

## Chamber Receives \$50K Grant for Strategic Housing Plan

The Michigan Office of Rural Prosperity has awarded the Chamber Alliance of Mason County a \$50,000 Rural Readiness Grant to continue the work of the Mason County Housing Alliance (MCHA), which the Chamber Alliance facilitates.

The MCHA is a group of community leaders working with a consultant to help make Mason County more “housing ready.” This is the second Rural Readiness grant the Chamber has received, awarded in fall 2023 when the grant program was first conceived.

The first grant secured the consulting services of Ryan Kilpatrick and his Flywheel Community staff to work with MCHA on educating the community about housing needs and opportunities, following its 2023 Housing Needs Assessment by Bowen National Research. This second grant will enable the MCHA to work with Kilpatrick and Flywheel for another year, as it begins to implement a 5-year housing strategic plan.

In its first year working with Flywheel, the MCHA learned how Mason County’s current housing supply does not meet demand, why it’s so expensive to build housing, and which tools are available locally to reduce costs and make it easier for developers to construct needed housing. The MCHA started to educate community leaders about zoning modifications to spur housing development, new tools to help close the construction financing gap, and site selection to make the best use of existing infrastructure. Recently the MCHA, with Flywheel’s assistance, drafted a 5-year strategic plan for housing which includes meeting the following goals by 2030:

1. 1,000 new units built
2. Solutions at scale for households earning 80% area median income and below
3. 250+ housing units repaired for low/moderate income residents
4. Three new mixed-income neighborhoods in progress
5. Small lot and/or missing middle housing options allowed across the community

Over the next year, the MCHA will engage the community to help with neighborhood planning to preserve natural spaces and ensure future housing development reflects community needs and desires. By securing another Rural Readiness Grant, the Chamber Alliance can continue to facilitate the MCHA’s work with Kilpatrick and Flywheel to help create conditions to spur housing development for those who live and work in Mason County.

The MCHA includes representatives from the County of Mason, City of Scottville, Amber Township, Pere Marquette Charter Township, City of Ludington, Community Foundation of Mason County, Home Team Housing, Pennies From Heaven Family Foundation and Chamber Alliance of Mason County. It is facilitated by Economic Development Director Kristi Lucas-Zimmerman of the Chamber Alliance in partnership with The Right Place.