



Seasonal Workforce Housing

Virtual Town Hall Meeting

www.sbgateways.org





Seasonal Workforce Housing Virtual Town Hall Meetings

Meeting Goals

Sleeping Bear Gateways Council is working to facilitate solutions to the seasonal workforce housing challenges in our service area.

- Solicit supporting letters needed to obtain USDA \$90,000 grant
- Provide overview of Phase II plans based on Phase I conclusions
- Plant the seeds for engagement in Phase II work
- Listen





Seasonal Workforce Housing Virtual Town Hall Meetings

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mike Rivard, SBGC President

Bill Witler, Seasonal Workforce Housing Committee Chair

2. Where We Are: Phase I Conclusions

3. Where We Are Headed: Phase II Funding

4. Two-Year Work Plan

5. Questions and Answers





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Phase I Study

In summer 2020, Sleeping Bear Gateways Council retained research firm Avenue ISR to study seasonal workforce housing needs in its service area.



Sleeping Bear Gateways Council Seasonal Workforce Housing Study

Final Report

July 21, 2020

Project Overview

The Sleeping Bear Gateways Council works to address the infrastructure needs of the villages and businesses within 60 miles of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

One of the unique challenges facing gateway communities in Leelanau and Benzie Counties is the lack of regional housing options for workers, especially during the summer season and autumn shoulder season.

The Gateways Council is developing potential solutions to address the seasonal housing gap. In order to do this effectively, however, the Gateways Council needs a reasonably accurate estimate of the size of the need. The SBGC also needs to identify the business partners willing to work collaboratively to develop solutions.



Principal Research Questions

- What is the demand for seasonal workforce housing in gateway communities?
- Who are the employers with the greatest workforce housing needs?
- What is the response of employers to potential solutions – pros and cons, questions or concerns, overall willingness to participate, etc.?

Research Approach: Respondents from 62 businesses hiring seasonal employees provided input into our survey. This is a robust sample.

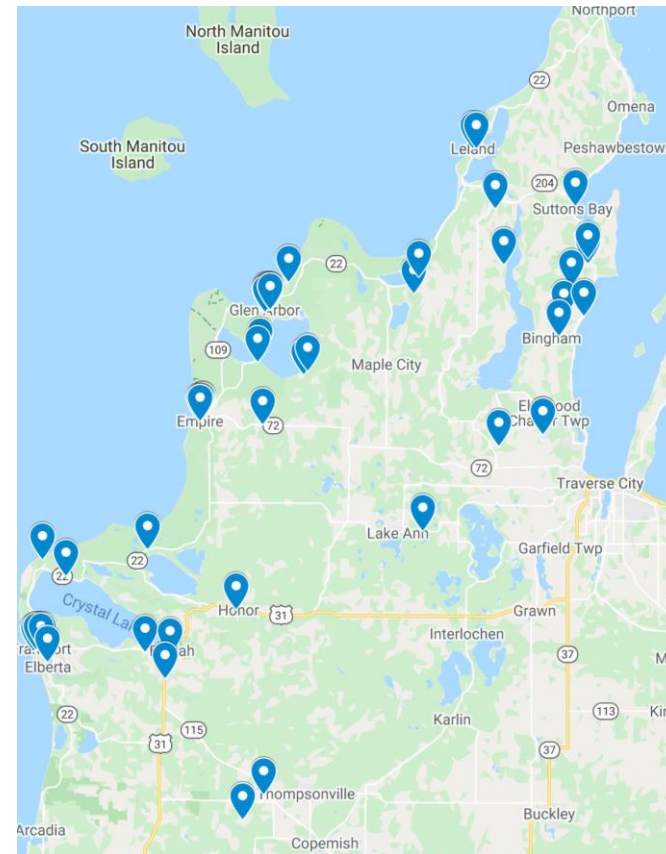
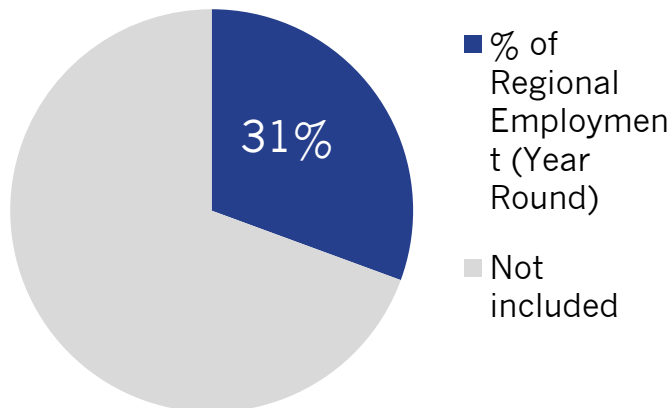
- Business decision makers (owners and managers) contributed input either via telephone interview or online survey
- These businesses are important year-round employers in the region

Study Participants



Respondents

- Respondents represent 62 businesses in Benzie and Leelanau Counties participated
- Participating businesses employ nearly a third (31%) of year-round employees in hospitality, food service, retail trade and entertainment



Geographic Distribution of Respondents (July 21, 2020)

When do businesses need seasonal workers?

- For these respondents, the peak need for seasonal employees is between June and August, though many ramp up considerably between May and October
- Some businesses need seasonal workers leading up to Christmas and through the winter months; these are not year-round employees

Respondents: Number of Seasonal Workers Hired

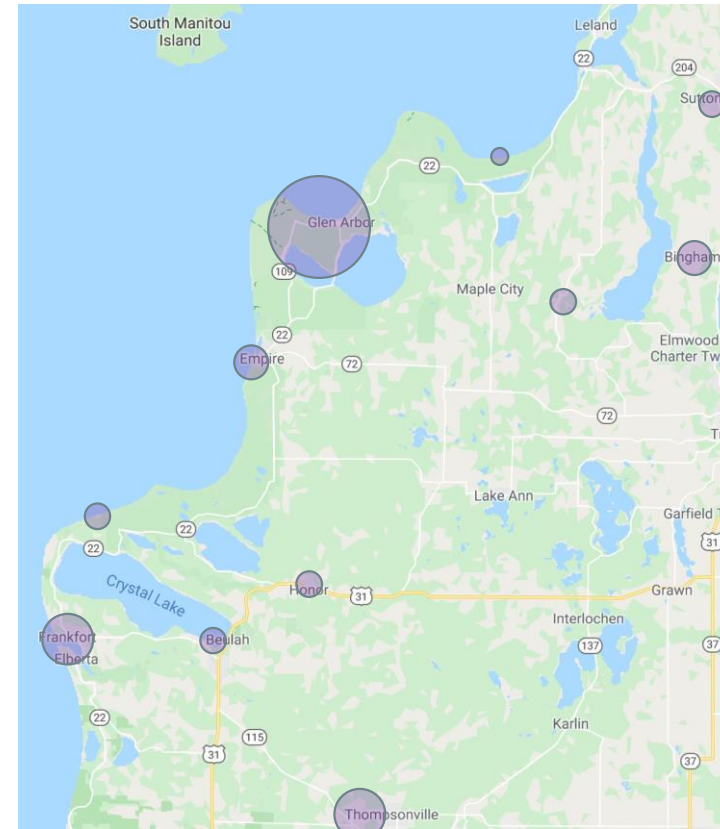


Where do seasonal workers need housing?

- Among survey participants, the 377 seasonal workers who need housing are concentrated in Glen Arbor, Thompsonville and Frankfort/Elberta

Need For Housing For Seasonal Workers

Township/Village	Seasonal Employees Needing Housing*	Extrapolating Based on 31% Share of Employment**
Glen Arbor	226	739
Thompsonville	59	193
Frankfort/Elberta	41	69
Bingham Township	17	65
Empire	11	56
Honor	7	36
Suttons Bay	5	23
Beulah	4	16
Cedar	3	13
Lake Township, Benzie	3	10
Cleveland Township	1	10



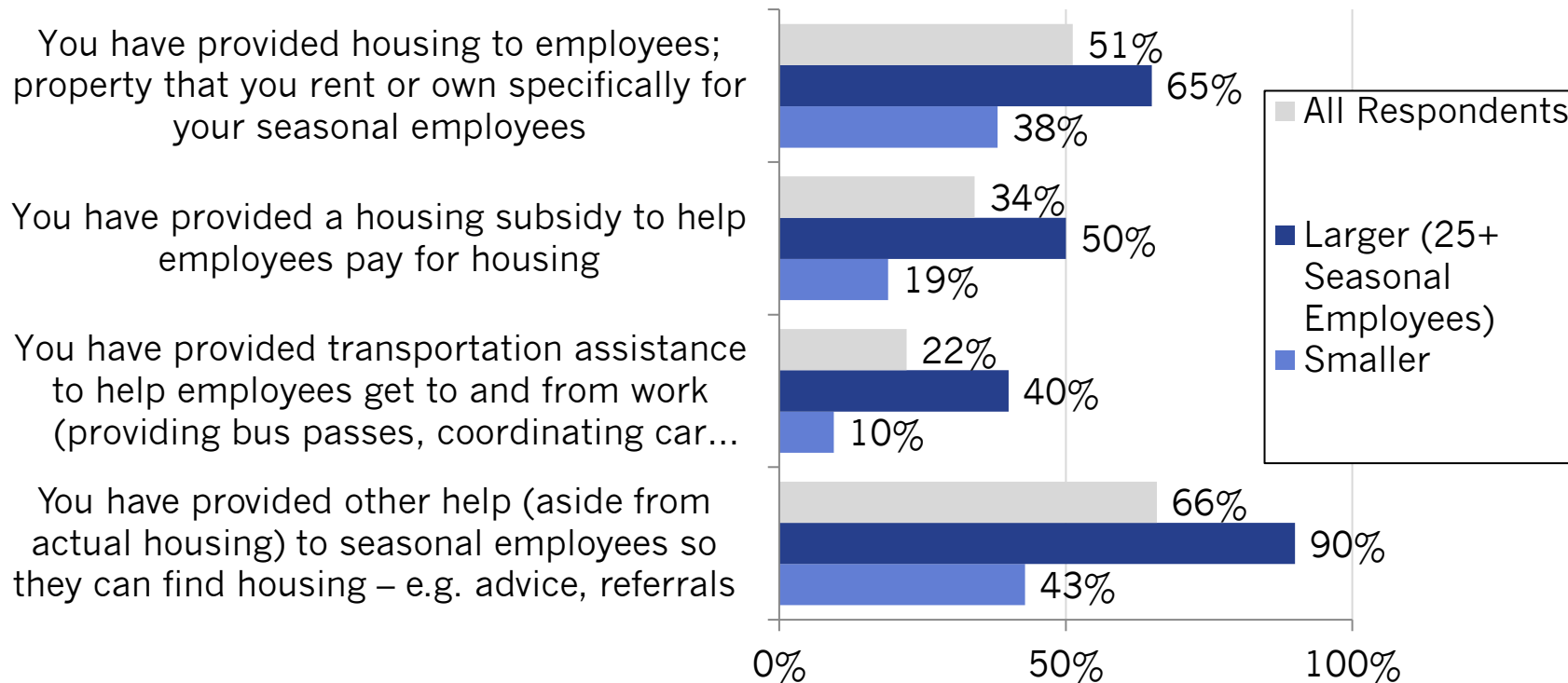
* Based on the Question: "How many of these seasonal workers might need seasonal workforce housing? (that is, don't already have housing when they come to work for you)"

** Based on self-reported data, respondents represent 31% of all employment in the 4 business sectors of interest

These gateway community employers frequently expend time and resources to help seasonal employees with housing and related transportation needs.

- Nearly all (90%) of larger employers have provided some form of help to seasonal employees in finding housing and 65% have actually provided housing
- When employers provided information on spending, they spend an average of \$2,500 per seasonal employee for those that they house

Employer Actions Re: Seasonal Workforce Housing

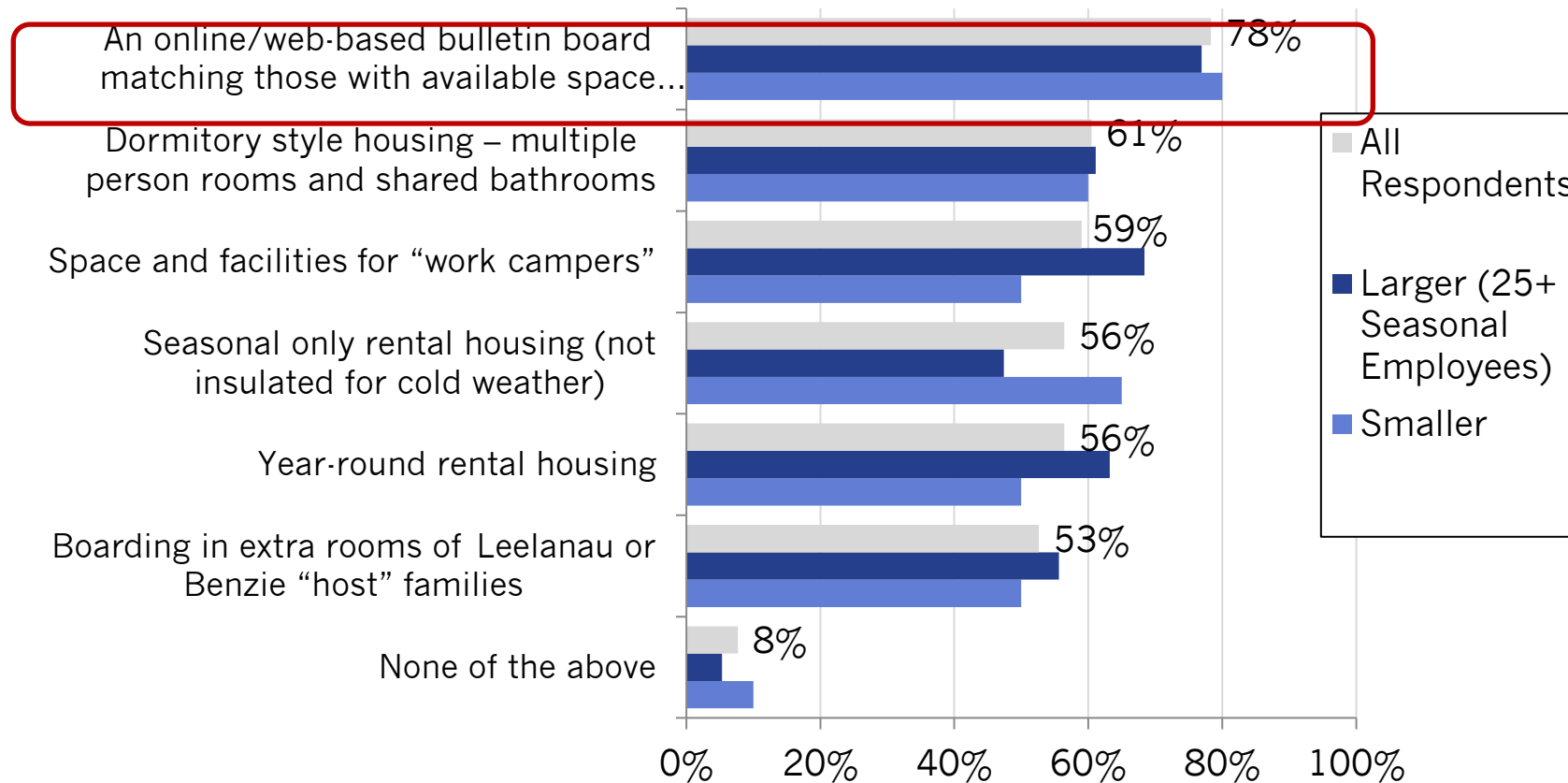


Question: Have any of the following situations applied to you in the past? Please respond with a Yes or No

There are significant numbers of respondents who think any one of these solutions might work for their employees.

- An online/web-based bulleting board is the solution that is most widely supported but many others have significant support

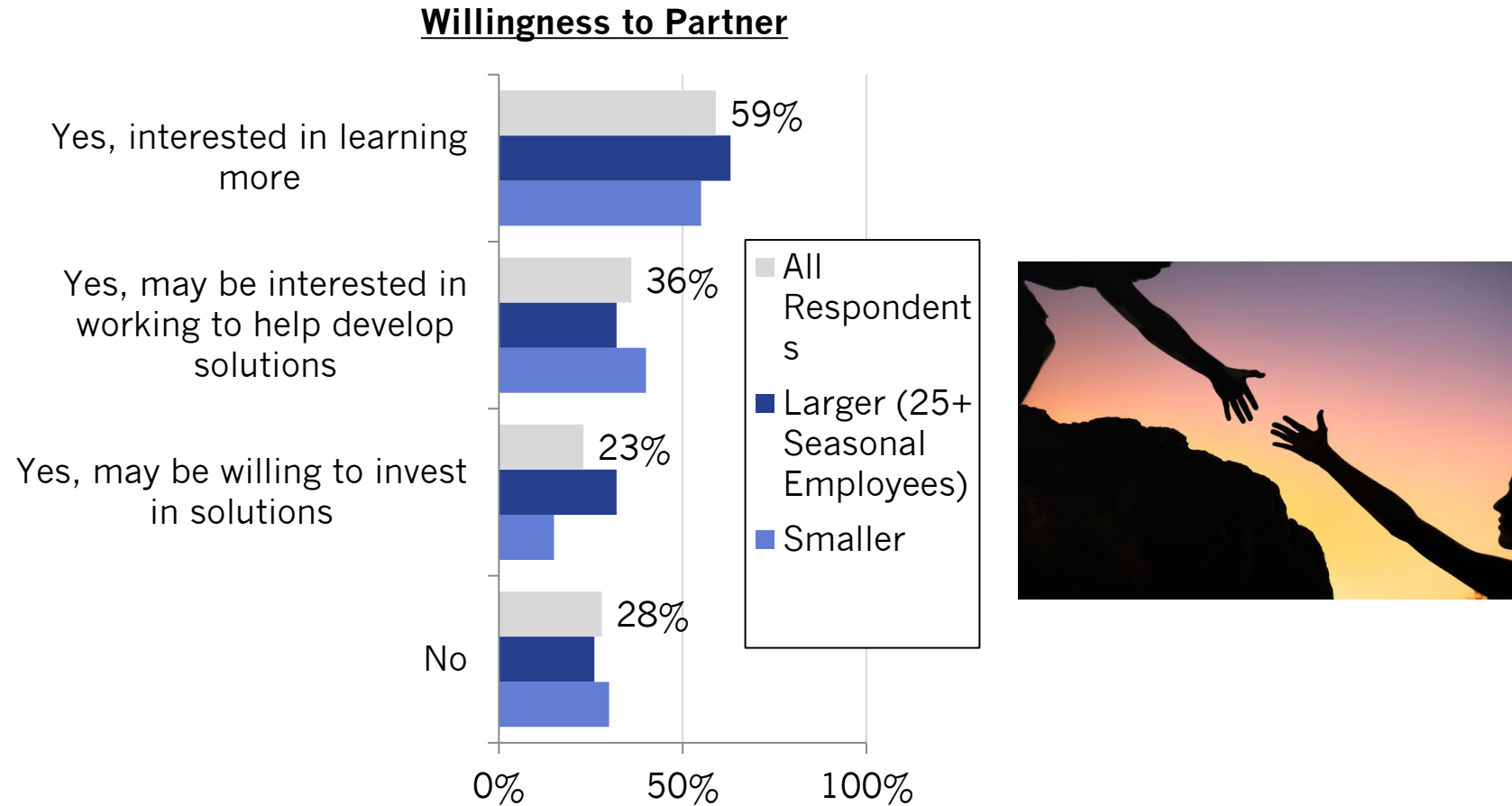
Reactions to Potential Solutions



Question: Which of the following types of solutions do you think might work for your seasonal employees?

The majority of these respondents are at least interested in learning more about the efforts of the SBGC

- Many are willing to pitch in and/or invest already



Questions: *Would your business be interested in learning more about or actively participating in these efforts? Please select all that apply*



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Funding

Funding Goal: \$131,000

- SBGC Seed Money: \$11,000 (approved)
- Rotary Charities: \$10,000 (approved)
- Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation: \$10,000 (pending)
- USDA Rural Economic Development “Opportunity”: \$90,000 (March 31 application)





February 9, 2021

Bill Witler
SBGC
P. O. Box 95
Glen Arbor, MI 49636

In response to your recent email please accept this letter as an expression of our support for your project to develop seasonal workforce housing in the gateway regions adjacent to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Dinghy's is located in Frankfort which we consider to be a gateway community. Frankfort is highly dependent upon tourism, particularly those visitors that come to see Sleeping Bear. Businesses that serve the visitors that come our community are constantly searching for qualified staff. Because affordable housing is difficult, if not impossible, to find within a walk or short drive to central Frankfort, many potential employees are forced to find rentals that are some distance from their place of employment. That introduces transportation issues, which are also difficult to address.

During the peak summer months, without the recent restrictions imposed by governmental authorities, we are required to pay significant overtime hours due to our inability to obtain adequate staffing. I would estimate that we could hire 2 to 4 additional part-time servers and up to 6 part-time line cooks.

I know of at least two new restaurants opening in Frankfort and question where they will fill their staffing needs.

C. Stephen Christian, Owner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Stephen Christian", written over a circular stamp or watermark.

415 Main Street P. O. Box 1148 Frankfort, MI 49635
Restaurant: 231/352-4702 Office: 231/352-8041
Website www.dinghysrestaurant.com
Email letseat@dinghysrestaurant.com

Send letters of support on
your letterhead to:

WRWITLER@HOTMAIL.COM

or

Bill Witler

P.O. Box 95

Glen Arbor, MI 49636



Bill Witler
Director, Sleeping Bear Gateways Council
PO Box 95
Glen Arbor, MI 49636

Dear Bill,

As the SBGC survey indicated, housing availability is an obstacle to full employment in the gateway region adjacent to the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore.

We have personally created space to attract up to 8 employees and see further development of workforce housing in our area as an opportunity to free up this space for potential year around housing and tourism rental.

Having access to more housing could create another 3 to 6 jobs at Iron Fish Distillery, beyond these 8 in 2022 and 2023.

Development of better seasonal housing solutions is a win-win for Iron Fish Distillery and other gateway region businesses. To that end, we applaud and support Sleeping Bear Gateways' seasonal workforce housing project.

Sincerely,


Heidi Bolger
Partner

14234 Dzuibanek Road Thompsonville, Michigan 49683 (231)378-3474

Send letters of support on
your letterhead to:

WRWITLER@HOTMAIL.COM

or

Bill Witler

P.O. Box 95

Glen Arbor, MI 49636



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Phase II Workplan

Two-Year Workplan (subject to funding)

- Hire dedicated Project Manager
- Promote and manage Housing Exchange
- Recruit service area Task Force of stakeholders
- Define needs (housing units) by gateway community
- Identify feasible solutions and planning for long-term solutions
- Identify funding and future project leadership





Questions and Answers





Thank You!