Dear Friends:

Economic development is a team sport. It takes our businesses, municipalities, schools and communities working in partnership in order to win. The 2019-2020 season brought us many unprecedented challenges, but as you will see in the following pages, we not only had a strong game plan, but were able to move the ball down the field and scored several big victories.

I would like to thank all of you for your support this year. We gained 18 investors, created 40 jobs, retained 219 jobs and built on our already strong foundation. Brick by brick, and block and block, Market Van Buren made progress in building a stronger community. Today we find ourselves in a unique position as people are leaving major metropolitan areas for communities that look like ours. Folks are starting to discover what we have known all along – our wide open spaces, lakes and streams, solid schools, and something as simple as getting fresh fruits and vegetables on the side of the road make for an outstanding quality of life.

The pandemic that swept across the country was devastating to small businesses. I was proud of the fact that our organization pivoted quickly to become a meaningful resource for companies and communities. It is easy to be the signpost directing people to different places, but we took a different strategy. We rolled up our sleeves, found needed state funding for businesses, made loans from our county revolving loan fund to shore up our job providers, and went directly to the Legislature to change rules so our companies had access to capital.

The coming year brings several challenges as we build an ecosystem for growth. We will be forging ahead on making rural broadband a reality, continuing work on filling industrial parks, working to help businesses not just survive, but thrive in the future.

We have assembled a great team of leaders in Van Buren County, and we will be helping Cass County as well in the coming year. Our strategy is sound, our team is tested, and I am excited to take the field and win. Thank you again for your ideas, connections and support. Let’s make it a great year.

Sincerely,

Zachary Morris
Executive Director
Market Van Buren

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**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**
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.
Since 2016, Market Van Buren has been working with companies, Van Buren County, local governments and community groups to build an ecosystem for economic development. That ecosystem includes the anchors of strong local businesses; the ability to attract and retain talent; and having a community where folks will want to live and build their futures.

MARKET VAN BUREN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 11 Business Expansions
- 8 Business Retentions
- 168 Jobs Created
- 427 Jobs Retained
- 7 Business Start-ups
- $43.7M Economic Impact
- $23.7M Capital Investment
- $20.02M Wage Impact
- $366K Dollars Loaned
- 15 Number of Loans Issued
July 2019

The expansion of Midwest Fasteners, a leader in the fastener industry, retained 172 jobs in Decatur, while creating 30 new jobs. Their investment in Decatur was a team effort between the Village of Decatur, the Van Buren County Brownfield Authority and Market Van Buren.

August 2019

We were also fortunate to be one of the few communities selected to receive a $100,000 grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to help develop 85 acres of industrial and commercially zoned property on the southwest corner of the Mattawan I-94 exit.

September 2019

Saw the formation of the Make it Van Buren Craft Beverage Coalition and its 14 members county-wide. This organization is fostering a culture of collaboration and art in the craft beverage industry in Van Buren County.
February 2020

More than 60 leaders from over 20 communities gathered to discuss the latest in economic development at the Local Unit of Government Summit hosted by Market Van Buren. The agenda covered the most pressing topics effecting rural communities, including rural high-speed internet, community development tools, the importance of local government in economic development, and a legislative update from governmental leaders.

If you missed it and would like to be part of the 2021 Local Unit of Government Summit, please reach out to Zach Morris at MorrisZ@marketvanburen.org.

April 2020

Market Van Buren helped Van Buren County receive $72,000 and Cass County receive $40,000 in Small Business grants being provided through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Nearly 40 companies in Van Buren and Cass counties benefitted from the funding.

January 2020

Market Van Buren Chairman, Tom Stanek and Executive Director, Zach Morris were guests of State Representative Beth Griffin at the State of the State address.

April 2020

When the State of Michigan knocked, Barber Packaging answered. The company switched gears from custom packaging to filling the need for local healthcare providers by producing personal protection plastic masks, and was quickly matched with a purchaser through the Pure Michigan Business Connect program of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Market Van Buren. Barber Packaging made over one million face shields to support the medical industry.
During this time, we were able to support

24 Businesses
with grants and loans totaling $172,000

&

15 Businesses
with grants and loans totaling $140,000

In Van Buren County

In Cass County

July 2020

Market Van Buren and Cass County formed a partnership to raise the economic development profile of the county.
When the State of Michigan knocked, Barber Packaging answered. The company switched gears from custom packaging to filling the need for local healthcare providers by producing personal protection plastic masks, and was quickly matched with a purchaser through the Pure Michigan Business Connect program of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

“Pure Michigan Business Connect’s virtual matchmaking program builds on PMBC’s success in providing supply chain sourcing solutions by supporting critical COVID-19 response efforts, as well as creating opportunities for small and medium-sized Michigan businesses,” said Nick Anderson, Senior Program Specialist at Pure Michigan Business Connect. “We were pleased to work with our partners at Market Van Buren to provide a connection for Barber Packaging, and we thank the company for stepping up to retool and support recovery efforts in this time of need.”

In response to COVID-19, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s Pure Michigan Business Connect program expanded its free, online procurement platform in March to include donations from suppliers capable of filling health and human service needs across a broad range of product and service categories. The platform provides direct access to businesses within the state providing supplies including personal protection equipment, food, medical devices, paper products, cleaning equipment and more.

“When this pandemic reached our nation, we felt called to stand in the gap. We immediately began looking at several medical industry needs and realized we could retool to make face shields,” said Luke Barber, President of Barber Packaging and Vice Chairman of the Market Van Buren Board. “Now we are producing a needed product. I’d like to think we are doing our part to serve our neighbors.”

“As soon as the pandemic reached our shores, Luke and his team wanted to be a part of the solution,” said Zach Morris, Executive Director of Market Van Buren.

“Barber’s strong leadership paired with the ingenuity of the Pure Michigan Business Connect program is resulting in healthcare workers getting the tools they need.”

Other Van Buren County based businesses have retooled to provide necessary resources for the community. One example of that is St Julian Winery, Michigan’s largest winery, retooled their distillery to produce hand sanitizer. In addition, Do-It Corporation in South Haven has retooled to provide face shields.

Morris said Market Van Buren has been helping local businesses fill out applications for MEDC grants and loan, among several other resources.
To Our Investors: Thank You.

Almena Township • Anterro Group
Antwerp Township • Barber Packaging
Burnette Foods • Charles River Laboratories
City of Bangor • Comcast • Consumers Energy
Entergy • Getman Corporation
Honor Credit Union • Indiana Michigan Power
ITC • Lakes & Country • Lounsbury Excavating
Mercantile Bank • Michigan Gas Utilities
Owen Ames Kimball • Paw Paw Township
Peat’s Cider • Schley Nelson Architects
South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce
Tapper • Tri-Mation Industries
Van Buren County • Village of Lawrence
Village of Mattawan • Village of Paw Paw
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