

A Consolidation of Services Plan  
For City of Saint Louis  
Gratiot County Michigan

A requirement pursuant to P.A. 63 of 2011, the Economic Vitality Incentive Program, the City of Saint Louis, Gratiot County, Michigan submits the following report of collaborative efforts and consolidation of services plan:

The City of Saint Louis has a long history of collaborating with other governmental units both within Gratiot County, Statewide and in some cases multi-state region to provide services to its residents and business. Many of the collaborative efforts have become routine business. In many cases, certain services would not be possible without collaborating with our neighbors. In other cases, the level of service that we can provide through collaboration is much greater than if we had provided the service for the residents of one community individually. In other collaborative efforts, the benefits of collaboration are more through coordinated efforts that enhance the service for each community than simply cost savings for the community. In reality, many of the services could not be provided but for the cooperation of the other units of government.

The reader should bear in mind that the cost savings by collaborative effort is difficult to calculate. By statute, this report is required to list the cost savings for each collaborative effort. The calculation of the cost savings often depends on perspective and the set of assumptions about the level of service to be provided. For this report, the estimate of cost savings will be from the perspective of the City of Saint Louis. The level of service is assumed to be the current level of service. The amount of cost savings will be the past year for current savings and the first year in future savings.

In this report, a brief history of current collaborations will be provided. Each service description will include an estimate of the cost savings. In making the estimated cost savings calculation, the report will be focused on the cost saving to the City of Saint Louis. The report will not attempt to calculate the overall net savings of the collaboration.

**Current Collaborative Efforts:**

1. **Greater Gratiot Development, Inc.** was one of the first major collaborative efforts in Gratiot County. GGDI is the economic development agency for the all the communities in Gratiot County. By having a coordinated effort, Saint Louis receives a better level of service than could be achieved by running its own office. If a prospective developer does not fit within the first target community, GGDI frequently shifts their focus to a neighboring community that may be better suited for their needs. By working together, the level of service is much higher than we could undertake by ourselves.
  - a. **Partners:** Gratiot County, Alma, Breckenridge, Ithaca, Saint Louis and Pine River Township
  - b. **Cost Savings:** A bare bones estimate for a go-it-alone approach for St. Louis is as follows: Wages and benefits \$75,000; Supplies and other 35,000; Total \$110,000. The go-it-alone approach would not be able to provide the same level

of services and results as the collaborative approach. The funding would have to come out of our General Fund. Since we are at our charter maximum millage, other programs would have to be cut in order to fund an in-house Economic Development Department.

2. **Mid-Michigan District Fire Department** provides firefighting and emergency medical response/rescue services to district residents. Funding for services are a shared with the City of Saint Louis, Bethany Township, Pine River Township, Gratiot County, and Jasper Township, Midland County. Without a collaborative effort, it would be very difficult for the townships to provide fire protection. By working together, we all have a greater level of service.
  - a. **Partners:** Saint Louis, Bethany, Pine River, and Jasper Townships
  - b. **Budget:** The FY2012 fire department operating budget is \$212,000 of which the City of Saint Louis contributes \$81,395.
  - c. **Benefits:** By combining forces, we have a larger better equipped department than we could otherwise afford. Most of our costs are in labor. Without the townships, we would have to downsize the department and service levels or raise revenues.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$100,000 annually.
3. **Gratiot County Central Dispatch Authority** has been a successful collaboration between all the cities, townships and the county. Dispatch has become a very high technology field. It is difficult for any one unit of government to fund and operate a dispatch center by itself. To run a dispatch center, the city would need to hire at least 4 dispatchers and purchase modern dispatch center equipment.
  - a. **Partners:** Gratiot County, Alma, Ashley, Breckenridge, Ithaca, Perrinton, Saint Louis, State of Michigan (MSP).
  - b. **Budget:** The total budget for central dispatch is \$765,563. The center is funded through a surcharge on telephone lines.
  - c. **Benefits:** If the City were to create their own dispatch center, we would not be able to afford the same level of service or use the sophisticated technology that is available in a collaborative effort. A more scaled back go-it-alone approach would cost Saint Louis as follows: Wages and benefits \$170,000; Operating supplies \$45,000; Capital Equipment \$200,000; Total \$415,000. The funding would have to come out of our General Fund. Since we are at our charter maximum millage, other programs would have to be cut in order to fund an in-house dispatch center.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$250,000 annually
4. **Gratiot Community Airport Authority** is a joint venture between Alma, Saint Louis, Ithaca, Pine River, Arcada, and Gratiot County. The airport serves the entire county. It is difficult for any one government to operate the airport. Without the joint effort, it is doubtful the airport would survive.
  - a. **Partners:** Alma, Gratiot County, Cities of Alma, Ithaca, Saint Louis and Townships of Arcada, Pine River.
  - b. **Budget:** The Airport operating budget is \$98,398. The City of Alma and Gratiot County contribute \$13,000 each. Saint Louis and other municipalities contribute \$2,000 each.
  - c. **Benefits:** Gratiot County has only one general aviation airport. The airport has proven to be an important economic development tool. Without the airport, it is unlikely that several of the major industrial concerns would have located within

the county. Without the collaborative effort, the airport would likely close or be scaled back to a much lesser asset.

- d. **Cost Savings:** None
- 5. **Michigan Public Power Rate Payers Association** is a joint venture between the cities of Saint Louis, Hart, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids and Portland. The organization's purpose is to protect members in negotiations for wholesale power contract purchases and provide ancillary services, such as, mutual aid supplying manpower and equipment to its members in the event of storm damage and legal/professional services to its member communities.
  - a. **Partners:** cities of Saint Louis, Hart, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids and Portland
  - b. **Budget:** The annual operating budget is varied.
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the small cities represented in the Michigan Public Power Rate Payers Association could not hope to afford the expertise necessary to negotiate contracts for wholesale power and other services in the ever more changing and complicated energy market.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$20,000 annually
- 6. **Michigan Public Power Agency MPPA** is a non-profit, customer owned, joint action power supply agency established in 1978 under Michigan Public Act 448. The Agency provides economic benefits to its 17 municipal members and is involved in joint ownership of electrical generating plants and transmission facilities, as well as the pooling of utility resources. The Michigan Public Power Agency exists to create opportunities for joint-action that enable Michigan's local public power utilities to remain independent and, through MPPA, in control of the energy resources needed to succeed in a competitive energy services market.
  - a. **Partners:** Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Grand Haven, Harbor Springs, Hart, Holland, Lansing, Lowell, Marquette, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Traverse City, Wyandotte, Zeeland
  - b. **Budget:** The general agency annual operating budget is \$3,892,446. City of Saint Louis member dues to the agency are \$13,296 for 2012.
  - c. **Benefits:** Within the MPPA there are several Projects and Service Committees that members may subscribe to provide assets and services in the ever more changing and complicated energy services market. Saint Louis is a member of the following Projects and Service Committees.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** Undetermined
    - i. **Projects:**
      - 1. **AMP Fremont Electric Center (AFEC) Project** – Joint purchase and ownership in a combined cycle electric generating facility in Fremont, Ohio. The facility is owned by American Municipal Power (AMP) (a collaboration of municipal electric utility members in five states) and MPPA. Ownership is made possible through electricity purchase contracts with Ohio and Michigan municipal electric utility members.
        - a. **Partners:** AMP municipal electric utility members and Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Harbor Springs, Hart, Holland, Lowell, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Wyandotte, Zeeland

- b. **Budget:** \$8,733,048
  - c. **Benefits:** Saint Louis need for energy from this source is so small that without the group purchasing power each individual utility would not be able to participate in such a project.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$15/MWh over life of the facility.  
Potentially \$75,000 annually
- 2. **Landfill Gas Project** – Energy Purchase Contract entered into by MPPA committing to purchase energy from landfill gas electric generating projects owned by Granger and North American Natural Resources. Energy purchase contracts entered into between partners below and MPPA made possible the energy purchase contract commitment by MPPA.
  - a. **Partners:** Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Grand Haven, Harbor Springs, Hart, Holland, Lowell, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Traverse City, Wyandotte.
  - b. **Budget:** \$4,808,743
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the partners could not have negotiated this type of resource to meet renewable energy portfolio standards required under PA 295, Michigan Public Acts of 2008.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** None (this is an added cost of \$8,500 annually to meet PA 295 renewable portfolio requirements)
- 3. **Energy Services Project** – This MPPA project monitors partner energy loads on a real time basis, does load forecasting, acts as MISO market participant for members, and purchases any shortage or sells excess energy to markets on behalf of members.
  - a. **Partners:** Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Grand Haven, Harbor Springs, Hart, Lowell, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Zeeland.
  - b. **Budget:** \$66,635,321
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the partners do not have sufficient staff or staff with expertise to accomplish necessary tasks associated with the ever more complex energy markets. Buying energy in blocks rather than risks associated with a full requirements contract, it may save as much as \$10/MWh considering recent market conditions.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** Potentially \$350,000 annual depending on energy demand.

**ii. Service Committees:**

- 1. **NERC Compliance** - This Service Committee assists participating cities in meeting the NERC compliance rules. The same personnel and systems will also be used in meeting those requirements for MPPA itself. Based upon the present requirements and direction that the compliance rules are heading, this Service Committee is

expected to be a significant effort. Every municipal electric utility must make filings for at least some of the NERC compliance rules.

- a. **Partners:** Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Grand Haven, Harbor Springs, Hart, Holland, Lowell, Marquette, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Traverse City, Wyandotte, Zeeland.
  - b. **Budget:** \$593,388 total for all partners
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the partners do not have sufficient staff or staff with expertise to accomplish necessary tasks associated with the ever more complex energy markets.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$5,000 to Saint Louis if for profit consultant or employee were to be hired to perform work.
2. **MIRECS** – The purpose of this committee is to assist members in the management(registration, acquisition, retirement) of Michigan Renewable Energy Credits (MIRECs) relating to compliance with renewable energy portfolio standards required by Public Act 295, Michigan Public Acts of 2008.
- a. **Partners:** Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Grand Haven, Harbor Springs, Hart, Holland, Lowell, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Traverse City, Wyandotte, Zeeland.
  - b. **Budget:** \$6,108 total for all partners
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the partners do not have sufficient staff or staff with expertise to accomplish necessary tasks associated with the ever more complex energy markets.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$1000 to Saint Louis if for profit consultant or employee were to be hired to perform work.
3. **Energy Efficiency** - The purpose of this committee is to manage contracts for energy efficiency programs and report as necessary to MPSC progress toward meeting goals established by PA 295, Michigan public Acts of 2008.
- a. **Partners:** Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Grand Haven, Harbor Springs, Hart, Holland, Lowell, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Traverse City, Wyandotte, Zeeland.
  - b. **Budget:** \$2,192,162 total for all partners
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the partners do not have sufficient staff or staff with expertise to accomplish necessary tasks associated with the ever more complex energy markets.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$10,000 if for profit consultant or employee were hired to perform work.
4. **Renewable Portfolio** – the purpose of this committee is to prepare reports required under Act 295, Michigan Public Acts of 2008 relating to Renewable Portfolio Standards for each of 16 members.
- a. **Partners:** Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Grand Haven, Harbor Springs, Hart, Holland, Lowell,

- Marquette, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Traverse City, Wyandotte, Zeeland
- b. **Budget:** \$9,152 total for all partners
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the partners do not have sufficient staff or staff with expertise to accomplish necessary tasks associated with the ever more complex energy markets.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$1,000 to Saint Louis if for profit consultant or employee were hired to perform work.
5. **Scheduling** – The purpose of this committee is to manage scheduling for electricity delivery under the full requirements contracts of the members. This committee will end 12/31/2011 as the full requirement contracts expire for each of the members.
- a. **Partners:** Chelsea, Eaton Rapids, Hart, Portland, Saint Louis.
  - b. **Budget:** There is no budget for continuing this work
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the partners do not have sufficient staff or staff with expertise to accomplish necessary tasks associated with the ever more complex energy markets.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$7,500 if for profit consultant or employee were hired to perform work. Ending 12/31/2011 as contracts expire.
6. **Combined Cycle** - The purpose of this committee is to investigate potential and feasibility for siting a combined cycle electric generating facility to serve interested members.
- a. **Partners:** Bay City, Charlevoix, Chelsea, Hart, Holland, Lowell, Petoskey, Portland, Saint Louis, Zeeland
  - b. **Budget:** \$9,152 total for all partners
  - c. **Benefits:** Individually, the partners do not have sufficient staff or staff with expertise to accomplish necessary tasks associated with the ever more complex energy markets.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$1,000 to Saint Louis if for profit consultant or employee were hired to perform work.
7. **Dial-A-Ride** is supported by Alma, the State of Michigan, the federal government and the City of Saint Louis. The collaboration between the local, state and federal agencies makes the service possible. While DART serves all citizens, most of the customers on DART are senior citizens, disabled citizens or children. Many customers depend on DART to live independently. Without DART, many would need an assisted living facility. It is difficult to attach a value to having residents live independently. Without the \$390,000 in federal and state assistance, DART could not exist.
- a. **Partners:** Alma, Saint Louis, State of Michigan and U.S. Department of Transportation
  - b. **Budget:** The City of Alma’s total budget for Dial-A-Ride is \$591,683 of which \$223,200 is raised locally through property taxes and the fare box. The state contributes \$182,202 for operations. The federal government contributes \$75,127 for operations and most of the funds for capital acquisitions. Saint Louis contributes \$4,000 to support a more limited service in Saint Louis.

- c. **Benefits:** A local governmental agency can run a bus service much cheaper than can the state or federal government. The overhead and cost of doing business is much lower. By having the city run the service, the state and federal governments save money by allowing more people to live independently. With the collaborative financing, the City of Alma is able to offer the service to its residents and provide service to Saint Louis as well.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$5,000 annually if a contractor could be located to provide service on such a limited basis.
- 8. **The Gratiot County Geographical Information System Authority** is funded by all the cities, villages, townships and county in Gratiot County. The GIS Authority provides maps, aerial photographs and other address related information. The GIS Authority also provides a web interface for our residents to easily access the information. Each community contributed \$1 per parcel to the project. For the City of Saint Louis, the aerial photographs were the top selling point. The web interface makes the information available to our residents.
  - a. **Partners:** All governmental units in Gratiot County.
  - b. **Budget:** The City of Saint Louis contributes \$1,550 annually.
  - c. **Benefits:** Without a collaborative effort, it would be very difficult for County governmental units to provide the services of this joint effort. The aerial photographs are used by the engineering staff, the assessor, zoning administration and economic development. By cooperating, we are able to update aerial mapping every 4 to 6 years of the entire county. Without the collaboration, Saint Louis would not be able to update the aerial photographs as frequently nor at such a high resolution.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$2,500 annually.
- 9. **Countywide Master Planning** has saved money for each municipality and improved the quality of the resulting master plan. The sum contributed by Saint Louis was a bargain. A go-it-alone approach would have cost Saint Louis between \$10,000 and \$20,000 and the product would have been less comprehensive.
  - a. **Partners:** All governmental units in Gratiot County.
  - b. **Budget:** Total budget unknown.
  - c. **Benefits:** By working together we were able to better understand our neighboring communities and their plans for the future. Most communities learned that their neighbor's plans fit well with their plans and even complemented each other well.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$10,000.
- 10. **Sewer: The Sewer System and Treatment Plant** Saint Louis receives and treats sewage from both Bethany and Pine River Township. The sewer mains and lift stations in the township are owned by the township. The townships pay the city to repair and maintain the sewer lines and lift stations. There are small cost savings to the City of Saint Louis but huge cost savings for the townships by collaborating with the city.
  - a. **Partners:** Saint Louis, Bethany Township, and Pine River Township
  - b. **Budget:** The total budget for the wastewater utility is \$1,160,000. Combined Bethany and Pine River Townships contribute \$50,000.
  - c. **Benefits:** The township contribution to the overall revenue and wastewater is small. By allowing the two communities to connect to our plant, the City of Saint

Louis was eligible for a federal grant to build the plant. The sewer system in their townships has permitted additional growth and development in the area.

- d. **Cost Savings:** \$18,000 annually
11. **Water Service:** The Cities of Saint Louis and Alma and the Township of Pine River entered into an interlocal agreement that allows the Township to receive water from both cities within certain specified areas of the Township. The City of Saint Louis maintains water mains and issues all tapping permits. The City of Saint Louis provides water to the residential and commercial districts within the Township. Under the agreement with the townships, the City is able to search for water anywhere in Pine River Township. Under another interlocal agreement the City of Saint Louis provides residents and businesses in Bethany Township with water service including the Saint Louis Corrections facility.
  - a. **Partners:** Alma, Saint Louis, Pine River Township, Bethany Township, State of Michigan
  - b. **Budget:** The total budget for the water utility is \$970,800.
  - c. **Benefits:** By allowing the two communities to connect to our utility system, it has permitted additional growth and development in the area.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$15,000 annually.
12. **Electric Service:** The Township of Bethany granted the City of Saint Louis an Electric Franchise to provide electric service to residents and business within a certain portion of the Township which includes the Saint Louis Correctional Facility.
  - a. **Partners:** Saint Louis, Bethany Township and State of Michigan
  - b. **Budget:** The total budget for the electric utility is \$4,630,000.
  - c. **Benefits:** By providing electric services, it has permitted additional growth and development in the area.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$25,000 annually from additional customer base.
13. **Mid-Michigan Cable Consortium:** The City of Saint Louis was a founding member of the Mid-Michigan Cable Consortium to provide joint franchise negotiation, administration, and operation of the Governmental, Public and Educational channels.
  - a. **Partners:** Alma, Arcada Township, Village of Breckenridge, Clare, Ithaca, Mount Pleasant, Pine River Township, Saint Louis, Village of Shepherd, and Village of Harrison
  - b. **Budget:** Saint Louis contributes 2% of franchise fees collected.
  - c. **Benefits:** By working together, all the communities can enjoy a state of the art studio. The consortium has the funds to better protect the communities' interests in franchise discussions and advocacy for legislation affecting cable companies.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** Savings could be as much as \$100,000 per year if Saint Louis were to provide this same level of service if it were not for the collaborative efforts already in place
14. **Brownfield Authority:**
  - a. **Partners:** All cities, villages and townships in Gratiot County, Greater Gratiot Development
  - b. **Budget:** Varies dependent on annual grant awards.
  - c. **Benefits:** By working together, only one office, Greater Gratiot Development, needs to become an expert on all the details related to accounting and report of Brownfield Authorities. By having GGDI run the Brownfield Authority, it is easier for the developers and for the municipalities.

- d. **Cost Savings:** None
15. **Gratiot Area Solid Waste Authority:** The Cities of Alma and Saint Louis jointly bid solid waste and recycling services. We have recently expanded to provide an environmentally safe means of disposing of unused or expired drugs.
- a. **Partners:** Alma and Saint Louis
  - b. **Benefits:** It is difficult to calculate the savings to each community. There is very little administrative overhead. Unless we bid each community separately as well as a package, it is impossible to estimate the savings. Beyond dollars savings, there are numerous other benefits. The two cities now have similar trash and recycling programs. The rules are the same which makes educating and administering the program easier. By sharing in the household hazardous waste program, we can reduce the overhead and increase the awareness of the program. Residents now have two opportunities to dispose of their hazardous waste as opposed to the previous once a year.
  - c. **Cost Savings:** Unknown. The first bid will be received in March 1012.
16. **Grant Writing:** The Cities of Alma, Ithaca, Saint Louis with the Village of Breckenridge, Gratiot County and Alma College jointly wrote a grant application for energy efficiency. Each governmental entity received an energy audit. Business within the county received mini-grants to undertake energy efficiency projects.
- a. **Partners:** Alma, Ithaca, Saint Louis, Breckenridge, Gratiot County, Alma College and United Way of Gratiot County
  - b. **Budget:** The total grant received was approximately \$225,000.
  - c. **Benefits:** Without the collaboration, it is unlikely that we would have received the grant. The entire grant amount would not have been received or expended in Gratiot County. Each city received an energy audit of their municipal facilities. We distributed a significant amount of grant proceeds to area businesses to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings.
  - d. **Savings:** Savings in this collaborative project were to businesses who took advantage of the availability of grants to make energy efficiency improvements to their buildings and probably \$5,000 per municipal building audited. In Saint Louis that would equate to \$25,000.
17. **Wind Ordinance:** All the governmental entities within the county drafted and adopted the same ordinance for wind turbines. One wind farm has begun construction of 136 wind turbines with announced intentions of adding an additional 125 wind turbines. We are currently working on two additional wind farms. If all are successful, we will have well over \$1 billion of construction activity because we worked together and had one set of rules for the county.
- a. **Partners:** All cities, villages and townships in Gratiot County, as well as Gratiot County.
  - b. **Budget:** The cost of drafting a new ordinance typically cost \$1,000. The cost of drafting the ordinance was shared by many municipalities.
  - c. **Benefits:** While we all saved money on sharing the same ordinance, the real issue is the number turbines we attracted by working together. By having the same rules and having joint planning commission meetings, Gratiot County has attracted the attention of several wind farm developers. Soon the first wind farm will be the largest tax

payer in the county. As other developers progress, the potential for more wind farms means more tax revenue for the townships, schools and county.

- d. **Cost Savings:** There were no cost savings to partners but opportunity for county wide revenue enhancement.
18. **Liability Insurance:** The City of Saint Louis is a member of the Michigan Municipal League Liability and Property Pool which is a joint venture with many other cities to provide liability and property insurance for the city.
  - a. **Partners:** Many Michigan Municipal League members.
  - b. **Budget:** The total budget is unknown
  - c. **Benefits:** Several years ago commercial insurance carriers discontinued to write coverage for municipal clients leaving them with no opportunity for insurance coverage. The City has been reluctant to leave the insurance pools created in the wake of being left uninsured by the commercial carriers.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** Unknown as the City has not taken bids for insurance in several years.
19. **Worker's Compensation:** The City of Saint Louis is a member of the Michigan Municipal League's worker's compensation fund which is joint venture to handle worker's compensation claims.
  - a. **Partners:** 845 Michigan cities, villages, townships and counties.
  - b. **Budget:** The total budget is \$27,734,243 for all members.
  - c. **Cost Savings:** Unknown
20. **Hazard Mitigation Plan:** The City of Saint Louis worked together with representatives from Gratiot County and the other municipalities to develop a hazard mitigation plan for the area.
  - a. **Partners:** Gratiot County, Alma, Ithaca, Saint Louis, Breckenridge, all townships in Gratiot County, Michigan State Police
  - b. **Budget:** Each partner contributed one or more staff people for a series of meetings.
  - c. **Benefits:** The County took the lead in preparing the Plan. Without their lead, each community would have had to devote its resources to write their own plan. We estimate that it would have cost the City of Saint Louis \$5,000 to prepare its own plan. It is unlikely that the Michigan State Police would have assisted communities on a single community basis. Our joint effort also meant that the Michigan State Police and the Federal Emergency Management Agency could review one plan instead of 24 separate community plans.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$5,000
21. **Equipment Sharing:** In Gratiot County, the municipalities frequently borrow and share equipment. In particular, on a regular basis, Ithaca owns a street sweeper and rents it to Saint Louis and Saint Louis owns a chipper shared between the two communities. In other cases, we reimburse each other at Schedule C rates. Items such as sewer flushers, street sweepers, and directional boring machines are expensive. It would be impossible of us all to own one. By sharing, we can all access the equipment we need.
  - a. **Partners:** Alma, Gratiot County Road Commission, Ithaca, and Saint Louis
  - b. **Budget:** There is no preset budget for equipment sharing.
  - c. **Benefits:** Communities do not need to buy every type of equipment.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** Undetermined
22. **Pension Administration:** The City of Saint Louis uses the Municipal Employees Retirement System of Michigan to manage, administer and invest our pension system. The City has four

separate pension divisions with varying funded levels. By following the rules of MERS, Saint Louis pension plan is 73% funded overall.

- a. **Partners:** There are 750 municipalities that are members of MERS of Michigan.
  - b. **Budget:** The total revenue for MERS of Michigan is \$1,341,817,880 of which the City of Saint Louis contributes \$203,637
  - c. **Benefits:** The City of Saint Louis is too small to hire professional money managers. By pooling our resources, we have access to professional money managers as well as professional staff to manage the personnel records and advise our employees.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** Undetermined
23. **Library:** Our library is a member of a regional cooperative, the White Pine Library Cooperative. With the Coop, our library is able to borrow just about any book in any library in Michigan. We sometimes borrow books from out of state libraries.
- a. **Partners:** Many libraries in the State.
  - b. **Budget:** The library pays minimal dues.
  - c. **Benefit:** With the Coop, our library is able to borrow just about any book in any library in Michigan.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** None. Added service for Library patrons.
24. **Road Salt:** City of Saint Louis purchases road salt under the state contract. The schools cannot purchase under the state contract because the contract requires delivery in quantities too large for schools to handle. We sell salt at near our cost to the schools district.
- a. **Partners:** Saint Louis, Saint Louis Public Schools, State of Michigan Department of Management and Budget (State Purchasing)
  - b. **Budget:** This collaboration has no separate budget
  - c. **Benefit:** Cost savings for Saint Louis Community Schools
  - d. **Cost Savings:** \$25 estimated per year markup on salt to cover some cost toward storage.
25. **Police Services:** Saint Louis and Alma are neighboring communities. We will often work together to reduce the amount of overtime we spend on police services. Our agencies entered an interlocal agreement to provide backup to the other community. This reduces the amount of staffing we need to have on duty during the late/early hours of the night and morning.
- a. **Partners:** Saint Louis and Alma
  - b. **Budget:** This collaboration has no separate budget
  - c. **Benefits:** Potential for cost savings and safety of officers needing assistance.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** None recognized
26. **Auctions:** Whenever Alma, Saint Louis or Ithaca has an auction to sell surplus equipment, we cooperate with each other and sell our neighboring community's items as well. This practice makes for a larger auction and tends to draw larger crowds.
- a. **Partners:** Saint Louis and Alma, Ithaca, Breckenridge, Gratiot County Road Commission
  - b. **Budget:** This collaboration has no separate budget
  - c. **Benefits:** This practice makes for a larger auction and tends to draw larger crowds.
  - d. **Cost Savings:** Cost for auction varies and is spread amongst partners based upon sales volume. Minimal savings at best.
27. **Gratiot Managers Forum:** The managers of various agencies in Gratiot County meet regularly to discuss issues of common interest.

- a. **Partners:** City Managers of Alma, Ithaca, Saint Louis, Village Manager of Breckenridge, Gratiot County Administrator, Manager of the Gratiot County Road Commission, Director of Greater Gratiot.
- b. **Budget:** This collaboration has no separate budget
- c. **Benefits:** Many of the collaborative efforts between governmental agencies in Gratiot County are product from these meetings.
- d. **Cost Savings:** There is no cost savings from the meetings themselves but this report is testimony to the benefits.

## **Future Collaborations**

The City of Saint Louis is planning several future collaborations. Some plans are far along in the planning stage that it is likely that the efforts will bear fruit. Some are in the early exploratory stages which may mean that unknown factors might make the idea uneconomical or unlikely.

1. **Water:** The City of Alma and the City of Saint Louis are working to create a water authority to produce treat and transmit potable water to the two cities. The likely of the project going forward is excellent. The City of Saint Louis needs to replace their current water supply. If we fail to reach an agreement, it is likely that the two cities will have a water war over the best well fields. In order for the Alma plant to treat enough water for the City of Saint Louis, the plant will need to be expanded.
  - a. **Partners:** Alma, Saint Louis, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
  - b. **Budget:** The initial estimates for the project are still being developed. The project is likely to cost at least \$20 million.
  - c. **Likelihood of Success:** This is a difficult project to undertake. There is a sense of urgency communities to move forward. The chance of success is good to excellent.
  - d. **Benefit:** The City of Saint Louis needs a new source of water. The merging of water systems is the best option for both cities. We will not be fighting over ground water if we work together. Re-configuring the plant to be able to process enough water for both communities will provide some upgrades and improvements to the plant that Alma will eventually need to undertake. A success in this project may lead to other collaborations in the future
  - e. **Cost Savings:** Short term, there are likely to be few immediate savings. Long term, the savings in operations and equipment replacement could be substantial. Water plant operators can process water both communities leading to potential savings of near \$200,000 for staffing wages and benefits annually.
2. **Water Ordinance:** Develop a uniform water ordinance for Alma, Saint Louis and Pine River Township. With both Alma and Saint Louis providing water to Pine River Township and Alma and Saint Louis looking to create a water authority, the need for a uniform water ordinance will be necessary. One ordinance will better educate the three communities about the proper conduct for water utilization as well as make it easier for water department employees of Alma and Saint Louis which will be called upon to perform work in the other jurisdiction. There will be only one set of rules for the employees in working with the system and the customers.

- a. **Partners:** Alma, Saint Louis, Bethany Township and Pine River Township
  - b. **Budget:** Overall budget is nominal. Cost of \$1,000 to \$3,000.
  - c. **Likelihood of Success:** This project is relatively easy. Much of the initial work has been prepared. The chance of success is excellent.
  - d. **Benefit:** Both Alma and Saint Louis provide water to Pine River Township. Saint Louis provides water to Bethany. Both Alma and Saint Louis want to update their existing water ordinance to meet with current industry standards. Having one common water ordinance allows the cities to share the cost development but more importantly, area residents will learn the rules quicker if they are the same. Having residents know the rules reduces time spent on enforcement.
  - e. **Cost Savings:** Minimal Perhaps \$200 per year in customer education expense.
3. **Zoning Codes:** Developing common terminology for zoning and planning is a stated goal of our master plan.
- a. **Partners:** All zoned cities, villages and township in Gratiot County.
  - b. **Budget:** Overall budget is nominal. Cost of \$1,000 to \$3,000.
  - c. **Likelihood of Success:** This may be a difficult one to achieve. It may be difficult for all the boards to agree on the same terminology. The first step may to get the cities to agree followed by the village and then the townships.
  - d. **Benefit:** By having and using the same terms for zoning, it will be easier for developers to locate, grow and expand in Gratiot County. By implementing the common terms, in the long term, there will be increased growth in the region which will increase the job base and tax base of the community.
  - e. **Cost Savings:** There will be little, if any, cost savings to each community.

**The Gratiot Managers Forum, Collaboration #27 above has discussed various other collaborations and in some cases has had meetings with agencies to discuss benefits of working together. Those discussions include:**

1. **Improve collaboration within the criminal justice system such as video testimony for police officers for traffic cases, sending criminal cases to prosecutor electronically, implement of e-tickets for traffic violations.** Under the current system, both Saint Louis and Alma sends an officer to Ithaca county government offices every morning. The trips typically take two to three hours. Much of the time is spent waiting for the prosecutor's office or the court system. By being able to transfer the information electronically, the officers would be able to make a quick trip to Ithaca to sign papers without having the extended time waiting. If just one hour per day is saved, the cities will have an additional 260 hours of officer time working in the City on police work. The City will gain one hour of productive time for each hour saved.
2. **Explore sharing of computer data bases and programming such as assessment programs and tax collection records.** All the municipalities and the county use the same program for property assessments and tax collections. Each spring, both the assessments systems and the tax collections must be reconciled to the county's database. If the all the units were to use the system database and same system, each unit would save time in not having to reconcile between the local and county system. In addition, maintaining the names and mailing address for every parcel of land is difficult and time

consuming. Having one database to maintain would save both the local units and the county time and effort. Having a central database will improve the security and backup procedures for most of the local units of government.

3. **Explore merging police departments between Alma, Saint Louis** and perhaps including Ithaca and Breckenridge. The two communities are neighbors.
4. **Explore the expansion in number of layers in the Gratiot GIS Authority system.**
5. **Unified Complete Street policy.** Alma, Saint Louis and Ithaca are all planning to adopt a complete street policy and plan. By coordinating efforts, we are likely to develop a more comprehensive policy. A coordinated plan will ensure that the trail and paths in one community meet the trails and paths of the neighboring community.
6. **Expand Pedestrian/Bicycle pathway system** to interconnect trails from Saint Louis and Ithaca to Alma and the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail and to the Isabella County Trail system currently being planned.

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