# INVESTING IN TALENT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH



2019 Annual Report







The Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce is powered by the energy, compassion and drive of our people – led by our mission to maximize economic and community growth through collaborative partnerships and promotion of the region.

This year's Annual Report, themed "Investing in Talent for Economic Growth" communicates the importance of available talent and a skilled workforce to achieving economic success, and how the Chamber is taking a holistic approach to talent development, as well as employing retention and attraction strategies. The Report also conveys progress the Chamber has made toward our goals after completing the second year of our three-year Strategic Plan. For example, in addition to our talent work, you'll see the role Chamber staff played in bringing private investment and jobs to Genesee County; how we are advocating for businesses, solving business challenges and presenting opportunities; and, what we are doing to positively influence perception of the area.

Throughout the Report, you will learn about the Chamber's work to continue Flint and Genesee County's forward momentum.

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN & CEO

# Economic Growth, Talent, Branding Among Strategic Priorities in 2019

As we reflected on our story in 2019, it was great to see the progress made toward our strategic goals. The team delivered programs and services that contributed to making Flint and Genesee County a great place to live, work, visit and start a business.

Last year, we continued to serve the interests of business by advancing economic growth and helping to build stronger communities. For example, our team facilitated economic development projects that totaled over \$26 million in private investment, and helped to create 368 new jobs. In addition, the Chamber partnered with General Motors to provide grants to 15 small businesses to help remove barriers to growth and extend revitalization efforts into Flint's neighborhoods.

We worked with our investors to build a strong business climate that helps our members prosper individually and collectively. We continued to be a resource that businesses can rely on to help solve their business challenges, make connections and have a voice in creating a stronger, more vibrant community. As a result, we're pleased to report that the Chamber welcomed 98 new members in 2019, bringing our total membership to 1,100 members; and, our member retention rate was 90 percent, which is above industry standard for chambers of commerce of similar size.

Employers have ranked attracting and retaining talent as one of their top challenges. As such, the Chamber focused on growing the talent pipeline through our education and training workforce readiness programs and economic development programs to ensure that businesses have the skilled workers they need. Last year, 378 teens graduated from TeenQuest, our pre-employment and leadership program. Nearly 420 teens were hired for summer employment through Summer Youth Initiative. In the K-12 realm, 722 students benefited from the YouthQuest afterschool program. This Report also delves further into how the Chamber helped to connect employers with talent resources and prepared students for college and experiences such as career exploration, apprenticeships, job fairs, and summer and permanent jobs.

We continued our work to improve the perception of Flint and Genesee County. The Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) helped to grow residents' and hospitality workers' knowledge about the region through the Certified Tourism Ambassador program, now 531 individuals strong. Through the revamped Be a Tourist in Your Hometown program, 312 individuals attended multiple customized, themed tours of local attractions. Also, through sales, marketing and public relations efforts, the CVB brought visitors to the region by booking meetings and events that resulted in nearly 9,500 overnight stays.

Our leadership role continued with the Forward Together planning group, which includes the City of Flint, Genesee County, the Chamber and a 24-person Steering Committee. We stayed focused on the challenging goal to create a countywide vision for economic vitality; and, we're pleased to report that the group closed the year with a draft economic vision statement and an action plan that will serve as a roadmap to long-term change for a more prosperous future in Genesee County. The plan will be finalized and rolled out this spring.

Also, a strategic priority for us in 2019 was to consider if our organization could benefit from new branding. Partnering with a marketing firm, we launched a research and discovery process to understand if different branding would increase the Chamber's efficiency and market effectiveness. We made good progress, ending the year with initial recommendations. Work continues this year and the final brand identity will be completed by spring 2020. At the same time, we are examining our governance structure to ensure it is effectively aligned with the results of the branding work.

All in all, 2019 was a very good year with many outstanding accomplishments that helped to build on the region's momentum. We invite you to read this Report to learn more about them and how the Chamber works for the betterment of business and the communities of Flint and Genesee County.

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors, we thank our members for your ongoing support and look forward to our continued partnership in 2020.

#### GARY HURAND

Board Chair President, Management Diversified, Inc.

#### TIM HERMAN

CEO Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TALENT & SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT



# GOAL 1 Be a relentless force for facilitating economic growth in Genesee County

Advancing economic growth in the region has several variables — not the least of which is talent. Businesses need talent to thrive.

This was one of the reasons why Peckham, Inc. chose Genesee County as the place to expand its apparel manufacturing operations, selecting a site on Linden Road in Flint Township where it will employ up to 200 sewing machine operators.

Peckham is one of seven private investment projects that the Chamber's Economic Development (ED) team facilitated in 2019. These new investments totaled more than \$26 million and helped to create 368 new jobs, which exceeded the goal of 330 jobs for the year.

Last year marked year two of the Chamber's three-year Strategic Plan; total private investment now stands at \$220,046,883 with 631 new jobs created over the two-year period. The ED team also ramped up its business attraction efforts, responding to 26 Requests For Proposals (RFPs) for business attraction prospects.

### Meeting Employers' Talent Needs & Overcoming Employment Barriers

The Chamber amplified its efforts to help connect job seekers to employers with openings. The ongoing initiative entails coordinating with a variety of talent service providers, including Michigan Works, the M.A.D.E. Institute, Re-Connections and Michigan Economic Development Corp.'s Community Ventures program, with a special emphasis on assisting people with overcoming barriers to employment.

As a result, the Chamber referred 217 individuals to employers with job openings last year. The Chamber also partnered with the Mass



Transportation Authority to host an "Employer Meet & Greet: Not Your Typical Job Fair." The midday event was held at the downtown Flint MTA bus terminal – a natural gathering spot – to build greater awareness of job opportunities in Genesee County.

#### **Building Capacity & Small Business Support**

The ED team works with entrepreneurs by helping to coordinate resources, identify opportunities and grow partnerships that will enable entrepreneurs and small businesses to be successful. The most recent example is the Moving Flint Forward Small Business Grants program, an initiative funded by General Motors that supports revitalization efforts across the city's neighborhoods by strengthening local businesses. Fifteen businesses were each awarded \$10,000 as part of the program, which is administered by the Flint & Genesee Chamber.

The Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) also provides small business support. The group

## **Private Investment Projects**

#### Peckham, Inc.

Peckham, Inc., a Lansing-based company, provides apparel manufacturing jobs and vocational services for people with disabilities. The Flint Township facility, formerly a furniture retail space, has more than 33,000 square feet of manufacturing space, with more than 8,000 square feet of flexible office and classroom space, including an internet café, training rooms and more.

#### Universal Coating

Universal Coating provides comprehensive, contract coating services to a variety of industries throughout

the Midwest. The company invested \$3 million to expand its Genesee Township facility by 25,000 square feet and add 30 new jobs, as it takes on new work with a major automotive company.

#### John P. O'Sullivan Distributing

John P. O'Sullivan Distributing distributes a variety of premium, craft, specialty and import beers to retail establishments, restaurants, and neighborhood taverns across Genesee, Saginaw, Midland, Bay, Shiawassee, Gratiot and Lapeer counties. The company invested \$2.7 million to expand its operations in Flint Township.

received \$10,000 small business grants

Flint businesses each



counseled 406 clients in the seven-county I-69 Thumb Region, including Genesee County, while helping companies secure nearly \$76 million in government contract value in 2019. A total of 1,612 government contracts were awarded to PTAC client companies.

## Forward Together

The city of Flint, Genesee County and Flint & Genesee Chamber partnered to launch a yearlong process to create a countywide vision for economic vitality, called "Forward Together: A shared vision for economic prosperity." The process – which includes gathering and compiling qualitative and quantitative data – has yielded a report that spells out the community's shared economic vision and the steps necessary for it to become a reality by 2040.

## The Vision:

In 2040, Genesee County is a top-five community in Michigan based on jobs, talent, livability, and equity.

#### **Ground Effects**

Grounds Effects, a Canadian-based Tier I automotive supplier, invested \$8 million to build a 100,000-square-foot facility in Flint Township near General Motors Flint Assembly. The company, which provides spray-on bed liners for pickup trucks and application technologies, will add 75 new jobs.

#### Barrett Donut Mixes, Inc.

Barrett Donut Mixes, Inc. provides donut mixes and ingredients to bakeries around the area. The Burton company is adding a new building and three new jobs.

#### **Genesee Polymers**

Genesee Polymers manufactures a broad range of silicone-based products for a number of industrial applications. The Burton-based company invested \$4 million to add a 30,000-square-foot warehouse and 10 new jobs.

#### 111 Leroy Place

This is a four-story, mixed-use building under construction at 111 S. LeRoy St. in downtown Fenton. The \$6.35 million project by Corlin Builders, Inc. will include commercial, office and residential space.

# STRENGTHENING BUSINESS



# GOAL 2

Build a strong business community that furthers the collective and individual success of businesses in Flint & Genesee

Members of the Flint & Genesee Chamber benefit from numerous programs, including a host of training and development workshops for individuals and Lead Now, a comprehensive leadership development program. Collectively, the programs are essential tools to building a skilled workforce in Flint & Genesee. These professional development offerings and capacity-building resources are available to Chamber members and their employees, and non-members alike, enriching workers and businesses in their pursuit of profitability and growth.

In 2019, nearly 1,200 individuals representing 277 unique employers attended 45 business training workshops offered by the Chamber. The number of workshops and attendance were 114 percent and 160 percent, respectively, of the goals set for the year. In addition, 14 professionals graduated in the fifth cohort of Lead Now, formerly known as Leadership NOW.

Membership held steady from year to year. The Chamber welcomed 98 new members, and closed the year with total membership at nearly 1,100 businesses and organizations. The member retention rate was 90 percent for 2019, above the industry standard of 85 percent for chambers of commerce of similar size.

The Chamber supported the interests of the business community in 2019 through its advocacy efforts. This included touch points with every level of government from presidential candidates to county commissioners and city council members. For example, Chamber members had an opportunity to have their voices heard by U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee by participating in business roundtables related to tax issues and on concerns affecting women small business owners. Also, during the budget negotiations over road funding in Lansing, the Chamber joined with other business organizations statewide to highlight the critical need to invest in improving our roads.

From an events perspective, the Chamber hosted more events with increased attendance in 2019 compared to the previous year, including After Hours Wine Down, Hot Dogs & Hot Rods and the annual Golf Outing. The number of events grew by 7.5 percent to 129 opportunities to connect; and attendance rose 27.7 percent to 9,007.

The Chamber also partnered with 22 new and existing businesses to host ribbon-cuttings and grand openings. Additionally, 17 exemplary businesses, community leaders and hospitality professionals were recognized for their significant contributions to the region's success at the 6th Annual Art of Achievement Awards. The awards and accompanying ceremony is a community-wide celebration of the accomplishments that are helping to move Flint & Genesee forward.

The organization continued to serve as a conduit, connecting different sectors of the local business community on a regular basis through monthly luncheons, special events and networking opportunities. From 2018 to 2019, average attendance at the monthly Chamber Luncheons grew by 19 percent.

Members also had opportunities to interact with other members by participating in Chamber committees such as Sales Lead Roundtable, Young Professionals, African American Advisory Council and Women's Leadership, which foster learning, networking, community engagement and sharing of expertise.







# Art of Achievement Awards







# EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

**MiCareer Quest** 

## **GOAL 3**

Support the success of our region's growing workforce with K-12 career preparation programs and adult talent development

Talent development and enrichment are lifelong endeavors. That's why the Flint & Genesee Chamber is committed to enhancing the region's growing workforce, beginning at the elementary school level on through secondary education and into early adulthood. Through the Chamber's continuum of educational services and programs, residents can access a wide variety of services that prepare them and the future workforce for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Last year, 722 students benefited from YouthQuest at Flint Community Schools, Carman-Ainsworth Schools and the International Academy of Flint. The afterschool enrichment program takes a holistic approach to learning in a way that is fun, engaging and experiential, and connected to the students' classroom instruction. This approach helps improve students' overall academic performance and builds employability skills, such as teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking and healthy decision-making.

The highly recognized program was honored with the Children's Champion Award for Special Resources for Children and Youth from Voices for Children, an advocacy organization and safe place for child victims of abuse or neglect. Also, YouthQuest was identified as a best-practice program and selected to present at two national education conferences (Beyond School Hours and Ready by 21). The program received a grant from the Close Up Foundation, a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization that fosters active and informed participation by all citizens, for eight middle school students and three staff to travel to Washington, D.C., to learn about citizen



## A Holistic Approach to Talent Development

activism. YouthQuest also expanded the YQ Biz Youth Entrepreneurship program in 2019 to include Shark Tank Pitch Competition judges from multiple local businesses and student internships for 7th-12th graders with SIPI and 100K ideas.

Students ages 14-19 are served by TeenQuest, an afterschool pre-employment and leadership training program designed to help teens get and keep a job. Last year, 378 teens graduated from TeenQuest and the program expanded to include New Standard Academy and Lake Fenton High School, bringing the total number of participating Genesee County high schools to 20.

Once students graduate from TeenQuest, they are eligible for summer employment through Summer Youth Initiative (SYI), which supports wage costs for 21 nonprofits throughout the county. Last year, 418 teens were hired through SYI. In addition, a partnership with the Genesee County Land Bank allowed the students to do beautification work at the former location of James Lumber on Fenton Road. The work was completed as part of SYI's Volunteer Service Day. The site, which would become a new Land Bank facility, provided the students with hands-on experience in bringing a vacant property back into productive use.

The most recent program in the Chamber's portfolio of workforce preparation programs is the Flint Promise. It is a last-dollar scholarship program for students who live in Flint and graduate from a high school or G.E.D. program located in Flint, and supported 186 students at Mott Community College, the University of Michigan-Flint and Kettering University.

By covering the cost of tuition after federal grants and other scholarships have been applied, Flint Promise allows eligible students to attend participating colleges for little to no cost. In doing so, the scholarship program provides increased access to and success in higher education for Flint's young people. It also represents a continuous investment in the city's future workforce. A special feature of the program is the success coaches assigned to the scholarship recipients. They offer guidance on a variety of resources, including transportation, employment, childcare, tutoring and other community support services. They can also serve as navigators through college departments and systems.

For adults new to the job market, returning to the job market or simply having trouble connecting to the job market, the Chamber offers Career Edge, a series of workshops that are designed to give participants the skills needed to succeed. New partnerships were initiated with the Genesee Intermediate School District, the Flint Housing Commission and New Paths, Inc., a local organization that provides individuals who are recovering from drug addiction with resources needed to help turn their lives around. In addition, the curriculum has been updated with materials and strategies for today's job seeker.

Developing a skilled workforce is essential to attract new businesses to Flint & Genesee and to support the expansion of existing businesses. Whether through K-12 initiatives, post-secondary partnerships or adult soft-skill training, the Chamber is working to meet workforce needs now and in the future.

YouthQuest, TeenQuest and Summer Youth Initiative are made possible through the generous support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.



# 378 TeenQuest 418 teens hired participated as graduates SYI employers





Photo Courtesy of Consumers Energy

GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK & PLAY



# GOAL 4

Improve the perception of Flint & Genesee to increase tourism and drive business in the region

Talent needs place – that is, a great place to live, work and play. The Flint & Genesee Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) on behalf of Genesee County, uses strategic marketing, public relations and sales efforts to improve the perception of the region and generate revenue for businesses and attractions.

The quality of our hospitality talent is a key driver of positive visitor experiences and thus perception. That's why the CVB works to strengthen community knowledge and capacity of residents and hospitality workers through the Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) program. The program bolsters customer service by providing more in-depth knowledge about history and attractions of the region. Since its launch five years ago, 531 hospitality employees, volunteers and residents have become Flint & Genesee CTAs, an average of slightly more than 100 annually. CTAs are equipped to provide historical perspective and valuable insights into the area. This helps to create a greater sense of community ownership from which a place thrives.

The Be A Tourist in Your Home Town event also seeks to improve residents' knowledge of the community and build community pride by allowing participants to experience the local attractions and hidden gems of Flint & Genesee. In 2019, the event was reimagined to offer themed, multiple one-day tour packages from May to October in place of a single event that allowed visitors to experience multiple venues and attractions in one day. Tours showcased Genesee County's craft beer scene, historical attractions and family-friendly venues. Feedback on the revamped event was very positive.

The CVB also improves perception of Flint & Genesee by bringing in visitors through sales and marketing efforts. One of the strategies that the team employed was to increase the diversity of bookings from the market sectors served to generate new business. Sports travel, dominated by amateur competitions, accounted for 59 percent of the group room nights contracted through the CVB. The sports market included support for the annual FireStix College Exposure Tournament, which brings hundreds of fast-pitch softball players to Grand Blanc. Other events that generated significant room nights included: the CANUSA Games, Michigan Amateur Hockey Association Bantam B State Playoffs, USL League Two soccer play and The Ally Challenge presented by McLaren. Meanwhile, corporations, associations, government and education markets made up 20.6 percent (from 7 percent); and the social, military, religious, fraternal markets totaled 20.4 percent (from 10 percent).

The CVB sales team attended 18 trade shows

and events, giving them the opportunity to engage with more than 4,415 potential clients and industry contacts. Leads generated at trade shows, expos, events and meetings resulted in securing nearly 9,500 room nights for groups in Genesee County in 2019.

The CVB also partnered with Crim Festival of Races to do targeted outreach to prospective runners from outside Genesee County to encourage extended stays for the race weekend in August. The initiative contributed to boosting registrations from outside the county, which helped produce more non-county runners in the race than in the prior two years.

Other partnerships advanced the CVB's efforts to promote Flint & Genesee. The CVB joined with Bishop Airport on a sales blitz to 42 Oakland County businesses with operations in the Charlotte, N.C., area. The goal was to complement the direct-flight air service available with lodging and other visitor information, as employees travel to and from their locations in the two states. The CVB also worked with Circle Michigan to host 25 group tour operators to familiarize them with the attractions in Flint & Genesee.

To reach new markets and attract prospective visitors, the CVB directed nearly 1,100 advertising placements in outdoor, print, video, social and digital media. Advertising within Michigan combined billboard and movie theater ads in select communities to feature unique attractions. Overall, more than 12.5 million prospective visitors were reached by the advertising, up by more than 2 million from 2018.

The CVB's dual focus on residents and visitors from outside of Flint & Genesee results in improved perception and visitor spending at local businesses and attractions.



## **Certified Tourism Ambassadors**







# FGCC IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



Investment Projects Facilitated



\$75,866,765
Total Government Contract Value
406 Active PTAC Clients
1,901 Counseling Sessions



186 Flint Promise Students 1,0333 Flint Promise Coaching Hours



**312** Be a Tourist in Your Hometown Participants

**531** Certified Tourism Ambassadors











Retention Rate

Generated Brand Touch Points through

**3.7 Million** Social Media Impressions and

12.5 Million Ad Impressions



# FLINT & GENESEE ECONOMY AT-A-GLANCE

Genesee County is located in mid-Michigan and is one of the state's 83 counties. It is home to 405,135 residents, 7,265 businesses and a labor force of 184,212 people. The county is also the regional hub of commerce, culture, employment and education. Flint is the largest city in the county with an estimated population of 95,107\*.

\*Estimate based on continuation of 10-year trend

#### Employment

Total employment for Flint and Genesee County was 175,187 people in 2019, up slightly (1.3 percent) from 2018.

#### Unemployment

The unemployment rate for 2019 was 4.89 percent, essentially flat compared to 4.9 percent in 2018.

Source: EMSI and U.S. Census Bureau







#### Top 5 Industries – By Employment



# THANKYOU TO OUR GENEROUS 2019 FUNDERS

Burroughs Memorial Trust Charles Stewart Mott Foundation Child Welfare Society Close Up Foundation Community Foundation of Greater Flint Defense Logistics Agency General Motors Genesee-Lapeer-Shiawassee Region 5 (GLS Region V) Greater Flint Educational Consortium Huntington Bank J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation Jennings Memorial Foundation Kiwanis Club of Flint

Martha Merkley Youth Charitable Trust

Michigan Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Ruth Mott Fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Flint

Stephanie Pasternack

Stella & Frederick Loeb Charitable Trust

The Whiting Foundation

United Way of Genesee County

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Chamber of Commerce - Convention & Visitors Bureau

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