

ELK RAPIDS

STRATEGIC VISION



OUR STORY

The history of our community is almost as old as the country itself. What began as a port became a designed resort community. The location and growth of industries grew the population to almost 3,000 by 1900. The village served as the commercial center, with people from across the region drawn to the hotels and shops lining River Street. Unfortunately, by 1916 industry operations ceased and by the Great Depression the population had decreased to less than 600 residents. But that wasn't the end of our community. Investments in a new marina and US 31 caused a tourism boom as visitors became residents, and once again our community thrived with energy and new businesses. At the turn of the millennium our community was once again facing challenges as main street businesses closed and buildings became dilapidated. Our community has faced many ups and downs throughout its history.

Today, people who love and believe in our community have generated new investments and volunteer lead events that have once again made our community attractive and desired. Our harbor, vibrant businesses, and natural beauty draw visitors from land and water to enjoy all we have to offer. People come for the lakes, the climate, and the walkability of our safe and caring neighborhoods. But our diverse medical amenities and high-quality education system also attract people of all ages and backgrounds who now want to call our community home. More and more are going to come as they seek places that offer economic opportunity, environmental security, prosperity and quality of life, and we must be ready to take advantage.

We want to become a truly sustainable community that stops riding these waves of growth and despair. We have water capacity to meet regional needs, but we need to address housing affordability to attract a workforce that grows and diversifies our population and our businesses. Yet, we have limited land for development within the village. We need to address access to daycare for that growing workforce, we need affordable high-speed internet for the new businesses and people that will arrive, and we need a better array of businesses that go beyond only those related to tourism. These needs and issues don't stop at the municipal boundary. The entire region is dealing with these issues, which means we must work together on the solutions. We will capitalize on our natural and built assets, and work with our regional neighbors, to ensure the long-term prosperity of current and future, rural and urban residents alike.

OUR VISION

The Elk Rapids Region is a year-round community offering prosperity and amazing quality of life for all citizens

WHAT WE VALUE

Communications and Engagement – Listening is a crucial part of success. As is communicating with intention and visibility. The Elk Rapids region believes in simple and clear communication through a variety of mediums to ensure all residents are included in decisions and conversations to reach the best decisions for their community's future.

Inclusive Community – The Elk Rapids region is building an inclusive and diverse future to ensure long-term success. Through housing affordability, asset planning and engagement; the Region is committed to building an abundant community for families, seasonal workers, professionals seniors and semi-retirees, and visitors alike.

Community Investment – Committed to attracting the right investment for the region. Investments that are aligned with the intentional direction and growth for a prosperous future. A sustainable community with enduring success for our businesses, school systems, and the region.

Collaboration – The Elk Rapids region success depends on collaboration and pooling resources. Whether it is labor, housing, water, recreation, economic prosperity, environmental, the solutions to these challenges are best addressed by working together to find long-term solutions that ensure the prosperity of the citizens and businesses in the region.

ACTIONS AND MILESTONES

Communications and Engagement

1. Develop a central site to communicate information that will keep residents informed and allow to ask questions.
 - a. On this site, explain the rules of engagement. Ex: when can a resident expect to hear a response to their comment or question?
 - b. Ensure there is a question box at the bottom of the page
 - c. Remove all dated and non-relevant communication points
2. Create a communications chart that will ensure maximum reach to all residents for the right content (facebook, newspaper, newsletter, social media, etc)
3. Create regular joint sessions of critical official organizations, sharing key objectives and activities for improved understanding, coordination, and implementation.

Inclusive Community

1. Establish researched and substantiated workforce needs in the region - both urban and rural.
2. Identify land availability and development opportunities.
3. Identify federal and state programs supporting or complimenting private sector investments in housing.

Community Investment

1. Create marketing and communication strategy with task and tactics to attract the missing demographics needed for the sustainability of Elk Rapids
2. Target market investment opportunities to diversity of housing developers.

Collaboration

1. Regular quarterly joint sessions between municipalities to build relationships and create a common ground document.
2. Create a regional economic development organization/entity.
3. Create a regional housing strategy complete with land bank and identified housing development zones.