

2024 IMPACT REPORT

BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY



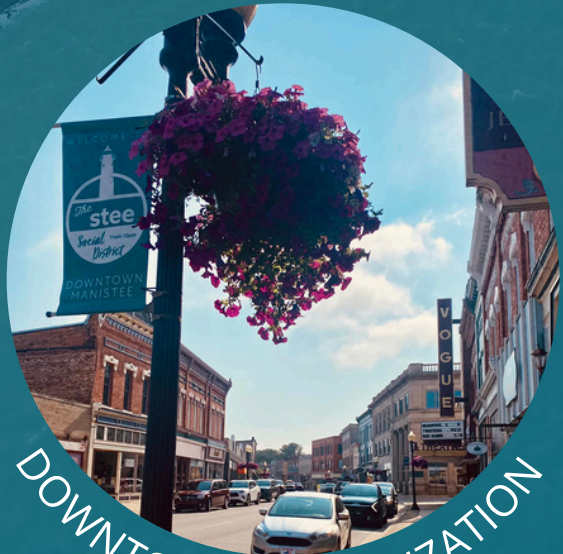
ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



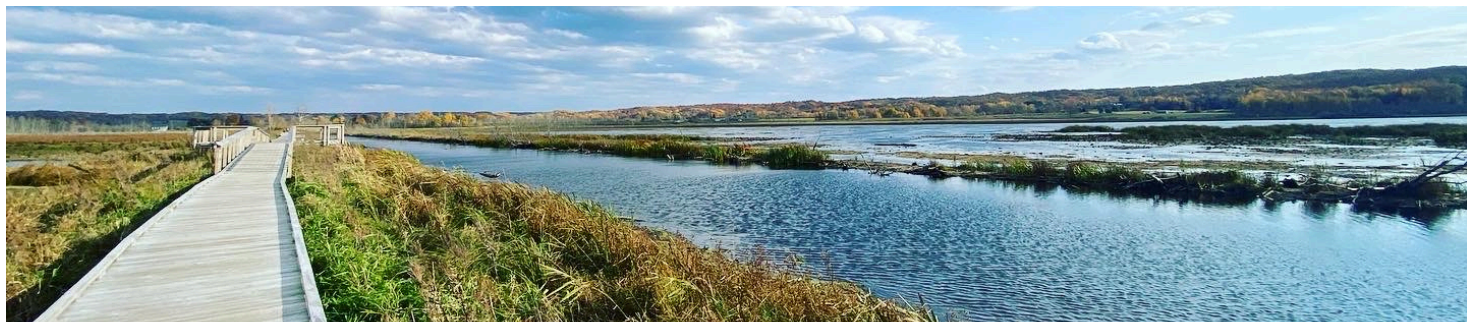
LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION



A NOTE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND PRESIDENT & CEO



As we reflect on 2024, we are proud to present this Impact Report as a celebration of progress, resilience, and the collective commitment to Manistee County's bright future. This past year brought about transformational change—both within our team and across the community—and we are excited to share just how far we've come, together.

This was a year of growth and fresh energy. With key leadership transitions, including the addition of a new Economic Development Director, our team has embraced change as a catalyst for innovation and momentum. These transitions have infused the Chamber with renewed focus and strengthened our ability to serve the evolving needs of our business community.

The accomplishments outlined in this report speak volumes. We have deepened regional impact through the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance and secured vital advocacy wins supporting everything from broadband expansion to housing development. Manistee County was even selected as one of only 35 regions nationwide to participate in the U.S. Chamber Foundation's Business Leads Fellowship—an incredible honor and testament to our influence.

None of this could have been achieved without the unwavering support of our investors, stakeholders, and the passionate community leaders who partner with us daily. Every initiative, event, and milestone detailed in this report reflects a shared vision and a collaborative spirit that define what it means to do business—and to belong—in Manistee County.

Finally, we recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of Stacie Bytwork. Bytwork resigned as President & CEO in October 2024 and was a key figure for the Chamber for 11 years. Her work paved the way for the Chamber's future, and we are excited to continue what she started. We are dedicated to fostering economic growth and community well-being, supporting local businesses, advocating for regional development, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders.

We are energized by what's ahead and deeply grateful for all that 2024 has brought. Thank you for your continued trust in the Chamber. The Chamber looks forward to an exciting chapter of growth, innovation, and strengthened community partnerships. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected, and more prosperous community for all.

With appreciation,

Dennis McCarthy
Board Chair

Carmen Kott
President & CEO

THE 2024 TEAM

IN 2024, THE STORY OF THE MANISTEE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WAS GUIDED BY ITS FOUR PRIORITIES.

Andrew Stafford
Director of Economic
Development

Blade Gates
Marketing & Communications
Specialist

- BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY
- ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Our four priorities work in union to uphold the Chamber's mission:

TO BUILD A DYNAMIC AND SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION TO SERVE THE BUSINESS, WORKFORCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF ALL IN MANISTEE COUNTY.

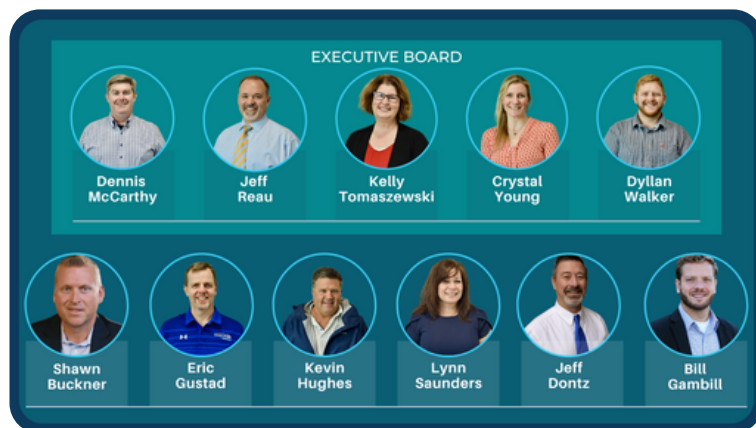
Carmen Kott
Operations Manager (2024)

Stacie Bytwork
President & CEO (2024)

Nicole Kaminski
Programs Specialist

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Chamber Board of Directors dedicate themselves to ensuring the Chamber of Commerce meets the business needs of Manistee County. Our board is a team of professionals across a wide variety of Manistee County industries, acting as a key resource to the community. They are the biggest advocates for the Chamber and act as guides for the Chamber's mission.



OUR INVESTORS

At the end of the day, a chamber of commerce is a sum of its parts. Behind the mission of the chamber are countless business, organizations, and individuals committed to serving in Manistee County. Whether through their personal ventures, through their board, or directly collaborating with the chamber, it is these investors that make up the identity of Manistee County.

23
NEW CHAMBER
INVESTORS IN 2024

250+
TOTAL INVESTORS



BUSINESS & LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

ADVOCACY BENEFITS EVERY MANISTEE COUNTY BUSINESS

First and foremost, the Chamber works at the local, regional, and state levels to promote policies that benefit businesses in Manistee County.

Whether by advocating for funding to come to Northern Michigan, writing letters of support, or cultivating relationships with key legislative officials, the Manistee Area Chamber works to advance local business interests. By coming to the table, the Chamber is responsible for keeping Manistee County at the forefront of business legislation.



MEMBER OF THE NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER ALLIANCE

The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance (NMCA) is a coalition of 18 chambers and economic development organizations from across Northern Michigan.

This coalition exists to:

- **SUPPORT** the success of existing Northern Michigan businesses.
- **DEVELOP** and attract a talented workforce in Northern Michigan
- **MAXIMIZE** the competitiveness of the rural Northern Michigan business environment.



The Chamber's annual Candidate Forum saw record forum participants, with 15 contested state representative, county commissioner, and city council candidates in attendance, signifying that local interest in public service is strong as ever.



The 2024 Northern Michigan Policy Conference is designed to leverage strategies that support rural-centric business policy, sharing solutions to regional issues like housing, workforce, and talent attraction.



Manistee was one of 35 selected from across the country to represent in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Business Leads Fellowship program.

SUPPORT LETTERS

- Networks Northwest State Apprenticeship Expansion 2023 Grant Application
- Manistee Blacker Airport (MBA): jet service with Contour Air
- 141 Washington Street, LLC redevelopment project and the local brownfield plan
- MANISTEE HOTEL & BAR, LLC's request to obtain a liquor license for the newly rebranded Econo Lodge
- KSE Ventures to receive funds from the Michigan Rural Development Grant
- Manistee Blacker Airport Authority in their recommendation to the Department of Transportation for Essential Air Service
- Armory Youth Project's out-of-school programming
- Township of Arcadia's application for the Manistee County Community Foundation Minger Foundation Grant

ADVOCACY EFFORTS

LOCAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS

- Hosted the Riley Apartments Milestone Gathering at 610 East Parkdale Avenue. Originally the site of the old Kennedy Elementary school building, the gathering celebrated it as the future location for a 288-unit apartment complex.
- Candidate Forum held for State Representatives, County Commissioners, & City Council in contested races, plus a meet & greet with all elected officials. Candidates were given a platform to express their stances on topical issues, including local housing needs, childcare, business growth, and economic development.
- Co-hosted the monthly Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance at Iron Fish Distillery, a joint investor with the Benzie Area Chamber of Commerce on August 5th.
- Tracked the Earned Sick Time Act and Paid Leave Minimum Wage legislation and kept investors informed on latest updates.
- The Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce hosted the Michigan Association of Chamber Professionals CEO Summit. The CEO Summit is an exclusive networking opportunity for chamber executives and leaders around the state to connect on strategic initiatives facing their communities.
- Broadcasted information about local elections and kept our investors informed on relevant, legislative updates in our regular advocacy newsletters.

STATE & REGIONAL EFFORTS

- Attended the Northern Michigan Policy Conference, in which Michigan's top legislative officials came together to discuss the policies surrounding the most important issues in rural Northern Michigan.
- Stacie Bytwork and Carmen Kott represented the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce at the annual Chamber Day at the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing Michigan.
- Stacie Bytwork represented the Manistee Area Chamber and Manistee County at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Business Leads Programs.
- Stacie Bytwork and Carmen Kott represented Manistee at the Michigan Association of Chamber Professionals (MACP) Annual Conference in Detroit, where discussion took place on the state of chambers of commerce across Michigan and strategies to further support these institutions and local businesses in effect.
- Chamber President & CEO, Stacie Bytwork, attended the 46th Annual Governor's Breakfast with Governor Whitmer, legislators, business professionals, and schools across Northern Michigan, hosted by the Cadillac Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Carmen Kott went to Lansing with Heather Luttrell from Networks Northwest, in collaboration with the Cadillac Area Chamber of Commerce's leadership team. There, they joined with key state legislative leaders, including Representative John Roth, Representative Curt VanderWall, and Senator Michele Hoyenga.
- The NMCA celebrated Stacie Bytwork on 11 years with the Manistee Area Chamber and over a decade advocating for Northern Michigan communities as a faithful send-off to her time with the Manistee Area Chamber as President and CEO.

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Manistee County saw a huge housing win in 2024, celebrated through the Riley Apartments Milestone Gathering at the future site of a 288-unit apartment complex.



440

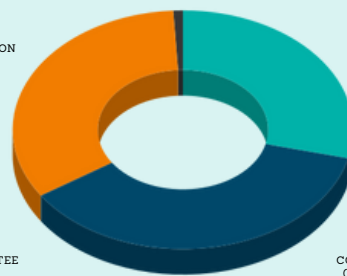
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CONTACTS IN 2024

4
UNDEFINED LOCATION
CONTACTS

127
CITY OF MANISTEE
CONTACTS

147
DOWNTOWN MANISTEE
CONTACTS

162
COUNTYWIDE CONTACTS
(EXCLUDING THE CITY)



RECRUITING & BRINGING INVESTMENT TO MANISTEE COUNTY

Economic development is critical for a community to thrive.

It allows citizens to have employment opportunities, and local government to be able to generate revenue and provide services. The Chamber's economic development efforts promote investment in the community as well as retain and grow jobs.

Marked by the welcoming of a new Economic Development Director, the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce has worked to expand opportunities not only within the City of Manistee but across the entire county. In 2024, 440 economic development contacts were made, including existing businesses, housing developers, local units of government, and community organizations. Growth is not possible without these partners, and many of 2024's economic wins must be credited to their collaborative efforts.

RIBBON CUTTINGS & GRAND OPENINGS

Whether it's a grand opening, a milestone, or anything in between, the Chamber is here to celebrate your local economic achievements.

Chamber investors are given the opportunity to host a formal ribbon cutting ceremony, providing a space for Chamber ambassadors, local leaders, and the public to come together and recognize the culminations of hard work, dedication, and investment to Manistee County.

BluWave's ribbon cutting ceremony celebrated the opening of a new car wash, which was an investment of \$250,000 into Manistee County.



14

CELEBRATED RIBBON
CUTTINGS

\$23.8 MILLION

INVESTED IN MANISTEE COUNTY IN 2024

46

FULL AND PART-TIME
JOBS CREATED IN 2024

LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Efforts from the Manistee Area Leadership Program 2023/2024 cohort culminated at the First Street Beach Dog Park Ribbon Cutting, celebrating constructed amenities such as a new agility course, new benches, and a water dispenser.



The Chamber knows that leadership within the community is essential to address the challenges and opportunities facing us.

Effective leadership is about facilitating and enabling people to act. Constructive social action, community renewal, and community development rely on leaders from all spheres and levels of the community.

THE 2023/2024 COHORT

Fix up the dog park? Absolutely paw-some.

Each year, the cohort of the Manistee Area Leadership Program is tasked with planning a community project of their choice to be completed at the end of the program: the 2023/2024 cohort upgraded the First Street Beach Dog Park. Upgrades include adding running water, new fencing with possible expansion, and agility structures.

THE 2024/2025 COHORT

Introducing the 10th Cohort!

The 2024/2025 cohort's community project is titled "Art for All", a project that will enrich the community with inclusive, multi-sensory art installations. This project will celebrate local creativity, engage diverse abilities, and foster accessibility, connection, and shared inspiration for everyone in Manistee County.

THE CHAMBER IS EXCITED TO SEE THE PROJECT COME TO LIFE IN 2025!



The 2023/2024 cohort raised and donated \$1,988.52 to the Manistee County Sheriff's Office and their K-9 Unit, fitting right in with the theme of the cohort's project.



The Manistee Area Leadership Program is a nine-month program with a focus on creating knowledgeable and connected professionals across several industries. Each year, participants gain knowledge of the strengths, trends, and issues within Manistee County by meeting current community leaders, engaging key skills, and showcasing important areas of Manistee County.

The program's ultimate goal is to develop leaders who will pave the way for Manistee County's future.

108

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
SINCE 2015



The 2024/2025 cohort is the largest cohort in the program's history. Pictured below is the cohort at Portage Lake Bible Camp for the Opening Retreat.



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

MANISTEE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)

The Manistee Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has three main objectives:

- to **PROMOTE** economic growth and development.
- to **CREATE** an identifiable and attractive downtown.
- to **STRENGTHEN** businesses and community ownership.

Acting as the Manistee DDA, the Chamber recognizes the downtown as the commercial core of a community that serves as its social and economic center. It is an important catalyst that will help the success of all our county businesses and communities.



The Sidewalk Sales are a popular tradition in Downtown Manistee, in which storefronts are invited to bring their business outdoors in the latter half of the summer season.



The 'Stee Social District allows patrons to carry alcoholic beverages across the Downtown district, with 11 participating businesses.

147 **+\$125K** **6**

DOWNTOWN MANISTEE
CONTACTS IN 2024

IN FACADE GRANTS
ADMINISTERED WITH THE
DDA MATCH PROGRAM

NEW DOWNTOWN
BUSINESSES

DOWNTOWN EVENT TRAILER & BEAUTIFICATION

In 2024, the DDA Board passed a motion to develop a Downtown Manistee Event Trailer to support local businesses interested in hosting events. The trailer includes:

- Event trailer
- Portable heater
- Four folding picnic tables
- Custom weatherproof sign
- Portable speaker system
- Two folding high-top tables

The DDA is dedicated to ensuring that downtown Manistee remains the heartbeat of the County, providing a welcoming space for both locals and tourists to enjoy all that Manistee has to offer.



\$7,587

SPENT ON HANGING
BASKETS AND PLANTERS



\$4,776

SPENT ON HOLIDAY
DECOR

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

The Chamber's annual programming offers valuable networking opportunities, recognition for local initiatives, and a chance for our investors to come together.

Made possible by the generous support of sponsors and investors, these events provide a platform to connect, exchange ideas, and foster collaboration across industries. By bringing together diverse perspectives, we create environments where innovation thrives, partnerships strengthen, and the collective success of Manistee County is propelled forward.

BUSINESS AWARDS GALA

The Business Awards Gala is an elegant evening of celebration, recognizing work of the past year from local businesses, organizations, and leaders. 2024's theme? Mardi-Gras!



ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

A full, fun day out, the Chamber's golf outing offers businesses a chance to get outside, connect with local partners, and make a hole-in-one. In 2024, there was even an inflatable dinosaur!



MANISTEE NATIONAL FOREST FESTIVAL

Since 1936, this festival has become a staple of Manistee County, attracting tens of thousands of visitors for moments like the Independence Parade and the fireworks show over Lake Michigan.



Devin Schweigert

CHAMBER UNTAPPED

With four Chamber UnTapped's throughout the year, these networking nights bring together business professionals across Manistee County, often with food, drinks, raffles, and live music.



MANISTEE COUNTY COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS

Originally started during the nationwide lockdown in 2020, the Manistee County Community Christmas provides local residents, businesses, and non-profits the opportunity to showcase their holiday spirit.



manistee county ca\$h

The manistee county ca\$h program is a county-wide initiative that advocates local spending.
This popular community gift encourages patrons to spend their dollars here in Manistee County.

34

PARTICIPATING
BUSINESSES

+\$15k

IN CASH
SPENT IN 2024

COMMUNICATIONS



MANISTEE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
102,711 ↑ **9.8%**
 Page Reach
28,364 ↑ **20.7%**
 Page Visits
435 ↑ **11.3%**
 Page Follows
1,980 ↓ **14.1%**
 Instagram Page Reach
38,283
 LinkedIn Page Impressions*



DOWNTOWN MANISTEE (MANISTEE DDA)
375,010 ↑ **111.1%**
 Page Reach
20,107 ↑ **4.5%**
 Page Visits
754 ↑ **13.9%**
 Page Follows



MANISTEE NATIONAL FOREST FESTIVAL
96,065 ↑ **92.3%**
 Page Reach
29,561 ↑ **71.4%**
 Page Visits
653 ↑ **12.8%**
 Page Follows



MANISTEE AREA LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
8,924 ↑ **13.3%**
 Page Reach
2,802 ↑ **238.4%**
 Page Visits
100 ↑ **108.3%**
 Page Follows



MANISTEE COUNTY COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS
11,444 ↑ **0.7%**
 Page Reach
3,810 ↓ **42.9%**
 Page Visits
76 ↓ **64.3%**
 Page Follows

Statistics are from January 1 - December 31, 2024. Percentages represent an increase or decrease in comparison to January 1 - December 31, 2023.

**LinkedIn statistic is collected from January 8, 2024 - January 6, 2025.*

The Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce (MACC) team maintains **seven different social media** pages: MACC Facebook, MACC Instagram, MACC LinkedIn, Downtown Manistee (Manistee DDA) Facebook, Manistee National Forest Festival Facebook, Manistee Area Leadership Program Facebook (partially moderated by the cohort of the program), and Manistee County Community Christmas Facebook.

In addition to our social media presence, there are also **three websites** managed by the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce: ManisteeChamber.com, ManisteeDowntown.com, and ManisteeForestFestival.com. These websites all serve a purpose, especially as a resource for our investors, developers, visitors, and community representatives.

According to Google Analytics, ManisteeChamber.com saw **26,812 sessions** in 2024, a **↑ 29.1%** increase compared to number of sessions in 2023.

24

CHAMBER & DDA
SPECIFIC NEWSLETTERS

54

EBLASTS TO
CHAMBER INVESTORS

90+

MENTIONS OF THE
CHAMBER & TEAM IN NEWS

18

INTERVIEWS WITH
THE CHAMBER

15

PRESS/MEDIA
RELEASES

12

CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE COLUMNS



SEE YOU IN 2025!

Our mission is to build a dynamic and sustainable organization to serve the Business, Workforce and Economic Development needs of all in Manistee County.

OUR FOUR PRIORITIES



BUSINESS &
LEGISLATIVE
ADVOCACY



ECONOMIC &
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT



LEADERSHIP &
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION

(231) 723-2575
ManisteeChamber.com

400 River Street
Manistee, MI 49660