

ICEA Ionia County
Economic
Alliance

Powered by The Right Place

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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Letter from the Chair

Fourteen years ago, the Ionia County Economic Alliance (ICEA) formed a strategic partnership with The Right Place, Inc. to drive long-term job creation, investment and overall economic prosperity in Ionia County.

Since then, ICEA has significantly increased its capabilities, and become an even more valuable resource to the Ionia County business community. ICEA provides Ionia County businesses with the tools, resources, and support they need to flourish.

In addition to directly supporting the business community, ICEA also works on long-term initiatives to create strong foundations for sustainable economic growth. Examples include our continued work to help with expansion of current businesses while attracting new, working with developers on more housing options, and assisting municipalities with placemaking projects.

ICEA looks beyond the more immediate gains of economic development through investments in strategic, long-term initiatives within the county. Infrastructure, work-ready talent, and quality of life are all critical factors in creating healthy foundations for continued economic growth.



**PRECIA
GARLAND**

Chair, ICEA

THE PARTNERSHIP

ICEA is a public-private partnership, and receives financial support from both communities and businesses to sustain this partnership and enable long-term building of economic prosperity in Ionia County. We look forward to our continued work together to create the next generation of economic growth in our community.

ICEA Overview



Our Mission

Long-term, sustainable economic growth is the goal of the ICEA. By supporting existing businesses in Ionia County while attracting new business to the area, ICEA provides a firm foundation for future growth of the county.

Our Board

- **Precia Garland** (Chair), *City of Ionia*
- **Ethan Ebenstein** (Vice-Chair), *Ionia County ISD*
- **Dan Mitchell** (Treasurer), *Mercantile Bank*
- **Amber Rood** (Secretary), *The Daily News*
- **Dave Bee**, *West Michigan Regional Planning Commission*
- **Jenny Dinehart**, *Independent Bank*
- **Terry Frewen**, *Ionia County Board of Commissioners*
- **Andrew Dymczyk**, *City of Portland*
- **Kevin Wagenmaker**, *Montcalm Community College*
- **Amy Herbruck**, *Herbruck's Poultry Ranch*
- **Steve Holt**, *ICEA Board Member*
- **Chad Shaw**, *Ionia County Administrator*
- **Linda Reetz**, *U of M Sparrow-Ionia Hospital*
- **Keven Kreiger**, *City of Belding*
- **Jessica Tramontana**, *Consumers Energy*
- **Rose Willson**, *Union Bank*

2024 at a Glance

For over twenty years, ICEA has collaborated with business and community leaders to ensure long-term economic prosperity for Ionia County. Ionia County residents recognize the positive impact this work has on our communities, from the increase in quality employment opportunities to the economic multiplier effect that growing businesses have on other business sectors throughout our economy.

Partnering with The Right Place, the ICEA supports businesses in Ionia County, providing services including but not limited to: State & Local Incentives, Confidential Site Location Searches, Local Supply Chain & Partner Opportunities, and Manufacturing Innovation & Operational Improvement.

ICEA has prioritized work in three main areas of focus: Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction; Talent Development, Retention, and Attraction; and Strategic Foundations.



→	Company Visits	60+
→	Company Assists	300+
→	Project Pipeline	12

ICEA Investment Report

An investment in our work produces a direct return in the form of new jobs and capital investment, strong businesses, and increased quality of life in Ionia County. In a recent example of one of our projects, ICEA helped the owners of the New Community Condos of Lake Odessa complete phase 1 of the planned 3-phase project. We are bringing awareness and exposure to local companies, engaging with over 60 businesses and organizations, and providing assistance to hundreds of companies, such as guiding Enwork through the process of receiving a PA 198 Tax Abatement from the City of Ionia. We are creating a pipeline of talent with renewed initiatives such as business tours for Belding, Ionia, and Portland high school students and co-hosting career fairs with our partners. These are just a few examples of the many ways investment in ICEA is producing tangible outcomes for our business community.



→	Investors	38
→	New/Increased	6
→	Total Raised	\$112,000+

Our Investors

↑ **19** Private Investors

↑ **19** Public Investors

APEC	Belding Public Schools
Cargill Kitchen Solutions	Boston Township
C.L. Trucking and Excavating	City of Belding
Coldwell Banker Frewen Realty	City of Ionia
Consumers Energy	City of Portland
Herbruck's Poultry Ranch	Easton Township
Independent Bank	Ionia County
Ionia County Community Foundation	Ionia County Intermediate School District
ITC Holdings	Ionia Public Schools
Jordan Manufacturing	Lakewood Public Schools
Mercantile Bank	Montcalm Community College
Michigan One Community Credit Union	Odessa Township
PFCU	Portland Public Schools
SoZo Coffee Roasting	Saranac Community Schools
The Daily News	Village of Clarksville
U of M Sparrow-Ionia Hospital	Village of Lake Odessa
Union Bank	Village of Muir
West Michigan Works	Village of Pewamo
Wolbers Possehn Pools, Ponds, and Landscapes	Village of Saranac

Thank you to our 2024 Investors that made all of this work possible.

Strategic Partners

Thank you to our strategic partners who support Economic Development work in Ionia County.

Belding Area Chamber of Commerce

Ionia County Career Center

Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce

Ionia County Community Foundation

Ionia DDA

MI Portland Downtown

United Way of Montcalm-Ionia Counties

West Michigan Works!

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2024 Highlights



4th Annual MIPitch Event

ICEA partnered with area Chambers, Strategic Partners, and the Montcalm Economic Alliance for the fourth annual MIPitch event. \$14,000 was awarded to three promising start-ups with The Ionia Smoothie Company taking 1st place. All three finalists were businesses in Ionia County. The event, which was attended by over 80 people, is designed to encourage entrepreneurship in Ionia and Montcalm Counties, which is a key economic growth strategy for the region.

SoZo Coffee Roasting Expansion

Sozo Coffee Roasting marked the opening of a new bean roasting and storage facility at 310 Cleveland on Nov. 9 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by employees, friends, and family of owners Mindy and Rodney Hensley.

Sozo's new location, formerly the site of Bert's Glass, will house their coffee bean roasting operation as well as providing storage for empty cups and other retail items. When the raw coffee beans arrive from Guatemala, they will now be roasted in that facility using a 30-kilogram-capacity Mill City brand coffee roasting machine.



2024 Highlights

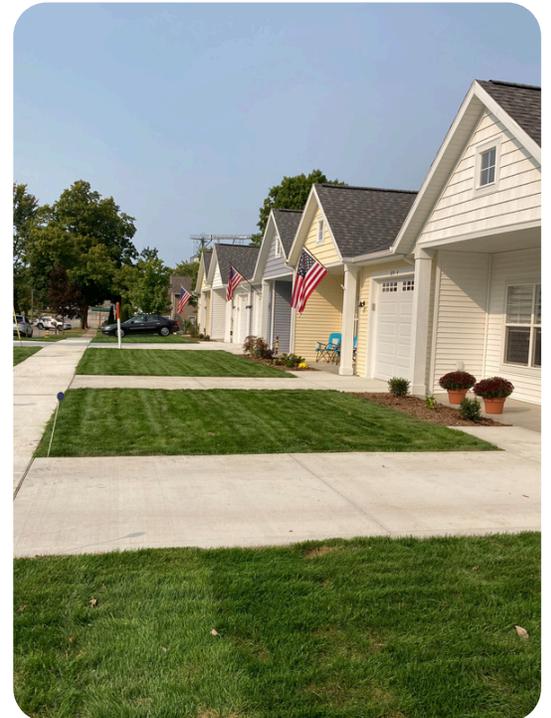


K-12 Business Awareness

ICEA coordinated business tours with multiple area high schools. The goal of these business tours is to create a pipeline of talent by exposing high school students to the many different careers in their community. In 2024, ICEA worked with Belding High School, Ionia High School, the Ionia County Career Center, Saranac High School, and Portland High School to gain exposure to multiple businesses in the Ionia area. Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, ICEA will be planning tours for all local schools on a consistent basis.

Community Condos of Lake Odessa Project

Recognizing a lack of housing options in the Village, Stuart Ventures acquired the old Lakewood school property with the goal of providing new living opportunities where residents could be an integral part of the downtown Lake Odessa community. After many months of hard work in acquiring the land, developing, and refining the project plans, the project has become a reality. Construction of the first building of five units was completed in the summer of 2024. Although the development is not limited to seniors, the design of the 5-unit Phase 1A building addresses typical needs of seniors with 3-foot-wide door openings, zero step entrances, the accommodation of stairs that allow chair lifts, and bathrooms large enough to accommodate walk-in showers. The development will be an asset to downtown Lake Odessa for many years.



Contact Us



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