

**redevelopment ready**  
communities®

# RRC Baseline Report

**City of Plymouth**

August 2018

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MICHIGAN ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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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.

To become formally engaged in the RRC program, communities must complete a self-evaluation of its development-related practices, attend the RRC Best Practice Training Series and have its governing body pass a resolution of intent, outlining the value the community sees in participating in the program. Plymouth completed the prerequisite RRC best practice training sessions in June of 2017, and completed a self-evaluation and passed

a resolution of intent to participate—becoming formally engaged in the RRC program in December of 2017.

Each of the six RRC best practices outlined in this report were developed in conjunction with experts in the public and private sector and they serve as the standard to achieve certification as a Redevelopment Ready Community®. RRC certification signals to investors, businesses and residents working within a community that they can expect a consistent, efficient, fair development review process.




Plymouth's strengths currently lie in its detailed master plan, zoning ordinance and engaged citizenry. The city's challenges include visioning for redevelopment sites and creating coordinated overarching economic development and marketing strategies. With this report and resources provided by the RRC, Plymouth will be able to complete all of the unmet RRC best practice criteria and achieve certification.

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 review meeting minutes 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 is significantly outdated.

This report represents the evaluation baseline of City of Plymouth’s redevelopment processes and practices. All questions should be directed to the RRC team at [RRC@michigan.org](mailto:RRC@michigan.org).

Plymouth is currently meeting 34 percent of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® best practices and is in the process of completing an additional 37 percent.						
1.1.1	1.1.2	1.1.3 (N/A)	1.1.4	1.2.1	1.2.2	1.2.3
2.1.1	2.1.2	2.1.3	2.1.4	2.1.5	2.1.6	2.1.7
2.1.8	3.1.1	3.1.2	3.1.3	3.1.4	3.1.5	3.1.6
3.1.7	3.1.8	3.1.9	3.2.1	3.2.2	4.1.1	4.1.2
4.2.1	4.2.2	4.2.3	4.2.4	5.1.1	5.1.2	5.1.3
5.1.4	5.1.5	5.1.6	6.1.1	6.1.2	6.2.1	6.2.2

## Best Practice 1.1—The plans

Best Practice 1.1 evaluates community planning and how well a community's redevelopment vision is integrated into a master plan, downtown plan and capital improvements plan. A master plan sets expectations for those involved in development, it gives the public a degree of certainty about their vision for the future and it is crucial for a community to establish and achieve its 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 subsequently review the master plan at least once every five years after adoption.

Plymouth is currently in the midst of a master plan update. Although the master plan has yet to be adopted by the city commission, it is nearing completion and the RRC team has determined it should be considered in this evaluation. The primary public engagement tool used to inform the master plan was a survey, which was made available for two weeks on the city's website. The survey received an impressive 1,035 responses which is a testament to the city's involved citizenry. Citizens provided detailed suggestions which enabled city planners to provide specific direction in the plan. Citizens highlighted their desire for additional streetscape amenities—particularly seating, bike racks and drinking fountains—downtown, along with additional free publically-managed parking. Interestingly, residents asserted they didn't want buildings developed all the way to the front property line along Main Street outside of downtown—although they would like to see similar setbacks so buildings are easy to access. All of the residents' input led to detailed sub-area plans for Downtown Plymouth, Old Village, North and South Main, South Mill and Ann Arbor Road.

The public input also assisted in the development of goals that fall within the city commission's strategic plan which focuses on four overarching goals of quality of life, financial stability, economic vitality, and service infrastructure. Strategically, the city will focus on ensuring homes are sized in proportion to their lot size; they will facilitate the development of a diverse housing stock and they will develop policy that will preserve

the city's historic character while also enhancing street mobility, connectivity and safety.

The draft master plan further aligns itself with Best Practice 1.1.1 as it contains a zoning plan—comparing the city's future land use plan classifications with the existing zoning districts. By doing this the city is able to identify where zoning and text amendments may be needed in order to implement the master plan to its fullest extent. The master plan's implementation matrix has been highlighted in the RRC online library of resources as it is precisely what is called for in the RRC best practices. The matrix categorizes policy changes recommended by the master plan into nine sections, outlining changes needed to: meet RRC certification, improve site design, tailor residential policy to the desires of the city, more adequately preserve the environment, promote mobility, streamline administrative processes, integrate policy with the capital improvements plan and maximize collaboration with local and regional stakeholders. Each of the recommended policy changes has an estimated time frame, responsible party and funding sources—which is consistent with the RRC best practices.

The city plans for the preservation and enhancement of its downtown district within the master plan. The city's downtown development authority's goals have been integrated into the draft master plan. The "Downtown Sub Area Plan" addresses the interface between the public and private realms by underscoring the importance of outdoor cafes and attractive retail window displays. The "Form & Site Design" section of the "Downtown Sub Area Plan" recommends setting a maximum setback of 12 feet, which is a strategic way to advance the city toward its goals. Further, pedestrian passageways and wayfinding recommendations aim to enhance the functionality of the downtown district for pedestrians, maximize patronage of downtown shops and restaurants and enhance the quality of life for city residents, business owners and employees. The downtown plan's implementation matrix (in the master plan), combined with the cost estimates of downtown projects found in the capital improvements plan ensure the city is poised to implement the downtown plan. Upon

## Best Practice 1.1—The plans *continued*

the adoption of the master plan, the city will be aligned with Best Practice 1.1.2 criteria.

In order to efficiently and effectively allocate resources to implement Plymouth’s various plans, the city will rely on its six-year capital improvements program (CIP). The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA) establishes the

requirement that planning commissions annually prepare a capital improvements plan for the upcoming six years; and by coordinating the capital improvements program with the strategies of the master plan and downtown plan out to fiscal year 2022/2023, the city is well positioned to realize its vision of the future.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
1.1.1	The governing body has adopted a master plan in the past five years.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt the draft master plan	Q4 2018
1.1.2	The governing body has adopted a downtown plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt the draft master plan which contains a plan for downtown Plymouth	Q4 2018
1.1.3	The governing body has adopted a corridor plan.	N/A	
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. In addition to meeting all of the public participation requirements required by law, Plymouth proactively engages its residents in a variety of ways.

The city consistently engages residents to inform the development of its plans and receive feedback on development proposals. Recently, a survey posted on the city's website received over 1,000 responses from residents and those living in proximity to the city. The city maintains a social media presence on both Facebook and Twitter which allows the city to easily reach a broad audience. In addition to using social media for highlighting city events and disseminating community news, the city's social media platform can provide a range of opportunities. For instance, the city could request feedback from its residents to inform code enforcement efforts (e.g., SeeClickFix), development proposals and long-range planning efforts. In addition to hosting surveys on the city website, Plymouth could consider posting surveys (including visual preference surveys)

on its social media platforms. Perhaps the city could even explore hosting online digital design charrettes (e.g., MetroQuest public involvement software), and live-streaming public meetings to acquire real-time citizen input. Technology is revolutionizing opportunities for public engagement, so the city should discuss what may or may not work well for its particular situation. Regardless of how the city determines it would like to use social media, it should be included in the city's public participation strategy.

To align with the RRC best practices, it is recommended Plymouth develop an overarching public participation strategy describing how various local and regional stakeholders will be reached in particular situations. The strategy should also explain how data, information and/or the results of engagement initiatives will be shared with the public after it is collected. The engagement strategy will help the city develop strong, implementable plans and it will help residents stay informed and engaged in city activities. When completed, it will be beneficial for the city to post the public participation strategy online. The RRC website has a "Public Participation Strategy Guide" that could assist the city in developing its strategy.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
1.2.1	The community has a public participation plan for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a public participation plan that defines outreach strategies and how the success of these strategies will be evaluated	Q4 2018
1.2.2	The community demonstrates that public participation efforts go beyond the basic methods.	✓	
1.2.3	The community shares outcomes of public participation processes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a method to share gathered information with the public	Q4 2018



## 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 crucial 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.

Plymouth's zoning ordinance was last updated in April of 2018 and overall, it is consistent with the city's draft master plan. For instance, the master plan's goals of fostering vibrant neighborhoods, preserving the city's historic character and maximizing connectivity are supported by the code's mixed-use zoning districts, restriction of front-yard parking, architectural compatibility requirements and other design standards. A robust mixing of uses is permitted by right in the each of the city's office (O-1 and O-2) and business (B-1, B-2 and B-3) zoning districts; and each district considers residential uses above non-residential uses as a permitted use by right. Just as advocated in the master plan, the ordinance allows for outdoor cafes and incentivizes pedestrian amenities in the CBD by offering parking reductions when public spaces are dedicated in the form of arcades, inner arcades, gallery or plazas.

The city's setback regulations are also consistent with the city's vision for the future. The city's Central Business District (CBD, aka B-2 Zoning District) and General Business District (aka B-3 Zoning District) don't require any front yard setbacks, which encourages the development of pedestrian-friendly environments. Plymouth features some form-based design requirements: as footnotes in the "Schedule of Regulations," as required conditions for some special uses and more prominently as design standards found in the CBD. The CBD stipulates requirements for 60 percent ground floor transparency, the orientation of building entrances, architectural interest and other design elements. While not required for RRC certification, the city may want to consider how additional form-based regulations could assist the city in meeting its goals. If the city were to include more form-based regulations, it could de-emphasize "use" regulations—which could

make the code easier to administer. Further, through proactively addressing aesthetics and site composition, form-based codes can help projects gain resident support and generate a higher comfort level with compact development, allowing developers to build more units per acre—which can ultimately result in lower housing costs for residents. Additionally, form-based codes can regulate development at the scale of an individual building or parcel, which can encourage compatible independent developments across large areas without requiring large land assemblies and megaprojects which can be costly and time consuming endeavors.

Plymouth's zoning code does a good job of providing for the new-economy type businesses that can add vibrancy to its neighborhoods and downtown district. The zoning ordinance is consistent with the RRC best practice expectations for new economy-type uses as the code expressly lists outdoor cafés, film, TV and radio production, arts/crafts studios, and dance studios. While unnecessary to meet the RRC best practice criteria, the city could consider adding other new economy uses such as breweries, distilleries and live/work spaces to its code.

Plymouth currently meets the RRC best practice criteria for housing. Plymouth allows single and two-family homes, multi-family apartment style dwellings, attached condominiums or townhomes, cluster housing, and housing above non-residential uses. Plymouth allows various forms of housing to be built in its business zoning districts which provides residents with attractive housing and lifestyle options. If the city wishes to augment the housing types currently permitted, consideration could be given to additional styles of multi-family dwelling like small multiplexes, courtyard apartments, and bungalow courts, live/work units, accessory dwelling units, and/or micro-units.

Plymouth's zoning code features strong non-motorized transportation standards in the downtown district. The code permits housing and allows for a healthy mix of uses in most of its zoning districts. The compact scale stipulated by the city's setback and rear-yard parking standards facilitates short trips that can be made by foot or via bike; and sidewalk and passageway requirements ensure these trips can be made safely.

## Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations *continued*

Additionally, design standards, i.e., including ground-floor transparency, building entrance orientation—create a welcoming, attractive environment for pedestrians; and the city’s premium regulations directly target non-motorized transportation as they incentivize parking reductions when pedestrian amenities are provided. Plymouth is meeting the RRC best practice expectations for non-motorized transportation. However, there are ways the city can continue to build upon its existing non-motorized transportation regulations in other zoning districts. The code gives consideration to streetscape amenities, i.e., street trees, bicycle parking spaces. However, numerous additional streetscape elements could be considered, including: bike lanes, bike service stations, traffic calming strategies and/or benches.

Plymouth’s ordinance meets the RRC best practices regarding green infrastructure. The code includes provisions for the preservation and replacement of street trees, parking lot landscaping, and cluster housing. In addition to environmental benefits, the city’s green infrastructure-related regulations will enhance aesthetics within the city, promote walkability and, in particular, the cluster housing process can help reduce housing costs and provide alternative housing and lifestyle options for residents. While not necessary for RRC certification, the city could add green infrastructure provisions such as: rain gardens, bioswales, curb cuts, green roofs, blue

roofs and/or other rainwater collection (e.g., cisterns) strategies.

Plymouth’s parking regulations align with the RRC best practices. The city allows for parking reductions in the CBD where on-street and public parking is available. Additionally, in situations where uses do not have overlapping operating hours, parking reductions can be considered; and when mixed-use buildings are developed, they are subject to fewer required parking spaces. This is reflective of the likelihood that people will walk to multiple destinations within the building. Reducing parking standards for mixed-use buildings also may serve to incentivize the construction of mixed-use buildings as it will reduce costs for developers. Consistent with the city’s efforts to foster walkability in the CBD, the city offers a payment in-lieu option in this district. While not necessary, the city could consider additional regulations that could help provide flexibility to its standards. These could include: maximum parking standards, parking waivers, and parking reductions when electric vehicle charging stations are provided.

The Plymouth zoning ordinance is user-friendly. It contains clickable links, clear requirements, informative tables, illustrations and is easily accessible from the city website. The zoning code meets the RRC best practice for user-friendliness.

## Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations *continued*

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
2.1.1	The governing body has adopted a zoning ordinance that aligns with the goals of the master plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Upon the adoption of the master plan, review the zoning code to ensure consistency	Q4 2018
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	The zoning ordinance includes flexible tools to encourage development and redevelopment.	✓	
2.1.4	The zoning ordinance allows for a variety of housing options.	✓	
2.1.5	The zoning ordinance includes standards to improve non-motorized transportation.	✓	
2.1.6	The zoning ordinance includes flexible parking standards.	✓	
2.1.7	The zoning ordinance includes standards for green infrastructure.	✓	
2.1.8	The zoning ordinance is user-friendly. Green means old.	✓	

## Best Practice 3.1—Development review policy and procedures

Best Practice 3.1 evaluates a community's development review policies and procedures, project tracking and internal/external communications. An efficient, deliberate and fair site plan review process is integral to being redevelopment ready. When communities can provide certainty and minimize risk in project planning, developers will be more likely to bring jobs and investment to a community. Therefore, communities should look to simplify and clarify policies wherever possible.

Plymouth's site plan review process is outlined in the zoning ordinance. The code describes which proposals necessitate site plan review along with the associated procedures and application requirements.

Upon receiving a site plan application, the city's internal review team conducts a review. This team consists of the community development department staff. Then, depending on the project, site plan documents are forwarded to the planning consultant and fire marshal for review. Additional parties that may be involved in the site plan review process include the city's engineering consultant, Wayne County, the Historic District Commission, and the city's police and municipal services departments.

The city's planning commission has approval authority for permitted-use and some special-use site plans—which is reflective of Plymouth's confidence in its zoning ordinance and planning commission and is consistent with the RRC best practices. Certain special-use permits, along with conditional rezoning requests and planned unit developments (PUDs) are reviewed by both the planning commission and the city commission prior to the city commission making a final decision.

While site plan requirements are easy to locate within the zoning ordinance, applicants may not know where to look, or take the time to research the process on their own. For this reason, the city has qualified staff available who can receive and process applications, explain procedures, schedule and conduct pre-application meetings and provide quality customer service. While this is consistent with the RRC best practices, it's not

clear in the zoning ordinance nor the on the city's website that staff is willing to conduct pre-application meetings. Pre-application meetings are important for developers so they can ensure the viability of their proposal, discuss ideas and try to identify potential project pitfalls before taking their proposal to the planning commission. The availability of these meetings should be looked at as a service provided to customers and advertised accordingly. Therefore, it is recommended the city advertise this service on the city's website.

If applicants can receive feedback from local residents, community groups and/or business owners, they can be prepared for a wider range of potential challenges. Right now, Plymouth is able to recommend applicants contact community groups or businesses in situations where they have an existing relationship with these entities; however, there is not a formal method in place for recommending applicants contact such groups. To align with the RRC best practices, Plymouth should gather stakeholder contact information so it is available for applicants and staff should advise applicants to contact stakeholders when it is warranted. This information will be important to include in the public participation strategy recommended in Best Practice 1.2.

Just as providing applicants feedback is important, it is important for the city to request feedback on its development review process. This feedback will help the city identify ways in which the process can be improved. Tools such as surveys, roundtable discussions or follow-up phone calls are all ways the city could request feedback. The feedback acquired should then be reviewed annually, so that the city can consistently be making improvements to its processes.

Plymouth uses BS&A to track projects from development review to inspections and permitting. While the RRC best practices don't require any specific system of project tracking, the expectation is that communities have a project tracking system that works well for them and the residents they serve. Plymouth is meeting this RRC best practice criteria.

## Best Practice 3.1—Development review policy and procedures *continued*

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
3.1.1	The zoning ordinance articulates a thorough site plan review process.	✓	
3.1.2	The community has a qualified intake professional.	✓	
3.1.3	The community defines and offers pre-application site plan review meetings for applicants.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a policy for holding pre-application meetings and advertise the availability of pre-application meetings on the city's website	Q4 2018
3.1.4	The community encourages a developer to seek input from neighboring residents and businesses at the onset of the application process.	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify stakeholder groups that applicants can contact to receive feedback on certain proposals (this should be included in the city's public participation strategy [Best Practice 1.2])	Q4 2018
3.1.5	The appropriate departments engage in joint site plan reviews.	✓	
3.1.6	The community has a clearly documented internal staff review policy.	✓	
3.1.7	The community promptly acts on development requests.	✓	
3.1.8	The community has a method to track development projects.	✓	
3.1.9	The community annually reviews the successes and challenges with the site plan review and approval procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a customer feedback mechanism to gather input on the site plan review process; and consider improvements to the process at an annual meeting	Q4 2018

## Best Practice 3.2—Guide to Development

Best Practice 3.2 evaluates the availability of a community’s development information. Having all development-related information in a single location can greatly increase the ability of a developer or resident to access what they need efficiently. Including this information online can also maximize Plymouth’s staff capacity as staff will spend less time answering questions when applicants can have these questions answered by the city’s website.

Plymouth has many of the fundamental elements of a guide to development already in place. The city’s community development webpage features: relevant contact information, a summary of the department’s responsibilities, meeting schedules for the city commission, planning commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, applications for development-related processes, agendas and minutes, links to the planning commission and Zoning Board of Appeals webpages, relevant ordinances to review prior to applying for a site plan or building permit, frequently asked questions, online property information and a link to the forms, documents and applications webpage.

To assist prospective applicants in applying and

progressing through the development-review process it’s recommended the following documents be added to the community development or the forms, documents and applications webpages: site plan review flow charts with associated time frames for each step in the process, an advertisement that the city is willing to hold pre-application meetings with applicants and a list of negotiable development tools, financial incentives or in-kind support available to applicants.

Another key element of a successful development-review process is having a fee schedule with up-to-date costs reflective of the services provided and consistent with the goals the city is striving to achieve. Plymouth has an up-to-date development-related fee schedule that can easily be located on the city website—enabling prospective applicants to review the cost of services prior to them arriving at the planning/building counter. Although, this is consistent with the RRC best practices, the city does not have a time each year when its development-related fee schedule is reviewed. To meet the RRC best practices, Plymouth should establish a date or annual meeting where the fee schedule can be reviewed and updated if needed.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
3.2.1	The community maintains an online guide to development that explains policies, procedures and steps to obtain approvals.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add the following items to the city’s community development webpage: site plan review flow charts, advertisement of pre-application meeting availability, negotiable development tools, financial incentives and/or in-kind support	Q1 2019
3.2.2	The community annually reviews the fee schedule.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a time when the fee schedule can be annually reviewed	Q4 2018



## 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 the city is able to recruit the best candidates for these bodies and also have a system in place to get new members up to speed ensures predictability and accountability in the development process.

Information about Plymouth’s development-related boards and commissions is easy to find on the city’s website. Each board/commission webpage describes its history, duties, length of term, meeting schedules and includes a list of members—all of which is helpful information when someone is deciding whether or not serving on a board/commission is a commitment they are willing to make. Once someone has determined they would like to serve on a board/commission, they will look to the website for an application. The city has board, commission and committee application that allows residents to apply for all of the city boards/commissions in which they are interested. By having applicants apply for all available board/commission seats, the size of the applicant pool from which the city can appoint officials is maximized; thus giving those who appoint these officials the flexibility to create diverse boards/commissions. This is a good practice that should be continued. Despite

strong practices overall, there is one way in which the city’s recruitment of officials can be improved.

It’s recommended that the city work with existing board and commission members to identify the skill sets that are most useful to each position. This information will help applicants determine where they could have the greatest benefit, it will help them understand how they can contribute and it will assist the city in recruiting officials who will be the most beneficial to a board/commission. A sample application that includes desired skill sets for various boards/commission can be found on the RRC online library of resources under Best Practice 4.1.

Just as someone’s understanding of expectations is important prior to them becoming an elected or appointed official, it is important after. Plymouth currently does not provide officials orientation materials at the beginning of their term. To meet the expectations of the RRC best practices, Plymouth should assemble materials that will help a newly elected or appointed official prepare for their role. Orientation packets could include meeting schedules relevant ordinances and other information helpful for each official’s role. The Michigan Association of Planning (MAP), Michigan State University Extension (MSUE), and the Michigan Municipal League (MML) offer a wealth of materials that can be included in the city’s orientation packets.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
4.1.1	The community sets expectations for board and commission positions.	<input type="checkbox"/> List desired skill sets for each board and commission (either online or on the development-related board/commission application)	Q3 2018
4.1.2	The community provides orientation packets to all appointed and elected members of development-related boards and commissions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide orientation packets for newly elected and appointed officials	Q4 2018

## Best Practice 4.2—Education and training

Best Practice 4.2 assesses how a community encourages training and tracks educational activities for 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. The advent of online training platforms makes educational opportunities more accessible than in the past and these opportunities should be taken advantage of.

Plymouth is well-positioned to take advantage of training opportunities as it allocates money for this purpose in the city budget. The city also conducts at least one joint training/workshop a year as the city attorney conducts an annual educational meeting.

The city sets training goals through strategic planning and goal setting with the city commission. Progress made toward meeting the established goals are tracked via an excel spreadsheet. This is consistent with the RRC best practices and it should be continued.

Plymouth has the foundational elements of a continuing education program in place, although there are some ways the city could improve in this area. Currently, the city does not have a formal method of notifying staff and officials about upcoming training opportunities. Therefore, it's recommended the city establish a consistent notification method. The city

should consider adding upcoming training opportunities as a standing agenda item. Similar to Best Practice 4.1, the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP), Michigan State University Extension (MSUE), and the Michigan Municipal League (MML) are good resources as they frequently advertise local training opportunities that have little to no cost.

The level of communication between city staff and officials is currently a strength of Plymouth. Staff and officials communicate effectively via email, phone calls and during “Committee of the Whole” meetings. However, right now, there is not a formal method of sharing lessons learned from trainings with other city staff and officials. To align with the RRC best practices, the city should establish a method for those who attend trainings to share the information they’ve learned with other city staff and officials. This could be done via email, memo, presenting reports at “Committee of the Whole” meetings or at an annual meeting.

Currently, the planning commission does not prepare an annual report of planning activities for the city commission. To meet the RRC best practices and comply with the MPEA, the Plymouth Planning Commission should begin preparing an annual report of planning activities and presenting it to the city commission.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
4.2.1	The community has a dedicated source of funding for training.	✓	
4.2.2	The community identifies training needs and tracks attendance of the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	✓	
4.2.3	The community encourages the governing body, boards, commissions and staff to attend trainings.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add “Upcoming Training Opportunities” as a standing agenda item	Q3 2018
4.2.4	The community shares information between the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a method of sharing lessons learned at trainings with other city staff and officials	Q4 2018



## 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. Prioritized redevelopment should be targeted in areas that will 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.

To meet Best Practice 5.1 criteria, Plymouth will need to work with community stakeholders to identify, prioritize and generate visions for at least three redevelopment sites within the city. The visions for these sites should be tied to the master plan, downtown plan, sub area plans, and CIP; and the city should ensure a policy framework is in place to support each vision (i.e., zoning ordinance will allow the visions to be implemented). After sites are identified and visions

are created, the city should gather basic information about the sites, including: owner contact info, address, size of the site, value and available infrastructure. This information should then be marketed online. One of these sites should be marketed in the form of a more thorough property information package (PIP). A property information package should comprise basic site information as well as more technical items (as applicable) including: traffic studies, environmental reports, financial incentives, market analyses, a property survey, a natural features map, etc. If financial incentives are not included in the property information package, the city should identify negotiable development tools or in-kind support that can be used for a potential project. All incentives should be consistent with the Plymouth master plan and the goals of the city. The marketing of priority redevelopment sites will help generate interest and excitement in the sites; and it will assist in attracting both business and talent to the city.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
5.1.1	The community identifies redevelopment sites.	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify at least three priority redevelopment sites—one of which can be the property information package	Q2 2019
5.1.2	The community gathers basic information for redevelopment sites.	<input type="checkbox"/> Gather basic information on at least three redevelopment sites	Q2 2019
5.1.3	The community has developed a vision for each redevelopment site.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish visions for each of the redevelopment sites	Q2 2019
5.1.4	The community identifies potential resources and incentives for prioritized redevelopment sites.	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify potential resources and/or incentives for the identified redevelopment sites	Q2 2019
5.1.5	A property information package for a prioritized redevelopment site(s) is assembled.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a property information package (PIP) for at least one of the redevelopment sites	Q2 2019
5.1.6	At least three redevelopment sites are actively marketed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Market the redevelopment sites online	Q2 2019

## Best Practice 6.1—Economic development strategy

Best Practice 6.1 evaluates goals and actions identified by a community to assist in strengthening its overall economic health. Today, economic development means more than business retention, expansion and attraction. While business development is a core value, a community needs to include place making and talent in the overall equation for economic success. A successful economic development strategy will highlight a community's assets, and describe a range of innovative incentives that will attract both people and businesses.

Plymouth has been proactive in planning for its economy as evidenced by the inclusion of the goal of Economic Vitality in the master plan, the establishment of the Plymouth DDA and the city's commitment to pursuing RRC certification. To meet the RRC best practice criteria, the city will need to coordinate all of its current and future economic development efforts through the creation of an overarching economic

development strategy. This overarching strategy should identify the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and include goals, implementation actions, estimated completion time frames and responsible parties. The strategy will be the strongest and most implementable if the city coordinates its strategy with its regional stakeholders, including: the Wayne County Economic Development Corporation, SEMCOG and the MEDC. In particular, the city should be sure to review the "Partnering for Prosperity—Economic Development Strategy for Southeast Michigan." Planning in accordance with this plan can save the city time and money and ensure all the city's efforts are aligned with regional efforts. When the city becomes eligible for RRC technical assistance grant funding, the city can explore using the available grant funding for the development of an economic development/marketing strategy.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
6.1.1	The community has approved an economic development strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop an overarching economic development strategy to be approved by city commission	Q1 2019
6.1.2	The community annually reviews the economic development strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Annually review the adopted economic development strategy	Q1 2019

## Best Practice 6.2—Marketing and promotion

Best Practice 6.2 evaluates how a community promotes and markets itself. Marketing and branding is an essential tool for promoting 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.

Plymouth has an all-important social media presence as it uses Facebook and Twitter to connect with its residents, businesses and visitors. Plymouth also advertises and provides contact information for many service providers in the city on its website. Further, the city has an attractive city seal—although it is not used consistently for marketing purposes. While not necessary for RRC certification, the city could consider eventually developing a city brand to help market itself in a visually appealing, consistent manner.

Despite its existing marketing initiatives, the city is lacking an overarching marketing and promotion strategy. To become certified, Plymouth will need to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy that highlights the city's assets, leverages available resources and establishes agreed-upon city goals within the existing regional framework of marketing and economic development strategies. The city's key redevelopment sites described in the master plan, and those eventually selected to meet RRC Best Practice 5.1 criteria, should be integrated into the city's marketing strategy when it is created. The development of a marketing strategy will be a great opportunity for the city to partner with local and regional stakeholders.

The second element of this best practice is the promotion of the community through a website. A municipal website serves multiple functions. On a fundamental level, it is a means to share information—including information about public meetings, city plans, policies, events and related organizations. Beyond this, a municipal website is an important expression of a community's character and image. People who are unfamiliar with a community will often first look to a website for information. They will be forming their first impressions and reaching conclusions from the website; therefore it is imperative that the website is visually appealing and key information is easily accessible.

Plymouth's website is organized and provides a variety of useful information. The homepage of the city's website features a menu bar along the top that organizes information into: government, city services, our community, and how do I? Categorizing city information into these sections allows visitors to easily access the information they're seeking. Another menu bar along the left side of the website's homepage offers quick links to the agenda center, employment, notify me, online payments, and recreation—allowing residents to stay informed, conveniently make payments for city services, view job opportunities, and find and register for city recreational programs.

Overall, the website is visually pleasing and user-friendly. As the development-related items discussed in this report are completed, they should be added to the website.

Status	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification	Estimated timeline
6.2.1	The community has developed a marketing strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt an overarching marketing strategy for the city	Q2 2019
6.2.2	The community has an updated, user-friendly municipal website.	<input type="checkbox"/> Add documents discussed in this report to the website	Q2 2019

The RRC program assists communities in maximizing their economic potential by embracing effective redevelopment tools and best practices. As this report makes clear, there are a variety of ways Plymouth can improve its development-related practices. The city commission, planning commission, DDA and city staff should review this report and establish a work plan for achieving RRC certification. The city can work at its own pace to complete the remaining best practice items. The

city certainly has strengths on which to build, including the draft master plan, zoning ordinance and engaged citizenry. With its advantageous starting position and the resources the RRC team can provide, Plymouth will be able to achieve certification in the near future. The RRC team views this report as the first step in a productive, long-lasting relationship that will continue for years to come.