



# 2011 Strategic Plan

Midland Tomorrow is the economic development corporation serving the County of Midland and all the municipalities in it. Our mission is *to enhance the quality of life for Midland County residents through the retention and creation of quality jobs and diversification of the economic base.* We work with industrial and technology companies to help attract and retain jobs and reduce their barriers to enterprise.

For years, economic development has relied upon “bottom line” accounting assistance, such as tax abatements, to successfully attract and retain business. Michigan’s economic issues in recent years, however, have challenged firms across our state to take their old tools down new paths. Michigan businesses and organizations are meeting the challenge by innovating, dreaming big, taking risks, and blazing new trails to business success.

Midland Tomorrow is one of those organizations. Our latest strategic plan retains the best of our existing economic toolkit and takes it to the next level with new, bold strategies to drive economic growth. In this plan, we seek to invigorate our existing knowledge and talent base through access to new innovations and intellectual property, strategic business counseling, and connections to other manufacturers and innovators to develop new relationships and opportunities. We’re helping to cement the connections that make us world class. At the same time, we’re researching and building relationships with businesses across the U.S. that fit our existing technology infrastructure, demonstrating to them why locating in the Midland area will be the best choice they’ve ever made. We are aggressively pursuing new jobs and investment from across America. We want them here to benefit our residents and grow our economy.

## **Strategic Initiative I: Enable Business Retention and Expansion**

Our larger economic base companies – The Dow Chemical Company, Dow Corning Corporation, MidMichigan Health, McKay Press, and many others – continue to lead the state in its efforts towards economic recovery, and have acted as Midland’s single most powerful defense against Michigan’s economic challenges. Our proactive strategy utilizes all resources available to us to ensure that when our existing economic base businesses think “expansion” and “investment,” they think “Midland.”

We’re accomplishing this by **developing strong relationships** with local manufacturing business executives; **proactively managing permitting processes** with local companies to ensure companies spend less time permitting and more time scaling up their operations; and **refining Midland’s pro-business environment** to reduce the overall cost of doing business in Midland and cement it as a location for business expansion and growth. Measuring local job creation, investment and employment rates – and benchmarking these and other statistics against comparable communities nationwide – allows us to refine our efforts continually to ensure we are offering the best possible palette of services for our local companies. Though we don’t directly control macroeconomic trends, we can help to influence them by helping to strengthen our business-friendly climate.

## **Strategic Initiative 2: Promote Innovation at Midland’s Existing Employers**

Midland Tomorrow utilizes a blended economic gardening strategy that blends traditional business retention strategies (assistance with incentives) with proactive assessments of companies' growth opportunities and assistance to help them develop and reach growth targets. We work continuously to help over 90 local manufacturing and technology businesses develop **new products, new customers and new markets**, with the goal of making Midland an adaptive leader in fostering and successfully launching high-expectation new technology companies.

Our **new market development** and **new customer development** efforts involve proactively seeking new market opportunities for our second-stage companies (companies that have passed the survival stage and are considering areas of growth). Our strategy works with these growing companies to ensure they’re taking advantage of chances to grow their businesses; in particular, we help them actively pursue and capitalize on new market diversification opportunities and to identify potential opportunities for customer/supplier collaboration, both inside and beyond Midland. Meanwhile, under our **new product development** initiative, we’re working to help bundle novel intellectual property and applications for Midland-based companies to commercialize, helping to grow their businesses while bringing new ideas into the marketplace.

### **Strategic Initiative 3: Proactively Research and Attract National Businesses**

As with our business retention efforts, proactive business attraction doesn't wait for jobs and investment to come to us. We're **researching and contacting leaders of specific companies** that complement our existing business infrastructure. We're **building business relationships** with them and explaining the deep chemical industry expertise Midland offers – and how that translates into business advantages they can't find anywhere else. And we're **developing a new Midland-based research and development cluster**, working to gather local companies and spawn new concepts for products and companies that will benefit Midland and the region. To complement these initiatives, we're seizing the opportunities afforded us by **Internet marketing**, using the power of our Web site, blog and social media – among other tools – to build awareness of Midland's business opportunities and infrastructure to drive external business engagement with us.

Given the presence of major solar industry leaders in Midland and our two neighboring counties, Saginaw and Bay, our whole region has a strong proposition for solar industry attraction as well. That's why Bay, Midland and Saginaw Counties continue to partner on a **regional solar business attraction initiative** that complements our individual business attraction efforts. In all these initiatives, our positions and goals are the same: Because we have business strengths in our community on an unprecedented scale for a region our size, we often find ourselves competing against much larger regions for investment – regions with more financial resources to bring to the table. Rather than competing with dollars alone, we aim to deliver a *targeted message to specific companies* through *personal contact* before the sales process begins, moving from a solely financial deal to a **true value proposition** that encompasses every aspect of business success.

### **Strategic Initiative 4: Increase and Sustain Investment in Midland Tomorrow**

Midland Tomorrow relies on the generous support of our investors to make our economic development initiatives possible. We are currently funded by contracts for service with the City of Midland and the County of Midland as well as generous support from over 70 other local private and public businesses and individuals. Going forward, we're working to solidify our current funding base and attract new investors to support our operations.

## **Strategic Initiative 5: Improve Midland’s Infrastructure and Quality of Life**

Midland is the “product” that we market to local businesses and national business prospects. For our business attraction and retention efforts to succeed, we must offer both the business infrastructure and the cultural amenities that allow companies to meet their financial and production goals while surrounding employees with a safe, inviting community. To achieve these ends, we focus our efforts on **development of large-scale industrial sites** as well as **redevelopment of historical industrial complexes**, ensuring both new and locally relocating businesses will have shovel-ready locations for their operations. We work proactively with local and state authorities and local businesses to address **environmental issues** affecting our companies, and we work closely with **local municipalities and township governments** to ensure that our economic development services and solutions benefit Midland County as a whole. In addition, we act as our local manufacturers’ voice in local, state and national **discussions on education and workforce development**, to ensure programs are put in place to supply them with a skilled and plentiful workforce.

## **Conclusion**

Midland has gained innumerable benefits from the chemical and technology industries, which have sheltered us from economic storms and provided a solid foundation for our local economy. In our fiercely competitive economic development climate, we’re continuing our work to help local companies execute their existing growth plans and form new ones, even as we proactively tell the world why Midland is *the* location for technology business siting and growth. Our goal is for business leaders both inside and outside our community to realize the summation of a century of cutting-edge research and development, business cooperation and synergy, and a focus on outstanding business together with outstanding quality of life:

**Michigan’s technology renaissance is happening here.**