

**Thursday, June 3, 2021, 7:30 am**

Via **Zoom Webinar**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81029113953?pwd=WjBJMUZRUx5TjdqdIRybGYyVE1DQT09>

***Mission Statement:** Retain, expand and recruit business and industry to the greater Albion area and strengthen and revitalize the local economy.*

**Economic Development Strategic Plan**

- Goal 1: Stabilize the downtown, enhance its historic character, and support its economic growth.
- Goal 2: Stabilize the City's major corridors and support their economic growth.
- Goal 3: Build the human and capital capacity of key economic development agencies within Albion.
- Goal 4: Retain and attract high-leverage jobs to Albion.
- Goal 5: Strengthen housing market and stock.
- Goal 6: Create a unified brand for Albion to drive tourism, business growth, and investment. (GACC)
- Goal 7: Make strategic choices to turn Albion into a destination for current and future residents and tourists. (GACC)

**AGENDA**

- 1) Roll Call
- 2) Welcome Andrew Zblewski
- 3) Public Comment  
*(Persons addressing the Board shall limit their comments to no more than 3 minutes)*
- 4) Action Items:
  - a) Consent Agenda:
    - i) Approval of Minutes from May 6, 2021 Board Meeting
    - ii) Approve Consolidated Statement Ending February 28, 2021
    - iii) Action to Excuse Absent Directors, if applicable (EDC/TIFA/BRA)*All matters listed under Item 3(a), Consent Agenda, are considered routine by the board and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If discussion of an item is required, it will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered separately.*
  - b) Officer Elections: Nominate & Approve Vacant Officer Positions – Chair
  - c) Albion First Discussion (Mayor & Harvey)
- 5) Economic Development Strategic Plan Discussion
- 6) Workforce Development
- 7) President's Report
  - a) Economic & Community Development Report
- 8) Board of Directors Discussion & Comments
- 9) Public Comment  
*(Persons addressing the Board shall limit their comments to no more than 3 minutes)*
- 10) Adjournment

# EDC/TIFA/BRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Held via Zoom webinar

May 6, 2021

**EDC Board Meeting called to order by Evans at 7:31 a.m. Evans chaired the meeting in McCall's absence.**

Board Members Present: Ed Haas; Jerome Harvey; Scott Evans; Mayor Snyder; Dr. Raymond Barclay; Annette Norris; Ben Wallace; Vicky Clark (joined 8:10 am)

Board Members Absent: Herm McCall (excused)

Ex Officio Non-Voting: None

Community: Haley Snyder (City Manager)

Staff: Amy Deprez

## Welcome New Board Member – Vicky Clark

Evans welcomed Clark to the EDC Board. Clark was not present, later joined the meeting at 8:10 am.

## Presentation: Albion Senior Housing Commission

Linda Kolmodin and Marcia Starkey presented to the Board on the Albion Senior Housing Commission, formed in December 2020. They shared the vision and activities to date. Anyone interested in participating in community conversations related to senior housing should contact Marcia Starkey at [mstarkey74@gmail.com](mailto:mstarkey74@gmail.com).

The group discussed the Target Market Study that was completed in 2015 and that the Senior group will be contracting with a firm to update the study with a broader perspective in mind. They introduced the Albion 90 second video, discussed marketing of the initiative and discussions with developers. This development will be for market-rate senior housing.

## **Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

## **Action Items:**

### Approval of Excused Board Members

With McCall's resignation on the agenda, McCall was included as an excused board member. This item was separated out to approve this action.

- Motion by Wallace, supported by Mayor Snyder.
- Voice Vote.
- Resolved: Motion carried.

#### Approval of Consent Agenda

The remaining items of the Consent agenda were reviewed as a group, consisting of approval of Minutes from April 1, 2021 Board Meeting, approval of Consolidated Statement ending December 31, 2020 and January 31, 2021.

- Motion by Mayor Snyder to support consent agenda, supported by Harvey.
- Voice Vote.
- Resolved: Motion carried.

#### Approve Herman McCall's Letter of Resignation from the EDC Board of Directors

Evans asked the Board if there was a motion to accept the resignation of Dr. McCall. Evans reminded the Board this is something that must be accepted by the EDC Bylaws and will require action at this meeting.

- Motion by Norris, supported by Haas.
- Roll Call Vote.
- Resolved: Motion passes unanimously.

#### Nominate & Approve Vacant Officer Positions – Treasurer and Chair

Evans shared that with the resignation of McCall and Spicer's decision to not seek another term, the position of Chair and Treasurer needed to be filled. He reminded the Board that Haas serves as Secretary and he serves as Vice Chair.

Mayor Snyder nominated Evans, Evans felt he had a conflict with being Chair of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). He respectfully declined unless he were to resign from the DDA.

Evans asked Haas to consider, Haas replied he is happy to continue to serve in the existing capacity of Secretary.

Wallace asked if there was anyone interested. Barclay indicated he is too new and does not feel he has enough of an understanding of the Board yet to serve in the Chair role. Norris shared she felt the same way.

Mayor Snyder indicated she planned to nominate Norris for Treasurer.

Evans asked Norris if she would be willing to serve if elected as Treasurer, she indicated she would. Mayor Snyder made the motion to appoint Annette Norris to the role of Treasurer, supported by Wallace.

- Motion by Mayor Snyder, supported by Wallace.
- Roll Call Vote.
- Resolved: Motion passed, with Norris abstaining.

Evans asked Harvey if he was interested in the Chair role. Harvey indicated that he would prefer to stay a member at large.

Mayor Snyder asked Wallace if he had any interest, Wallace declined as he felt he had too many other commitments on his plate at this time.

Evans offered to Chair, contingent upon his resignation from the DDA. Evans also disclosed he is a director for the Greater Albion Area Chamber. Mayor Snyder indicated that the City would work with Evans to replace his position on the DDA. The nomination of Chair and possibly Vice Chair will be held in June.

Evans and Haas shared their experience as officers so the Board members could understand the responsibilities and Deprez shared the Bylaws via email following the meeting.

#### Nominate and Approve Replacement for EDC Representation on Albion First Subcommittee

Evans shared that with the resignation of McCall we will need to appoint a new representative for the Albion First Sub Committee and shared that there is a Study Session being scheduled. Evans shared with the Board that he is not interested as he has intentionally stayed out of this discussion due to areas of conflict.

Evans indicated that there was a clear position of the Board and asked Harvey if he would be interested in representing the EDC. Harvey indicated that the position he took was clear and he was not sure if his effectiveness would be the best on this committee. He indicated that he would take on this role and wanted it to be clear that he is strong in his thoughts on this item.

Clark joined the meeting and was promoted to panelist at 8:10 am.

Mayor Snyder motioned for Jerome Harvey to represent the EDC Board for the Albion First Subcommittee; Haas supported.

- Motion by Mayor Snyder, supported by Haas.
- Roll Call Vote.
- Resolved: Motion passed unanimously.

Deprez added that she would send Harvey the Doodle poll for the pending meeting and encouraged all board members to ultimately attend the study session with the City as the intent is to understand the decision the EDC made and to decide next steps.

## Approve Site Development Plans – Sinclair Design & Engineering (1104 Industrial Blvd.)

Deprez shared the highlights on the development of the Sinclair expansion. The TIFA Board is required to approve site plans, following the Planning Commission, on any developments in the industrial park.

- Motion by Norris, supported by Haas.
- Roll Call Vote.
- Resolved: Motion passed, with Wallace absent from the vote.

## **Workforce Development**

Meeting was cancelled for this month, so no report in your packet this month.

## **President's Report**

Deprez shared that she will be sending an email to all Board members directly following the meeting with annual certification of the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality policies. This is an annual requirement.

Deprez shared that the December 2020 Consolidated Statement, included in your packet, is not final, final. Deprez is working with the City to conclude all 2020 items and will provide a final 2020-year end report once that is done.

Deprez also shared that the financials for the year reflected about a 10% reduction in tax increment, based on COVID. At the start of COVID, the Board approved a staffing reduction plan to offset the predicted 20% tax hit. Deprez shared that the City has approved a Work Share furlough program for the Summer and will be on a 20% furlough until September 4<sup>th</sup>. Deprez will work with the Executive Board in June to discuss if there is a need for the EDC to follow suit.

## Economic Development

Deprez shared that Retention visits, the bread and butter of EDC offices, continue to be a challenge to get scheduled, more so with COVID. Christine Bowman and the MEDC continue to work toward meeting with the 6 targeted retention companies, as well as the EDC seeking a goal of doing 4-5 per month.

Deprez also shared that the Michigan Strategic Fund recently approved the Site Readiness Grant for the 40-acre site on Michigan and upon execution of the Grant Agreement we will soon have a Master Site Development Plan. This is timely and needed to increase marketing for this site, as we continue to see larger acreage RFPs for prospective projects.

## Community Development

Deprez shared that Bowman and the City (Kipp) are working on a Broadband access taskforce, through a grant that the UpJohn Institute received. Albion College and Merit

Network also are included in these discussions. Connectivity continues to be a priority for a healthy economic environment. Additionally, Bowman will participate in smaller workgroups with Calhoun County on the same subject.

Brick Street Lofts recently submitted for reimbursement of the Brownfield eligible activities. Deprez will review and decide if a 3<sup>rd</sup> party environmental firm should handle to certification or if it can be done in house. Expect to see the certification on the June Board meeting agenda.

Housing – Deprez shared that Zero Day presented to Council on May 3, 2021 on a potential project at the Urban Renewal. The Council indicated interested and City Manager Snyder and Deprez will continue to work with Zero Day to bring forward a proposal. Deprez also shared that we are using EPA grant funds to “back into” the site plan based on the environmental. It is a new way to use the funds, approved by the EPA, and will develop a site plan that minimizes the costs of remediation, while maximizes the development.

500 Berrien – Deprez shared that there was an informational meeting held recently on the results of the recent soil, water and soil vapor testing that was done on the parcels. Participants of the meeting included community partners that are interested in the site, as well as developers that have indicated interest.

Entrepreneurship - Deprez shared that the enhanced entrepreneurial programming has been branded *dream.build.rise* and though will be an initiative of the EDC will not be marketed as the EDC. A DBR team, consisting of Justin Andert, Boss Up and EDC will roll out the pilot in June and is currently working the through the logistic of launching the programming and fundraising. The Summer cohort will be followed by a Business Plan pitch session in the Fall.

Albion Small Business Pandemic Response Fund – Deprez shared that we continue to work with individuals that are interested in the fund, a couple new applications have been sent out – however, there has not been any new approvals. Funding is still available. Evans added that a recent announcement by the SBA that the last round of PPP is depleted, may bring additional candidates that were looking to the SBA PPP program and now will be unable to apply.

#### **Board of Directors Discussion & Comments:**

Mayor Snyder indicated a desire by Council to see the recordings of the EDC meeting made available on the EDC website. Deprez shared that this was under consideration, however once we return to in-person meetings, the EDC does not have the technology to record meetings. Deprez to discuss with the Executive Board.

City Manager Snyder shared the details of the Work Share program that the City is under until September 4<sup>th</sup> and that it was approved to keep the General Fund strong considering the continuing unknowns related to COVID and the budget.

No other Board Member comments received.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**EDC Board Meeting adjourned by Evans at 8:35 AM.**

DRAFT

## February 2021 Consolidated Statements

Information presented as of 2/28/2021, Report prepared 05/28/2021

Revenues	TIFA		EDC		Brownfield Development		Food Hub		RLF		Totals	
	Budget	Year-to-Date	Budget	Year-to-Date	Budget	Year-to-Date	Budget	Year-to-date	Budget	Year-to-Date	Budget	Year-to-Date
Property Taxes (w/ LCSSR)	\$ 125,000.00				109,000.00						\$ 234,000.00	\$ -
Property Tax Chargebacks											\$ -	\$ -
Delq. Personal Property Tax											-	-
Rental of Property			\$ 60,000.00	11,083.33				2,900.00			60,000.00	13,983.33
EPA Grant											-	-
Federal Grant					-						-	-
State Grant			39,900.00		-						39,900.00	-
Local Grants											-	-
Incubator Rents											-	-
Food Hub Rents											-	-
Farmer's Market Stall Fees											-	-
Senior Project Fresh / Market Fresh											-	-
Reimbursements	110,000.00										110,000.00	-
Other Revenues				607.42							-	607.42
Interest		51.42		32.16				5.31	\$ 35.00	\$ 62.75	35.00	151.64
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 235,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 51.42</b>	<b>\$ 99,900.00</b>	<b>\$ 11,722.91</b>	<b>\$ 109,000.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 2,905.31</b>	<b>\$ 35.00</b>	<b>\$ 62.75</b>	<b>\$ 443,935.00</b>	<b>\$ 14,742.39</b>
<b>Transfer In</b>												
Trans From TIFA to EDC			\$ 43,500.00								\$ 43,500.00	\$ -
Trans From TIFA to Bus Inc											-	-
Trans From DDA to BRA					103,000.00						103,000.00	-
<b>Total Transfers Out</b>	<b>\$ -</b>		<b>\$ 43,500.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 103,000.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>			<b>\$ 146,500.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>Total Net Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 235,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 51.42</b>	<b>\$ 143,400.00</b>	<b>\$ 11,722.91</b>	<b>\$ 212,000.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 2,905.31</b>	<b>\$ 35.00</b>	<b>\$ 62.75</b>	<b>\$ 146,500.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>Expenses</b>												
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 155,421.00	\$ 21,393.90	\$ 61,617.00	\$ 8,484.64							\$ 217,038.00	\$ 29,878.54
Administrative Costs			2,950.00	866.19							2,950.00	866.19
Professional Services	1,000.00		3,600.00	1,425.50							4,600.00	1,425.50
Contractual Services	500.00		4,450.00	437.00	207,000.00				35.00		211,985.00	437.00
Utilities	600.00	1,568.33	2,300.00	1.97				821.66			2,900.00	2,391.96
Travel			500.00	-							500.00	-
Maintenance	4,000.00		2,000.00					177.26			6,000.00	177.26
Insurance			2,000.00	4,184.00							2,000.00	4,184.00
Conference & Training Cost			2,200.00	-							2,200.00	-
Admin Fees to City	8,900.00		10,000.00		5,000.00						23,900.00	-
Rental Charges (Spec Bldg)											-	-
Loan Payments MDEQ											-	-
Land											-	-
ABA Land Contract			5,720.00								5,720.00	-
ABA Land Contract interest			286.00								286.00	-
Roof loan interest											-	-
Economic Development	4,000.00		42,400.00	22,424.50							46,400.00	22,424.50
Rent to ABA/ACF	10,200.00	1,700.00	1,800.00	300.00							12,000.00	2,000.00
Miscellaneous												
Transfer FR TIFA to EDC/AFH	43,500.00										43,500.00	
EPA Grant											-	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 228,121.00</b>	<b>\$ 24,662.23</b>	<b>\$ 141,823.00</b>	<b>\$ 38,123.80</b>	<b>\$ 212,000.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 998.92</b>	<b>\$ 35.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 581,979.00</b>	<b>\$ 63,784.95</b>
<b>To Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 6,879.00</b>	<b>\$ (24,610.81)</b>	<b>\$ 1,577.00</b>	<b>\$ (26,400.89)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 1,906.39</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 62.75</b>	<b>\$ 8,456.00</b>	<b>\$ (49,042.56)</b>

\*Transfer from TIFA to EDC will take place at year-end with the amended budget.



# Economic Development Strategic Plan

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Albion, Michigan

**Amy Deprez, President & CEO**

Approved by:

Albion Economic Development Corporation  
Board of Directors  
November 2, 2017

Updated and Certified  
April 4, 2019

Approved by City Council  
April 15, 2019

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albion is reaching a tipping point of economic growth. The residents of Albion have shown unwavering resilience throughout the Great Recession and the decline of manufacturing. Investors have been instilled with more confidence in small-town economies. The Albion Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) and its partners have been experiencing both successes and growing pains as developments take off and the interest in Albion grows each day. This Economic Development Strategic Plan has been created to guide the AEDC and its partners through this quickly evolving economic upswing.

The overarching goal of the EDSP is to increase the human and financial capacity of the AEDC so that it can take a more proactive and responsive approach to economic development instead of a reactionary approach. The EDSP seeks to do this by:

- ❖ *creating a unifying direction for the economic and business development entities in Albion as the City continues to move in a positive direction; and*
- ❖ *improving the ability and efficiency of the AEDC and its partners to attract, retain, and grow businesses.*

As a result of the strategy outlined in this document, existing businesses can expect to receive more support from the DDA, the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Albion, the AEDC, and other organizations. It is through this support that they will see increased sales, more skilled employees, and more complementary businesses. The City, AEDC, and others can hope to see increased revenue to increase their staffing and ability to serve the needs of residents, businesses, and tourists alike.

By taking a more unified and concerted effort, it is the hope of the AEDC, its Board, and its partners that the growth and prosperity coming to Albion will benefit all of those that seek to take part in it.



Amy Deprez, President and CEO

## INTRODUCTION

The AEDC organized a Steering Committee to draft the Economic Development Strategic Plan. This Steering Committee represented City Council, Planning Commission, the City Planning and Zoning Department, local business owners, and Albion College. The Steering Committee met on July 24, 2017 to generate ideas for the goals and objectives of this Plan. The AEDC staff worked to compile the information from the meeting and drafted the Economic Development Strategic Plan. The Steering Committee reviewed a draft of the document on August 28, 2017, made edits, and sent it to the Albion Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors. The final document was approved and adopted on September ##, 2017 with the Directors' edits.

This document begins with the strategic situations and opportunities that Albion faces. This list has been developed and vetted by the AEDC staff and the Steering Committee. Each of the goals of this plan identifies: those responsible for achieving the goal, the objectives to achieve the goal, the expected outcomes, key partners, and performance measures where appropriate.

The goals in this document were largely based on the City's Comprehensive Plan which was drafted with input from residents, City Council, Planning Commission, and key stakeholders. The goals are also designed to ensure that the AEDC and the City of Albion meet the requirements of the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Community Program. Completing the RRC Program will open the door to many opportunities for Albion. Albion will have access to funding, technical assistance, and marketing through the MEDC during the RRC process and after completion of the program.

During the planning process, it became clear that certain guiding principles were paramount in the development of this plan. Ensuring the development of the community promotes densely populated neighborhoods and smart growth strategies. Ensuring that there is a strong sense of inclusion in the planning and promotion of positive and consistent messages both within and outside of the community. Ensuring support for "early adopters" with resources and incentives to create a strong economy and foundation that will attract more developers to the area. And lastly, ensuring that the community attracts businesses that will accommodate the needs and wants of residents, students, and visitors. Through these principles, the following Economic Development Strategic Plan was developed.

### Steering Committee Members:

Sheryl Mitchell, City Manager	Garrett Brown, Mayor	Jeanette Spicer, Councilperson
John Tracy, Planning Director	Tom Pitt, Planning Commission	Sharon Ponds, Planning Commission
Scott Evans, DDA	Kelly Rice, Chamber of Commerce	Eric Worley, Chamber of Commerce
Mauri Ditzler, Albion College	Bob Anderson, Albion College	Andy French, Albion College
William Dobbins, ARC	Ed Haas, EDC Board	Art Kale, EDC Board
Craig Carroll, Industry	Gene Sorgi, Industry	Kyle Sinclair, Industry

## Strategic Opportunities

### Redevelopment Sites

Albion has been left with several large properties that are ideal for development. The Calhoun County Land Bank Authority, Marshall Public Schools, Albion College, the AEDC, and Albion Reinvestment Corporation (ARC) hold over 20 redevelopment sites in Albion. These sites present opportunities for various sizes and types of development, including commercial, mixed use, industrial, and residential.

### Strong Industrial Park

Albion's Industrial Park is home to 17 manufacturing companies that produce everything from cardboard and plastic injection molding to prosthetic limbs and solar panels. There is still undeveloped space available for new operations. The Albion Industrial Park also boasts a business incubator space that has had successful businesses exit the incubator stage and go on to grow in Albion such as Team One Plastics.

### Downtown Anchor Projects

Albion's early investors have helped to strengthen the downtown and instill confidence in future investors and entrepreneurs. In 2015, the historic Bohm Theatre was reopened and has become a venue for first-run movies and community events like Blues at the Bohm, where locals hang out for a 3-hour jam session on Monday nights. The Bohm Theatre launched a successful crowdfunding campaign through the MEDC's Public Spaces Community Places Grant Program to add a second screen in the adjacent building. A Courtyard by Marriott hotel will be completed in early 2018, the Peabody Project – a three-story mixed use renovation of an existing building – has just been approved for a Community Development Block through the MEDC, and the Albion Malleable Brewing Company will be open by early 2018 – due in part to a comprehensive financial package utilizing a local bank, crowdfunding, and impact investment through the New Albion Impact Group. The momentum that these projects are creating has led to other small businesses and entrepreneurs remodeling and opening stores in the downtown such as Stirling Books and Brew, AIM Community Thrift Store, Brown's Home Furnishings, Yesterday's News Antiques, and more.

### Educational Institutions

Albion is home to Albion College, a high-ranking Midwestern liberal arts institution with nearly 1,500 students. Kellogg Community College has a branch located just outside of Albion. Albion is also located within 60 miles of 11 major colleges and universities.

Albion is within the Marshall Public School District which has a kindergarten through post-secondary education focus and offers AP courses, an early access college program, and a strong educational program. Albion's children can benefit from being part of a school district that focuses on K-12 education and beyond.

### MEDC Redevelopment Ready Community Program

The MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Community Program has opened the door to financial support and technical assistance to achieve the economic development goals that the AEDC has identified. The program is designed to build the capacity of small cities to attract and retain developers.

### Residents

Residents of Albion show strong support for local businesses and initiatives. Albion's residents are an engaged, talented, passionate, and active community that are committed to Albion's success. Both current and future residents hope to see Albion become a place that provides a good quality of life while remaining affordable.

Many of Albion’s aging residents would like to remain in Albion and are seeking ways to attract more senior residential developments and single-level barrier-free homes.

### Natural Features

The Kalamazoo River runs through the heart of the downtown and is the focal point of Albion’s largest and most-used park of its 17 amazing parks, Victory Park. The Kalamazoo River is an ideal spot for kayaking, canoeing, and fishing. Albion is located at the intersection of 3 major state-wide and national trails: The North Country National Scenic Trail, the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail, and the Iron Belle Trail. The City is currently expanding its trail system through an MDNR Trust Fund Grant to attract more hikers and bikers to the region.

### Publicity at State and National Levels

Albion has been featured in MLive, the Wall Street Journal, and by departments of the State such as the MDNR for the progress that is being made here and its bold initiatives. Albion College even received a Simon Spotlight award for its educational connections to the City’s sister city, Noisy-le-Roi, France. Albion is on the path to success and it is gaining local, state, national, and even international recognition.

### Entrepreneurship

People within and around Albion have a strong interest in starting businesses in Albion. A few such examples include the Albion Malleable Brewing Company, Kerizma Salon, and Stirling Books and Brew. Stirling Books and Brew was the reinvention of the former Books and More, revamping the business to what is popular today. Continuing to support these entrepreneurs is a key part of this strategic plan.

### Investors

Albion has been fortunate to have initial investors that are willing to take the necessary risks to revitalize the economy in Albion and lay the foundation for other investments. The Albion Reinvestment Corporation, the New Albion Impact Group, Shaheen Development and ACE Investments have been purchasing and renovating blighted buildings. Also, an alumnus of Albion College gifted \$1 million for the Harrington Project, which allows for the rehabilitation and demolition of homes in a neighborhood connecting the downtown with the campus.

### Alumni & Retirees

Albion’s aging population and alumni of Albion College and the City are seeking opportunities to relocate or remain in Albion for their retirement years. A group of engaged and passionate retirees and alumni are working to attract developers to provide senior housing and barrier-free housing so that they can remain in Albion and age in place instead of relocating to another city with more housing options.

### Location

Albion’s manufacturers and producers enjoy that Albion is located just off I-94 and a short drive from I-69 and US 127. People can come and go using the Amtrak station located at the north end of downtown via daily trains going to Chicago, Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Lansing.

### Large Amount of Affordable Housing

Albion was recently ranked as the 16<sup>th</sup> best city for first-time homebuyers in the State of Michigan by [LendEDU](#). Albion has many beautiful and affordable historic homes, a wide selection of rental properties, and the majority of Albion is within walking and biking distance to downtown.

## Strategic Situation and Challenges

### Education & Workforce

The existing workforce is ready to reskill so that it can meet the demand for technical and skilled labor. Like much of the US's workforce, many unemployed workers have given up looking for work. Before working to reskill the labor force, the labor force must be engaged and supported to reenter the workforce or enter reskilling programs or pursuing more education.

### Infrastructure & Transportation

Albion's main street, Superior Street, is undergoing a complete renovation to replace the water mains, sub-base, and brick pavement. Albion's downtown will be well prepared to welcome new businesses with the work that is taking place. Many of Albion's other roads, however, are in disrepair. The main corridors – Michigan Ave., Eaton St., and M-99 – are maintained by MDOT which helps to alleviate the strain on the City's budget. Albion lacks a public transportation system making transportation for jobs, health, and living challenging for residents.

### Perception of Change

As with any city, everyone has different ideas as to what their city *should* be. The community is developing a unified vision for economic growth, education, and workforce development. The AEDC believes that the positive changes happening in the community can and should reach all those that wish to take part in them

Albion is on the cusp of a rebirth. The resilience of Albion's residents combined with the risk that initial investors are taking is positioning the City to return to its past life of a bustling downtown and strong, connected neighborhoods. By focusing on this, Albion can change its self-image and continue to welcome more residents and businesses into the community.

### Alignment of Community Leaders

While many great initiatives and investments are taking root in Albion, community leaders have been coming together in formal and informal ways to align their goals so the city can take larger strides in economic progress. This plan seeks to align those goals for the betterment of the Albion economy and workforce.

### Access to Healthcare

The closest hospital to Albion is a 15-minute drive to Oaklawn Hospital in Marshall, MI. Many residents have expressed a desire for a hospital or medical facility within Albion that offers after-hours and emergency care. The existing health care facilities in Albion include: Henry Ford Allegiance Family Medical Center, Calhoun County Health Department, and the Ralph and Mary Cram Medical Center which provide basic medical services. A group of community organizations prepared and submitted a rural healthcare grant in 2017 for research and development of a new healthcare facility in Albion to best accommodate the needs of residents.

### Gateway Appeal

Albion recognizes the impact that an attractive and inviting entryway has on a community. Organizations are coming together to develop a plan for redeveloping these corridors. The City of Albion is updating its zoning ordinance to better meet the needs of today's residents and businesses to attract investment and development along the corridors.

## Communication

The most effective forms of communication in Albion tend to be word-of-mouth and social media. Organizations and individuals are always seeking new ways to communicate news about events and other happenings. Finding new ways to communicate and reach more areas of the city will help to better inform residents of events and developments and create a larger sense of community.

## Food Desert

Albion is classified as a “food desert” as there is a lack of access to affordable fresh foods. The AEDC has made a significant impact in this deficiency by revitalizing the Albion Farmer’s Market and starting the Albion Food Hub. The Albion Farmer’s Market is open during the spring, summer, and fall and accepts food assistance program benefits. The AEDC plans to implement a year-round market soon. The Albion Food Hub is a shared commercial kitchen, food and restaurant incubator, and houses the food pantry for the community. A nonprofit group, Albion Community Gardens, has converted several acres of property for production of free produce for residents.

## Manufacturing Trends

The US economy has been experiencing a decline in employment in manufacturing due to automation and overseas labor markets. While Albion has had a strong manufacturing history, it is becoming increasingly difficult for economies to support manufacturing industries. A broad range of skilled and unskilled jobs will create a more resilient economy with more opportunities for all residents.

## Declining & Aging Population

The City of Albion, like many of its surrounding communities, lost population from 1970-2010. Albion’s population continued to decline, however, and in 2015 Nielsen Company estimated that Albion’s population decreased to 8,240 persons, a decline of 4.44% from the 2010 Census. Without intervention, Nielsen projects that the City’s population would continue to fall to 7,961 persons by 2020, a decrease of another 3.4%.

Of the 2,785 households estimated in Albion in 2015, nearly 64% are comprised of “empty nesters and retirees.” These empty nesters and retirees are seeking domiciles where they can age in place. Many do not want to move out of town to a retirement home, but without adequate housing and senior options in the City, they must.

## Quality of Life

As many small post-industrial towns have seen, attracting younger people can be difficult when there is “nothing to do.” All residents, regardless of age, would like to see more “things to do” after 5:00 pm. Right now, many young people are willing to move to communities and put the time and sweat-equity into older homes if they can be in a lively and engaging community. Albion needs entertainment options and a diversified housing stock to attract new residents and keep existing residents here. Albion is on its way to offering more entertainment options and providing for the basic retail needs of current and future residents. The arts, culture, and music are growing in Albion. Albion is seeing more and more talent coming from within its own community from musicians and artists to chefs and entrepreneurs. The AEDC is focusing on dense development to create the walkable, energetic community that both young and old would like to see.

## **Mission & Vision**

### **Albion Economic Development Mission Statement**

The Albion EDC works to retain, expand and recruit businesses and industry to the greater Albion area and strengthen and revitalize the local economy.

### **Vision**

Revitalizing the local economy through collaboration, partnership, and delivering on the Mission through:

- Growing and Attracting Businesses and Industry
- Building Workforce Capabilities and Alleviating Conditions for Unemployment
- Revitalizing Albion's Core Development Districts

*Through facilitated discussions with community leaders and residents, a long-term vision will be developed and included in future updates of this document.*

### **Social Impact**

As the main economic development organization serving the City of Albion, the Albion EDC seeks to strengthen the local economy so that the City of Albion has ample resources to meet the diverse safety, public health, environmental, and other needs of citizens. After the major economic downturn, the community lost its economic base, but its residents did not lose their faith in the community. The Albion EDC is putting its resources into restoring the robust economy that Albion once had by attracting businesses and jobs that will meet the needs and desires of Albion's citizens. The Albion EDC along with many other partners is working to ensure that Albion improves its quality of life while remaining affordable.

## **The Albion Economic Development Corporation: Your Continued Partner**

The Albion EDC recognized that there are many challenges to development in post-industrial towns – diminished customer base, environmental remediation, brain-drain, population decline, workforce skill gaps and more. As a result, we have many options in our development “tool box.” The goals and strategies outlined in this document regarding the attraction of new businesses and jobs will be realized, in part, due to the incentive packages that the AEDC can assemble for developers.

### **TIFA & BRA**

The AEDC is also the City’s Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA). Through these tools in particular, the AEDC can help support the redevelopment and reuse of Brownfield sites. Through capture of increased tax revenue, resulting from the redevelopment project, certain environmental costs associated with a Brownfield site may be reimbursed to the Developer over time. Eligible activities include demolition, asbestos abatement, site preparation, public infrastructure improvements and more. These programs spur the development of challenged sites and create a cleaner, healthier environment for residents.

The AEDC has in place a mechanism to continue the collection of tax increment on Brownfield projects for a period of time after the developer has been reimbursed to create a revolving pool of funds that can be used on future projects to address environmental assessments and other costs.

### **Albion EDC Revolving Loan Fund**

The AEDC has a revolving loan fund, designed to be the “lender of last resort”, that is flexible and can be used as an alternative form of financing for development projects. The fund requires job creation and can be used for a variety of activities, including working capital.

### **Tax Sharing & Rehabilitation Acts**

Michigan law encourages the redevelopment of obsolete, blighted and underutilized buildings with the creation of districts that allow for tax capture by essentially freezing the taxable value of the building prior to redevelopment for a period of up to 12 years. Depending on many variables, the tax capture can be provided to the developer or shared between the developer and the community to incentivize significant improvements in the property without increasing the property taxes on the building.

### **SBDC Partnerships**

Due to a partnership with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the AEDC can offer free business consulting for start-ups or existing businesses in Albion. Local entrepreneurs, long-time businesses, and others have taken advantage of this free assistance to launch their businesses or expand their current reach.

### **Grants and Other Incentives**

The AEDC is happy to partner with developers that need assistance in applying for state or federal grant/loan programs. Our team has vast experience with the MEDC’s programs, grant writing, EPA grants/loans, and more. The AEDC is here to assist developers and businesses in making it easier to locate in Albion.

To read more about available incentive programs, [click here](#) to view our incentives summary sheet.

## **STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

The goals and objectives outlined on the following pages represent actions that the AEDC will *claim, support, or endorse*. Unless otherwise stated, the AEDC will claim these goals and objectives meaning that they will take a lead role in seeing that these goals are followed through on. If a goal specifies that the AEDC will *support* an action, that means that the AEDC will be a partner and participant in that action, but it is not the lead organization spearheading that action. If a goal is specified as being *endorsed* by the AEDC that means that the AEDC may not have an active role in that activity, but it endorses other organizations working toward that goal.

All organizations that have been listed as the responsible parties and champions for achieving these goals have been consulted during the drafting of this plan. The organizations listed have agreed that the goals and strategies with which they are listed are appropriate, within their purview, and feasible.

The goals have been ranked by the Steering Committee and the order has been approved by the AEDC Board of Directors. When ranking the goals, the Steering Committee considered the logical order in which they should happen, their feasibility, the current progress on the goals, and the community's most pressing needs. It should be noted that Goal 3 is not an end unto itself. The goal of building the capacity of the AEDC and other economic development agencies in the city is to ensure that we can sustain the progress that has been made and continue to make progress in *all areas of the City*.

**Goal 1: Stabilize the downtown, enhance its historic character, and support its economic growth.**

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO, ARC Board of Directors, DDA, City of Albion

**Key Partners:** Foundations, investors, Albion College, residents, the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce (GACC), Calhoun County Visitors Bureau, developers

*Several investors, entrepreneurs, and business owners have been reenergizing the downtown in recent years. It is the hope that the downtown will become an active, walkable, vibrant, and engaging public space that attracts and serves residents, students, and visitors. Albion’s downtown is the most economically viable section of town at this point. The AEDC recognizes that all areas of town need redevelopment, investment, and planning. The downtown has initial investors that will help to create jobs and increase revenue for the City of Albion. The AEDC sees a need to allocate its limited resources here for the time being until the downtown is more stable and producing revenue for the City. The AEDC is confident that the positive effects of a strengthened downtown will naturally spill over into other areas of the city.*

Strategies	AEDC’s Role	Responsible Party
A. <i>Attract</i> mixed use development to the downtown that will serve the needs of the community and complement the existing mix of businesses	Claim	AEDC
B. <i>Develop</i> ARC Strategic Plan and Downtown Plan	Claim	AEDC
C. <i>Support</i> DDA in efforts to develop comprehensive façade improvement program	Support	DDA
D. <i>Develop</i> Community Development Block Grant façade improvement program	Claim	AEDC
E. <i>Support</i> Chamber of Commerce in the enhancement of events to draw more foot-traffic to the community	Support	GACC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) Mixed use properties will be developed in downtown
- 2) ARC Strategic Plan and Downtown Plan will lead to increased growth and vibrancy in the downtown
- 3) Businesses will rehab façades, transforming the aesthetics of the downtown
- 4) Increase in attendance at events, increase in foot-traffic supporting downtown

Performance Measures	Baseline	Target	Target Amount
No. of downtown properties redeveloped	1	December 2018	3
		December 2021	10
		December 2025	20
No. of façade improvements	1	December 2020	4
		Commercial vacancy rate	
	40%	December 2021	20%
		December 2025	<8%
No. of downtown residential units developed/redeveloped	N/A	December 2021	20
		December 2025	55

-Revised January 2019

**Goal 2: Stabilize the City’s major corridors and support their economic growth.**

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO, City of Albion, businesses located within corridors, Citizens to Beautify Albion and other Community Partners

**Key Partners:** Businesses along corridors, residents, MDOT, business/trade associations, developers

*Albion’s civic and business leaders realize the importance of having inviting, attractive gateways to the community. Albion will strengthen neighborhoods and businesses along the entryways, thus improving the quality of life in those areas. This is recognized as a top priority for both attracting more development and improving the quality of life by removing blight and channeling investment into the corridors. The AEDC’s role in achieving this goal is attracting and retaining businesses and developments along the major corridors. The City of Albion’s role is to establish an overarching plan for improving the corridors. The performance measures for the corridor improvement efforts will be outlined in the Corridor Improvement Plan. It is not appropriate to outline those performance measures in this document without undertaking the appropriate planning processes.*

Strategies	AEDC’s Role	Responsible Parties
A. <i>Support</i> the development of a Corridor Improvement Plan that strengthens the visual and physical connections made by the Downtown Commercial District, Albion College, the I94 (Eaton St.) Business Corridor, Austin Avenue, and the south entrance to the City on M99 - Explore the establishment of a Corridor Improvement Authority	Support	City of Albion
B. <i>Attract</i> businesses and development to the major corridors	Claim	AEDC
C. <i>Support</i> primary Community Partner for each corridor: Austin & Eaton – Albion Community Foundation Downtown – Albion Reinvestment Corporation Michigan – Albion College Michigan, Eastern Entrance – Sheridan Township	Support	Community Partner

**Outcomes:**

- 1) "Gateway appeal" will improve and the businesses along the major corridors will experience positive changes and growth
- 2) Corridor Improvement Authorities will be established if necessary
- 3) Corridors will be filled with businesses and development

Performance Measures	Baseline	Target	Target Amount
No. of new businesses/developments along major corridors	N/A	December 2019	3
		December 2021	6
		December 2025	12

- City will complete Corridor Improvement Plan and establish Corridor Improvement Authority (if deemed necessary) – *by December 2019*

-Revised January 2019

**Goal 3: Build the human and capital capacity of key economic development agencies within Albion.**

**Champions:** Director of Planning, Building, and Code; AEDC Project Manager

**Key Partners:** DDA, City of Albion, GACC, MSU Extension, State partners and regional planning councils

*Albion will seize the major shift taking place in its economy to build up the tax base and thus the revenue streams for the City, AEDC, and DDA. These increased financial resources will help all organizations function at a higher level with increased staff and resources for the community. As mentioned in Goal 1, the AEDC recognizes that every area of town can benefit from investment and redevelopment. It is the hope of the AEDC that through the completion of the Redevelopment Ready Community Certification (RRC) through the MEDC and supporting the initial investors in the community that it will have the resources to focus attention and investment into all areas of the city so that all will benefit from the economic upswing.*

*Many of the strategies outlined in this goal are part of the RRC Program which the City is on track to complete by the end of 2017. This is the reason why this goal has been listed higher on the list of goals. As this shift in Albion’s economy is taking place, the option of combining certain aspects of the DDA, AEDC, and Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce (GACC) has been identified to maximize the outputs of all the organizations combined.*

Strategies	AEDC’s Role	Responsible Party
A. Reduce barriers to development and increase speed-to-market	Claim	AEDC
- Achieve consistency between the existing zoning code and the long-term goals for residential, commercial, and industrial development	Support	City of Albion
- Prepare Guide to Development	Support	City of Albion
- Prepare Property Information Packages for redevelopment sites	Claim	AEDC
- Have all development guides, materials, and applications available online	Support	City of Albion
- Implement administrative and procedural practices to better align and communicate among the “doorways” of development – City, AEDC, DDA, GACC	Support	City of Albion
B. Review and develop funding strategies to increase financial resources and staff of the AEDC, the City, the DDA, and the GACC	Claim	AEDC
- Develop a revolving loan fund through brownfield tax increment capture	Claim	AEDC
- Apply for economic development grants to increase staffing	Claim	AEDC
C. Explore possibility of market research study	Claim	AEDC
D. Explore possibility of combining aspects of the AEDC, DDA, and GACC	Claim	AEDC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) Speed-to-market, communication among development organizations, and organizational capacity/preparedness will improve
- 2) Increased staff and capacity will lead to further economic growth and expanded community resources
- 3) Market research study will be completed if necessary
- 4) Working agreement with AEDC, DDA, and/or GACC will be established

Performance Measures:

- City completes Zoning Rewrite – *by May 2019*
- Finalize Guide to Development – *by December 2017*
- Finalize Property Information Packages – *by December 2018*
- Have all development materials online – *by May 2019*
- Establish standing meetings among “doorways” of development – *by December 2017*
- Review funding strategies – *by February 2018*
- Complete market research study (if determined necessary)
- Meet with DDA and GACC to discuss possibility of combining aspects of functions – *by February 2018*

*-Revised January 2019*

## Goal 4: Retain and attract high-leverage jobs to Albion

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO, City of Albion, Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce President (GACC),

**Key Partners:** Employment resource network, foundations, educational institutions, AmeriCorps VISTA, employers

*Albion will be home to a broad labor force and a robust local economy. The AEDC will realize this by attracting a diverse range of employers and expanding the capacity of current employers. There are several available jobs in and around Albion. The major challenge to matching people with jobs is the skill gap. The AEDC will work with employers, community partners and workforce development agencies to engage disengaged citizens to re-enter the labor market and put in place training programs that will close the skill gap.*

Strategies	AEDC's Role	Responsible Party
A. Support a workgroup to research and generate ideas for housing, workforce development, and business recruitment	Support	City of Albion
B. Support efforts to strengthen Albion's workforce development network by partnering with key organizations and educational institutions	Support	City of Albion
C. Develop and implement proactive business retention and development strategy	Claim	AEDC
D. Foster entrepreneurship	Claim	AEDC
E. Encourage reuse and redevelopment of brownfield sites by utilizing existing brownfield redevelopment assistance programs	Claim	AEDC
F. Support connections with Albion College/Albion High School Alumni looking to expand or start new businesses	Claim	AEDC
G. Advertise business incubators to broader network	Claim	AEDC

### Outcomes:

- 1) A roadmap for housing, workforce development, and business recruitment will be implemented
- 2) Albion's workforce will be strengthened and job-seekers will relate to employment
- 3) Albion's businesses will remain strong players in the local economy and experience growth
- 4) More entrepreneurs will thrive in Albion
- 5) Brownfield sites will be redeveloped and repurposed
- 6) New business/employment opportunities will result from proactive engagement with alumni networks

Performance Measures	Baseline	Target Date	Target Amount
Tenant(s) in Albion Food Hub Incubator	2	December 2019 December 2021	4 8
Tenant(s) in business incubator, if re-established	0	December 2020	2
No. of Entrepreneurs engaged* in community	N/A	December 2019	5
No. of new businesses attracted to the community	N/A	December 2020	4

\*Here, "engaged" is defined as at a minimum receiving counseling support and progressing in the development of their business.

- Workgroup for housing, workforce development, and business recruitment established
- Participate in efforts to strengthen Albion's workforce development network
- Complete business retention and development strategy
- Engage with existing brownfield redevelopment assistance programs
- Complete promotional materials for business incubators and advertise

-Revised January 2019

## Goal 5: Strengthen housing market and housing stock.

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO, City of Albion

**Key Partners:** Realtors, Local Banking Community, MEDC, MSHDA, Albion College, Albion High School Alumni Association, housing developers

*Albion will meet the housing needs of current and future residents. A Target Market Analysis was completed in 2015 for Albion that showed that Albion is capable of sustaining housing developments like townhouses, apartments, mixed use spaces, duplexes, and single-family homes. To seize this opportunity, the AEDC will work with realtors, the City of Albion, residents, and other partners to attract these desired developments.*

Strategies	AEDC's Role	Responsible Party
A. Support the attraction of private and nonprofit housing developers to create infill housing and the redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and brownfield sites for attainable and market rate housing that appeals to a broad range of demographics.	Support	City of Albion
- Develop incentive package for housing developers	Claim	AEDC
- Utilize Target Market Analysis to work with developers on creating different types of housing options	Claim	AEDC
- Create incentives for homeowners to invest in their homes	Support	City of Albion
- Collaborate with local realtors to spread a positive, consistent message about Albion	Endorse	GACC
- Coordinate the groups working on housing to maximize effort	Support	City of Albion
B. Support the City of Albion in its efforts to establish Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZ)	Support	City of Albion
C. Research and explore the establishment of a real estate investment trust	Claim	AEDC
D. Research and explore the establishment of a housing development incubator	Claim	AEDC

### Outcomes:

- 1) New housing developments and rehabilitated homes will create active and attractive neighborhoods
- 2) Neighborhood Enterprise Zone(s) will lead to more homeowners rehabilitating homes, restoring the character and vibrancy of these areas
- 3) More homes will be sold in Albion

Performance Measures	Baseline	Target Date	Target Amount
No. of new commercial housing developments	N/A	December 2020 December 2022	2 4
No. of commercial housing rehabilitations	N/A	December 2020 December 2022	2 5
No. of permits issued for rehabs in NEZ	N/A	December 2022	TBD
No. of structures demolished or rehabilitated to eliminate blight in the community	-	December 2020 December 2025	10 25

*-Revised January 2019*

**Goal 6: Create a unified brand for Albion to drive tourism, business growth, and investment**

**Champions:** Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce

**Key Partners:** City of Albion, AEDC, appointed and elected officials, educational institutions, SBAs/professional organizations, GACC

*The City, its residents, and its businesses will benefit from increased tourism, population, density, and a stronger housing market through the development of a Strategic Marketing Plan. A community marketing group has already been established to develop a new brand for Albion. With funding from the MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Community Program, a new community brand will be developed and marketed.*

Strategies	AEDC’s Role	Responsible Party
A. <i>Support</i> the creation of a “bank” of positive stories and accomplishments of residents, businesses, and organizations in the Albion community	<i>Support</i>	GACC
B. <i>Support</i> the development of a Strategic Marketing Plan to improve internal and external communication regarding developments, initiatives, and successes.	<i>Support</i>	GACC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) Information “bank” will help to develop pitches to large developers and attract new businesses, jobs, and investment
- 2) Strategic Marketing Plan will create and unify the branding of the City and its efforts
- 3) More attention on Albion will result in increased investment, population, and prosperity
- 4) More businesses that serve residents’, students’, and tourists’ needs will locate in Albion
- 5) Residents will be more informed of new projects and developments and become more civically engaged

**Performance Measures:**

- GACC creates information to “bank” of positive stories and accomplishments – *by May 2019 and ongoing*
- Complete Strategic Marketing Plan – *by May 2019*

*-Revised January 2019*

**Goal 7: Make strategic choices to turn Albion into a destination for current and future residents and tourists.**

**Champions:** GACC President, City of Albion

**Key Partners:** Local businesses

*Albion will be a community that is vibrant and bustling at all times of day with residents, students, and tourists. New entertainment options, restaurants, and retail stores will meet the leisure time activities that residents and tourists desire. At the time of the creation of this Plan, the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce is in a transition period and is searching for a new President. The new Courtyard by Marriott will also provide more revenue for the community to spur tourism and economic development. After the new President is hired and the GACC has more capacity through this new funding stream, the main champion of this goal will be the GACC.*

Strategies	AEDC's Role	Responsible Party
A. Determine if future hotel tax revenue can be used for economic development, marketing, and placemaking as a way to drive tourism	Claim	AEDC
B. Endorse extending or changing business hours of local businesses to accommodate residents and out-of-towners that work 8 to 5	Endorse	GACC
C. Support the attraction of more entertainment, restaurants, and recreation to Albion	Support	GACC
D. Support placemaking efforts	Support	GACC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) A plan for the new revenue will be developed and implemented
- 2) Businesses receive more traffic and sales from extended hours
- 3) More businesses that accommodate the entertainment needs of residents and tourists will locate to Albion
- 4) Increased vibrancy, foot traffic, and use of public spaces

**Performance Measures:**

*Remaining performance measures to be completed by December 2019*

- Albion EDC initiates discussion on use of increased tourism funding to drive economic development – by December 2018

*-Revised January 2019*

## Review and Oversight

The Economic Development Strategic Plan will be reviewed, approved, and amended annually and as needed by the Albion Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors. Staff of the City of Albion, the AEDC, and the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce and Albion's elected, and appointed officials will work towards the success of each goal. Annual updates will be reported to Planning Commission and City Council by the City Manager.

# memo



**Albion Economic Development Corporation**

To: EDC Board of Directors  
From: Christine Bowman, Economic Development Specialist  
CC: Amy Deprez, EDC President & CEO  
Date: June 3, 2021  
Re: Workforce Development Monthly Report

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## **Workforce Development**

The last Workforce Taskforce meeting was held April 30, 2021. Next meeting is June 17, 2021 at KCC Eastern Academic Center.

### *Status of identified Taskforce initiatives:*

*The activity that is grayed out is ongoing and has not had any pertinent updates since the last report. Any updated/new information will be in normal print.*

- Employer Communication
  - *Albion-Marshall Employer Roundtable: Temporarily on hold due to staff changes at Michigan WORKS! Southwest who will be responsible for facilitating the roundtable.*
- Childcare Issues
  - Jason Raddatz joined as a new member of the sub-committee and to share information he had gathered regarding a plan to possibly offer childcare at the Whitehouse Nature Center. The sub-committee continues to gather data to determine the level of need for childcare services in Albion, including before/after school care and for employees who work 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift jobs.

### *Newly identified Taskforce initiatives:*

- Employer Communication
  - The taskforce is working on a workforce development resource matrix to include local, regional, state, and federal partners and resources with clickable information links. The completed matrix will be housed on the EDC website and will also be available as a downloadable PDF. The goal of the matrix is to have a simple, easily updatable tool to communicate to existing and new businesses what workforce development resources may be available to them, depending upon their current or future workforce and talent development needs.
- Connecting Job Seekers to Employment Resources

- Out of several conversations regarding skill development, the group began to coalesce around the idea that one of the largest impediments to having a skilled workforce ready for employment was simply getting job seekers connected to existing resources. The discussion resulted in a concept the Workforce Taskforce wants to pursue – creating community navigators - that have a working knowledge of the available resources so they can assist job seekers in getting to the right resources/resource providers specific to their individual needs or desired career path. Dr. Barclay shared some examples of similar models. Linda LaNoue agreed to chair the sub-committee that will explore this concept and possible ideas for partnerships and funding to establish such a program in Albion.

## **Albion Economic Development Corporation**

To: EDC Board of Directors  
From: Amy Deprez & Christine Bowman  
CC:  
Date: June 3, 2021  
Re: Economic & Community Development Report

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*The activity that is grayed out is ongoing and has not had any pertinent updates since the last report. Any updated/new information will be in normal print.*

# Economic Development

## **Business Retention/Expansion/Attraction**

### Retention

- No retention visits were conducted in May.
- The Albion EDC is pleased to support the Manufacturing Growth Alliance and their many partners in their efforts to educate MI manufacturers about emerging Industry 4.0 technologies. MGA is hosting a series of informational webinars on June 8 and June 17 about Industry 4.0 - and potential grant funding available - to help implement these technologies. The full press release about the MGA Industry 4.0 initiative can be viewed at: <https://albionedc.org/industry-4-0-initiative-for.../>
- The Albion EDC wrote a letter of support to the MEDC in support of support of Michigan Works! Southwest proposal to secure Regional Talent Innovation Grant funding. If funding is secured, it would be used to enhance employer engagement and training opportunities for manufacturing companies within Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph counties, geared at low-to-moderate income individuals.
- Kellogg Community College in conjunction with Kalamazoo Community College has submitted a grant to the state for short-term accelerated training and support for area unemployed and underemployed, which works well for a possible expansion of iACT/KAMA, that would include the Albion area.
- Bowman continues to communicate with our manufacturing/industrial community with bi-monthly email blasts featuring training, workforce and business development, and other opportunities and resources for employers to retain and attract employees.
- Bowman continues to post 2-3 times a week open positions in all business sectors, targeting those opportunities within 10 miles of Albion.

### Expansion & Attraction

- MEDC Site Readiness Grant for creation of Master Site Development Plan for the EDC owned 1917 E Michigan Ave (AKA 425 Parcel): City is awaiting receipt of the grant agreement in May. Once received and executed, funds will be released, and Wightman Associates can commence work on the Master Site Development Plan.

- River Fork Solar Project: Bowman has been communicating regularly with Nick Edgmon, Swinerton Renewable Energy, the construction firm working with Ranger Power to build the project. They are still in the preconstruction/design phase and have not yet started permitting. Swinerton is targeting late summer 2021 to start construction. Over the next 2-3 months, EDC and Swinerton will begin discussing specific workforce needs and employee recruitment.
- 2021 Site Selection RFP & General Site Inquiries: (Reported Quarterly)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2021: EDC Site Selection RFP'S (Submitted online via ZoomProspector): EDC responded to 10 RFP's.
  - General Inquiries (By email, phone, referral from business or community members, Facebook): EDC responded to 4 requests.

## Entrepreneurial & Small Business Development

- dream.build.rise Albion E-Program
  - The first cohort is June 11 – July 26 with programming specifically designed for minority and women owned entrepreneurs. The application deadline was June 2.
  - Fundraising – The EDC continues to apply for donations and grants to support the DBR programing. To date, ACF \$5,000, with another \$5,000 promised if matching funds are obtained; Edward Jones \$1,000; Leah Raddatz CPA \$250 has been received. Deprez will present to Albion Area Philanthropic Women, sponsored by Board member Annette Norris; and Men Who Give.
  - Submitted for a Michigan Municipal League Neighborhood Microgrant \$500 to aid the DBR programming. Grants will be reviewed and undergo public voting in June, with July announcements.
  - Scheduled a brainstorming meeting for DDA, Chamber, City, ACF, Walk the Beat, Farmers Market, and others to collaborate on an incubation space / social district / community place and has identified a grant opportunity that we will pursue for the Small Business incubator portion of this initiative.
- Deprez participated in the Brick by Brick Entrepreneurship panel discussion, presented by ARC, on May 27<sup>th</sup>. The other panelist included Dr. Vicki Baker Harris, Director of the Albion College Community Collaborative (AC3); and Regina Ann Campbell, President & CEO of BUILD Institute. The discussion centered around why small business and entrepreneurship is a critical component for a thriving community. The podcast can be viewed at: [Albion Reinvests / Brick by Brick](#).
- The new small business information tool from Consumers Energy “Size Up” mentioned in the May 2021 Economic Development report can now be accessed from the AEDC website under the Small Biz Assistance tab [Small Biz Assistance - Albion Economic Development Corporation \(albionedc.org\)](#) Consumers provided customized links for EDO's, Chambers, etc. to embed in their individual websites to track site traffic. Consumers plans soon to provide training to EDO/Chamber staff so they can become proficient at using the tool. This will be a helpful resource for the EDC's entrepreneurial efforts.

## Broadband Access

- W.E. Upjohn Institute has received a grant to study broadband access in the SW Michigan region. Upjohn is also already working with a small group in Calhoun County that recently contracted with [Merit Network](#) to assess broadband access throughout the County. Albion College has provided funding and is very involved in the endeavor with Merit. Calhoun County is forming additional work groups around building broadband access. The EDC will participate in one of those work groups. \*Broadband access is both an economic and community development issue.

# Community Development

*The activity that is grayed out is ongoing and has not had any pertinent updates since the last report. Any updated/new information will be in normal print.*

## Downtown Development

- **Peabody Block Project (ACE Investments)** – Congratulations to ACE Property Investments on the Michigan Historic Preservation Award for the Peabody Block Project – see the video here <https://www.mhpn.org/historic-preservation-awards/>, great information on why preservation and redevelopment is so important. This project was a recipient of a Community Development Block Grant that aided in making the restoration a viable option for the owners.
- **Big Albion Plan (ARC)** – The Big Albion Plan (\$19 million investment / 57 apartments / 22 commercial units) is on track for development starting in 2022. ARC has a letter of intent from one major investor and still has 55% of the funding to acquire. Once the funding is in place, final architectural design work will be completed. They continue to meet with MEDC on a regular basis to share progress as this project moves along.

## Housing Development

- **Project Green (Zero Plus Team)** – We continue to work with Zero Day on an exciting and unique housing/skilled trades apprenticeship project for the Urban Renewal. They continue to work toward land control with the City of Albion. Currently, SME, through EPA grant funds, will be backing into a site plan based on where contamination is and with the thought to build a site plan that reduces costs for remediation and maximizes the development of housing units. The City/EDC has worked with Zero Day since mid-2019 and feel there is real momentum with this project and several State departments. The proposal estimates 24 single family homes and 2 multi units, each with 36 units, and a trades training program onsite. The project is expected to have green elements and promote a walkable neighborhood. The home ownership component will encourage partnerships with the Veteran housing, Habitat for Humanity, and other key members of the housing industry. This project has the ability to be used as a pilot for other communities to follow and shed light on the Albion community and its willingness to think creatively to create a win-win project for the community and development team.
- **500 Berrien** – A meeting was held in early April to discuss the findings from recent testing on the site, paid for by the EPA grant under the CCLBA/BC/Albion Coalition. The full report is available for interested developers and shows there are direct contact concerns in soil and water above required criteria, however the soil vapor numbers came back below the criteria. The environmental concerns for this site are manageable, and the BRA highly suggests that any developer interested in the site have experience and resources to handle a Brownfield redevelopment.
- **Place Plans** - In discussions with several of the developers interested in housing projects, there has been significant talk about the type of housing that would be envisioned for the various sites. As the Board knows, housing is a critical need in Albion and there really is not any housing type that is not needed. However, for a site, like 500 Berrien, where the parcel is larger and has various interested parties – it has been recommended that the EDC put together a place plan for the development sites. Place Plans are typically used for public spaces to gather input on what the community would like to see for a specific site. A similar approach can be done for development sites – gaining input from community members and stakeholders to identify the types of housing that would best fit the neighborhood and needs of the community. This gives interested developers a leg up on designing the proposed project – and instead of starting at zero they can design a project that the community has already shared is their vision for the site.

The EDC will be taking on a pilot program for two of our development sites, with 500 Berrien being one of the chosen sites.

- **Wildflower Crossing** – Deprez and Bowman attended the grand opening of the community. The first residents have moved in and more homes are expected to be constructed soon. COVID has affected this project as well, as the manufacturers are unable to promise homes until March 2022. The development team continues to work hard to ensure more options are available soon. To see the home options and for more information, please follow the link - <https://www.fourleafprop.com/virtual-home-tours/> .
- **Project HARRINGTON (Inheritance Development)** – This development is for 4 new single-family homes (3 Bed / 2.5 Bath) in the Harrington Development Corridor. A Pre-Sale Event was launched in November 2020, and to date no homes have been sold. The developer has met with Albion College, Dr. Johnson, to discuss options to make this opportunity available to faculty and staff that would qualify for the \$50,000 Harrington incentive. The EDC and Homestead Bank has worked with this developer for 2 years on getting the project to the pre-sale stage. The importance of this project is that it will set the market for new construction in the community and allow for adequate comp information for financing of new construction. As of an update with the developer the end of March, they are interested in understanding why the homes have not been spoken for yet, especially in a community where the housing stock is older and the need for new offerings is apparent.
- **Project HOPE** – This project is with a confidential client that EDC has worked with for the last couple of years. He is an alum of the college that wants to see Albion thrive. He has experience in mixed-use development and housing projects and has done a couple in Michigan already. His team is interested in four different projects currently, senior housing is one of them. Staff works with the team to pursue all options with the intent that one or two will come to the top and the team will pursue those in full force. The client recently met with the college to discuss a housing project with them, that if it materializes, would be the “anchor” project needed to bring his development to our community. Deprez followed up with property information on downtown buildings that may be available for development.

### Miscellaneous Community Development

- Deprez and several Board members participated in the Joint Study Session with the Albion City Council relative to the Albion First initiative. The session was for the City Council to understand from the Albion First Sub Committee and the EDC Board what brought about the decision by the EDC board to not continue forward with discussions of a new non-profit that the EDC Board will purchase services from. The item is to be discussed at the June 3 EDC Board meeting brought forward by the Mayor.
- **600 Block Austin (611, 617, 619 Austin Ave)** Through assistance from EGLE, we now have a Due Care Plan for the 600 Block of Austin that will give prospective developers much needed information. EDC has received approval from the Planning Commission to combine these three parcels into one and is currently going through the County tax search before that can happen.
- Bowman continues to share via bi-monthly email blasts to Council/Community Stakeholders/Non-industrial Business/Community Organizations a broad range of information about small business development and management resources and funding opportunities, housing development, community development related issues and grant opportunities, and job and skills training resources and programs for employers and job seekers.

## Albion Small Business Pandemic Response Fund

- **21 Applications Requested**

- 4 Funded (Palmer House, Kids 'N' Stuff, Pure Albion, Bohm) – **All funding has been verified.**
- 4 Denied/Withdrew
- 4 Pending Complete Application Packages
- 9 Applications Out / No Response

- **Funding Update**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Amount Approved, Pending Closing</b>	<b>Closed &amp; Funded</b>	<b>Available Balance</b>
<b>Micro-Grant</b>	\$0	\$0	\$10,000
<b>Pandemic Grant</b>	\$0	\$12,800	\$7,200
<b>Rent/Mortgage Loan</b>	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
<b>Pandemic Loan</b>	\$0	\$0	\$100,000

**INFORMATION**

**ONLY**

**2020/2021  
CITY OF ALBION  
EDC/TIFA/BRA  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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 **ALBION  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

May 7, 2021

Ryan Hundt, EDFP  
Regional Director, Growth and Development  
Michigan Economic Development Corporation  
300 N. Washington Square  
Lansing, MI 48913

Dear Ryan,

On behalf of the Albion Economic Development Corporation, it is my pleasure to provide this letter of support for Michigan Works! Southwest and their proposal for Regional Talent Innovation Grant funding.

The Albion EDC supports Michigan Works! Southwest's mission to prepare a qualified workforce to meet the current and emerging needs of business and industry. Through their proposal to enhance employer engagement and training opportunities for manufacturing companies within Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph counties, we believe Michigan Works! Southwest will better achieve their mission within the Southwest Michigan area, while meeting the goals of the funding.

It is imperative to the Albion community to have a strong workforce and labor market. Having training available for low-to-moderate income individuals will increase access to our employers.

Michigan Works! Southwest has a dedicated history of supporting employers and low-to-moderate income individuals to ensure the upskilling of local talent to meet the needs of local employers. It is vital to our local employers' future success to continue developing and upskilling the area's workers and grow the area's talent pipeline through initiatives such as this and we are excited to support Michigan Works! Southwest in the proposed endeavor.

Please feel free to contact me, should you require additional information.

Sincerely,



Amy Deprez, President  
Albion Economic Development Corporation