

# MONTHLY ALLOY



A mix of news, events, and other relevant city-related topics.

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## ALBION EDC: UPCOMING PROJECTS

Albion's Economic Development Corporation looks to expand its positive impact in the community this year.

A big project currently at the forefront of the City of Albion and the EDC is the future development of 600 Austin Block (611, 617, 619 Austin Ave.). Located near the Albion Industrial Park, the long-term objective is to attract goods and services providers to Albion residents, M-199 commuters, and employees, as well as creating additional housing developments. To that end, the first step being taken is a grant application for a Brownfield Redevelopment Site Assessment Grant- to determine what environmental issues, if any, exist at the site.

Also upcoming is a Grocery Store Initiative- a primary objective of which is to bring in more fresh produce and more meat. City Councilwoman Vicki Clark is currently leading this initiative, with the EDC looking into outside businesses, as well as other options. "The voices of Albion have spoken," says Clark, when reached for comment. "The citizens (*continued*)

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The mission of the City of Albion's Recreation Department is to provide a variety of recreation activities within the community which will enhance the cultural, psychological, social, physical and educational well-being of the residents of Albion. Under the direction of Recreation Department Director Larry Williams, they are on track to fulfill this goal in the new year. "We do a number of things- program-wise, our most successful year-round programs are adult water aerobics, as well as an open gym." Williams also (*continued*)

## ALBION'S FOODHUB

Albion's own FoodHub continues to be a resource for residents in the new year. Speaking with Laura Overholt, the FoodHub's Facilities Manager, it's clear that essential work gets done.

"The main goals of the Albion FoodHub are to increase food access in the Greater Albion area, reduce barriers to food, and to provide space and resources for prospective food-based businesses," says Overholt. "In essence, to reduce food access barriers for both people and businesses." (*continued*)

## ADDITIONAL CONTENTS:

### Page 2:

Albion EDC  
Recreation Department  
City Announcements

### Page 3:

MLK Community Dinner

Editorial: Year of Opportunities

Upcoming City Events

### Page 4:

MLK Convocation

Albion FoodHub

Contact Public Affairs

## EDC (CONTINUED)

would like another grocery store in the city and I believe we can do it. This is only one of the many plans of building a better community and we are working diligently to make it happen for our community." Mayor Dave Atchison expressed support, saying, "While it will take many months to achieve this goal, I and the rest of our City Council are fully committed to this initiative." Christine Bowman and Ryan Hopson stated, "The EDC is looking into outside businesses, as well as other options to create access to fresh food and variety."

Regarding downtown development, the EDC provided an update. "The downtown area is being revitalized with plans to include 72 apartments as mixed-use and commercial buildings," says Hopson, who serves as the EDC's Community Development Specialist. This will encompass 18 buildings across 8 different sites.

In the areas adjacent to their campus, Albion College has a program (Harrington Family), which incentivizes individuals to build new housing developments on vacant lots. Christine Bowman, the Economic Development Specialist, also alluded to a prospective urban renewal project in the works which will include new construction housing.

Separate from his duties at EDC, Ryan Hopson is also involved with Play Right Academy. Founded by Albion College alumni Milton Barnes, the Albion-based basketball program coaches 15 to 30 children on a biweekly basis, focusing on teaching "the right way" to play basketball. A requirement of the program is for each participant to log at least one hour of academic work before each lesson. Barnes is looking to expand the programming the summer, potentially to other sports.

The Albion Economic Development Corporation can be reached at (517) 629-3926 or at <http://albionedc.org/>.

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED)



mentioned Peapod Summer Dreams- a summer enrichment program that engages children aged 4 to 13. Additionally, activity offerings for this year include a swimming program in partnership with Albion College, a walking program in Marshall Opportunity High School, *tai chi* classes, and a successful community theater program, which put on the play "The Day the Cornfield Stood Still" this past October. Williams also expressed emphasis on the hosting potential of Marshall Opportunity High School, where the Recreation Department has its offices. "This space, we have a lot of community activities, for instance- birthday parties, repasses, where we can work with the community because there's often not a large space available for that."

Williams is particularly proud of two upcoming annual events- the Easter Egg Hunt, currently scheduled for April 11th, and the Daddy-Daughter Dance, which is scheduled for April 17th.

When asked about future prospective projects, Mr. Williams was quick to stress the importance of public park access. "We identified the northwest section of the community did not have a community park that allowed families to participate safely in it," said Williams. "I'd like to see McIntosh Park built up- a walking path, some playground equipment, and a connection to the Albion trail system. Right now, in order for kids to access a public park, they would have to cross a busy highway [Austin Ave.]."

The Recreation Department and program registration is available for contact at <https://albion.recdesk.com/Community/Home>.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Upcoming Election: March 10th:

The City of Albion is looking for Election Inspectors to help with the democratic process. Hourly pay and paid training is available. Contact the clerk's office at (517) 629- 7864 or [jadomingo@cityofalbionmi.gov](mailto:jadomingo@cityofalbionmi.gov) for more information!

### City Manager Extended Office Hours:

City Manager Darwin McClary is now going to be holding extended hours to meet resident needs. These are every Thursday from 5 to 7 pm by appointment. To make an appointment, call (517) 629-7172 or email [dmclary@cityofalbionmi.gov](mailto:dmclary@cityofalbionmi.gov).

# THE DREAM STILL LIVES: 3RD ANNUAL MLK COMMUNITY DINNER

One of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's most famous quotes is, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is 'What are you doing for others?'" On January 20, 2020, the Albion Community came together to celebrate what we do for each other in our community.

The Martin Luther King Jr. holiday marked the 25th anniversary of the Day of Service that celebrates the Civil Rights leader's life and legacy. The Albion community joined to honor Dr. King's legacy by having a community dinner. This dinner has quickly become a tradition, bringing members of the community from all walks of life together to break bread and honor youth who are the future of our community.

The dinner, which was organized by Former Build Albion AmeriCorps VISTA members and leaders Cressie Vargo, MARquetta Frost, and Andrew French, included a buffet-style dinner that fed over 250 community members and leaders. The dinner was made possible by generous financial support from Mark Putvin State Farm, the Greater Albion Chamber of Commerce, Albion Volunteer Service Organization, Amos and Amos Incorporated, and other private donors.

The theme of the program, "The Dream Still Lives", was illustrated by a program packed with youth presenters from Harrington Elementary School. Essay contest winners from the 4th and 5th grades read winning essays and received awards from their Principal, Mr. Robert Giles. Providing words of wisdom and encouragement was President of the Albion Branch NAACP, Robert Dunklin. Ms. Akaiia Ridley, a Build Albion Fellow at Albion College, provided a moving keynote address to the audience.

The evening concluded with entertainment which included the Macedonia Missionary Church Triumphant Youth and Adult Praise Dancers, Members of the 4-H Creative and Expressive Arts Group performed as well, including a song that was directed by Mr. Clarence Stirgus, Coordinator of the Build Albion Fellows.

## EDITORIAL: A YEAR OF OPPORTUNITIES



By: Mayor Dave Atchison

"When you look at the possibilities instead of the problems, **the future is filled with endless opportunities.**" -Zig Ziglar

2020 will be a year of change and growth, a year of opportunities.

The Union Steel building will be demolished. Irwin Avenue will be completed. Michigan Works will pilot the six-week MYCITY Albion youth employment and career exploration program here. Many sidewalk repair projects will be completed across the city. Our next city-wide single-hauler trash pickup contract will be in place and should include curbside recycling pickup. Vacant city staff positions should be filled with permanent employees, and some new faces will be present among our city employees. Extensive rehabilitation of downtown buildings will physically be underway. Among these projects, our iconic Coca-Cola sign will be restored. The Harrington Community Partners Program will be in place and working to improve educational opportunities for Albion's children.

The construction of the first of several solar array "farms" will have begun in neighboring Sheridan Township, bringing with it a projected economic contribution of 7 million dollars to Albion and the surrounding areas with each 9-12 month construction period. Sheridan Township Supervisor Dick Porter anticipates 3 or 4 such installation periods over the next four years. The 300-person installation crews will spend money in Albion- renting, eating, drinking, and shopping. Furthermore, the recent decision by the EDC Board of Directors and approved by City Council to restructure the Albion EDC Revolving Loan Fund will enhance the flexibility of using the fund to support local entrepreneurs in capitalizing on this economic boon.

In summary, there are a great many things happening in our community and 2020 holds the promise for a vibrant tomorrow. However, what this year will bring depends a great deal on what every member of the community contributes. Moving Albion forward means changing the status quo, refusing to accept where we are and focusing our energy on success; not on fighting the past, but on building the new.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### February 10th, 2020:

The Albion City Council will be holding a Study Session to discuss a proposed Rental Registration and Inspection Program. The event will take place at the Ludington Center (101 N. Superior Street). Questions and comments can

be sent in advance to [jadomingo@cityofalbionmi.gov](mailto:jadomingo@cityofalbionmi.gov) or mailed to: 112 W. Cass St, Albion, MI 49224.

### Upcoming City Council Meetings:

February 18th, 2020 (Tuesday)  
March 2nd, 2020 (Monday)

## 1/28/20: ALBION'S MLK CONVOCATION



On January 28th, the annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation and Community Celebration began at 7:00 pm in the Bohm Theater. The event is usually an opportunity to reflect on the unique origins and nature of Albion, the progress- both made and yet to be made- with regards to civil rights and racial equality, and the forming partnership between the City of Albion and Albion College. This year was no exception, owing to the combined efforts of the Albion NAACP Branch, Albion College's Ford Institute, and numerous other groups and individuals. Albion College Concert Choir and 4-H Creative and Expressive Arts Singers provided stirring renditions of "Let My People Go" and "Speak" respectively. Speakers included Dr. Mauri Ditzler, Mae Ola Dunklin, Dr. Wes Dick, Reverend Paul Koehn, and Reverend Donald Phillips. Additionally, Albion College student Aura Ware introduced the keynote speaker, The Honorable Dannia L. Edwards, a District Court judge and Albion alumni who gave an address titled "Justice Delayed".

"We are at a major juncture in America and American life, one that closely resembles the historical events of the Civil War and the Reconstruction," Judge Edwards said, going on to stress the need for continued effort towards racial equality and racial justice. "King- would he rejoice or condemn? Justice achieved or denied?...We must not be color-blind, for to do so, we ignore the problem...All of us must start having candid conversations about race and racial relations so we can better understand each other's perspectives and experiences."

Towards the end of the event, it was announced that the NAACP Scholarship had been awarded to four Albion College students who grew up in Albion. This announcement was met with applause.



**The Honorable Dannia L. Edwards.**  
**District Court Judge, First Judicial District, State of Minnesota.**

### ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any newsletter questions, comments, concerns, complaints, or corrections to report, please direct them to the City of Albion's Department of Public Affairs and Public Relations. They can currently be reached at [jyt10@albion.edu](mailto:jyt10@albion.edu).

## FOODHUB (CONTINUED)

Part of going about achieving these goals involves renting out their test kitchen, connecting business owners with scholarship opportunities and professional development, and, in partnership with Community Action, handling community food distribution to residents. "If you could use some help stretching your grocery dollars, you are welcome here," Overholt stated. "If there's a lot of bills one month, we're happy to help." A major component of this program is enthusiastic community involvement- from members of City Council, to St. Paul's Church, to the Albion College Basketball Team.

The space is also used to organize farmer's market programs such as the Battle Creek-based SproutBox program, which offers access to fresh local produce on a weekly basis.

One upcoming goal for Laura Overholt and the Albion FoodHub for 2020 is to support Michigan Plate, a state-wide initiative to encourage restaurants to serve at least one locally sourced dish. Another is to look to secure funding and support for the Grocery Store Initiative (see ALBION EDC article).

Food distributions are on the second Tuesday and the fourth Thursday of each month at 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

The FoodHub is located at 112 East Erie Street. They can be reached at (517) 629-3343. For further information, go to <https://albionfoodhub.com/>