

IONIA
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY
2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Economic Development

MEDC / Community Development Projects:

Ionia is designated a low - moderate income community which allows for Community Development Block Grant funding and broadens the scope of grant opportunities. In cooperation with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), the DDA supported grant programming for blight elimination, façade improvements, rental rehabilitation, and building acquisition. The DDA will be involved in the funding process of each of the new projects described below.

Project 1. 340 W Main Street. Bruce Johnston / Revitalize LLC provided a project summary for the 5,282 square foot property originally constructed in 1890. Purchased in 2020, the property will be fully restored utilizing façade, rehabilitation grant funding and private investment. City Council approved Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Exemption certificate and proposed Brownfield plan for property. Building to include a first floor commercial outlet, climate controlled storage areas within the basement area, and residential units on the second floor.

Project 2. 410 / 412 W Main Street. Full restoration of first floor utilizing each storefront for a restaurant to open April 2022. Bruce Johnston / Revitalize LLC will work with property owner to secure future grant funding for second floor residential units.

Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC): The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) selected cities through an application process to participate in the statewide launch of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® program designed to assist local municipalities establish a sound foundation for redevelopment to occur. RRC is a certification program promoting effective redevelopment strategies. The program measures and then certifies communities that integrate transparency, predictability and efficiency into their daily development practices. The certification is a formal recognition that a community has a vision for the future and the fundamental practices in place to reach that threshold. Communities must commit by participating in assessments, workshops, and evaluations followed by a report of findings that outline recommendations and actions for best practice criteria. Future grant funding administered by MEDC is only awarded to cities engaged or certified by the Redevelopment Ready Communities program. Ionia became fully engaged in the program in April 2017 and began the process of alignment with the Best Practices as required by the project. In July 2020, Ionia became the 46th Michigan city to reach certification. Effective July 2021, Ionia's RRC certification was extended through July 30, 2025. Documentation updating and annual reporting is required to maintain certification.

RRC Priority Sites: Redevelopment Services Team (RST Team) provides special services including technical assistance, site analysis and assessments, site design, and marketing services for approved / selected properties located in traditional downtowns of RRC communities.

- **The Design and Build Scenario** is a grant funded pre-development planning service to assist downtown property owners of historic buildings in need of storefront rehabilitation. Scenario packages include schematic renderings of the property with written explanations of the budget process. The service is intended to empower the property owner(s) with a clear vision for redevelopment, the tools to clearly communicate project details in addition to an understanding of the financial costs and potential returns. The DDA provided an invitation to property owners to complete a request for proposals for review and submission for selection of the Design and Build program. After careful consideration, two properties were submitted for final review by the RST Team. The DDA was notified that each of the properties were accepted into the Design and Build Scenario program with the process beginning spring 2022.
 - 213-215 W Main Street – Robin and Randy Fazakerley
 - 402 W Main Street – Seth Izzard
- **Priority Site Designation.** A second phase of the program assists in identifying three to five priority development sites within the city. The selected parcels will receive a full report detailing potential for development which will be showcased on the MEDC website, City of Ionia website in addition to being provided to interested parties. The DDA will continue to collaborate with the RRC Team providing pertinent information on each site as required.

Ionia Free Fair Employee Lease Agreement: In July 2021, the Ionia Free Fair requested the assistance of the DDA Director in seeking sponsorships to support the upcoming event. Limited sponsorships were secured assisting with expenses related to several Grandstand shows.

In November, the IFF Board of Directors presented a proposal for a longer term program with the City of Ionia and DDA. City Council approved the Memorandum of Understanding Agreement to share costs and services of the DDA Director for the 2022 Ionia Free Fair. The program outlined the terms, salary sharing, and a list of professional services to be provided by the DDA during a 25% employee time frame agreement.

Services to be performed for the 2022 Ionia Free Fair will include but not be limited to:

- Design and implement a sponsorship solicitation program specific to the general Fair, individual events and building restoration needs. Full return on investment program developed recognizing the levels of funding provided by donors.
- Meeting with committee / event chairpersons to define needs that could be filled with donor funding and / or in-kind contributions.
- Meeting with individual former and potential donors to present the sponsorship program and secure contributions accordingly.
- Work with IFF administrative staff to review past donor records, annual renewal programming related to specific contributions, and contact lists for same.
- Create spreadsheets detailing sponsor involvement – both funding and in-kind contributions.
- Creating a new sponsor signage program allowing for greater recognition and esthetic appeal. Crating new donor board program to honor those supporting building restoration efforts.
- Developed a naming rights agreement template to assist with long term investments by area donors for restoration of the aging buildings.
- Assisted in creating a sponsor program to fund the purchase of livestock panels for the covered arena allowing for expansion of equine and cattle events. Added rental agreements will provide new sources of income for the Fair.
- Attending IFF Board of Directors meetings to present a monthly report of activities related to solicitation of funding through the sponsor program.

Match on Main: The MEDC reimbursement grant funding program would provide up to \$25,000 to the awardees. Goals included supporting the growth of placed based businesses located in a traditional downtown, brick and mortar businesses creating and / or retaining jobs, leveraging private investments and activating vacant / underutilized space. A Selection Committee reviewed submitted applications utilizing a MEDC approved scoring matrix. After careful consideration, one application was forwarded to MEDC for final review. Unfortunately, Ionia was not selected for the grant funding for the first round of Match on Main. Only RRC and Main Street communities were included in the Match on Main program announcement.

Orchard View Industrial Park: MEDC awarded a grant to the City of Ionia for the creation of a full economic development marketing package for the Industrial Park with the project being transferred to the DDA in September 2020. The DDA made initial contact with the marketing firm for development of a site plan package for the park including maps, general lot descriptions, incentive programming, infrastructure, drone footage, and investment opportunities. Project completed in 2021 – fully funded through the grant program with a final report submitted as required.

MIPitch 2021: In cooperation with The Right Place, Montcalm / Ionia based economic alliances, Montcalm County / Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Development Authority, MIPitch hosted its inaugural small business startup competition. A panel of judges selected the top applicants to present their business plans to a live audience. A total of \$11,000 was awarded to five local entrepreneurs at a special tri-chamber After Hours event hosted at the Candlestone Golf Resort in Belding. The Ionia DDA was a community partner in addition to participating in the initial application review process. The Steering Committee will begin meeting in early 2022 to set plans for the second annual MIPitch competition.

Small Business Saturday and Buy Nearby Campaign: Sponsored by American Express, select communities received promotional banners, posters, and tote bags to be distributed to downtown businesses for participating in the event scheduled for the Saturday following Thanksgiving. Many of the area businesses noted an increase in retail sales from last year’s event. The “Buy Nearby” shopping campaign was created by the Michigan Retailers and held in early October. The DDA participated in each of the events to promote shop local initiatives.

FOX 47 TV Morning Blend Marathon: The Ionia DDA and FOX 47 TV partnered to offer district businesses with the opportunity to purchase 3-5 minute advertising segments at the cost of \$150 each. The interviews were aired on the TV station’s top morning broadcast. Ten businesses / organizations enrolled in the newly developed programming during 2021. Due to the success of the partnership, the DDA hopes to continue the project in 2022.

Ionia Farmers Market: The DDA entered into a one year agreement releasing the Farmers’ Market project to the Ionia Harvest Marketplace (IHM) Board of Directors. A market manager was hired by IHM to provide services during the 2021 season. WIFI services were donated by YCD Electronics to the market area allowing vendors to offer on-line purchases for patrons. The Market is open each Saturday, June through October with future plans to include more seasonal events. DDA Director is a member of the IHM Board of Directors.

Ionia Community Library: Mercantile Bank announced plans to officially donate their historic downtown property located at 302 W Main Street to the Ionia Community Library on January 13, 2021. The building will require significant rehabilitation to serve the Library's needs.

Special Events, Festivals and Outdoor Experiences Provide a Sense of Place

Statistics show that continued special events create guest destination sites, attract new residents, promote investment and support economic growth. Every small community develops its own sense of place by providing friendly areas for families to gather, special activities appealing to a broad audience and creating a small town ambiance that will create memories for generations. Included are a few of the past year's highlights that made Ionia a destination for many and an enhanced sense of pride for its residents.

Mural Project: Ionia's first mural project was fully completed and now graces the east exterior of the Theatre building. The mural provides a snap shot of the community's history from the late 1800's to the 1960's. The locomotive depicts the mode of travel used by thousands of visitors, national leaders, the beginning of the industrial age, and those looking to settle in the community. The Hotel Bailey was established in 1901 where the Ionia Theatre stands today. The stately building represented a time of prosperity and a home away from home for weary travelers. The service station was one of Ionia's first and remained on the site for decades. It represents the leap from the depression era to a time when travel was as unlimited as was our imagination. The Ionia Theatre is located within the 200 Main Street block of the picturesque downtown district. It was chosen as a site for the first mural to begin to tell our story. The mural was dedicated on July 13, 2021 with a ribbon cutting and ceremony honoring the artist, the project's donors and guests. All funding for the project was raised through generous donations.

Ionia Fireworks Display: Due to flooding of the fairgrounds in early July, the Ionia Fireworks Display was held September 2nd. Friends and families gathered downtown or on the grounds to view the spectacular pyrotechnic presentation. The display is made possible by the Ionia DDA and generous sponsors. The 2022 contract was approved by the DDA Board of Directors.

Michigan Wizard of Oz Festival: The Michigan Wizard of Oz Festival was created in an effort to attract visitors to the community and showcase the shopping district. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Festival originally scheduled for October was cancelled. The committee will move forward with planning for the 2022 Festival.

Autumn Celebration returned to the downtown on Thursday, October 28th. The Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce and DDA partnered to host the annual event. Candy and giveaways were provided to the children by downtown businesses and those participating in the Trunk R' Treat activity. Several thousand guests visited the downtown celebrating the season and upcoming Halloween holiday.

Hometown Holidays and Electric Christmas Parade: The official downtown Christmas tree was placed at the intersection of Depot and Main Street adding to the ambiance of the holidays. The DDA provides the lights for the tree with DPW staff placing and maintaining the system. The official parade, tree lighting, Santa's arrival and free movie were a few of the activities marking the arrival of the holiday season.

Sidewalk Cafés: The DDA offers the opportunity for Main Street restaurants to host outdoor seating during the summer months to further enhance the atmosphere of downtown Ionia and their businesses. The DDA requires the completion of an application process prior to approval being granted.

Parades, Car Shows, and more: Numerous special events were hosted in downtown Ionia by non-profit organizations and community groups adding that sense of place atmosphere. DDA works with each individual group to submit street closing applications and barricade requests accordingly.

- Memorial Day Parade hosted by VFW David Huhn Post 12082 was held on Monday, May 31st. A newly formed committee was established to increase the size and participation of the 2022 parade.
- The Ionia Crusin' Classic Car Show hosted over 250 vehicles in its annual first Saturday of June event.
- The Cow Pie Classic dirt bike race's participation grew again in 2021 hosting over 500 riders. The famed Michigan gravel grinder bike race offers four distance rides from 3 to 62 miles. A 5K Run / Walk was added to the event bringing additional competitors to the area.
- The Ionia Free Fair Grand Parade was held on Saturday, July 17th showcasing entries from across mid-Michigan. The Ionia Free Fair noted record breaking attendance in 2021.
- First Thursday on the Bricks is hosted by the Ionia Downtown Group and invites patrons to shop during extended hours. Vendors are also a part of the monthly program offering handcrafted items at their outdoor booths.
- The Ionia High School Homecoming Parade was hosted on Friday, October 1st to honor students and the time honored football game presented at the High School.

Downtown Beautification and Maintenance

Dumpster Program: The DDA continues the downtown dumpster program for businesses / rental units located on the south side of Main Street in the 300 block in addition to limited businesses on the north side of the 400 block. Dumpsters are maintained by Granger Container.

Flowers / Plantings / Trees / Lampposts: Spring brought the blooming of daffodils, tulips and other plantings showcasing the downtown. The DDA continued downtown beautification efforts by providing funding for the annual flowers that grace many of the downtown streets. Large urns of flowering plants are also placed throughout the district. The DDA oversees the ordering of flowers and plantings for the curb jets, entrance to the fairgrounds, and decorative urns. All are planted by the City of Ionia DPW staff.

Fresh garland wraps: The fresh garland wraps for the historic lampposts are purchased locally during the holiday season. The DDA solicits sponsors for the garland and recognizes each by placing a laminated card noting the donor on the individual wraps.

DDA Director Community Involvement / Participation and DDA District Updates

Director Training:

- Participated in continuing educational webinars and workshops relating to business development, festival / special event management, promotion / marketing, planning and zoning, business recruitment, grant writing, philanthropic management, winter strategies for downtowns, etc.
- Attended the spring and autumn Michigan Downtown Association Conference virtually.
- Attended the annual Statewide Preservation Conference virtually in May 2021. Individual workshop topics included historic tax credits, best practices for local historical preservation projects, recreating historic storefronts and facades, and other related topics.
- Completed the Master Planning Process training program hosted by the Michigan Association of Planning. Certification of completion March 2021.
- MI Small Business Development Center virtual workshops relating to business brand identity, advisory board development, etc.

DDA Promotion and Marketing:

- The DDA provides a monthly newsletter highlighting upcoming events, business promotions and activities.
- Special activities and announcements are placed upon the City’s official website.
- WION I1430 Radio ad campaigns:
 - Holiday – shop local
 - Live promotional event hosted April 20th.
 - Several interviews via phone
- FOX 47 TV Morning Blend Marathon marketing campaign. Segments available at the cost of \$150 each offered to ten district businesses.
- DDA included within the Chamber of Commerce Community Guide.

District Updates:

- Maintained working relations with DDA businesses and property owners – via phone, ZOOM meetings and email. All in-person meetings were made within CDC guidelines.
- Member of the Professional Business Women’s Association – Ionia.
- Developing new events to create a destination atmosphere for the downtown area. Strive to enhance current events and activities.
- Assisted as requested with community fundraisers and special programs.
- Numerous meetings with the area’s Right Place representative relating to workforce development, new business attraction, etc.
- Collaborated with the Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce Director to implement shared / partnered activities to strengthen both entities.
- Maintained a list of available properties within the downtown / district.
- Maintain log of Ionia Theatre donations and thank you letters for each contributor.
- DDA office is the site for the 2021 Ionia High School senior banners to be collected by said families once removed from lampposts.
- Chamber of Commerce Legislative meetings: Provided DDA District updates.
- DDA presented Cody Husted with a Certificate of Appreciation for his mural based artwork within Cornell Alley. Cody received his Eagle Scout Court of Honor award during the ceremony.
- Met on several occasions with Grand Rapids developer to discuss priority sites, community needs in addition to providing copies of the Economic Development Study, Housing Study, RRC certification for their review.
- The DDA welcomed many new and / or relocated businesses to the area during 2021 including:

Grand Ionia Antiques & Estates	Thread, White and Blue Boutique
Main Street Dance Academy	Riverbank Treasures
Ionia Quick Lube	NovaCare Rehabilitation
Domino’s Pizza	Brick Road Nutrition
Whimsical Den	Salon 6 Spa and Wellness
Cloud 9	State Farm Insurance / Ryan Secor
YCD Electronics (new location)	Consume Cannabis
ACI Insurance Agency	CCG Prime
Cathy Hoppough Group – RW Rivertown Hoppough	

Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

The Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act authorizes municipalities to create Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities to facilitate the implementation of Brownfield plans and promote revitalization of Brownfield properties through the use of tax increment financing for eligible activities and projects.

At a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Ionia, a resolution to rescind Resolution 003-2001-05 and to reaffirm the creation of the City of Ionia Brownfield Redevelopment Authority was approved. Plans will be established on a project by project basis rather than boundaries creating a zone. The DDA Board of Directors also serve as the Board of the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority meets quarterly immediately following general DDA Board gatherings.





DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)

Annual Report of Expenditures - DDA Project Fund

Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Prepared Pursuant to Section 884.11 of the City Code of Ordinances

REVENUES

Special Assessments (2 Mill Property Tax Levy - DDA District)	\$ 39,976.95
Tax Increment Financing	\$ 21,254.32
Local Community Stabilization Funds	\$186,664.44
Charges	\$ 1,120.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 25,826.00
Interest Income	\$ 122.09
Contributions from Gen Fund	<u>\$200,000.00</u>
TOTAL	\$476,473.94

EXPENDITURES

Administration	\$132,982.53
DDA District Maintenance	\$ 93,652.96
DDA District Development/Promotion	\$ 20,806.67
Contributions to Theatre	<u>\$121,022.60</u>
TOTAL	\$368,464.76

INDEBTEDNESS

The DDA Fund has no outstanding debt.

ASSESSED VALUE

Initial Assessed Value in the DDA District (Base Year – 1989)	\$ 23,046,100
Current Assessed Value in the DDA District (2020)	\$ 21,114,386
Captured Assessed Value to Support DDA Activities	(\$1,931,714)

FUND DEFICIT/FUND BALANCE

DDA Fund – Fund Balance as of July 1, 2020	\$ 33,264.13
DDA Fund – Fund Balance as of June 30, 2021	\$141,273.31

The TIF Plan expired rendering no capture for the Ionia DDA. The 2-mill property tax levy collected within the District continues to support initiatives.