



# Advancing Albion Action Plan

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## Downtown Albion

**Amy Deprez, Executive Director ARC**

Approved by:

Albion Reinvestment Corporation Board of Directors

11/27/2017

December 1, 2017

It is with great pleasure and excitement that we present our support for the Advancing Albion Action Plan. This plan will be a guide to the redevelopment and revitalization of the downtown business district and the surrounding area.

The plan complements other community plans to coordinate development strategies and accelerate the redevelopment of the core of our community – the downtown district.

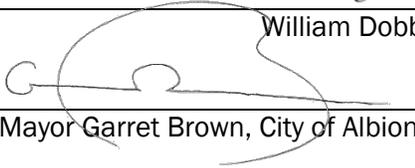
This is a very important time for the revitalization of Albion and the window of opportunity is now. There has been momentum building with several projects that will lead to a more vibrant, diverse and culturally rich community. The Courtyard by Marriott is expected to be completed in 2018, as will several other projects that are at various stages, like Albion Malleable Brewing Company and the Peabody Project. The time is now to capitalize on the momentum that has been built so far and keep it going.

We fully support the direction and initiatives outlined in the Advancing Albion Action Plan and the mission and vision of Albion Reinvestment Corporation as a long term partner to Albion's growth and sustainability.

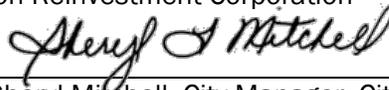
Respectfully,



William Dobbins, President of Albion Reinvestment Corporation



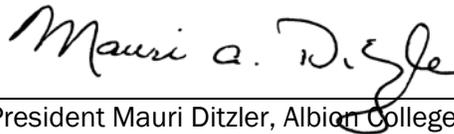
Mayor Garret Brown, City of Albion



Sheryl Mitchell, City Manager, City of Albion



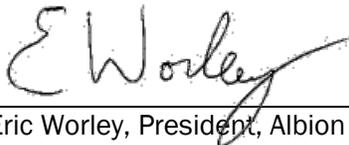
Amy Deprez, CEO/President, Albion EDC



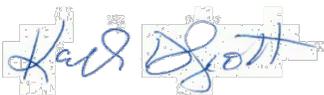
President Mauri Ditzler, Albion College



Herman McCall, Chairperson  
Brownfield Redevelopment Authority



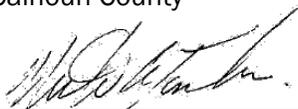
Eric Worley, President, Albion Chamber of  
Commerce



Kelli Scott, County Administrator,  
Calhoun County



Krista Trout-Edwards, Executive Director,  
Calhoun County Land Bank Authority



Michael A. Tymkew, Chairman  
Albion Downtown Development Authority



Tim Krause, Executive Director  
Albion Community Foundation

## Table of Contents

ADVANCING ALBION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	4
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TODAY .....	7
SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES TODAY.....	9
Mission of Albion Reinvestment Corporation .....	12
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES .....	13
INCREASING DENSITY AND REACHING FOR CRITICAL MASS IN THE DOWNTOWN.....	14
GOAL 1: .....	14
REVITALIZATION OF CONNECTING NEIGHBORHOODS.....	16
GOAL 2: .....	16
ENHANCING THE APPEAL OF THE GATEWAYS.....	17
GOAL 3: .....	17
SOCIAL PLAN & STRATEGY.....	18
GOAL 4: .....	18

## ADVANCING ALBION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**A**dvancing Albion is a community plan and investment strategy. It envisions the future of the downtown Albion business district and the surrounding areas. The Plan will lead the direction of Albion Reinvestment Corporation (ARC), a public charity 501(c)(3), which was formed in 2015 specifically to administer funds and property to combat community deterioration in the downtown business district of the City of Albion and surrounding areas. The ARC Board of Directors consists of four members with strong ties to Albion and a shared desire to see Albion progress and become a thriving core to the City that is sustainable for decades to come.

Advancing Albion is a call to action that represents views from a diverse group of community leaders that share a vision for reinventing the downtown with a focus on real estate development in housing, retail, offices, culture, and the arts. Albion residents, both past and present, and Albion College Alumni are proud of their town. They are eager to see the community redeveloped and opportunities for living, working, and recreating in a small town with a resilient spirit and never ending passion.

For Albion to be truly successful and vibrant, equity and opportunity for everyone is essential. Traditional economic development and expansion cannot solve the persistent racial and income inequality in our community. Albion needs a fundamentally new approach to achieve prosperity that is shared by all residents. That includes championing diversity and inclusion while building equity in the downtown business district and surrounding areas. This will require regional thinking and solutions that recognize diversity as a strength and focus on building racial equity and increasing economic opportunities for everybody.

Advancing Albion does not stand alone, but compliments the many other development and strategic plans for the community, including the City of Albion’s 2017-2021 Comprehensive Plan, the Albion Economic Development Strategic Plan 2017, and Albion College’s Strategic Plan to name a few.

Albion is poised to become a resilient, cultural, and lively community for all ages centered on a revitalized downtown. This action plan is developed to lead the ongoing transformation of Albion.



### **Advancing Albion Action Plan**

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Albion is reinventing itself after experiencing the same changes that most Midwestern manufacturing towns have with the decline in manufacturing jobs that have led to population loss and a diminished tax base. Over the years there have been several initiatives to address these challenges. Although there has been some success, a major renaissance has been elusive. An effort that included all the major partners was needed to move the community forward. Today, Downtown Albion is on the cusp of revitalization and there are many players that have been and continue to be instrumental in the development.

**ARC:** Albion Reinvestment Corporation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization whose primary mission is to combat further deterioration of downtown properties by promoting economic growth in the downtown Albion business district in cooperation with the City of Albion, Albion Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), Greater Albion Area Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), the Albion Community Foundation (ACF), and community groups. ARC's role in community development focuses on the downtown to ignite economic growth and investment. This role involves administering funds to facilitate the acquisition, renovation, and lease and sale of underserved properties to help eliminate blight and encourage businesses to start-up in and relocate to Albion.

**Dr. William Dobbins (ARC President):** Lifelong resident of the Albion area and graduate of Albion College (Class of 1974), Dr. Dobbins practiced family medicine in the Albion/Marshall area for 25 years and has been President of Caster Concepts, Inc. and seven other associated business units in four locations since 1997. He married Karen, also alum of Albion College, and has been actively involved in the downtown revitalization efforts. He and Karen recently announced the Peabody Block Project, which will be a mixed-use rehab of the oldest brick structure in the downtown, located at 400 S. Superior. Dr. Dobbins has been President of ARC since inception.

**Dr. Samuel Shaheen (ARC Vice President):** Dr. Samuel Shaheen serves as President and CEO of Shaheen Development. For 50 years, Shaheen Development has enriched our communities by creating places for living, working, leisure, and healthcare. Dr. Shaheen has passion and a 20 year history of urban redevelopment projects throughout Michigan which includes the restoration of the Historic Temple Theater in Saginaw. Dr. Shaheen's community leadership roles include: founding member of the Temple Theatre Foundation, he helped establish the Mid-Michigan Children's Museum, and is one of two founding directors of the Saginaw Art Museum. He has served on numerous boards and is currently on the Great Lakes Advisory Board of Huntington Bank, the Board of Trustees for Albion College, and is a past chair of the Covenant Healthcare Mackinaw Surgery Center Board. Dr. Shaheen has received many awards over the years for his business, leadership and philanthropic endeavors, including the 2016 Governor's Award for Community Philanthropy, Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame, Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce Spirit of Saginaw Award, and Saginaw Future's Outstanding Economic Investment Award just to name a few. In addition to his philanthropic and development projects, Dr. Shaheen is the Executive Director for Central Michigan University Medical Education Partners. The partnership between Central Michigan University and Saginaw's two major hospital systems. Prior, he served as Professor of Surgery and Chair of Surgical Disciplines for CMU College of Medicine. Dr. Shaheen is a 1988 graduate of Albion College where he graduated Summa Cum Laude, he earned his Doctor of Medicine

from the University of Michigan in 1992 and completed his surgical training at Northwestern University in 1997 before returning to his hometown of Saginaw. He resides in Saginaw with his wife Holly, and his four children.

**Jeffrey Ott (ARC Secretary):** Jeff Ott is a partner in the law firm Warner Norcross & Judd LLP. Jeff has almost 30 years' experience representing businesses and financial institutions on various corporate matters, including business startups, early round financing, capital raising, corporate and securities law compliance, mergers and acquisitions, and general contract matters. Jeff regularly represents individuals seeking to start new business ventures and existing businesses looking to expand into new markets and/or locations and finance business growth. Jeff received his J.D. degree from the University of Michigan Law School in 1989, where he graduated cum laude, and his A.B. degree from Albion College in 1986, where he graduated summa cum laude. He is a member of the Albion College Board of Trustees, the board of directors of Habitat for Humanity of Kent County, and the board of directors of Albion Reinvestment Corporation.

**Michael McFarlen (ARC Board Member):** Michael McFarlen joined the ARC Board in 2017 and is a graduate of the prestigious Culinary Institute of America. Chef Mike has spent the last 30+ years honing his passion for Food and Beverage management as an Executive Chef and Vice President of Food and Beverage. He is the recipient of the "Beacon of Light Award" as well as the Governor's Service Awards "Volunteer of the Year", He has earned repeated recognition for his hands on approach to his craft and the ability to balance highly driven philanthropic endeavors with the business demands of a casino executive. He has developed, designed and launched complete Food and Beverage openings for companies like MGM Grand, Kerzner International/Atlantis Resorts and FireKeepers Casino Resort Hotel which encompassed menu creation, kitchen layout, staff training, menu engineering, staffing and hiring, budgeting, capital expenditure forecasting, food safety compliance and strategic planning. He has worked in 5 star, 4 diamond properties, managed celebrity chef driven outlets, high profit fine dining and catering operations and led teams of up to 570 team members. Most recently created a hybrid concept "The Fire Hub" designed to feed local nonprofits thru revenue sharing as well as a fully operational food pantry in conjunction with The Food Bank of South Central Michigan.

**FORKS:** Forks Associates, which preceded ARC, was a privately held equity partnership charged with acquisition of property during the initial phase of the development effort. Its role began to subside as ARC became more organized and focused on the development of the downtown.

**NAIG:** The New Albion Impact Group (NAIG) works with entrepreneurs and partners with Albion College, and other for-profit, charitable, educational, and government organizations to build a new model of economic sustainability through impact investing in the community. The mission of NAIG is to attract new business in a diverse, low-income community; retain and grow existing businesses; focus on investments that leverage the vision of a new, sustainable community; and make strategic investments to assist companies in all stages of growth. The group will help local entrepreneurs fill "main street" by creating jobs for a diverse community.

**CITY, TOWNSHIPS, & COUNTY LEADERSHIP:** Local government is critical in the coordination and effective use of available resources. The City of Albion, Albion Township, Sheridan Township and

Calhoun County all play a vital role in the revitalization of the downtown through communication of strategy, initiatives, and progress through public forums.

**AEDC, Chamber of Commerce & DDA:** The Albion Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), the Greater Albion Area Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) are positioned in Albion to coordinate and accelerate efforts central to this effort and growing and recruiting business enterprise in Albion. Further, through partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and other state programs, the AEDC, Chamber and DDA will increase access to incentive programs that will spur growth.

**CCLBA:** The Calhoun County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA) plays an important role in the development of downtown Albion as it seeks to support the revitalization of neighborhoods and business districts. The CCLBA owns properties throughout Albion, including downtown, and partners with the stakeholders to leverage resources to address blighted structures and assist with projects. The CCLBA also holds commercial properties for ARC while development plans are put in place. The partnership between the two agencies is important as it allows ARC to put all available resources toward redevelopment costs.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TODAY

The principal challenges facing Albion are not unique, however, the extent of population loss, loss of industry, and growing rates of poverty and blight present opportunities for collaborative problem-solving, strategic growth, and positive change to meet the needs of current and future residents.

### *Blight & Vacancy*

Albion has a higher percentage of poverty than compared to other similar-sized communities in the region. The downtown has seen storefronts close without turnover and many of the buildings are in need of major investment to ensure they are usable for the next 50 years and beyond. The vacancy rate for the commercial space in the downtown is approximately 40%. At the time of this report, very few residential options are available in the downtown.

### *Declining & Aging Population*

The City of Albion, like many of its surrounding communities, lost population from 1970-2010. Albion's population continued to decline and in 2015 the Nielsen Company estimated that Albion's population decreased to 8,240 persons, a decline of 4.44% from the 2010 Census. Without intervention, Nielsen projects that the City's population would continue to fall to 7,961 persons by 2020, a decrease of another 3.4%.

*Albion must reinvent, diversify, and stabilize its post-industrial economy to meet the changing 21<sup>st</sup> economic landscape.*

Of the 2,785 households in Albion in 2015, nearly 64% are comprised of "empty nesters and retirees". These empty nesters and retirees are seeking domiciles where they can age in place. Many do not want to move out of town to a retirement home but feel there is no other option in Albion.

### *Loss of Industry & Higher Poverty Levels*

Macroeconomic changes caused the relocation, decentralization, and automation of manufacturing jobs. This has caused many small and large cities across America to restructure their economies to continue to provide city services and maintain their population. Albion must diversify, reinvent, and stabilize its post-industrial economy to meet the changing 21st century economic landscape. As of 2015, 42% of Albion's residents over age 16 were not in the labor force. Citizens and civic and business leaders have expressed their desire to engage the segment of the population that has left the labor force due to a dismal economic outlook. As of 2014, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates over 2,700 people were below the poverty level in Albion. Much of this is caused by a high unofficial unemployment rate, caused by residents that are discouraged or under-skilled, and the lack of public transportation.

### *Infrastructure & Transportation*

The City's declining population is felt by the reduced property tax income for the City. Many of the roads in the Albion area are in dire need of repair and upkeep. The main corridors – Michigan Ave, Eaton Street, and M-99 – are maintained by MDOT which helps alleviate the strain on the City's budget. Superior Street (the section of M-99 that runs through the downtown) is being redone as this report is being written. The project includes replacing the water mains, sewer lines, and a complete restructuring of the road. It will make downtown a prime location for economic growth. Albion is the only city in Calhoun County that does not have a city-wide transportation system in place causing a challenge for many residents to commute to a job and have transportation to and from health care, shopping, and other needed venues.

### *Economic Development Plan*

Over the last decade, it has become apparent that a lack of a unified economic development plan has been a principal obstacle for the community. A plan encompassing all the community partners needed to be adopted by the City and supported by the Albion Economic Development Corporation, the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce, the Albion Community Foundation, and Albion College. A group of community leaders participated in a steering committee and the resulting plan was approved by the Albion Economic Development Board of Directors in October 2017.

*To date, ARC has invested \$387,500 for the initial planning phase of the redevelopment of downtown Albion. Overall approximately \$26 million has been invested in the immediate downtown in the past two years. ARC estimates that another \$25 million will be needed to redevelop the remaining structures in the downtown.*

## **SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES TODAY**

In the past several years, local leaders, foundations and organizations have started the ambitious process of reviving Albion after decades of lost industry, population, and spendable income left its economy sluggish and unprepared to enter the evolving economic landscape. The collective result of these investments, however, only kept the economy limping forward and was not successful in igniting additional investment needed to launch Albion forward.

To date, ARC and its predecessor (Forks Associates) has invested \$387,500 for the initial planning phase of the redevelopment of the downtown including acquisition of several blighted downtown buildings. Over the last two years, approximately \$26 million has been invested in the immediate downtown area. Private developers, businesses, institutions, nonprofits, and other organizations have all contributed to this figure. Advancing Albion seeks to coordinate investments that will transform the downtown and propel Albion forward.

### ***Downtown Anchor Projects***

Albion has been blessed with several early investors to help strengthen the downtown and instill confidence in future investors and developers. In 2015, the historic Bohm Theatre (\$3.5M) was reopened and has become a venue for first-run movies and community events like Blues at the Bohm, where hundreds of locals and visitors hang out for a 3-hour blues jam session. In 2017, Albion College renovated 5 storefronts (\$3M) into a college/community space, named The Ludington Center. A Courtyard by Marriott hotel (\$12M) will be completed in 2018 with a historic look and seated in the middle of the downtown. Two other projects are currently underway – the Peabody Block Building (\$1.7M), a three-story mixed use development utilizing Community Development Block Grant funds to help offset the costs of a historic renovation project. Albion Malleable Brewing Company (\$1M), opening in early 2018, will be the first brewery in Albion and was made possible through creative financial packaging including traditional financing through a local bank and impact investment through New Albion Impact Group.

### ***Walk to Work Community***

The Albion community is just over 3 square miles and connected by various corridors that make our community very walkable

and attractive to anyone wishing to live, work and recreate in a smaller community.

### ***Albion College***

Albion College was founded more than 180 years ago with a single primary purpose: to enhance, enrich, and empower its community. Today that holds true and the College continues to show its commitment to the community through development opportunities and sharing of resources. Albion College has sponsored an AmeriCorps VISTA program for the second year, allowing for 10 VISTA members to volunteer their time in the community building capacity and alleviating poverty. In addition to direct investment via the Ludington Center, the College made a large financial commitment to the Courtyard by Marriott and their success in a small downtown.

### ***Historic Downtown***

Albion's main street, Superior Street, is undergoing a complete renovation to replace water mains, sub-base, and brick pavement. Albion's downtown will be well-prepared to welcome new businesses with the improvements that are taking place and a brand new brick street.

### ***New Albion Impact Group***

The New Albion Impact Group (NAIG) is a creative and vital asset to the community and seeks to fill downtown buildings with businesses and entrepreneurs that will meet the demands of the community while offering employment for residents. NAIG's first investment in Albion Malleable Brewing Company set the direction for impact investment in Albion and the group is seeking to expand its portfolio in the near future.

### ***Location***

Albion is located directly on Interstate 94 connecting Detroit with Chicago and just a short drive to Interstate 69 and US 127. Business owners and residents can catch the Amtrak train just north of downtown Albion for daily trains to Chicago, Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing. Albion is within an hour of several larger urban communities and within a 2 hour commute to Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

### ***Market Potential & Target Market Analysis***

The market potential for development in downtown Albion is strong and the community is on the cusp of revitalization. The primary market area for this plan is defined as:

- *Superior Street Commercial Corridor* - runs the length of Superior Street and includes roughly one block deep to the East and West of the downtown.
- *Albion College / Harrington Neighborhood* - this area lies to the East of downtown and South of Michigan Ave. and is bounded to the East by the campus.
- *Michigan Ave. Corridor* - runs the length of Michigan Avenue (Business I-94) from Bidwell Street to Clinton Street and is primarily concerned with the commercial parcels facing Michigan Ave.

A target market analysis (TMA) was completed for Albion in 2015 and shows compelling evidence for new housing developments and redevelopment of existing residential properties. The target population can be expected to come mainly from the surrounding counties and people looking to relocate within Albion. Nearly 82% of the potential market will be seeking multi-family rental units which could include apartments, lofts, condos, or townhouses. The other 18% will be looking for single family detached houses. According to the TMA, Albion can expect to see 345 households on average looking to relocate within the city each year over the next 5 years. Albion can also expect to see on average 415 people from Calhoun County and the

*According to the TMA, Albion can expect to see **345 households** on average looking to relocate within the city each year over the next 5 years. Albion can also expect to see on average **415 people** from Calhoun County and the surrounding counties (Kalamazoo, Jackson, Branch, Barry, and Eaton Counties) and **140** from across the US looking to move to Albion each year over the next 5 years.*

surrounding counties (Kalamazoo, Jackson, Branch, Barry, and Eaton Counties) and 140 from across the US looking to move to Albion each year over the next 5 years.

According to the TMA, the potential market of 345 households looking to relocate within the city consists of approximately one-third empty nesters and retirees, one-third traditional and non-traditional families, and one-third younger singles and couples. Of those potential new residents from outside Albion, they range across all ages, lifestyles, and income groups. There is strong evidence to support the demand for all types of housing across all price ranges. More data is available in the TMA. Albion is a prime market for real estate development. The city's large outdated housing stock does not meet the needs of current or future residents. The majority of the housing stock is aging, single-family detached homes. There is certainly a market for these homes if the proper renovations and upgrades are made to them. The market for subsidized, rental, market rate, and high-end apartments is strong. Albion will only see these new households if developers seize the opportunity now.

Residents of Albion and the surrounding area have a need for options when it comes to services, dining, shopping, and entertainment. The community can support several new options when it comes to all of these categories with many residents seeking options in other communities currently.

## Mission of Albion Reinvestment Corporation

Albion Reinvestment Corporation is a 501c(3), public charity, that combats community deterioration in the Albion downtown business district and surrounding areas to improve and revitalize the district into an area that is attractive to businesses, employment and entertainment, through continued initiatives that:

- Promotes economic growth, employment and development by offering capital, real property and other incentives to businesses, educational institutions, healthcare organizations and entertainment providers considering locating new facilities or development;
- Unites all parties interested in the redevelopment of downtown Albion, including education, government, business and charitable institutions in a broad based coalition; supporting existing businesses and encouraging entrepreneurial business development; enhancing public infrastructure, improving aesthetics and eliminating blight and vacant storefronts; increasing residency in the downtown; and developing the downtown into an attraction area for business, employment, education and entertainment;
- Advocates and solve problems with governmental entities and other agencies on behalf of new and existing businesses and other institutions desiring to locate new facilities or developments in the downtown area;
- Identifies new construction or expansion opportunities in the downtown area; aiding in or locating appropriate sites for construction or expansion opportunities; attracting investment capital to those opportunities; inventorying and establishing priorities on investment opportunities; and expediting their fulfillment;
- Initiates applications for Federal and State financial and other charitable support of the economic development in the downtown area;
- Uses all effective means to bring in new construction and business that will provide jobs and increase the job base of the City and committing local business and non-Albion based businesses, educational institutions, government agencies, nonprofit organizations and other employers to locate new facilities and developments in the downtown business district.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Coordinating investments to concentrate growth and stimulate surrounding areas will advance Albion. Urban planning and design principles should be considered and used as evaluation criteria for future redevelopment work. Successful downtowns typically have a distinctive image, a reliable and diverse economic base, compact building pattern, varied residential options, quality public open spaces, and visionary leadership. Vibrant communities capitalize on unique local attributes, promote historical preservation, encourage active, publically-accessible riverfronts and hold frequent local and regional festivals and events.

Advancing Albion Action Plan is comprised of four segments that together can and will propel Albion forward.

- *Increasing Density and Reaching for Critical Mass in the Downtown*
- *Revitalization of Connecting Neighborhoods*
- *Enhancing the Appeal of the Gateways*
- *Social Plan & Strategy*

The Advancing Albion Action Plan builds on the aforementioned segments and broadly defines project specific initiatives, goals and objectives as follows:

## INCREASING DENSITY AND REACHING FOR CRITICAL MASS IN THE DOWNTOWN

*Downtown Albion was once bustling with people and stores. Today, over 40% of the storefronts are empty and many of the buildings are in need of investment right away to sustain them into the future.*

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**GOAL 1:** *Redevelop ARC-owned properties to increase density in the downtown through “white boxing” and infill development for residential, retail, restaurant, commercial, and cultural uses.*

- I. Create development strategy for 315 S. Superior St. as the first “alpha” project for ARC. (2017-2018)
  - a. Define financial package including equity requirements and incentive eligibility
  - b. Fundraise for the equity portion needed to achieve this project
  - c. Secure financing and incentives needed to achieve this project
  - d. Initiate project and redevelop 315 S. Superior Street into a residential rental revenue earning model with a strong commercial tenant to anchor the downtown district
- II. Leverage relationship with ARC Board of Director’s Michael McFarlen to pursue the possibility of an “Albion Fire Hub” type development in the Downtown (2017)
- III. Develop a retail storefront and office/upper-floor loft strategy for Superior Street. (2017)
  - a. Define project scope and development plans and architectural elements to restore storefront elevation and “white box” the retail and business offices
  - b. Development of loft apartments on the upper floors where amenable
- IV. Develop and implement a Transformational Grant Plan (Big Albion Plan) for the redevelopment of up to 20 storefronts, but no less than 5, as outlined above, as one transformational project for the downtown. (2017-2019)
- V. Diversify the downtown retail mix and reach for critical mass through aggressive business recruitment strategies (2017-2019)
  - a. Identify complementary businesses to the existing businesses through focus group discussions with current business owners
  - b. Create synergies and strategy with New Albion Impact Group for business funding opportunities, in addition to “lease subsidy”
  - c. Develop “business contest” strategy to properly vet and attract regional businesses

*“White boxing” refers to preparing a commercial or residential building with a heating/cooling system, lighting, electrical, bathrooms, a finished ceiling, walls that are prepped for painting, and a concrete slab floor. This makes the space “move-in ready” which is attractive for new businesses.*

- i. Utilize a team of Gerstacker/Ford students, college faculty, and VISTA Members to define strategy, target businesses and contest metrics and to award recipients through a “Shark Tank” (ARC Tank) like competition
    - ii. Develop an overall marketing strategy including logo, social media marketing (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram), and print media for promotion and marketing
- VI. Encourage approximately 50% of the storefronts to be an entrepreneurial business development by partnering with entrepreneurial businesses through attractive standard lease rates or various forms of subsidized leasing such as a tiered rate or a percent of sales for early adopters (ongoing)
  - a. Turn downtown Albion into a destination place through enhancement of public infrastructure, placemaking, and improving aesthetics
    - i. Enhance the front and rear façade of the downtown buildings for a more aesthetically pleasing and vibrant environment
    - ii. Encourage active and publically-accessible river frontage
    - iii. Partner with the AEDC and the City of Albion for planning and upgrading of public infrastructure in the downtown
    - iv. Partner with City of Albion and the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to offer incentive options, such as Business Improvement District and Façade Improvement Programs, to spur developments and residential living in the downtown

## REVITALIZATION OF CONNECTING NEIGHBORHOODS

*Neighborhoods surrounding the downtown have seen a decline in housing quality and property values as residents' age or move out, leaving vacant structures. As indicated earlier, the neighborhood connecting the campus to the downtown is the focus of the Harrington Project made possible by a large donation from an alumnus of the college. Transforming this neighborhood into a sidewalk community has started in the past year and will continue in the coming years. Other neighborhoods surrounding the downtown business district also need investment and transformation to improve the walkability of the community as a whole and promote a vibrant downtown.*

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**GOAL 2:** *Revitalize neighborhoods connecting to the downtown to encourage development and walkability.*

- I. Partner with Albion College to define a comprehensive strategy for the Harrington Neighborhood. (2017-2018)
- II. Spur development of Harrington Neighborhood through establishment of a Neighborhood Enterprise Zone (NEZ), linking the downtown with Albion College through redevelopment of this area (2018 -2019)
- III. Cultivate residential “infill” development in the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown (ongoing)
- IV. Work with the City of Albion to determine other surrounding neighborhoods that would benefit from an NEZ being established (2017-2018)
- V. Partner with community leaders to define a long-term plan for Stoffer Plaza and the Riverfront to capitalize on this asset (2018-2019)
- VI. Encourage development projects that reflect the long-term Architectural Plan including development of a pocket park and pedestrian gateway connecting the college campus with the hotel (ongoing)

## ENHANCING THE APPEAL OF THE GATEWAYS

*Having visually appealing and inviting entryways to the city are critical to creating an inviting and welcoming community that leads visitors to the historic downtown.*

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**GOAL 3:** *Enhance the gateways to our community through aesthetic improvements.*

- I. Partner and develop the I-94/Eaton Corridor through improving the appeal of the gateway. (2017-2019)
  - a. Encourage streetscape improvements such as landscape and plants, lighting and wayfinding signage.
- II. Partner and develop the I-94/Michigan Corridor through improving the appeal of the gateway. (2018-2020)
  - a. Encourage streetscape improvements such as landscape and plants, lighting and wayfinding signage.
- III. Coordinate wayfinding signage efforts with City of Albion's Wayfinding Signage Committee. (ongoing)
- IV. Partner with community leaders/organizations to improve the aesthetics of any community and welcoming signage and placement

## SOCIAL PLAN & STRATEGY

*The redevelopment of Albion requires more than investment; in order for the revitalization to be sustainable, the internal and external perception of Albion needs to be changed to a positive and progressive one. Lives will be strengthened as we work to reverse community deterioration by focusing our redevelopment efforts in the downtown business district and surrounding areas.*

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**GOAL 4:** *Develop a social plan and strategy that underscores the faith-based and culturally rich community and encourages all citizens to be a part of the revitalization effort and create a community branding strategy that tells the collective redevelopment story and turns the community around through consistent and persistent marketing and promotion. The impact of which will:*

- *Create a community that will become an attractive place for business, employment and entertainment by offering financial and technical assistance, eliminating blight, and attractive investment capital.*
  - *Add jobs to the community through attracting new construction, supporting new and existing businesses, and assisting entrepreneurs.*
  - *Enhance the quality of life by attracting businesses that meet the wants and needs of residents, providing more attainable housing options, creating jobs, and updating public infrastructure.*
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- I. Engage in specific projects to improve and strengthen the image of Downtown Albion. (ongoing)
    - a. To counter longstanding negative perceptions of the community and downtown, vigorously promote short-term successes and new and existing businesses as they seek to establish a larger customer base
    - b. Partner with the Community Marketing Committee on the development and implementation of a community branding strategy
  - II. Engage faith-based and other community organizations to partner in the redevelopment efforts and creation of a long term vision for the community (2017-2019)
    - a. Create a community forum to socialize the action plan and encourage participation in its efforts
    - b. Create social collateral to destigmatize the mystery of ARC and the revitalization
    - c. Create a communication plan to socialize the action plan, gain community input and encourage participation in its efforts