

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
CITY OF FENNVILLE  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

ORGANIZATION

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a municipal corporation of the State of Michigan, authority by Michigan Public Act of 1975 and enabled by local ordinance. The City of Fennville established its DDA in August of 1992, adopted a tax increment financing (TIF) and development plan to establish development area boundaries and prioritize proposed projects in 1993, and adopted an amendment to this plan in 2003.

The DDA's membership includes: Elice Menear, Chair; Mark Schrock, Vice Chair; Tony Morgan, Secretary/Treasurer; Amy Cook; Al LaShell; Dan Rastall, Mayor; Claude Rummer; Tasha Smalley; and Steve Valkema.

The mission of the DDA, as stated in the amended TIF development plan, is to create a functional, attractive business district to meet the needs of the community through meeting the following goals:

- Encourage an improved environment for development and redevelopment of commercial buildings and land.
- Improve overall parking and circulation.
- Strive for improved public and semipublic infrastructure within the development district.
- Improve the overall appearance of the downtown area.
- Create an aesthetically pleasing environment.
- Encourage development of additional public spaces in the district, and improve the existing facilities.

The DDA has formed committees in which to address four key facets of economic development as identified by the National Mainstreet program. These committees are Economic Restructuring, Organization, Physical Elements and Promotion. The goals and objectives of the DDA have been divided accordingly to each of these four committees.

FINANCE

The DDA, through its TIF plan, captured \$60,721.87 in fiscal year 2008-2009 from taxing jurisdictions including the City of Fennville, the County of Allegan, and the Fennville District Library. These TIF proceeds were used to pay for administration functions and public beautification and improvement projects.



The DDA currently pays for municipal services provided by administrative staff, DPW professional staff and general labor and supplies.

## WORK PROJECTS

In fiscal year 2008-2009, work projects begun in the previous year continued, as well as new projects were initiated. These projects are listed below according to the committee responsible for each:

### Economic Restructuring Committee

- The DDA held its first festival. The Fennville Winterlude was held on February 14, 2009 and featured ice sculpture demonstrations and a chili cook-off. The event was free of charge to all participants. Around one hundred people attended the Winterlude. Next year's event will be held in January. Planning for a Fourth of July celebration is underway currently.
- The Façade Loan Program was reviewed and updated. This program uses local banks Chemical Bank, Huntington Bank and the Bank of Holland to provide low-interest loan for improvements to downtown commercial buildings within the Central Business and City Center Overlay Districts.
- The Façade Grant Program was developed and approved. This program provides small grants of up to \$2,500 to improve facades on businesses located in the Central Business and DDA Districts. All grants require a 50% match from the applicant. The grants may be used for painting, repair and restoration or architect and designer services.
- A committee was formed to develop a farmers' market. Though it had been anticipated for the market to begin with Memorial Day week, it is more realistic for it to start mid-summer. This summer the market will feature a combination of produce and art work. The market will be located on the south side of Main Street and held from 9 – 2 p.m. on Saturdays.

### Organization Committee

- The first edition of the DDA newsletter was distributed in Fall 2008 and followed by Winter and Spring editions. The newsletter is sent quarterly to everyone within the DDA district. It contains articles and information regarding the DDA and its current projects.
- The DDA completed its annual review of the Tax Incrementing Finance (TIF) plan and assigned the various projects within it to the appropriate committee. The committees develop a budget and plan for each project.
- The DDA held its first business meeting on March 26, 2009 at the Fennville District Library. The purpose of the meeting, which will be held each quarter, is to create open communication with the downtown businesses to better meet the needs of the business community.
- The DDA reassigned the membership of the Organization Committee to consist of the board officers. Committee meetings are held quarterly.



### Physical Elements Committee

- A second Request for Proposals for the purchase and development of the vacant properties in the City Central Redevelopment Project (CCRP) was released in October 2008. Although there was general interest expressed by several developers, no proposals were received by the deadline. The Physical Elements Committee has since re-worked the concept design for the property, which now showcases a community space for a farmers' market, festivals and other city events.
- The downtown music system was upgraded and expanded westwards to the Fennville Tire Center. The DDA applied and paid for a license to play all types of music throughout the downtown area. A survey was taken of the businesses and residents of the downtown to determine what type of music was preferred and when that music should be played.
- The DDA continues with the beautification of the downtown area by financing the replacement of dead or dying trees and the placement and maintenance of flower planters along Main Street within the DDA district.

### Promotion Committee

- A tag line to complement the new logo was developed. "A place to grow..." was approved in August 2008 as the tag line for the City and DDA. The tag line was suggested by Mary Kasprzyk, the Executive Director of the Children's Museum of Fennville.
- An art sculpture project was undertaken in early fall of 2008. The idea behind the sculpture was to celebrate the reason the Fennville Goose Festival had been created, which was to get the Amtrak train to stop in Fennville. The DDA contracted with Icon Poly, Inc. to create six 4 ft. sculptures of a man. This figure was in the form of a train traveler, complete with brief case. The sculpture was nicknamed Arnold in honor of the first passenger, Arnold Nelson, from the train that stopped at that very first Goose Festival. Controversy arising from unapproved press releases and forgotten timelines prevented a formal press release showcasing the sculptures. The DDA, Fennville Elementary School, the Children's Museum of Fennville and the Fennville District Library partnered to create a naming contest for each art sculpture. The artwork was displayed at each location, and children were encouraged to submit their entries on-line. Winners received a party at the children's museum.
- The web site continued to be improved and promoted throughout the year. A coupon corner, featuring discounts and coupons from downtown businesses, was released in April 2009. New photos of the downtown area and various projects have been added to the web site.
- The *Community News* is an electronic newsletter developed by the DDA in effort to easily and cost-effectively get Fennville-related news out to the community. The e-newsletter is available both on-line at [www.fennville.com](http://www.fennville.com) and is emailed to subscribers free of charge. It is generated bi-monthly and contains links of its stories to contributors' web sites. The first edition was released on April 1, 2009.



- The DDA continues to work on its marketing plan for downtown Fennville. It placed advertisements in both the Greater Fennville Visitors' Guide and the Allegan County Visitors' Guide. Its ad in the county guide was on the inside front cover, which resulted in being the second ad viewed on the on-line version of the guide. The DDA also placed a half-page ad in which it listed all the businesses located within the DDA district.
- The color and font standards for the City/DDA logo were developed and approved on June 3, 2009.

## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

As several of the projects begun this fiscal year are annual events, the DDA will continue its work on them. Other projects in the works include:

- Frequent buyer program for consumers at downtown businesses.
- First Friday celebrations
- Zoning Guide for businesses
- Business incubator
- Sister City Program
- Streetscape improvements for Main Street
- South alley improvements
- Re-establishment of a train stop in Fennville
- District expansion
- Parking plan
- Art murals for second-story windows
- Green space dedication
- Joint-marketing program

## SUMMARY

The DDA is committed to meaningful action. It continues to implement the strategies outlined in the TIF plan and the Downtown Fennville Strategic Plan in order to accomplish its goals and objectives in creating a vibrant and attractive downtown area for visitors and residents.

