



CASE STUDY | 2022

Public Spaces, Community Places



Thriving places help define a community’s economic vitality, from bike trails to pocket parks to public art projects, they contribute to a strong quality of life, help attract and retain talent, and grow stronger local economies.

Program Overview

In 2014, as Michigan was facing declining public revenues and local budgetary concerns in communities across the state, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) saw a need to empower themselves to continue improvements during a time of economic distress. The MEDC partnered with the civic & community based crowdfunding platform, Patronicity to create the “Public Spaces, Community Places” (PSCP) crowdgranting program.

The program focuses on creating new or activating distressed public spaces for community use; such as pocket parks, trails, outdoor plazas, public art, farmers markets, art centers, and more. The practice of crowdfunding aims to fund projects by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people that invites residents to engage in the process from start to finish and beyond. The goal is to have an inclusive platform that allows local residents and stakeholders to play a role in projects that will transform their communities into places where talent wants to live, businesses want to locate, and entrepreneurs want to invest.

Learn more at [Patronicity.com/puremichigan1](https://www.patronicity.com/puremichigan1)

Location | Michigan



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

# Projects	312
# Patrons	53,531
Crowdfunding	\$11,630,810
Matching Grants	\$9,942,068
Total Funding	\$21,572,878

2014 to May 2022

“For the long haul, if John Q. Citizen lays down \$20 to improve their park or give a farmers’ market a home, then they will become invested in that piece of property or that place. It instills pride in their community where they will go to that location and take care of it.”

- Nate Scramlin,
Senior Community Assistance Team
Specialist at the MEDC





Program Impact

Due to the innovative crowdfunding component of the program where qualifying and approved applicants only receive matching funds if they are able to raise their target crowdfunding goal, the program has enabled the following outcomes:

- Democratizing the access to capital where non-profits and municipalities apply by submitting qualifying projects that fall within the grant parameters and receive funding through community demand, establishing the community as the final review committee.
- Deeper civic engagement where the program enables community members, residents, businesses and local organizations to vote with their dollars on projects they find valuable within their community.
- Increased public awareness and press towards community projects, which enables greater support for public initiatives.
- Freed up organizational resources while expanding the number of projects and overall granting budget.
- This program builds off of matching grant programs, however enabling the crowd to be involved through crowdfunding revolutionizes the mechanism in which the match is leveraged.



UICA Mural Project | Grand Rapids, MI



This program was an award-winning finalist in Harvard's 2017 Innovation in American Government awards and won the 2015 Gold Award for Public Private Partnerships from the International Economic Development Council.



“The Depot Rehabilitation Project has been one of the best examples of a community backed and supported project that I have experienced in my 20 year tenure as the Clare City Manager. We could not have completed this project without the benevolent support of countless community members, community businesses, and numerous charitable and nonprofit organizations. The PSCP program was critical for the project and served as absolute testimony to the significance of the project by the overwhelming community support. We took a dying 123 year old historic building, renewed and repurposed it, and assured its continued legacy for the next century.”

--Ken Hibel
Clare City Manager



CASE STUDY | 2022 PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Bates Alley Project | Kalamazoo, Michigan

Summary

Before the Bates Alley Project began, the alley was a dingy, blighted back alley of businesses along East Michigan Avenue full of litter, garbage receptacles, and parked cars. However, the space had great potential as it was a natural connector to many community anchors, including the Entertainment District, AMC Theatre, Portage Street businesses, and the WMU Medical School.



““Since Bates Alley was opened in October, the alley has become a place to be in downtown Kalamazoo. The lights, street mural, and outdoor seating will make for fun opportunities to engage the community.””

– Steve Blinn,
Owner of Olde Peninsula
Restaurant along Bates Alley

Impact

Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership and DKI saw this potential and began project plans for Bates Alley. With feedback from the City of Kalamazoo’s Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 community vision and planning process they gained feedback and input to inform their resulting plan. Bates Alley was dreamed and designed to become a pedestrian promenade where people could make memories and included the following:

- Converting the alley into a pedestrian-only walkway
- Repairing and repaving the roadway
- Installation of pedestrian lamp posts and overhead bistro string lights
- Replacing unsightly parking lot fencing with ornamental trees and landscaping
- Installation of removable bollards at either end, recessed to allow for deliveries
- Bike racks, waste receptacles and other streetscape items were included
- Decorative signage and lighting along the cornices of buildings
- Restaurant owners will be able to add parklets to accommodate outdoor cafés



**PUBLIC SPACES
COMMUNITY PLACES**

Tangible Results

At completion of the Bates Alley project in October 2018, the community came out to celebrate and experience the well-received new space. Since then, thousands of people have been enjoying the new space, complete with parklets, a street mural designed by local artist Patrick Hershberger, overhead lights, and live music most nights. It has become not only an iconic Instagram photo spot but a space that has encouraged economic activity in downtown Kalamazoo and strengthened communal ties. The businesses along the alley have seen an increase in patronage since the space debuted and Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership keeps the space active with events. Plans are developing to extend the connection further West, down a small walkway on Portage Street, and continuing down Exchange Place to Rose Street.

Bates Alley in Kalamazoo, MI is a great example of a Public Spaces, Community Places project that completely transformed an underused space into a public gathering place and downtown destination. The PSCP program spurred continued momentum to create a lasting positive impact within Downtown Kalamazoo.



Patronicity is a civic crowdfunding & crowdgranting platform. We bring together local citizens and sponsors to support great initiatives in their communities.

Contact us at info@patronicity.com for more information.

patronicity.com

