



# MONROE COUNTY LINK PLAN 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

January 2020

## ABOUT THE LINK PLAN

The Monroe County Link Plan was born from a study of the I-75 corridor within Monroe County. The purpose of the study was to enhance the economic vitality of the county by identifying future opportunities that will arise from the construction of a new international border crossing between Detroit and Windsor Canada.

At the November 2017 Board of Directors' meeting, the Monroe County Business Development Corporation (BDC) Board approved the implementation of the Monroe County Link Plan. Shortly thereafter, the Link Plan Action Team Kickoff Meeting took place on January 12, 2018, which included team captains and their selected team members.

The Link Plan is a strategy to guide future economic development along the I-75 corridor, the County's economic backbone. This Plan identifies industries Monroe County should attract to the corridor, action steps that will entice companies to relocate along I-75, and specific development areas along the corridor that would appeal to various companies. As the Link Plan evolves, additional development areas throughout the County are being identified for development.

In addition, and critical to this development process is a commitment to improving quality of life and strengthening the image and brand of the County. The Link Plan will position the County to grow and adapt in a changing 21st century economy.

Michael Bosanac, Monroe County Administrator, said, "this is a focused effort to bring economic development into Monroe County," and "we want to make Monroe County the right place to do business."

"As we continue to work on the various pillars of the Link Plan and dig deeper into the weeds, we have been able to work to solve problems and develop tools to meet our mission of creating an environment of economic growth that benefits all of our citizens," stated Tim Lake, President and CEO of the Monroe County Business Development Corporation.

The Consumers Energy Foundation donated a \$200,000 grant to Monroe County BDC for the Monroe County Link Plan at a ceremony on January 12, 2018. Tim Lake, BDC President & CEO said, "This money will fund a portion of the 5-year plan which is expected to cost about \$550,000. Michael Bosanac, Monroe County Administrator, added, "the funding is essential to implementing the plan."



Economic development in any community requires a sustained financial commitment. As growth opportunities evolve, additional financial resources will be needed. The Link Plan will actively reach out to foundations, businesses and individuals to share successes of the Plan and request financial participation.

## PLAN PILLARS

The foundation of the Plan is a core set of development principles and action items. Formed by input from local stakeholders, market research, and other best practices, these principles and actions will be instrumental for attracting new employers and industries while retaining existing ones.

The Six Plan Pillars are the main organizing elements of the plan. They reflect and address the key findings identified through the public input and technical research processes. Each Pillar has a Team Captain. These captains hold leadership positions within our business, educational or government community and were chosen based on their executive role within their respective organizations. The strength of each of their organizations and the role within will continue the process should they retire or are no longer able to serve the Link Plan.



## 2019 GENERAL OVERVIEW

In 2019, the Monroe County Link Plan entered its second year of implementation. The Link Plan gained significant momentum throughout the year due to the unwavering dedication of over 60 community stakeholders representing local governments, businesses, k-12 and post-secondary educators, and vested community leaders volunteering close to 1,000 hours. This represents a fifty percent increase over 2018, the inaugural year.

With volunteerism remaining steady, the Pillar Teams collectively achieved milestones that perhaps in the past would have been considered too difficult. This type of commitment from the volunteers clearly indicates Monroe County is poised and ready to continue overcoming challenges as it strives to elevate its economic competitiveness. Still, there remains a significant amount of sweat equity required for optimal success.



*You never change things by fighting the existing reality.  
To change something, build a new model that  
makes the existing model obsolete.*

Buckminster Fuller

## 2019 GENERAL UPDATE

The key actions taken in 2019 that contributed to the Link Plan successes included:

- Florence Buchanan, President, Customer Experience360, joined the Link Plan team in February as Project Manager. Her role is to work closely with the Pillar Captains, manage and facilitate the Pillar meetings and maintain forward progress.
- Mission and Vision Statements were developed for each Pillar allowing better alignment for their scope-of-work.
- Annual Goals were created. The goals evolved from the original Link Plan Priority Action Plan Goals. During the process of establishing the Goals, some of the original Priority Goals were modified or moved to the “parking lot” for further and future evaluation.
- Re-occurring meetings were established for each Pillar Team.
- The Grow Strategic and Grow Logistic Pillars were combined early in the year but separated mid-year to enable the Grow Strategic Pillar to focus on entrepreneurship and local business growth.
- An All Pillar Meeting was held on February 1, 2019.
- A progress report on the Link Plan was presented to the BDC Board of Directors at their meeting on November 6, 2019.
- An All Pillar Team Meeting was held on November 8, 2019, for a year-end review and to celebrate successes.



The following is a summary of each individual Pillar’s performance.

## || Enhance the Local Image & Brand

Michael Bosanac — County of Monroe — Pillar Captain

### **Mission**

Enhance the overall image of the County

### **Vision**

Create a unifying county-wide brand that promotes the character and culture of our community

### **2019 GOALS**

1. Implement highway beautification efforts along the I-75 corridor.
2. Create a county-wide regional branding campaign that provides facts about the region's competitive advantages, regional assets, and quality of life amenities.

### **Achievements**

1. The Gateway Beautification Program for landscape maintenance was implemented utilizing manhours from the Monroe County Jail System's Red Shirt Program. Inmates who are eligible for the Red Shirt Program will maintain the landscape at Exit 15 (Dixie Highway) and Exit 18 (Nadeau Road). In addition, local businesses located at the exits will be asked to participate with a monetary contribution and/or with employee volunteerism. Exits 15 & 18 lay within the jurisdiction of the City of Monroe and Frenchtown Township, both have given 100% support for the program.

The Pillar Team is enthusiastic about the success of the program and the impact it will have on the image of the County. As an added benefit to the Red Shirt Program, the inmates will have the opportunity to enroll in a landscaping certification program providing workforce skills for future employment. The certification program is being developed by Michigan Works with input from local landscape companies.

2. One of the most exciting accomplishments of the year was the selection of Phire Group, a community brand and marketing agency based in Ann Arbor, as the agency of choice to develop a county-wide image and brand campaign. As part of the selection process, the Image and Brand sub-committee conducted an extensive evaluation process with a total of four agencies.

The RFP requires Phire Group to engage diverse stakeholders throughout the County by conducting focus groups, surveys, telephone interviews and in-person interviews. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the third quarter. The goal of the county-wide brand is not to usurp existing community identities but to create a county-wide brand that can be complementary and facilitate economic development throughout the county.



## ***Pillar Team Members***

- Michael Bosanac — County of Monroe — Pillar Captain
- Al Barron — Monroe Township
- Jeanine Bragg — Couture by Karen
- Robert Clark — City of Monroe
- James Gardner — City of Luna Pier
- James McDevitt — Frenchtown Township
- Randy Pierce — Monroe County Road Commission
- David Uhl — Village of Dundee
- Susan Vanisacker — La-Z-Boy
- Matt Zook — Monroe County Convention & Tourism Bureau



## **|| Prepare for Investment**

Barry Buschmann — The Mannik & Smith Group — Pillar Captain

### **Mission**

Facilitate infrastructure knowledge and Assist communities with strategies for Priority Development Areas

### **Vision**

Communities well prepared for economic investment

### **2019 Goals**

1. Identify each Priority Development Area (PDA) “infrastructure ready” to support targeted development.
2. Develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Communities and MOU Property Owners.
3. Using the Development Ready Communities program tool, implement a “one-stop shop” model across local municipalities to strive for a streamlined permitting process.



4. Develop a sub area plan for PDA #6 — LaPlaisance Road Corridor by collaborating with Monroe Township, its citizens and the corridor property owners.
5. Invest in the development of an online site selection tool that depicts surrounding resources and available sites, with the ability for computer-aided design applications for virtual speculative buildings — GIS.
6. Create a searchable feature for the online Developer’s Streamlining Guide to become more user friendly.

### ***Achievements***

1. No fewer than 8 Priority Development Areas (PDAs) were initially identified as potential sites for development. The 8 PDAs were re-evaluated mid-year for site readiness. At least five have potential but still need a strategic process for development. The Pillar Team will continue to review sites throughout the county as an ongoing process.
2. The MOU Communities document was finalized and will be used to work with municipalities establishing development guidelines and revisions of their Master Plans. The MOU Property Owners were vetted by the Pillar Team and are available to present to property owners as the need arises.
3. The Developer’s Streamlining Guide was updated and is available on the BDC’s website. Several municipalities have a link to the guide on their websites.
4. In September, the Prepare for Investment Pillar sub-committee held a successful meeting with the Monroe Township Planning Board. The meeting was held to review the pathway for redeveloping the LaPlaisance Road Corridor (PDA #6). As a result, the Monroe Township Board of Trustees passed a resolution for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Communities which provides guidelines for developing the LaPlaisance Road Corridor. A working committee was formed with representatives from Monroe Township, LaPlaisance Road property owners, and the community at large. The committee will be guided by the BDC. Overall, the Planning Board is positive about the prospects of redeveloping the corridor.
5. The BDC made significant progress with the County on the GIS online site selection tool for developers. Developers will be able to readily access information on geography and the status of the site’s utility infrastructure.
6. The online Developer’s Streamlining Guide was revised to include a searchable feature making the online guide more user friendly.

### ***Pillar Team Members***

- Barry Buschmann — The Mannik & Smith — Pillar Captain
- Jim Jacobs — James S. Jacobs Architects, PLLC



- Barry Kinsey — Monroe County Community College
- Jeff McBee — Monroe County Planning and Engagement
- Adelle Pascaris — ITC Holdings
- Kerry Bondy — Petrangelo, Bondy & Crossley, P.C.
- Randy Pierce — Monroe County Road Commission
- Tracy Oberleiter — Monroe County Economic Development Corporation
- Ryan Simmons — Monroe County Community Planning
- David Thompson — Monroe County Drain Commission
- Dave Uhl — Village of Dundee
- Tom Fritz — Coldwell Banker Hayes Real Estate
- Kennis Wooten — DTE Energy
- Stephane Blatt — Consumers Energy



## || Improve the Local Quality of Life & Strengthen Tourism Opportunities

Doug Chaffin — First Merchants Bank Board of Directors & BDC Board of Directors' Chairman — Pillar Captain

### **Mission**

Improve the Quality of Life and Strengthen Tourism

### **Vision**

A world-class community where people want to visit, play and stay

### **2019 Goals**

1. Increase the diversity of housing options in the City of Monroe and across Monroe County to retain current employees and attract new ones. Determine gaps in housing throughout the county. Need data for 4 Hub areas of the County: Monroe, Bedford, Dundee and Carleton. Goal: County-wide Tourism Study that will include identifying amenities and a county-wide housing study.



2. Goal: Tourism Bureau — Developing a county-wide marketing plan.
3. Tourism Bureau — Upgrade website.
4. Focus growth in the City of Monroe, the largest community nearest the I-75 corridor in Monroe County — Ongoing.
5. Update City of Monroe's Economic Development website page — Ongoing.
6. Toledo to Detroit Passenger Rail — Preliminary study.

## ***Achievements***

1. Quotes were received from LandUse USA, a land use consulting firm, to conduct a county-wide housing and tourism study. Sub-committees for both Housing and Tourism will be formed and will meet in the first quarter of 2020. Both Housing and Tourism are important aspects of economic development.
2. The Tourism Bureau formed a Marketing Committee consisting of several volunteers who have marketing backgrounds. The Tourism Executive Director worked directly with the committee on the county-wide Marketing Plan. The Plan continues to evolve.
3. An RFP was distributed to upgrade the Tourism Board's website. The selection process resulted in two website developers as finalist. The status of the website upgrade should be determined in early 2020.
4. The City of Monroe is working on several projects that will have an impact on economic development. These projects include the redevelopment of the La-Z-Boy property which is part of the Telegraph Road Corridor Improvement Plan and the River Raisin Heritage Corridor East.
5. Updating the City's Economic Development page is an ongoing project.
6. The preliminary study for the Toledo to Detroit passenger rail system was completed. In October during the BDC's Annual "Focus on the Future," Dr. Alexander E. Metcalf, Transportation Economics & Management Systems, Inc. President, provided an overall summary of the rail project.

## ***Pillar Team Members***

- Doug Chaffin — First Merchants Bank Board of Directors & BDC Board of Directors' Chairman — Pillar Captain
- Scott Bentley — River Raisin National Battlefield Park
- Andy Clark — Monroe County Historical Museum
- Mark Cochran — City of Monroe
- Michelle Dugan — Monroe County Chamber of Commerce
- Stacy Harper — ProMedica Monroe Regional Hospital



- Bill Kipf — Monroe County Home Builders Association
- Annette Knowles — City of Monroe
- Steve Mihalec — Monroe County Chamber of Commerce
- Jasdeep Sohi — Marcus & Millichap
- Michael Stewart — Saint Mary’s Catholic Central
- Matt Zook—Monroe County Convention & Tourism Bureau



## || Grow Strategically

Scott Laskey — Laskey LLC — Co-Pillar Captain  
 Paul Pirrone — Bedford Township — Co-Pillar Captain

### Mission

Create an environment for successful new business formation and growth

### Vision

A strategic network that facilitates and promotes a thriving entrepreneurial community

### 2019 Goals

1. Gap analysis.
2. Connectivity — partnerships.
3. Communication county-wide — marketing entrepreneurial resources.
4. Sustainability.
5. Provide assistance.



## ***Achievements***

1. The Grow Strategically Pillar was separated from the Grow Logistically Pillar mid-year and began to focus its efforts on entrepreneurship and local business growth. The first priority was to determine the resources that are available to entrepreneurs and established businesses. Members of the Pillar Team contacted organizations located within and outside of the county to determine the level of business-related resources available for Monroe County residents.
2. Going forward, the Pillar Team will investigate the development of a shared working space location. The goal is to have shared working space available by the end of 2020. The BDC will develop the business plan that will include visits to existing shared working space locations within the state.
3. The Pillar Team will continue to create partnerships, invite additional stakeholders to join the effort and continue to evaluate the gap analysis.
4. Resources to sustain these efforts will be a challenge.

## ***Pillar Team Members***

- Scott Laskey — Laskey LLC — Co-Pillar Captain
- Paul Pirrone — Bedford Township — Co-Pillar Captain
- TC Clements — T.C and Jamie Clements Cruise Planners
- Fred Earl — Innovative Management Services LLC
- Barry Kinsey — Monroe County Community College
- Tracy Oberleiter — Monroe County Economic Development
- Al Prieur — Bedford Township
- Tom Allen — Allen Chevrolet Cadillac



## **|| Improve Workforce Development & Education**

Stephen McNew — Monroe County Intermediate School District — Co-Pillar Captain

Gregory Pitoniak — Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA) — Co-Pillar Captain

### **Mission**

Create a dynamic, sustainable talent development ecosystem

### **Vision**

A robust economy with a talent development system responsive to the needs of employers

### **2019 Goals**

1. Re-work the former Marshall Plan for Monroe County.
2. Identify Monroe County's workplace needs.
3. CTE Pilot Program.

### **Achievements**

1. The Talent Development Team initially focused on the Intermediate School District's application to receive funding from the Marshall Plan. Unfortunately, both requests were not funded. The Marshall Plan was introduced by the previous Governor's administration but not continued by the Governor elect.
2. The Talent Pillar decided to refocus its efforts identifying workforce needs for CTE, specifically in the local manufacturing sector; re-work the former Marshall Plan for Monroe County's needs and implement a CTE Pilot Program.
3. The CTE Pilot Program is being chaired by Julie Everly, Superintendent of Monroe Public Schools, in conjunction with local manufacturing companies. The Pilot Program will focus on students completing an assessment of skills needed to be successful in manufacturing. Successful completion of the assessment will not guarantee employment but should give students an advantage in the hiring process. The long-range goal of the CTE Pilot Program is to have the assessment process transfer to other businesses and industries.

### **Pillar Team Members**

- Stephen McNew—Monroe County Intermediate School District — Co-Captain
- Gregory Pitoniak — Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA) — Co-Pillar Captain
- Julie Everly — Monroe Public Schools
- Stacey Goans — Michigan Works
- Patrick Lambrix —TWB
- Kojo Quartey — Monroe County Community College
- Julie Smith — Michigan Works
- Julie Soderberg — Gerdau
- Denise Teague — Monroe County Intermediate School District



- Greg Thomas — Fluid Equipment Development Company (FEDCO)
- Randy Daniels — Monroe County Community College



## || Grow Monroe As A Logistics Gateway

Tim Lake — Monroe County Business Development Corporation — Pillar Captain

### **Mission**

Promote the multimodal assets of Monroe County's location to site selectors and developers

### **Vision**

Robust business and industry growth throughout the region

### **2019 Goals**

The Grow Logistically Pillar was separated from the Grow Strategically Pillar mid-year. The focus of the Pillar is centered on Supply Chain Management on the I-75 corridor.

The Pillar is in the process of restructuring and recruiting new members and will continue to do so in 2020.

### ***Pillar Team Members***

- Tim Lake — Monroe County Business Development Corporation — Pillar Captain
- Stacy Demers — Daly Merritt Insurance
- Frank Wszelaki — University of Toledo



## SUMMARY

*"The effort will be a long process with setbacks; need to continue to push ahead."*

Quote from 2018 Monroe County Link Year End Report

The strength of the Link Plan rest with passion of over 60 community volunteers. In my first year as Project Manager, it has truly been amazing to work directly with people who care about the future of our community and who are selflessly giving of their time.

Although not all has progressed as planned, the challenges and obstacles that were encountered will only fuel innovation, creativity and more collaboration. I have no doubt our community will benefit as a result.

If you are passionate about contributing to the economic growth and overall success of Monroe County and would like to serve on one of pillar teams, please contact us. It has been very rewarding for me and I am confident you will have the same experience.

If I can be of assistance to help you learn more about the Link Plan, do not hesitate to contact me. You may view our website for additional information as well at <https://monroecountybdc.org/monroe-county-link/>.

A sincere congratulations to all volunteers for a job well done!

Regards,



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*Florence Buchanan, President and Founder of Customer Experience360 has over 28 years of experience in strategic marketing, general management, strategic planning, new product launches and executive leadership. She is a passionate leader who has guided cross-functional teams to deliver leading results, profitable growth, exceptional brand consideration and employee engagement by connecting customer perceptions with product and operational priorities.*

Certifications include: Women Business Enterprise (WBE), Woman Owned Small Business (WOSB), Net Promoter Score®(NPS), customer loyalty metric.



For questions or comments on the BDC or the Monroe County Link Plan, you may any of the staff members:

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