



the greater
BRIDGMAN
area chamber and growth alliance

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was made possible with the support of the Board of Directors of the Greater Bridgman Area Chamber of Commerce and Growth Alliance.

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PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, PEOPLE, AND PLACES

Hotel & Housing – Positive conversations have continued with several potential investors and developers who are interested in bringing more housing and hotel options to the Bridgman area.

Scholarships – The CGA awarded one \$500 scholarship to a deserving student in 2020.

Involvements and Partnerships– Over the years, the CGA has actively participated with many programs/initiatives for collaboration, project management, and information and resource sharing.

- American Electric Power / Indiana Michigan Power
- Berrien County Community Development
- Blossomtime Queen’s Breakfast at Weko Beach
- Bridgman Public Library Strategic Planning
- Chamber Directors of Berrien County
- City of Bridgman Master Planning/Zoning Rewrite Processes
- Community Economic Development Strategies Committee
- Cornerstone Alliance
- Corridor Improvement Authority, City of Bridgman
- Economic Development Corporation of Berrien County
- Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce
- Kinexus/Michigan Works
- Landbank Authority of Berrien County
- Michigan Economic Developers Association
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center
- Michigan Small Business Development Center
- Miss Michigan Outstanding Teen Open House
- Procurement Technical Assistance Center
- Real Estate Developer Community Tour
- Redevelopment Readiness Communities Best Practices
- Shoreline Hotel Association Annual Meeting
- Small Scale Development Seminar
- Southwest Michigan First
- Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

- Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber Chief Elected Officials Council
- Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber Business After Hours
- Southwestern Michigan Tourist Council
- Strategic Leadership Council - Best Practices Committee
- TwinCats – Berrien County Transportation Planning

Events – The CGA and Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber have held numerous in-person public and member-oriented events for the Bridgman Business community over the past year, including:

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|---------------------------------|---|
| • CGA Annual Meeting | • Pints & Politics @ Haymarket |
| • SMRC Golf & Steak Fry | • Ribbon Cutting @ Lake Side Fit |
| • Bridgman Polar Party | • CEO Council @ Lake Twp Park |
| • (2) Chamber 101's @ City Hall | • Biz After Hours @ Classic Catering & Events |

VISIBILITY

Promotion of events and members come largely from the SMR Chamber's advertising budget and have been included on:

- **Radio segments and advertisements:** Weekly/bi-weekly live radio segments on 102.5 FM/AM, 1060 WHFB, 97.5 Y-Country, 98.3 The Coast, and News Talk 94.9 WSJM plus radio advertisements valued in excess of \$30,000;
- **Newspaper Columns:** Weekly/bi-weekly columns in *MailMax* (50,314 weekly readers) and each of Leader Publications' four news products: *The Niles Daily Star*, *The Dowagiac Daily News*, *The Edwardsburg Argus*, and *the Cassopolis Vigilant*. (2,500 homes + 60,000 unique online readers) SMRC is the only Chamber in the state regularly published across three different counties;
- **Social Media:** SMRC's Facebook (3,513 followers), Twitter, LinkedIn, & Instagram; the CGA's Facebook (1,594 followers); and the Family Fun Fest Facebook page (which we own and manage);

- **Banner Ads:** Online banner advertisements on MoodyontheMarket.com which garnered 4,174,912 impressions and 5,145 clicks in 2020 alone;
- **Friday Email Updates:** Weekly Email Updates that reach roughly 3,000 consumers throughout Berrien County; and

CGA Social Media – We also increased our total number of CGA page likes to 1,446 and followers to 1,594. Total reach for 2020 was just over 14,000 individuals, which is down from previous years due to the cancellation of the Makers Trail Festival in 2020. Additionally, the Weko Beach Festival page, which primarily promotes the Makers Trail Festival has 3,852 likes with 3,902 followers.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Attraction – The CGA continues to partner with the Cornerstone Alliance to promote development in the Bridgman/Lake Township area, specifically the property once owned by LECO Corporation. Additionally, the Regional Chamber has actively connected the City with civil engineers and real estate developers to lay the groundwork for future projects.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The CGA was able to partner on, or benefit from, the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber’s many response programs, including:

Buy Local Berrien! – The wildly successful [Facebook](#) group launched in March 2020 to encourage our community to support local throughout the “Stay Home, Stay Safe” order. With over 14,000 engaged members, the group continues to move the needle for area businesses in their fight for solvency.

Buy Local Berrien Holiday Gift Guide – In the midst of a second shutdown, we launched the Buy Local Berrien Holiday Gift Guide and created a campaign to turn Small Business Saturday into Small Business *Season*. We also leveraged our partnership with Mid-West to launch a “buy local” radio spot co-voiced by Pat Moody and Arthur Havlicek.

#BuyLocalBerrienChallenge— We created a viral social media challenge encouraging consumers to support local business affected or closed by the second round of restrictions. Those who took the challenge posted photos of their purchases and then nominated three of their friends to go out and support local as well. This challenge was taken countless times throughout the county and helped spur consumer spending at a critical time for thousands of local businesses.

Buy Local Bridgman Gift Card – We partnered with the Greater Bridgman Area Chamber & Growth Alliance to launch a brand-new community gift card program for Bridgman merchants. Unlike reloadable visa debit cards, these ensure the money spent stays completely local. It’s also not store specific, which means it can be redeemed at a number of participating locations. As of today, 129 gift cards have been purchased totaling \$4,895, of those 63 have been redeemed for \$2,045.41 spent at participating merchants. Visit www.smrchamber.com/bridgman for more information!

Berrien Reopens – We partnered with the Cornerstone Alliance, Kinexus Group, the Berrien County Health Dept., and the Berrien County Government in launching www.berrienreopens.org, a localized resource with consolidated information meant to assist companies in a safe re-opening. We then took lead in expanding the group by inviting every other chamber and business organization in Berrien County. A week after Berrien Reopens was formed, the coalition more than doubled in size.

Southwest Michigan Safe – We created a safety awareness campaign that encouraged public, private, and non-profit entities to pledge to uphold a basic set of health and safety recommendations with the ultimate goal of increasing consumer confidence throughout the county. Visit www.swmisafe.org and take the pledge to be listed in our online directory.

Back2WorkSafe - We assisted the Berrien County Health Department in creating their “Back2WorkSafe” Employer and Organization Wellness Tracking Tool - a secure, online portal that enables companies to track COVID-related information across multiple worksites.

Virtual Networking – We launched several brand-new virtual networking opportunities for all members to stay engaged. These included 45 Coffee Chats, 10 Wine Down Happy Hours, Industry Cluster Meetings to discuss safe re-opening practices, and we co-hosted multiple, free “Wicked Smart Webinars” with Mid-West Family Broadcasting Group on how to advertise during a crisis.

COVID-19 Resource Page & Email Updates - We were one of the first organizations to create a COVID-19 Resource Page on our website with localized information, including financial assistance for businesses; clarifications on the executive orders; timely information about state and federal unemployment; industry specific and CDC guidelines, OSHA protocols, and updates from the Berrien County Health Department. We also sent out regular COVID-19 Email updates to members breaking down the latest news and information related to their industry.

Pandemic Advocacy – We lobbied the state to adopt industry-specific health guidelines and have been a strong voice for allowing businesses to re-open safely. Notably, our Board Chair testified on behalf of struggling SW MI businesses in front of the Legislature’s Joint Select Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic, and we were among a select group of chambers to partner with the Michigan Chamber in releasing a COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Agenda. Locally, we were responsible for the County Commission declaring March “Restaurant Month” in an effort to drive support towards hospitality establishments.

The Future

Bridgman Social District – In an effort to support downtown hospitality establishments, a proposal led by the Regional Chamber, Bridgman CGA, and Bridgman CIA was recently passed by the City Council to establish a Social District in the heart of Downtown Bridgman.

Once approved by the MLCC, patrons of adjacent bars, distilleries, breweries, restaurants, tasting rooms, and similar food service establishments may purchase alcoholic beverages in specially marked open containers to be taken into the District’s “Common Areas” for consumption.

The “Bridgman Social District” consists of Lake Street, between Maple Street and Mathieu Street, and the City parking lot. Commons Areas include all sidewalks within the social district, the City’s parking lot, and the courtyard owned by Hoof2Hanger/Sandpiper. With this footprint, the qualified licensees that could potentially participate include: China Café, Lake Street Eats, Lazy Ballerina Winery, Tapisstry Brewing Company, and Transient Artisan Ales.



Makers Trail Festival – While this event was unable to happen in 2020, the CGA Events Committee is excited to announce that we are in the planning stages for a 2021 festival to happen on **Saturday, October 2nd**. Additional details will be announced as we get closer to the event.

Goals Committee – A Goals Committee was formed in an effort to foster greater collaboration between the City of Bridgman, Lake Township, the CGA, and the Regional Chamber. This committee has been tasked with identifying what the immediate and long-term needs are for our community and determining a solution to tackle them. Topics discussed include economic development, housing, hotel accommodations, and more.

