

IONIA  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY  
2022 ANNUAL REPORT





# **Ionia Downtown Development Authority 2022 Annual Report**

The City of Ionia Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is pleased to provide this Annual Report of activities for the 2022 calendar year. This report is submitted pursuant to Section 6 of the By-Laws and Rules of Procedure for the DDA as adopted January 19, 2022.

The Downtown Development Authority embarked on a number of initiatives during 2022 as recommended in the Blue Print Study, City of Ionia Master Plan, and Redevelopment Ready Communities program as they pertain to the DDA District. This report outlines the objectives and accomplishments of the DDA during the past year.

## **Organizational Structure and Board of Directors**

The DDA Board of Directors shall be comprised of the Chief Executive Officer and eight (8) members appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by City Council. At least five (5) of the members shall be persons having an interest in property located within the DDA District. At least one (1) of the members shall be a resident of the DDA District, if the DDA District has one hundred (100) or more persons residing in it. Each member shall serve a term of four (4) years but for the Chief Executive Officer whose term shall coincide with the term of the Mayor. An appointment to fill a vacancy shall be made by the Mayor, upon confirmation by the City Council, for the remainder of the unexpired term. Members of the Board shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses. Regular meetings of the Board of Directors are held at City Hall on the third Wednesday of each month at 8:00AM.

Note: On March 11, 2022 the City Manager was approved by the Mayor to serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors. The Chief Executive Officer's term within the DDA Board of Directors will coincide with the term of the Mayor.

2022 members of the Board of Directors are as follows:

- Mike Kirgis, Chairperson Kirgis Insurance Agency
- John Krueger, Vice Chairperson Ionia Lock and Key
- Margot Cook, Secretary Cook & Company / Downtown resident
- Tim Hemenway, Treasurer Michigan One Community Credit Union
- Dave Cook D.O.C. Properties
- Cathy Hoppough Cathy Hoppough Group – KW Rivertown Hoppough
- Paul Lentz Edward Jones / Downtown resident
- Ryan Wilson ICEA and The Right Place
- City Manager Precia Garland City Manager – City of Ionia

## Economic Development

**MEDC / Community Development Projects:** Ionia is designated a low - moderate income community which allows for Community Development Block Grant funding broadening the scope of grant opportunities. In cooperation with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), the DDA supports grant programming for blight elimination, façade improvements, rental rehabilitation, building acquisition in addition to downtown revitalization. The DDA will be involved in the process of each of the 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. The owner is also working with the State Historic Preservation Office as the building is a prominent landmark in downtown Ionia. Building to include a first floor commercial outlet, climate controlled storage areas within the basement area, and residential units on the second floor. Due to the COVID Pandemic, rising costs of materials and financing, the project is on hold until January 2023.

Project 2. 410 / 412 W Main Street. Full restoration of first floor utilizing each storefront for the El Mariachi Mexican Grill opening in 2022. Bruce Johnston / Revitalize LLC will work with property owner to submit application for future grant funding for second floor residential units.

**Community Block Grant application:** The City of Ionia submitted a grant application for the creation of two major projects located within the DDA District. Each are designed to enhance the area as a public gathering space while creating a sense of place. The application was approved securing funding for the following:

- Creation of a Dog Park to be located on South Steele Street.
- Purchase and installation of a sound system to be located in the downtown.

**RRC Priority Site Designation:** The City of Ionia and DDA in cooperation with MEDC will identify 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 for future development. The DDA will continue to collaborate with the RRC Team and City of Ionia providing pertinent information on each site as requested.

**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 46<sup>th</sup> Michigan city to reach certification. Effective July 2021, Ionia’s RRC full certification was extended through July 30, 2025. Documentation updating and annual reporting is required to maintain certification. As required in the annual reporting, public engagement updates including meetings, newsletters, publications, website utilization, and other documentation were provided to MEDC and approved accordingly. The DDA wishes to thank the Assistant to the City Manager Jonathon Bowman for providing the required updates to MEDC.

**Redevelopment Services Team:** The (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. Each of the opportunities is offered through a grant application and funding program.

- **Optimize Main Street Grants:** This MEDC pilot program was created to support businesses located in the Main Street Shopping District of RRC communities. The program provides technology related assistance, digital tools, hardware and coaching related costs up to \$2,500. Two businesses were selected for the project.
  - Izzy’z Barber Shop / Seth Izzard
  - Ionia Floral Shop / Brenda Cowling
- **Match on Main:** The MEDC reimbursement grant funding program provides up to \$25,000 in funding support for new or expanding placed businesses. 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. One business application was submitted in 2022 but unfortunately not selected for grant funding.

- 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 kicking off in 2022 and completed early 2023.
  - 213-215 W Main Street – Robin and Randy Fazakerley
  - 402 W Main Street – Seth Izzard

## **Contractual Agreements and Partnerships**

**Ionia Harvest Marketplace:** The DDA entered into a second year agreement with the Ionia Harvest Marketplace (IHM) Board of Directors. A market manager hired by IHM continued to provide services during the 2022 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 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. Due to the limited time line, sponsorships were secured assisting with expenses related to several Grandstand shows. In November 2021, the IFF Board of Directors presented a proposal for a longer term program with the City of Ionia and DDA for 2022. 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 Director during a 25% employee time frame agreement. In November 2022, an agreement was approved to extend the Memorandum of Understanding Agreement for the 2023 Ionia Free Fair.

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

- Designed and implemented 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. Created corresponding spreadsheets detailing sponsor involvement – both monetary funding and in-kind contributions.
- Met with committee / event chairpersons to define needs that could be filled with donor funding and / or in-kind contributions.
- Met with individual former and potential donors to present the sponsorship program and secure contributions accordingly. Relationship building was a key component of the meetings.
- Created a new front entrance sponsor signage program allowing for greater recognition and esthetic appeal. Worked prior to and during the Fair to place banners and promotional signage showcasing sponsors.
- Created a full marketing and promotional campaign with mid-Michigan media representatives including but not limited to radio, TV, print, and digital properties. Maintained a high degree of value added promotions resulting in savings for the Fair in addition to a wider scope of advertising.
- Met with grandstand event contractors to gain an insight of their respective presentations. Provided each with an announcer’s packet noting sponsors to be recognized during each individual event. Met with IPRA / Midstate Rodeo Association contractor throughout the season to increase the number of champion competitors and sponsor involvement / recognition. Contestants from across the nation competed in 2022 making it one of Michigan’s top fair / festival rodeo events of the year. Grandstand attendance for the rodeo was noted as the largest in many years.
- Developed a naming rights agreement template to assist with long term investments by area donors for restoration of the aging buildings. Seeking funding through state grant sources for restoration of historic landmark buildings on the grounds.
- Assisted in creating a sponsor program to fund the purchase of livestock panels and bow gates for the covered arena allowing for expansion of equine and cattle competitive events. Program was successful in funding nearly the entire cost of the panels within a span of several months. The addition of the panels expanded the interest of organizations who are renting the facility providing new sources of income for the Fair.
- Attended IFF Board of Directors meetings to present a monthly report of activities related to solicitation of funding through the sponsor program.

**MIPitch 2022:** In cooperation with The Right Place, Montcalm / Ionia based economic alliances, Montcalm County / Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce and the DDA, MIPitch hosted its second annual small business startup competition. A panel of judges selected the top applicants to present their business plans to a live audience. CCG Prime, a downtown Ionia business, was among the top five and awarded funding to expand his operation. The Steering Committee will begin meeting in early 2023 to set plans for the third annual MIPitch competition.

**City of Ionia Fireworks Display:** The DDA entered into a contractual agreement with Pyrotecnico Fireworks for the 2022 display at the cost of \$12,000. The event was held on Thursday, June 30<sup>th</sup> and launched from the Fairgrounds. Displays are made possible by the DDA and generous sponsors. A Request for Proposals was released in December to secure agreements for the 2023 and 2024 displays. Bid award announced in January 2023.

### **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. When requested, the DDA assisted event coordinators with planning, street closing applications and barricade requests. All applications were directed to the Assistant to the City Manager for review. Included are a few of the past year's highlights that made Ionia a destination for many and an enhanced sense of pride for community residents.

**First Thursday on the Bricks:** Hosted by the Ionia Downtown Group, businesses offered extended hours, in-store specials in addition to outdoor vendors. The event is hosted the first Thursday each month May through December.

**Memorial Day Parade:** The annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony honoring fallen service men and women was presented on Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup>. Hosted by VFW Post 12082 and committee, the event was viewed by many who lined Main Street and attended the Closing Ceremony on the Courthouse lawn.

**Ionia Cruisin' Classic Car Show:** Hosted the first Saturday in June, the show drew over 250 vehicles to Main Street. Proceeds from the car show support area food banks.

**Cow Pie Classic Gravel Bike Race:** Organizer Joe Cantwell welcomed 800+ riders to the 2022 Cow Pie Classic. The famed Michigan Gravel Grinder Bike Race offered four distant rides from 3 to 62 miles. A 5K Run / Walk was added to the event in 2022 bringing additional competitors to the community.

**Ionia Fireworks Display:** Friends and families gathered downtown or the Fairgrounds on Thursday, June 30<sup>th</sup> to view the spectacular pyrotechnic presentation. An estimated 3,500 plus patrons attend each year.

**Ionia Free Fair:** The ‘Best Days of Summer’ was host to over 300,000 guests over a nine day period in 2022. A full grandstand line-up, live and still projects, youth open and 4-H competitions, midway and free entertainment were just a few of the activities bringing guests from across Michigan to Ionia. The Grand Parade traveled downtown on Saturday, July 16<sup>th</sup>. Plans for the 2023 IFF are well underway.

**Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce Expo Block Party:** The first Expo Block Party was hosted in downtown Ionia on Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>. Vendors representing area businesses and services lined Main Street for the day long event. Free entertainment and mobile food units added to the festivities. Following the event, the Community Awareness committee hosted their annual ‘Cruisin’ for a Cause’ in downtown. This fundraiser assists Ionia County residents with costs associated with cancer treatments and challenges.

**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. After a two year postponement, the Festival was presented in October 2022.

**Ionia High School Homecoming Parade:** The community celebrated the Ionia High School Homecoming on October 21<sup>st</sup> with the time honored parade and game.

**Autumn Celebration** was hosted downtown on Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. The ever popular Chili Dawg Challenge sponsored by Independent Bank returned adding to the event’s festivities. Candy distribution, contests, free movie, entertainment and more added to the excitement for children – of all ages. Several thousand guests visited the downtown celebrating the season and upcoming Halloween holiday.

**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.

**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 hosted on Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

## **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:** 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 maintained by City of Ionia DPW.

**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. A total of 196 garland wraps were sponsored in 2022.

## **Community Involvement, Promotion, and DDA District Updates**

### **DDA Promotion and Marketing:**

- Monthly newsletter highlighting upcoming events, business promotions and activities.
- Special activities and announcements are placed upon the City’s official website.
- Email blasts noting promotional activities, grant funding opportunities, special events and more.
- WION 11430 Radio ad campaigns:
  - Holiday – shop local ad campaign
  - Interviews via phone on request
- DDA information included within the Chamber of Commerce Community Guide.

### **District Updates:**

- Maintained working relations with DDA District businesses and property owners.
- 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.
- 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 and district.
- Maintain log of Ionia Theatre donations and thank you letters for each contributor.
- Attended Chamber of Commerce Legislative meetings: Provided DDA District updates.
- Worked throughout the year with downtown property owners to secure new businesses to open within vacant storefronts.
- Worked with new potential small business owners to secure storefronts, develop business plans, seek funding for business startups, in addition to providing small business training opportunities. Worked closely with two new business owners for several months in late 2022. Each will be opening in 2023.
- The DDA welcomed many new and / or relocated businesses to the area during 2022 including:
  - Main Street Dance Academy – new location
  - Remy's Accessories Gift Shop
  - Aunt Stephie's Restaurant – re-opened in 2022
  - Podoll Law PLC
  - Yours & Mine Gift Shop
  - Cloud 9 – relocated to N Kidd Street
  - B & D Asset Recovery
  - Sid's Flower Shop – expansion
  - El Mariachi Mexican Grill – relocation to downtown Ionia

**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.
- MI Small Business Development Center virtual workshops relating to business brand identity, advisory board development, etc.
- Currently enrolled in Michigan Planning Association workshop series targeting zoning reform, Master Plan development, and housing. Past workshops included planning and zoning essentials, site plan review, and master planning process.

## **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. The DDA was appointed to serve as the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) in 1997. With the proposed redevelopment of the former Riverside and Deerfield Correction facilities in 2022, the scope of the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority will be greatly expanded. At the October City Council meeting, the decision to create a separate BRA Board was approved. The newly appointed BRA Board will focus on the redevelopment of the above mentioned properties in addition to Brownfield incentives.

*Thank you for the opportunity to serve  
as DDA Director for the amazing city of Ionia.*



**Annual Report of Expenditures - DDA Project Fund  
Fiscal Year 2021-2022**

**Prepared Pursuant to Section 884.11 of the City Code of Ordinances**

**REVENUES**

Special Assessments (2 Mill Property Tax Levy - DDA District)	\$ 43,276.78
Tax Increment Financing	\$ 681.07
Local Community Stabilization Funds	\$ -0-
Charges	\$ -0-
Miscellaneous	\$ 29,088.00
Interest Income	\$ 30.08
Contributions from Gen Fund	<u>\$195,000.00</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$268,075.93</b>

**EXPENDITURES**

Administration	\$259,416.71
DDA District Maintenance	\$ 27,193.02
DDA District Development/Promotion	\$ 23,646.06
Contributions to Theatre	<u>\$ 92,295.09</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$402,550.88</b>

**INDEBTEDNESS**

The DDA Fund has no outstanding debt.

**ASSESSED VALUE**

Initial Assessed Value in the DDA District (Base Year – 1989) \$ 23,046,100

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.

**FUND DEFICIT/FUND BALANCE**

DDA Fund – Fund Balance as of July 1, 2021	\$141,273.31
DDA Fund – Fund Balance as of June 30, 2022	\$ 6,798.36