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Annual Report

2021

Cover image courtesy of St. Julian Winery.



THE STRAIGHT SCOOP

With Executive Director, Zachary Morris

Dear Friends:

Economic development is a team sport. It takes our businesses, municipalities, schools and communities working in partnership to secure a win. The 2020-2021 season brought us many unprecedented challenges, but it also brought many victories for us to celebrate.

Much of our work in the first half of this year centered on supporting businesses as they navigated COVID-19 shutdowns and capacity limits. For example, we successfully encouraged the State of Michigan's Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to change its policy regarding eligibility for the Michigan Restart Grant Program. Through our efforts, businesses that had initially been prevented from receiving funding from the program were able to access dollars that allowed them to keep their doors open. In total, we were able to secure more than \$72,000 in grants to support 24 local businesses.

We also led the way in petitioning the MEDC to change several policies in order to better support our business community. This including altering the County Revolving Loan Fund to allow for loans that directly supported job retention, which allowed us to issue 10 \$20,000 loans to local businesses that kept community members employed. This effort was so successful and well-liked by the MEDC that it was rolled out state-wide as a new model for supporting small businesses during the pandemic.

In recent months, we have transitioned to supporting businesses as they fully reopen and begin to stabilize. This has included issuing two more \$20,000 loans from the County Revolving Loan Fund to local businesses as they begin to recover from the impact from a year of capacity restrictions.

In total over the past year, we created 80 jobs, retained 143 jobs and 12 local businesses, and supported three business start-ups. **Overall, we were able to leverage every \$1 invested in Market Van Buren into \$91.55 in economic impact for our community.**

These and our other successes have only been made possible through our many amazing partners and investors. While this publication is an opportunity to celebrate this year's victories, it is also an opportunity to thank the businesses, municipalities, and community leaders who believe in our mission to build a strong local economy for Van Buren County.

While we will undoubtedly face new challenges in the coming year, I know we will find success, as we have assembled a great team of leaders, innovators, and changemakers. Our strategy is sound, our team is tested, and I am excited to take the field and win. I genuinely thank you for your ideas, support, and commitment to our community. Together, I know we will make it a great year.

Zachary Morris
Executive Director
Market Van Buren



Market Van Buren Strategic Plan

1. Form an Economic Development Organization
2. Create a county-wide economic development plan
3. Establish county Land Bank
4. Develop county industrial sites
5. Augment the current Revolving Loan Fund
6. County-wide high-speed internet connectivity
7. Develop county Business Connect program



MARKET VAN BUREN

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.



INSIDE MARKET VAN BUREN

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2020-2021 RESULTS

143

JOBS RETAINED

12

**BUSINESSES
RETAINED**

80

JOBS CREATED

\$11.5M

CAPITAL INVESTMENT



\$8M

WAGE IMPACT



\$19.5M

ECONOMIC IMPACT

12
**NUMBER OF
LOANS ISSUED**

\$240K
**LOANED TO LOCAL
BUSINESSES**



MARKET VAN BUREN 2020 - 2021 IN-REVIEW

AUGUST 2020

Executive Director, Zach Morris, led a group effort with local legislators and economic developers throughout the state to expand the list of eligible recipients of the Michigan Restart Grant, which allowed 132 previously excluded businesses to apply for grants to support their survival during the COVID shutdown.



SEPTEMBER 2020

Market Van Buren facilitated the issuance of 10 loans totaling \$240,000 through the Van Buren County Revolving Loan Fund. The loans provided in small business relief to local businesses, 75% of which were women, minority or veteran owned.

OCTOBER 2020

Market Van Buren received a \$10,000 grant from Consumers Energy to develop a Business Resilience Program, which is slated to be released in the fall of 2021.

FEBRUARY 2021

Market Van Buren's potential to make an even larger impact for the local economy was enhanced through a formal partnership between Market Van Buren and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

MARCH 2021

Market Van Buren's executive director, Zach Morris, was added to the list of the nation's 2021 Economic Development 40 Under 40 young professionals.



Community and business leaders gathered for a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the joint effort between the Village of Lawton, Van Buren County and Market Van Buren to secure a developer for the former Bronson Nursing and Rehabilitation building at 99 Walker Street in Lawton.





MARKET VAN BUREN

2020 - 2021 IN-REVIEW



MAY 2021

Market Van Buren took a step forward toward the strategic goal to develop countywide industrial sites with the completion of a site study in Mattawan and a trip to a site selector conference to promote local commercial development and industrial sites.



Market Van Buren facilitated the issuance of two loans for \$20,000 each through the Van Buren County Revolving Loan Fund. The loans supported the stabilization of local businesses as they continued to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.



JUNE 2021

Luke Barber, Vice-Chair of the Board and owner of Barber Packaging, and our executive director, Zach Morris, testified before the Michigan House of Representatives Workforce, Trades and Talent Committee regarding the talent shortage faced by employers.



Community leaders and business owners gathered for the inaugural Market Van Buren Business Recognition Awards to celebrate the accomplishments of local businesses over the past year. Brian Calley was the keynote speaker, and more than 35 businesses were recognized.



HONORING OUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Celebrating a Year of Challenges & Success

After the turbulence of 2020, Market Van Buren wanted to create a space for the community to step back and celebrate the hard-earned victories of local businesses. To that end, we hosted the first annual Market Van Buren Business Recognition Awards on June 29 at the Black River Barn in South Haven.

The event featured food and drink from local vendors, a networking hour for local business and community leaders, and a keynote address by Brian Calley, the 63rd Lieutenant Governor of the State of Michigan and current President of the Small Business Association of Michigan.

Highlighting Outstanding Local Business

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 inaugural Market Van Buren Business Recognition Award recipients were as follows:

- Economic Development Pioneer of the Year: Barber Packaging Company in Bangor
- Best New Business of the Year: Learn and Grow Childcare in Hartford
- Community Champion of the Year: Lounsbury Excavating in Paw Paw
- Business Innovator of the Year: Getman Corporation in Bangor
- Business Resilience Leader of the Year: Mercantile Bank of Michigan in Paw Paw

Barber Packaging was also honored with a surprise tribute presented by State Senator Aric Nesbitt and State Representative Beth Griffin. The tribute was awarded in recognition of Barber Packaging's role in combating Covid-19 and stabilizing the local economy through their timely and innovative response to the need for face shields.

"Our community has many outstanding businesses," acknowledged Zach Morris, Executive Director of Market Van Buren. "However, the five businesses we recognized tonight stood out amongst their peers and illustrated the talent and skills that our business community possess. I am grateful to have these businesses acting as leaders, innovators, pioneers, and champions in Van Buren County."



HONORING OUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY





HONORING OUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Celebrating Pioneer Investors

The evening's awards ceremony also honored the pioneer investors that empowered Market Van Buren to impact the community in the our earliest days.

"Without our Pioneer Investors supporting us in the early days, we would not be here today," said Tom Stanek, Chairman of the Board of Market Van Buren. "The financial support of our local municipalities and business owners is what empowers us to create programs, write grants, and build relationships that promote a robust local economy for all."

It was with great gratitude that we recognized the following pioneer investors: Indiana Michigan Power, Alma Township, Antero Group, Antwerp Township, Barber Packaging, Burnette Foods, Charles River Laboratories, City of Bangor, Comcast, Consumers Energy, Entergy Nuclear, Getman Corporation, Honor Credit Union, ITC Holdings, Lakes & Country Real Estate, Lounsbury Excavating, Mercantile Bank of Michigan, Michigan Gas Utilities, Owen-Ames-Kimball Co., Paw Paw Township, Peat's Cider, Schley Nelson Architects, South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce, South Haven Township, Tapper Inc., Tri-Mation Industries, Van Buren County, Village of Lawrence, Village of Mattawan, Village of Paw Paw, Vertical Beverage Company.

Looking Ahead

Gathering restrictions limited attendance at our Business Recognition Awards, but we hope to be able to expand our guest list next year to include many more local business and community leaders.

Next year we also hope to again honor a variety of local businesses through our awards. If you have a favorite Van Buren County business that you feel deserves to be recognized, make sure to keep an eye on our Facebook page so that you can know when we begin accepting award nominations.



HONORING OUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY





MARKET VAN BUREN COVID RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic was a destabilizing force in our community. We fought for our business community through robust advocacy efforts, grant writing and the issuance of loans - all with the goal to help keep businesses in our community in operation and to keep our neighbors employed.

We are proud to say that at this time, every business we supported as a part of our COVID response is still in business.



During this time, we were able to support

24
BUSINESSES

With grants and
loans totaling
\$272,000



To Our Investors: Thank You!



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



Market Van Buren Board of Directors



 **Tom Stanek, Chairman**
Regional Director, Owen-Ames-Kimball Co.

 **Luke Barber, Vice-Chairman**
President, Barber Packaging

 **Chad Ritchie, Finance Chairman**
Vice President, Midwest Energy Communications

 **Sarah Moyer-Cale, Secretary**
Manager, Village of Paw Paw

 **Daywi Cook**
Entrepreneur

 **Kurt Doroh**
County Commissioner

 **Randy Peat**
County Commissioner

 **Arnie Redsicker**
President and Chairman of Praegressus

 **Paul Schincariol**
County Commissioner

 **Scott Smith**
Mayor, City of South Haven

 **Donald Stull**
Supervisor, Paw Paw Township

 **Bill Wadsworth**
Economic Development Manager,
Consumers Energy

 **Scott Whiteford**
Financial Advisor, Whiteford
Wealth Management

Note: Roster reflects membership of the board as of July 2021



MARKET VAN BUREN

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