

Village of Decatur

Strategic Marketing Plan

November 2023



**MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**



*Prepared in association with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's
Redevelopment Ready Communities® Program*

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Introduction

About the Village of Decatur

Nestled in the heart of southwest Michigan, Decatur offers visitors, homeowners, and investors a unique opportunity... the opportunity to slow down and enjoy a different pace of life. While we'd like you to notice our beautiful parks and our quaint downtown district, we're certain that what you'll notice most is how relaxing and friendly our community is. At a time when lifestyles are too busy to even make eye contact with someone on the street, our residents take a different attitude, one that starts with a smile and a hearty "Hello."

Decatur is situated on I-94 midway between Detroit and Chicago. A quick 30 minutes from Kalamazoo or Benton Harbor/St. Joseph, Decatur offers visitors a great central location to shopping, antiquing, golfing and more. Come and stay at one of our many family-friendly campgrounds, take a dip at our Red Woolfe Park beach, laze near one of the dozen lakes that surround Decatur, or set out for an afternoon of fun at a local U-pick Farm. Whatever is on your agenda, we're sure you'll find Decatur is a great place to start.

About RRC

The Village of Decatur is engaged in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program. The RRC program provides no-cost evaluation and recommendations for improvement of a community's development processes and procedures. If a community meets all the best practice requirements outlined by the MEDC, it can become an RRC certified community. Receiving RRC certification means that the community has "clear development policies and procedures, a community-supported vision, a predictable review process, and compelling sites for developers to locate their latest projects." For Decatur, this certification can help show investors, residents, and visitors that the Village offers deliberate, predictable, and transparent processes. Through this program, the Village of Decatur hopes to join the short list of RRC-certified Michigan communities.

About this Strategy

This Strategic Marketing Plan is necessary to complete the requirements of RRC Best Practice 5.3 – Marketing Plan. Community marketing and promotion efforts take many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that enhances community pride and consumer and investor

confidence. As such, strong community marketing plans should publicize and strategize around what sets a community apart from others. The Village of Decatur does not have an up-to-date comprehensive community marketing document that deliberately outlines strategies to connect with development partners and attract businesses, talent, and additional development. Thus, Village Staff reviewed existing best practices and community input from the 2022-2023 Community Survey to develop key strategies and action steps to market the Village of Decatur more effectively as an attractive place to live, work, and invest.



Marketing Goals

The Village of Decatur Strategic Marketing Plan has been crafted to create a framework and action plan for effectively promoting the Village of Decatur's services, community activities, events and other economic opportunities to current and potential community members, visitors, the business community, and investors with the objective of motivating them to:

- ❖ Live in the Village of Decatur
- ❖ Support community events
- ❖ Participate in public meetings and activities
- ❖ Invest in the Village of Decatur through development, redevelopment and job creation
- ❖ Drive more traffic/support to local businesses and organizations
- ❖ Share information about the Village of Decatur with their networks
- ❖ Comment and engage on all Village social media platforms

The Strategic Marketing Plan outlines an organized way to communicate that will ensure the best marketing methods and accurate information will be disseminated on a timely and regular basis. The plan is intended to be an easy-to-follow roadmap for the variety of marketing tasks that need to be completed to further the Village's goals of:

- ❖ Attracting new business and investment to the Village of Decatur
- ❖ Driving more traffic and sales to Decatur's businesses
- ❖ Increasing awareness of the Village of Decatur's amenities, facilities and services
- ❖ Achieving regional and national media exposure for the Village
- ❖ Garnering outside interest in visiting, living and/or doing business in Decatur
- ❖ Reinforcing the Village of Decatur's brand
- ❖ Encouraging visits to the Village's website
- ❖ Increasing lines of communications with community partners
- ❖ Inspiring residents, businesses and visitors to become Village of Decatur brand advocates
- ❖ Improve lines of communication with residents, community partners and investors through the website and social media channels

Details on this process and the accompanying strategies for marketing and branding are outlined in this document.

Community Partners

For the Strategic Marketing Plan to be most impactful, the Village of Decatur will need to collaborate and actively engage with current local and regional stakeholders and form new partnerships. The Village will continue to build relationships with community organizations to effectively promote doing business and living in Decatur.

❖ Regional Stakeholders

- Community and Economic Development Partners
 - Kinexus Group
 - Market Van Buren
 - Michigan Works
- Van Buren Intermediate School District- Van Buren Tech
- Van Buren County Senior Services

❖ Local Stakeholders

- Local Business Leaders
- Community Leaders- Ministerial Association
- Decatur Public Schools, Tri County Head Start
- Van Buren District Library- Webster Memorial Branch



Target Audience

- ❖ Community Members/Residents
 - Young Professionals/Young Families
 - General Community
 - Business Community
 - Community Organizations
 - Community Leaders
- ❖ Potential Investors
 - Business Investors
 - Young Professionals/Young Families
 - Potential Entrepreneurs
- ❖ Regional Leaders
- ❖ Regional Partners & Stakeholders
- ❖ News Media
- ❖ Visitors



Community Assets

The Village of Decatur’s community assets can be reasonably categorized into natural resources, family-friendliness, inclusive economic development, pedestrian-oriented design, placemaking and historic preservation. The assets listed below define the character of the Village limits of Decatur and residents that call it home.

Natural Resources	Family-Friendly	Inclusive Economic Development	Pedestrian-Oriented Design	Placemaking	Historic Preservation
Lake of the Woods	Safe Location	Manufacturing & Industry	Many Parks	Annual Community Events	Historic Buildings
Located in Michigan’s “Fruit Belt”	Many Parks	Small Business/ Entrepreneurs	Downtown Neighborhoods	Volunteer Opportunities	Township Hall Museum
Mud Lake	Water Sports	Affordable	Alleys behind Businesses	Outdoor Seating	Decatur Republican Newspaper
Agricultural Lands	Family Activities	Available Storefronts	Central Downtown District	Streetside Amenities	Small Town Charm
Beautiful Natural Landscaping	School Pride	Commercial Zoning District	New Sidewalks	Basketball Court	Veterans Services

Priority Development Sites

The Village of Decatur owns many properties that have the redevelopment potential to address issues faced by our community, including lack of housing, vacant properties not on tax roll, and population growth.

❖ Redevelopment Opportunities

- **Vacant Lot**- N. Phelps St., parcel # 80-43-040-221-11
- **Village Hall**- 114 N. Phelps St., parcel # 80-43-040-261-00
- **Underutilized Lot**- W. Sherwood St., parcel # 80-43-040-534-00

❖ Public Amenities

- **DDA Park**- 123 N. Phelps St., parcel # 80-43-040-250-00
- **Fireman's Park**- W. Delaware St., parcel # 80-43-085-024-31
- **Red Woolfe Park**- 45280 Pine St., parcel # 80-43-051-001-00
- **Skate Park**- W. Beers St., parcel # 80-43-040-541-10
- **Raider Romp**- 560 N. Phelps St., parcel # 80-43-085-013-01
- **Public Parking Lot**- W. Sherwood St., parcel # 80-43-040-280-20
- **Public Parking Lot**- E. Delaware St., parcel 80-43-040-258-10
- **Public Parking Lot**- W. Sherwood St., parcel 80-43-040-279-00
- **Public Parking Lot**- E. Delaware St., parcel # 80-43-040-334-00
- **Public Parking Lot**- E. Sherwood St., parcel # 80-43-085-065-05



Process

The development of this Strategy relied on the input of many individuals and synthesizes the efforts of several Village-wide initiatives. The process employed to complete this Strategy included background research, existing efforts, and the development of strategies and initial marketing materials for use by Village staff and partners. The work carried out in the development of this Strategy is outlined in the following sections:

- ❖ Background Research
- ❖ Existing Efforts
- ❖ Strategies and Implementation



Background Research

Community Input

Community participation is a vital element of the planning process. Thus far in citizen surveys and community meetings, feedback has been focused on the Downtown DDA district and community parks and amenities. In 2022, A 31-question survey was created by the Downtown Development Authority and the Parks & Recreation Committee to gather general community insights and to determine the economic and developmental priorities and values of Decatur residents.

During the creation of the 2023 DDA Development Plan & TIF Plan, a series of stakeholder roundtable meeting were held to gather input and several common themes were found, these ideas include:

- ❖ More businesses downtown, specifically food and drink establishments (e.g., restaurants with outdoor seating, coffee shops, bakeries, etc.).
- ❖ More beautification within the Development Area, such as flowers along major throughfares.
- ❖ Downtown wayfinding signage.
- ❖ Enhancements to park and public spaces, such as a splash pad or youth programs.
- ❖ Continued (and more) community events and festivals.
- ❖ Hosting business incubator events and/or temporary shopfront spaces for local entrepreneurs and businesses to occupy vacant spaces.
- ❖ More opportunities for public art in the Development Area, such as collaborating with local schools or artists.
- ❖ Continue the “small” beautification and placemaking programs, such as seasonal decorations and window displays.
- ❖ Outdoor public gathering space with amphitheater or space for live music events.
- ❖ A community rental space for private events, such as weddings, showers, parties, etc.
- ❖ Sidewalk connections to adjacent neighborhoods from the core Downtown and creating a sidewalk network throughout the Development Area. This includes identifying and filling gaps in the current network.
- ❖ More opportunities for housing in the Development Area, such as workforce housing.
- ❖ A community garden.
- ❖ Redevelopment of underutilized or vacant buildings, such as the old McDonald’s building.
- ❖ A market study to identify businesses that would thrive in the Development Area.

- ❖ Enhanced programs designed and implemented by the DDA to support the redevelopment and reenergization of downtown, such as a rental program, façade improvement program, and others.

The feedback that was received from the 2022-2023 Community Survey and the Stakeholder Roundtable Meetings created the following goals for the Downtown District, which are outlined in the updated Development Plan:

- ❖ **Goal 1: Economic Repositioning.** Encouraging the growth and development of Downtown Decatur by supporting the highest and best use of property and tenant spaces, coordinating business attraction efforts, business assistance programs, and redevelopment.
- ❖ **Goal 2: Placemaking and Design.** Utilizing the DDA’s resources to plan, design, and construct an innovative and unique sense of place to complement Downtown Decatur’s historic charm.
- ❖ **Goal 3: Infrastructure and Transportation.** Ensuring Downtown Decatur, and the surrounding areas, are fitted with modern and efficient infrastructure to upkeep and enhance the Village’s transportation and utility network.
- ❖ **Goal 4: Organization and Partnerships:** Developing the necessary administrative tasks and fostering partnerships to implement projects.



Existing Efforts

This section briefly shares the existing efforts the Village of Decatur has put forth to achieve the overall mission of effectively marketing the Village.

Digital Marketing

- ❖ Website- a newly updated website is updated frequently
- ❖ Social Media- an active Facebook is utilized daily to provide information from the Village and other local businesses
- ❖ Press Releases- Urgent information is shared through news outlets
- ❖ Mobile Marketing- Nixle, a communication tool, sends important information through text messages

Physical Marketing

- ❖ Banners on Light Posts- updated banners adorn light posts on Phelps St.
- ❖ Signage for Events- sandwich board style signs are placed in high visibility areas to showcase upcoming community events
- ❖ Distribution of Flyers- staff distributes event flyers to all downtown district businesses
- ❖ Distribution of Business Cards- staff has business cards available

Collaborative Marketing

- ❖ Joint Events- many events are collaborative in name and effort
- ❖ In-Person Conversations- staff has frequent conversations with business owners to provide event information, general Village information, and to receive feedback

Strategies and Implementation

Market Analysis

The Village will collaborate with county, local and state officials for assistance in creating a market analysis. The purpose would provide analytical results of market needs in the Village for specific businesses, customer needs, housing and spending patterns, to effectively promote redevelopment sites and provide valuable information to developers. The market analysis should include details indicating sufficient support or shortfalls in market demand. The Village will utilize the analytics when discussing potential redevelopments with businesses and real estate developers and how it fits with the current planning and zoning regulations for the site.

Technology Marketing

Technology marketing can help the Community and Economic Development staff communicate with a much broader, worldwide audience of prospective visitors and employers. Because of its speed and efficiency, this method represents a very cost-effective strategy with near limitless potential to reach intended audiences. The most effective technology marketing strategies are those that result in a steady stream of targeted leads over time. Utilizing this marketing channel will produce website traffic, brand awareness, on-going connection to target audiences and encourage visitor and business relocations many years into the future. The Technology Marketing component will be executed utilizing the following tools:

- ❖ **Website:** The Village's website should be utilized as a central location to provide information the Village wants to convey to target audiences. While other social media platforms can and should be used to share information, the website provides a way to curate details and facts in an easy to view manner. Social media platforms like Facebook should be used to enhance how information is shared; not replace it as users are often left searching for valuable information.
- ❖ **Social Media:** The Village must put social media to work by means of actively using its social media strategic plan. The plan should be designed and implemented to achieve specific goals that support the overall marketing strategy. The plan must identify how each service will be managed, including the frequency of updates, who will be responsible for updates and what means will be used to report on the activities and how its effectiveness will be measured. Social networking sites provide a virtual community for people interested in a particular subject or looking to increase their circle of acquaintances. The Village will continue to evolve its municipal profile and share

relevant information. The Village can communicate with others by making their latest news and announcements public in a “post” or “share” format. Social media platforms are adaptable to meet a variety of goals. They can assist the Village by creating awareness, locating leads and prospects, generating discussion, building local business communities and increasing traffic to the Village’s website.

Success Measures: Technology Marketing requires new approaches to developing marketing strategies and predicting results, which are very different from traditional advertising. Unlike other media, every impression on the Internet is logged and reach numbers are commonly reported. The Village will measure effectiveness with click-through rate (CTR) and website traffic data provided by the back end of the Village website. Regular tracking of this data will allow the Village to evaluate the level of engagement through online sources.

Public Relations and Media Relations

Public Relations: Public relations have been performed for decades by the Village staff. As with other strategies and activities that were assessed to prepare this plan, public relations activities had previously been performed informally without following a structured strategy shaped by standardized evaluation and measurement. Now that the Village has identified target audiences, public relations may be one of its most strategic and effective tools in the arsenal of resources provided by this plan. In today’s economy, collaboration is critical to community and economic development success. If the Village effectively seeks and develops partnerships and collaborative ventures, it should result in measurable outcomes. Public Relations is about telling stories and bringing a place to life through those stories.

The Village needs to encourage existing businesses throughout the Village of Decatur to share their stories, successes, and news announcements as a way for the Village to generate stories of the community. Serving as an extension of other media channels, the Village can help identify and share those stories. This effort will help position and promote the Village of Decatur as a business leader and effectively carry the Village’s brand forward to the target markets previously identified in the plan.

To carry out the public relations strategy, select Village staff and partners will be provided with guidelines, training and tools (i.e., Board Members, Village Staff)

Success Measures: When it comes to Economic Development and Community Outreach, public relations are an essential component. Measurements need to be based against a contact database tracking system that may be integrated with the media relations database. Other

ways to measure results include the number of valuable contacts created and the level of participation in the public relations activity.

Media Relations: With a robust social networking platform and a communication plan that includes quarterly newsletters, the Village of Decatur serves as a primary news source by, for and about itself. An effective media relations campaign incorporates both functional and emotional messages, generates third-party endorsements, facilitates communication, and increases visibility. Media relations play an important role in Village branding and offer the Village of Decatur an opportunity to connect with its current and prospective stakeholders. Potential media tools include:

- ❖ Press Releases: Village staff will regularly issue press releases of important decisions, events, project updates, and general information that will positively market the Village of Decatur
- ❖ Banners and Advertising: The Village may consider collaborating with local businesses to sponsor the purchase and display of community banners, renderings or posters for public events and dedication ceremonies. When doing so, the Village will seek low-cost opportunities to market itself in various local publications on multi-media platforms.
- ❖ Open Houses/Question and Answer (Q&A): Village officials and staff will be encouraged to stay informed on Village projects to help answer any questions the community may have regarding specific projects. Community engagement may range from informational booths, displays, social media, and Q&A sessions.
- ❖ Signage
- ❖ Market events, projects, news and other community happenings on the Village's website, social media (Facebook)
- ❖ Media Tours: Media tours are used to allow the media to share an experience of a service, business or something new that is happening in the Village of Decatur.

Success Measures: There is no better validation than third party endorsement. The goal should be to develop a rapport/relationship that is sustainable and will establish ongoing return on investment over time. These contacts should be tracked and documented for the sake of accountability. The Village will develop a regular method for tracking news stories that includes the publication/media source, date, title, topic, etc.

Media Contacts

As relationships and new media are created, the contacts on the media list may need to be added, redefined or modified. Constant upkeep of these records is vital to the success of the media relations component of this plan.

- ❖ Print: Decatur Republican, Paw Paw Flashes
- ❖ Radio: WBCT 93.7, WKFR 103.3
- ❖ Online Media: Village website, Village Facebook, Around Van Buren
- ❖ External: Van Buren District Library- Webster Memorial Branch, Decatur Public Schools, Market Van Buren



Community Branding Guide







PMS 295C
C100 Y0 M54.08 K61.57
R0 G45 B98



PMS 420C
C0 Y0 M0 K20
R204 G204 B204



PMS 7480c
C100 Y34.67 M0 K21.96
R0 G199 B130



PMS 186C
C0 Y75.24 M92.38 K17.65
R210 G16 B52

Neue Helvetica Pro 107 Condensed Extra Black/ Pristina STD

"Live, Work, Play in Decatur"



Conclusion

The Village of Decatur Strategic Marketing Plan provides a detailed description of the activities that would create a powerful marketing campaign for the Village. The activities represent best practice recommendations based on current knowledge of the market, the latest trends in community-based marketing and professional experience, guided by insight from the Village staff and Village Planner. Activities will be prioritized according to potential impact and budget and will be updated annually to meet the changing needs of the Village. The overall success of this plan will rely on the implementation and tracking of the activities described within the Plan. While implementing this plan, the Village must be able to remain flexible to accommodate unforeseen changes or respond to actual marketing channel results. This Strategic Marketing Plan will take the Village’s marketing and advertising efforts to another level of professionalism and into a future that has unlimited possibilities. This plan will position the Village to be a place where you can “Live, Work, Play in Decatur” for years to come.

