



CITY OF IONIA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

JUNE 2019



The Rising Tide project supports vibrant, thriving communities to attract business investment and talent by creating a sustainable path toward economic stability and growth. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Talent Investment Agency, and Michigan State Housing Development Authority—collectively, the Talent and Economic Development (TED) team—have committed their assets to engaging specific communities across the state in order to empower them to shape their future and maximize economic potential. This document was produced as part of that effort.

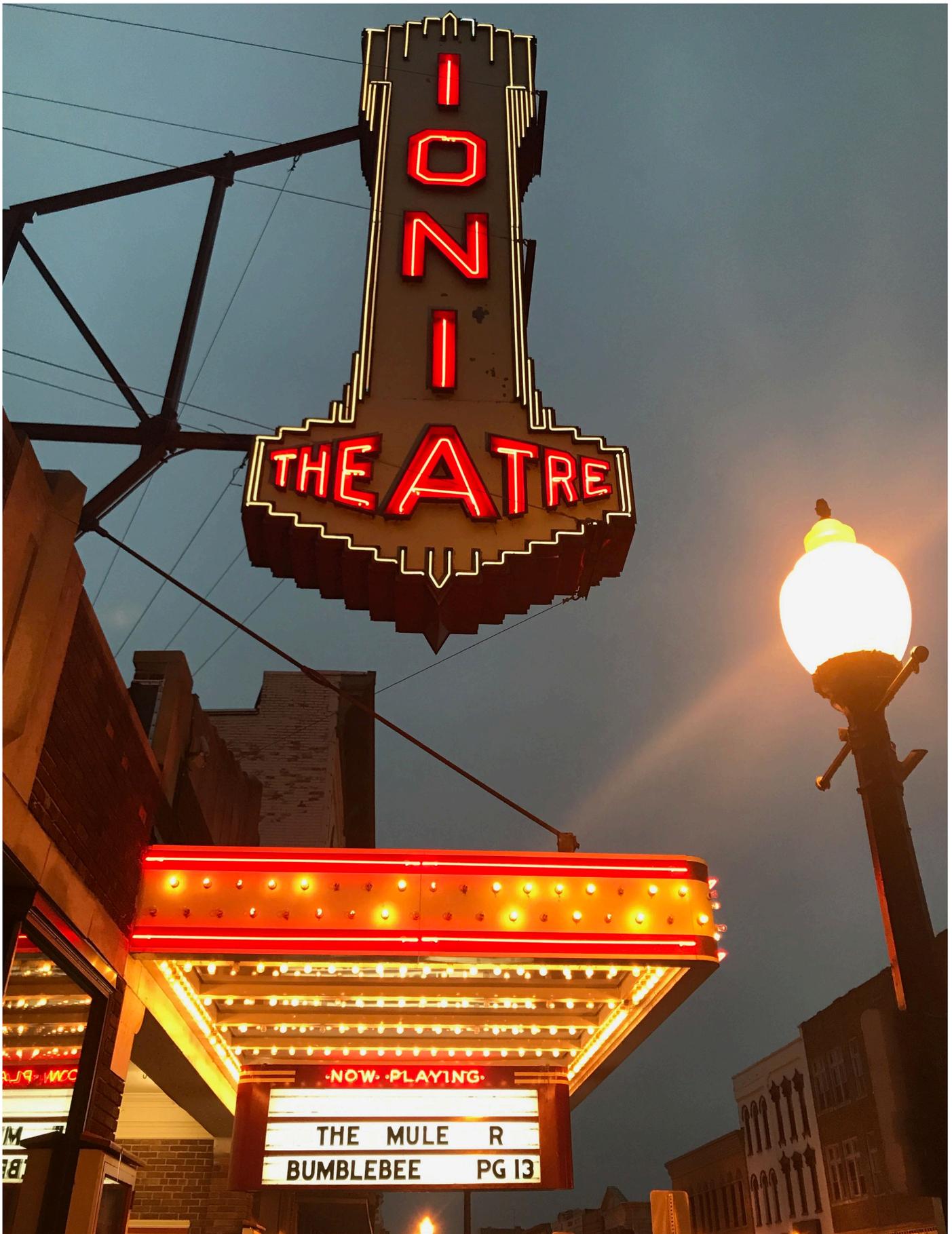
**PLACE
+MAIN
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in association with



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The Ionia Theatre is a historical asset and a key downtown attraction.

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OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Economic development has evolved over the last several decades to emerge as a more holistic discipline focused on creating prosperous local and state economies. Originally concentrated solely on the recruitment and retention of industry, primarily manufacturing, economic development has become a much broader effort recognizing the importance of additional factors, such as the roles played by talent, tourism, place, and entrepreneurialism in the economic success of a community. For the purposes of this economic development strategy, these areas are defined below:

Talent

The available or needed people and skills enabling a community to be competitive in helping local businesses expand, attracting new businesses, or creating jobs themselves.

Industry

Best classified as “traditional economic development,” Industry focuses on manufacturing, mining, or other value-added industries where the end products or services are sold outside the immediate local economy.

Tourism

The attraction of visitors and their related spending from outside the local area. Tourism has several forms, from recreation and leisure to business-related to agri-tourism. For the purposes of this strategy, it is defined as recreation and leisure-related visits and visitors.

Place

This includes the physical areas that help define the character of a

community. Downtowns, historic districts, neighborhoods and housing, and bike trails are all examples of Place. Place is a key factor in a community’s ability to attract and retain talent.

Entrepreneurialism

The development of entrepreneurs and small businesses are key to economic prosperity. In addition to their role as economic contributors, small businesses help retain money in the local economy. Nurturing these entrepreneurs and small businesses can help grow them into larger businesses and contributors to the local economy.

This economic development strategy for the City of Ionia encompasses these five main areas. In addition, the City recognizes that economic development is a team sport and requires cooperation from multiple groups to reach its goals. The strategy solidifies partnerships among the entities working in these areas: City of Ionia, Ionia Chamber of Commerce, and the Ionia Downtown Development Authority. The City believes this cooperative approach will create a sum greater than its parts and will position all of the entities for success.

LOCATION

The City of Ionia (population 6,312) is the seat of Ionia County (population 65,544) and the County’s largest city. The City sits at the crossroads of state trunklines M-66 and M-21, and it is just a few miles north of I-96, midway between the cities of Grand Rapids and Lansing. The community is served by Sparrow Ionia Hospital, a 25-bed critical access, acute care facility.

LARGEST EMPLOYER

Ionia is home to four state correctional facilities, employing roughly 1,200 employees ranging from corrections officers and administration to medical care professionals and maintenance staff. The cumulative budgets of these facilities add up more than \$110,000,000 annually. The four facilities are:

- » Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility
- » Ionia Correctional Facility
- » Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility
- » Michigan Reformatory

Combined, they house more than 5,000 prisoners ranging from medium to maximum security. The Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility is home to the first-of-its-kind Vocational Village. When operating at full capacity, the Vocational Village has 165 vocational trade students, 27 vocational trade tutors and 12 building trade workers. Prisoners are trained in one of several areas:

- » Automotive Repair
- » CNC Machining
- » Construction Woodworking

- » Electrical
- » Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)
- » Plumbing
- » Welding
- » Woodworking

Prisoners have full days of training and classroom instruction intended to mimic a typical workday outside prison walls, and they receive state and nationally recognized certifications in their trade. It is a model program, with one other men's Vocational Village in a correctional facility in another community, and a women's Vocational Village to follow.

STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

Ionia's strategic advantage is proximity to the Grand Rapids and Lansing markets combined with its low cost of living. Its real estate values are very affordable in comparison to Grand Rapids and offers a good number of amenities for residents and businesses. The City leverages the presence of the four correctional facilities and headquarters of a regional financial institution by levying a 1% income tax. This has allowed the City to have a lower-than-average real property tax rate.



Main Street in downtown Ionia at dusk.

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SUMMARY OF KEY DATA

POPULATION

The City of Ionia has a total estimated (2018) population of 6,312* and an estimated daytime population of 10,192. Its population is expected to increase slightly to 6,426 by 2023. The average age of the population, including prisoners, is 34.0 years old. ** When prisoners are removed from the statistic, the average age of residents becomes 39.8 years old.

SITE	2018 MEDIAN AGE
Ionia City, MI	34.0
Ionia County, MI	38.4
Michigan	40.2
USA	38.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023

SITE	2018 TOTAL POPULATION	2023 TOTAL POPULATION
Ionia City, MI	6,312	6,426
Ionia County, MI	65,544	67,006
Michigan	10,057,191	10,182,805
USA	330,088,686	343,954,683

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023

*Population estimates do not include approximately 5,140 prisoners located in the four state-owned correctional facilities within the City; depending on the source, the estimated population is closer to 11,452 when prisoners are included.

** This average age is impacted by the average age of prisoners at the four state-owned correctional facilities within the City. 72% of prisoners within the State of Michigan Correctional system are under the age of 40.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The median household income within the City is \$37,895, with a per capita income of \$13,831 and a median net worth of \$34,683.



\$37,098

Median Household Income



\$13,831

Per Capita Income



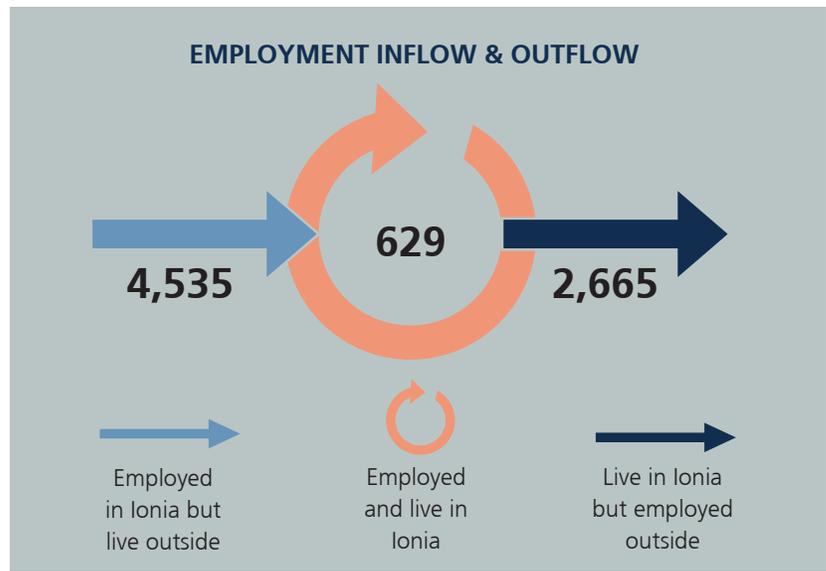
\$34,683

Median Net Worth

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023

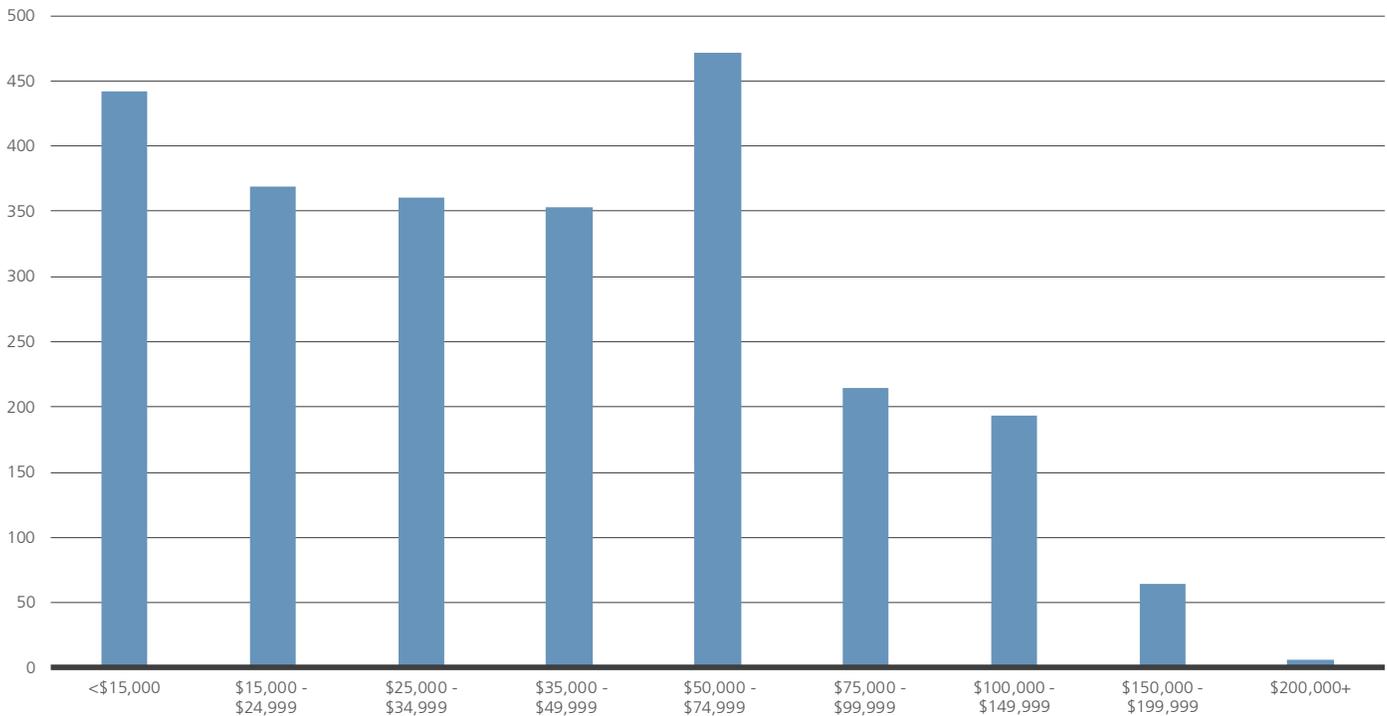
2018 HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME	NUMBER	PERCENT
<\$15,000	442	17.9%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	369	14.9%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	360	14.6%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	353	14.3%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	471	19.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	215	8.7%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	193	7.8%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	64	2.6%
\$200,000+	6	0.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap 2015

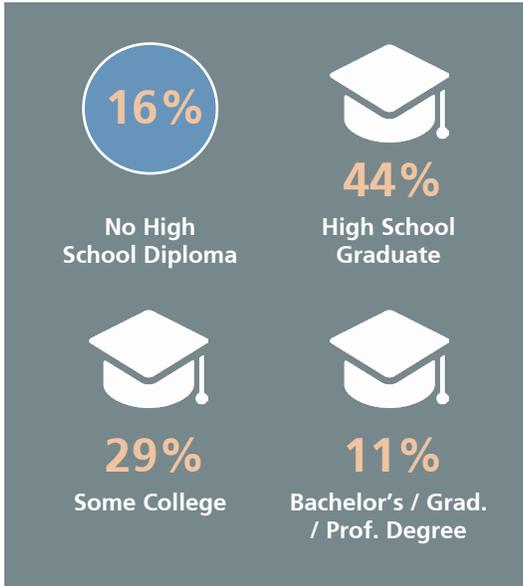
HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY HOUSEHOLD



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023

WORKFORCE

The City of Ionia has a total labor force of 3,060. 40% of residents have either some college or a Bachelor's, Graduate, or Professional degree. 46.3% of residents in Ionia work in white collar jobs, while 34% work in blue collar jobs and 19.7% work in services.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023

2018 EMPLOYED POPULATION 16+ BY OCCUPATION	
Total	3,056
White Collar	46.3%
Management / Business / Financial	6.4%
Professional	18.2%
Sales	8.0%
Administrative Support	13.7%
Services	19.7%
Blue Collar	34.0%
Farming / Forestry / Fishing	3.1%
Construction / Extraction	3.5%
Installation / Maintenance / Repair	4.4%
Production	13.4%
Transportation / Material Moving	9.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023



The 64-A District Courthouse sits in downtown Ionia.

HOUSING

The City of Ionia has 2,846 total housing units. Of those, 2,478 units are occupied. The breakdown of housing units are 54.1% Owner-Occupied, 33.0% Renter-Occupied, and 12.9% Vacant. The average home value for the City is \$127,376.

SITE	2018 AVERAGE HOME VALUE
Ionia City, MI	\$127,376
Ionia County, MI	\$165,919
Michigan	\$198,011
USA	\$310,149

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023

HOUSING UNITS BY OCCUPANCY STATUS & TENURE (2018)	NUMBER	PERCENT
Total Housing Units	2,846	100.0%
Occupied	2,478	87.1%
Owner	1,539	54.1%
Renter	939	33.0%
Vacant	368	12.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023

OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY VALUE (2018)	NUMBER
Total	1,539
<\$50,000	175
\$50,000 - \$99,999	674
\$100,000 - \$149,999	328
\$150,000 - \$199,999	168
\$200,000 - \$249,999	55
\$250,000 - \$299,999	47
\$300,000 - \$399,999	73
\$400,000 - \$499,999	1
\$500,000 - \$749,99	4
\$750,000 - \$999,999	2
\$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999	12
\$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999	0
\$200,000,000+	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2018 and 2023

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STRATEGY PROCESS

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Over the winter of 2019, several meetings were conducted to determine what possible opportunities could be seized in the future. On February 12th, the City held a public meeting where a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) were formed. Attendees then were asked to vote on the most important items in each area. The following page contains the list of items for each category, with the number of votes is in parentheses.



Public meeting attendees participating in the SWOT analysis.

STRENGTHS

What INTERNAL strengths does the City have that are within the City's control?

WEAKNESSES

What INTERNAL aspects of the City are holding it back from success?

OPPORTUNITIES

What EXTERNAL factors offer potential for the City to thrive?

THREATS

What EXTERNAL factors put the City's success at risk?



Public meeting attendees participating in the SWOT analysis.



Public meeting attendees participating in the SWOT analysis.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

Historic Buildings (37)
 River/Nature (27)
 Small/Locally Owned Businesses (23)
 Location (11)
 4 Prisons (10)
 Hospital (7)
 Schools (6)
 Heartland Institute (6)
 Fairground/Parks/Theatre (6)
 Library (6)
 Well Paying Jobs (5)
 Good Infrastructure (3)
 People (2)
 Churches (2)
 Community-Minded Corps (1)
 Events
 City/County/MSP Police
 Affordable Housing
 Public Transportation
 County Seat

OPPORTUNITIES

Broadband (36)
 Revitalize Downtown (25)
 Engage Young Leaders (14)
 Marketing (13)
 Library (8)
 New Housing (8)
 Fill Empty Buildings (6)
 Small Business Development (6)
 Tourism (6)
 Expand Education (6)
 Attract Younger Families (5)
 Value-Added Agriculture (5)
 More Diverse Businesses (4)
 Better Leverage of Natural Resources (2)
 Expand Marijuana Opportunities (2)
 Balance Education Among Schools (2)
 Airport Expansion (1)
 Fill Mini-malls (1)
 Teen Center
 Leverage Hard Working Residents
 Returning Skilled Prisoners
 Change Culture of Shopping

WEAKNESSES

Lack of Broadband (29)
 High Poverty Level (20)
 Library Facilities/Services (14)
 Lack of Pride (10)
 Lack of Educational Resources (9)
 No Growth North of River (9)
 Resistant to Change (8)
 Historic Preservation (8)
 Lack of Diverse Business Ownership (7)
 Lack of Marketing (7)
 No Higher Education Connection (7)
 Lack of Individual Follow-Thru (6)
 Lack of Diversity (5)
 Lack of Housing (5)
 Small Business Lending (5)
 Lack of Vision/Creativity (5)
 Empty Buildings (4)
 Lack of Youth Retention/Attraction (4)
 Lack of College-Educated Jobs (3)
 Taxation Model (2)
 Lack of Consistent Transportation (2)
 Lack of Coordination (City Services) (1)
 Slum Lords (1)
 No Communication/Media (1)
 4 Prisons
 Opportunist Organizations
 Prison Workers Don't Live Here
 Lansing Focus
 Flooding
 Transient Residents
 Tax Base Changes
 Lack of Regional Coordination
 Lack of North-South Connection
 Little Promotion of Education

THREATS

Youth Leaving (35)
 Competition (GR, Lansing, Internet) (29)
 Economy (28)
 Drugs (23)
 Juvenile Delinquency (10)
 Minimum Wage Rising (6)
 Loss of Major Employers (4)
 Contraction of Lending (4)
 Michigan Prison Reform (2)
 Roads/Funding (1)
 Michigan Legislature (1)
 Flooding
 Weather
 Foreclosures
 M-66

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LOCAL & REGIONAL GOALS

LOCAL ECONOMIC GOALS

For an economic development strategy to follow best practices put forth by the Redevelopment Ready Communities program, the individual objectives must tie back to one or more of the local goals and goals identified in the regional context. Each of the goals put forth in this strategy meets this criterion. In the City's recently adopted Master Plan, it has identified several goals in several areas. These are:

A. Residential Land Use

Goal 1

Maintain and improve the quality of existing neighborhoods. Promote, preserve, and improve the living environment of the residential areas of the City and provide a variety of living choices to serve the needs of various age groups and life stages.

B. Commercial Land Use

Goal 1

Create a vibrant, active downtown which retains its historical architectural character while being responsive to contemporary trends in amenities and services.

Goal 2

Maintain and enhance the appearance and function of the Lincoln Avenue (M-21) corridor.

Goal 3

Continue efforts to improve the appearance and function of the M-66 and Dexter Street Corridor within the City limits by addressing vehicle access, landscaping, street furniture, signs, and turning movements.



The pedestrian and bikeway bridge over South Dexter Street welcomes visitors to Ionia.



There are many historic structures in downtown Ionia with unique architectural character.

Goal 4

Establish communication with Sparrow Hospital officials and cooperate with them in meeting their expansion needs which may develop.

C. Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Component

Goal 1

Façade Improvement/Building Rehabilitation — Improve the appearance of buildings in the DDA District through continued revitalization efforts. Such efforts will help preserve the architectural character of historic structures and encourage additional retail and residential development within the district.

Goal 2

Gateway Site Development — Complete the construction of the Gateway Park project on the vacant property owned by the DDA at the northeast corner of Main Street and Dexter Street.

Goal 3

Residential Development — Identify and implement initiatives to aid in the rehabilitation and development of residential units within the DDA district.

Goal 4

Undertake marketing efforts to inform users of the Fred Meijer Grand River Rail Trail of the businesses, services and attractions within the community.

Goal 5

Steele Street Corridor Re-Development — Coordinate the Tax Increment Financing and Development Plan with a plan for the long-term redevelopment of the Steele Street corridor, which includes commercial and residential development and recreational opportunities.

Goal 6

Construct Public Restrooms Downtown

Goal 7

Ionia Theatre Preservation & Improvements

Goal 8

Downtown Area Development — Plan for and implement land use and development policies that support and expand upon the key strengths of the downtown area.

Goal 9

Ionia Community Library New Construction in the Steele Street Corridor.

D. Economic Development

Goal 1

Business Recruitment/Retention — Lead efforts to retain businesses in the DDA District and outside the DDA boundaries, while simultaneously recruiting new businesses.

Goal 2

Business Marketing — Publicize information about the downtown, the DDA, and the Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce mission and current projects, including information about commercial and industrial areas and opportunities within the City.

Goal 3

Downtown Events — Increase the number of events taking place in the DDA district in order to support local businesses.

E. Steele Street Redevelopment

Goal 1

Steele Street Corridor Re-Development — Establish a plan for the long-term redevelopment of the Steele Street corridor, which includes commercial and residential development plus recreational opportunities.



The exterior façades of many downtown buildings are in need of repair.



Pedestrian and bikeway bridge on the Fred Meijer Trail.

F. Industrial Land Use

Goal 1

Maintain the existing industrial land uses in the City; market and promote existing sites and consider new sites in the downtown area; provide a range of opportunities within lands zoned for industrial land use to reflect current market trends.

G. Recreational Land Use

Goal 1

Continue to maintain and improve City of Ionia recreational facilities and parks; plan for future recreational facilities to serve the current needs and desires of the City of Ionia residents and visitors.

H. Transportation and Pedestrian Circulation

Goal 1

Provide for the safe and efficient movement of vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users of the streets, sidewalks, and trails in the City of Ionia.



Main Street in downtown Ionia.

Goal 2

Continue to implement traffic calming measures or pedestrian safety measures in those areas where driver and/or pedestrian safety is of concern in order to make the City a walkable, pedestrian friendly community.

Goal 3

Analyze streets to determine which would be good candidates for incorporating the design concepts of “Complete Streets,” as required by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC GOALS

Prosperity Region 4, which encompasses the central portion of the western side of the lower peninsula, has identified the following goals for the region’s economic development goals:

1. The Region will strive to address economic distress for the entire population.
2. Promote lifelong learning in West Michigan using the public and private K-12 systems, Intermediate School Districts, colleges and universities, workforce development agencies, and private businesses.
3. The Region will preserve and enhance its natural resources.
4. Promote the efficient maintenance and improvements of West Michigan’s public assets.
5. West Michigan will strive to create a sustainable approach to collaboration.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

The completion of this Economic Development Strategy will not be easy. The City of Ionia will require partners. Thankfully, several local entities have committed time, energy, and funding to help projects like those suggested here.

The professionals and organizations listed below should be considered to provide valuable expertise, time, effort, and assistance with executing this strategy. These organizations are assigned to individual tasks in the Economic Development Strategy table.

City of Ionia

Project Rising Tide Fellow

*City of Ionia Downtown
Development Authority (DDA)*

*Ionia Chamber of Commerce
(ICoC)*

*Ionia County Economic Alliance
(ICEA)*



Multiple alleys downtown allow for creative opportunities.



Existing signage and branding.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Economic Development Strategy is a direct reflection of the input of stakeholders and professional redevelopment staff. It balances the desires of the community with market feasibility and the City's capacity for execution of this strategy.

Hi-Speed Internet + Public Wi-Fi

One of the greatest economic development challenges for the City of Ionia is its lack of reliable internet access. Internet access is as fundamental to economic development in this century as road, water, and sewer capacity were

to economic development in the 20th century. The three types of broadband are, in order of increasing speed: Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), Cable, and Fiber Optic. Broadband internet is currently defined by the Federal Communications Commission as internet speeds that equal 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload.

DSL

DSL generally offers download speeds in the 5–35 Mbps range. Upload speeds are usually in the 1–10 Mbps range.

Cable

Cable download speeds are usually in the 10–500 Mbps range, while upload speeds are 5–50 Mbps.

Fiber

Fiber Internet download speeds can be anywhere from 250–1,000 Mbps.

The City should do everything in its power to help bring broadband, or better yet, fiber optic internet to the City. An ever-growing number of businesses and residents prefer the fastest available internet in order to both work and stream entertainment. The faster the available internet, the more competitive the community can be at attracting businesses, residents, and tourists.

Additionally, cell phone reception in the downtown is spotty. The City should explore and consider providing free public Wi-Fi in the downtown area in order to boost connectivity for residents and visitors to the downtown area.

Department of Corrections Connections

The City is fortunate to have a large employment center in the four Department of Corrections facilities, with more than 1,200 people and annual expenditures in excess of \$110,000,000. There are two main areas in which these facilities can be better leveraged to benefit the community: procurement and employee spending.

Procurement

The four facilities spend a large amount every year in categories from building and maintenance supplies to office products. While the administrations of these facilities have discretion for amounts under \$2,500 and can use local businesses, anything larger must go through the state procurement system. Ionia needs to educate its businesses on the benefits of registering to receive bids through the Department of Corrections in order to bid on these larger contracts. The Chamber of Commerce and the DDA should work with the four wardens to determine their most needed goods and services to make local businesses aware of the opportunities that exist.

Employee Spending

The more than 1,200 employees of the four facilities represent a payroll of roughly \$80 million a year. Local businesses should be working together to offer discounts to these employees in order to entice some of their spending to be done locally. Capturing just 1% of this annual payroll amount in expenditures would represent approximately \$800,000 in additional sales.

Housing

Housing is a large need in Ionia. A housing study is being completed to quantify specific demand, but local realtors are reporting a growing number of potential buyers coming from the Grand Rapids area. This new demand and a lack of inventory of available houses can be stifling to the area's ability to grow and attract new residents. The City should look to help assemble, even if just by securing assignable options, property in or near the City to help facilitate the construction of the housing types identified in the housing study.

Industrial Properties Promoted

There are several parcels and available industrial properties within the City. These properties need to be promoted through both the City's website as well as the regional economic development partner, the Ionia County Economic Alliance (ICEA) and The Right Place,

Inc. Collecting base information on these properties and creating custom marketing pieces for each one should be the highest priority for industry retention, expansion, and recruitment. Marketing available properties is the fundamental base for economic development within a community.

Branding

The City of Ionia and its related organizations (DDA, Airport, etc.) lack a common and cohesive brand. The City should retain a branding expert to help the community develop the following:

- » Overall Community/Destination Brand for the City and downtown
- » Logos for the City, DDA, Airport, Industrial Park, and any other participating organizations
- » Cohesive and consistent event logos



Downtown buildings have unique architectural characteristics.

Having the community put forth a clear and consistent brand and message as to who they are and what they are about will assist not just the City, but all other organizations seeking to market the community to prospective businesses, residents, and visitors.

Continue and Promote Entrepreneurship Trainings

The Chamber currently hosts a series of entrepreneurship trainings in partnership with the Small Business Development Corporation and other entities. These trainings should continue with a focus on helping existing businesses grow and develop new businesses. This is also a task the DDA could take on with specific issues-training for downtown businesses.

Downtown

This section provides several recommendations specific for downtown. While many of these projects could apply to areas in addition to downtown, the importance of the downtown

district cannot be overstated. As for the core business district, it is home to a majority of the historic buildings in the community. It is also the district prospective businesses and residents evaluate to determine the viability of the community, even if they are not going to locate downtown themselves.

Façade Improvements

The exterior facades of many buildings downtown are in need of appropriate repair. The DDA should continue its façade program, but it should be altered to focus on fewer larger grants instead of more and smaller grant amounts. The focus should be on creating visually impactful repairs or improvements consistent with the historic nature of the building.

Market Data + Recruitment /Expansion

This data includes retail leakage statistics which call out the areas where spending within the community is leaving to other markets or online competitors. These



The DDA should continue its existing façade program.



The Fred Meijer Trail runs through Ionia and is a tremendous asset.

areas are the most likely to find success locally in recapturing these sales. This data should be shared with downtown businesses and property owners to help focus efforts in expansion and/or attracting businesses to fill these needs.

Upper Floor Housing

Many upper floors of buildings downtown are vacant or underused. These buildings should be targeted for upper floor apartments. The MEDC has a program to help address these potential units. By adding additional units downtown, it creates two significant benefits. First, it generates additional cash flow for the building, making it more profitable for the owner. Also, it increases the number of potential customers downtown, helping to make other businesses viable as well.

Promotion of Businesses

The success of every business should be a priority for the DDA. To this end, the DDA should proactively promote every business downtown and its respective newsworthy information. This should be shared via newsletter and especially on

social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram.

Enhance Connection to Fred Meijer Trail

The City has a tremendous asset in the Fred Meijer Trail and has recently completed a fantastic trailhead facility including public bathrooms and playground. This asset can be further leveraged by including additional signage to downtown attractions and businesses. Furthermore, additional bike racks can be located throughout the downtown to accommodate these travelers as well as others within the community who may want to bike downtown instead of drive.

Convention & Visitors Bureau

While this would require cooperation beyond the City, the creation of a countywide Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) would result in an entity whose sole mission is to market the County to prospective tourists. The County's location between Grand Rapids and Lansing would make it an attractive location for potential overnight visitors.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY TABLE

Short-term: 0-1 years

Medium-term: 1-4 years

Long-term: 5-10 years

HIGH SPEED INTERNET + PUBLIC WI-FI					
ACTION	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNER(S)	TIMEFRAME
Install broadband internet infrastructure to ensure reliable internet access for businesses, residents, and tourists.	B.1, D.1	1,2	City of Ionia	ICEA	Medium-term
Install fiber optic internet infrastructure to ensure reliable internet access for businesses, residents, and tourists.	B.1, D.1	1,2	City of Ionia	ICEA	Medium-term
Provide free public Wi-Fi downtown to improve cell phone reception and increase connectivity.	B.1, D.1	1,2	City of Ionia	ICEA	Medium-term

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS CONNECTIONS					
ACTION	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PARTNER(S)	TIMEFRAME
Educate businesses on the benefits of registering to receive bids through the Dept. of Corrections.	D.1	1,2	DDA; Chamber of Commerce	Dept. of Corrections	Short-term
Determine the Dept. of Corrections' most needed goods and services.	D.2	1,3	DDA; Chamber of Commerce	Dept. of Corrections	Short-term
Encourage Dept. of Corrections employees to spend locally through discount opportunities.	B.1, D.2	1	Local Businesses	DDA; Chamber of Commerce	Short-term

HOUSING					
ACTION	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNER(S)	TIMEFRAME
Assemble property in or near the City to help facilitate the construction of the housing types identified in the housing study.	A.1, C.3, E.1	1,4	City of Ionia	Project Rising Tide	Short-term

Short-term: 0-1 years

Medium-term: 1-4 years

Long-term: 5-10 years

INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES PROMOTED					
ACTION	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNER(S)	TIMEFRAME
Promote available industrial properties on the City’s website, through the Ionia County Economic Alliance (ICEA), and through The Right Place.	D.1,D.2, F.1	1	City of Ionia	ICEA; The Right Place	Medium-term
Collect information about available industrial properties and create custom marketing pieces for each one in order to promote industry retention, expansion, and recruitment.	D.1,D.2, F.1	1,2	City of Ionia	ICEA; The Right Place	Medium-term

BRANDING					
ACTION	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNER(S)	TIMEFRAME
Retain a branding expert to help the community develop the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Overall Community / Destination Brand for the City and downtown » Logos for the City, DDA, Airport, Industrial Park, and any other participating organizations » Cohesive and consistent event logos 	C.4, D.2	1,4	City of Ionia		Medium-term

CONTINUE AND PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAININGS					
ACTION	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	PARTNER(S)	TIMEFRAME
Continue existing entrepreneurship trainings with a focus on helping existing businesses grow and developing new businesses.	D.1, D.2	1,2	Chamber of Commerce; DDA	Small Business Development Corporation; PTAC; SCORE	Short-, Medium-, & Long-term

Short-term: 0-1 years

Medium-term: 1-4 years

Long-term: 5-10 years

DOWNTOWN					
ACTION	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNER(S)	TIMEFRAME
Continue the existing façade program, but with a focus on more and smaller grant amounts instead of fewer large grant amounts.	B.1, C.1	1,4	DDA		Short- & Medium-term
Focus façade improvements on creating visually impactful repairs or improvements consistent with the historic nature of the building.	B.1, C.1	1,4	DDA		Short- & Medium-term
Target vacant or underused upper floors of downtown buildings for housing.	C.3	1	DDA	MEDC	Medium-term
Proactively promote every business downtown and its respective newsworthy information via the DDA newsletter and social media channels.	C.8, D.2	1,4	DDA		Short-term
Install signage to downtown attractions and businesses at the Fred Meijer Trailhead.	C.4	1,3	DDA		Medium-term
Install additional bike racks downtown.	G.1, H.1	3	DDA		Medium-term

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU					
ACTION	LOCAL GOAL(S)	REGIONAL GOAL(S)	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PARTNER(S)	TIMEFRAME
Create a countywide Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB).	C.8, D.2	1,4			Long-term



Existing signage welcoming visitors to the downtown Business District.

