

Sault Ste Marie Bi-National Investment District

Composed of the EUP region of Michigan and the Sault Ste Marie, ON region, the bi-national investment district would be a specialized strategic rural NAFTA investment hub, which would promote bi-national border investment in a market that has been historically economically isolated and underdeveloped. The two regions would work collaboratively together to plan and leverage the region's resources as an integrated mega region. Numerous initiatives will be needed to capture these opportunities such as the integration of supply chains in the region; the development and implementation of an integrated bi-national workforce development strategy; and the creation of an infrastructure/utility plan that is dictated by the mega region's economic development strategy. Combined, the region can portray itself as a combined community with a series of key market attributes including:

- A population of 100,000+ with a diversified and skilled labor force and consumption market which is categorized as a (lower tier) mid-sized market.
- A region with a series of regional assets or advantages that distinguish it from an investor perspective:
 - A privately owned international seaport which is situated on the Great Lakes/St Lawrence Seaway System, providing inbound and outbound maritime service to large markets along the Seaway System and to global markets in Europe and South America.
 - Two comprehensive four-year universities which can form a custom skills development partner backbone and spearhead the attraction and retention of talent in region.
 - Two regional commercial airports providing connecting service to international hubs in Toronto and Detroit and, as a system, can coordinate route service development and cargo development
 - A combined labor base that rivals some larger US or Canadian Midwest communities and as a system the can compete for projects that would be out of reach to the US-side on its own
 - With proximate access to valuable natural resources; forestry stocks and extraction minerals, the District has the breadth to develop feedstock to manufacturing investment strategies

Key action items of the District would be:

- Creation of a governing Binational Coordinating/Advisory Board structure for the Investment District
- Collaboration between regions, province/state and federal governments from an economic planning, development and promotion perspective.
 - Development of a single economic development plan specifically for the District, instead of having a series of regional, disjointed efforts, where the different cities/counties are acting in independent disjointed silos.
- Pursue the creation of a federally-recognized bi-national zone in both Canada and the U.S.

- Development of a strategy to attract and retain talent to the region, and to allow free-flow of labor in a special binational labor zone
- Explore and pursue the implementation of an integrated International Metropolitan Statistical Area
- Establish a corridor along the Michigan Ontario border in which products and manufactured goods within the corridor meet the certification requirements of both nations, as though they had been made in both the U.S. and Canada for trade purposes.
- Create a defined, secure area extending across the Michigan-Ontario border in a zone designated free of border entry procedures and payments of duties within the zone, allowing for free movement of raw materials, components, semi-finished goods and finished goods, as well as personnel, as long as such goods and persons remain within the zone.
- Create state and federal financial incentives for in-district investment in key infrastructure and targeted sectors

With a Memorandum of Understanding already in place, the Sault Ste Marie region has started down a path with a common purpose and a common agenda. The Bi-National Investment District is the next step in the progression to an integrated mega region.