



ALBION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

# Economic Development Strategic Plan

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Albion, Michigan

**Amy Deprez, President & CEO**

Approved by:

Albion Economic Development Corporation  
Board of Directors  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albion is reaching a tipping point of economic growth. The residents of Albion have shown unwavering resilience throughout the Great Recession and the decline of manufacturing. Investors have been instilled with more confidence in small-town economies. The Albion Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) and its partners have been experiencing both successes and growing pains as developments take off and the interest in Albion grows each day. This Economic Development Strategic Plan has been created to guide the AEDC and its partners through this quickly evolving economic upswing.

The overarching goal of the EDSP is to increase the human and financial capacity of the AEDC so that it can take a more proactive and responsive approach to economic development instead of a reactionary approach. The EDSP seeks to do this by:

- ❖ *creating a unifying direction for the economic and business development entities in Albion as the City continues to move in a positive direction; and*
- ❖ *improving the ability and efficiency of the AEDC and its partners to attract, retain, and grow businesses.*

As a result of the strategy outlined in this document, existing businesses can expect to receive more support from the DDA, the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Albion, the AEDC, and other organizations. It is through this support that they will see increased sales, more skilled employees, and more complementary businesses. The City, AEDC, and others can hope to see increased revenue to increase their staffing and ability to serve the needs of residents, businesses, and tourists alike.

By taking a more unified and concerted effort, it is the hope of the AEDC, its Board, and its partners that the growth and prosperity coming to Albion will benefit all of those that seek to take part in it.



Amy Deprez, President and CEO

## INTRODUCTION

The AEDC organized a Steering Committee to draft the Economic Development Strategic Plan. This Steering Committee represented City Council, Planning Commission, the City Planning and Zoning Department, local business owners, and Albion College. The Steering Committee met on July 24, 2017 to generate ideas for the goals and objectives of this Plan. The AEDC staff worked to compile the information from the meeting and drafted the Economic Development Strategic Plan. The Steering Committee reviewed a draft of the document on August 28, 2017, made edits, and sent it to the Albion Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors. The final document was approved and adopted on September ##, 2017 with the Directors' edits.

This document begins with the strategic situations and opportunities that Albion faces. This list has been developed and vetted by the AEDC staff and the Steering Committee. Each of the goals of this plan identifies: those responsible for achieving the goal, the objectives to achieve the goal, the expected outcomes, key partners, and performance measures where appropriate.

The goals in this document were largely based on the City's Comprehensive Plan which was drafted with input from residents, City Council, Planning Commission, and key stakeholders. The goals are also designed to ensure that the AEDC and the City of Albion meet the requirements of the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Community Program. Completing the RRC Program will open the door to many opportunities for Albion. Albion will have access to funding, technical assistance, and marketing through the MEDC during the RRC process and after completion of the program.

During the planning process, it became clear that certain guiding principles were paramount in the development of this plan. Ensuring the development of the community promotes densely populated neighborhoods and smart growth strategies. Ensuring that there is a strong sense of inclusion in the planning and promotion of positive and consistent messages both within and outside of the community. Ensuring support for "early adopters" with resources and incentives to create a strong economy and foundation that will attract more developers to the area. And lastly, ensuring that the community attracts businesses that will accommodate the needs and wants of residents, students, and visitors. Through these principles, the following Economic Development Strategic Plan was developed.

## Strategic Opportunities

### Redevelopment Sites

Albion has been left with a number of large properties that are ideal for development. The Calhoun County Land Bank Authority, Marshall Public Schools, Albion College, the AEDC, and Albion Reinvestment Corporation (ARC) hold over 20 redevelopment sites in Albion. These sites present opportunities for various sizes and types of development, including commercial, mixed use, industrial, and residential.

### Strong Industrial Park

Albion's Industrial Park is home to 17 manufacturing companies that produce everything from cardboard and plastic injection molding to prosthetic limbs and solar panels. There is still undeveloped space available for new operations. The Albion Industrial Park also boasts a business incubator space that has had successful businesses exit the incubator stage and go on to grow in Albion such as Team One Plastics.

### Downtown Anchor Projects

Albion's early investors have helped to strengthen the downtown and instill confidence in future investors and entrepreneurs. In 2015, the historic Bohm Theatre was reopened and has become a venue for first-run movies and community events like Blues at the Bohm, where locals hang out for a 3 hour jam session on Monday nights. The Bohm Theatre launched a successful crowdfunding campaign through the MEDC's Public Spaces Community Places Grant Program to add a second screen in the adjacent building. A Courtyard by Marriott hotel will be completed in early 2018, the Peabody Project – a three-story mixed use renovation of an existing building – has just been approved for a Community Development Block through the MEDC, and the Albion Malleable Brewing Company will be open by early 2018 – due in part to a comprehensive financial package utilizing a local bank, crowdfunding, and impact investment through the New Albion Impact Group. The momentum that these projects are creating has led to other small businesses and entrepreneurs remodeling and opening stores in the downtown such as Stirling Books and Brew, AIM Community Thrift Store, Brown's Home Furnishings, Yesterday's News Antiques, and more.

### Educational Institutions

Albion is home to Albion College, a high-ranking Midwestern liberal arts institution with nearly 1,500 students. Kellogg Community College has a branch located just outside of Albion. Albion is also located within 60 miles of 11 major colleges and universities.

Albion is within the Marshall Public School District which has a kindergarten through post-secondary education focus and offers AP courses, an early access college program, and a strong educational program. Albion's children can benefit from being part of a school district that focuses on K-12 education and beyond.

### MEDC Redevelopment Ready Community Program

The MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Community Program has opened the door to financial support and technical assistance to achieve the economic development goals that the AEDC has identified. The program is designed to build the capacity of small cities to attract and retain developers.

### Residents

Residents of Albion show strong support for local businesses and initiatives. Albion's residents are an engaged, talented, passionate, and active community that are committed to Albion's success. Both current and future residents hope to see Albion become a place that provides a good quality of life while remaining affordable.

Many of Albion’s aging residents would like to remain in Albion and are seeking ways to attract more senior residential developments and single-level barrier-free homes.

### Natural Features

The Kalamazoo River runs through the heart of the downtown and is the focal point of Albion’s largest and most-used park of its 17 amazing parks, Victory Park. The Kalamazoo River is an ideal spot for kayaking, canoeing, and fishing. Albion is located at the intersection of 3 major state-wide and national trails: the North Country National Scenic Trail, the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail, and the Iron Belle Trail. The City is currently expanding its trail system through an MDNR Trust Fund Grant to attract more hikers and bikers to the region.

### Publicity at State and National Levels

Albion has been featured in MLive, the Wall Street Journal, and by departments of the State such as the MDNR for the progress that is being made here and its bold initiatives. Albion College even received a Simon Spotlight award for its educational connections to the City’s sister city, Noisy-le-Roi, France. Albion is on the path to success and it is gaining local, state, national, and even international recognition.

### Entrepreneurship

People within and around Albion have a strong interest in starting businesses in Albion. A few such examples include the Albion Malleable Brewing Company, Kerizma Salon, and Stirling Books and Brew. Stirling Books and Brew was the reinvention of the former Books and More, revamping the business to what is popular today. Continuing to support these entrepreneurs is a key part of this strategic plan.

### Investors

Albion has been fortunate to have initial investors that are willing to take the necessary risks to revitalize the economy in Albion and lay the foundation for other investments. The Albion Reinvestment Corporation, the New Albion Impact Group, Shaheen Development and ACE Investments have been purchasing and renovating blighted buildings. Also an alumnus of Albion College gifted \$1 million for the Harrington Project, which allows for the rehabilitation and demolition of homes in a neighborhood connecting the downtown with the campus.

### Alumni & Retirees

Albion’s aging population and alumni of Albion College and the City are seeking opportunities to relocate or remain in Albion for their retirement years. A group of engaged and passionate retirees and alumni are working to attract developers to provide senior housing and barrier-free housing so that they can remain in Albion and age in place instead of relocating to another city with more housing options.

### Location

Albion’s manufacturers and producers enjoy that Albion is located just off of I-94 and a short drive from I-69 and US 127. People are able to come and go using the Amtrak station located at the north end of downtown via daily trains going to Chicago, Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Lansing.

### Large Amount of Affordable Housing

Albion was recently ranked as the 16<sup>th</sup> best city for first-time homebuyers in the State of Michigan by [LendEDU](#). Albion has many beautiful and affordable historic homes, a wide selection of rental properties, and the majority of Albion is within walking and biking distance to downtown.

## Strategic Situation and Challenges

### Education & Workforce

The existing workforce is ready to reskill so that it can meet the demand for technical and skilled labor. Like much of the US's workforce, many unemployed workers have given up looking for work. Before working to reskill the labor force, the labor force must be engaged and supported to reenter the workforce or enter into reskilling programs or pursuing more education.

### Infrastructure & Transportation

Albion's main street, Superior Street, is undergoing a complete renovation to replace the water mains, sub-base, and brick pavement. Albion's downtown will be well prepared to welcome new businesses with the work that is taking place. Many of Albion's other roads, however, are in disrepair. The main corridors – Michigan Ave., Eaton St., and M-99 – are maintained by MDOT which helps to alleviate the strain on the City's budget. Albion lacks a public transportation system making transportation for jobs, health, and living challenging for residents.

### Perception of Change

As with any city, everyone has different ideas as to what their city *should* be. The community is developing a unified vision for economic growth, education, and workforce development. The AEDC believes that the positive changes happening in the community can and should reach all those that wish to take part in them

Albion is on the cusp of a rebirth. The resilience of Albion's residents combined with the risk that initial investors are taking is positioning the City to return to its past life of a bustling downtown and strong, connected neighborhoods. By focusing on this, Albion can change its self-image and continue to welcome more residents and businesses into the community.

### Alignment of Community Leaders

While many great initiatives and investments are taking root in Albion, community leaders have been coming together in formal and informal ways to align their goals so the city can take larger strides in economic progress. This plan seeks to align those goals for the betterment of the Albion economy and workforce.

### Access to Healthcare

The closest hospital to Albion is a 15-minute drive to Oaklawn Hospital in Marshall, MI. Many residents have expressed a desire for a hospital or medical facility within Albion that offers after-hours and emergency care. The existing health care facilities in Albion include: Henry Ford Allegiance Family Medical Center, Calhoun County Health Department, and the Ralph and Mary Cram Medical Center which provide basic medical services. A group of community organizations prepared and submitted a rural healthcare grant in 2017 for research and development of a new healthcare facility in Albion to best accommodate the needs of residents.

### Gateway Appeal

Albion recognizes the impact that an attractive and inviting entryway has on a community. Organizations are coming together to develop a plan for redeveloping these corridors. The City of Albion is updating its zoning ordinance to better meet the needs of today's residents and businesses to attract investment and development along the corridors.

### Communication

The most effective forms of communication in Albion tend to be word-of-mouth and social media. Organizations and individuals are always seeking new ways to communicate news about events and other happenings. Finding new ways to communicate and reach more areas of the city will help to better inform residents of events and developments and create a larger sense of community.

### Food Desert

Albion is classified as a “food desert” as there is a lack of access to affordable fresh foods. The AEDC has made a significant impact in this deficiency by revitalizing the Albion Farmer’s Market and starting the Albion Food Hub. The Albion Farmer’s Market is open during the spring, summer, and fall and accepts food assistance program benefits. The AEDC plans to implement a year round market soon. The Albion Food Hub is a shared commercial kitchen, food and restaurant incubator, and houses the food pantry for the community. A nonprofit group, Albion Community Gardens, has converted several acres of property for production of free produce for local residents.

### Manufacturing Trends

The US economy has been experiencing a decline in employment in manufacturing due to automation and overseas labor markets. While Albion has had a strong manufacturing history, it is becoming increasingly difficult for economies to support manufacturing industries. A broad range of skilled and unskilled jobs will create a more resilient economy with more opportunities for all residents.

### Declining & Aging Population

The City of Albion, like many of its surrounding communities, lost population from 1970-2010. Albion’s population continued to decline, however, and in 2015 Nielsen Company estimated that Albion’s population decreased to 8,240 persons, a decline of 4.44% from the 2010 Census. Without intervention, Nielsen projects that the City’s population would continue to fall to 7,961 persons by 2020, a decrease of another 3.4%.

Of the 2,785 households estimated in Albion in 2015, nearly 64% are comprised of “empty nesters and retirees.” These empty nesters and retirees are seeking domiciles where they can age in place. Many do not want to move out of town to a retirement home, but without adequate housing and senior options in the City, they have to.

### Quality of Life

As many small post-industrial towns have seen, attracting younger people can be difficult when there is “nothing to do.” All residents, regardless of age, would like to see more “things to do” after 5:00 pm. Right now, many young people are willing to move to communities and put the time and sweat-equity into older homes if they can be in a lively and engaging community. Albion is in need of the entertainment options and a diversified housing stock to attract new residents and keep existing residents here. Albion is on its way to offering more entertainment options and providing for the basic retail needs of current and future residents. The arts, culture, and music are growing in Albion. Albion is seeing more and more talent coming from within its own community from musicians and artists to chefs and entrepreneurs. The AEDC is focusing on dense development to create the walkable, energetic community that both young and old would like to see.



## **Mission & Vision**

### **Albion Economic Development Mission Statement**

The Albion EDC works to retain, expand and recruit businesses and industry to the greater Albion area and strengthen and revitalize the local economy.

### **Vision**

Revitalizing the local economy through collaboration, partnership, and delivering on the Mission through:

- Growing and Attracting Businesses and Industry
- Building Workforce Capabilities and Alleviating Conditions for Unemployment
- Revitalizing Albion's Core Development Districts

*Through facilitated discussions with community leaders and residents, a long-term vision will be developed and included in future updates of this document.*

### **Social Impact**

As the main economic development organization serving the City of Albion, the Albion EDC seeks to strengthen the local economy so that the City of Albion has ample resources to meet the diverse safety, public health, environmental, and other needs of citizens. After the major economic downturn, the community lost its economic base but its residents did not lose their faith in the community. The Albion EDC is putting its resources into restoring the robust economy that Albion once had by attracting businesses and jobs that will meet the needs and desires of Albion's citizens. The Albion EDC along with many other partners is working to ensure that Albion improves its quality of life while remaining affordable.

## **The Albion Economic Development Corporation: Your Continued Partner**

The Albion EDC recognized that there are many challenges to development in post-industrial towns – diminished customer base, environmental remediation, brain-drain, population decline, workforce skill gaps and more. As a result, we have many options in our development “tool box.” The goals and strategies outlined in this document regarding the attraction of new businesses and jobs will be realized, in part, due to the incentive packages that the AEDC can assemble for developers.

### **TIFA & BRA**

The AEDC is also the City’s Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA). Through these tools in particular, the AEDC is able to help support the redevelopment and reuse of Brownfield sites. Through capture of increased tax revenue, resulting from the redevelopment project, certain environmental costs associated with a Brownfield site may be reimbursed to the Developer over time. Eligible activities include demolition, asbestos abatement, site preparation, public infrastructure improvements and more. These programs spur the development of challenged sites and create a cleaner, healthier environment for residents.

The AEDC has in place a mechanism to continue the collection of tax increment on Brownfield projects for a period of time after the developer has been reimbursed to create a revolving pool of funds that can be used on future projects to address environmental assessments and other costs.

### **Albion EDC Revolving Loan Fund**

The AEDC has a revolving loan fund, designed to be the “lender of last resort”, that is flexible and can be used as an alternative form of financing for development projects. The fund requires job creation and can be used for a variety of activities, including working capital.

### **Tax Sharing & Rehabilitation Acts**

Michigan law encourages the redevelopment of obsolete, blighted and underutilized buildings with the creation of districts that allow for tax capture by essentially freezing the taxable value of the building prior to redevelopment for a period of up to 12 years. Depending on many variables, the tax capture can be provided to the developer or shared between the developer and the community to incentivize significant improvements in the property without increasing the property taxes on the building.

### **SBDC Partnerships**

Due to a partnership with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the AEDC is able to offer free business consulting for start-ups or existing businesses in Albion. Local entrepreneurs, long-time businesses, and others have taken advantage of this free assistance to launch their businesses or expand their current reach.

### **Grants and Other Incentives**

The AEDC is happy to partner with developers that need assistance in applying for state or federal grant/loan programs. Our team has vast experience with the MEDC’s programs, grant writing, EPA grants/loans, and more. The AEDC is here to assist developers and businesses in making it easier to locate in Albion.

To read more about available incentive programs, [click here](#) to view our incentives summary sheet.

## STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives outlined on the following pages represent actions that the AEDC will *claim, support, or endorse*. Unless otherwise stated, the AEDC will claim these goals and objectives meaning that they will take a lead role in seeing that these goals are followed through on. If a goal specifies that the AEDC will *support* an action, that means that the AEDC will be a partner and participant in that action but it is not the lead organization spearheading that action. If a goal is specified as being *endorsed* by the AEDC that means that the AEDC may not have an active role in that activity but it endorses other organizations working toward that goal.

All organizations that have been listed as the responsible parties and champions for achieving these goals have been consulted during the drafting of this plan. The organizations listed have agreed that the goals and strategies with which they are listed are appropriate, within their purview, and feasible.

The goals have been ranked by the Steering Committee and the order has been approved by the AEDC Board of Directors. When ranking the goals, the Steering Committee took into account the logical order in which they should happen, their feasibility, the current progress on the goals, and the community's most pressing needs. It should be noted that Goal 3 is not an end unto itself. The goal of building the capacity of the AEDC and other economic development agencies in the city is to ensure that we can sustain the progress that has been made and continue to make progress in *all areas of the City*. Out of necessity, the majority of the actions outlined in the goal will be completed by the end of 2017, which gives the goal a higher priority.

**Goal 1: Stabilize the downtown, enhance its historic character, and support its economic growth.**

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO, ARC Board of Directors, DDA, City of Albion

**Key Partners:** Foundations, investors, Albion College, residents, the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce (GACC), Calhoun County Visitors Bureau, developers

*A number of investors, entrepreneurs, and business owners have been reenergizing the downtown in recent years. It is the hope that the downtown will become an active, walkable, vibrant, and engaging public space that attracts and serves residents, students, and visitors. Albion’s downtown is the most economically viable section of town at this point. The AEDC recognizes that all areas of town are in need of redevelopment, investment, and planning. The downtown has initial investors that will help to create jobs and increase revenue for the City of Albion. The AEDC sees a need to allocate its limited resources here for the time being until the downtown is more stable and producing revenue for the City. The AEDC is confident that the positive effects of a strengthened downtown will naturally spill over into other areas of the city.*

Strategies	AEDC’s Role	Responsible Party
A. <i>Attract mixed use development to the downtown that will serve the needs of the community and complement the existing mix of businesses</i>	Claim	AEDC
B. <i>Develop ARC Strategic Plan and Downtown Plan</i>	Claim	AEDC
C. <i>Support DDA in efforts to develop comprehensive façade improvement program</i>	Support	DDA
D. <i>Develop Community Development Block Grant façade improvement program</i>	Claim	AEDC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) Mixed use properties will be developed in downtown
- 2) ARC Strategic Plan and Downtown Plan will lead to increased growth and vibrancy in the downtown
- 3) Businesses will rehab façades, transforming the aesthetics of the downtown

Performance Measures	Baseline	Target	Target Amount
No. of downtown properties redeveloped	1	December 2018	3
No. of façade improvements	1	December 2020	4
Commercial vacancy rate	40%	December 2020	20%
No. of downtown residential units developed/redeveloped	N/A	December 2020	20

**Goal 2: Stabilize the City’s major corridors and support their economic growth.**

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO, City of Albion, businesses located within corridors

**Key Partners:** Businesses along corridors, residents, MDOT, business/trade associations, developers

*Albion’s civic and business leaders realize the importance of having inviting, attractive gateways to the community. Albion will strengthen neighborhoods and businesses along the entryways, thus improving the quality of life in those areas. This is recognized as a top priority for both attracting more development and improving the quality of life by removing blight and channeling investment into the corridors. The AEDC’s role in achieving this goal is attracting and retaining businesses and developments along the major corridors. The City of Albion’s role is to establish an overarching plan for improving the corridors. The performance measures for the corridor improvement efforts will be outlined in the Corridor Improvement Plan. It is not appropriate to outline those performance measures in this document without undertaking the appropriate planning processes.*

Strategies	AEDC’s Role	Responsible Parties
A. <i>Support</i> the development of a Corridor Improvement Plan that strengthens the visual and physical connections made by the Downtown Commercial District, Albion College, the I94 (Eaton St.) Business Corridor, Austin Avenue, and the south entrance to the City on M99	Support	City of Albion
- Explore the establishment of a Corridor Improvement Authority	Support	City of Albion
B. <i>Attract</i> businesses and development to the major corridors	Claim	AEDC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) "Gateway appeal" will improve and the businesses along the major corridors will experience positive changes and growth
- 2) Corridor Improvement Authorities will be established if necessary
- 3) Corridors will be filled with businesses and development

Performance Measures	Baseline	Target	Target Amount
No. of new businesses/developments along major corridors	N/A	December 2019	3

- City will complete Corridor Improvement Plan and establish Corridor Improvement Authority (if deemed necessary) – by *December 2018*

**Goal 3: Build the human and capital capacity of key economic development agencies within Albion.**

**Champions:** Director of Planning, Building, and Code; AEDC Project Manager

**Key Partners:** DDA, City of Albion, GACC, MSU Extension, State partners and regional planning councils

*Albion will seize the major shift taking place in its economy to build up the tax base and thus the revenue streams for the City, AEDC, and DDA. These increased financial resources will help all organizations function at a higher level with increased staff and resources for the community. As mentioned in Goal 1, the AEDC recognizes that every area of town can benefit from investment and redevelopment. It is the hope of the AEDC that through the completion of the Redevelopment Ready Community Certification (RRC) through the MEDC and supporting the initial investors in the community that it will have the resources to focus attention and investment into all areas of the city so that all will benefit from the economic upswing.*

*Many of the strategies outlined in this goal are part of the RRC Program which the City is on track to complete by the end of 2017. This is the reason why this goal has been listed higher on the list of goals. As this shift in Albion’s economy is taking place, the option of combining certain aspects of the DDA, AEDC, and Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce (GACC) has been identified as a way to maximize the outputs of all of the organizations combined.*

Strategies	AEDC’s Role	Responsible Party
A. Reduce barriers to development and increase speed-to-market	Claim	AEDC
- Achieve consistency between the existing zoning code and the long term goals for residential, commercial, and industrial development	Support	City of Albion
- Prepare Guide to Development	Support	City of Albion
- Prepare Property Information Packages for redevelopment sites	Claim	AEDC
- Have all development guides, materials, and applications available online	Support	City of Albion
- Implement administrative and procedural practices to better align and communicate among the “doorways” of development – City, AEDC, DDA, GACC	Support	City of Albion
B. Review and develop funding strategies to increase financial resources and staff of the AEDC, the City, the DDA, and the GACC	Claim	AEDC
- Develop a revolving loan fund through brownfield tax increment capture	Claim	AEDC
- Apply for economic development grants to increase staffing	Claim	AEDC
C. Explore possibility of market research study	Claim	AEDC
D. Explore possibility of combining aspects of the AEDC, DDA, and GACC	Claim	AEDC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) Speed-to-market, communication among development organizations, and organizational capacity/preparedness will improve
- 2) Increased staff and capacity will lead to further economic growth and expanded community resources
- 3) Market research study will be completed if necessary
- 4) Working agreement with AEDC, DDA, and/or GACC will be established

Performance Measures:

- City completes Zoning Rewrite – *by December 2018*
- Finalize Guide to Development – *by December 2017*
- Finalize Property Information Packages – *by December 2017*
- Have all development materials online – *by December 2017*
- Establish standing meetings among “doorways” of development – *by December 2017*
- Review funding strategies – *by February 2018*
- Complete market research study (if determined necessary)
- Meet with DDA and GACC to discuss possibility of combining aspects of functions – *by February 2018*

## Goal 4: Retain and attract high-leverage jobs to Albion

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO, City of Albion, Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce President (GACC),

**Key Partners:** Employment resource network, foundations, educational institutions, AmeriCorps VISTA, employers

*Albion will be home to a broad labor force and a robust local economy. The AEDC will realize this by attracting a diverse range of employers and expanding the capacity of current employers. There are a number of available jobs in and around Albion. The major challenge to matching people with jobs is the skill gap. The AEDC will work with employers, community partners and workforce development agencies to engage disengaged citizens to re-enter the labor market and put in place training programs that will close the skill gap.*

Strategies	AEDC's Role	Responsible Party
A. Support a workgroup to research and generate ideas for housing, workforce development, and business recruitment	Support	City of Albion
B. Support efforts to strengthen Albion's workforce development network by partnering with key organizations and educational institutions	Support	City of Albion
C. Develop and implement proactive business retention and development strategy	Claim	AEDC
D. Foster entrepreneurship	Claim	AEDC
E. Encourage reuse and redevelopment of brownfield sites by utilizing existing brownfield redevelopment assistance programs	Claim	AEDC
F. Support connections with Albion College/Albion High School Alumni looking to expand or start new businesses	Claim	AEDC
G. Advertise business incubators to broader network	Claim	AEDC

### Outcomes:

- 1) A roadmap for housing, workforce development, and business recruitment will be implemented
- 2) Albion's workforce will be strengthened and job-seekers will be connected with employment
- 3) Albion's businesses will remain strong players in the local economy and experience growth
- 4) More entrepreneurs will thrive in Albion
- 5) Brownfield sites will be redeveloped and repurposed
- 6) New business/employment opportunities will result from proactive engagement with alumni networks
- 7) Incubators will have new tenant(s)

Performance Measures	Baseline	Target Date	Target Amount
Tenant(s) in Albion Food Hub Incubator	2	December 2018	4
Tenant(s) in business incubator	1	December 2018	2
No. of Entrepreneurs engaged* in community	N/A	December 2018	5
No. of new businesses attracted to the community	N/A	December 2018	4

\*Here, "engaged" is defined as at a minimum receiving counseling support and progressing in the development of their business.

- Workgroup for housing, workforce development, and business recruitment established
- Participate in efforts to strengthen Albion's workforce development network
- Complete business retention and development strategy
- Engage with existing brownfield redevelopment assistance programs
- Complete promotional materials for business incubators and advertise



## Goal 5: Strengthen housing market and housing stock.

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO, City of Albion

**Key Partners:** Realtors, Local Banking Community, MEDC, MSHDA, Albion College, Albion High School Alumni Association, housing developers

*Albion will meet the housing needs of current and future residents. A Target Market Analysis was completed in 2015 for Albion that showed that Albion is capable of sustaining housing developments like townhouses, apartments, mixed use spaces, duplexes, and single-family homes. To seize this opportunity, the AEDC will work with realtors, the City of Albion, residents, and other partners to attract these desired developments.*

Strategies	AEDC's Role	Responsible Party
A. <i>Support</i> the attraction of private and nonprofit housing developers to create infill housing and the redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and brownfield sites for attainable and market rate housing that appeals to a broad range of demographics.	Support	City of Albion
- Develop incentive package for housing developers	Claim	AEDC
- Utilize Target Market Analysis to work with developers on creating different types of housing options	Claim	AEDC
- Create incentives for homeowners to invest in their homes	Support	City of Albion
- Collaborate with local realtors to spread a positive, consistent message about Albion	Endorse	GACC
B. <i>Support</i> the City of Albion in its efforts to establish Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZ)	Support	City of Albion
C. <i>Research and explore</i> the establishment of a real estate investment trust	Claim	AEDC
D. <i>Research and explore</i> the establishment of a housing development incubator	Claim	AEDC

### Outcomes:

- 1) New housing developments and rehabilitated homes will create active and attractive neighborhoods
- 2) Neighborhood Enterprise Zone(s) will lead to more homeowners rehabilitating homes, restoring the character and vibrancy of these areas
- 3) More homes will be sold in Albion

Performance Measures	Baseline	Target Date	Target Amount
No. of new commercial housing developments	N/A	December 2020	2
No. of commercial housing rehabilitations	N/A	December 2020	5
No. of permits issued for rehabs in NEZ	N/A	December 2022	TBD

**Goal 6: Create a unified brand for Albion to drive tourism, business growth, and investment**

**Champions:** AEDC President/CEO & Project Manager

**Key Partners:** City of Albion, appointed and elected officials, educational institutions, SBAs/professional organizations, GACC

*The City, its residents, and its businesses will benefit from increased tourism, population, density, and a stronger housing market through the development of a Strategic Marketing Plan. A community marketing group has already been established to develop a new brand for Albion. With funding from the MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Community Program, a new community brand will be developed and marketed.*

Strategies	AEDC's Role	Responsible Party
A. Create a "bank" of positive stories and accomplishments of residents, businesses, and organizations in the Albion community	Claim	AEDC
B. Develop Strategic Marketing Plan to improve internal and external communication regarding developments, initiatives, and successes.	Claim	AEDC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) Information "bank" will help to develop pitches to large developers and attract new businesses, jobs, and investment
- 2) Strategic Marketing Plan will create and unify the branding of the City and its efforts
- 3) More attention on Albion will result in increased investment, population, and prosperity
- 4) More businesses that serve residents', students', and tourists' needs will locate in Albion
- 5) Residents will be more informed of new projects and developments and become more civically engaged

**Performance Measures:**

- AEDC creates information to "bank" of positive stories and accomplishments – *by January 2018 and ongoing*
- Complete Strategic Marketing Plan – *by March 2018*

**Goal 7: Make strategic choices to turn Albion into a destination for current and future residents and tourists.**

**Champions:** GACC President, City of Albion

**Key Partners:** Local businesses

*Albion will be a community that is vibrant and bustling at all times of day with residents, students, and tourists. New entertainment options, restaurants, and retail stores will meet the leisure time activities that residents and tourists desire. At the time of the creation of this Plan, the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce is in a transition period and is searching for a new President. The new Courtyard by Marriott will also provide more revenue for the community to spur tourism and economic development. After the new President is hired and the GACC has more capacity through this new funding stream, the main champion of this goal will be the GACC.*

Strategies	AEDC's Role	Responsible Party
A. Determine if future hotel tax revenue can be used for economic development, marketing, and placemaking as a way to drive tourism	Claim	AEDC
B. Endorse extending or changing business hours of local businesses to accommodate residents and out-of-towners that work 8 to 5	Endorse	GACC
C. Support the attraction of more entertainment, restaurants, and recreation to Albion	Support	GACC
D. Support placemaking efforts	Support	GACC

**Outcomes:**

- 1) A plan for the new revenue will be developed and implemented
- 2) Businesses receive more traffic and sales from extended hours
- 3) More businesses that accommodate the entertainment needs of residents and tourists will locate to Albion
- 4) Increased vibrancy, foot traffic, and use of public spaces

**Performance Measures:**

*As noted above, it is more appropriate for the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce to define the performance measures for the goals that will be the responsibility of the yet-to-be-hired President.*

## Review and Oversight

The Economic Development Strategic Plan will be reviewed, approved, and amended annually and as needed by the Albion Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors. Staff of the City of Albion, the AEDC, and the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce and Albion's elected and appointed officials will work towards the success of each goal. Quarterly and annual updates will be reported to Planning Commission and City Council by the City Manager.