

# Cooperation, Collaboration & Consolidation Plan | **2011**



*City of Sturgis*

## Cooperation, Collaboration, Consolidation & Sturgis

The City of Sturgis has long believed in the importance of right-sizing operations and working with other area municipalities to provide the best services practicable. Since 2006 the City has worked to reorganize through employee attrition; continuously re-evaluating positions and organizational responsibilities as a result of retirements and other position vacancies. This process has led to organizational cost savings, while at the same time allowing for maintenance of services at or near historic levels.

This methodology proved extremely important in allowing the City to manage the economic downturn which began in 2008. Despite lost revenue and the increasing cost of fixed expenses, to date the City has not had significant lay off of personnel or needed to make dramatic cuts to citizen services.

Collaboration and cooperation have also been important tools for the City in working to provide first-rate services to citizens with ever-reducing revenues. Despite being relatively isolated geographically from other large communities, the City has worked closely with nearby cities and surrounding townships to address issues and improve service provision.

Close ties with organizations in the community, including local non-profits, businesses, and the school system have also been beneficial. Due to the City's close proximity to the state border, Sturgis has also had the opportunity to collaborate with Indiana municipalities and counties in an effort to improve economic development in the region.

Looking forward, the City anticipates continuing to take advantage of all cooperation, collaboration, and consolidation opportunities that make sense and provide cost-savings and/or service provision advantages. In times of fiscal stress working together to maximize the benefit of every dollar spent is more important than ever in order to meet our goal of providing services that make Sturgis a community people want to call home.

## Existing Cooperation, Collaboration & Consolidation Activities

Existing cooperation, collaboration and consolidation (C3) activities within the City of Sturgis are numerous. Partnerships range from internal consolidations to cross-state collaborations. The intent when engaging in any of these activities is to achieve at least one of the two following goals:

- 1) Improve services
- 2) Reduce costs

Not all C3 activities will achieve both goals, but achieving either goal is important to keeping the community strong. Below is a list of the City's existing and recently completed C3 activities. Each listing provides the activity, the partners involved, date of activity, cost savings (if any) and non-cost benefits. Note that most cost savings are rough estimates of impact. Most projects have either been long-term, ongoing projects or items where true cost savings would be difficult to determine without significant staff time, analysis, and cost.

Activity	Partners	Date Completed	Cost Savings	Non-Cost Benefits
Emergency Sewer Back up Cleaning	Village of Burr Oak, Village of Centerville	Ongoing	N/A – City provides assistance to other communities	Provides additional manpower and resources during significant backups
Compost site maintenance equipment (grinder and compost turner)	City of Three Rivers, City of Coldwater, City of Marshall, Berrien County Landfill	Ongoing	\$24,000 annually. 1/5 of total cost to operate on a yearly basis (all costs shared evenly by group)	Access to specialized equipment purchased and maintained by the collaborative.
Maintenance of City Property; Road Commission mows ditch banks at City's "White Elephant" property with special equipment	St. Joseph County Road Commission	Ongoing	Saves cost to rent equipment plus staff time to run equipment (approximately 2 days per year)	Access to specialized equipment and manpower
Inter-departmental workforce sharing	INTERNAL	Ongoing	Estimated at \$125,000.00 per year. Cost to hire two additional staff positions to cover shared duties	Several departments collaborate to provide services for odd jobs or assist on large efforts. By temporarily assisting with projects, the City workforce is able to complete jobs with lower overall staffing levels
Police Mutual Aid Agreement	St. Joseph County Sheriff, Three Rivers PD, Colon PD, White Pigeon PD, Constantine PD, Mendon PD and Burr Oak PD	Ongoing (May 2007)	Estimated at \$55,000.00 per year. Cost to hire an additional police officer	Allows us to obtain additional manpower, equipment and support during an emergency
Traffic Enforcement Zones; partners respond to non-fatal, non-injury traffic accidents outside of jurisdiction if local PD is unavailable	Three Rivers PD, St. Joseph County Sheriff, State Police	Ongoing	Cost savings to county and state agencies who would otherwise be required to respond sometimes long distances	More efficient and rapid response to minor crashes. Ability to clear traffic from crash scenes to avoid further risks and better public service.
Major Crimes Task Force; Provides immediate specially trained investigative personnel to the scene of a Major Crime anywhere in the county	St. Joseph County Sheriff, State Police, Three Rivers PD, other Villages in St. Joseph County	Ongoing	Substantial cost savings by sharing specialized manpower and multiplying forces in special cases. Resources cost prohibitive otherwise	Force multiplier for small departments in rural counties. Access to trained technicians and investigators. Much higher rate of successfully solving serious crimes.

Activity	Partners	Date Completed	Cost Savings	Non-Cost Benefits
Special Response Team; a SWAT style team that responds to calls involving drugs or fugitives where the risks and environment require a tactical team	St. Joseph County Sheriff Department, Three Rivers PD, White Pigeon PD, and Constantine PD	Ongoing	Cost savings by sharing manpower and training; savings dependent on amount of use and time	Force multiplier for small departments in rural counties; unit otherwise unavailable due to cost of manpower/equipment. Less risk to officers and the public by utilizing specially trained personnel. Provides for joint training among departments.
Meth Container Program; Provides a cost effective method to share the costs and burden in cleaning up meth contamination across the county	St. Joseph County Sheriff Department, Three Rivers PD, Kalamazoo Valley Enforcement Team (KVET)	Ongoing	Reduces burden of \$1,500 to \$3,000 per cleanup due to shared services	Program has trained our current Meth techs to also neutralize, package and ship hazardous clean-up for disposal. Provides trained local response to the clean up in a timely manner, reducing risk to officers and public.
Mutual Aid Agreement with Michigan municipal electric utilities	Clinton, Coldwater, Dowagiac, Hillsdale, Marshall, Niles, Paw Paw, South Haven and Union City	Ongoing; (1962)	Estimated at \$77,000.00 annually. Cost to hire a new electric worker to maintain current level of service	Invaluable asset when it comes to storm restoration for electric service to residents and businesses
Compliance with PA 295 of 2008 (energy efficiency)	23 Michigan communities with municipal electric utilities	Ongoing	Cost savings from collaboratively hiring and utilizing consultant staff versus hiring independently	Allowed compliance with PA 295, reduce customer electric costs, job creation and promotes energy efficiency
Tax collection	City taxing entities	Ongoing	N/A – City provides assistance to other communities	City collects and distributes taxes for all taxing entities
Consolidated positions of Auditorium and Cemetery office manager; added City Hall miscellaneous billing duties	INTERNAL	December 2010	\$113,500.00 per year	Consolidation included movement to City Hall, providing centralized service provision for auditorium and cemetery. Position also assists with City Hall Customer Service as available

Activity	Partners	Date Completed	Cost Savings	Non-Cost Benefits
Cooperative grant writer	City of Three Rivers, St. Joseph County, St. Joseph County EDC	2008-2010	Approximately \$30,000.00 per year; difference between the City's cost and a part-time staff person. Received several grants due to the position.	Leveraged cooperative to fill a position the City could not otherwise afford
Business Development Team (BDT), coordinating City Departments and other entities to help address questions for businesses and ease development	Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce, Sturgis DDA (if applicable)	Ongoing	Cost savings from reduced staff time on projects. Varies based on the project.	Improves customer service for businesses looking to start or grow in Sturgis. By involving multiple City departments and pertinent outside entities, the result is more successful and less expensive projects completed in a faster and more productive time frame
Economic development projects including business attraction incentives, business park development, public/private infrastructure improvements, and business district beautification	Sturgis Improvement Association (SIA)	Ongoing	SIA partners with the City to fill the gaps to complete economic development projects that might not otherwise receive funding or be completed. Their assistance reduces the City's project cost. Varies based on project	As a private nonprofit the SIA addresses needs that cannot be met by other entities (such as the Sturgis EDC, DDA, Chamber of Commerce, and St. Joseph County EDC)
Acquisition and renovation of depressed housing stock	Sturgis Neighborhood Program (SNP)	Ongoing	Approximately \$45,000.00 per year. The difference between the City's fee and hiring a full-time staffer	City pays a yearly fee to SNP, who handles grant writing responsibilities and project administration
Cooperative Economic Development Services	St. Joseph County EDC	Ongoing	City contributes \$9,000 per year to St. Joseph County EDC, but receives support valued in excess of this amount	The City is better able to coordinate activities with county communities, enjoys the benefit of development efforts that target entire county, and leverages county resources to attract new business to Sturgis

Activity	Partners	Date Completed	Cost Savings	Non-Cost Benefits
Coordination of election notices	Townships of: Burr Oak, Colon, Fawn River, Florence, Leonidas, Mottville, Nottawa, Sherman, Sturgis and White Pigeon	Ongoing	N/A – City provides assistance to other communities	City handles coordination of election notices with other clerks
Generate Sturgis; a committee of business leaders intent on creating new jobs by fostering an entrepreneurial culture	Community business leaders, citizens, Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing	N/A	Provides a broad-based network to develop entrepreneurs in the community. Delivers programs and tools that connect entrepreneurs to professional services, business support, resources, training and education
Fawn River Crossing; a cross-state development area for business attraction on I-80/90.	Sturgis Township, LaGrange County, IN, and LaGrange County Sewer District	Ongoing	Cooperative activities have reduced cost for land use planning and marketing of the area	By aggregating the resources of the partners, Sturgis has more to offer large franchise and chain retailers and site developers and increases the chances of locating a business of this type in the greater Sturgis area
Expansion of Revolving Loan Fund applicable area to include communities county-wide	St. Joseph County, State of Michigan	July 2011	N/A	Can assist businesses that may not reside within the City when there is potential job creation for City residents. Expansion also creates the possibility for additional funding from the State; as the loans are paid back to the Revolving Loan Fund, it would grow and allow for larger projects in the future.
Inter-State Mutual Aid for Fire	Howe, Indiana Fire Department	Ongoing	Approximately \$75,000.00 per year; the cost to hire an additional full-time firefighter	Provides overlapping coverage for fires occurring near the Michigan/Indiana Border.

Activity	Partners	Date Completed	Cost Savings	Non-Cost Benefits
Code Enforcement officer/enforcement; part time CE officer is split between police and zoning, fire department completes code enforcement in addition to regular duties	INTERNAL	Ongoing	Approximately \$20,000.00 per year; the cost to hire an additional part-time code enforcement officer.	Use of fire department for code enforcement on a limited basis expands capacity for enforcement
Electrical, plumbing and mechanical plans reviews, permitting and inspection services	State of Michigan	Ongoing	Approximately \$65,000.00 per year; the cost to hire an additional inspector for these duties.	State inspectors handle specialized inspections, reducing necessary employees or training
Partnership to provide donation tax benefits to those funding fire prevention materials	St. Joseph County United Way	Ongoing	N/A	Working with United Way, donations for fire prevention materials, used to educate children, are considered a tax-exempt donation; spurs more donations
Fire Department Mutual Aid	All 10 Fire Departments in St. Joseph County	Ongoing	Approximately \$75,000.00 per year; the cost to hire an additional full-time firefighter	Increased levels of service provision for all involved fire departments, particularly during large fires or multiple-fire events
AFG Radio Grant; purchased new radios for each partnering department.	All St. Joseph County fire departments	2009	Sturgis received radios and related equipment valued at \$29,452 as part of the grant, paying a match of \$5,890.40	Purchase of radios works toward county-wide interoperability of equipment
Joint Emergency Response training, SCBA mask fit testing, and hearing testing	Abbott Nutrition	Ongoing	\$3,000 annually	Eliminates need for specialized equipment for fit and hearing tests. Joint training provides familiarity in case of actual incidents and understanding of capabilities
US-12 reconstruction project and downtown streetscape;	MDOT, DDA	2007	Significant reduction in traffic signage costs	Integrated streetscape and reconstruction project at one time. Less disruption to public.

Activity	Partners	Date Completed	Cost Savings	Non-Cost Benefits
Cross-training of Police staff as part-paid fire fighters	INTERNAL	Ongoing	N/A. Part-time staff would exist without the program	Enhances understanding between departments, and creates cohesive atmosphere on the job.
Installation of inter-state sanitary sewer for Fawn River Crossing Development	LaGrange County, IN, and LaGrange County Sewer District	2009	Purchase of sewer capacity by LaGrange County reduced overall cost of extending the sewer by \$950,000.00	Sewer service extended to Michigan / Indiana border. Provides infrastructure for Fawn River Crossing Development
Installation of new sewer main along west side of the City and a new lift Station	Abbott Nutrition	2008	\$1.8 million in cost sharing on the project.	Accommodated significant local industry's need while expanding the sewer system's capacity and service area
Small Urban grant funding for road repair; invited townships to participate in the funding process	Burr Oak Township, Sherman Township, Sturgis Township, & Fawn River Township	Ongoing	N/A	Allows for better project planning and coordination of community road upgrades
Wellhead protection activities	Sturgis Township, Burr Oak Village, Tri-County Health Dept.	Ongoing	N/A	Partner's sit on Wellhead Protection Team and help implement City's program; provides community awareness to the issue
Sturgis Area Ambulance Committee; joint contract for area ambulance service with private contractor			Approximately \$580,000.00 per year; difference between City-run service and joint, contracted service.	Eliminated need for City-run ambulance service; by cooperative agreement, subsidy for private service is reduced.
Sturgis Area Calendar; lists all events in one area	Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing	Shared cost of calendar creation and maintenance	Ease of use by community to find events and information, as well as for organizations for planning



## Proposed Cooperation, Collaborations & Consolidations

The C3 activities the City is proposing include efforts that will reduce costs, provide new services, and improve operational efficiencies. As part of these efforts, the City is looking at collaborating with a number of groups, including other local and county governments. Below are the list of proposed C3 activities, including a description of the effort, proposed partners, anticipated benefits (including any cost savings), current status of the effort, and projected timeline for completion.

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### STREET REPAIR EQUIPMENT SHARING

The condition of community streets has been and continues to be an area of concern for the City and citizens. In an effort to improve street repair activities, the City is looking to purchase two pieces of equipment; an emulsion tank and pothole patcher (Durapatcher).

The emulsion tank will allow Department of Public Services staff to fill potholes and small street cracks more effectively than simple hot or cold asphalt patching; repairs will thus last longer and require fewer repair trips. The Durapatcher will allow City staff to complete street repairs on more significant cracks that would have previously only been completed by a contracted service as part of a comprehensive street repair program.

Purchase of both machines would be prohibitively expensive if undertaken by the City of Sturgis alone. The City is proposing to purchase the equipment cooperatively with other local governments, sharing costs and equipment time.

**Proposed Partners:** City of Coldwater and City of Three Rivers (Durapatcher), St. Joseph County and City of Three Rivers (emulsion tank).

**Benefits:** The primary benefits of the collaboration would be increased service provision for street repairs. The City would save approximately \$40,000.00 (2/3rds) of estimated purchase cost on the Durapatcher by collaborating versus purchasing alone. Additional savings would be realized from joint purchase of an emulsion tank. Ultimately, however, this is a new expense for the City, so any true cost savings are minimal, based on reduced need to re-repair potholes.

**Current Status:** The City has discussed the issue with the proposed project partners and completed cost estimates for purchase. The City is still in discussions with partners about the purchase.

**Projected Timeline:** Decision on the collaboration by Spring 2012; if productive, purchase(s) by the end of 2012.

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## BUILDING PERMIT UNIFICATION

The City of Sturgis is surrounded by several other municipalities, including four townships. Each of these municipalities has a separate building permit process, with unique fees for service, applications, etc. Often residents of the township or building contractors will contact the City about building permits for projects in one of the townships. Contractors often complain of not knowing proper procedures because of the variance between jurisdictions.

To address these mutual issues and provide a more customer service-friendly atmosphere for citizens and contractors, the partners are working on a collaboration to unify the building permit process for area municipalities. Contractors could obtain, submit, and pay for a building permit anywhere in the area; municipalities would then work together to get the permit to the correct jurisdiction for review.

**Proposed Partners:** Burr Oak Township, Fawn River Township, Sturgis Township, Sherman Township

**Benefits:** Increased service provision for citizens and contractors; nominal cost savings are anticipated at this time.

**Current Status:** The City has had discussions with area municipalities and is currently studying the issues to consider a unified permit, fees, etc.

**Projected Timeline:** Anticipated finalized collaboration by the end of 2012, implementation 2013.

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## STURGIS AREA MUNICIPAL COOPERATIVE

The relationship between the City of Sturgis and its surrounding townships and municipalities is increasingly important. Given the need for greater collaboration and cost-sharing in today's economy, communication is critical. The City and Burr Oak Township, Fawn River Township, Sturgis Township, Sherman Township have formed a cooperative to discuss issues and ways for area municipalities to collaborate, cooperate and, where possible, consolidate now and in the future. This effort is expected to create more C3 activities in the future.

**Partners:** Burr Oak Township, Fawn River Township, Sturgis Township, Sherman Township

**Benefits:** Increased communication between municipalities and development of C3 opportunities. No direct cost savings.

**Current Status:** The City has held several meetings with the partners in 2011; a formal cooperative has not been established.

**Projected Timeline:** Establishment of formal cooperative in 2012.

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## Future Cooperation, Collaboration & Consolidation Ideas

While some proposed C3 activities are planned for the short-term, the City is also considering several possible C3 ideas for the long-term. Not currently expected to reach completion in the near future, these ideas include collaborations with agencies that include the local school system and area non-profits in addition to other municipalities. These efforts are in the earliest of planning stages at this point, with collaborations not fully explored; as with all other efforts, their eventual completion, in some form, would impact the City through reduced costs and/or additional services.

### **SPECIALIZED ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

Highly technical, specialized administrative positions and tasks such as facilities maintenance and management, fleet management, bank reconciliations and information technology (IT) are requirements of effectively managed organizations. Hiring to address these areas alone can be expensive to fund. Currently, facilities management and fleet management are handled by City department heads on a part-time basis; typically the department heads handling these duties have little formal training in these areas. City IT is handled in-house by a specialized staff person, but the department is understaffed given the increasing use of technology in the workplace. Likewise, facilities maintenance and bank reconciliations are handled on an as-available basis by department heads.

As a small municipality, staffing either specialized positions or increasing staff to handle additional responsibilities alone is not practical given the current economic climate and financial conditions. To ensure that the best, most cost-effective decisions are being made in these critical areas and that assets are being properly utilized, monitored and maintained, the City has considered collaboration with the area school system to provide some of these services. By collaborating, the City can take advantage of economies of scale to hire well-trained personnel in sufficient capacity to address these areas. Cost saving would come over the hiring of new City staff, by freeing up current department head staff time for other duties, and due to more informed purchase and maintenance decisions in these areas.

### **WALKING/BIKING TRAILS**

For any successful community, quality of life is an important consideration. In today's economic climate, however, making funds available for improving quality of life assets is at best a tough sell. One area the City of Sturgis is interested in developing greater quality of life assets is biking and walking trails.

Currently the City and surrounding area feature no such trails for public use. The City has property associated with easements for its electric utility as well as railroad right of way that would be ideal for development into trails. Initial steps include the development of a trails plan for the Community, which the City has explored with several organizations and municipalities. The long term goal would be establishing a local trail network.

A trail plan and eventual trail system would improve the community's quality of life assets. As a new service to the community, the plan would entail a new expenditure of funds. By collaborating with

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various interested agencies from the community, the cost of individual portions of the project, such as plan development, would be spread out on an equitable basis.

## Conclusions

The City of Sturgis has numerous current cooperation, collaboration, and consolidation activities underway with both short-term and long-term plans for additional efforts. These activities provide City residents both with cost savings and levels of service unobtainable by the City alone without greater resources. The City plans to continue to look for and take advantage of any C3 opportunities available that meet our goals. By partnering with other organizations and municipalities we can become an improved, more efficient organization better able to provide for our citizens and strengthen our community.