



Photo by Chris Franckowiak

# 2021 Annual Report



# Message from the Chair & CEO

Our team at the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce is pleased to provide you with a review of our 2021 efforts and accomplishments.

Our first major accomplishment through our partnership with West Shore Community College was the relocation of the Chamber office to 400 River Street. This allows us the opportunity to utilize a state of the art facility with multiple partners on-site.

During the last couple of years, we have found new ways to work smarter, make a difference, and impact the community's future. We have strived to go above and beyond to be a leader in the industry, devoting our efforts to serve you our investors, making Manistee County a place of choice.

The Chamber of Commerce has narrowed our focus to the following key areas: Legislative Advocacy, Economic Development, Leadership & Professional Development, and the Manistee Downtown Development Authority. We are dedicated to driving innovation and growth to streamline making business easier in Manistee County.

*Sincerely, Dennis P. McCarthy & Stacie Bytwork*



## Chamber Team

**Stacie Bytwork**  
President & CEO

**Kristina Bajtka**  
Director of Communications & Investor Relations  
DDA Point Person

**Carmen Kott**  
Operations Manager

**Marc Miller**  
Director of Economic Development

## Local, Regional & State Representation

Chamber President & CEO

serves on the following Boards and Commissions

- Great Lakes Sports Commission
- Michigan Association of Chamber Professionals, Vice Chair
- Michigan Works Association Board
- Munson Healthcare Manistee Hospital Foundation Board
- Networks Northwest Workforce Development Board
- Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance, Chair

## Chamber Board of Directors

- Dennis P. McCarthy, Board Chair
- Jeff Reau, Vice Chair
- Kelly Tomaszewski, Treasurer
- Crystal Young, Secretary
- Eric Gustad
- Kevin Hughes
- Lynn Saunders
- Jordan Solowiej
- Xavier Verna
- Dyllan Walker
- Jeff Dontz
- William Gambill

# Chamber Overview

## MISSION

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To build a dynamic and sustainable organization to serve the Business, Workforce, and Economic Development needs of all in Manistee County.

## POSITIVE IMPACTS THE CHAMBER DESIRES TO HAVE ON THE COMMUNITY

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- Grow the number of businesses in Manistee County
- Keep talent here and attract talent from elsewhere
- Increase the number of living-wage jobs
- Simplify the development process and remove barriers for investment
- Showcase Manistee County in a positive way - "Roll out the Welcome Mat"
- Cultivate high-quality, impactful leaders
- Improve overall quality of life and foster an engaged population / provide ways to get involved

## POSITIVE IMPACTS THE CHAMBER DESIRES TO HAVE ON ITSELF AS AN ORGANIZATION

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- Articulate the value of engagement, with investors and the community
- Develop appropriate, long-term, sustainable funding for the organization
- Increase the Chamber's pool of quality investors
- Retain quality talented staff

## PRIORITY AREAS OF FOCUS

Legislative  
Advocacy

Economic  
Development

Leadership &  
Professional  
Development

Manistee  
Downtown  
Development  
Authority

# Legislative Advocacy



Building relationships through the Chamber's advocacy efforts enabled visits from our state's leaders, like Lt. Governor Gilchrist

## State, Local & Regional

- Hosted a Virtual Policy Conference in January 2021 with 180 registrants
- Joined strategic coalitions to strengthen our efforts on a state and national level including Reopen Michigan Safely, Housing Michigan, Child Care, Winning Michigan Jobs, Listen to MI Business, Michigan Global Talent Attraction Retention & Recovery
- Welcomed New Director of Government Relations, Henry Wolf to the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance.
- State Budget wins including funding for the following:
  - Tri-Share Childcare Program
  - Michigan Reconnect
  - Pure Michigan
  - Going Pro
  - Coastal Erosion
  - Community Colleges
- MIOSHA Emergency Rules
- Supported and was involved with the "Reopen Michigan Safely" campaign
- Successfully aided in the launch of the new **Office of Rural Development**

## Communication

- Rebranding launched with new logo and website created to enhance Alliance name and efforts
- Weekly radio spots on WTCM Radio's Northern Michigan Focus with representation from all Alliance members
- 8 Local Advocacy Newsletters
- Quarterly & Annual Reports from the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance
- Quarterly Government Relations Meetings with Senator VanderWall & Representative O'Malley

### NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER ALLIANCE PRIORITY POLICY AREAS

- **Support:** Proactively anticipate and address the needs of our business communities, focusing on competitive tax environments, regulatory reform, and industry-specific legislation
- **Develop:** Advocate for policies that make our region attractive to talent, focusing on housing, childcare, education, equity/inclusion, and parks/natural areas
- **Compete:** Maximize the competitiveness of state policies, incentives, and infrastructure needs for our businesses, focusing on broadband, Pure Michigan, high water, affordable energy, quality healthcare and an efficient supply chain
- Coalition representing 16 Chambers & Economic Development Organizations
- Represents over 7,000 Northern Michigan businesses
- Chamber President & CEO chaired the Alliance in 2020 & 2021

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**COVID Response:** continue to serve as Northern Michigan's advocate in COVID response and recovery discussions, working to reopen all industries safely and pursue funding opportunities for necessary business liquidity.

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# Economic Development

The Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce has positioned itself to lead and implement economic development strategies as Manistee County's economic development organization.

## REDEVELOPMENT OF PRIORITY AND BLIGHTED SITES

**Outcomes:** Catalyst for more investment, increased property tax base, future housing, jobs, economic development partnership, and other community benefits.

- Fricano's on Manistee River
- Northern Hotel
- Amor Water Street
- West Shore Community College Manistee Center
- Hampton Inn Hotel at Lakeshore Motel site
- Downtown Gateway Project - Spirit of the Woods

## RECRUITING AND BRINGING INVESTMENT TO MANISTEE

**Outcomes:** Transformational projects, increased property tax base, outside investment dollars.

- Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)
- Redevelopment Ready Community Program
- Hampton Inn
- Recruiting and assisting developers to other projects
- Federal EDA Riverwalk Grant
- Visits from the Lt. Governor and Directors of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Labor and Economic Opportunity
- County Land Bank

## SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH & EXPANSION

**Outcomes:** Create jobs and support workforce development, increased tourism infrastructure, increased investment, and property tax base.

- Assisted manufacturing expansions and plans
  - Iron Fish Distillery
  - MR Products
  - Northern Naturals Cider House and Winery
  - Thoroughbred Boat Company (TBC)

**Manufacturing**

**Tourism Infrastructure**

**Housing**

**810**

**2021 Economic Development Contacts**

**46**

Business Referrals

**39**

Business Retention Visits

# Leadership & Professional Development

2021-2022 Participants



*The Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce is focused on developing future leaders in our community that will utilize their talents and passions to make a positive impact in Manistee County*

**LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

**AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

**\*NEW\*  
2022**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE  
EXPERIENCE PROGRAM**



2021-2022 Participants

**OVER**  
100 participants 2014-2022

# Manistee Downtown Development Authority



## DDA OBJECTIVES

- Promote Economic Growth & Development
- Identifiable & Attractive Downtown
- Strengthen Business & Community Ownership

## Team Approach

## Economic Development

Responsibilities: Market and development of downtown parcels, and host an entrepreneurial day event.

- 433 Downtown Specific Contacts
- Growth of downtown business sector  
9 new businesses opened downtown
- Successfully recruited a Ludington Tour Boat company to the Manistee Marina, increasing the tourism infrastructure of the community
- Hosted 2021 Entrepreneurial Day, with online recordings for ongoing use
- Marketing of the City's key priority properties in the downtown district

## Administration & Compliance



## Social District & Dining Platforms

- Enhanced outdoor experience in Downtown

## New Opportunities

- Streetscape Bond
- Riverwalk Plaza & Sculpture

## Communications

- Monthly Downtown Merchant/Business Meetings
- District Newsletter

As the Chamber continues our work to showcase and elevate the Manistee area, we thank you for your continued support in those endeavors.

