

## **EDC Mission**

The Economic Development Commission will help attract, retain, develop, and promote businesses in the City of Kentwood.

### Opportunities

- Kentwood situated in a prime location
- Existing collaborations with Right Place, Inc. and MEDC
- Communications to community improved with Sabo PR—website improvements connect to local, state and federal
- Investors see high potential
- Business friendly
- Good infrastructure
- Thriving farmer's market
- School-business partnership focused on new jobs
- Low business insurance rates due to accessible services
- Some land still available for development—new opportunities on Division Avenue

### Challenges

- Need to continue outreach/communication with City Commission, county and other entities—understand needs of the city
- Establish relationship with new CEO of Right Place Inc.
- Identity for the City—residents and businesses
- Have community appreciate business contributions
- Demonstrate that Kentwood is healthy and growing
- Businesses awareness of available benefits
- Need method to continued outreach to business community
- Understand business issues better
- Have local business leaders care about Kentwood
- Need ongoing outreach to businesses—commercial as well as industrial

### Business challenges

- Finding qualified employees/training
- Finding employees that will show up to work every day
- Understanding programs available to them—especially new program related to Covid relief
- Knowing who to call with issues

## **EDC Objectives:**

1. Guide Policy and Partnerships to Assist with Economic Development
  - a. Align with MEDC
  - b. Align with Right Place
  - c. Interact w/ elected officials
  - d. Interact w/business community
  - e. Policy review and guidance
  
2. Implement Programs to Attract, Retain and Support Businesses
  - a. Bonds & Loans
  - b. Brownfield
  - c. PACE
  - d. Entrepreneurship
  - e. Education & Workforce Development
  - f. Liquor Licenses
  - g. Corridor Improvement
  
3. Community Engagement, Marketing and Business Promotion
  - a. Promotion of local, state, and federal economic opportunities and resources
  - b. Business Promotion
  - c. Customer Relations
  - d. Establishing and Maintaining Partnerships
  
4. Education & Training
  - a. Workforce Training & Development
  - b. Education of EDC Board Members

## **EDC Ambassador Teams & Objectives:**

### **OBJECTIVE 1: PROGRAMS AND DEVELOPMENT**

**The EDC acts as a conduit to connect businesses with available resources from local, state, federal, or private sources. Programs administered by the EDC include EDC Revenue Bonds, the Revolving Loan Fund, the Commercial Loan Fund, PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) Program, Brownfield Redevelopment Fund, and others.**

**The EDC is a clearinghouse of information provided by city, state, county and federal agencies that recognize the importance of the communication of public policies that support business development. Likewise, the EDC can inform these agencies of issues faced by the business community.**

**Real estate agencies, banking and other financial institutions may not be aware of the EDC loan programs or other incentives offered by the city; therefore their customers may not be aware of assistance that may be available to them. The EDC must communicate the availability of these programs and incentives to entities that advise small businesses.**

**Upon request of the City, EDC shall review and provide recommendation for policies that may have an impact on the businesses or the economic climate of the City. These policies may include tax abatements or other business incentives or tools, liquor licensing and the distribution of new quota licenses obtained by the city, or amendments to sign regulations.**

### **TASKS:**

The EDC shall:

- a) Invite legislators and other local leaders to EDC meetings to update the EDC the legislative board on issues and policies that may impact business development, as well as to inform legislators of known concerns within the business community.
- b) Identify organizations whose members or constituents could have interest in loan program/brownfield funds—including the Chamber of Commerce, Right Place, Inc., lending groups, real estate brokers (CAR) and environmental consultants. The EDC will provide or present written materials on these programs and the availability of funding.
- c) Find new ways to publicize information on business incentives such as loan programs, brownfield redevelopment programs, and training opportunities.
- d) Provide step sheets to access incentives such as Brownfield Redevelopment Funds to aid in determining eligibility and to provide insight into the process/timeline for approval.
- e) Develop list of banks interested in participation in the Revolving Loan Fund program, and identify a contact from each bank to promote the loan program.
- f) Coordinate efforts with Right Place Inc. by building on RPI Strategic Plan efforts.

- g) Inform City Commission and residents of business development successes by publishing article in city newsletter or reporting at a City Commission meeting.
- h) Survey businesses to address issues and concerns of the business community.
- i) Work with potential entrepreneurs and business start-ups to:
  - make use of the resources within the Entrepreneurial Center at the Library.
  - host entrepreneur bootcamps or incremental development workshops.
  - provide networking opportunities.
  - provide business counseling.
- j) At the request of the City, provide recommendations regarding ordinances, programs and policies that impact businesses and the business community.

## **OBJECTIVE 2: EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY**

- High School
- Higher Education
- Entrepreneurial (Junior Achievement HQ, MI SBDC, Etc.)
- Workforce Development
- Business Mentorship

**The EDC recognizes the critical connection between schools and employers and will act as a conduit to connect students or graduates with businesses needing workers. The EDC can also connect local businesses with other resources (such as Michigan Works!) to help identify candidates for employment.**

**The EDC in its connections with the business community will gain an understanding of the characteristics and skills needed for the workforce and communicate these needs to educators.**

**The EDC will encourage the growth of business start-ups through programs offered by organizations such as GROW (Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women) and the Small Business Development Center of GVSU that educate individuals in various aspects of starting and operating a business.**

## **TASKS:**

The EDC shall:

- a) Actively participate in East Kentwood Future Fest by assisting in recruiting business participants and contacts.
- b) Survey businesses to assess the employment needs within the business community
- c) Encourage entrepreneurial activity by:
  - understanding the resources at the Entrepreneurial Center.
  - updating information in Entrepreneurial Center at the Kentwood Library, including outside resources available to entrepreneurs.
  - use Entrepreneurial Center for small groups training/workshops.
- d) Provide information on GRCC training programs that would benefit businesses.
- e) Connect employers to MI Works programming.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT**

**The EDC can act as a conduit to encourage the redevelopment of areas that lack new investment and growth. The areas of concern include Division Avenue and the 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and Eastern Avenue intersection. In addition, the EDC will work to encourage the ongoing success of commercial areas such as the 28<sup>th</sup> Street and 29<sup>th</sup> Street corridors.**

### **TASKS:**

For each state corridor/district below, the EDC shall:

#### **Division Avenue:**

- a) Disseminate information on the Division United study to businesses and property owners along the corridor.
- b) Link interested developers/property owners to the Division United Toolkits available, including:
  - Mobility and Connectivity Toolkit
  - Economic Development Toolkit
  - Incremental Development and Zoning Toolkit
  - Placemaking Toolkit
  - Equity Toolkit

Ensure that Toolkits are easy to read and understand, by summarizing information and making the toolkit widely available to businesses and residents along the corridor.

- c) Encourage ordinance amendments to allow food trucks and open air businesses to promote incremental development.
- d) Host incremental development workshops.
- e) Locate preferred sites for open air businesses and food trucks.
- f) Establish a Corridor Improvement Authority for Division Avenue.
- g) Advertise availability of loan programs specifically intended for Division Avenue start-ups.

#### **28<sup>th</sup> / 29<sup>th</sup> Streets:**

- a) Encourage the re-use of underutilized buildings, including
  - Consider new uses not currently permitted—such as EV charging stations
  - Consider the amount of office space currently vacant and recommend new uses.
  - Reconsider Special Land Use standards for drive throughs.
  - With assistance of developers, review city's zoning ordinance for outdated use provisions or new use provisions.
- b) Meet with property owners to encourage business associations/joint marketing efforts.

- c) Make recommendations to the city regarding the allowance for more temporary businesses—food truck, open air businesses to encourage new development and test market.
- d) Encourage city to improve access to 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> Street corridors through:
  - Bus line extensions/service improvement, especially for the benefit of employees
  - Improve crosswalks along the corridors
- e) Review retail/office absorption rates and report trends

### **52<sup>nd</sup> and Eastern**

- a) Invite owner/realtor representing property to EDC meeting to discuss potential projects.
- b) Encourage incorporation of new residential uses.
- c) Work with landlord to offer retail incubator space within center.
- d) Encourage temporary uses such as food trucks or outdoor open-air businesses.

### **OBJECTIVE 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**One of the major roles of the EDC is to act as a conduit between the business community and the city. In order to do this, the EDC needs to connect regularly with businesses to ascertain their issues and concerns. In addition, the EDC must continue to promote the accomplishments of the business community to residents, the City Commission and other entities.**

### **TASKS**

The EDC shall:

- a) Determine method for collection and upkeep of business contact information.
- b) Complete a periodic survey of businesses for feedback on services, issues, accomplishments.
- c) Use city newsletter (or a newsletter geared primarily to business) to inform developers, real estate, engineers re:
  - changes to development process
  - road closures and construction
  - business expansions in Kentwood
  - changes to state programming and incentives, grants, deadlines for applications
- d) Develop a list of the City's Top 30 businesses—know who they are and they know us.
- e) Develop a business award program for:
  - significant contributions to employment in area
  - exterior property improvements
  - contributions to the community
  - new technology developed

- f) Develop a business assistance hotline.
- g) Complete a cost of doing business study:

- real estate and occupancy cost
- construction cost
- utility cost
- taxes
- development permit fees
- incentives to reduce costs
- Labor costs

Create model project for comparison

Identify comparable communities

RFP for consultant

Identify results, cost advantage, incentives to offset costs

- h) Develop a directory of small business services.
- i) Create a Kentwood Linked in Group.
- j) Encourage tourism in the city.
  - Who visits and why
  - Use digital resources to provide information on current events/activities/attractions
  - Host amateur tournaments
  - See if hotels have exhibition space to attract events

### **EDC Ambassador Team Members:**

1. Programs & Development
  - DeBruyn
  - Clements
  - Gaffin
  - Brandt
2. Education & Opportunity
  - Swoboda
  - Green
  - Tyson
3. Corridor Development
  - DeLuccia
  - Coughlin
  - Clements
4. Community Engagement
  - DeLuccia
  - Coughlin
  - Green
  - Tyson

