

southwest michigan  first
THE GREATEST FORCE FOR CHANGE IS A JOB



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IS A JOB**

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Southwest Michigan First believes **the greatest force for change is a job** and we are on a mission to drive job growth and shared prosperity for those in the entire Southwest Michigan region. Everything we do is centered around creating jobs and —by extension— a thriving community where citizens can live vibrantly, and companies are empowered to succeed and grow.

NEW JOBS

766

INDIRECT JOBS

1,149

RETAINED JOBS

176

SINCE THE BEGINNING (1999), SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST HAS ANNOUNCED 51,768 TOTAL JOBS THROUGH 756 NEW PROJECTS!

**NEW PROJECTS
ANNOUNCED**

17

**PRIVATE
INVESTMENT**

\$264M

**KALAMAZOO AREA
JOBLESS RATE**

4.1%

JOB CREATION HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGION



CRUISERRV
Great American Trailers.

Sturgis | St. Joseph County
\$19.9M investment
225 New Jobs



HEARTLAND

Sturgis | St. Joseph County
\$16M investment
225 New Jobs



Battle Creek | Calhoun County
\$25M investment
86 New Jobs



Cassopolis | Cass County
\$6.3M investment
175 New Jobs



Kalamazoo | Kalamazoo County
\$94.4M investment
22 New Jobs



Portage | Kalamazoo County
\$10.4MM investment
124 New & Retained Jobs



Battle Creek | Calhoun County
\$31.9M investment
68 New Jobs



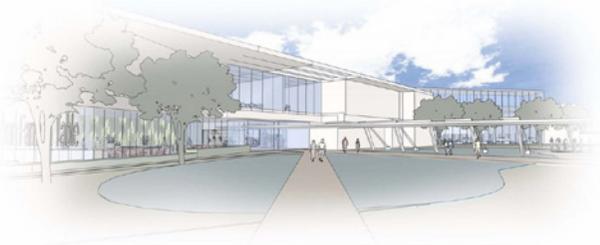
Benton Harbor | Berrien County
\$3.2M investment
60 New Jobs



Battle Creek | Calhoun County
\$7.8M investment
17 New Jobs

While 2021 continued to be a challenging year due to many factors - including the COVID-19 pandemic, material inflation, housing shortages, talent and workforce shortages, supply chain issues, raw material shortages, and more - we were proud of the continued support and resources that Southwest Michigan First was able to offer to businesses in our region.

- In early 2021, Southwest Michigan First received an allocation of \$4,150,000 for small businesses in our region who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 through the Gatherings and Mask Order. Through this funding, we had the honor and privilege of awarding **275 small businesses with funding across the seven counties of Southwest Michigan**.
- Southwest Michigan First worked with regional companies and Michigan Works! to provide one-on-one business consultations and training sessions on the application process for Michigan's Going PRO Talent Fund. Our organization also wrote 51 critical letters of support resulting in 31 awards, totaling **more than \$1.41 million in investment of individuals** in Kalamazoo County.
- In collaboration with community partners at the City of Kalamazoo, PNC Bank, United Way, Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation, and the Society for History and Racial Equity, Southwest Michigan First developed a pilot program that will become a continuum of care designed to engage small business entrepreneurs, support their business acceleration, and facilitate their connection to our region's largest public and private procurement organizations. The goal of the **Diversity Supply Chain Initiative** is to build generational wealth for underrepresented business owners, entrepreneurs, and our community. Diversifying our regional supply chains will create opportunities for innovation and stabilize procurement activities while fostering community interconnectedness.
- Southwest Michigan First was instrumental in bringing business leaders to the table to populate the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center Steering Committee that would define the CTE Course Recommendations for the new center. In October, it was announced that a local philanthropist would be donating **\$100 Million towards the construction of a new, world-class Career and Technical Education Center** on a gifted parcel of land. The facility's central location adjacent to a major interstate and near the county's industrial base will increase accessibility through a countywide transportation system and ensure equitable access to course offerings for all students across Kalamazoo County school districts. The new facility is expected to open in Fall 2024.



REGIONAL VIEWS. NATIONAL NEWS.



The Kalamazoo-Portage MSA offers the #2 lowest cost of living in the U.S.

Annual Cost of Living Index, Council for Community and Economic Research, 2020



Kalamazoo named #3 "Best Market for First-Time Home Buyers."

Realtor.com®, April 2021



Kalamazoo is #8 of the "10 Best Cities for High Salaries and Low Cost of Living in the Midwest."

The Ascent, February 2021



Kalamazoo ranks #2 of the "Top 12 Cities With Thriving Job Markets."

LinkedIn's Economic Graph Research Team, January 2020



Kalamazoo is the number one coolest city in the U.S. with the lowest cost of living.

PureWow, February 2021



The Kalamazoo-Portage MSA ranks in the top 10 U.S. metro areas in the East North Central region for sustainable development practices.

Site Selection Magazine, July 2021

LEADERS AREN'T BORN. THEY ARE MADE.

Southwest Michigan First believes that at our community's core, the ultimate catalyst for growth is the ability to identify, engage, and empower the right people. We must take a bold approach to develop the human capital required for a sustainable future. According to John Maxwell, "Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another." Southwest Michigan First has been the community leadership development resource for the Kalamazoo Region, providing unique opportunities for a diverse group of current and emerging community leaders to learn and work together.



Catalyst University has built up over 14,000 existing and emerging leaders over the last 12 years to carry our organizations and community into the future. This conference is designed to spark fresh ideas and motivate you to new heights. The team at Southwest Michigan First thoughtfully curates a speaker lineup that ignites a leadership evolution. This two-day event is filled to the brim with innovation, action plans, energy, leadership takeaways, motivation, excitement, and so much more.

Leadership Kalamazoo is a dynamic, interactive, and intensive program that gathers participants through interactive training sessions, shared experiences, community tours and networking opportunities. The program consists of an orientation, two-day retreat, three community tours and five training sessions over the span of 11 months. We bring together experienced professionals, a world-class faculty and a dynamic curriculum in a setting where the common denominator is a shared commitment to accelerating leadership and impact. The result is a lasting transformational leadership experience. Also included in the program is the opportunity to complete Gallup's CliftonStrengths assessment and a ticket to attend Catalyst University.

First Path is a ten-week journey to help you decide which direction you should take your entrepreneurial idea. Not only will you be introduced to a community of support, but you'll also get a chance to workshop your business idea. You'll learn from leading social entrepreneurs and have the opportunity to give and receive feedback from your peers throughout First Path. Do you have an idea for a business that you've been itching to make a reality? First Path is the perfect fit.

MIX Southwest Michigan believes in the power of creativity in our community. We bring together local creators and innovators for mixers, seminars, and workshops. Let's mix together to grow the creative future of Southwest Michigan.

The Southwest Michigan First Chamber strives to promote the quality and breadth of businesses in our region. Working closely with our members, we aim to grow and link our region's business community and activate high-impact leaders and their teams. Our end game is to create a cohesive and connected community where people want to visit, shop, invest, live, work and play.

We create and convene powerful local and regional partnerships that leverage the talents and resources of our member businesses that include businesses of every size and industry sector, as well other business and community organizations. We do this by:

- Working with the business and industry professionals to develop an understanding of their problems and concerns.
- Creating a climate of community that focuses on the strength of all to increase our region's competitiveness.
- Sharing information on economic programs and promoting resources designed to strengthen and expand the potential of all businesses and industries within our region.
- Providing updates on applicable legislative and political policies and programs.
- Offering educational programs designed to increase the knowledge of our business leaders and teams.

SEVEN BEST WAYS TO LEVERAGE YOUR CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP

- Increased Visibility
- Increased Access
- Advocacy
- Networking
- Low-Cost Advertising
- Business Service Provider Discounts
- Training & Education



DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION.

After conversations with local and national organizations, Southwest Michigan First consulted with diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) advisors to help formally assess the organization and develop a strategic DEI plan. The board approved this recommendation and in May, we signed a two-year agreement with Global Bridgebuilders (GBB) to develop a formal inclusive diversity strategy that would engage team and board members, create attainable metrics, and determine community engagement. The entire Southwest Michigan First team participated in small group discussions regarding DEI at the organization, every member of the team and board has completed the DEI Assessment, and have engaged with GBB regarding the results of the Assessment. Our next step is to create a Diversity Action Committee that will consist of team members, board members, and community leaders with the purpose of providing solutions-based insight and input, generate innovative ideas, and help diversity and inclusion management plan again and maintain sustainable traction.

NEW LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCED IN 2021

JONAS PETERSON CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Peterson previously served as President and CEO of Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance (LVGEA). During his tenure, LVGEA helped over 250 companies create more than 26,000 high-wage jobs and deliver \$30 billion in economic impact throughout Southern Nevada.

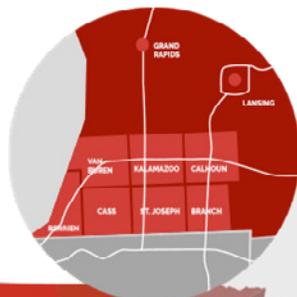


CLARENCE LLOYD DIRECTOR, SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST CHAMBER

Lloyd has a passion for connecting with others and nurturing the small business community. He works to promote prosperity for the entire community and its residents by strengthening our area businesses. Lloyd draws on a long history of business management and people leadership to bring opportunities together for Chamber member companies.

WHERE WE WORK

While our team is called upon to share our skills around the globe, the primary focus for our operations is in the seven-county region of Southwest Michigan. With the region's geographic center touted as one of the top places offering the lowest cost of living in America and praised for its thriving job market, it's easy to see why we know our region's future is bright!



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