



Antrim County

Economic Development Corporation

Mission Statement: Retain, expand, and promote County-wide economic growth and stability

MEMBERS

Sherry Comben
12/31/2026

Garry Ellison
12/31/2026

Peter Garwood
12/31/2025

Cherie Hogan
12/31/2027

Rachel Krino
12/31/2027

Dawn LaVanway
Annual Appointment

Kathleen Peterson
12/31/2026

Tim Timmer
12/31/2028

Christy Wilson
12/31/2028

STAFF

Jeremy Scott
County Administrator

Janet Koch
Deputy Administrator

Gayle Rider
Administrative Asst.

Margie Boyd
Secretary

OFFICE ADDRESS

P.O. Box 187
Bellaire, MI 49615

PHONE: 231-533-6265

FAX: 231-533-8111

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

If you wish to attend a meeting and require special assistance, please contact the Administration Office.

The Antrim County Economic Development Corporation meeting is scheduled for

Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

Antrim County Building

Board of Commissioners Room

203 East Cayuga Street, Bellaire, Michigan

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of Minutes – [February 20, 2024](#)
4. 2023 Annual Report
5. Resource Identification/Reporting
6. Various Matters
7. Public Comment
8. Adjourn

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Administration and Planning Office at 231-533-6265. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. Thank you.



Antrim County
Administration Office
Memorandum

March 19, 2024

TO: Antrim County Economic Development Corporation

FR: Administration Office

RE: Approval of Minutes (02/20/24)

You received the minutes from the [February 20, 2024](#) Economic Development Corporation meeting via electronic communication on February 26th. If there are no corrections to those minutes, please consider the following motion:

Approve the minutes of the February 20, 2024 meeting as presented.



Antrim County
Administration Office
Memorandum

March 19, 2024

TO: Antrim County Economic Development Corporation

FR: Administration Office

RE: 2023 EDC Annual Report

A draft of the EDC's 2023 Annual Report is attached. If there are no corrections or changes, please consider the following motion:

Approve the 2023 Annual Report and have EDC President Rachel Krino present it to the Antrim County Board of Commissioners.



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Email: countyadmin@antrimcounty.org
Facebook: [@AntrimEDC](https://www.facebook.com/AntrimEDC)

Tel: (231) 533-6265
203 E. Cayuga, Bellaire



PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Antrim County EDC Charts a Strategic Course for 2024

Building on past successes, the Antrim County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) embarked on a transformative journey in 2023. While previous years saw strong emphasis on promoting tourism and business development, along with crucial efforts in expanding broadband access, the EDC recognized the need for a more comprehensive approach.

2023 was a year of strategic visioning for the EDC. Recognizing the connection of the County's economic, social, and environmental well-being, the EDC embarked on a collaborative effort to create a comprehensive strategic plan. This plan, developed with partners like the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, Networks Northwest, Housing North, and local chambers of commerce in mind, established a clear roadmap for Antrim County's Economic Development Corporation goals in the coming years.

"The EDC is poised to guide Antrim County's economic development with measurable objectives and a unified vision."

- Rachel Krino, EDC President

The newly adopted strategic plan focuses on four key areas: Business & Economic Development, Community & Human Services, Environmental, and Organizational - EDC Specific. Each area encompasses specific focus points, which have been prioritized and aligned with the broader goals of the county's master plan. Among these focus points are fostering business attraction, expanding broadband access, addressing housing needs, preserving natural resources and strengthening EDC's messaging and community outreach.

By adopting this well-defined and collaborative strategic plan, the EDC is poised to guide Antrim County's economic development with measurable objectives and a unified vision. Looking ahead to 2024, residents and businesses can anticipate tangible progress in areas like business education and networking, communication and research regarding infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and community engagement. The EDC's strategic direction represents a commitment to a brighter future for all of Antrim County.

--Rachel Krino, EDC President

STRATEGIC PLANNING

In 2023, the EDC spent a number of meetings focusing on setting new priorities for the next few years. During these meetings, members worked closely with representatives at the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance to develop a strategic plan that best suits the needs of Antrim County's economy and future growth. There are four (4) main areas of importance on which members chose to focus, each with their own actionable items.

Business Attraction & Economic Development

One of the most important things the EDC can do is understand the makeup of Antrim County's businesses, the challenges they face, and help provide opportunities for development and growth. In 2022, the EDC explored the possibility of hosting a quarterly *Business Connector Series*, a themed quarterly hybrid series that would focus on industry-specific topics that affect or influence economic development. Continuing this series was something members deemed an important part of their mission as it connects area small businesses with community resources. Moving into the next year, the EDC hopes to expand on the concept by hosting a *Business Owner Meeting Program*, in which Antrim County business owners will be invited to talk to the EDC about their business history, needs & challenges, and what works or does not work.

Community & Human Services

One of the biggest issues that has effected economic development in Antrim County is related to the availability of various housing opportunities. In order to better understand the issue and needs of Antrim County, the EDC discussed the importance of continuing education and partnering with regional agencies that have an interest in the current housing market.

The EDC members are also members of the Antrim County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (ACBRA). In 2023, the ACBRA approved initial steps for Antrim County's first brownfield project, the Bellaire Lofts, a workforce housing project.

Additionally, members agreed that acknowledging the needs of an aging population and a distinct need for childcare are also important for healthy economic development. To that end, there are plans for the EDC to speak with members of the healthcare and childcare industries to gain a better understanding of what is needed in Antrim County.

Environmental Objectives

Antrim County's natural resources are at the heart of its economy. Providing resource access and information to local trail systems owners, local conservation organizations, and other environmental organizations is an important way the EDC can help advocate for

Promotion and Communications (Organizational)

In 2023, the EDC began to embrace the use of social media as a tool for community outreach and education as part of the resource access portion of their strategic plan. Members will work with the Antrim County Administration Office staff to push information on available funding opportunities, education workshops, and notable news related to economic development in Antrim County and across the region. Information on funding opportunities will also continue to be shared via email with local units of government, area chambers of commerce, businesses, and non-profits as pertinent grants become available.

In addition to digital outreach, the EDC also fine-tuned an "elevator pitch" members could use to start conversations with businesses or organizations hoping to expand Antrim County's economic framework. To help further the discussion, a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) was developed. The FAQs cover a number of topics important to economic development in Antrim County, including information on Opportunity Zones, how to obtain financing locally, and infrastructure availability.

In future years, the EDC plans on conducting periodic surveys of area businesses and service organizations as a way to help the EDC further understand the needs of Antrim County's economic interests. To keep the work of the EDC in the eye of the public, the EDC president will attend meetings of the Antrim County Board of Commissioners bi-annually to keep stakeholders apprised of the work the EDC is doing.

"If you are a business owner in Antrim County, the EDC can help you connect with the resources you need to succeed."

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Broadband Initiatives

The lack of county-wide access to consistently reliable internet has long been a point of discussion in rural Antrim County. The lack of access to broadband is a barrier to economic development opportunities that could create growth across our rural county. However, two companies - Peninsula Fiber Network (PFN) and Great Lakes Energy Truestream (Truestream) - sought to make access easier for Antrim County residents and businesses by seeking out grant funded opportunities. Understanding the vital importance to Antrim County businesses, the EDC was pleased to collaborate with PFN and Truestream and provide letters of support for their grant applications. PFN has been awarded a National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) middle mile grant award for the Infrastructure for Michigan Peninsulas and Critical Crossings project, and, thanks in part to support from the EDC, Truestream was awarded a Michigan's Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks (ROBIN) grant. The combined total grant award for these projects that will provide a direct benefit to Antrim County businesses is \$89,000,000.



Community Development – RAP 2.0 Grant

In 2021, the Village of Elk Rapids approved conceptual plans for the Ames Street Improvement Project, but lacked the funding for the placemaking initiative. In June, the Village of Elk Rapids applied for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) Grant Program. The EDC provided its enthusiastic

support for this project, specifically the Village’s foresight in planning for the future of the community’s expected continued economic growth. In October 2023, the MEDC announced a \$385,000 award to the Village of Elk Rapids for this ambitious project. When complete, this project is expected to provide residents and visitors to Elk Rapids an economically sustainable commercial area.

DRAFT



Antrim County
Administration Office
Memorandum

March 19, 2024

TO: Antrim County Economic Development Corporation

FR: Administration Office

RE: Resource Identification/Reporting

At the EDC's February 20 meeting, there was a unanimously approved motion to "draft a letter to send out to DDAs, chambers, and local units of government asking for their input and information regarding potential commercial, industrial, housing developments."

The letters have been sent. Any communications from the recipients of the letters will be provided to the EDC.