

## 2023 Annual Report



In 2024 I will continue to reach out to communities, our region, and the state to develop stronger connections between key partners. This will open doors to greater opportunities and increase quality of life here in Iosco County. Our communities are faced with a unique set of obstacles when working to achieve their goals. Positive forward thinking and a team effort is the only way we will ever make our dreams a reality. I am very proud to be a part of this community and honored to call Iosco County my home. Let's celebrate our place of fortune by pitching in and working together for a better tomorrow!

*Chris Martin, Executive Director*

### Our Vision

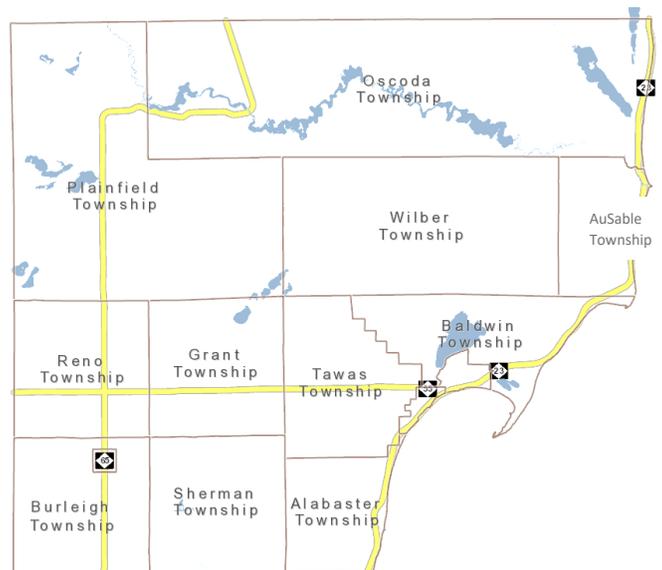
By facilitating efforts that focus on regional assets, quality of life and education opportunities, Iosco County will experience economic growth, increased employment, and create thriving communities.

### Our Mission

To promote economic development in Iosco County, Michigan

Develop Iosco, Inc.'s momentum increased exponentially in 2023. Our volunteers selflessly poured their efforts over critical initiatives which has resulted in many great successes and learning opportunities. DI has made regional connections and began to bring Iosco County onto the map as a valued partner in our region's Economic Development. We want to extend a special thanks to our inaugural 2023 members along with our volunteer Board of Directors, all who have participated in our meetings, joined our membership, and supported our efforts here in Iosco County. Without these volunteers, none of this would be possible"

*Gloria Brooks, President, Board of Directors*





**DEVELOP IOSCO** INC

## **MEMBERS**

### **BUSINESS & CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS**

Alpena Community College  
Consumers Energy  
G. Brooks & Associates LLC  
NEMCOG  
O'Connors  
Oscoda-AuSable Chamber of Commerce  
Perceptions Agency  
Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce  
Tawas Bay Insurance  
TCA Insurance  
Witz End/WE Players Inc.

Develop Iosco has quickly evolved into a local resource for economic development. We frequently lean on Christopher Martin's expertise and plan to utilize Develop Iosco's grant writing assistance included with our membership. Thank you for helping raise the bar in strategic planning and economic growth in Northeast Michigan.

*Brent Barringer, City Manager, City of East Tawas*

### **GOVERNMENT ENTITIES**

Alabaster Township  
Au Sable Township  
Baldwin Township  
Burleigh Township  
City of East Tawas  
City of Tawas City  
City of Whittemore  
Grant Township  
Iosco County  
Wilber Township

Governmental Entities  
contributed \$1/per resident  
from their respective areas

### **INDIVIDUALS**

Blinda Baker  
Wendy Hoin  
Christopher Martin  
Judy Shuler  
Michael Timreck

Last Updated on Dec. 12, 2023

# FY 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## INITIATIVES

### Increasing Access to Childcare Services

In March 2023 DI was awarded a \$203,000 regional childcare planning grant that created the Quad County Childcare Coalition for Iosco, Arenac, Ogemaw, and Alcona Counties. The 18-month grant focuses on better understanding the needs of families with children aged 12 and younger and identifying and implementing new ways to expand access to childcare for working families and employers. The QCCC's Childcare Innovation Report was published in January 2024 and is available at [www.develop-iosco.org](http://www.develop-iosco.org). An Employers CEO Roundtable will be held in February 2024 to provide employers options on how employers can support community-based childcare for their employees.



### Environmental Concerns



DI received Consumers Energy's Community Impact Report prepared by Public Sector Consultants in April 2023. This was in response to the Initial Response Report created on behalf of Iosco County by Develop Iosco to Consumers Energy in October 2022. DI will participate with Iosco County in the development of the "AuSable River Prosperity Group" who will be tasked with the future of the Hydroelectric Dams in Iosco County. This group will be a center for reliable information to and from Consumers Energy and Iosco County, and will be formed in early 2024.

### Economic Development Capacity Building

DI was awarded a \$50,000 planning grant by the Office of Rural Prosperity through the Michigan Labor & Economic Development to expand grant writing capacity in Iosco County. To achieve this goal DI will hold six grant writing workshops throughout the county during the 18-month grant period. These workshops will be geared to increasing the communities' collective knowledge about how grants work and how to apply and ultimately get awarded a grant for their project. The grant also offers up to twenty hours of grant writing assistance to DI's members through its contractor Mid-Michigan Grant Writers and Associates. This partnership will build DI's grant writing capacity and position the organization to continue this work with its membership into the future after the grant has been successfully completed.



### Small Business Development (DI Winter Market)



DI's Winter Market continued to be a success in the early months of 2023 and held momentum into the 2023 holidays. More than three dozen vendors participated in the market throughout the year, with small businesses offering everything from bakery items, hand crafted gifts and home decor, unique items such as gemstones and garden equipment, to custom-made wood hewn signs. Foot traffic varied week to week, but at the conclusion of the first year, it was clear that the community appreciated a centrally located venue to support local small businesses during the off-tourism season. Vendors also reported a direct positive impact to their ability to drive sales and support themselves during the winter months.

## INITIATIVES (continued)

### Expanding Access to High-Speed Internet Services



DI co-chairs the High-Speed Internet Advisory Committee with Iosco County. This committee met quarterly in 2023 with DCS Technology Design, LCC, the County's consultant on the project, to monitor the status of funding for internet service providers, review publicly available internet availability maps, and determine a volunteer-driven plan to validate addresses across the county to determine if there is high quality access to services. DI spearheaded letters of support from more than two dozen units of government, businesses and residents to support a grant application for the Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks (ROBIN) Grant in the spring of 2023. While this funding was not secured, the Advisory Committee continues to work with the consultant to develop a plan to make the county attractive for funding through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) grant application that will be announced in early 2024.

One of the most important aspects of Develop Iosco is teamwork and the feeling that we are trying to achieve the same goal: the success of Iosco County. A prime example of this teamwork is Develop Iosco's new project to use the grant writing skills of Manuela Kress. The ability of our Township to use this grant writing expertise was instrumental in our ability to complete and submit the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Michigan Community Center Grant. This grant, if received, will bring not only construction money to our Township, but will also benefit the economic development and overall success of our County. As a member of Develop Iosco, it is a winning combination if we can all work together and help each other to achieve the results that keep Iosco County moving forward.

*Eric Strayer, Superintendent, AuSable Township*

### Bringing Investment and Economic Development Funding to Iosco County

Generated more than \$255,000 of new economic development revenue to the Iosco County community:

- ✓ \$203,000 – Early Childhood Investment Corporation's Regional Childcare Planning Grant
- ✓ \$50,000 – Michigan Department of Rural Development Planning Grant
- ✓ \$2,000 – Consumers Energy Foundation
- ✓ \$430 – Community Foundation of Northeast Michigan's Giving Tuesday donations
- ✓ \$500 – Event sponsorships from Alpena Community College and TCA Insurance



### Community Impact

- Completed four quarterly community meetings in the four corners of the county, representing the southwest, central, northeast and southeast communities of Iosco County, with an average of 35 attendees each quarter.
- Held its first Annual Meeting Breakfast at the East Tawas Community Center with more than 70 attendees.
- Awarded the inaugural Economic Development Volunteer of the Year award to Blinda Baker, former DI board member and East Tawas City Council member. The award will be known as the Blinda Baker Economic Development Volunteer award in future years.
- Provided significant networking opportunities for business owners and community leaders during an inaugural New Years Networking Event in collaboration with the Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce.

## Media

1. Extensive coverage of DI's initiatives and activities through articles in the Iosco News Herald/Oscoda Press.
2. Monthly radio interviews with DI Executive Director on WKJC 104.7 FM.
3. Redesigned website [www.develop-iosco.org](http://www.develop-iosco.org) to increase functionality and resource utilization
4. Expanded social media efforts through Facebook and LinkedIn.

	<u>Jan 23</u>	<u>Dec 23</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>Increase</u>
<b>FB Followers</b> 	168	322	154	<b>92%</b>
<b>FB Winter Market</b>	228	526	296	<b>130%</b>
<b>LI Followers</b> 	21	54	33	<b>157%</b>
	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>Increase</u>
<b>Website Visitors</b>	4,600	5,661	1061	<b>23%</b>

## Governance

- Expanded Board Membership by 5 members, ensuring representation from across the county
- Created Membership Committee to develop and implement a Membership Dues structure generating more than \$41,000 in membership dues for the organization in its first year
- Hired an Executive Director for first time in Develop Iosco's fifteen-year history

Being a DI Board Member offers a chance to foster the growth and prosperity of (our) community... cultivating a sense of civic responsibility and making a positive impact on the local economy

*Fran Ommani, Oscoda resident and new DI Board Member*

## 2024 Develop Iosco Board of Directors

### Officers

Gloria Brooks, President (president@develop-iosco.org), G. Brooks & Associates LLC, South Branch

Terry Dutcher, Vice President, Iosco County Board of Commissioners, Au Sable Township

Scott Peters, Treasurer, Grand Ridge National Bank, Tawas City

Chris Young, Communications Officer (contact@develop-iosco.org) Perceptions Agency, East Tawas

### Directors

Angel Melendez, Kalitta Air, Oscoda  
Julie Shellenbarger, Proof Bakehouse, Wilber Township

James Cain, IRESA, Oscoda  
Pam O'Laughlin, MI Works Region 7B, Harrison  
Samantha Duvall, Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce, East Tawas

Frances Ommani, NEMCSA, Oscoda  
Rich Castle, Consumers Energy, National City

## How can you support DI?

- Attend our quarterly meetings
- Join a DI Initiative work group
- Share DI news with your network
- Become a dues member
- Donate to DI, a non-profit 501c3
- Follow us on our social media (Facebook & LinkedIn)



**Community. Synergy. Solutions.**