The City of
ALBION

2017 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

City of Albion
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Introduction: What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Essentially, the Comprehensive Plan is a study of Albion's present conditions and a framework for future growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides a strategic focus and helps guide the community in future decision-making concerning land-use planning, social, economic, and environmental development. The plan identifies the community's strengths and assets as well as its opportunities for growth and improvement. It looks at Albion's past, where it wants to go in the future, and what needs to happen to achieve its vision of the future.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Act 33 of 2008; MPEA) requires an update of the plan at least every five years. Consistent with the requirements of the Act, the City of Albion is updating it Comprehensive Plan.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The City of Albion is taking a phased approach in updating its Comprehensive Plan. This Phase I document:

- Provides current demographic data, describes changes that have taken place in Albion, and highlights certain emerging trends within the city and the region
- Provides an overview of the City's updated goals and objectives, which are summarized in Appendix 1.
- Identifies priority redevelopment sites

During a 95-day review and comment period for Phase I of the update process, citizens, local developers, employers, business owners, and other key stakeholders provided feedback, discussed major challenges and opportunities, and participated in visioning. Input gained from interviews, Town Hall meetings, and other forums has been gathered and synthesized in this document. On November 28, 2016, the end of the review and comment period, a public hearing will be held, regarding the Phase I Comprehensive Plan Update. The focus of Phase I is on adopting goals and objectives and a vision to guide Albion for the next 10 to 20 years.

Vision

Building a sustainable community requires diverse partnerships and collaboration, sound and thoughtful public policy, business and economic opportunity, stable residential neighborhoods, quality education institutions, diversity in arts, entertainment and recreational offerings, conservation and protection of the natural environment and access to services for all residents. The following Comprehensive Plan incorporates these fundamental community building blocks and provides a framework from which to address the most pressing needs and most promising solutions for re-imagining the City of Albion.

Albion is resilient. Its leadership is shaping the future instead of merely being shaped by it. In updating its Comprehensive Plan, the City's leadership is taking a serious look at the community's most pressing needs, identifying catalytic revitalization projects, and taking necessary steps to create the amenities that will attract people to the community and improve the quality of life for existing residents. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document that serves as a rallying point to help the City identify priorities, allocate resources, and chart the course for the future. To make the plan a reality, the City of Albion is creating collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders, nonprofits, and county, regional, state and federal leadership. The Comprehensive Plan encompasses a wide range of topics including economic and business development, public infrastructure, housing, transportation, public and environmental health, and entertainment and recreation.

Community Engagement and Stakeholder Involvement

The process of updating the Comprehensive Plan began with a review of the goals and objectives that were outlined in the previous plan. The Planning Commission took a close look at those goals and objectives to determine which had been achieved and which were still relevant. Numerous discussions regarding the goals and objectives have been held among Planning Commission members, with key stakeholders, and in Town Hall sessions.

Ultimately, the Comprehensive Plan will be used to assist bodies such as the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), and City Council in making policy decisions, especially related to land use. This plan update helps set parameters for land use decision-making and provides the foundation on which the community's zoning ordinance is based.

Local and Regional Stakeholders

Input has been sought from various community partners to create a dynamic comprehensive plan. The City of Albion seeks to continuously involve these entities and others in its comprehensive planning process. Key stakeholders are comprised of many local, regional, state, and federal partners and include, but are not limited to:

Albion Economic Development Corporation and Downtown Development Authority
Albion College
Albion Food Hub
Albion Healthcare Alliance
Albion Housing Commission
Albion/Marshall Public Schools
Albion: Senior Millage Allocation Committee
AmeriCorps VISTA
Forks Senior Center
Local businesses
Local churches
Neighborhood organizations
Major employers
Private investment partners
City of Homer: Senior Millage Allocation Committee
City of Marshall: Dial-a-Ride
Calhoun County Community Action
Calhoun County Land Bank Authority
Calhoun County Senior Services
Calhoun County Board of Commissioners
Southcentral Michigan Planning Council
Southwest Michigan First
Habitat for Humanity
Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)
Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)
Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)
Michigan Works!
USDA Rural Development

Community Input Survey

A Community Input Survey was conducted to engage community members and identify today's most pressing needs. In order to reach a broad audience, the survey was administered both on-line by the Albion Community Foundation and also with hard copies disseminated by the City. Two hundred forty-two community members participated in the survey. Survey respondents reflected a diverse array of perspectives, e.g. home owners and renters, business owners, and a small number of property developers. Interestingly, a number of non-residents participated in the survey, because of their personal ties and commitment to the community. Although nearly 63% of the participants were in the 35-64 age group, younger and older people also participated. Citizen feedback from the survey is included in the Appendix.

Town Hall Meetings were held on topics like Walkability and Housing, in order to share and disseminate information and to gain input from citizens. Two working groups were formed – The Downtown Housing Workgroup and the Albion City Transportation Workgroup – to take a more in-depth look at those specific issues. A briefing with emphasis on downtown housing was held with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). City Council and the DDA held a joint working session to discuss Albion's downtown parking situation. Interviews were held with major employers, heads of non-profit organizations, and local pastors to gain their perspectives on many challenges facing the community.

Table 1

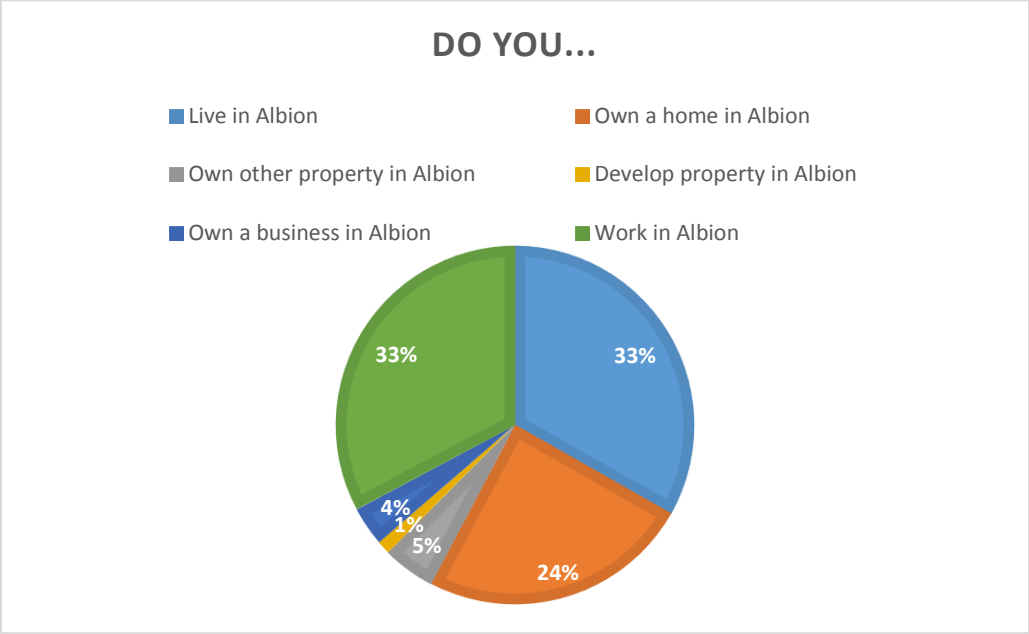
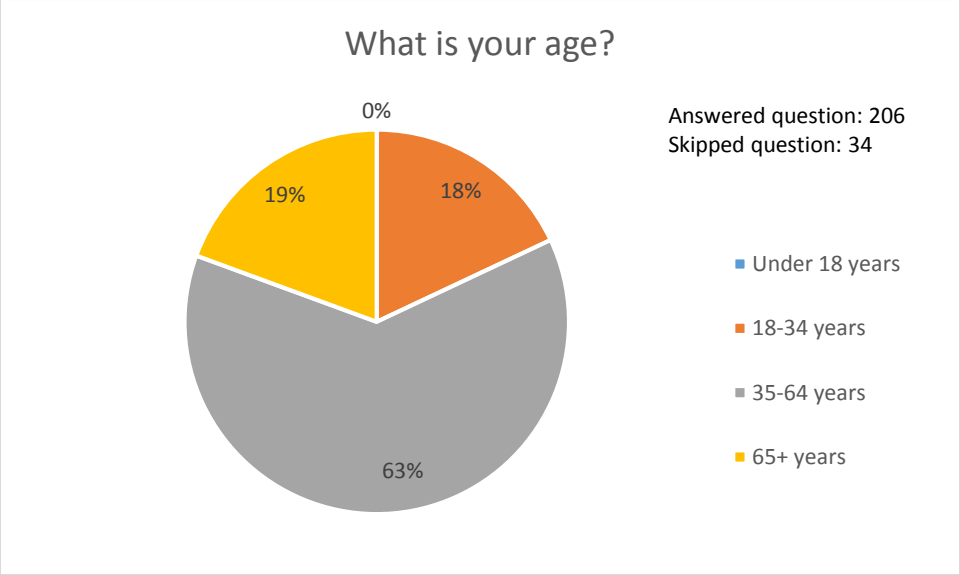


Table 2



A number of planning documents supplement the City of Albion's Comprehensive Plan:

- An Analysis of Residential Market Potential: The City of Albion – February 2015
- Target Market Analysis: Calhoun County Michigan 2016
- City of Albion Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2016 – 2020
- Southcentral Michigan Five-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: September 2014 – W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
- Calhoun County Master Plan: A Comprehensive Land Plan: Amended February 2013
- Downtown Market Strategy: The City of Albion – February 2006 – Anderson Economic Group

- City of Albion 2006 Downtown Parking Analysis Albion – HamiltonAnderson in collaboration with Anderson Economic Group
- Downtown Design Plan 1991

Social and Economic History

Albion's first settlers arrived in 1833. These visionaries formed a land development company called the Albion Company from which the City draws its name. In 1835, Methodist settlers established Albion College, a private college that has emerged as a major employer and economic driver. In 1855, Albion was incorporated as a village and also received its official charter as a city.

Location

Throughout the course of its history, Albion's location and access to transportation networks have been strategic assets that propelled its growth. Albion was founded at the Forks of the Kalamazoo River, the confluence of the river's north and south branches. During its early period as an agrarian economy, the river provided power for various mills that located on or near "the Forks". Through the 19th and 20th centuries, the city's steel facilities and foundries transported goods and products along the Chicago Road and two railroads. In 1844, the arrival of the Michigan Central Road brought with it an influx of industry and population. A second railroad, the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad was completed in 1872. In the mid-20th century, transportation was expedited by two major interstate highways -- I-94 and I-69.

The Kalamazoo River

The City of Albion, which is 4.5 square miles, is located along the I-94 corridor in the eastern portion of Calhoun County. The city is bordered largely by Sheridan Township to the north and Albion Township to the south. The City of Marshall, county seat of Calhoun County, lies approximately 12 miles west of Albion.

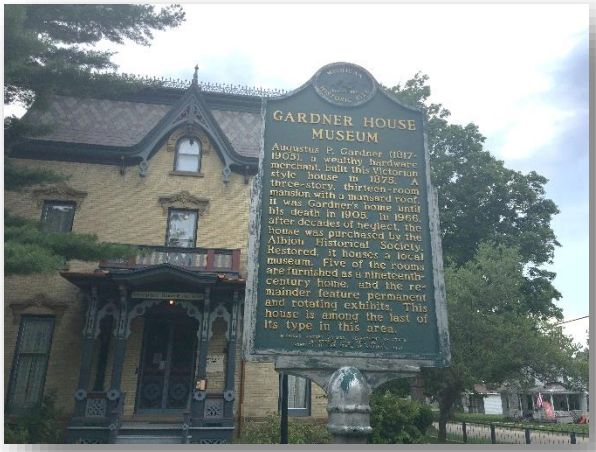
Albion is within a short driving distance of several regional and major metropolitan centers within Michigan and the Great Lakes area. Via the interstate highway system, Albion is only 15 miles from Jackson, 20 miles from Battle Creek, 40 miles from Lansing, 47 miles from Kalamazoo, and 53 miles from Ann Arbor. On a larger scale, it is 86 miles from Grand Rapids, 91 miles from Detroit, 93 miles from Fort Wayne, 98 miles from Toledo, 175 miles from Chicago, and 190 miles from Cleveland. In addition, Interstate 94 provides convenient access to international markets in Canada.

The City of Albion is positioned between 3 international airports: 43 miles south of the Capital Region International Airport in Lansing, 46 miles east of Kalamazoo-Battle Creek International Airport, and 77 miles west of Detroit Metropolitan International Airport.

Economic History

Like many cities throughout the Midwest, Great Lakes and North-Eastern regions of the United States, Albion suffered the effects of deindustrialization. The city's economy has fundamentally changed with shifts that have taken place in domestic manufacturing and specifically in the automotive industry. Since 2001, Albion has lost nearly 1,000 jobs in manufacturing, healthcare, and retail. This economic shift has caused a reduction in real and personal property tax revenue and an increase in vacant or under-utilized industrial spaces.

While no single industry has replaced the jobs and taxes generated by the automotive suppliers, several sectors have emerged in Albion with the potential of bringing new vitality to the local/regional economy and community. These include small to medium-sized manufacturing, craft production facilities, alternative energy, and a major expansion by a Tier 1 automotive supplier.

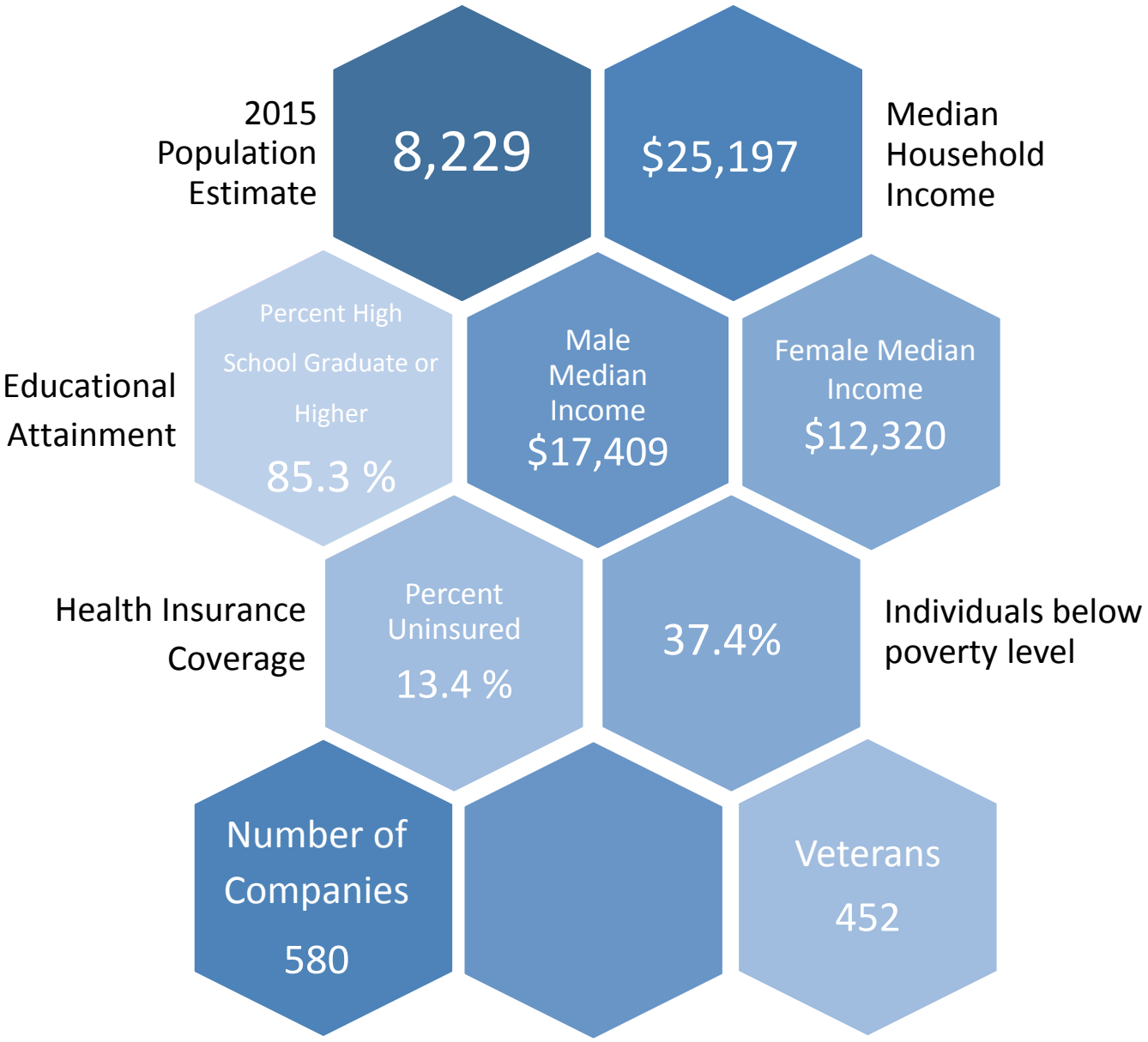


The Gardner House Museum

Albion College, the city's major anchor institution with over 452 employees, is working with the City to develop a strategic economic partnership to redevelop and revitalize the downtown. It is in the vested interest of the College, the City and its citizenry to forge new relationships and partnerships to help Albion recover its economic vitality. The College is leveraging the financial support of its alumni, intellectual capital of its faculty, strength of its student involvement, and reach of its network to begin the revitalization effort. Albion College has made it a top priority to launch a long-term housing development strategy with financial incentives designed to attract new employees and others to live in the City and either rent or purchase residential dwellings. Another example of the College's commitment is its writing and receiving an AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) grant, which allows 11 VISTA members to work with the College and City in 2016-2017 to boost economic development, education and health initiatives.

Demographics

Table 3



SOURCES:

2015 Population Estimate: Source: Vintage 2015 Population Estimates: Population Estimates; Median Household Income: Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Individuals below poverty level: Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Profiles; Educational Attainment: Percent high school graduate or higher: Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Profiles; Health Insurance Coverage: Percent uninsured: Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Profiles; Number of Companies: Source: 2012 Survey of Business Owners: Company Summary; Male Median Income: Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Female Median Income: Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Veterans: Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Profiles

Declining Population

During the 40-year period from 1970 to 2010, Albion and many surrounding communities lost population. The Nielsen Company estimates that in 2015, Albion's population decreased to 8,240 persons, a decline of 4.4 percent from the 2010 Census. Without interventions, Nielsen projects that the city's population would continue to fall to 7,961 persons by 2020, a decrease of another 3.4 percent.

Within the larger region, many counties registered a net population loss between 2000 and 2010. During this period, population was lost in most of the region covered by the Southcentral Regional Planning Council (SMPC). SMPC is a regional planning organization representing Barry, Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and St. Joseph Counties. During the 2000-2010 time frame, the rate of population growth in neighboring Jackson County slowed but did not decrease.

Table 4: % Population Change, 1970-2010, City of Albion & Surrounding Communities

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	70-80	80-90	90-00	00-10
City of Albion	12,112	11,059	10,066	9,144	8,616	-8.7%	-9.0%	-9.2%	-5.8%
Albion Township	1,582	1,413	1,256	,1200	1,123	-10.7%	-11.1%	-4.5%	-6.4%
Homer Township	2,714	3,041	2,890	3,010	3,015	12.0%	-5.0%	4.2%	0.2%
Homer Village	1,617	1,791	1,758	1,851	1,668	10.8%	-1.8%	5.3%	-9.9%
Sheridan Township	2,469	2,257	2,139	2,116	1,936	-8.6%	-5.2%	-1.1%	-8.5%
Marshall City	7,253	7,201	6,891	7,459	7,088	-0.7%	-4.3%	8.2%	-5.0%
Marshall Township	2,232	2,564	2,655	2,922	3,115	14.9%	3.5%	10.1%	6.6%

Source: Calhoun County Master Plan, U.S. Bureau of Census

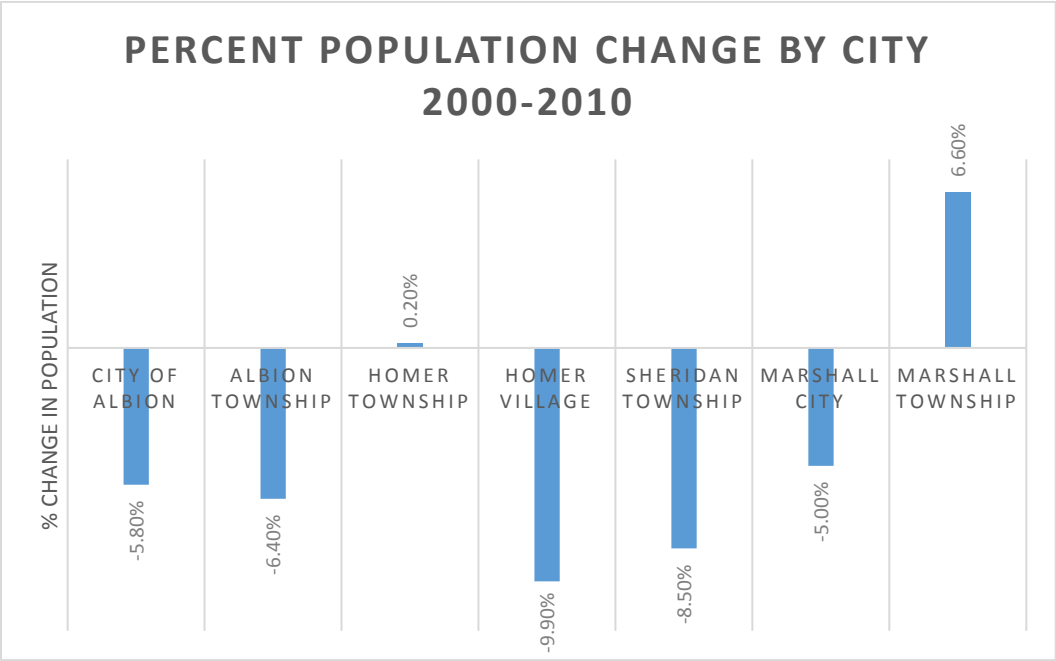
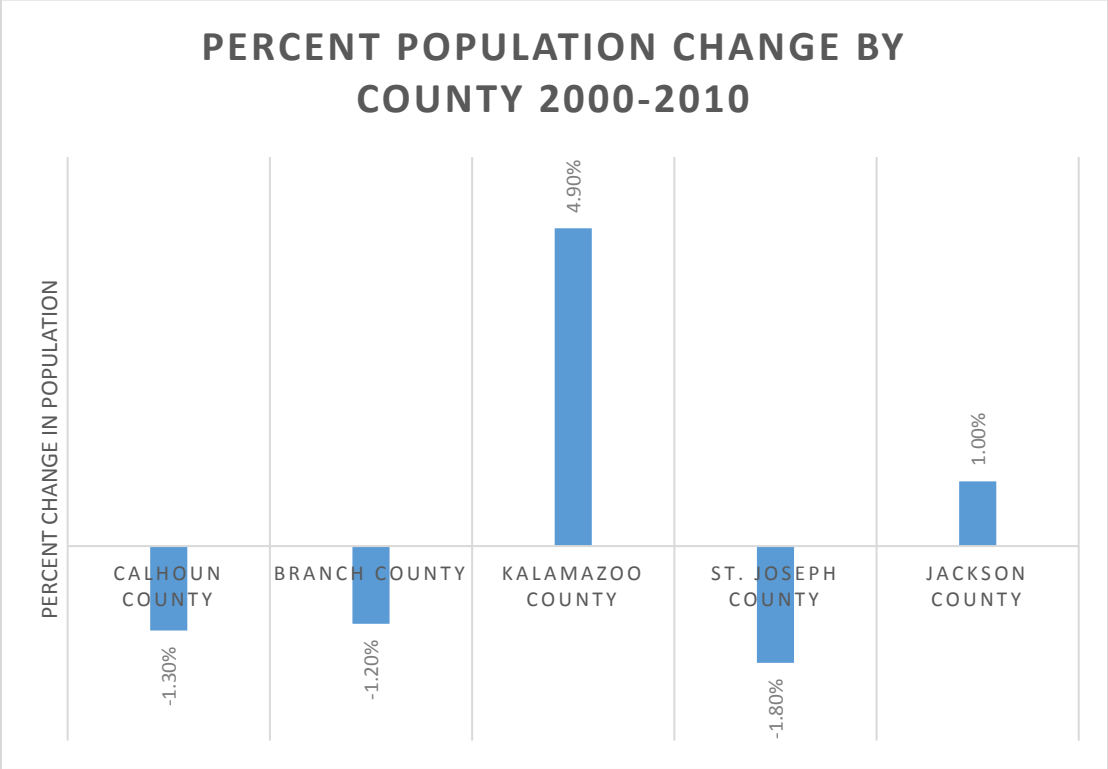


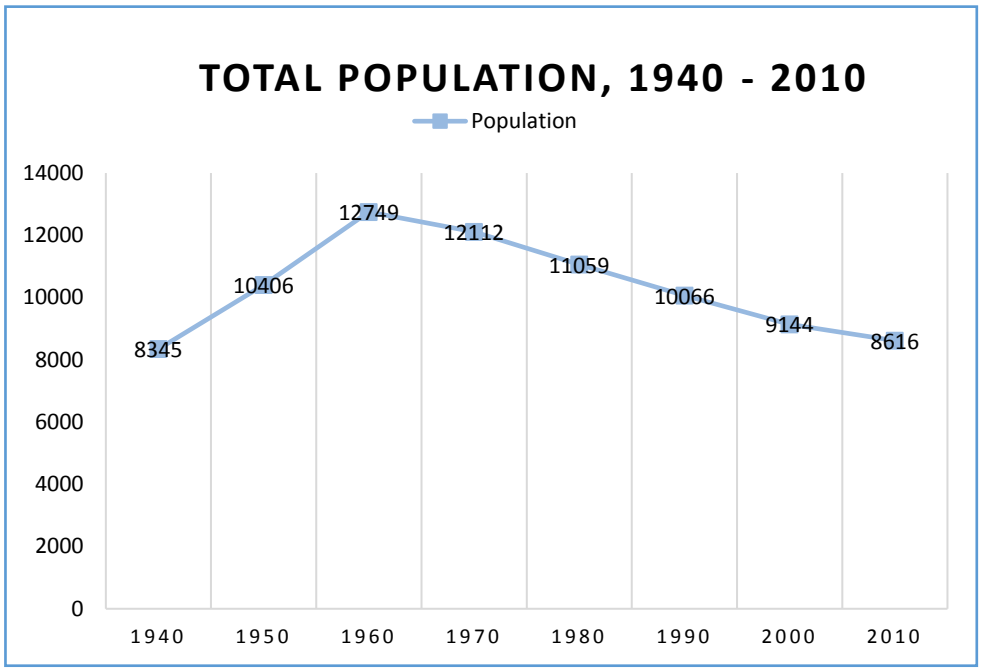
Table 5: % Population Change, 1960-2010, Calhoun County and Surrounding Counties

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	60-70	70-80	80-90	90-00	00-10
Calhoun County	138,858	141,963	141,557	135,982	137,985	136,146	2.2%	-0.3%	-3.9%	1.5%	-1.3%
Branch County	34,903	37,906	40,188	41,502	45,787	45,248	8.6%	6.0%	3.3%	10.3%	-1.2%
Kalamazoo County	169,712	201,550	212,378	223,411	238,603	250,331	18.8%	5.4%	5.2%	6.8%	4.9%
St. Joseph County	42,332	47,392	56,083	58,913	62,422	61, 295	12.0%	18.3%	5.0%	6.0%	-1.8%
Jackson County	131,994	143,274	151,495	149,756	158,425	160,248	8.6%	5.7%	-1.1%	6.0%	1.0%



Sources: Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, U.S. Bureau of the Census
https://www.census.gov/population/cencounts/mi190090.txt

Table 6: Population Change
Source: US Census 1940-2010



Looking back to the early 1900's, the City experienced steady growth in its population and economic base. Between 1900 and 1950, the City's population more than doubled. The chart above would suggest that in 1960 there was another upward spike in Albion's population. However, it should be noted that the inclusion of the college student population in Census reporting is likely to account for this phenomenon. Conversely, the 5% decrease in population registered between 1960 and 1970 understates the dynamics in the "permanent" population, which actually decreased by a full 9.5% when controlling for the student population. In spite of these statistical anomalies, since 1960 Albion has experienced a steady decline in population. This downward population trend is consistent with the pattern of urban centers throughout the country, which lost population to their suburban neighbors.

Aging Population

Like the rest of the nation, Albion's population is aging as the Baby Boom generation (people born between 1946 and 1964) make their way through the life cycle. Between 2000 and 2010, "Baby Boomers" began entering the retirement phase of their lives. In 2000, the Baby Boom generation entered the new millennium with ages ranging from 36 to 54. Ten years later in 2010, they were between the ages of 46 and 64. In 2010, the median age was in Albion 28.1. It had increased from 23.5 in 1980 and 26.5 in 1990.

Since 1980, Albion has experienced a downward trend in the percentage of people ages 25-44. One contributing factor to the 23% decrease in the 25-44 age group between 2010 and 2000 is the exodus of the Baby Boom generation from this segment of the population. A second factor is the outmigration that occurred due to plant closings and economic dislocation. The lack of population growth coupled with the aging and retirements of Baby Boomers will undoubtedly impact the availability of labor in Albion and throughout the region, especially in construction trades and manufacturing skilled trades where an increasing number of Baby Boomers are retiring en masse. During the next 20 years, the aging of Baby Boomers will also have serious implications on healthcare and housing markets in Albion and throughout the region. In spite of these demographic changes and the increased need for health care services, Albion has lost its hospital. Many citizens who participated in the Town Hall meetings expressed the desire for an urgent care option with walk-in and after-hours services.

Table 7: Age Distribution
City of Albion – 2010
Source: U.S. Census 2000-2010

Age	2000	% of Pop	2010	% of Pop	% Change 2000-2010
Under 18 Years	2,356	25.8	1,872	21.7	-20.5
18 to 24 years	1,801	19.7	2,159	25.1	19.9
25 to 44 years	2,099	23	1,613	18.7	-23.2
45 to 64 years	1,660	18.2	1,848	21.4	11.3
65 years and older	1,228	13.4	1,124	13	-8.5
Total population	9,144		8,616		

Table 8: 25-44 Cohort
City of Albion – 2010
Source: U.S. Census 1980-2010

Age	1980	% of Pop	1990	% of pop	2000	% of Pop	2010	% of pop
25-44	2,314	20.9%	2,405	23.9%	2,099	23%	1,613	18.7%

Another significant trend within the city of Albion is the loss in population of children ages 14 and under. Between 2000 and 2010, there was a decrease of about one-third of the size of the 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 age groups. This trend has had adverse effects on K-12 school enrollment.

Table 9: Population: Ages 5 to 24 Years

	Number 2000	% of Pop	Number 2010	% of Pop	% Change 2000-2010
Under 5 years	606	6.6	574	6.7	-5.3
5 to 9 years	752	8.2	525	6.1	-30.2
10 to 14 years	621	6.8	439	5.1	-29.3
15 to 19 years	1,019	11.1	1,129	13.1	10.8
20 to 24 years	1,159	12.7	1,364	15.8	17.7

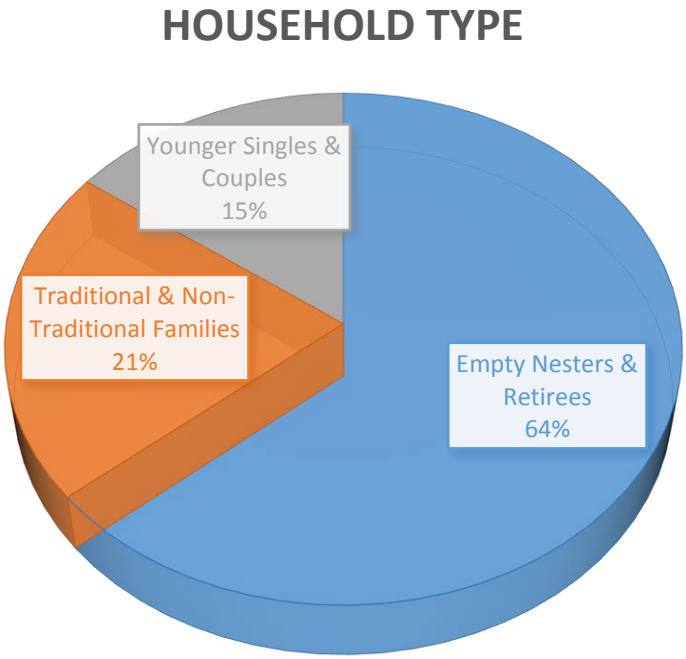
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Life Stage

Life stage denotes the stage of life of a given household – ranging from initial household formation, through family formation, empty-nesting, to retirement. Of the 2,785 households estimated in Albion in 2015, nearly 64% are comprised of "empty nesters and retirees".

Table 10: 2015 Household Classification by Life Stage

City of Albion, Calhoun County, Michigan



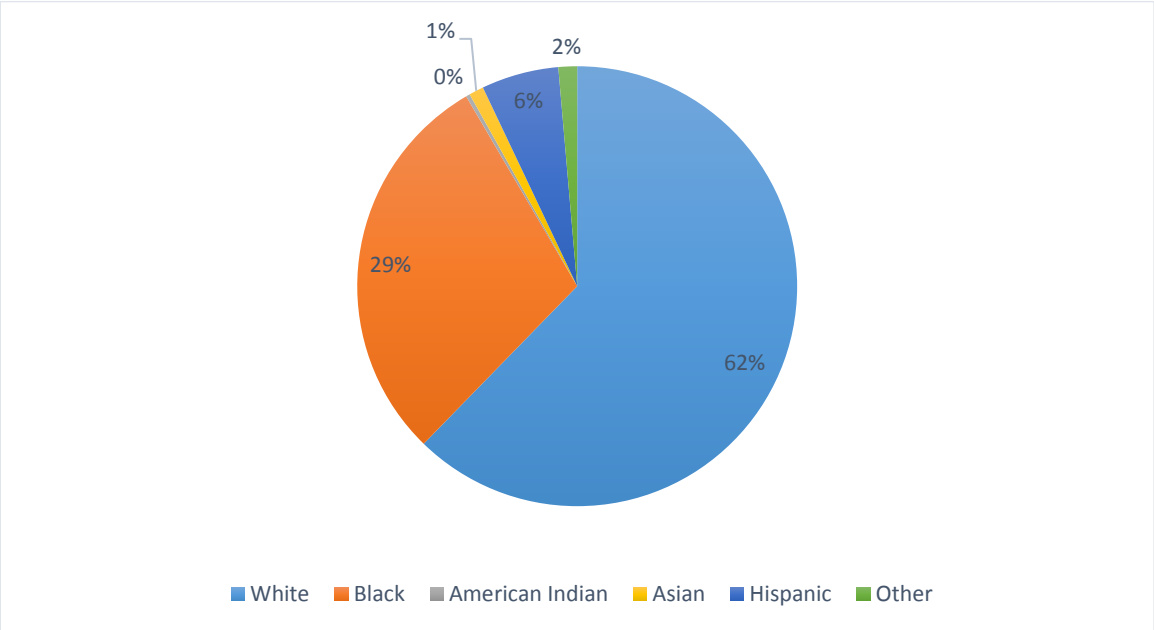
SOURCES: The Nielsen Company; Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc.

Racial Composition

Table 11 below depicts the racial composition of the City of Albion as of 2010. Over the last 20 years, the racial makeup of the city has remained fairly consistent, although there have been slight fluctuations in the actual percentages. As of the 2010 Census, nearly two-thirds of Albion's current residents were White. Nearly one-third were Black. Between the years 1950 and 1980, the racial composition underwent a significant shift with an inverse trend between the City's White and Black populations. The Black population increased in both absolute and relative terms. Between 2000 and 2010, the City's Hispanic population increased in absolute terms from 416 to 500. This is consistent with regional and national trends concerning the increasing number and percent of Hispanics in the population.

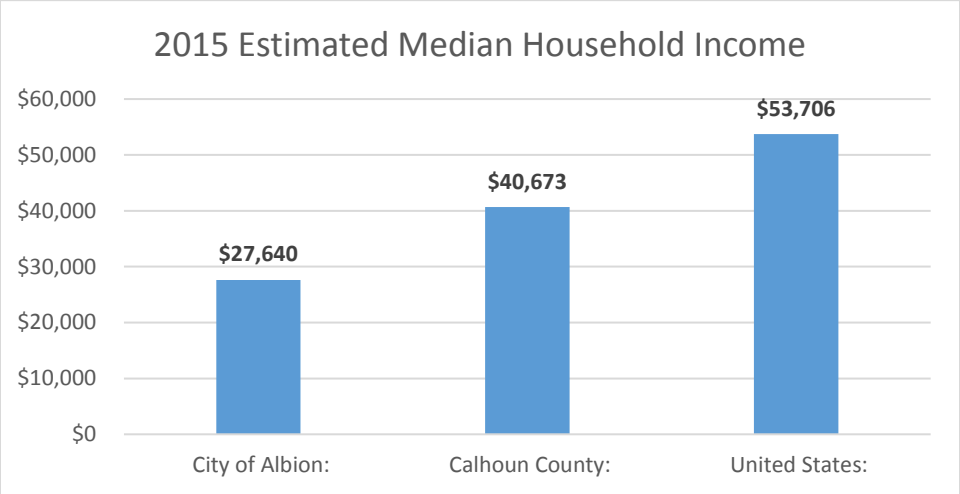
Table 11: Racial Composition

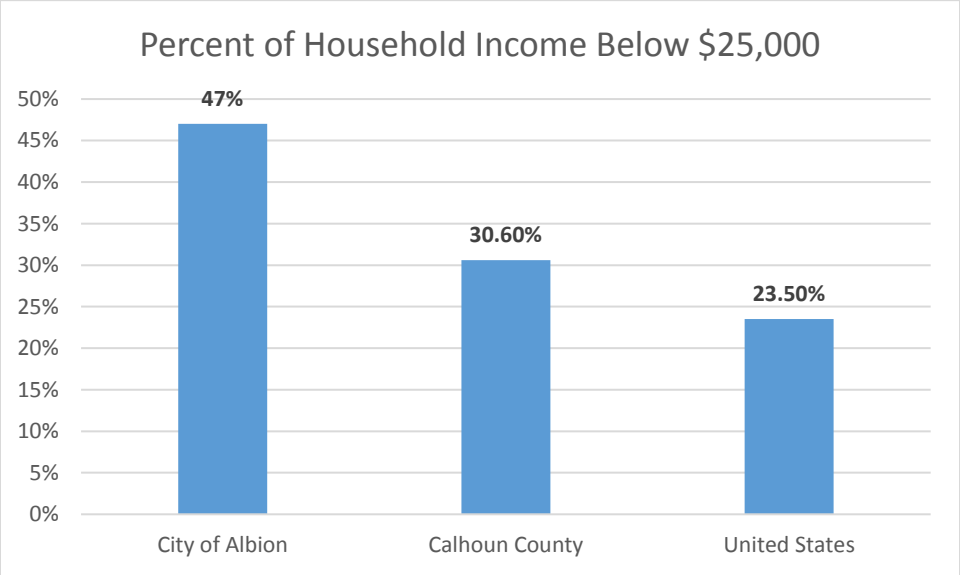
Source: US Census 2010



Income

Table 12: Income





SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Census; The Nielsen Company; Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc.

In 2015, the Nielsen Company estimates Albion's median household income in the city at $27,640, which is about 51% of the national median of $53,706 and about $13,000 less than the county median. During this period, nearly 47% of Albion's households had incomes below $25,000.

Workforce

As a result of macroeconomic changes, automation, decentralization, and relocation of manufacturing operations and jobs, unskilled workers and youth have been the hardest hit by the economic restructuring that has taken place in the American economy. As of 2015, over 42% of Albion's residents over age 16 were not currently in the labor force. People "not currently in the labor force" include stay-at-home parents, who have not held and are not looking for jobs, the elderly, and the chronically sick and disabled. In addition, this count includes many "prime age workers" who are discouraged and disillusioned and have disinvested and given up on trying to find a job. These individuals have left the workforce. Engaging this segment of the population is a concern voiced by citizens, civic and business leaders. With its spirit of resilience, Albion's City, the Albion Economic Development Corporation (EDC), workforce development network, and business leaders are collaborating and strategizing to combat the problem.

"The Molder" Statue

Table 13: Employment Status

2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Subject	Albion city, Michigan			
	Total	In labor force	Employed	Unemployment rate
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Population 16 years and over	6,862	53.8%	43.5%	19.2%
AGE				
16 to 19 years	884	36.4%	30.0%	17.7%
20 to 24 years	1,173	72.2%	54.8%	24.1%
25 to 44 years	1,692	81.7%	65.6%	19.7%
45 to 54 years	809	67.9%	56.1%	17.3%
55 to 64 years	1,019	46.2%	38.4%	17.0%
65 to 74 years	652	13.8%	13.8%	0.0%
75 years and over	633	4.7%	4.7%	0.0%
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN				
One race	6,724	53.0%	43.7%	17.5%
White	4,779	55.5%	48.8%	12.1%
Black or African American	1,804	45.3%	28.9%	36.1%

American Indian and Alaska Native	59	78.0%	78.0%	0.0%
Asian	39	76.9%	76.9%	0.0%
Some other race	43	39.5%	23.3%	41.2%
Two or more races	138	92.0%	31.2%	66.1%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	284	63.4%	37.3%	41.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	4,585	55.4%	49.4%	10.7%
Population 20 to 64 years	4,693	69.2%	55.4%	20.0%
SEX				
Male	2,142	71.9%	53.4%	25.8%
Female	2,551	67.0%	57.0%	14.9%
POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS				
Below poverty level	1,467	50.9%	27.5%	46.0%
DISABILITY STATUS				
With any disability	754	28.8%	19.6%	31.8%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT				
Population 25 to 64 years	3,520	68.2%	55.5%	18.6%
Less than high school graduate	384	31.5%	19.5%	38.0%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,224	66.4%	50.2%	24.4%
Some college or associate's degree	1,194	68.3%	57.6%	15.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher	718	90.8%	80.4%	11.5%

In reading Table 13, it should be noted that American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing statistical survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Although the numbers are estimates, the data is useful in helping to understand certain characteristics within the community.

Table 14: Commuting Patterns

	Residential employment	Barry	Branch	Calhoun	Kalamazoo	St. Joseph
County employment		22,564	19,496	47,330	87,581	21,754
Barry	11,005	6,928	27	334	353	29
Branch	12,476	49	6,630	912	227	723
Calhoun	49,979	2,175	1,459	26,972	5,366	632
Kalamazoo	102,330	2,251	754	4,038	58,550	2,480
St. Joseph	19,030	115	1,050	386	1,555	10,238

SOURCE: Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

The existing workforce is very mobile. People who are in the labor market are willing to commute to neighboring areas for employment. For example, Table 14 shows that in 2012 there were nearly 50,000 jobs in Calhoun County; however, of the 47,330 employed residents fewer than 27,000 of them worked within the county.

Table 15: Employment Change

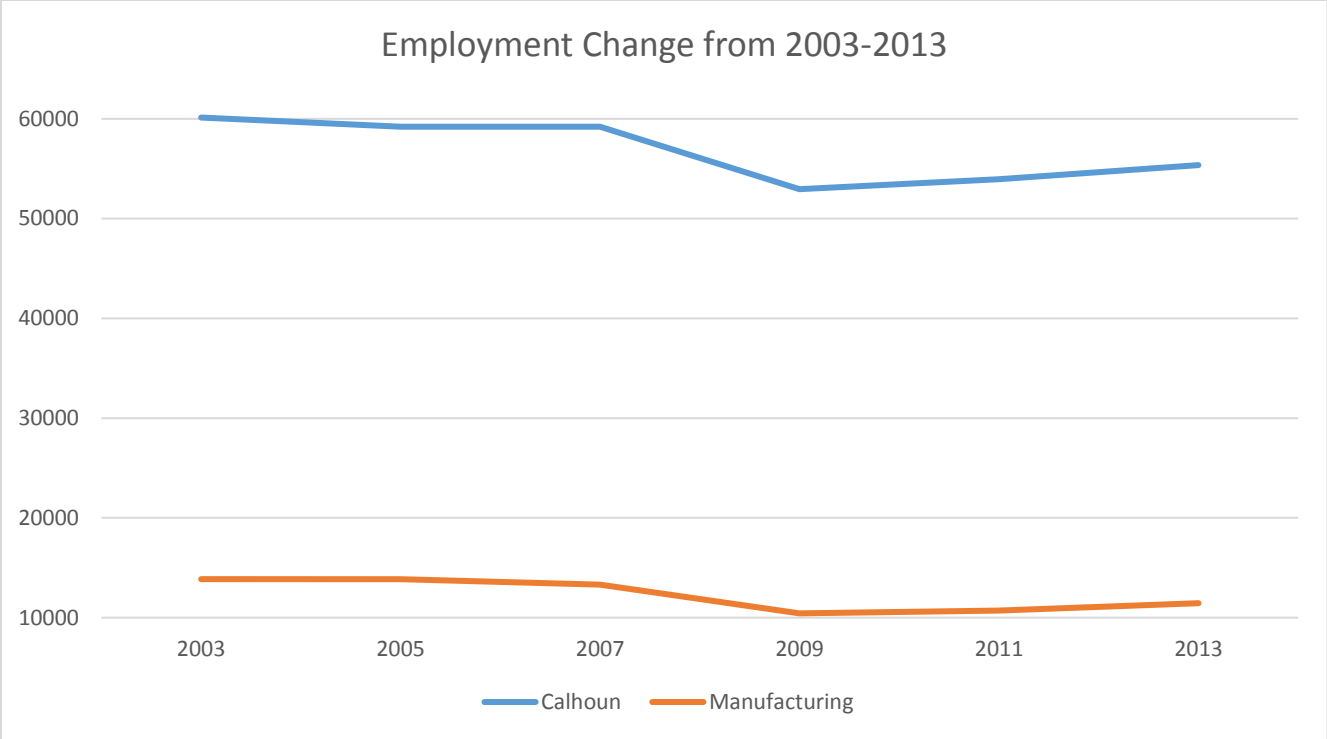
							Change 2003-2013	
	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	Number	% Change
Calhoun	60,131	59,209	59,209	52,953	53,962	55,362	-4,769	-7.9%

Source: The Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

Table 16: Employment Change in Manufacturing, 2003 to 2013

							Change 2007-2013		Change 2003-2013	
	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013				
Calhoun	13,862	13,847	13,297	10,432	10,700	11,465	-1,832	-13.8%	-2,397	-17.3%

Source: The Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

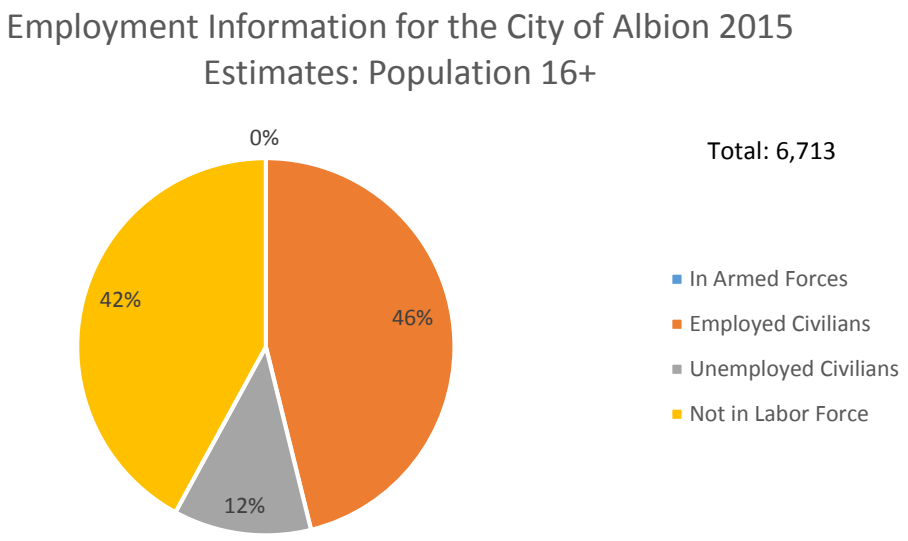


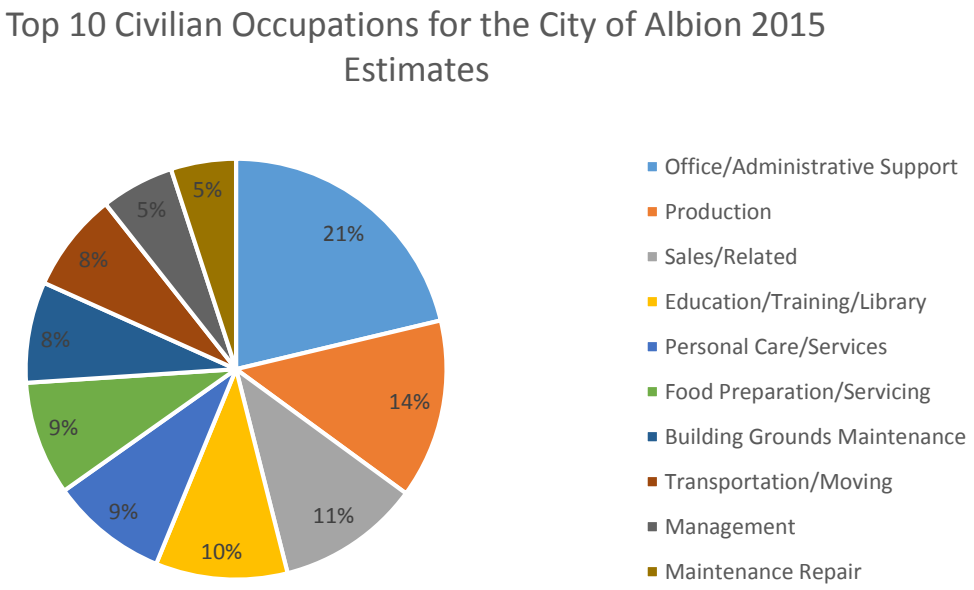
From 2003 to 2013, a shift took place in the economic base within the five-county area served by the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council (SMPC). Throughout the region, employment fell by 13,200 jobs, nearly 6.0%. Calhoun County lost over 4,700 jobs. However, as employment in the manufacturing sector decreased, employment in healthcare and other service sector activities increased. One question for Albion to consider is whether there are niche opportunities within the healthcare sector to meet the needs of its community, especially the senior and disabled populations. Nursing and residential care facilities are examples of industries that meet a need within the population and create jobs. Although jobs in other sectors are important, manufacturing continues to be a vital base industry. Most manufacturing products are sold to customers outside of the county and region, which draws money into the local economy.

Table 17: Employment Information

City of Albion

2015 Estimates

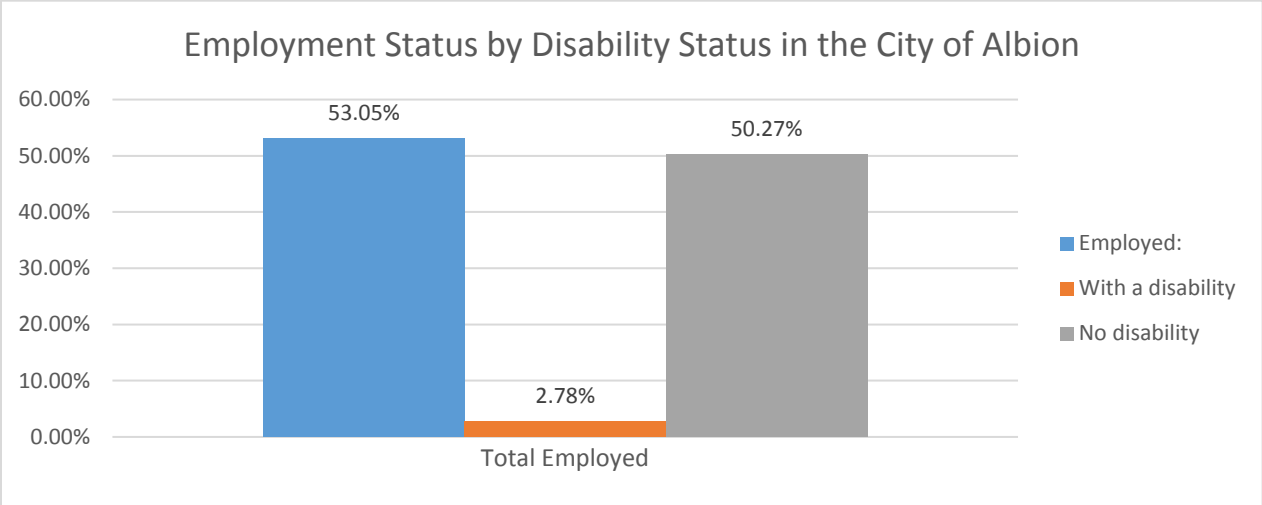


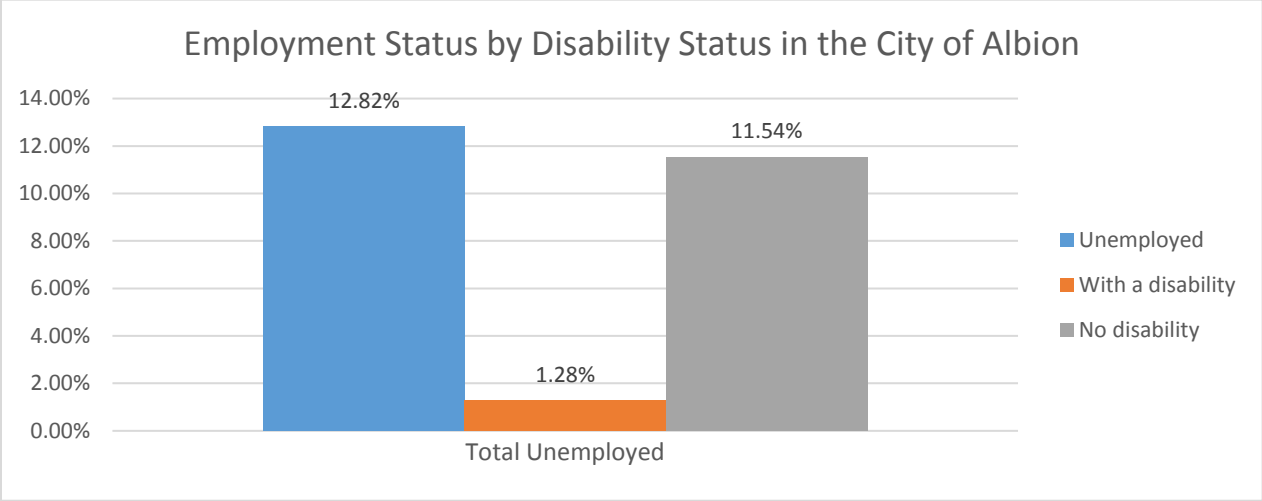


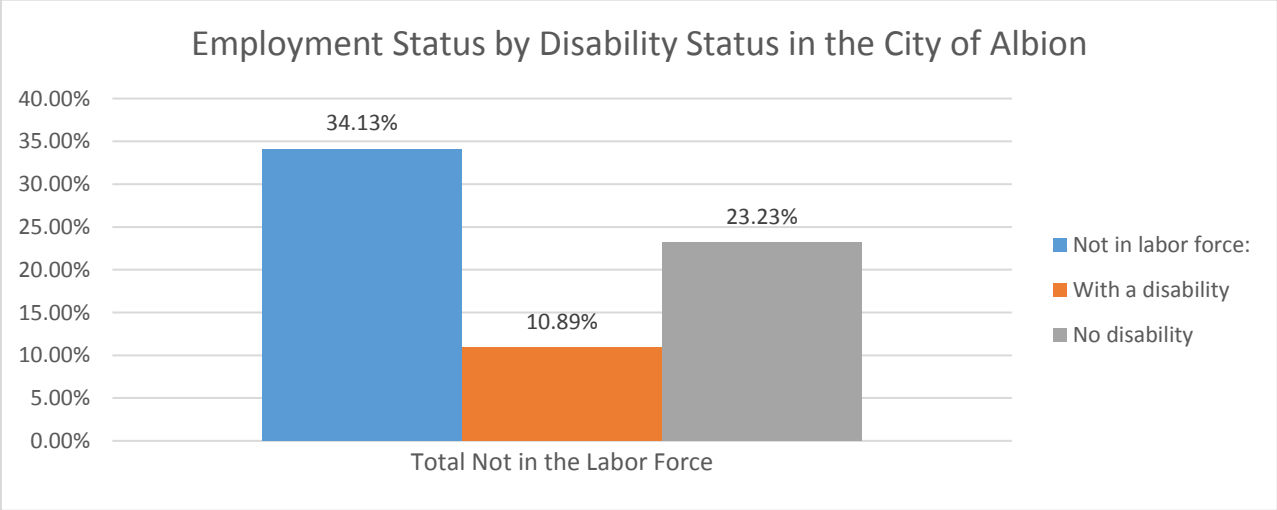
SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census; The Nielson Company; Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc.

Table 18: Employment Status by Disability Status

City of Albion: Civilian population 18 to 64 years
2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates







http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_5YR_C18120&prodType=table

Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in the city of Albion in 2014 there were 2,702 people below poverty level. In many instances, children whose parents are not currently in the labor force lack educational qualifications and social and other skills and unable to rise out of poverty.

According to the 2000 Census figures, nearly 32% of the population received Social Security income. Eight percent or 264 households received public assistance. About 7.6% of the population received Supplemental Security Income.

Table 19: 1999 Government Transfer Payments

Households	3,291	100%
With Social Security Income	1,406	31.8%
Mean Social Security Income (dollars)	$ 10,634	
With Supplemental Security Income	249	7.6%
Mean Supplemental Security Income (dollars)	$ 4,931	
With public assistance income	264	8.0%
Mean public assistance income (dollars)	$1,717	

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census

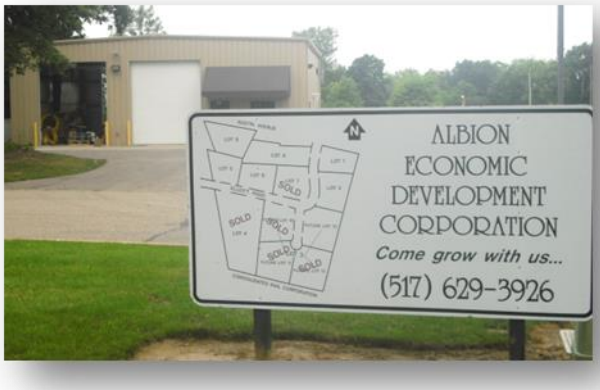
Plan Elements

BUSINESS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Retain and attract jobs to Albion by supporting business growth and development

The Albion Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is the City's lead economic development organization and works to assist and recruit business and industry in the greater Albion area. The Albion EDC's mission is to retain, expand and recruit business and industry to the greater Albion area and strengthen and revitalize the local economy. This is partially accomplished by growing and attracting businesses; building workforce capabilities to alleviate conditions for unemployment; and revitalizing Albion's core business centers. At one end of the spectrum, this requires delivering services to small businesses and entrepreneurs that are at the earliest growth stages. At the other end, it involves attracting new companies to the greater Albion area. The Albion EDC is part of a statewide network that delivers services to companies and entrepreneurs at every part of the spectrum.

Retention of local companies is critical. Through its retention strategy, the EDC is working to identify, understand, and respond to the needs and opportunities of local businesses. This includes helping established manufacturers sell existing products in new markets, diversify and innovate new products and services, or even gain access to export markets. The EDC's network of statewide partners provides technical support and tailored solutions to help small and medium-sized manufacturers become stronger, more competitive and compete in a global marketplace.



The Albion EDC Business Park

Attracting businesses to the greater Albion area is another key component to expanding the local economic base. The Albion EDC is experienced in developing and executing attraction campaigns and collaborates with regional and state economic development partners who support and encourage the growth of greater Albion. Additionally, the EDC will seek to establish a Community Engagement Plan that will tap into the community at various points to encourage referral of potential prospects and maximize the power of those referrals by marketing a concise and clear message on why Albion is a great place to grow your business.

Workforce development is an important prong in Albion's economic development strategy. The EDC serves as an intermediary between the local workforce, employers and the region's workforce development network. The goal is to assist businesses in finding qualified, employable people, by building a strong workforce of youth and others prepared to perform in 21st century jobs. The EDC will collaborate with workforce development partners to provide training programs pertinent to today's job market. On the flip side, this will allow opportunities for residents to increase their skills to match today's jobs.

The EDC is focused on setting a strategic direction that will include job creation initiatives for both short and long term periods. The key to a strong and viable local economy is sustainable job growth. The EDC seeks to find federal or other funding opportunities that benefit the community in both the short and long term. The Business Incubator, located in the Albion Industrial Park, is one example of encouraging long term growth by assisting new ventures in a sheltered environment with lower start-up and operation costs.

The Albion Food Hub

The Albion Food Hub, which is under the umbrella of the EDC, is another example of the EDC's impact on the local economy. The Food Hub is designed to be a multi-purpose center with an emphasis on generating food-related business from a shared-use kitchen. The Food Hub is taking a five-pillar approach to helping businesses grow and changing the local food culture:

1. **The Farmers Market** serves as many as 500 people on its highest volume days. Twelve vendors are "market gardeners" from within Albion's city limits. Most of the market's 40 vendors are located within a 30-mile driving radius of Albion. Working in partnership with Albion Innovation, a local non-profit food pantry, along with other local pantries, the Food Hub distributes food coupons that can be redeemed at the Farmers Market. In addition, the Farmers Market accepts SNAP, WIC Project Fresh, and Senior Project Fresh, as well as credit and debit cards. From November through February, the Winter Market operates in the Food Hub Building. Beginning in May, the market moves to its outdoor location.

2. **The Commercial Kitchen:** Still in its start-up phase, the commercial kitchen was launched in April 2016. Local entrepreneurs are learning about profit margins, launching new businesses, and diversifying existing ones. The kitchen is also used by community members who cook or bake for personal use, fundraisers, or as team-building activities. It has also served as a meeting place for local and state organizations with meals prepared and served by local entrepreneurs.

3. **Education:** Through the education component, the Food Hub provides classes that are relevant to start-up businesses and community members at various income levels and from different walks of life.

4. **Aggregation and Exchange:** The fourth prong is facilitating the aggregation, storage, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food to local restaurants, hospitals, and schools. An AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer and Albion College interns have been assigned to assist the Food Hub in developing a "sources and uses" database.

5. **Community Gardens:** Working in partnership with Albion Community Gardens, Inc. (ACGi), the Albion Community Foundation, local churches, civic organizations and the Calhoun County Land Bank, the Food Hub supports the use of community gardens. ACGi hopes to reduce the problems of food insecurity in Albion, while promoting the value of a strong ethic, as well as efficient and responsible use of our abundant green space.

The Food Hub is still in its infancy. Much of the marketing and growth is yet to come.

Objectives

1. Encourage broader participation with local stakeholders (public, private, nonprofit, higher education, civic, and business) in the formulation of Albion's economic diversification strategy (1-3 years)
2. Work with the EDC to strengthen Albion's workforce development network and connect Albion's talent base with employment opportunities (e.g. partnering with Michigan Works, Albion College Career & Internship Center, etc.) (1-3 years)

3. Continue support for programs and initiatives that foster entrepreneurship (e.g. promote Albion business incubators and encourage entrepreneurship among all segments of the population, including minorities, women, youth,) (1-10 years)
4. Work closely with the Albion EDC, Chamber and other partner entities to support local businesses with a proactive business retention and development strategy (1-3 years)
5. Work with the Albion EDC, businesses, developers, and others to encourage reuse and redevelopment of brownfield sites (1-10 years)
6. Highlight the progress of Albion's economic development strategy within the framework of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

MUNICIPAL SERVICES:

Deliver high-quality municipal services that improve the quality of life in Albion

Capital Improvements

Maintaining quality infrastructure is important to every aspect of community growth and development, ranging from sidewalk maintenance to facilitating the use of high-speed telecommunications and other technologies. A resounding number of respondents to the Community Survey and participants in the Town Hall sessions registered strong dissatisfaction with the condition of certain city roads and neighborhood streets. However, as the City looks to address the visible problems of street and road repairs, it must also calculate the costs associated with replacing its underground infrastructure of water and sewer mains. Albion has an aging infrastructure. The City is responding by formulating a long-term plan to meet current and future infrastructure needs. For example, during Town Hall sessions, citizens expressed concerns regarding the condition of the water tower. At present, the City is pursuing grant funding to determine, from an engineering perspective, whether the best course of action is to replace or rehabilitate the tower.

Green infrastructure

The citizens of Albion value its existing green infrastructure, e.g. parks, trails, etc. The City of Albion is partnering with others to develop a regional green infrastructure vision for the region. Green Infrastructure is both a network of green space and natural areas, along with built techniques such as rain gardens and bio swales that preserve the function of the natural ecosystem to benefit residents of the region. Rain gardens along roads help clean the rain water before it enters rivers and lakes. Green infrastructure is a mechanism to protect water quality, provide recreational opportunities for citizens, and increase tourism.

The City of Albion planned and secured funding for trail development and construction of green infrastructure for control of storm water runoff. Storm water runoff is a major problem for municipal sewer systems and can lead to the contamination of drinking water.

Encourage Green Development

Albion's revitalization strategy embraces and encourages sustainable development. The City of Albion encourages green development practices in public, commercial, educational, and residential buildings, at the onset of projects and initial stages of planning. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present while being mindful of and not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Green development looks at improving the built environment while having a minimal impact on the natural environment. Green buildings make more efficient and effective use of the resources of energy, water, materials, and land. Beyond the environmental, social, and health benefits associated with green buildings, increasingly more studies make the case for the financial benefits in terms of the long run savings and payback from reduced energy and water consumption, reduced buildings' emissions, and improved and healthier work, learning, and living environments.

Green development ranges from reusing portions of existing structures, when possible, to minimizing impervious surfaces to reduce storm water handling/management, encouraging the creation of rain gardens and bio swales, green roofs, and the use of alternative energy.

Objectives:

1. Take all of the necessary steps to have Albion certified by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation as a Redevelopment Ready Community (1-2 years)
2. Develop/formalize a Public Services Plan to determine needed enhancements in city administration, public safety, community health, and overall municipal services. (1-3 years)
3. Develop/update a Capital Improvements Plan to enhance and maintain quality technological and physical infrastructure. Infrastructure includes: Roads and sidewalks; parking; water, sewer, and storm sewer utilities, dam and millrace removal (1 year)
4. Evaluate and implement appropriate fiber optic communications and other emerging technology infrastructure, in order to address the current and future needs of the community's diverse array of stakeholders (1-5 years)

PARKS AND RECREATION

Enhance and protect the environment

In the fall of 2015, the City of Albion Parks and Recreation released its 2016-2020 Master Plan. The Master Plan focuses on: (1) maintenance and improvement of the current parks and recreation system; (2) ensuring that there are sufficient recreational opportunities within walking distance of low-income neighborhoods; (3) enhancing recreational opportunities associated with the Kalamazoo River and the parks along the river and associated with the river trail; (4) addressing access to and safety within the park system; and (5) ensuring that, whenever possible, all applicable policies and environments promote physical activity.

The City of Albion owns and maintains approximately 100 acres of parks and trails. The 17 developed city parks range in size and scale from mini-pocket parks to the nearly 40-acre Victory Park. The facilities and amenities provided in these parks include a range of options, such as playground, canoeing, ball fields, basketball courts, shuffle board, and a disc golf course. The City also maintains five properties that have not been designated permanent parks or open spaces, but are being utilized in this fashion. These include a dog park, memorial garden, and landscaped greenspaces. Finally, the 1.6 mile Albion Rover Trail along the Kalamazoo River bisects the city from Victory Park to Harris Field.

Albion's riverfront and parks are important community assets that provide recreational opportunities and offer places for solace and reflection, and contribute to placemaking and the overall quality of life. Both the Community Input Survey and the Town Hall sessions confirmed that the people of Albion value its parks and natural areas. In addition, citizens have suggested the creation of a splash park or skate park. A conceptual plan for a splash pad, which would be located at Rieger or Holland Park, is included in the City of Albion Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2016-2020. Citizens have raised regarding the future of the Kalamazoo River dam, the millrace, and maintenance of the swimming area of the Rieger Park Pond, McIntosh Park, and the Tillman Cornelius baseball.

Victory Park Playground

Albion is located along the North Country National Scenic Trail.

ZONING

Improve consistency between the existing zoning code and the City's long-term goals for housing, commercial, and industrial development

In October 2016, Albion was privileged to be among five Michigan cities selected to receive consultation and guidance from the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) and the Michigan Municipal League (MML). The City is advised to make incremental changes in updating its zoning code. The zoning code can be streamlined by consolidating the number of classifications. In addition, through text amendments, the City can propose changes in the zoning ordinance that will allow for "Missing Middle" housing types, e.g. micro-units, carriage houses, duplexes, townhomes, live/work, and bungalow courts.

The City has identified several situations where: (a) current land use is inconsistent with existing zoning classifications; (b) previous zoning decisions have created hardship for residential property owners; or (c) economic development and the growth of new businesses might be spurred by identifying and correcting ordinances and zoning code provisions that are barriers.

Objectives:

1. Evaluate and implement changes in the zoning code and map that are necessary to achieve desired land use patterns and align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan (1-5 years)
2. Adopt and update standards in the zoning ordinance to improve non-motorized transportation and promote and encourage green infrastructure (1-2 years)

NEIGHBORHOODS

Strengthen and beautify Albion's neighborhoods

The City is collaborating with a diverse array of stakeholders to redevelop and rebuild its neighborhoods and create a more vibrant community. Local leaders and citizens alike recognize that a quality housing stock is a tremendous asset in attracting new residents and encouraging current residents to stay within the community. Albion has an aging housing stock. Almost 54% of the city's housing stock was built prior to 1950. Less than seven percent of all units were built since 1980. In 2015, almost 20 percent of all city housing units were estimated to be vacant. Of the 2,785 occupied units, 43.6% were rented and 56.4% were owner-occupied. Community residents and leaders recognize the need to increase the availability of housing options.

Albion is a diverse community. Albion College, a premiere four-year residential college, attracts an influx of academic talent, both in terms of students as well as faculty and staff. At the other the end of the spectrum, Albion's senior citizens are an integral part of the fabric of the community. Therefore, it is important that the City's housing strategy range from the development of loft apartments to considering specific options expressly designed for seniors, including assisted living. Many respondents to the Community Input Survey expressed concern regarding the lack of options for senior housing. Several respondents indicated that there is a demand for condominiums and cited examples of people who have left the community because these options are not available. As new housing products are developed, it will be important to consider issues of accessibility and accommodations of barrier-free design, in order to allow all persons, regardless of physical ability, weight, height, or age, equal access to facilities.

A target market analysis (TMA) produced by Zimmerman/Volk Associates reports that there is demand for new housing units in and around downtown Albion. Approximately 42% of the potential housing market is comprised of young singles and couples, about 35% represent families, and 23% are empty nesters and retirees. According to the TMA, about 38% currently live within the City, approximately 32% live elsewhere in Calhoun County, with the balance being drawn from neighboring counties and elsewhere. Their housing preferences include apartments, townhouses, and single-family houses. Although there is demand for smaller rental units and a diverse array of product types, there is a disconnect between available housing units and the preferences of many in the housing market. Most of Albion's available housing units are single-family houses. Over 69% of the city's 3,478 housing units are single-family detached houses. However, nearly 65 percent of all households in Albion contain just one or two persons. The TMA encourages development of rental units, especially on the upper floors of commercial buildings that are along or adjacent to Superior Street, the main corridor in Albion's central business district. Mixed-use developments blend residential and other uses and create economic activity.

The introduction of new and/or renovated market and affordable-rate units in and around the downtown area will create a healthier balance of housing types and incomes. Between now and 2022, an estimated 432 housing units could be absorbed in and around the downtown area. This includes both market-rate and affordable apartments, townhouses, single family houses, lofts and condominiums.

Nationwide, there has been a significant shift in preferences from suburban subdivisions toward mixed-use, walkable urban neighborhoods. The two largest generations in American history – Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) and Millennials (born between approximately 1982-2000) are having a significant influence on housing markets. Many are singles or couples without children. Due to a combination of economic and lifestyle preferences, including their recollection of the housing market collapse in 2008, many prefer to rent rather than own and enjoy living in downtown areas. A critical mass of residential housing in the downtown increases the density and contributes to the vibrancy of the downtown. As more people live downtown, spending is increased in the downtown.

Albion has a significant number of retirees. In 2015, there were 545 households that would be considered "Struggling Retirees" with income largely from Social Security, supplemented by small pensions. Nearly all live in substandard housing. Some of Albion's seniors would prefer to live in dwelling units that require minimal upkeep and low maintenance expense, and if given appropriate housing choices, would choose to remain in their current neighborhoods. There is an opportunity to stabilize neighborhoods by raising awareness of resources to assist seniors in staying in their homes, encouraging homeowners to improve their homes, and providing new homebuyers with information about available financing tools and incentives. Homeownership helps to instill a sense of pride and create a more stable local economy.

Working in partnership with the Calhoun County Land Bank, the City of Albion has and is taking steps necessary to eliminate blight, encourage infill housing development, and attract private investment. In preparation for infill development, the Land Bank demolished a number of blighted residential structures in the neighborhood that is located west of South Superior Street, south of West Cass, and north of West Erie. The Urban Renewal Area (also known as the Renaissance Area) is another priority area for infill housing development.

Blight elimination was noted as a major concern by a number of participants in the Community Input Survey. Some people did acknowledge the work that the City is doing to address this problem. Others called for greater code enforcement.

Redevelopment of abandoned industrial facilities, which are located in close proximity to residential areas, can spark the revitalization of surrounding neighborhoods. Through adaptive reuse, historic buildings like the former Sheldon Hospital can be repurposed and used for something other than the purpose for which they were originally built. Today, the Sheldon Place Apartments, the most expensive apartments in Albion, are fully occupied with a waiting list. At most, only one or two units become vacant each year and are quickly filled. Unfortunately, the lack of this type of high quality housing has forced residents in search of it to leave and prevented others from relocating to Albion. Regardless of the price point, the City encourages through thoughtful planning the revitalization of underutilized and vacant properties.

According to the TMA, downtown artist housing could potentially be developed through the use of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). Artists who do not have high incomes could likely qualify for income-restricted units, as has been the case with many developments across the country. A requirement would be that at least one member of the household have a portfolio review by a qualified committee established for that purpose. The LIHTC program can be augmented with federal historic tax credits to redevelop buildings within an historic district. Artspace Project, Inc., in

Minneapolis, Minnesota, has used this strategy and provided consultation for similar redevelopment projects around the country.

Objectives

1. Develop and implement a neighborhood revitalization strategy to eliminate blight, improve public safety and environmental health, and strengthen residential areas as well as former industrial sites that are in close proximity to neighborhoods (1-10 years)
2. Work with private and nonprofit housing developers and others to encourage infill forms of development and the redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and brownfield sites (1-10 years)
3. Expand, diversify and market housing options to meet the needs of residents of varying life stages, life styles and income levels (e.g. Senior/retirement living, College corridor neighborhood, downtown lofts, affordable and low income housing, etc.) (1-10 years)
4. Develop and implement a certification/registration program for rental and vacant properties (1-2 years)
5. Identify neighborhood groups who can serve as ambassadors and champions for their respective areas (1-3 years)
6. Highlight progress and achievements as part of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Stabilize the downtown, enhance its historic character, and support its economic growth

According to leadership guru John Maxwell, "Momentum is the most powerful force for change." Momentum is hard to gain, but once it begins to build, it becomes a source of energy that fuels change. Momentum is building in downtown Albion with significant investments in anchor projects like the renovation of the Bohm Theatre, restoration of the Mary Sheldon Ismon House, and construction of a new hotel.

The beautifully restored Bohm Theatre, which reopened in the fall of 2014, has been a significant catalyst in the revitalization of downtown Albion. The project involved the exterior and interior historic renovation of the 1929 landmark theatre. An important community gathering place was restored with the historic rehabilitation of the Mary Sheldon Ismon House, located at 300 S. Clinton. The Ismon House is listed as an eligible property in a National Register of Historic Places. A $9.2 million project is underway to construct a four-story, 72-room boutique hotel at the corner of Superior and Porter streets. The hotel would house a restaurant, conference and ballroom space.

With the increased numbers of young adults/Millennials and Baby Boomers wanting to live in high-density, walkable neighborhoods, it is important for Albion to make the downtown area an attractive place to live, work, and play. Participants in the Community Input Survey and in the Town Hall sessions expressed concern regarding the condition of downtown storefronts. The Michigan Main Street program could be a tool to assist with the beautification and restoration of downtown storefronts.

Citizens, DDA, and City Council members also recognize the importance of making better use of rear entrances. Conceptual drawings may be available from previous grant applications to inspire design concepts for rear entrances and to generate ideas for the restoration of former alleyways.

Downtown Parking

In 2006, a Parking Analysis was commissioned by the City of Albion and Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The study reported an inventory of 1,429 parking spaces in downtown Albion, which includes publicly and privately owned as well as on-street and off-street spaces. In general, on-street parking is preferred over off-street. On-street parking on Superior Street is preferred over other downtown streets.

As the dates for reconstruction of Superior Street and construction of the new hotel approach, the City and DDA are aware of the need to help people make the transition to off-street parking. The 2006 Parking Analysis reported that there are approximately 315 parking spaces behind the Bohm Theatre. However, many people have expressed safety concerns regarding the use of this lot, especially at night.

Recreation and Entertainment

Revitalizing the downtown is key to Albion's future. Albion's citizens understand the importance of creating a vibrant downtown. They recognize the importance and impact associated with special events and community festivals like Swingin' at the Shell, the French Market, and Festival of the Forks. However, there is a call for more community events that appeal to community members across all demographics.

Downtown Albion is home to Kids 'N' Stuff Children's Museum. Museums and other cultural attractions can be primary destinations/trip generators as well as supplemental attractions and activities for tourists already in an area for other reasons. Museums serve local residents, visitors on day trips from outside the local area, as well as those who stay overnight in the local area. The economic impact of museums is measured as the direct sales of museum admission and purchases within the museum as well as the secondary sales and expenditures in the local area, which include shopping, restaurant meals, gas and lodging.

The lack of entertainment options and nightlife is cited as a concern. In addition, there is a significant demand for more restaurants. The image and vibrancy of the downtown is important in keeping and attracting all groups – young people, families, retirees, and visitors. Albion College enriches the city with cultural and recreational amenities unusual for a town its size. The College's $3.5 million project to upgrade its athletic facility will liven the athletic arena portion of the campus, which could have a spillover effect on downtown commerce. The Nancy G. Held Equestrian Center, which opened in the fall of 2004, regularly hosts events for regional horse organizations. The Held Center is a 340-acre resource intended to draw community members and those from surrounding communities who are interested in equine sports and will be another economic engine for the community.

Attracting New Businesses

City leadership desires to be both strategic and realistic in identifying ways to diminish the flow of dollars that leave the community through sales leakage. This occurs when consumers make purchases outside the local area either at a physical location or online. There is recognition that in certain consumer categories it will be difficult for local businesses to compete on price, given the economies of scale achieved by major retailers and big-box stores.

City leadership has consulted with another community in the region that has successfully recruited businesses to its downtown. The strategy was based on: conducting comparison studies with comparable cities; performing a gap analysis of goods and services within a certain driving radius; understanding and evaluating the needs of companies in different sectors and niches, e.g. sales per square foot, square foot demand, square foot per store, etc.; developing a referral pipeline of prospective entrepreneurs that included Human Resource professionals in area companies; packaging incentives; and delivering presentations to prospects. In addition, the community launched a marketing campaign targeting consumers within a specific driving radius. Downtown businesses collaborated to create discount packages to cross-promote the goods and services of others.

Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation

Historic preservation protects the historic building stock and transforms aging structures into buildings that contribute to the vibrancy and economic revitalization of communities. The Superior Street Commercial Historic District is listed on the National Register and two other districts -- the Eaton/Superior Residential District and the Albion Historic District -- are eligible to be listed on the National Historic Register. In addition to the Bohm Theatre and the Mary Sheldon Ismon House, other historic assets include the Gardner House Museum, a preserved historic building, and a Carnegie library built in 1919, which houses the Albion Public Library. Albion College also has at least two Michigan registered historic buildings.

Objectives:

1. Find creative ways to increase the number of Downtown Development Authority (DDA) initiatives (1-3 years)
2. Explore the establishment of a Local Historic District study committee (1 year)
3. Analyze and evaluate the City's parking situation and create a plan for improving parking management and balancing parking space supply with demand (1-3 years)
4. Maintain a robust nonprofit sector, while monitoring the balance between nonprofit and revenue generating development in the downtown district, in order to expand and build the tax base (1-3 years)
5. Attract commercial development to the downtown that will serve the needs of the community and complement the existing mix of businesses (e.g. restaurants, retail, entertainment, etc.) (3-5 years)
6. Continue to create incentives and attractions for residents, college students and tourists to visit the downtown (e.g. Hotel, Bohm Theater, Kids N Stuff, the Ludington Center) (1-5 years)
7. Highlight progress of downtown development efforts within the context of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

EDUCATION

Support and strengthen a Pre-K through 16 education system for the community

In May 2016, Albion merged and consolidated its school district with its neighbor, Marshall. Albion voters made the difficult decision to approve the annexation, in order to deal with the challenges of declining enrollment and revenue. Through a cooperative agreement, Albion's high school and middle school age children were already attending Marshall Schools. Many factors must be considered in handling this complex phenomenon of bringing together two historic sports rivals with racially, culturally, and socioeconomically different student populations.

Community Input Survey respondents expressed that education is a very important issue and a deciding factor for many parents with school age children. Participants in the Town Hall meetings expanded on this theme and stressed the importance of including vocational educational and job training in the curriculum.

Objectives

1. Continue joint meetings with Marshall Public Schools, Albion College, other area schools and community partners to assess, document and support a comprehensive, “post-annexation” K-16 education strategy. An important element would be a communications plan to share information and inform the parents and guardians of Albion’s school-age children. (ongoing)
2. Strengthen and promote City programs (summer and after school tutoring, the arts, recreational programs, etc.) that support youth in and around Albion (1-5 years)
3. Partner with area school districts, the Albion Recreation Department, the Albion District Library, neighborhood organizations, the Build VISTA Team, Albion College, and other partners to develop educational opportunities outside of the classroom for all school-age children in the Albion (49224) area. (1-2 years)
4. Utilize Albion College and other institutions of higher education to support college preparation and access. Strengthen the Albion College Access Network. (1-3 years)
5. Highlight progress and successes in the educational arena as part of the City’s comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

TRANSPORTATION

Improve Albion's transportation network to accommodate and promote various modes, including walking, biking, automobiles, passenger rail and public transportation

The I-94 business loop is a 4.4 mile Michigan highway that runs south from I-94 along Eaton Street, east along Austin Avenue, then south via Superior Street into downtown Albion. M-99, a state trunkline also runs through Albion with a terminal point in Lansing to the north and Ohio to the south.

Transit

Table 20: 2015 Estimates Transportation Access

	City of Albion	Calhoun County	U.S.
No vehicle ownership	13.7%	8.1%	9.1%
Own 1 vehicle	44.6%	37.4%	33.9%
Walk to work	17.2%	3.8%	2.8%
Take public transportation to work	0.0%	0.6%	5.0%

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Census; The Nielsen Company; Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc.

Overall, Albion residents have lower rates of automobile ownership than the nation as a whole. In 2015, the Nielsen company estimated that 13.7% of Albion's population did not own vehicles. This is in comparison with 8.1% of Calhoun County and 9.1% of the United States population. A substantially large percent of the population – 17.2% -- walked to work. This is in comparison with 3.8% and 2.8% of the population of Calhoun County and nationwide, respectively. In 2000, it was estimated that 3.0% of Albion's population worked at home and the mean travel time to work was 15.8 minutes.

Working in partnership with AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, the Albion City Transportation Workgroup looks to raise awareness of existing transportation services that are available to the people of Albion. In addition, the City is collaborating with Michigan Works! and others to help Albion residents overcome transportation barriers that might prohibit them from obtaining and maintaining jobs within the city and the region.

Community Action, the Albion-Marshall-Connector, and private taxi companies provide transit services for Albion and its surrounding areas. Community Action specializes in providing curb-to-curb services in Calhoun County for seniors age 60 and over and disabled persons age 18 and over. Community Action transports its clientele to medical appointments, handle grocery shopping and banking, places of employment, congregate meal centers, and other necessary trips. The Albion-Marshall Connector serves a broader audience and provides intercity bus services between Albion and Marshall. The service has been in operation since 2014, when the City of Marshall expanded its offerings to bridge the 12-mile gap between both the two communities.

Community Action provides services to its targeted clientele on a donation basis. The Albion-Marshall Connector charges a nominal fee. Both services operate mainly on weekdays and Saturday mornings. Albion's most active taxi service offers more flexibility in scheduling. However, its moderately priced fares are still cost-prohibitive for certain segments of the population.

Albion is served by both Amtrak and Greyhound. Amtrak stops daily in Albion, which is located along the Wolverine passenger route between Chicago and Detroit. The Wolverine route continues north from Detroit reaching Pontiac. Albion's historic train station was built in 1882 and in the mid-1980's was restored to its original condition.

Non-Motorized Network

Albion's River Trail is an important community asset. The trail runs through Albion for 1.6 miles along the Kalamazoo River. Many towns around the country enjoy their trails as both a recreational and economic resource. A 2014 study released by the Michigan Department of Transportation reported that bicycling provides an estimated $668 million per year in economic benefit to Michigan's economy, including employment, retail revenue, tourism expenditure, improved health, and increased productivity. The City is looking to strengthen its connections with regional and even a national network of trails.

Albion is strategically located along the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST), one of the nation's longest hiking and backpacking trails, extending 4,600 miles from New York to North Dakota. The trail is administered by the National Park Service. Albion also has the opportunity to pursue a "Trail Town" designation, by identifying and promoting the amenities and attractions that would be of interest to trail users. Trail towns have developed systems of trails and created a welcoming environment with amenities like bike and kayak racks and picnic tables at access points. Wayfinding signage and kiosks encourage trail users to visit and patronize downtown businesses and use amenities like ATM machines, air at gas stations, or Internet access at the public library.

Water trails also translate into regional economic growth. As one of the cities located along the Kalamazoo River, Albion would benefit from its participation in a regional recreation plan, which would culminate in the creation of a water trail for the Kalamazoo River. The City has expressed its support of the project, which is being spearheaded by the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council, the Pottawatomi Resource Conservation and Development Council and the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council. The water trail will cover the entire navigable portion of the river, approximately 120 miles.

Albion is poised to take the next step in leveraging its trails as an element within its economic revitalization strategy. Trails are good for the health of local residents. They also link and connect people, which is good for the health of an economic region.

In addition to the recreational and economic benefits of developing a non-motorized network, the City recognizes the importance of building sidewalks, bicycle paths and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to make walking and bicycling safer and more accessible for students who will continue to attend school within city limits.

Objectives:

1. Develop a motorized public transportation plan working in conjunction with Calhoun County, Albion-Marshall Connector and other strategic partners (1-5 years)
2. Develop a non-motorized transportation plan (1-5 years)

3. Encourage walking, biking and other recreation by strengthening Albion's non-motorized trail network within the city as well as its connections with the region's non-motorized network (e.g. Iron-Belle Trail, North Country Trail, Kalamazoo River Water Trail, etc.) (1-3 years)
4. Establish Albion as a "Trail Town" (1-2 years)
5. Continue to work cooperatively with MDOT, AMTRAK and other regional transportation partners and authorities to coordinate and improve major streets and other public transit systems (1-10 years)
6. Highlight progress and achievements in the comprehensive marketing campaign for the City (1-10 years)

MAJOR CORRIDORS

Focus planning and resources to enhance and transform the city's major corridors

The City of Albion has several important gateways and corridors leading into the community and connecting it to other communities, i.e. downtown commercial district, Albion College, the I-94 Business Corridor, Austin Avenue and the south entrance on M-99. There is an opportunity to enhance major gateways, develop strong and consistent visual themes along these corridors, and stabilize them. This would include improving the gateways into the City with attractive landscaping, streetscape, and signage; establishing strong visual themes and physical linkages to strengthen connections between the corridors, and improving access for walking and biking.

Objectives:

1. Develop a Corridor Improvement Plan that strengthens the visual and physical connections between the Downtown Commercial District, Albion College, the I-94 Business Corridor, Austin Avenue and the south entrance on M-99 (1-5 years)
2. Enhance the City's major gateways (as described above) with appropriate landscaping, street-scaping, and signage (1-10 years)
3. Explore the possibility of establishing a Corridor Improvement Authority (1-2 years)
4. Work with surrounding communities to extend/connect Albion's major corridors to the region (e.g. establishing an MLK corridor between Albion and Marshall, and complementing corridors with non-motorized, regional trail systems) (1-5 years)
5. Highlight progress and achievements in the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

Appendix 1: 2017 Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives are not ranked, because each is a high priority. Progress will be reviewed by the Planning Commission on a quarterly basis.

Goal 1

Retain and attract jobs to Albion by supporting business growth, development, and attraction

Objectives:

- Encourage broader participation with local stakeholders (public, private, non-profit, higher education, civic, and business) in the formulation of Albion's economic diversification strategy (1-3 years)
- Work with the EDC to strengthen Albion's workforce development network and connect Albion's talent base with employment opportunities (e.g. partnering with Michigan Works, Albion College Career & Internship Center, etc.) (1-3 years)
- Continue support for programs and initiatives that foster entrepreneurship (e.g. promote Albion business incubators and encourage entrepreneurship among all segments of the population, including minorities, women, youth,) (1-10 years)
- Work closely with the Albion EDC, Chamber and other partner entities to support local businesses with a proactive business retention and development strategy (1-3 years)
- Work with the Albion EDC, businesses, developers, and others to encourage reuse and redevelopment of brownfield sites (1-10 years)
- Highlight the progress of Albion's economic development strategy within the framework of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10)
- Take all of the necessary steps to have Albion certified by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation as a Redevelopment Ready Community (1-2 years)

Goal 2

Deliver high-quality municipal services that improve the quality of life in Albion

Objectives:

- Take all of the necessary steps to have Albion certified by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation as a Redevelopment Ready Community (1-2 years)
- Develop/formalize a Public Services Plan to determine needed enhancements in city administration, public safety, community health, and overall municipal services. (1-5 years)
- Develop a Capital Improvements Plan to enhance and maintain quality technological and physical infrastructure. Infrastructure includes: Roads and sidewalks; parking; water, sewer, and storm sewer utilities, dam and millrace removal (1 year)
- Evaluate and implement appropriate fiber optic communications and other emerging technology infrastructure in order to address the current and future needs of the community's diverse array of stakeholders (1-5 years)

Goal 3

Achieve consistency between the existing zoning code and the City's long-term goals for housing, commercial, and industrial development

Objectives:

- Evaluate and implement changes in the zoning code and map that are necessary to achieve desired land use patterns and align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan (1-2 years)
- Adopt and update standards in the zoning ordinance to improve non-motorized transportation and promote and encourage green infrastructure (1-2 years)
- Take all of the necessary steps to have Albion certified by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation as a Redevelopment Ready Community (1-2 years)

Goal 4

Strengthen and beautify Albion's neighborhoods

Objectives:

- Develop and implement a neighborhood revitalization strategy to eliminate blight, improve public safety and environmental health, and strengthen residential areas as well as former industrial sites that are in close proximity to neighborhoods (1-10 years)
- Work with private and nonprofit housing developers and others to encourage infill forms of development and the redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and brownfield sites (1-10 years)
- Expand, diversify and market housing options to meet the needs of residents of varying life stages, life styles and income levels (e.g. Senior/retirement living, College corridor neighborhood, downtown lofts, affordable and low income housing, etc.) (1-10 years)
- Develop and implement a certification/registration program for rental and vacant properties (1-2 years)
- Identify neighborhood groups who can serve as ambassadors and champions for their respective areas (1-3 years)
- Highlight progress and achievements as part of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

Goal 5

Stabilize the downtown, enhance its historic character, and support its economic growth

Objectives:

- Find creative ways to increase the number of Downtown Development Authority (DDA) initiatives (1-3 years)
- Explore the establishment of a Local Historic District study committee (1 year)
- Analyze and evaluate the City's parking situation and create a plan for improving parking management and balancing parking space supply with demand (1-3 years)
- Maintain a robust nonprofit sector, while monitoring the balance between nonprofit and revenue generating development in the downtown district, in order to expand and build the tax base (1-3 years)
- Attract commercial development to the downtown that will serve the needs of the community and complement the existing mix of businesses (e.g. restaurants, retail, entertainment, etc.) (3-5 years)
- Continue to create incentives and attractions for residents, college students and tourists to visit the downtown (e.g. Hotel, Bohm Theater, Kids N Stuff, the Ludington Center) (1-5 years)
- Highlight progress of downtown development efforts within the context of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

Goal 6

Support and strengthen a Pre K-16 education system for the community

Objectives:

- Continue joint meetings with Marshall Public Schools, Albion College, other area schools and community partners to assess, document and support a comprehensive, "post-annexation" K-16 education strategy (ongoing)
- Strengthen and promote City programs (summer and after school tutoring, the arts, recreational programs, etc.) that support youth in and around Albion (1-5 years)
- Utilize Albion College and other institutions of higher education to support college preparation and access. Strengthen the Albion College Access Network. (1-3 years)
- Highlight progress and successes in the educational arena as part of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

Goal 7

Build capacity and a network of organizations and services to address poverty and meet the needs of residents who cannot afford basic services

Objectives:

- Update comprehensive community needs assessments and asset maps to identify assets and determine needs (1-2 years)

Goal 8

Improve Albion's transportation network to accommodate and promote various modes, including walking, biking, automobiles, passenger rail and public transportation

Objectives:

- Develop a motorized public transportation plan working in conjunction with the Calhoun County Transit system, Albion-Marshall Connector and other strategic partners (1-5 years)
- Develop a non-motorized travel plan (1-5 years)
- Encourage walking, biking and other recreation by strengthening Albion's non-motorized trail network within the city as well as its connections with the region's non-motorized network (e.g. Iron-Belle Trail, North Country Trail, Kalamazoo River Water Trail, etc.) (1-3 years)
- Establish Albion as a "Trail Town" (1-2 years)
- Fortify relationships with MDOT, AMTRAK, Greyhound and regional transportation partners and authorities to coordinate improvements to major streets and public transit systems (1-5 years)
- Highlight progress, achievements, and testimonials as part of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

Goal 9

Focus planning and resources to enhance and transform the city's major corridors

Objectives:

- Develop a Corridor Improvement Plan that strengthens the visual and physical connections between the Downtown Commercial District, Albion College, the I-94 Business Corridor, and Austin Avenue, and the south entrance on M-99. (1-5 years)
- Enhance the City's major gateways (as described above) with appropriate landscaping, streetscaping, and signage (1-10 years)
- Explore the possibility of establishing a Corridor Improvement Authority (1-2 years)
- Work with surrounding communities to extend/connect Albion's major corridors to the region (e.g. establishing an MLK corridor between Albion and Marshall, and complementing corridors with non-motorized, regional trail systems) (1-5 years)
- Highlight progress and achievements as part of the City's comprehensive marketing strategy (1-10 years)

Goal 10

Forge local, regional and global collaborations that support the City of Albion -- its people, its needs and its opportunities.

Objectives

- Work in collaboration with local and regional partners and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers to assess community needs, increase organizational capacity and expand access to education, health care, quality food, economic opportunity and the overall quality of life for all residents (1-3 years)
- Develop a local food culture through increased access to healthy food and nutrition education that utilizes community resources including businesses, farms, community gardens, farmers market, food hub, and other organizations (1-5 years)
- Strengthen and increase the number of strategic collaborations with global partners (e.g. Noisy-le-Roi and Bailly, France, the Albion College/Global Liberal Arts Alliance, etc.) that bring international perspective and attention to Albion (1- 5 years)
- Develop and utilize a *Partnership & Collaboration Agreement* with appropriate community partners (tbd) to further define goals, objectives and roles (1-3 years)
- Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy, working in collaboration with partner entities, to promote Albion as a desirable place in which to live, play, study, and invest (1-5 years)

Goal 11

Support networks and systems that promote healthy living

Objectives:

- Partner with the Food Hub and other local organizations to increase access to healthy, affordable, and nutritious food (1-3 years)
- Partner with the Food Hub and other local organizations to promote food security and public health by encouraging and supporting locally-based food production and distribution, e.g. the Farmers Market and community gardens (1-5 years)
- Partner with various healthcare providers, patient advocacy groups, transportation services, AmeriCorps VISTA, and other stakeholders to support healthcare access and wellness programming in Albion (1-3 years)
- Enhance safe walking and cycling routes for citizens through transportation, land use, and design decisions (1-5 years)

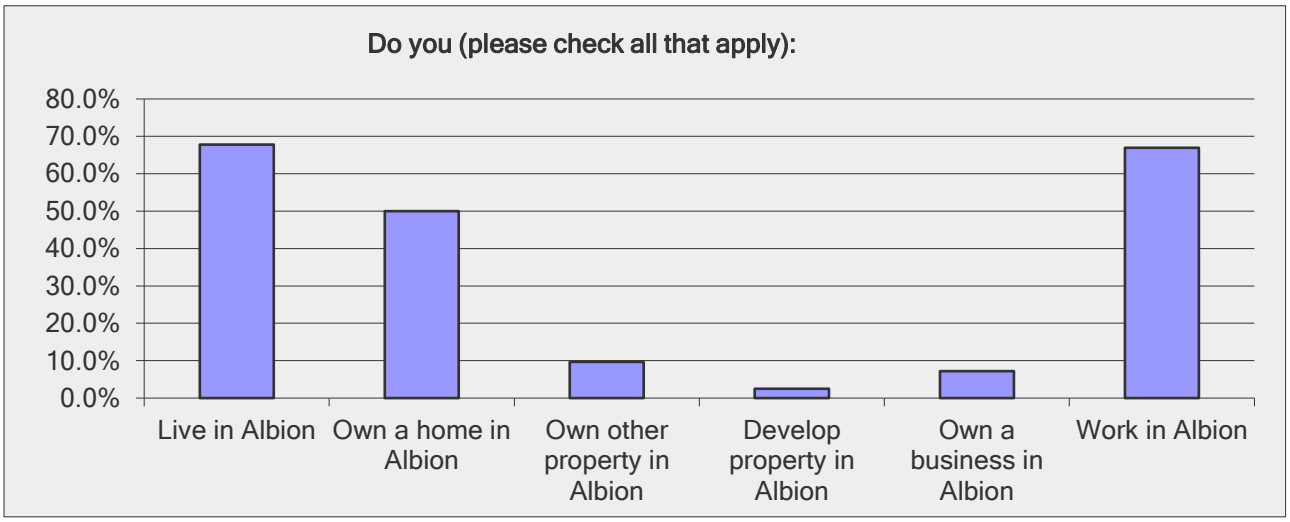
Appendix 2: Redevelopment Sites

	Sites	Blight	Contamination	Length of vacancy	Utilities terminated by provider due to inactivity	Location: proximity to residential, river, downtown, or park	Rezoned from residential to B-1	Brownfield designation	Number of acres	Architectural Integrity	Historic value
1	Washington-Gardner					xx				x	x
2	Dalrymple	x	x	x		x			x		
3	Union Steel	x	x	x		xx			x		
	(plus 2 additional former Union Steel sites)										
4	Austin School	x	x	x							x
5	"Gayle Mfg": 710 W. Cass St	x	x	x		x			x		
6	Harvard Site	x	x	x							
7	Parker Labs: 601 N. Albion	x	x	x							
8	Parker Labs: asphalt parking lot			x		x			x		
9	600 block of Austin Ave	x			x		x				
10	Schools: N. Berrien Street								x		
11	500 N. Berrien										
12	Browns Weld	x	x	x		xx					
13	Renaissance Area (Urban Renewal land)					x			xx		
14	Sheridan 425										

Appendix 3: Community Input Survey Results

Provided by the Albion Community Foundation

Question 1



Question 2

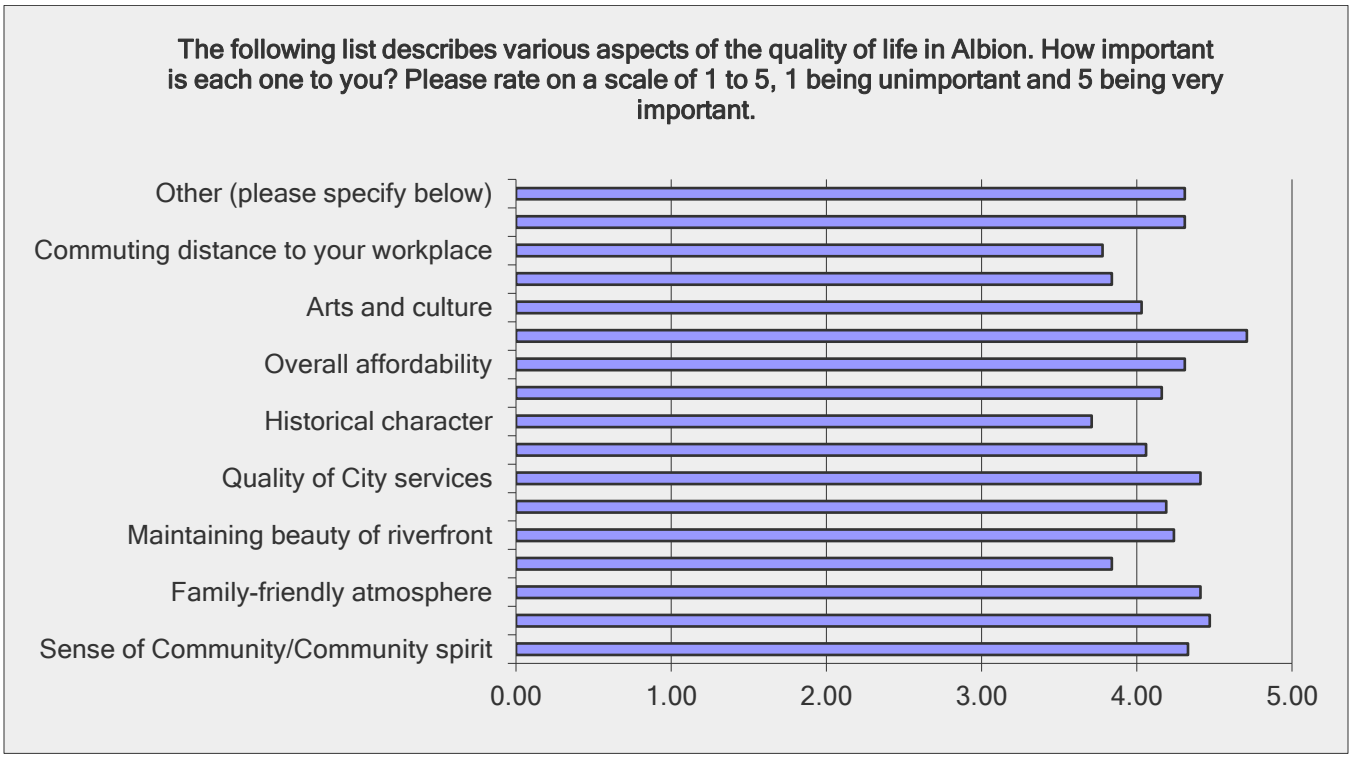
In general, how satisfied are you with the quality of life in Albion?							
Answer Options	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Rating Average	Response Count
	5	42	92	86	10	3.23	235
						answered question	235
						skipped question	5

Question 3

Other Specified Responses:

- More restaurant and dining options, e.g. Chinese food, steak house, ethnic restaurants
- More bar options/Nightlife/Entertainment
- Baked goods; bakery
- Gym with fitness classes
- Dry cleaning
- Auto service
- Printing needs; office supplies (Staples/Office Max)

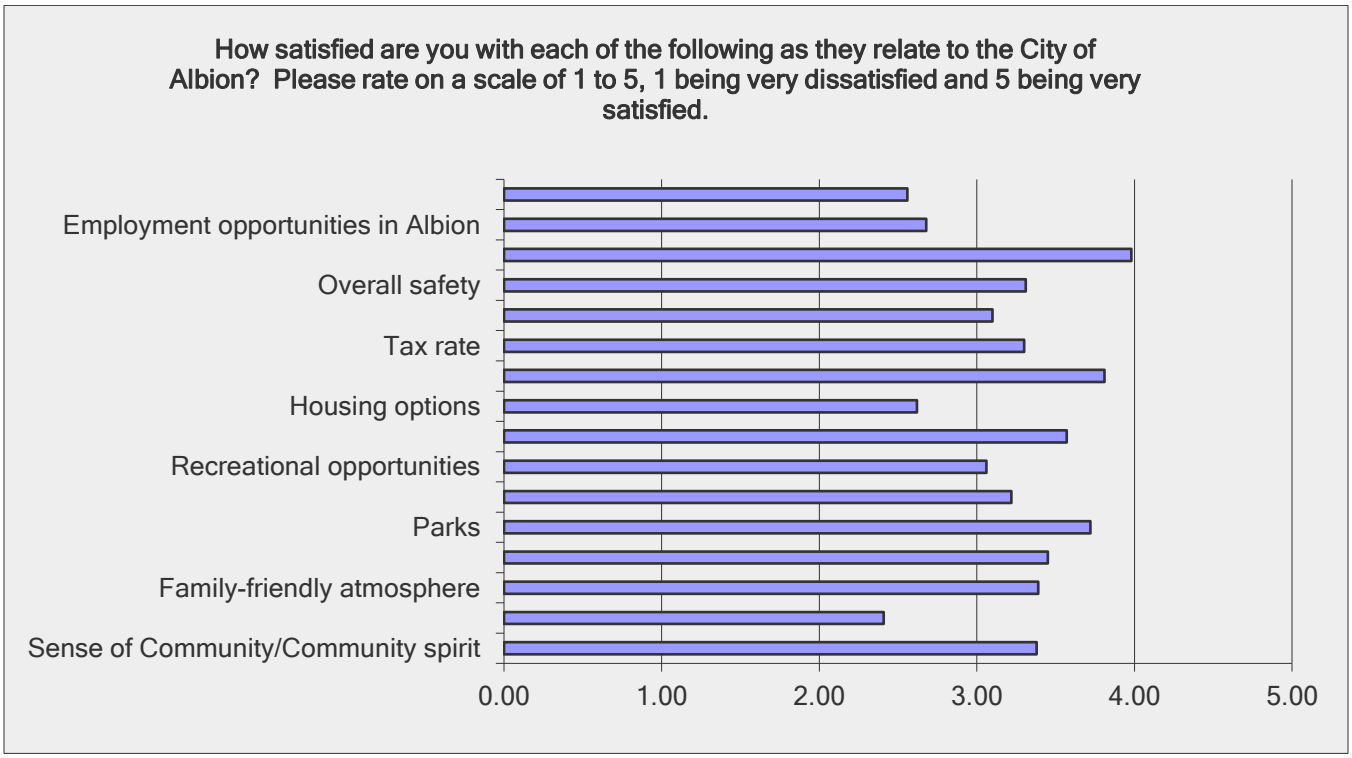
Question 4



Other Specified Responses:

- Fork Senior Center
- Nursing homes/assisted living opportunities
- Proximity to urban centers, i.e. Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Jackson, Lansing, Ann Arbor
- The Albion Community Foundation/grant opportunities, local news outlets, central communication strategy for community events (public calendar that is widely-utilized); constructive, positive, and collaborative relationship between the college and city; conversations on how to improve race relations among citizens, public safety, and students
- Cultural activities for youth (piano, dance etc.)
- Opportunities for interactions among diverse people
- Albion has been our home/place of work since 1973. We have always been impressed with the feeling of community that makes Albion a warm and inviting place to live. This is not always the case in other communities, as our friends who have moved away have found.
- Cultural experiences that celebrate our diversity
- It is important is that the college continue to enrich the community by hosting public venues for speakers, performances, athletic events, films, and utilizing student leadership and volunteers. It's important that the equestrian center is further developed to provide an economic boost to the community.

Question 5



Other Specified Responses:

- Appeal to senior citizens
- Fork Senior Center. Retirement housing options.
- Town and gown
- Proximity to urban areas
- Opportunities for young professionals; college-community relationships; race relations; public transportation
- Childcare/preschool
- More rental housing for young people or visiting faculty.
- Our youth need the support of the community in order to grow into productive citizens. We need programs in place to assist them.
- Healthcare services

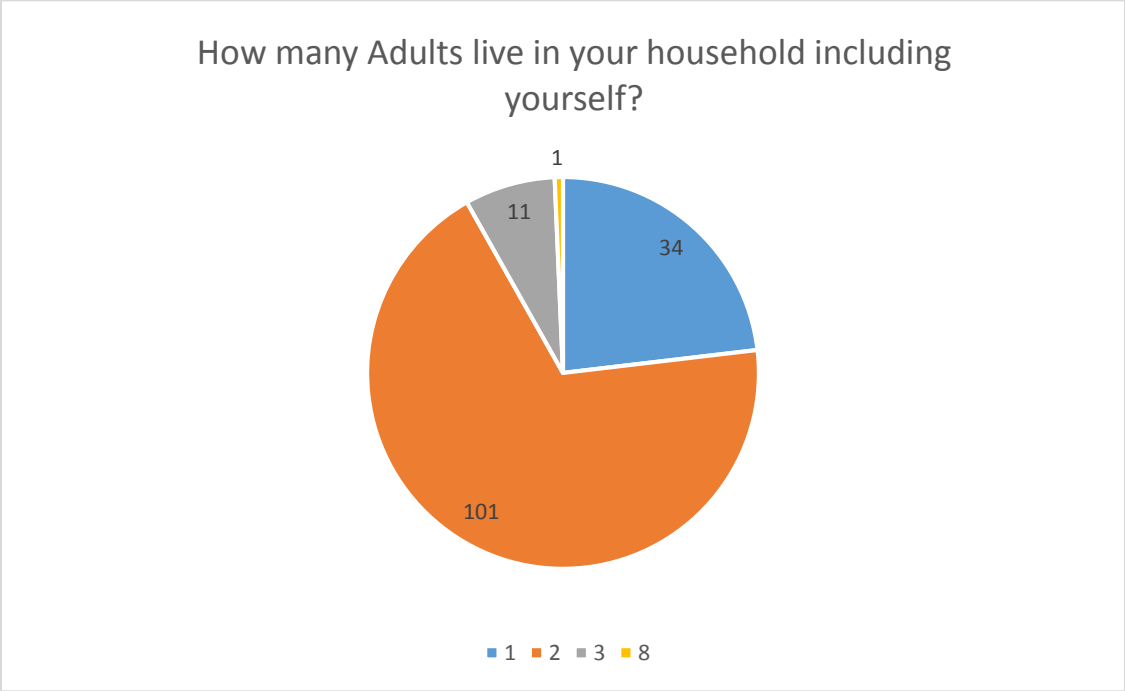
Question 6

Please check all of the following that you would like to see in Albion:		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Improved sidewalks	60.9%	126
Improved street lighting	45.9%	95
Bike lanes	44.0%	91
Bike racks/bike parking at more locations	37.2%	77
Benches downtown	52.2%	108
Historical markers/Historic tours	40.1%	83
Public art	50.7%	105
Art gallery/artist co-op space	43.5%	90
Transportation system between Albion & surrounding	52.7%	109
Retirement community	44.4%	92
Community center	52.7%	109
Other (please specify)	34.3%	71
	answered question	**207**
	skipped question	**33**

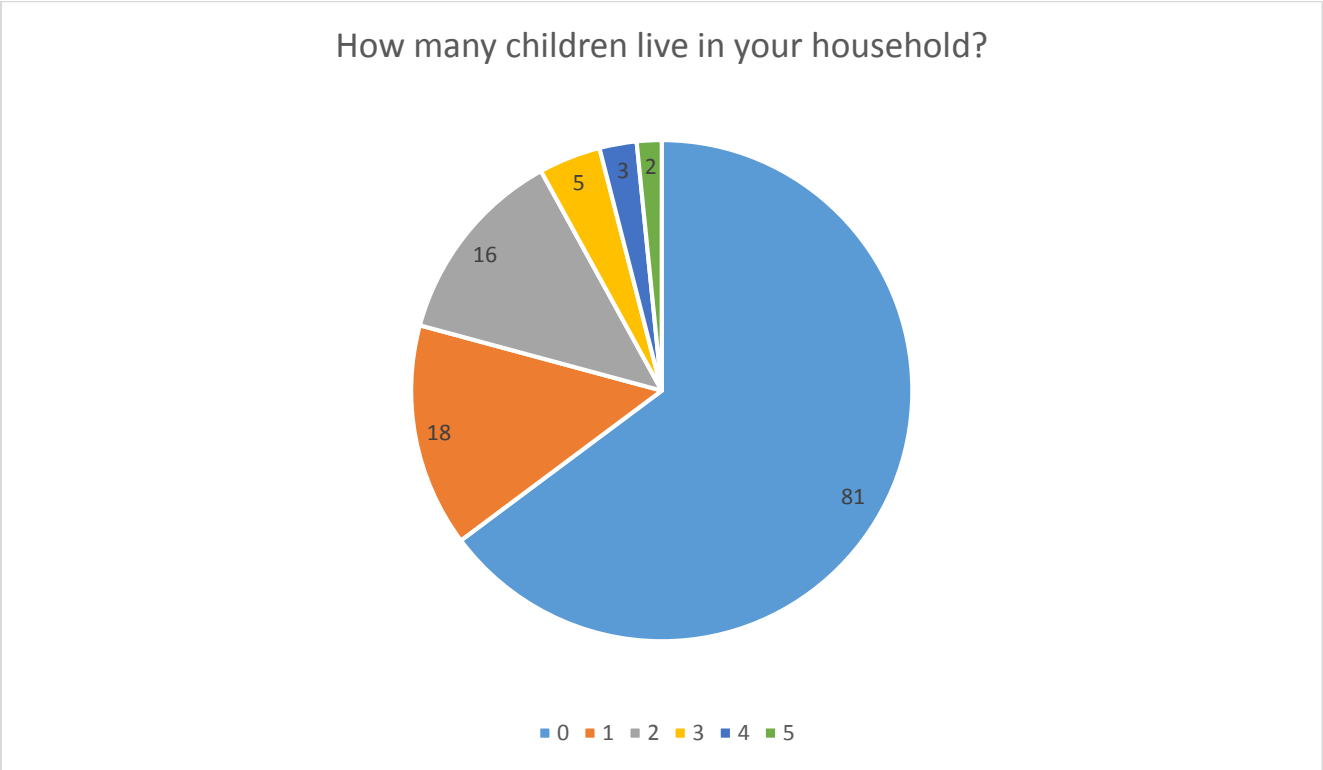
Other Specified Responses:

- Nightlife
- Finish the river trail all the way to Marshall. Trails. Expanded trail systems for biking, walking
- Coffee shop, cafe. Restaurant-upscale dining
- Loft apartments downtown with an elevator. Assisted living home, hospice house, nursing home
- Opportunities for young professionals to live, work, play, and network; programming focused on the outdoors and unplugging from technology; Albion "swag" that is not college items but focused on the City of Albion and its pride and history (clothing, stickers, hats, etc.)
- We really need to bring the arts into downtown Albion. There are some wonderful local artists available.

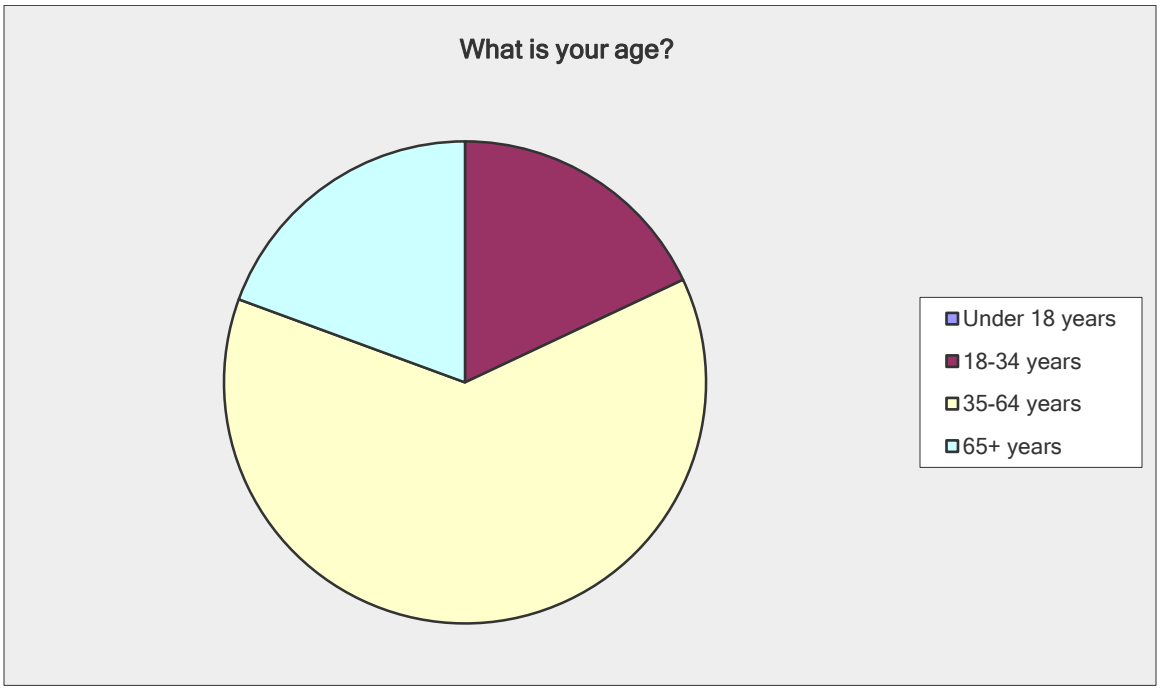
Question 7:



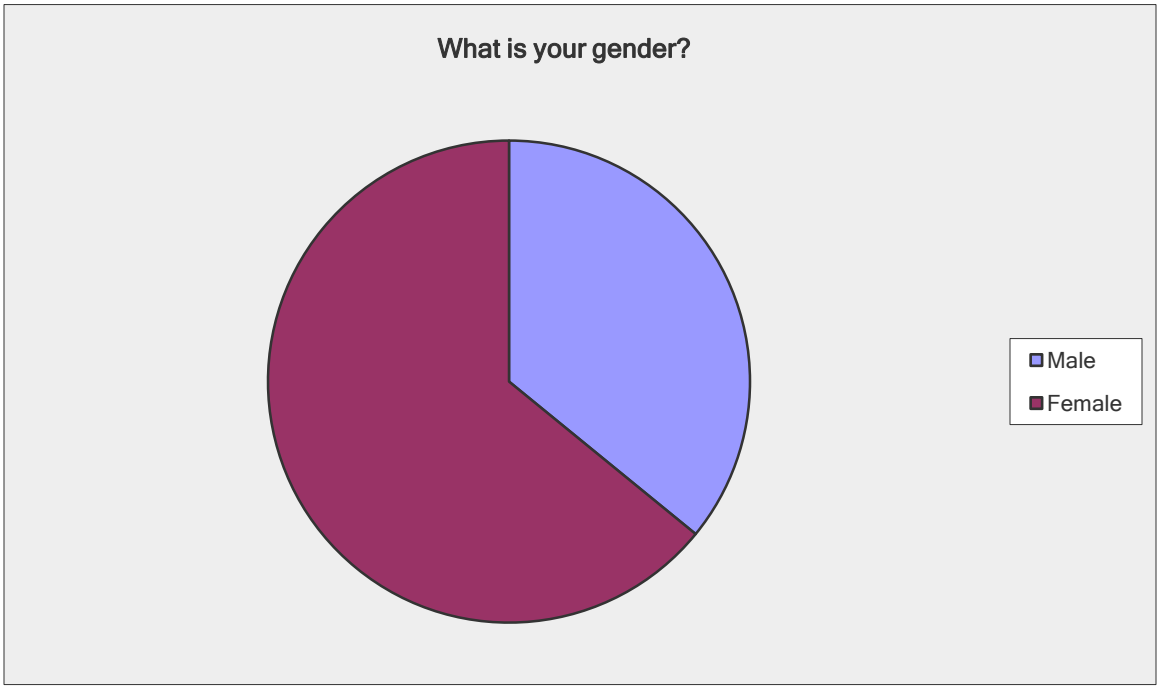
Question 8:



Question 9:



Question 10:



Appendix 4: Planning Commission Resolution

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF THE CITY OF ALBION COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – PHASE 1 TO THE ALBION CITY COUNCIL

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, MCL 125.3801 *et. Seq.* ("MPEA") authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Comprehensive Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the City; and

WHEREAS, the City of Albion issued a Notice of Intent to Prepare a Master Plan Update on July 7, 2016, in accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008 as amended); and

WHEREAS, the City of Albion issued Notice of Public Comment on the Recommendation of the Five Year (2017-2021) Comprehensive Plan Phase 1; providing for public comment at the Planning Commission Hearing on November 28, 2016; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Albion Planning Commission hereby:

1. ***Adopts the 2017 Comprehensive Master Plan – Phase 1.*** The City of Albion Planning Commission hereby approves and adopts the proposed Comprehensive Plan, including all of the text, figures, charts, graphs, and other descriptive materials contained therein.

2. ***Distribution to the City Council.*** Pursuant to MCL 125.3843 and Resolution #2016-36, the Albion City Council has asserted its right to approve or reject the proposed Comprehensive Plan and therefore, the approval granted herein is not the final step for adoption of the plan as provided in MCL 125.3843. In addition, the Planning Commission hereby approves distribution of the proposed new Comprehensive Plan – Phase 1 to the City Council. The Planning Commission respectfully recommends to the City Council that the City Council give final approval to the proposed new Comprehensive Plan – Phase 1.

3. ***Finding of Fact.*** The Planning Commission has made the foregoing determination based on a review of the existing Comprehensive Plan provisions, input from public, as well as, elected and appointed officials, through community surveys, forums, and at the public hearing. The Planning Commission also finds that the new Comprehensive Plan – Phase 1 will accurately reflect and implement the City's vision, goals and objectives.

4. ***Effective Date.*** The new Comprehensive Plan – Phase 1 will become effective on the date it is approved by the City Council.

Motion by Planning Commission Member Tom Pitt and supported by Planning Commission Member Scott Brown to approve the foregoing resolution.

AYES	Garrett Brown, Scott Brown, Wesley Dick, Mayor Joseph Domingo, Tom Pitt, Scott Kipp, Gregg Strander, George Strander (7)
NAYS	None
ABSENT	None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above resolution was adopted on November 28, 2016, at a regular meeting of the Albion Planning Commission, and this is a true copy of that resolution.

George Strander

November 28, 2016