



2022 Downtown Development Authority Board

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2023 Annual Synopsis

This annual synopsis of the projects and activities of the Downtown Development Authority is prepared to satisfy the reporting requirements of the Tax Increment Financing Act, Public Act 57 of 2018.

As the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was formed in 2019, there are no revenues that have been accumulated for five or more years at this point to address as to when they will be expended. With 2022 tax increment capture, the DDA has now collected revenues for five years. There are no land or equipment investments by the DDA to report for 2023.

In April 2023 the DDA Board hired a part-time Director of the Comstock Center Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The Downtown Development Director's responsibilities work toward implementation three key plans including the Downtown Development Plan adopted by the Township Board in 2019 and the Comstock Center Place Plan for Prosperity and Redevelopment and the 2022 Economic Development, Marketing & Branding Strategy.

Two members of the DDA resigned in 2023. Ryan Davis resigned as the residential representative of the Board. Steve Deisler resigned to become the new DDA Director. Anne Summerfield, a Comstock Township resident, replaced Mr. Deisler. John Gisler became the new Kalamazoo County representative on the Board. The Township Board adopted a Resolution formalizing the number of members on the DDA Board at 8. The DDA Director encouraged more efficiency and involvement of the Board members. The DDA has reconfirmed the focus and priorities of their four committees. The four committees are Beautification, Maintenance & Infrastructure, Economic Development, Marketing & Outreach, Events /Special Programs and Executive.

Projects and Activities of the DDA

The Downtown Development Plan spans 30 years. The year 2023 was the fifth of this 30-year plan. First steps toward improving the overall appearance of and reminding the community that Comstock Center matters and is worth revitalizing got underway in 2020 as the ***Beautify Comstock Center*** initiative. In 2023, significant work was done to expand and enhance the appearance of the district streets and entryways. Highlights of 2023 include:

Beautification, Maintenance & Infrastructure

- ❖ 2023 was the fourth year the welcome banners hung on poles in Comstock Center. The thirty banners are seasonally themed and swapped out for fall, winter and spring/summer.
- ❖ ***Beautify Comstock Center*** initiative expanded with a new southern gateway sign and reinstallation of 40 attractive planters near downtown intersections and business. The Kalamazoo River bridge was decorated with 20 flower baskets along the railings improving the pedestrian walkway on each side of the bridge.
- ❖ The ***Beautify Comstock Center*** initiative is supported by Comstock Township greenhouse businesses. River Street Flowerland, Wenke Greenhouse and Sportel Greenhouse all donated products and services to help beautify the district.
- ❖ Maintenance of the downtown district was improved with the DDA executing a 3-year contract with MowCo to water, weed, maintain the gateways, planters and bridge areas.
- ❖ A grant awarded in 2023 from the Consumers Energy Foundation (\$5,000) assisted with the annual cost of flowers and the new gateway sign.
- ❖ The DDA purchase four new trash containers for the placement at key locations to encourage cleanup of King Hwy. and River St. streetscapes. A local business owner was hired to empty and maintain the containers. Trash along the sidewalks has decreased and the DDA plans the purchase of more containers in 2024.

Events /Special Programs

- ❖ The DDA participated in the National Night Out Event in August at Merrill Park arranging for live music by Comstock residents and handing out water and ice cream to attendees. A local business donated funds for free hotdogs. Attendance grew by 50% to 150 people. The DDA partnered with Comstock Parks and Recreation to hold

the 2nd Fall Fest at Merrill Park in September. Significant expansion of food, music, games and family activities resulted in the tripling of attendance to 400.

- ❖ In 2005 a prominent historical-themed mural was painted on a key building at King Hwy. and River St. Upkeep of the mural lagged for 18 years until efforts were launched to restore the mural in 2023. The DDA took the lead to scrap and repaint the mural with the help of volunteers to create a focal point once again for the district. Holiday lighting is now being used to highlight the mural.

Economic Development, Marketing & Outreach

- ❖ 2023 was an active year for the DDA Board related to economic development. The re-evaluation for the 2019 Place Plan simulated discussion with our local and state partners on future redevelopment of the SE corner of King and River St., enhancement of the Kalamazoo River walkways and connection, access to the Kalamazoo River Trailway and streetscape improvements throughout the district.
- ❖ Kalamazoo County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority awarded the Township a grant of \$32,000 to complete a Phase I and II environmental site assessment.
- ❖ The Michigan Economic Development Corporation has allocated funds through our Redevelopment Ready Certification program to update the 2019 Place Plan and implement a retail and residential market assessment. These studies will help to determine future investment in development strategies over the next couple years.
- ❖ The DDA Board created the Comstock Center Façade Improvement Program to stimulate private reinvestment by district businesses who need assistance in renovations and repairs to their storefronts. Through a combination of DDA funds and a grant from ITC Company a budget of \$15,000 has been created to offer a 50% reimbursable grant for signage, window, door and brickwork and outdoor seating improvements.

Executive Committee

- ❖ The Executive Committee, among other tasks, serves as the sounding board for initiatives the Director may undertake, amends bylaws and creates new policies and strategies to help lead the full board.
- ❖ The DDA Bylaws were amended to streamline and make the contract award and payment process more efficient.