

**VILLAGE OF ALMONT
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES
2014 - 2015**

ORGANIZATION

- 1) Maintained a fully functional business office and DDA presence downtown.
- 2) Developed the annual DDA budget. Coordinated financial statements, tax collection, accounts payables, and DDA audit with the Lapeer Development Corporation and DDA Treasurer. Ensured compliance with all local and state reporting requirements.
- 3) Prepared all agendas, minutes and recordkeeping for the DDA Board of Directors.
- 4) Respond to all phone, mail and personal requests of the DDA.

MARKETING EFFORTS

- 1) Maintain an active DDA website. The Almont DDA currently has a presence on active on-line presence which integrates design elements complimenting the DDA graphics and logo. A business directory highlighting all DDA merchants is listed as well as available buildings for sale/lease. Updates to the design, organization, and content were coordinated and mobile friendly capabilities developed.
- 2) Maintain an active DDA social networking site utilizing Facebook. Currently Downtown Almont has 1,541 "Fans" (up 17% from last year). The DDA actively promotes downtown business owners and events through the Facebook community.
- 3) Produced and published a quarterly newsletter which is distributed to all merchants within the DDA district, area business owners, service organizations and other local stakeholders.
- 4) Partnered with the Almont Chamber of Commerce to produce a full color business directory with listings for each DDA business. Directories were made available to each homeowner and business owner within Almont and Almont Twp. Additional copies are provided as needed to local business owners for distribution.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- 1) Coordinated and co-sponsored several annual DDA and community events including:
 - Spooky Time Bash
 - Annual Scarecrow Decorating Contest
 - Holly Day Light Parade
 - Polar-Palooza
 - Downtown Spring "Clean Up" Day
 - 2015 Almont Homecoming

- 2) Partnered with faculty and staff from the Almont High School to maintain and expand the Youth on Main Street Program aimed at promoting civic leadership, community involvement, historic preservation and special event planning for our area youth. Over 25 local students participated. The YOMS group with DDA oversight organized the second annual Polar Palooza youth event and downtown Spring Clean Up day. Continued progress was made in the development of a historical coloring book outlining the cultural resources of downtown Almont.
- 3) Developed a solid working relationship with the Michigan district office of the U.S. Small Business Administration and hosted a “Dialogue with the Director” business roundtable in Almont. This event brought together twelve of our local business owners as well as local, county, state and federal small business organizations and service providers to discuss their current needs and opportunities for assistance. A tour was conducted with the Director, Assistant Director and local officials of a local manufacturer that has utilized SBA financing for the purchase of capital equipment.

SPECIAL PROJECTS/INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- 1) Coordinated seasonal planting and maintenance of perennial and annual flowers downtown. Continued a tree shaping and maintenance project.
- 2) Contracted for and managed holiday decorations.
- 3) Contracted and oversaw landscaping, snow plowing and downtown maintenance projects including street light repair and fountain maintenance.
- 4) Served as a facilitator between property owners, program and public officials and professionals for the MSHDA rental-rehab grant funds. Total grant funds successfully applied for this fiscal year totaled \$94,400. Since its inception the DDA has been successful in securing \$393,100 in MSHDA rental-rehab grant funding. Over \$100,000 in private funds were leveraged for completion of completed units.
- 5) Team member with the Village of Almont and Almont Building Department for the continued enforcement of the International Property Maintenance Code.
- 6) Worked with Village officials in the drafting of new architectural design guidelines for the Central Business District in order create a “sense of place”, promote historic preservation, and encourage best construction practices.
- 7) Worked through the design and engineering phase of Phase III of the Fire Hall parking lot project which includes alleyway construction and lighting. Additionally, design work was completed for parking lot restriping as well as a dumpster enclosure for the SW parking lot.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

- 1) Successfully worked with new and expanding business owners and entrepreneurs looking to open their businesses downtown. These efforts resulted in the purchase/lease of 4 properties within the downtown and new business openings. Three ribbon cutting ceremonies were orchestrated by the DDA. Total private investment by new and expanding businesses totaled over \$700,000 dollars and resulted in the creation of 24 new jobs within the community.
- 2) Maintained working relations and a visible presence with DDA business and property owners. Made regular retention calls to offer DDA assistance in partnership with Lapeer Development Corporation and MEDC staff.
- 3) Served as an active partner with the Village of Almont in coordinating local activities and projects as a member of the "Next Michigan Development Corporation" and I-69 International Trade Corridor project.
- 4) Actively promoted the façade grant program. One new Façade Grant project was funded and two existing projects were completed.
- 5) Administered a Design Assistance program to provide property owners the opportunity to receive a comprehensive rendering of affordable, historically accurate and appropriate design options for façade improvements. Funded one (1) Design Assistance Grant project.
- 6) Conducted work session, community surveys and public presentations to collect community feedback for proposed updates to the Almont DDA Development Plan. Worked with DDA board members and LSL Planning to identify short and long range development projects. Was successful in securing approvals for the updated Almont DDA Development and TIF plans and reauthorizing of the DDA for 20 years to expire in 2035. Included in these activities was successfully extending the DDA boundaries to include those commercial properties to the south of the Village limits as well as commercial parcels to the west of Van Dyke
- 7) Managed the "Almont Women Business Owners Alliance" with membership totaling over 70 locally-owned women business owners. One event was coordinated for this group
- 8) Maintain working relationships with the Almont Area Chamber of Commerce, Almont Lion's Club, Almont Historical Society, Almont American Legion as well as various other churches and service organizations.
- 9) Participated with regional and state wide economic development organizations. Attend meetings of the Lapeer Economic Club, Michigan Downtown Association, USDA, MSHDA and MEDA. Maintain contact with other DDA and economic development professionals.
- 10) Attend meetings of the M-53 Corridor Improvement Committee

- 11) Coordinate services with the Lapeer Development Corporation and MEDC for local manufactures.
- 12) Maintained the “Michigan Certified Business Park” status of the Almont Research and Industrial Park through the Michigan Economic Developers Association and provided updated information and photographs for the statewide web site of certified parks.
- 13) Provided assistance for individuals requesting business start-up and business planning assistance, site location assistance as well as serving as a liaison to Village and Township officials.
- 14) Represent the local business community on the Lapeer Ed-Tech business advisory committee.
- 15) Maintained a partnership with the MI-SBTDC network and the Imlay City DDA to provide increased seminar and counseling services to local business owners.
- 16) Succeeded in having the Village of Almont recognized as a “Best Practicing Community” in 2014 for placemaking and economic development activities through the University of Michigan –Dearborn eCities Project. The eCities program recognizes those communities that provide outstanding services and support for local businesses and entrepreneurship. This recognition resulted in the Village having a professional film shoot which included testimonials from several local business owners and local officials that is being used for business attraction and retention purposes. Additionally, the Village was granted “Three Star Community” status.
- 17) Participated in the community training program for the Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) program through the MEDC. Continue to work towards having the Village of Almont recognized as a Redevelopment Ready Community.
- 18) Working partner with the Almont Elementary Adaptive Reuse Steering Committee by providing historical preservation and potential grant funding source information.
- 19) Started to address and respond to the talent gap currently impacting our local business owners as they try to recruit and hire employees to fill their vacant positions. A “Career Connections” page was instituted on the DDA website which highlights current open positons. This service has resulted in the hiring of 7 local employees. Additionally, grant funding was secured from the Four County and Lapeer County Community Foundations to host a “Local Job Fair” in cooperation with the Imlay City DDA. Twelve local companies met with over 79 individuals to help bridge the talent gap and increase local employment opportunities. Representatives from the Michigan ThumbWorks office provided resume writing and review assistance.