

2021 Annual Report



Reimagined.
Reinvented.
Reset.

A Message from the CEO

As I reflect on 2021, there's no denying the challenges we faced throughout the year – as communities, as individuals, businesses and organizations, and as a nation.

Yet, amid the persistence of the pandemic, talent shortages, supply chain disruptions, inflation - among other issues - our team pushed forward, proved their resilience, and had significant accomplishments.

We stayed focused on innovation and continued to do what it took to keep the economic engine going in Flint & Genesee. Our team provided programs and services that helped local businesses mitigate the impact of COVID and recover in a variety of ways, including talent support, business coaching and grants. Throughout the year, the Group awarded nearly \$1.7 million in grants to Genesee County businesses. We also closed seven business development projects that resulted in nearly \$123 million of private investment and created 773 jobs. Over 2,200 Flint students received YouthQuest programming, both virtually and in-person and 218 students were hired for summer jobs through Summer Youth Initiative and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. We assisted our hospitality partners in traditional and non-traditional ways, and despite the starts and stops in travel, our team booked contracts for over 5,600 room nights.

We also took on a major initiative to rebrand the organization from the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce to Flint & Genesee Group, now marketing our programs and services through four divisions as we work to achieve greater economic prosperity and quality of life in Genesee County. Not only did we gain a new name, identity and a more clearly defined organization structure, the rebrand helps us communicate with our audiences more effectively - who we are, our breadth of services and how to connect with the appropriate arm of the organization. As part of this initiative, we also restructured our boards to better align with the new branding and ensure board and organizational effectiveness.

A key priority for the Group is to have a positive, inclusive and productive culture. To help us achieve this, we sharpened our focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in 2021.

Internally, we underwent a third-party assessment of our processes and practices to give us a baseline on our strengths and where there is room for improvement. Through a collaborative process - that included our employees - we developed our DEI Statement, which serves as the foundation of our organization's commitment and aligns with our values. We also assembled a group of leaders to form a DEI Committee. They are responsible for driving the work, including developing an action plan that outlines

our goals and objectives, and how we plan to achieve them in a meaningful and measurable way. These strategic activities took place among many other efforts.

Externally, to help address some of the racial inequities in our region, we actively participated in the Greater Flint Task Force on Racial Inequities with community and civic leaders, and I chair the Business, Banking and Workforce Development Subcommittee. This forum allows us to help build relationships and bring equitable access to financial capital, business grants, business support services and financial instruments to minority owners and entrepreneurs. In addition, we stood with other businesses on business and social issues; and, we supported our African American Advisory Committee as they refined their mission and developed an agenda to support the growth of Black-owned businesses in Genesee County.

In all, 2021 was a good year. While navigating the uncertainty driven by the pandemic and addressing the needs of our customers, we reinvented our organization, which has allowed us to reset our culture, our way of working, the services we provide and our future. We have an excellent team here at the Flint & Genesee Group and we are excited about the opportunities ahead.

I encourage you to read this Report to learn more details about what the teams have accomplished to keep the momentum going in Flint & Genesee.

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



Tim Herman
CEO, Flint & Genesee Group



A photograph of two men shaking hands on a stage. The man on the left is wearing a blue suit and is seen from the side. The man on the right is wearing a grey suit, glasses, and is smiling while holding a small trophy. The background is a dark blue curtain. In the foreground, there is a blue sequined tablecloth and a wooden chair. On the far left, there are four vertical bars in cyan, lime green, magenta, and orange.

FLINT & GENESEE GROUP

Developing business, talent and place.

In 2021, Flint & Genesee Group (Group) stayed focused on the needs of its stakeholders, providing programs, services and resources that helped the organization manage the effects of COVID, and advance their goals. At the same time, Group leadership looked inwardly to determine what was needed to increase the organization's efficiency and effectiveness, be more inclusive and prepared for what's to come. It was a reset year for the organization.

A Strategic Roadmap

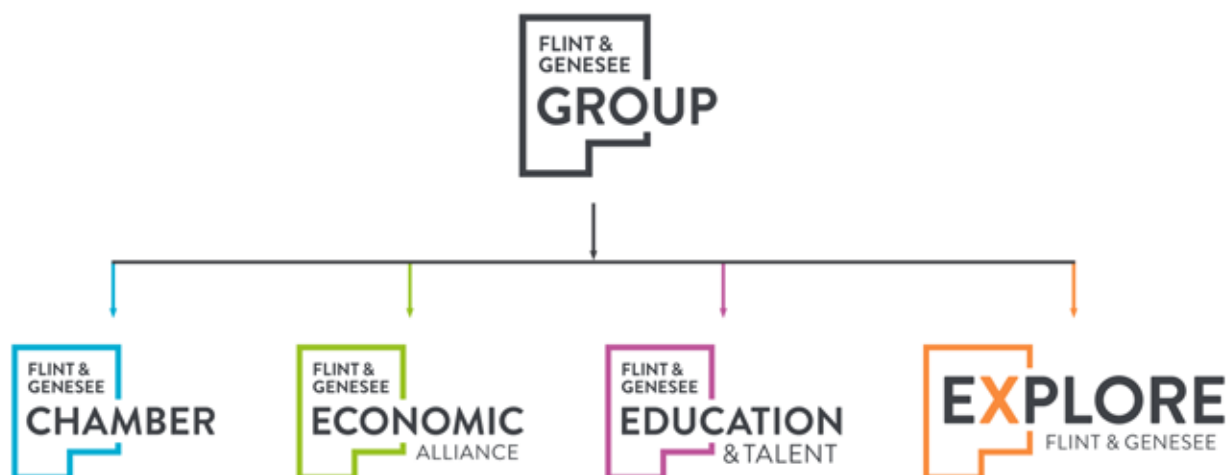
As the Flint & Genesee community continued to persevere and traverse the impacts of the COVID pandemic, the Group continued to support the region through its commitment to developing business, talent and place, working collaboratively with community partners to improve the quality of life for residents and position the region as a choice destination for businesses, residents and visitors alike. With this in mind, the organization developed its 2021-23 Strategic Plan, a roadmap for executing our internal and external work over the next three years.

Our Rebrand

The Group underwent a major rebrand to improve organizational efficiencies and more effectively reflect what we offer and to whom. After a great deal of research and planning, the organization adopted a new brand architecture built on a parent brand and four sub-brands, or divisions.

Effective April 1, the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce became Flint & Genesee Group, focused on improving the economic success of Genesee County and its residents. The organization also sets the strategic infrastructure that connects to the divisions through a shared mission, vision and values, and markets a broad range of services.

Our four divisions are: Flint & Genesee Chamber, responsible for helping small businesses grow their bottom line; Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance, responsible for business retention and attraction, private investment and jobs in Genesee County; Flint & Genesee Education & Talent, which prepares youth and adults for academic and career success; and Explore Flint & Genesee, responsible for promoting the region and increasing tourism in Genesee County.



The rebrand was the right move made at the right time. Not only for the efficiencies it is creating for the organization, but it also has benefits for our stakeholders, our partners and the community.

For one, the Group now has a brand that more clearly communicates our lanes of work and helps to differentiate the Group in the marketplace. Also, it is clearer how to access different services within the organization; and, more importantly, it allows a market-driven approach and has helped with communicating our breadth of services to our audiences, enhancing our value proposition.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

In 2021, we renewed our focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to ensure Flint & Genesee Group embraces and celebrates diversity in its many forms. Our leadership team aims to have an organization where employees feel valued, heard and included; and are treated fairly with dignity and respect.

Oversight of DEI begins at the highest level of the organization with the CEO and Board of Directors and extends throughout the enterprise. In addition, a DEI Committee was established, which is comprised of a diverse group of leaders. The Committee is responsible for driving the work that ensures that the Group's decision-making reflects and respects diversity of all types, supports diversity within our organization and builds a culture that enhances, values and capitalizes on the diversity of our workforce. Also, the Committee – with input from employees – created a DEI Statement, which affirms the organization's commitment to DEI.

Work also began on a DEI Action Plan that is organized around four strategic categories: Employment Practices, Policies and Culture, Supplier Diversity, and Community Engagement and Influence. Our goals are augmented by actionable tactics that provide a path forward for the organization. Internally, the plan further integrates DEI into our talent recruitment, training and career development programs, and it calls on leaders at all levels of the organization to develop DEI operational plans.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) were also established last year. Working in partnership with the internal Committee on Culture & Collaboration, the employee-led ERGs provide forums for staff members to join together on common interests, backgrounds or demographics. They also influence new policies that further inclusiveness in the workplace and are in alignment with the Group's mission, values and goals.

Our commitment also extends to ensuring the Group's advisory committees and governing bodies not only guide the work that we do, but also that we do it responsibly with DEI in mind. To that end, guiding principles were developed to provide board members and committee members with a set of expectations for the way the bodies would be composed and conducted, and hold the organization accountable.

Additionally, our commitment to DEI extends beyond the organization's walls and encompasses working with our partners to create a more racially-just community. One that offers equitable opportunities and outcomes for businesses and individuals. For example, we stood with other businesses to call for action and change on business and social issues, including legislation to expand Michigan's civil rights law by including protection against discrimination for LGBTQ people, and hosting a Business Case for Race Roundtable with local businesses. We also participated on task forces and committees that aim to reduce racial inequities and connect minority owned businesses to financial capital and other business support resources.

Retaining and Attracting Talent

In 2021, the worker shortage continued to rank among top concerns for employers across the country, state of Michigan and Genesee County. While the need to retain and attract talent to our region has been on our radar, the challenges related to the pandemic and people migrating out of the county, prompted the organization to put more resources into assisting employers with meeting their workforce needs. The organization created a core function – at the enterprise level – that focuses internally on employee and leadership training and development, and externally, on talent retention and attraction strategies.

We launched a new program called the Flintern Experience, a professional development series that aimed to help college students make the most of their summer internships, with local employers in Genesee County. The goal of the program is to get students thinking

about Flint & Genesee as a place to start and grow their careers after graduating from college, and internships play an important role in that effort. The pilot program gave 15 in-person and virtual interns the opportunity to experience what makes Flint & Genesee a desirable place to live, work and visit, and connect to local employers, ultimately to build a pipeline of talent prospects.

The Group and divisions worked collaboratively to host one of the largest job fairs in Genesee County, Flint & Genesee Career Expo, which featured over 120 companies, with over 1,900 jobs available, and 400+ job seekers attending the event. They also co-hosted other job fairs such as the Genesee County Manufacturing Career Fair and the Genesee County Hospitality Career Fair, which yielded potential candidates for many job openings.



A man and a woman are standing in a bakery, holding 'Our Town' gift cards. The man is wearing a red t-shirt, a white baseball cap, and a black face mask with white polka dots. The woman is wearing a blue t-shirt, glasses, and a black face mask with a floral pattern. They are both smiling. The background shows shelves filled with various breads and pastries. A sign on the wall reads 'BE LOOSE AND HAVE FUN TAKE PHENOMENAL BREADS'. A sign on a shelf reads 'EXTREME CINNAMON CHIP SWIRL'. The gift cards they are holding are white with a blue and green design. They feature the 'Our Town' logo, which includes a heart and a location pin. The text on the cards says 'OUR TOWN GIFT CARD', 'STARTING APRIL 9, 2021', 'For every gift card you purchase at our business, you will receive a second gift card of equal value for FREE (up to \$50)!', 'Available for a limited time - don't wait!', and 'For more information or additional participating businesses: flintandgenesees.org/ourtown'.

STRENGTHENING BUSINESS

*Further the individual and collective success of small businesses
in Flint & Genesee to build a stronger local economy.*

Facilitating business connections and professional networking among members is a core mission of Flint & Genesee Chamber. Typically, these interactions occur in face-to-face settings, such as monthly luncheons, after-hours events and professional development workshops.

However, the ongoing pandemic was a significant obstacle in hosting such events in the first half of 2021. As a result, the public health situation and the uncertain business climate understandably caused some members to curtail their involvement with the Chamber.

But the Chamber was still able to continue serving its nearly 1,000 members in unique and valued ways, despite not being able to gather in person. The organization made strategic use of virtual networking while offering enhanced training and development programs and delivering technical assistance with grants and federal funding.

The Chamber, which hired a new executive director in March, also sought and compiled input from members on their challenges as well as what they were optimistic about for the remainder of the year. By mid-year when safety protocols had been relaxed as COVID cases dropped and vaccination rates rose, membership events and services transitioned back from virtual to in-person events, including the newly created Connect Over Coffee, an informal gathering for businesses to reconnect after the drought in networking activities. Members enthusiastically took advantage of opportunities to attend in-person Chamber events. The gatherings reminded members of the strength and camaraderie of our business community and provided a sense of hope that conditions were beginning to return to normal.

Sales Lead Roundtable Connection: INC Systems & Great Lakes Family Dentistry



^ Each month, the Sales Lead Roundtable meets to network and share leads in a non-competitive atmosphere. For Aaron Hamp of INC Systems, his membership in the Chamber committee has allowed him to make many important business connections.

Visit our 2021 Annual Report website to hear him describe how it led to an ongoing contract with Great Lakes Family Dentistry in Burton.

■ annualreport.FlintandGenesee.org/strengthening-business



^ 2021 Art of Achievement Awards



^ Our Town Gift Card Program participants.



^ Chamber members attend Connect over Coffee in May 2021.

COVID Recovery Response

To assist member merchants in generating foot traffic at their establishments, the Chamber partnered with Consumers Energy on the Our Town Gift Card Program in February, April and November. Member businesses were able to sell gift cards and provide purchasers with an additional one of equal value. In total, Consumers provided \$125,000 to support the program in 2021. This resulted in nearly \$250,000 of revenue spread across more than 40 Chamber business members.

The Chamber worked with the Small Business Administration to plan and provide guidance regarding how to apply for the COVID relief programs targeted to local restaurants. The division also partnered with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, General Motors and Dr. Bobby Mukkamala to host a webinar to provide employers with information and ideas to encourage their employees to receive the COVID vaccine.

Business Training

The Group rolled out, once again, the Business Training Catalog to members of the business community, which offered 23 workshop opportunities for 2021. In addition, virtual offerings introduced in 2020 were carried over into 2021. The virtual options even increased out-county participation in business training programming.

Workshops were offered to both our membership base and community at-large. More than 610 program attendees participated in 23 professional development workshops last year. It is evident that community members continue to turn to the Group and Chamber for their personal and professional developmental needs.

Programming was planned using feedback from participants to ensure training was relevant to the expectations and needs. The feedback also helped determine the appropriate length of training offerings and which presenters were favored. Additionally, the survey feedback found that 98 percent of participants were likely to recommend a Group training and development opportunity to a friend or colleague.

In September 2021, the Group kicked off its seventh cohort with nine participants graduating from the yearlong Lead Now Flint & Genesee leadership development program. The program now runs concurrently with the school year and will wrap up late spring 2022. Delaying the kick-off of the 2021 cohort has allowed participants to come back together in person for the 2021/2022 program year.

Member & Community Recognition

To close out the year, the annual Art of Achievement Awards returned in November 2021 to honor 16 exemplary businesses, community leaders and hospitality professionals for their significant contributions to the region's success in 2021. The Chamber partnered with Explore Flint & Genesee to host more than 400 people at the historic Capitol Theatre – with COVID safety protocols in place – for the awards ceremony, which returned after a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic.

Learn more about the benefits of being a Flint & Genesee Chamber member

■ [FlintandGenesee.org/chamber](https://flintandgenesee.org/chamber)

A woman wearing a blue lab coat, safety glasses, and a white hairnet is working on a green circuit board in a factory setting. She is using a pair of orange-handled pliers. The background shows industrial equipment and a conveyor belt. The image is overlaid with a green tint and several vertical bars in blue, green, purple, and orange on the left side.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TALENT & SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Grow, retain and attract businesses to Genesee County by connecting them to resources needed to advance the prosperity of local residents.

The Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance completed a remarkable year in 2021, closing seven business development projects that resulted in \$123 million of private investment and the creation of 773 jobs. In fact, the division achieved 50.9 percent of its three-year goal for securing new private investment in one year and achieved 51.5 percent of its job-growth target for the same period.

The seven projects are:

- ✓ **PPG**, a global supplier of paints, coatings, optical products and specialty materials, expanding its location in Flint to accommodate two additional batch ovens.
- ✓ **NorthGate**, a provider of supply chain management, expanding into an existing facility in Burton to handle logistics associated with packaging, sorting and distribution of parts to Ford Motor Co.
- ✓ **Magna Electronics**, a Tier 1 automotive supplier, added new machinery at its Grand Blanc Township facility to deliver advanced lighting systems to its automotive customers.
- ✓ **Goyette Mechanical Co.**, a leader in plumbing, heating, cooling and electrical sales, expanding its existing headquarters into a high-profile, state-of-the-art office and training facility on a refreshed campus site in Flint.
- ✓ **DAG Technologies**, a market leader in decorative wheel trim for the auto industry, establishing a new manufacturing facility at an existing building in Grand Blanc Township, where it will focus on assembly, paint and assemble, and injection molding.
- ✓ **Allegiant Travel Co.**, a commercial airline, establishing a base of operations, including three Airbus A320 aircraft and flight and ground crews, at Bishop International Airport.
- ✓ **HIROTEC**, a global Tier 1 automotive supplier specializing in the production of body-in-white closures, exhaust systems, and closure manufacturing equipment, acquired 200,000-square-feet of manufacturing space in the former Delphi East site on north Center Road in Flint.



Impact of COVID and Relief Accomplishments

Despite the successes of the new investment projects, the ongoing pandemic remained a challenge for the Economic Alliance team in 2021. Working remotely and travel restrictions imposed to protect public health made it difficult to network and further relationships with clients and site selectors. The emergence of new COVID variants that led to the tightening of safety protocols also infused the business climate with an air of unpredictability.

However, there continued to be significant interest in the Flint & Genesee region, as the division submitted available sites/land in response to 65 Requests for Proposals. Economic Alliance's effective use of remote-conferencing technologies (i.e., Zoom and Microsoft Teams) allowed the division to meet with more site selectors and prospective attraction clients than in previous years.

Meanwhile, the division administered the Michigan Survival Grant for Region 6 in partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corp. and awarded \$4.1 million to 291 companies across the seven-county region; of that, \$1.4 million was awarded to 96 Genesee County companies.

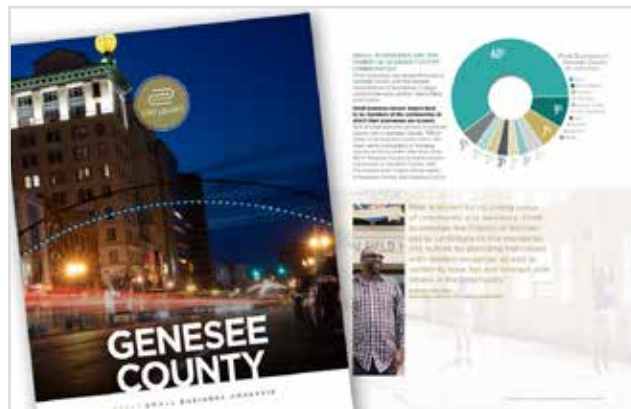
Small Business Development & Talent Connection Services

In 2021, the division increased its focus on strengthening the support system for Genesee County small businesses. The work was driven, in part, by the findings of the Genesee County Business Landscape Survey, commissioned by Economic Alliance in the spring of 2021. The study of 350 small businesses, conducted by the Ann Arbor-based research firm EntryPoint, provided great insight into the needs and challenges of the local small business community.

A chief concern identified was the need to improve access to capital and/or provide direct financial support to help locally owned and operated enterprises succeed. Also cited was the importance of increasing the visibility of Flint & Genesee businesses through target marketing or “shop local” initiatives. In addition, the survey data showed that nearly 50 percent of area small businesses are less than five years old and the majority under 10 years. Therefore, it became apparent that helping small businesses survive beyond the “startup years” was essential to build a resilient and vibrant business community.

This led to the launch of the Small Business Help Desk, a formalized online platform for providing personal, private, no cost small business coaching. The Small Business Help Desk was integral to conducting more than 420 meetings with entrepreneurs and small business owners in 2021. Delivering support to small businesses included a renewed partnership with General Motors for another round of the Moving Flint Forward grant program, which awarded \$150,000 to 15 Flint-based businesses. The Economic Alliance also closed two Genesee County Economic Development Corp. Revolving Loan Fund loans resulting in three jobs created and \$75,000 invested; and supported two entrepreneurs in securing a total of \$13,000 in Kiva loans.

Talent continued to be a significant concern in 2021 for Flint & Genesee businesses across nearly all industry sectors. The division’s Talent Connection Services worked with area employers to help connect job seekers with to 603 open job opportunities. They also joined with community partners as well as allied divisions of Flint & Genesee Group to co-host virtual and in-person career fairs, including:



^ Results from the Genesee County Business Landscape Survey were published in the Genesee County Small Business Analysis.



^ The virtual **Genesee County Manufacturing Career Fair**, featuring 18 employers, 6 resources providers and 80 job seekers; more than 200 one-to-one conversations between employers and job seekers conducted.



^ Co-hosted with Explore Flint & Genesee a virtual **Genesee County Hospitality Career Fair** for area hotels.



^ Co-hosted, with Explore Flint & Genesee, Flint & Genesee Chamber and Flint & Genesee Education & Talent, the **Flint & Genesee Career Expo**; more than 120 companies participated with over 1,900 jobs available and over 400 job seekers.

Moving Flint Forward with Sal's Gym



< In 2021, General Motors and the Flint & Genesee Group awarded grants to 15 small businesses in Flint. Among those recipients was Sal's Gym Flint.

Visit our 2021 Annual Report website to hear husband-and-wife duo Jacob and Ashleigh Saldaña share a bit about their business' history and the impact of the Moving Flint Forward Small Business Grant Program.

■ annualreport.FlintandGenesee.org/economic-development

Regional/Statewide Collaboration

Economic Alliance's collaborations regionally and statewide continued to expand in 2021. This included ongoing work on Forward Together: A Shared Vision for Economic Prosperity, an initiative designed to make Genesee County a top-five community in Michigan on the basis of jobs, talent, livability and equity by 2040. Other involvements include:

- ✓ Region 6 representative on the Michigan Economic Development Corp.'s Collaborative Development Council
- ✓ Representing Genesee County on Detroit Regional Partnership's Partner Council, an 11-county consortium, and the Center for Automotive Research Automotive Communities Partnership
- ✓ Serving on the University of Michigan-Flint's Citizen Advisory Council and Kettering University's School of Management Industry Advisory Council.

Government Contracting (PTAC)

The Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), a program of Economic Alliance, continued its support of small businesses. The group facilitated more than \$82.5 million in federal, state, local and subcontracting opportunities for clients throughout Region 6 during DLA fiscal year.

PTAC made significant strides toward achievement of all program DLA goals with 147 new clients, delivering 1,697 counseling hours and hosting 49 events. It hosted a virtual "Meet the Buyer" event with 85 companies that were represented with 12 buyers in attendance.

PTAC also partnered with General Dynamics, the Michigan Small Business Development Center and Economic Development Alliance of St Clair County on a two-part subcontracting workshop that resulted in greater client participation into General Dynamics supply chain.

Visit Flint & Genesee Economic Alliance online to learn more about doing business in Flint & Genesee

■ DevelopFlintandGenesee.org



EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Promote lifelong educational and economic empowerment of Flint & Genesee residents by reducing barriers to participate in high-quality, out-of-school-time spaces and local workforce training programs.

YouthQuest

YouthQuest continued to provide comprehensive and highly engaging afterschool programming to K-12 students in the Flint area. Despite building closures due to COVID, YouthQuest served 2,222 local students last year. YouthQuest also grew from 13 sites to 15 by partnering with Flint Cultural Center Academy and Bendle Public Schools. It now serves in all Flint Community School buildings, International Academy of Flint, Flint Cultural Center Academy and South Bendle Elementary.

YouthQuest continued to increase access to afterschool programming by partnering with 21stCentEd TechTrep to provide online STEM programming. This gave students who were not able to join programs in person the opportunity to connect online.

In addition to providing extended-learning opportunities to students, YouthQuest helped to support the basic needs of families by collaborating with other community organizations like the Flint Community Education Initiative and Flint Fresh to provide over 4,000 care packages and 450 school supply kits to local families.

Thanks to a partnership with United Way of Genesee County, General Motors and On the Move, YouthQuest provided free driver's education to Flint-area students. The driver's ed course gave students a deep-dive into driver's safety through a workshop that included a Q&A with first responders, engaging virtual games and a tutorial on vehicle maintenance.

Despite COVID building closures, YouthQuest was able to continue the YQ Biz Youth Entrepreneurship program by using a hybrid model that included virtual learning sessions, a virtual marketplace and in-person market days at the Flint Farmers' Market. The marketplace venture brought in \$5,037 in sales that went directly to the students. In addition to enjoying some of the revenue, the young entrepreneurs also reinvested dollars into their businesses.

YouthQuest also partnered with TeenQuest, Michigan State University 4H and the Genesee County Commissioners' Office to pilot a Citizen's Academy that included a Youth In Action Day at the County Administration Building and a Genesee County Youth Council. The Citizen's Academy is a civic engagement program that gives local youth the opportunity to learn about government at the county level as well as connect with local legislators.

Thanks to a ReCAST grant from the City of Flint, YouthQuest conducted a program called Making Money Moves that combined grantmaking with service learning. Students worked in small groups to develop solutions to problems in their local community. Students then turned their solutions into service-learning projects and wrote mini-grants to help fund them. In 2021, planning began on projects such as installing porch lights for senior citizens, distributing self-care kits to the homeless, a neighborhood clean-up and playground repairs at Holmes STEM Academy.

YouthQuest showcased its innovative programming at both state and national level conferences, including the Association of Chamber Executives and the National Afterschool Alliance Conference.



^ Making Money Moves



^ YouthQuest Summer on the Road



^ Summer Youth Employment Program
teens enjoy outdoor recreation activities

TeenQuest/Summer Youth Initiative

TeenQuest graduated 179 students in the 2020-21 program year via a virtual ceremony. The virtual platform was more effective than the previous year, with students able to transition seamlessly when having to revert to remote learning due to rising COVID cases. In addition, facilitators were all trained for the new virtual approach, using virtual technologies.

Despite COVID, TeenQuest developed new relationships and retained existing partnerships with area nonprofits and for-profits through Summer Youth Initiative (SYI) employment opportunities with 24 organizations providing summer programs. SYI Job Fair interviews were conducted virtually between hiring agencies and SYI students. The lingering pandemic slowed student job prospects with for-profit organizations but expanding opportunities in the region remains a key area of focus in the current year. Additionally, 218 students were employed through SYI with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.



< After completing the TeenQuest pre-employment program, Marcell Simmons snagged a summer job with Kayak Flint through Summer Youth Initiative (SYI).

Visit our 2021 Annual Report website to hear him talk about the important work experience he's gotten through SYI and Kayak Flint and how that's prepared him for his future.

■ annualreport.FlintandGenesee.org/education-workforce

Flint Promise & Career Edge

At the close of 2021, there were 101 students enrolled in local colleges and universities using the Flint Promise Scholarship, which covers the cost of tuition after federal grants and other scholarships have been applied. Communication and coordination between the Education & Talent Flint Promise team and the higher education partners, helped identify opportunities for students to stay in school, despite a challenging environment. Two Mott Community College students transferred to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor; one MCC student transferred to Central Michigan University; and nine MCC students transferred to UM-Flint to complete bachelor's degrees. Four of the students that transferred had completed associate degrees at MCC.

Career Edge, a series of workshops designed to help adults prepare for the job market, had 80 people participate in AmeriCorps workshops provided through United Way. The program offered resume writing, application preparation and interview support/training for the Flint & Genesee Virtual Hospitality Job Fair in March. Career Edge repeated the offering for young adults at the Genesee County Career Expo in September. In addition, classes on career soft skills were offered during the day at Hamady, Bendle, Swartz Creek, Kearsley and Linden in the 2020-2021 school year.

Learn more about the Flint & Genesee Education & Talent programs

■ FlintandGenesee.org/youth-programs



GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK & PLAY

*Increase tourism and drive economic impact in the region
through strategic marketing, public relations and sales.*

The success of an organization dedicated to promoting travel and tourism has traditionally been measured by overnight room stays – known in industry jargon as “heads in beds” – or increased hotel revenue. However, with the lingering effects of the pandemic in 2021, it became clear that local convention and visitors’ bureaus had an opportunity and responsibility to be more than revenue generators.

Such was the case in 2021 for Explore Flint & Genesee (CVB), which promotes the region and enhances tourism. As travel slowly gained momentum in 2021 over the previous year, the CVB team seized the opportunity to become more of a connection point in non-traditional ways for area lodging and attraction venues as the industry grappled with market instability (due to new COVID variants and the resulting economic fallout) and the shifting needs of stakeholders.

Still, Genesee County hotels achieved an average occupancy rate (AOR) of 52.7 percent, approaching the pre-pandemic rate of 57.9 percent in 2019. (AOR dipped to 46.6 percent in 2020.) Most notable in 2021 were increases in Average Daily Rate and total hotel revenue that surpassed the numbers reported in 2019 – \$80.91 and \$40.2 million compared to \$75.95 and \$37.7 million, respectively. Revenue increases in 2021 are likely the result of rescheduled and new events combined in the social and sports markets. Meetings, weddings, tournaments and conferences that could not be held in 2020 were moved to 2021 and 2022.

In 2021, the CVB team secured contracts for 5,664 room nights in Genesee County, exceeding its goal of 4,000.

Collaboration & Partnerships

Like many industry sectors, Genesee County hotels were faced with staffing challenges that made it difficult to meet increasing business demands. When hotel partners reached out for support, the CVB worked with its partner divisions at Flint & Genesee Group to host a hospitality job fair last March.

Working with Bishop International Airport, the CVB conducted familiarization tours to highlight community assets for Allegiant Airlines, which was considering adding a hub at the airport. The tours were a great success and helpful in persuading Allegiant to invest \$75 million to establish a base of operations at Bishop, potentially creating at least 89 high-wage jobs. Allegiant Airlines currently represents 63 percent of Bishop’s airline business.

The CVB also worked with county hotels, the Metro Police Authority and other law enforcement agencies to ensure a safe environment for overnight guests. The partnership was started to connect area hotels with law enforcement to ensure hotel staff were comfortable calling for help on matters such as credit card fraud or suspected human trafficking situations. The CVB convened six municipalities and 10 hotel properties to facilitate communication and on-site safety training.

After nearly a 20-year absence, the Gus Macker 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament returned to Flint in 2021. In partnership with the Sylvester Broome Empowerment Village, Explore Flint & Genesee helped to secure a three-year-commitment with the Gus Macker franchise, returning the world’s largest 3-on-3 traveling basketball tournament to Flint & Genesee. The 2021 tournament hosted 137 teams with 549 players from Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Virginia, Las Vegas and Oregon. The two-day event attracted nearly 1,500 individuals each day.

Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, area hotels have struggled to maintain revenue. To retain one of Genesee County’s largest sporting events while saving hotels from booking fees, the CVB created a housing bureau to coordinate group booking for the Firestix College Exposure Tournament. By hosting the housing bureau in-house, the division saved each hotel 17 percent per room in processing fees, allowing them to book multiple group blocks without third-party fees.





^ Allegiant Airlines and community officials cut the ribbon on Allegiant's new hub at Bishop International Airport.



^ Flint's Gus Macker 3-on-3 Basketball committee.
Photo courtesy of Gus Macker-Flint



^ Firestix College Exposure Tournament participants play at Creasey Bicentennial Park.



^ Apple picking at Spicer's Orchard.

Promotion of the Region

Public relations and social media efforts continued to play a vital role for the CVB's work in 2021, with Explore Flint & Genesee social media resonating with existing and new audiences.

Social media content focused initially on outdoor adventures and supporting local businesses. Then, as the year progressed, content featured strong visuals of the region's local downtowns, parks and attractions. This proved to be successful on many occasions, with images like that of downtown Davison resulting in over 500 engagements on Facebook. Seasonal content was also well received, especially posts related to local farms and orchards in the fall and outdoor adventures in early winter.

Blog posts featured local attractions and events, promoting a sense of place. Some of the most successful blog posts in the second half of the year centered around the culture of Flint & Genesee, including features on Hispanic-owned businesses and Black-owned businesses, attractions including apple orchards and restaurants, and holiday-based events around the Fourth of July and Halloween.

Meanwhile, traditional media coverage advanced a positive narrative of the region. News coverage included: promotion of the Vehicle City Gridiron Classic at Atwood Stadium; Chevy Commons being designated Genesee County's state park; the announcement of Allegiant Air establishing a hub at Bishop Airport; the Flint Farmers' Market competing to be named one of the 10 Best in the US; and Explore Flint & Genesee's partnership with the MI Awesome Mitten campaign, which showcased some of Genesee County's attractions to prospective visitors, including kayaking the Flint River National Water Trail, Crossroads Village and For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum.

Visit Explore Flint & Genesee online to discover things to do in Flint & Genesee

■ ExploreFlintandGenesee.org



^ Ice climbing at Peabody Ice Climbing Club.

Flint & Genesee Group Impact by the Numbers



Nearly
\$130M
in private investment
(Including grants/loan
programs)
Of that, **7** business
development projects
spurred **\$123M** in
investment



733
jobs created



603
connections made
between employers and
job seekers



530
companies impacted
through retention and
growth efforts
This includes **422**
meetings through Small
Business Help Desk



422
Small Business Help
Desk meetings with
entrepreneurs and small
business owners



615
participants in
23 professional
development
workshops; **114**
employers represented



1,724
PTAC counseling hours;
317 clients/companies
counseled by PTAC



3,377
total PTAC contracts
awarded; **\$82.5M** total
PTAC contracts value



72
new Chamber members



241
average number of
students served by
YouthQuest each
month



2,222
students received
YouthQuest
programming



4,000+
care packages and
450 school supply
kits distributed to
YouthQuest students
and families



2
new YouthQuest sites
added



179
graduates of TeenQuest



101
students utilized
the Flint Promise
Scholarship



9
Lead Now participants



218
students employed
through SYI/MDNR



5,664
room nights in Genesee
County secured for
hotels



21%
web traffic increase
over 2020 (Explore
Flint & Genesee)



Nearly
\$250,000
of revenue generated
by 40+ Chamber
business members
through Consumers
Energy-sponsored Our
Town Gift Card Match
Program



\$150,000
awarded to **15** Flint-
based small businesses
through GM-funded
Moving Flint Forward
grant program



\$4.1M
awarded to **291** small
businesses in Region 6
through administration
of the MEDC's Small
Business Survival Grant
Program



133
events attended by
8,408 people



48,396
social media
engagements



383
positive news stories
about Flint & Genesee



18.5M
ad impressions



50
speaking engagements



Thank you to our generous 2021 Funders

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Community Foundation of Greater Flint

Consumers Energy Foundation

CYMER

Defense Logistics Agency

Greater Flint Educational Consortium (GFEC)

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Community Learning Centers

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

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Regional Leadership Council

The Regional Leadership Council members are investors of Flint & Genesee Group. The Council is comprised of up to 50 individuals who are selected to represent the region's major businesses and donors.

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Connect

☎ 810.600.1404

✉ 519 S. Saginaw St., Suite 200
Flint, MI 48502

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