Certification Report

City of Bessemer

October 2018

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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Executive summary

Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) is a certification program supporting community revitalization and the attraction and retention of businesses, entrepreneurs and talent throughout Michigan. RRC promotes communities to be development ready and competitive in today's economy by actively engaging stakeholders and proactively planning for the future—making them more attractive for projects that create places where people want to live, work and invest.

In March 2018, Bessemer received a baseline report after being evaluated under the statewide RRC program. While the city's report was strong at the time, coming in at more than 50 percent alignment with the best practices, the report identified a handful of areas the city needed to address prior to receiving RRC certification.

Since that time, Bessemer city staff and officials have been hard at work making improvements to fully align and reach certification. Key activities include the city's first capital improvements plan, updates to the zoning ordinance, stronger documentation of the development review process, removal of extra steps for development review, a more focused training approach, and increased marketing efforts. The city's efforts have produced high quality documents/processes and did so in less than half a year, faster than most other RRC certified communities. Bessemer also joints the ranks of RRC certified communities as the smallest community to-date.

As the 28th community to reach certification, the city will now enjoy added benefits from MEDC including access to the Redevelopment Services Team, a group of experienced professionals who will focus on the city's identified priority sites and help turn vision into reality. Other benefits include continued technical assistance, site marketing support, access to special services such as business attraction testing and the opportunity for additional social media exposure (a goal of the city's marketing strategy). The city's RRC planner will connect the city with all these benefits and more as they are identified. RRC certification is active for three years at which point the city will undergo a review of its practices to ensure continued alignment.

Bessemer has much to be proud of in reaching this key milestone. MEDC extends its heartfelt congratulations to city staff and officials and looks forward to strengthening its partnership with the city for many years to come.

Methodology

The basic assessment tool for evaluation is the RRC Best Practices. These six standards were developed in conjunction with public and private sector experts and address key elements of community and economic development. A community must demonstrate all of the RRC Best Practice components have been met to become RRC certified. Once received, certification is valid for three years.

Measurement of a community to the best practices is completed through the RRC team's research, observation and interviews, as well as the consulting advice and technical expertise of the RRC Advisory Council. The team analyzes a community's development materials, including, but not limited to: the master plan; redevelopment strategy; capital improvements plan; budget; public participation plan; zoning regulations; development procedures; applications; economic development strategy; marketing strategies; and website. Researchers observe the meetings of the community's governing body, planning commission, zoning board of appeals and other committees as applicable. In confidential interviews, the team also records the input of local business owners and developers who have worked with the community.

A community's degree of attainment for each best practice criteria is visually represented in this report by the following:

	Green indicates the best practice component is currently being met by the community.
	Yellow indicates some of the best practice component may be in place, but additional action is required.
	Red indicates the best practice component is not present or outdated.

This report represents the final findings of the evaluation for City of Bessemer's redevelopment processes and practices. All questions should be directed to the RRC team at RRC@michigan.org.

Best practice findings

Best Practice 1.1—The plans

Best Practice 1.1 evaluates community planning and how the redevelopment vision is embedded in the master plan, downtown plan and capital improvements plan. The master plan sets expectations for those involved in new development and redevelopment, giving the public some degree of certainty about their vision for the future, while assisting the city in achieving its stated goals. Local plans can provide key stakeholders with a roadmap for navigating the redevelopment process in the context of market realities and community goals.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), Public Act 33 of 2008, requires that the planning commission create and approve a master plan as a guide for development and fully review the master plan at least once every five years. Bessemer's current master plan was adopted in 2017 and provides a comprehensive framework for guiding development in the city. The plan's 12 chapters cover a wide variety of topics ranging from housing and transportation to economic development and life in a winter city. Each section of the plan includes goals and specific objectives for achieving those goals. To strengthen the likelihood of success, the last chapter includes a detailed action plan which assigns timelines, funding sources, and responsible parties to each of the objectives. What's perhaps most impressive about this implementation section is the wide variety of partners including the city, Ironwood Chamber, Belle Trail Authority and Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR). To keep the plan relevant, the city reviews its progress each November as part of a new annual joint meeting establish as part of its RRC efforts.

It's clear in the master plan and by talking to city stakeholders that the downtown is a source of history and pride for the community. While the area has seen some neglect in recent years (like many downtowns), there is a dedicated group of individuals working to revitalize the area via the downtown development authority (DDA). The DDA uses a tax increment financing mechanism (TIF) to fund improvements within its boundaries including pop-up shops, beautification efforts, façade grants, wayfinding improvements, broadband infrastructure, and marketing. The DDA plan was updated in 2017 and shows a clear direction for the area specifying projects, estimated timelines, and costs. The plan also ties nicely into the master plan through policy-based suggestions such as zoning ordinance changes. The DDA brings in roughly $55,000 a year to fund such projects—a healthy balance for a community such as Bessemer. This plan meets all RRC best practice criteria for downtown plans.

RRC best practices require either a downtown plan or a corridor plan for a community. Bessemer is in a situation where it has both a traditional downtown and an active commercial corridor via US-2. Since the city has a downtown plan, this evaluation did not require a corridor plan. However it is worth noting that the city included a section in the master plan to address US-2 corridor. The city's top priority redevelopment site is along this corridor and a major road and infrastructure reconstruction project is planned for 2020.

With the master and downtown plans providing vision and projects for the city, it's essential to plan for the capital investments that those projects will inevitably require. To help promote sound investment, Bessemer adopted its first-ever capital improvements plan (CIP) in 2017. The plan covers six years and includes projects ranging from the new website to a cemetery expansion and new welcome signs. The plan is reviewed and updated each year to ensure it covers six years as required under the MPEA.

Best Practice 1.1—The plans *continued*

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
1.1.1	**1.1.1**	The governing body has adopted a master plan in the past five years.	✓
1.1.2	**1.1.2**	The governing body has adopted a downtown plan.	✓
1.1.3	**1.1.3**	The governing body has adopted a corridor plan.	N/A
1.1.4	**1.1.4**	The governing body has adopted a capital improvements plan.	✓

Best Practice 1.2—Public participation

Best Practice 1.2 assesses how well the community identifies and engages its stakeholders on a continual basis. Public participation aims to prevent or minimize disputes by creating a process for resolving issues before they become an obstacle. Communities who regularly engage their residents also build long term trust and see greater support for plans and other initiatives.

Bessemer has demonstrated an understanding of the benefits gained through public engagement. The city follows the requirements of the Open Meetings Act but also goes above and beyond in several ways. The city's recently updated website is a prime example of how a community can use technology to communicate proactively with its residents via email listservs, meeting notices, live streams of city council meetings, and access to documents. The city also maintains an active presence on Facebook which takes the city's message directly to residents and stakeholders versus asking them to come to the city. The 2017 master plan update also included proactive engagement efforts such as surveys (nearly 300 were received) and a community workshop with about 40 attendees. All of this activity ties directly into the master plan's goal of increasing engagement and communication.

As part of its efforts to reach RRC certification, the city adopted a public participation plan in 2018. This plan outlines the city's stakeholders, identifies tools it will use and establishes how the city will track and evaluate the success of its efforts.

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
1.2.1	**1.2.1**	The community has a public participation plan for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders.	✓
1.2.2	**1.2.2**	The community demonstrates that public participation efforts go beyond the basic methods.	✓
1.2.3	**1.2.3**	The community shares outcomes of all public participation processes.	✓

Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations

Best Practice 2.1 evaluates the city's zoning ordinance and assesses how well it implements the goals of the master plan. Zoning is a significant mechanism for achieving desired land use patterns and quality development. Foundationally, the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZEA), Public Act 110 of 2006, requires that a zoning ordinance be based on a plan to help guide zoning decisions. Bessemer's ordinance last underwent a review and update in 2018 to address alignment issues identified in the 2017 master plan.

Aside from ensuring alignment between the master plan and ordinance, the RRC best practices look at seven other aspects ranging from mixed-use development and housing to user friendliness and parking flexibility. In March 2018, the city aligned with five of the seven. Following the summer 2018 updates, the city is in alignment with all seven.

Concentrated Development: This criterion looks for provisions which allow mixed use developed by right, incorporating place making components, and addressing environmental and historic preservation. Bessemer already partially met this criterion during its March 2018 evaluation though a few items held it back from full alignment such as requiring special land use permits for mixed-use housing and a lack of actual provisions to support place-making efforts desired for the downtown. The city addressed these concerns through the creation of a Central Business District Overlay (Section 7.3 of the ordinance). The overlay establishes design standards such as front facades, building materials, and balconies. The city also updated its permitted uses table to include mixed-use development as a permitted use in the C-1 district (downtown).

Housing Diversity: The city's ordinance allows numerous types of housing development in addition to traditional types such as detached single family and apartment buildings. More unique types of housing include upper level dwellings (special use in R-1, C-1 and C-2), attached single family homes (duplexes and townhomes), corporate temporary housing, stacked flats and live/work units. While not required for RRC certification, the city adopted provisions to address tiny houses, a national trend. None are currently planned but this update is just one demonstration of the city's proactive approach to potential development.

Non-Motorized Transportation: Creating a community which allows residents and visitors to move around via multiple modes of transportation is vital for continued economic growth. The master plan discusses the idea of complete streets and also improving connections to nearby non-motorized trail amenities. The ordinance supports this to some degree via Section 5.10.B which requires sidewalks built to city standards for any project which goes through the site review process. During the March 2018, evaluation, RRC recommended the city adopt at least one additional provision to support this topic. The city opted to update Section 5.5.A to adopt bike parking standards allowing developers to make limited reductions to vehicle parking capacity in exchange for bicycle parking so those who ride into town from the trails are able to easily find places to park their bike and shop or dine.

Parking Flexibility: Parking is a fact of life in communities across the nation—in fact, there are eight parking spaces for every car in the United States. Emerging technology, decreasing car ownership, and a focus on active living are all combining to change the equation for how much parking is truly necessary. Communities who are prepared for redevelopment are incorporating more creative solutions to parking aside from traditional parking minimums. In Bessemer this includes encouraging connections between parking lots and allowing shared or complementary parking agreements. The ordinance also caps parking at no more than 10 percent of the minimum thus introducing parking maximums. The bike parking provisions added in Section 5.5.A (as mentioned earlier) also add to the city's parking flexibility options.

Green Infrastructure: Like parking, technology advances in energy and a greater understanding of how development impacts surrounding environments is changing how communities address sustainable infrastructure. Previously more of a buzz word, green infrastructure now plays a vital role in protecting an area's natural beauty (something U.P. communities benefit greatly from) and also helps reduce the cost of

Best practice findings

Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations *continued*

maintaining expensive "gray" infrastructure projects. In a world increasingly focused on resiliency, communities who address green infrastructure also become more attractive to employers and new residents, something discussed in Bessemer's master plan. The city's ordinance already meets this criterion through provisions allowing permeable pavement in parking lots [5.5(A)(8)] and wind towers (conditional use in all districts). As part of summer ordinance updates, the city also adopted new provisions to strengthen the parking lot landscaping standards and established street tree standards.

Flexible Development Tools: Bessemer's ordinance is very detailed and addresses many potential development types. But even the best ordinance can't predict every type of development that may occur in the future. As such, RRC communities build tools into their ordinance which provide flexibility to react to special uses or unforeseen development when it fits in with a community's vision. Bessemer handles this criterion through its extensive and up-to-date use table processes such as special land uses, conditional land uses and planned unit developments (PUDs).

User Friendliness: This final criterion evaluates how easy the community's ordinance is to find and use. Bessemer hits all the major points by including the ordinance on its website (click "government" and choose "ordinances") and by including the full zoning ordinance in a single document. That document goes above and beyond by including helpful tables, graphics and hyperlinks throughout.

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
2.1.1	2.1.1	The governing body has adopted a zoning ordinance that aligns with the goals of the current master plan.	✓
2.1.2	2.1.2	The zoning ordinance provides for areas of concentrated development in appropriate locations and encourages the type and form of development desired.	✓
2.1.3	2.1.3	The zoning ordinance contains flexible zoning tools to encourage development and redevelopment.	✓
2.1.4	2.1.4	The zoning ordinance allows for a variety of housing options.	✓
2.1.5	2.1.5	The zoning ordinance includes standards to improve non-motorized transportation.	✓
2.1.6	2.1.6	The zoning ordinance includes flexible parking standards.	✓
2.1.7	2.1.7	The zoning ordinance includes standards for green infrastructure.	✓
2.1.8	2.1.8	The zoning ordinance is user-friendly.	✓

Best Practice 3.1—Site plan review policy and procedures

Best Practice 3.1 evaluates the city's development review policies and procedures, project tracking and internal/external communications. An efficient site plan review process is integral to being redevelopment ready and can assist a community in attracting investment dollars while ensuring its zoning ordinance and other laws are followed.

Bessemer's zoning ordinance provides a significant level of detail on the site plan review process. For a first time developer the level of detail in the ordinance can be almost overwhelming but the city's "Guide to Development" (see next Best Practice) provides an easier way to understand the process. All processes start with a recommended pre-application meeting with the city manager. A prospective applicant can call the manager directly to set up the meeting. During the meeting the manager (and any other invited staff) will review applicable ordinances, provide paperwork and discuss any other topics the applicant may need to know. All the applicant will need to bring is a rough sketch of the proposed development.

Once an applicant is ready, they can submit the application, site drawings and fee to the city manager. Within 14 days, the manager will confirm completeness of the application and move it forward in the process. All developments fall into three review categories: major site plan, minor site plan requiring site plan review (planning commission or city council) and minor site plan requiring administrative review. The city's guide to development provides an overview of what falls into each category. Once the application is deemed complete, the city manager will distribute the plans to other reviewers including building, public works and fire for their comments. The manager will then compile a staff report (within 18 days) for any site plan which requires planning commission or city council approval. For major site plans, the city may request an escrow account to cover the cost of professional reviews as well.

Once a site plan is ready for planning commission review, it is reviewed against standards found in the ordinance (Section 9.5 for conditional and special land uses, 10.6 for planned unit developments and 14.5F for permitted uses) and a decision is issued. If the proposed development is a special land use, planned unit development or a rezoning request the application is forwarded to city council for a final decision. Permitted and conditional uses are approved by the planning commission (and others are approved administratively). The process received high marks from those who have been through it—primarily due to the personalized service a city such as Bessemer can offer because of its size. Once an applicant receives the zoning permit, it can move on to the building process which is also handled through the city.

Bessemer's process overall is streamlined and efficient. The city has made tremendous progress in the last year in formalizing its approach to development reviews which provides stability and predictability for development in the city. Highlights include:

- Updating the "Guide to Development" to include maximum timeframes versus minimums to provide greater predictability;
- Creating flowcharts and other visual aids to better explain the development review process;
- Documenting the internal review process to ensure consistency even in the event of staff turnover;
- Streamlining the special land use process to require only one public hearing at the planning commission level (previously two were required, one at the city council level and one at the planning commission);
- Developing a sheet to track projects from application to occupancy; and
- Establishing a survey to collect feedback on the development review process and established a process for reviewing feedback.

Best practice findings

Best Practice 3.1—Site plan review policy and procedures *continued*

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
3.1.1	3.1.1	The zoning ordinance articulates a thorough site plan review process.	✓
3.1.2	3.1.2	The community has a qualified intake professional.	✓
3.1.3	3.1.3	The community defines and offers conceptual site plan review meetings for applicants.	✓
3.1.4	3.1.4	The appropriate departments engage in joint site plan reviews.	✓
3.1.5	3.1.5	The community has a clearly documented internal staff review policy.	✓
3.1.6	3.1.6	The community promptly acts on development requests.	✓
3.1.7	3.1.7	The community has a method to track development projects.	✓
3.1.8	3.1.8	The community annually reviews the successes and challenges with the site plan review procedures.	✓

Best Practice 3.2—Guide to Development

Best Practice 3.2 evaluates the availability of the community's development information. Having all the necessary information easily accessible online for developers and residents alike creates a transparent development process that can operate at any time. This information creates a smoother process overall and reduces the amount of time staff spend answering basic questions.

As part of the city's early efforts in the RRC program, city staff created a "Guide to Development" which is available on the city's website. The guide helps a developer understand which application they need and explains each of the development review processes. It also includes contact information, special meeting request procedures, pre-application conference procedures and more. As part of its efforts to reach certification, the city made numerous updates to the guide including the addition of flowcharts, stronger timelines, and additional information such as links to applications, and where to find information on potential incentives. The guide is hosted on prominently of the city's "Business" page.

Along with having access to information on the development review process, a developer should be able to understand their costs upfront. The city posts the zoning fee schedule online for easy access. Fees range from $40 for a permitted use zoning permit to $400 for a conditional rezoning request. As part of the RRC process, the city established a process to annually review the fees during the budget process (prior to this they had last been reviewed in 2012). The city accepts credit cards as a form of payment and allows online payments which goes above and beyond the RRC Best Practices expectations.

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
3.2.1	**3.2.1**	The community maintains an online guide to development that explains policies, procedures and steps to obtain approvals.	✓
3.2.3	**3.2.3**	The community annually reviews the fee schedule.	✓

Best Practice 4.1—Recruitment and orientation

Best Practice 4.1 evaluates how a community conducts recruitment and orientation for newly appointed or elected officials. Such officials sit on the numerous boards, commissions and committees that advise city leaders on key policy decisions. Ensuring that the community has a transparent method of recruitment, clearly lays out expectations/desired skillsets, and provides orientation for appointed officials is key to ensuring the community makes the most of these boards and commissions.

Bessemer provides seven opportunities for residents to participate on a board or commission: the planning commission, downtown development authority, parks and recreation committee, Gogebic Range water authority, sewer authority, civil service commission and elected officials commission. The DDA, planning commission and parks/recreation committee each have a webpage on the city's website which provides a basic overview, key documents, and a list of current board members. Each page also contains a link to the city's application to join a board. The same application is used for all seven boards and includes a list of desired skill sets for each.

The city has developed an agenda and packet to provide orientation materials for new members. The packet was originally created for the planning commission but can also be used for the DDA and council with limited modifications.

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
4.1.1	**4.1.1**	The community sets expectations for board and commission positions.	✓
4.1.2	**4.1.2**	The community provides orientation packets to all appointed and elected members of development-related boards and commissions.	✓

Best Practice 4.2—Education and training

Best Practice 4.2 assesses how a community encourages training and tracks educational activities for appointed and elected officials and staff. Trainings provide officials and staff with an opportunity to expand their knowledge and ultimately make more informed decisions about land use and redevelopment issues. An effective training program includes four components: financial resources to support training, a plan to identify priority topics and track attendance, consistent encouragement to attend trainings and sharing of information between boards and commissions to maximize the return on investment for the community.

As called for in the master plan, Bessemer allocates funding to support training for staff as well as officials. Training funds for officials are enough to potentially send members to local events but not likely to support larger events which typically occur downstate. While these larger events provide experience and insight that can only be gained in person, communities can supplement those events via free opportunities such as webinars, publications, or asking a local expert to come to a meeting. For 2018, the city prioritized sending its clerk to a conference and also sending DPW to confined spaces training. Prior to RRC, the city took a more informal approach to training for its officials but in order to align with this best practice the city made a number of changes including setting a policy to identify priority trainings each November at a joint meeting (more on this further down), creating a tracking system to create stronger records of training completion and adding training as a standing agenda item to encourage reminders and report-outs.

The last criteria in this best practice goes beyond training and focuses on collaboration among city boards, staff and officials. RRC recommends three main activities in this area: hold an annual joint meeting with city council, planning commission and DDA; share minutes and other information between boards; and publish a planning commission annual report as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. The city shares minutes between boards and has a liaison system in place.
The city also published its first planning commission annual report in November 2017, noting five key accomplishments; the next annual report is expected in time for an annual joint meeting set for each November. This new annual joint meeting will help the numerous city officials and stakeholders chart a coordinated path forward each year for priority activities

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
4.2.1	4.2.1	The community has a dedicated source of funding for training.	✓
4.2.2	4.2.2	The community identifies training needs and tracks attendance for the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	✓
4.2.3	4.2.3	The community encourages the governing body, boards, commissions and staff to attend trainings.	✓
4.2.4	4.2.4	The community shares information between the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	✓

Best Practice 5.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites®

Best Practice 5.1 assesses how a community identifies, visions for and markets their priority redevelopment sites. Communities must think strategically about the redevelopment of properties and investments and should be targeted in areas that can catalyze further development around it. Instead of waiting for developers to propose projects, Redevelopment Ready Communities® identify priority sites and prepare information to assist developers in finding opportunities that match the community's vision.

In order to meet this RRC Best Practice, a community should engage stakeholders across the community to identify redevelopment ready sites and prioritize at least three. As part of this process, the community should develop a vision for what they'd prefer to see on the site—this vision should be tied to the master plan and the city should ensure the framework is in place to support that vision. With sites and visions identified, basic information such as address, owner, value and infrastructure should be gathered and packaged into a short, marketable document. At least one of the sites should be developed further into a complete property information package which includes an expanded list of more technical items (as applicable) such as environmental conditions, traffic studies, etc. Finally, the sites should be actively marketed via the city and its economic development partners.

Over the past year the city has identified six priority sites for redevelopment or new development: 312 South Sophie Street, 107 East Sellar Street, 303 South Sophie Street, 206 South Sophie Street, a vacant lot along US-2 and the city's industrial park (three available sites). Under the business tab on the city's website a developer can easy find a document providing basic information and desired outcomes for each of these sites. This mix of sites provides opportunity for mixed-use development, multifamily housing, restaurants, senior living, large box store and industrial development. Along with the site-specific information in the package, the city identifies available incentives on the business webpage.

When the city received its baseline report in March 2018, it was missing just two components of this best practice: a full property information and more detailed identification of potential incentives. Since that time, city staff have created a full property information package for its top priority site along US-2 where it believes a grocery store or senior living center could locate. The city identified specific incentives at both the local and state level including negotiable pricing for the land, local brownfield incentives or state programs such as MEDC's Community Revitalization Program (CRP) or the Michigan State House Authority's (MSHDA) low-income housing tax credits. The city also tied this site into the city's efforts to connect to recreation trails by including information on the Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) grants which could support a trailhead on the site. Incentives for other priority sites include downtown facades, small business development funds or MEDC programs.

The city's available sites can be found on the business page which is easily accessible from the city's home page.

Best Practice 5.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites® *continued*

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
5.1.1	5.1.1	The community identifies and prioritizes redevelopment sites.	✓
5.1.2	5.1.2	The community gathers basic information for at least three priority sites.	✓
5.1.3	5.1.3	The community has development a vision for at least three priority sites.	✓
5.1.4	5.1.4	The community identifies potential resources and incentives for at least three priority sites.	✓
5.1.5	5.1.5	The community assembles a property information package for at least one priority site.	✓
5.1.6	5.1.6	Prioritized redevelopment sites are actively marketed.	✓

Best Practice 6.1—Economic development strategy

Best Practice 6.1 evaluates goals and actions identified by the community to assist in strengthening its overall economic health. Strategic economic development planning is critical to attract jobs and new investment in communities.

Bessemer has integrated its economic development strategy directly into the city's 2017 master plan as Chapter 8. The city's focus is on promoting tourism, using the RRC process to guide development, increasing marketing efforts, developing a strong internet infrastructure, and incorporating place making throughout the city (especially in downtown). The strategy notes the city's many partners and pulls from other projects such as a target market analysis for housing provided through regional prosperity funds via WUPPDR. Like the master plan, this strategy includes goals and objectives that are guided by responsible parties, timelines and funding sources. The plan also aligns with the regional prosperity initiative, another key expectation of this best practice.

The city annually reviews the economic development strategy each year along with the master plan review at the joint meeting in November.

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
6.1.1	6.1.1	The governing body has approved an economic development strategy.	✓
6.1.2	6.1.2	The governing body annually reviews the economic development strategy.	✓

Best Practice 6.2—Marketing and promotion

Best Practice 6.2 evaluates how the community promotes and markets itself. Marketing and branding is an essential tool in promotion of a community's assets and unique attributes. Consumers and investors are attracted to places that evoke positive feelings and to communities that take pride in their town and their history.

Bessemer recently completed a branding effort which is prominent throughout the city's website and on many city documents. The logo incorporates the city's geographic location in the mountainous western Upper Peninsula. As noted in the city's master plan, the city has a lot to gain in the long run from its natural beauty and the logo plays off that idea. The city has also created a developer packet which lays out the many reasons to invest in Bessemer and including information such as planned investments, demographics and contacts to learn more. In addition to the work the city had already completed prior to the RRC baseline in March, the city has developed a more overarching marketing strategy which includes six key areas:

- Trail town
- Vibrant art community
- Retirement community
- Telecommuting
- Thriving historic downtown
- Thriving industrial park

Each area includes key messaging and actions the city will undertake to promote to targeted audiences. The strategy meets the minimum of this best practice and the city intends to develop it further this winter to include more detailed actions and a stronger focus on implementation.

A key piece of any marketing strategy is having an up-to-date and easy to navigate website. The city's website meets both points. The website is filled with helpful planning and development information, mostly focused under the business or planning/zoning pages. The website also provides a strong first impression of Bessemer and includes all the information required to align with this best practice. RRC has begun pointing other communities to Bessemer's website as a prime example of strong branding and clear navigation.

Initial RRC evaluation March 2018	Final RRC evaluation Oct 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
6.2.1	6.2.1	The community has developed a marketing strategy.	✓
6.2.2	6.2.2	The community has an updated, user-friendly municipal website.	✓

City of Bessemer has exhibited a strong commitment to improving their redevelopment readiness and has worked diligently to meet the best practice criteria and achieve the Redevelopment Ready Certified Community® designation. The city has found a balance between removing unnecessary delays and hurdles, while preserving the integrity of the community's vision and goals, positioning the city for success. Bessemer has set an example for the region as a leader in community revitalization.

Certified communities signal a proactive, business friendly environment to developers and investors. Upon certification, the MEDC will assist in marketing a certified community's top Redevelopment Ready Sites® and provide access to a dedicated Redevelopment Services Team which is focused on turning priority site visions into reality. Additional benefits include ongoing technical assistance, social media exposure, and other specialized services tailored to the community. The toolbox of benefits is always growing.

RRC certification lasts for three years. At that time a full review will take place to ensure continued alignment with best practices.

In today's competitive economy, developers and businesses can invest anywhere. Certified Redevelopment Ready Communities® signal that locating a new business or growing an existing one within their municipality is straightforward. City of Bessemer, like many other communities will have challenges ahead. The city has developed the tools to address those challenges by streamlining the review process and improving customer service, to ensure the city remains a competitive and attractive community for business and talent attraction.

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is the state's marketing arm and lead advocate for business development, talent and jobs, tourism, arts and cultural grants, and overall economic growth. The MEDC offers a number of business assistance services and capital programs for business attraction and acceleration, entrepreneurship, strategic partnerships, talent enhancement, and urban and community development.