

## REGION 3

# MEDC IN YOUR REGION

Across Michigan's diverse regions, businesses of all sizes are thriving thanks to direct support from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Small business owners, entrepreneurs, and innovators are leveraging MEDC programs and assistance, including Michigan's State Trade Expansion Program (MI-STEP), Collateral Support, the Small Business Support Hub (SBSH) network, and more, alongside other MEDC-supported partners such as the Michigan Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to grow, create jobs, and strengthen their local economies. These investments are driving meaningful outcomes: helping rural and urban communities alike support their homegrown businesses, pursue international trade, enhance public spaces, and fuel long-term economic resilience across Michigan.



## CEDAM Community Development Fellowship

The **CEDAM Community Development Fellowship** in Mackinac City, supported by the **MEDC for communities actively participating in the Redevelopment Ready Communities program**, strengthens local planning capacity through improving community development strategies and long-term economic vitality.

Program Fellow Dean Martin said, "The CEDAM Community Development Fellowship prepared me for a career in municipal service better than any program I had been in prior. What I loved about the fellowship was that it was an opportunity to gain experience by making real change. It was real, earnest employment that was crafted around developing and maximizing my talents so I could best serve the community I was placed in. I am extremely fond of my time in Charlevoix and the work we were able to achieve. I would recommend any municipality that has a plethora of vital tasks to get done and limited staff power to do it to seriously consider applying for a Fellow."



## The Curator

The Curator, a specialty antique shop and home goods boutique in Grayling, received a **Michigan Main Street grant**, enabling downtown revitalization efforts. The project allowed owners Erich and Penny Podjaske to invest further in the rehabilitation of the interior space, adding tremendous value to downtown by reactivating a highly visible, long-vacant historic building while also contributing to the economic development momentum Grayling has experienced over the past few years.

"The \$25,000 going towards all the inventory freed up \$25,000 that I could use to fix the building," Erich Podjaske said. "When the building is 130 years old, there's a lot of stuff that needed to be done. It helped us to create the space and vision that we had for how nice we wanted the ambience, because MEDC helped provide us the resources and support that we needed to make it a reality. It was a huge driver of success, because we had this vision that we wanted before we even opened the door."



## Jim Perialas of Irish Kilt Brewing Company

Using resources from the **MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities program**, economic developer Jim Perialas provides guidance and support to local Roscommon County businesses, advises on regulations, engages the community, promotes best practices and facilitates redevelopment projects, all while also running Irish Kilt Brewing Company.

"We had some bold, courageous business owners who took a chance and looked at the tools we were using through RRC like Match on Main. Our local DDA initiated a facade grant program, and we proactively started to work with business owners to get the facades done, cleaned up, and help them with other types of resources, even if it's not money, but advice, tutoring," said Jim Perialas.



## Jeremy Hickmott, West Branch Twp Clerk

Township Clerk Jeremy Hickmott utilized **Redevelopment Ready Communities and Revitalization and Placemaking program** support to advance community planning initiatives, improving infrastructure and positioning the township for sustainable growth.

"The Redevelopment Ready Communities project is one I am most proud of so far. There was a good bit of skepticism at first, as very few townships in Michigan have ever reached that level, and West Branch Township was a 'corridor business district' and not a 'traditional downtown.' The township, the planning commission, and community members worked for over three and a half years to develop policies and procedures we never had before. A year later, we are still learning what the long-term benefits of the certification will be, but we have seen new development continue in the community and the township continues to lead the area."



## The Cutter Family of Cheboygan Coffee Roasters

The Cutter family leveraged **Michigan Community Revitalization Program and Match on Main funding** to expand their coffee business in Cheboygan, revitalizing downtown space while strengthening the local small business ecosystem.

"Moving to Cheboygan and the support from the locals made the choice easy. The MEDC was integral in our decision as well. They were always helpful with any questions about starting a project in a new town that was attracting new investors to help bring back a city that had been in and out of challenging times over the last few decades. A friendly, grateful community that was always supportive and willing to help sealed the deal. Help from the MEDC allowed us to invest in a city that was on its way up and provided necessary funding tools to bridge the gap financially," said Jeff Cutter.

