



Serving Cass and Van Buren Counties

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Annual Report 2022



Cover image courtesy of...

- Top Left: High Acres Fruit Farm, Hartford, MI
- Top Right: City of South Haven Lighthouse
- Middle Right: Schultz Fruitridge Farms, Inc., Mattawan, MI
- Bottom: City of Decatur

We love to highlight local sites, vistas, farms and businesses. If you are interested or know of someone in the community that would want to be highlighted, contact Julia Wall at wallj@marketvanburen.org or 269-215-4861.

Picture Credit: Market Van Buren.



Growing the Future

With Executive Director, Zachary Morris

Dear Business & Community Leaders:

The 2021-2022 fiscal year brought many areas of growth for our community. Much of this growth was seen directly in our local businesses, municipalities, and communities who have partnered with us to succeed in the arena of Economic Development. However, our work is not done. And, in many ways, this work is just getting started.

I recently spoke on the need for creating *The Zone* here in Cass and Van Buren counties – and really within our greater region. I explained that while I was volunteering at my church's summer camp, we established what is called *The Zone*, which has seven elements: Fun, Challenge, Success, Support, Inclusiveness, Structure, Positive Relationships. With *The Zone* in place, our campers and team gelled on day one, and we had a phenomenal week of personal and team development.

For us to build an environment of cooperation and trust, we also need *The Zone* here in our community. We need *The Zone* to ensure we are having **fun** and enjoying our work. That we are properly **challenging** each other to become better. That we cheer for each other's **successes** and legitimately want each other to be successful without envy. That we **support** each other to ensure we each have the resources we need to flourish. That we make sure we are **inclusive** and that no one is more important than another person or left out. That we do our work in a **structured** way that is methodical so that we can get things done. Finally, we need *The Zone* to ensure that we build **positive relationships** with each other because if we treat each other with respect and care, it will be a race to the top – not the bottom. Imagine what more we could do with *The Zone* fully implemented.

In the past fiscal year, through the teamwork and cooperation of our businesses, municipalities, counties, and the State, we were able to accomplish some remarkable feats. In FY2021-22 we celebrated four expansion/attraction projects in Cass County and another five expansion/attraction projects in Van Buren County. Altogether, these projects resulted in 696 jobs being created or retained, \$156.2 million of new investment, and an overall Economic Impact of \$181.2 million.

These successes are a testament to the great story our two-county region has to tell! One of a diverse economy featuring agriculture, automotive, food, and life sciences – just to name a few leading industries. We also have a second-to-none outdoor scene. Many pictures we see of Michigan could be the Pacific Northwest, Colorado, or even tropical beaches – and it's all right here!

I want to wrap up by saying how excited I am for the future of our community and to say thank you for being a part of our achievements. We have so many brilliantly talented people who sincerely care about our community and are vested in its future. Let's continue to work as one team and create *The Zone* for shared success.

Sincerely,

Zachary Morris
Executive Director
Market Van Buren

How Market Van Buren Connects with the Community





**MARKET
VAN BUREN**

Serving Cass and Van Buren Counties



Our Vision

Market Van Buren will provide opportunities for development that enables business and residents to benefit from talented people, strong businesses and vibrant communities.



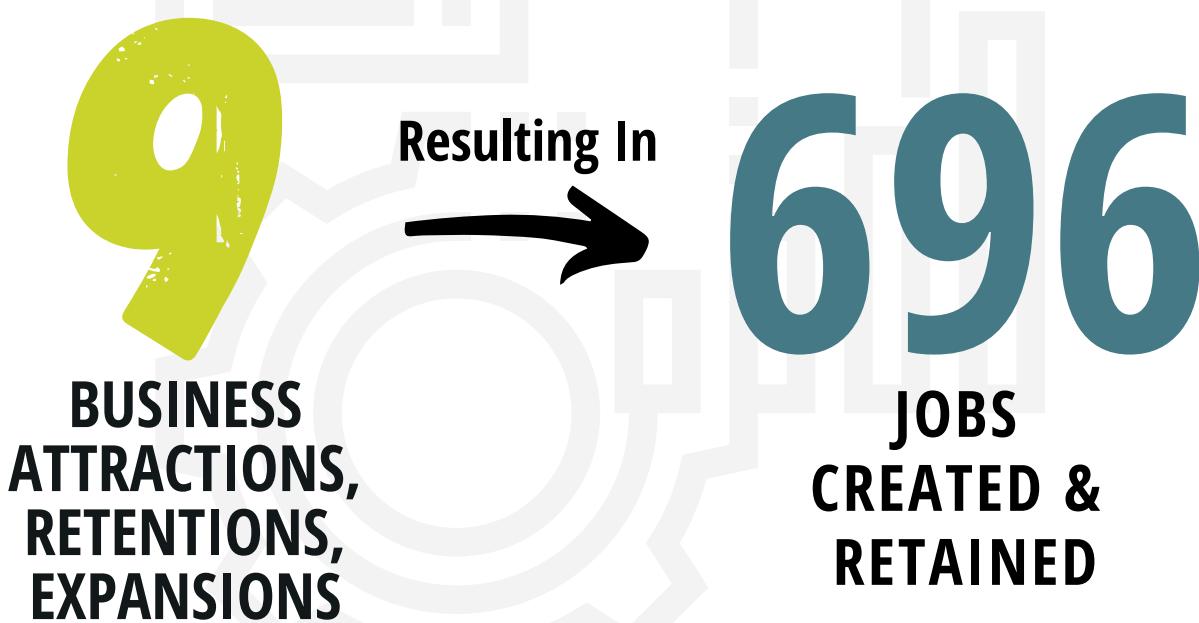
Our Mission

The mission of Market Van Buren is to attract and strengthen businesses, connect community capital and promote regional advantages.



ECONOMIC IMPACT CASS AND VAN BUREN COUNTIES

Market Van Buren had a direct hand generating the following economic impacts in Cass and Van Buren Counties in the 2021 - 2022 fiscal year:



Our business attraction, retention, and expansion successes meant that our region benefited from the following:

\$156M + **\$25M**

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

WAGE IMPACT



\$181M

OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT



MARKET VAN BUREN

2021 - 2022 IN REVIEW

JULY 2021

Three outstanding Van Buren County businesses were named 2021 Michigan 50 Companies to Watch: Barber Packaging, Riveer, and Tri-Mation Industries.



DECEMBER 2021

Executive Director, Zach Morris joined James McBryde, President of Middle Michigan Development Corporation, in representing Michigan at the Area Development Consultant Forum.



OCTOBER 2021

Market Van Buren became the Economic Development Organization for Cass County and therefore grew to a two-county service region.

NOVEMBER 2021

Business leaders completed the two-day workshop: "Build a Business Resilience Plan." The workshop taught attendees how to identify business hazards and develop robust plans to prevent and mitigate related business disruptions.



JANUARY 2022

Through a team effort between The Village of Lawton, Van Buren County, and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, we were able to secure a \$580,000 grant and attract a \$26.2 million dollar expansion for the Welch's plant in Lawton, which will bring 57 new jobs to the area.



Market Van Buren staff organized the first of a series of Palisades Community Advisory Panels as a means to engage and inform the public in the Palisades Power Plant decommissioning process.



MARKET VAN BUREN

2021 - 2022 IN REVIEW

MARCH 2022

More than 50 community leaders from 30 local municipalities and organizations joined together for the 2022 Local Unit of Government Summit. Special thanks to guest speakers Justin Horvath from Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership and David Stegink from Envirologic Technologies, Inc. for taking the time to educate us on Economic Development, Brownfield Redevelopment, and Land Banks.



The Van Buren County Internet Taskforce met with municipality leaders and local internet service providers to discuss updates regarding broadband efforts in Van Buren at the end of March. DCS Technologies began the mapping process to help Van Buren County residents receive quality internet.



Michigan was well represented by these economic developers including our Executive Director Zach Morris at the Annual Site Selectors Guild. They had the opportunity to learn from industry experts and network with leaders across the globe.



APRIL 2022

Market Van Buren attended the Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet to hear about economic development and community involvement in Hartford and Van Buren County.



JUNE 2022

CHT held a Groundbreaking Event in Cassopolis to celebrate the start of construction of the Organo-Modified Silicone Polymers expansion at CHT USA. Market Van Buren supported and celebrated with CHT USA and Cass County officials and leadership.



On June 29, we got to celebrate outstanding local businesses and municipalities in Cass and Van Buren Counties as part of the 2022 Market Van Buren Awards Ceremony!





HONORING OUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY



Celebrating a Year of Growth and Opportunity

Market Van Buren hosted the second annual Awards Ceremony on June 29, 2022 at the Black River Barn in South Haven.

The event featured food and beverages from local vendors, a networking hour for local business and community leaders, a keynote address by Quentin Messer, the CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and The Magic of Trino who kept the audience on their toes with a mind-blowing magic show.

Highlighting Outstanding Local Businesses

The evening included an awards ceremony that recognized outstanding local businesses in five award categories. These businesses were selected as award winners following a rigorous nomination, application, and review process. The Market Van Buren Awards Ceremony recipients were as follows:

- **Economic Development Pioneer of the Year:** Honor Credit Union
- **Best New Business of 2022:** Patch & Remington in Marcellus, The Lodge in South Haven, Waters View Inn in South Haven
- **Community Champion of the Year:** Tri-Mation Industries in Mattawan
- **Business Innovator of the Year:** Burnette Foods Inc. in Hartford
- **2022 Municipal Trailblazer of the Year:** Village of Lawton

Honor Credit Union was also honored with a surprise tribute presented by State Senator Aric Nesbitt, State Representative Beth Griffin, State Representative Pauline Wendzel, and State Representative Steve Carra. The tribute was awarded in recognition of Honor Credit Union's role in investing in the cultivation of generational wealth and economic stability for businesses and communities that have historically been underserved.



HONORING OUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY



Celebrating Our Torchbearer Investors

The purpose of the Torchbearer Awards are to recognize the groups whose investment in Market Van Buren continue to power our work for a stronger local economy. All those listed below have established themselves as investors in the last 12 months, and it was our pleasure to celebrate them.

Of course, all our investors are great, but Cass County made the monumental decision last fall to become our second county-level investor and make Market Van Buren the County's economic development organization of name.

We are honored to be entrusted with the economic development responsibilities for Cass County, and extend our sincere thanks to the Cass County Commissioners, County leaders, and municipal officials who have supported our work in their communities.



It was with great gratitude that we recognized the following Torchbearer investors:

- Abonmarche
- Bloomingdale Communications
- Cass County
- City of South Haven
- Crandall Family
- Great Lakes Belting
- Honee Bear Canning
- Midwest Energy & Communications
- St. Julian Winery & Distillery
- Huntington Bank
- Village of Decatur
- Village of Lawton



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT SUPPORTING BUSINESS EXCELLENCE



Business Resilience: Planning for the Unexpected

In October 2021, to support the development of resilience in the face of major business disruptions, Market Van Buren developed and hosted the “Build a Business Resilience” program. Funding for program development was provided by Consumers Energy, and program delivery was supported by Mercantile Bank of Michigan.

The program was a two-day workshop that guided business leaders through the process of assessing their risk for potential sources of business disruptions like natural disasters, cybersecurity threats, and supply chain disruptions, preventing such disruptions to their operations, and developing structured responses to address disruptions when they cannot be prevented.

While many large corporations recognize that this type of planning is a best practice and have whole departments focused on preparing for worst-case scenarios, such resources are rarely available to smaller employers. Market Van Buren is looking forward to hosting the program again at a date to be determined in the 2022-23 fiscal year. The program will be open to businesses in Cass and Van Buren counties.

Business Expansion and Retention: Offering Practical Solutions

Market Van Buren also operates a Business Expansion and Retention program. Through this program, we make regular visits to local businesses in the area to talk about what is going well, connect business owners to resources that help them grow their operations, and provide support to keep businesses operating within our communities. This includes supporting businesses in writing grants to secure funding for automation technology, free trainings, tools, and assessments available through organizational partners, and connecting local suppliers and producers to increase the exchange of materials and goods within the community.

If you would like to be connected with our Business Expansion and Retention program, please contact Zach Morris at morrisz@marketvanburen.org.



PRIORITY SPOTLIGHT

QUALITY INTERNET ACCESS

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, we learned how important it was to have fast and reliable service - especially with the many adults working from home and the majority of students transitioning to online schooling. Although much of life has returned to "normal" following the pandemic, many adults are now working from home permanently, students are expected to be able to access the internet in order to complete their homework, and telehealth medicine has increased in prevalence.

Who Needs Internet?

According to the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office "more than 212,000 households in our state lack the opportunity to access a high-speed internet connection and another additional 865,000 households face barriers related to affordability, adoption, or digital literacy. Taken together, this means that approximately 31% of Michigan households do not have an affordable, reliable high-speed internet connection that meets their needs."

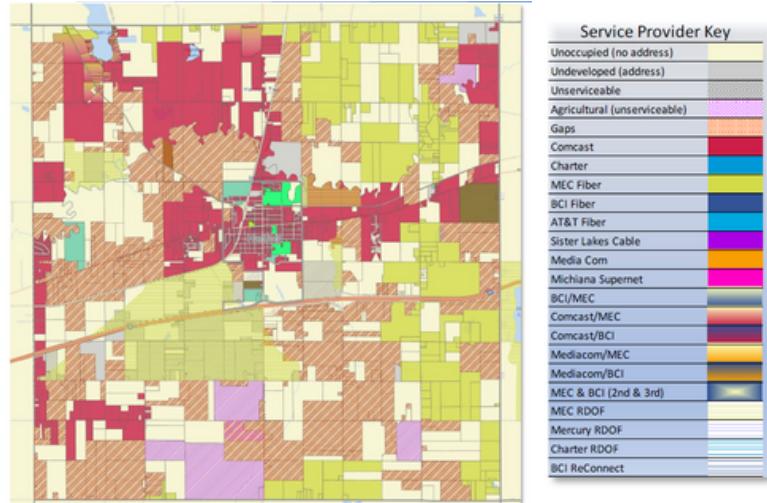
In both Cass and Van Buren counties, many of our neighbors do not have the access to highspeed internet that they need to function effectively in the 21st century, which negatively impacts the quality of life in our communities.

Moreover, in order to remain globally competitive, local manufacturers are increasingly reliant on high-speed internet as they transition into "Industry 4.0" – the futuristic world of cyber-physical systems, the Internet of things, cloud computing and cognitive computing and creating the smart factory. Ultimately, ensuring access to high-quality internet levels the playing field between urban and rural communities.

What Can Be Done?

While there are large federal and state grants available to support internet access expansion, applicants are first required to show that service will be provided to those currently without access. Therefore, the first step in expanding access to high-speed internet is understanding who has access to it and who does not.

Market Van Buren has supported the development of a parcel-level internet access map in Van Buren County and hopes to do the same in Cass County. Through a coordinated approach with local municipal leaders and internet service providers, Market Van Buren intends to spend the next year pursuing grant funding to support the expansion of internet access to as many homes and businesses in the community as possible.



An excerpt of the parcel-level map showing Hartford Township. Areas with hatching are currently unserved or underserved, and orange hatched areas represent gaps where internet service is not currently available and internet providers do not yet have plans to offer internet service. Credit goes to DCS Technology Design, LLC.



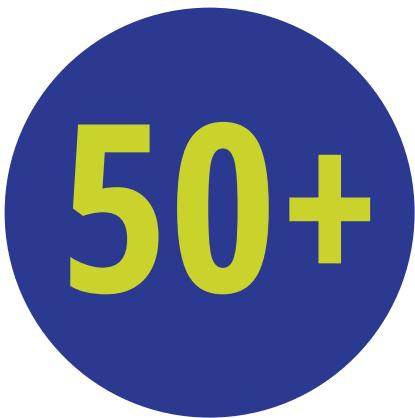
PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

MUNICIPAL SUMMIT

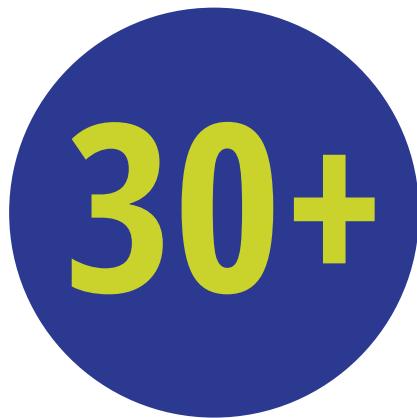


In March of 2022, Market Van Buren held their annual Municipal Summit. Over 50 municipal leaders from both Cass and Van Buren Counties attended this summit to network and grow their toolbelt to better address pressing community needs and ongoing economic development efforts.

The first training session, Economic Development 101, was presented by Justin Horvath from the Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership. The session outlined the importance of economic development and foundational principles. The second and third sessions, Brownfield Redevelopment 101 and Land Banks 101, were presented by David Stegink from Envirologic Technologies. These sessions focused on tools available for communities to address blight, redevelop contaminated or abandoned parcels of land, and revitalize historic structures like downtown mixed-use buildings.



**Community leaders
in attendance to
network and grow**



**Municipalities and
local organizations
represented**



**Of instruction on
foundational
economic
development tools**



To Our Investors: Thank You!



Almena Township • Antero Group • Antwerp Township
Barber Packaging • Bloomingdale Communications
Burnette Foods • Cass County • City of Bangor
City of South Haven • Comcast • Consumers Energy
Covert Township • Entergy • Getman Corporation
Great Lakes Belting • Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce
Honee Bear Canning • Honor Credit Union
Indiana Michigan Power • ITC • Lakes & Country
Lounsbury Excavating • MEC • Mercantile Bank
Michigan Gas Utilities • Owen Ames Kimball
Paw Paw Township • Paw Paw Area Chamber Of Commerce
Peat's Cider • St. Julians • Schley Nelson Architects
South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce
Tapper Automotive • TCF • Tri- Mation Industries
Van Buren County • Village of Decatur • Village of Lawrence
Village of Lawton • Village of Mattawan • Village of Paw Paw
Vertical Beverage • South Haven Township



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Scott Whiteford
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Note: Roster reflects membership of the board as of July 2022



Serving Cass and Van Buren Counties



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