ABSTRACT
This marketing plan has been created as part of the City’s efforts to obtain status as a Certified community in the Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) program through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The plan has been completed in partnership with the City’s RRC Planner, Christopher Germain.
City of Vassar, Tuscola County, Michigan

Vassar City Council

Mike Damm - Mayor
Chuck Fabbro Jr. – Mayor Pro-Tem
Melissa Armstrong – Councilwoman
Pat Mecham – Councilwoman
Tom McTaggart – Councilman

City of Vassar Planning Commission

Mike Damm – Council Liaison
Gary Kasper
Burly Binder
Ian Rudkin
Jennifer Miller
Nathaniel Miller
Benjamin Kaiser
Andrew Niedzinski – Vassar City Manager
Christopher J. Frazer – Project Coordinator for the City of Vassar
Christopher Germain – Senior RRC Planner for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Purpose

The City of Vassar’s marketing plan strives to market and promote the city as a connected, vibrant, distinctive, and livable community. The city actively partners with agencies and local organizations to promote the community as a redevelopment ready community with business opportunities. The city aims to be a vibrant, prosperous community with a high quality of life through the preservation of its natural environment, the protection of its residents’ health and safety, the enhancement of its cultural heritage and recreational opportunities, its diverse neighborhoods with varied housing options, and its thriving business and restaurants. An assessment of the city’s assets assists in marketing the city to potential developers, residents, businesses, and tourists. The marketing plan identifies visual to potential and non-visual assets the city wants to retain and build upon. In addition, an evaluation procedure will determine the effectiveness of the marketing campaign.

The Planning Commission will be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the marketing plan. The Planning Commission with input from the Chamber of Commerce will conduct the review each year at their first meeting in January. A brief report that highlights accomplishments and recommends activities for the following year will be prepared and presented to the City Council.

The purpose of a marketing plan is to guide the city’s marketing efforts through the end of 2027 which will put it in line for an update at the same time as the City’s RRC recertification process would begin. Having a marketing plan is the RRC’s Best Practice 5.3. Vassar is fortunate to already be doing some great marketing and has some active partners to spread the work.

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
Introduction

The City of Vassar is in Vassar Township, Tuscola County, near the thumb region of Michigan. The city’s location provides access to the reputable cultural history of Frankenmuth and shopping centers of Birch Run. The city is also near population centers of Bay City, Saginaw, and within a reasonable distance of Flint and Midland. In addition, the city is surrounded by small town living that gives residents ease of low crime and a friendly environment. In addition, the surrounding areas house facilities in both higher education and hospitalization. These facilities include Saginaw Valley State University, Delta College, Mott Community College, Covenant, Ascension, McLaren, and Hills & Dale hospital and healthcare systems.

Existing Marketing Assets & Tools

Throughout the year, the City of Vassar and neighboring communities hold events that attract visitors to the region, which include the River Festival (River Fest), the Summer Concert Series, Vassar’s Car Show & Swap Meet, the Tuscola County Fair, and the Fall Festival with its famous pumpkin rolling contest.

The City of Vassar has a web presence that allows the city to market and advertise what the city has to offer. The City’s website gives Vassar the opportunity to not only share key information with the public, but also allows for stakeholders in the community to retrieve documents such as permits and notifications of upcoming events.

The City of Vassar utilizes social media too. The city has a Facebook page to engage with the Vassar community to inform the public of upcoming events and any updated information that may be missed or not seen on the City’s website. Facebook is the most used social media platform across the multiple generations that live in Vassar, so it is key that the City of Vassar continue its presence on social media to communicate with the public. As of now, the City’s Facebook page is the only social media platform the City of Vassar utilizes as this time. To be more effective in engaging the community, the City of Vassar will need to utilize more social media platforms to engage the public.

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
In addition to its web presence, the City of Vassar also utilizes a newsletter to engage the Vassar community. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform the public of what is currently going on in the community and for the city to continue its efforts in both community relations and community engagement.

**Focus Areas**

In the public survey, the City’s residents and stakeholders indicated the City’s major assets are its friendly, small-town atmosphere, low crime rate, affordable housing, convenience to work, and community activities. The following focus areas have been chosen to describe the way in which the City of Vassar intends to market itself – as a community which offers an opportunity to reduce commuter fatigue, a community that prioritizes safety, a community with a full range of activities, and desirable home ownership. The following characteristics – (1) Atmosphere, (2) Safety, (3) Affordable, (4) Invested and (5) Community Oriented – are the characteristics which describe Vassar, and which support the five focus areas. The marketing strategy table (which follows the goals and action items) describes the key strategies, core audience, core messages,

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
and the avenues for communication which will be used to communicate these characteristics.

**Focus Area 1: Small-Town Atmosphere**

The City of Vassar has an extensive history regarding its small-town atmosphere. With less than 3,000 people that live in Vassar year-round, it gives the people the sense of small-town living. Smaller community means less noise and light pollution. In addition, children of families that grow up in Vassar tend to stay and have families themselves. This gives residents the feeling of a sense of security and familiarity that allows them to stay in Vassar. **Core Message: Vassar is an excellent place for small town living!**

**Focus Area 2: Safe & Family Oriented**

Vassar has a history of low crime within its community. With low crime rates in the city, residents can feel as ease knowing they can raise a family and send their kids to the Vassar school district with little to no worries of threat to their children’s safety. In addition, the friendly environment of the Vassar community allows for residents to feel comfortable and secure in their neighborhood. **Core Message: Vassar is a great place to settle down and raise a family!**

**Focus Area 3: Affordable Housing**

Vassar has a variety of options in affordable housing. Residents have the choice to live in Vassar’s variety of multiple-family housing developments across the city. Families can choose through Vassar’s various single-family housing options. In addition, developers and builders can fill out Vassar’s easy-to-use building permit applications for single-family housing as well our simple conceptual review meeting application process for multiple-family housing developments. **Core Message: Vassar has a variety of affordable housing options!**

**Focus Area 4: Growing & Invested**

In large part to Vassar’s commitment to investing in the future, infant industries are beginning to grow in the city. Growth in Vassar’s marihunana industry has allowed for new industries and businesses never seen in Vassar begin to invest in the community. In that aspect, Vassar continues to trend as a community focused on encouraging fledgling businesses and industries to lay ground in the city. In addition, Vassar has become a sought-after community for residents that want to work from home. Our partnership with telecommunication companies makes working from home as convenient as the commute to the office. **Core Message: Vassar provides opportunity for businesses to grow and invest in the community!**

**Focus Area 5: Staying Active in the Community**

Vassar offers several activities that are oriented towards the community. Activities like Concert Series in the Park, Riverfest, and activities hosted by other organizations in the community demonstrate Vassar’s focus on community orientation and keeping the community engaged with the City of Vassar. **Core Message: Vassar is community oriented!**

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Strategies</th>
<th>Core Audience</th>
<th>Core Messages</th>
<th>Avenues for Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>- City Leadership - Developers - Business Owners - Local Organizations - Residents</td>
<td>- Looking to past to build towards the future. - Big city amenities in a small town.</td>
<td>- Website information - City brand and logo - Redevelopment Ready Site Marketing Package - City outreach to developers and prospective businesses - MEDC Zoom Prospector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>- Enforce zoning ordinances including peace ordinances across city, finishing roadway and side streets, search for grants and additional funding sources for the hiring of additional police officers. - City Leadership - Residents - Visitors - Local Business Owners</td>
<td>- A safe place to raise a family. - Kids can walk around city with ease of mind.</td>
<td>- Website announcements - Brochures and packets - Word of mouth - Networking through the Vassar Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>- Priority redevelopment sites, infill and mixed-use developments, entrepreneurs, and single-family developments. -Developers - City Leadership - Local Organizations - Tuscola County Economic Development Corporation</td>
<td>- Diverse housing types and stock is encouraged. - Housing in Vassar is affordable. - Building permits and housing development proposals are simple and easy to obtain and navigate.</td>
<td>- Networking through the Vassar Area Chamber of Commerce - Redevelopment Ready Site Marketing Package - City outreach to developers and prospective businesses - MEDC Zoom Prospector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing &amp; Invested</td>
<td>- Enhance the community’s internet and cell phone connectivity, search for grants to fund street and road projects, encourage current and future local businesses to invest in the community, analyze data towards business retention, and build and retain relationships with current and future investors - City Leadership - Business Owners - Vassar Economic Development Corporation</td>
<td>- Creating a connected, walkable community - Access to amenities is important - Vassar provides development resources when opening or expanding businesses - Vassar is an attractive place to open your business.</td>
<td>- Networking through the Vassar Area Chamber of Commerce - Redevelopment Ready Site Marketing Package - City outreach to developers and prospective businesses - Brochures and packets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
**Marketing & Promotion**

The overarching goal of all the goals and action items listed below is to communicate messages of Focus Areas 1 through 4 above.

**TIMEFRAMES**

Short: Low cost, easy implementation, directly addressing priorities, or critical to the advancement of other strategies, and to be implemented in the next 1-5 years.

Medium: Important actions that have some level of significant cost and can be implemented within the next 5-10 years.

Long: Actions that often require significant amounts of funding that must be planned for over time or require other strategies to be completed prior to their implementation.

Ongoing: Actions that have no beginning and end period, but which are continuously ongoing in the city.

**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES**

VCC: Vassar City Council

PC: Planning Commission

CM: City Manager

Staff: City Staff

CoC: Chamber of Commerce

LBO: Local Business Owners

VCS: Vassar Community Schools

DDA: Downtown Development Authority

EDC: Vassar’s Economic Development Corporation

TCEDC: Tuscola County Economic Development Corporation

Residents: Residents that reside in the Vassar city limits.

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
Logo should be simplified so that it can be more easily be reproduced and used on signs and merchandise. The following color palette closely follows the design of the current logo. It is suggested the logo be simplified using a similar color palette:

- Lettering (white): White Background 1 Black: Black Text 1
- Oval (blue): Blue Accent 1; and dark blue: Blue, Accent 1, Darker 50%
- Tree (green): Green, Accent 6, Darker 25%; and brown: Brown (R: 108, G: 67, B:0)
- Background (white): White Background 1

### Goal 2: Partnerships

Partner with businesses, consumers, real estate developers, and other entities to actively market the City of Vassar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Items</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>RP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 1</strong>: Work with real estate agents to market redevelopment/development sites online and to increase site exposure.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>VCC, CM, Staff, LBO, CoC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 2</strong>: Partner with the arts community in implementing public art installations throughout the City of Vassar.</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>CM, Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 3</strong>: Work with Vassar’s VFW Post, Vassar Lions Club, Vassar Chamber of Commerce and Bullard Sanford Library to market the city’s quality of life.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CM, Staff, CoC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 4</strong>: Partner with businesses/business associations to promote local businesses.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CM, Staff, CoC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 5</strong>: Partner with Vassar Community Schools to market the city with displays about redevelopment projects at athletic and academic events. Encourage the school system to use and display information at the city’s facilities.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>VCC, CM, CoC, PC, EDC, TEDC, Pure Michigan, I-69 Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 6</strong>: Work with local, regional, and state partners to establish activities and programs that will elevate Vassar’s attraction towards new businesses and residents.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>VCC, CM, CoC, PC, EDC, TEDC, Pure Michigan, I-69 Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 7</strong>: Market priority redevelopment sites for the RRC -Create site marketing team consisting of city staff, realtors, economic development professionals, and other business owners. -Create marketing packets for redevelopment sites. -Provide packets to local commercial realtors. -Upload the sites on the MEDC Site Selection website and evaluate and submit sites each time a matching project need is posted. -Use social media to promote current successful business and advertise available business space. -In partnership with the MEDC, issue RFQ/RFP for developers. Reach out personally to developers (in person and online). -Work with MEDC to connect with developers through the RRC program.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CM, Staff, CoC, LBO, PC, EDC, TCEDC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
### Goal 3: Campaign Marketing

Develop a marketing campaign to express how the City of Vassar is unique.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 1:</strong> Develop and distribute marketing materials that ‘tells Vassar’s story’ – marketing messages should focus on the five Focus Areas. Utilize brochures, packets, newsletters, an email listerv, the Internet, and social media.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>VCC, CM, Staff, CoC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 2:</strong> Purchase ads in publications, (virtual and real) that target enthusiasts, retirees, entrepreneurs, and young workers. Communicate the Focus Area messages via ads.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>VCC, CM, Staff, PC, CoC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 3:</strong> Publish press releases in local publications that highlight events and major products and policy decisions.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, TEDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 4:</strong> Develop a marketing strategy for Redevelopment Ready Sites that includes the sites’ assets, a strategy for information sharing (e.g., website announcements), and a distribution strategy that includes the media, commercial, and real estate networking events, and word of mouth engagement.</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, TEDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 5:</strong> Reach out and discuss potential development projects with developers.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, TEDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 6:</strong> Partner with the county, local, and state officials to create a market analysis to determine the support and shortfalls in market demand in the city.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, TEDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 7:</strong> Create a database to assist in measuring the effectiveness of the marketing campaign (e.g., # of people reached, engagement types, return of investment, # of projects, etc.). Use this qualitative data in annual reports.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CM, Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Item 8:</strong> Market Vassar as a destination for all of your marihuana needs and wants. This includes ability to purchase and Ongoing</td>
<td>VCC, CM, Staff, DDA, EDC, CoC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
ability to set up a business for different areas of the marihuana process.

Action Item 9: Market Vassar as a destination for recreational opportunities. This includes creating brochures and using the City’s website and social media presence to promote the kayak launch and the Rail Trail.

| Action Item 2: Market Vassar’s assets including, but not limited to, neighborhoods, business districts, services, hidden gems, and schools across various websites. | Ongoing | CM, Staff, CoC |
| Action Item 3: Utilize social media to showcase the City of Vassar on different platforms using the #vibrantvassar to showcase Vassar in a positive manner. This includes creating an Instagram page to coincide with the City’s Facebook page, enticing visitors and residents to take snap shots and tagging Vassar locations on Snapchat, and partnering with local influencers to showcase Vassar as a vibrant community. | Ongoing | CM, Staff, CoC, Residents |

**Goal 4: Online Presence**

Maintain an online presence with a regularly updated website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Items</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Item 1: Upload and maintain the following items on the website: lists for merchants, restaurants, businesses, and available spaces for lease or purchase; and area map; information about special events and projects; brochures and development site packets; and the type of businesses the city would like to attract.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CM, Staff, CoC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.*
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