



CITY OF IONIA
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA
8:00 AM, Wednesday, April 16, 2025
IONIA CITY HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call of Members Taryn Altobelli, Precia Garland, John Krueger, Tricia Meyers, Heather Poland-Sizemore, Zachary Sheehan, Dustin Sommer, Ben Weller, and Ryan Wilson.

III. Public Comments

IV. Consent Agenda

1. To approve the April 16, 2025 meeting agenda.

V. Approval of Minutes

1. To approve the minutes from March 19, 2025 meeting.

VI. Financial Report

1. To accept the Accounts Payables for the DDA:
February 26, 2025 – March 25, 2025 in the amount of \$9,869.82

To accept the Accounts Payables for the Theatre:
February 26, 2025 – March 25, 2025 in the amount of \$11,183.55

VII. DDA Director Report

1. Report included in Board meeting document packet.

VIII. Theatre Report

1. Report included in Board meeting document packet.

IX. Board Decisions and Action Items

1. Adoption of DDA Strategic Plan

X. Discussion Items

1. Marketing Committee Update
2. Williams & Works Downtown Businesses and Parking Maps Proposal

XI. Other

Upcoming Events and Street Closures

1. Event listing included in Board meeting document packet
2. Street Closure Listing included in Board meeting document packet.

XII. Adjournment

The Mission of the Ionia Downtown Development Authority is to promote and control economic growth which enhances the quality of life through planning and implementation of activities and projects within the Development District.



CITY OF IONIA
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

8:00 AM, Wednesday, March 19, 2025
IONIA CITY HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Krueger called the meeting of the Ionia Downtown Development Authority to order at 8:00 AM.

II. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Roll call revealed a Quorum with board members Taryn Altobelli, Tricia Meyers, Heather Poland-Sizemore, Benjamin Weller, Precia Garland, Ryan Wilson, Dustin Sommer and John Krueger present. Also in attendance: DDA Director C. Rice, Assistant City Manager J. Bowman.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Assistant City Manager Bowman informed the board of the new agenda and meeting website being used moving forward. There will be an emails going out explaining how to use and to create an account.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

(IV.1.) To approve the March 19, 2025 meeting agenda.

Chairperson Krueger introduced the agenda and asked if there were any requested changes. Board Member Garland made a motion, seconded by Board Member Weller, to approve the agenda as presented.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(V.1.) To approve the minutes from February 19, 2025 meeting.

Board Member Wilson made a motion, seconded by Board Member Garland, to approve the February 19, 2025 meeting minutes as presented.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

VI. FINANCIAL REPORT

**(VI.1.) To accept the Accounts Payables for the DDA:
January 25, 2025 – February 25, 2025 in the amount of \$1,268.49**

To accept the Accounts Payables for the Theatre:

January 25, 2025 – February 25, 2025 in the amount of \$14,414.12

Board Member Weller made a motion, seconded by Board Member Sommer, to Accept Account Payables for DDA and Theatre for the time period of January 25, 2025 to February 25, 2025.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

VII. DDA DIRECTOR REPORT

(VII.1.) Report included in Board meeting document packet.

Director Rice highlighted a few projects underway, including an inventory of district businesses and parking parcels. Information from the Michigan Downtown Association Spring Workshop was also touched on.

It was requested to quantify rentals in the area and suggested working with the Assessor's office or Public Safety.

VIII. THEATRE REPORT

(VIII.1.) Report included in Board meeting document packet.

Assistant Director Rice recapped showings in February, upcoming movies and upcoming events.

It was requested to add a more visual aspect to the monthly Theatre report.

IX. BOARD DECISIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

(IX.1.) Free Fair Opportunities

This item was broken into 2 separate items at the meeting: 1a being sponsoring a Wizard of Oz Day at the Fair with a Tea Party and 1b being sponsoring a booth in the Merchant Building at the Fair for the DDA and DDA businesses.

1a. Board Member Garland made a motion, seconded by Board Member Poland-Sizemore, to bless the fair and Wizard of Oz Committee to carry on with the fair opportunity with our involvement limited to the potential of coordinating a Wizard of Oz movie, showing downtown.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

1b. Board Member Garland made a motion, seconded by Board Member Sommer, to purchase a booth at \$275 and make a schedule for downtown business utilization.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

(IX.2.) Mega Mixer Opportunity

The date and location have been updated to May 8th at the Old Stone Porch. The board has requested more marketing info.

Board Member Garland made a motion, seconded by Board Member Wilson, to Approve the DDA to move forward with being a named sponsor of the Mega Mixer event with the six other organizations(IACC, Ionia Ambassadors, Ionia Rotary, ICEA, Business and Professional Women of

Ionia and Ionia Innovators.)

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

X. DISCUSSION ITEMS

(X.1.) Marketing Committee Update

Inventory of the district must take place and better quality photos need to be obtained in order to create accurate, eye-catching material. A draft of the high-level Stackable Experiences is completed. New marketing city standards have been provided by the Assistant to the City Manager for use. Director Rice met with IHS Teacher, Danna Fuller and students on the Bulldogs Unleashed project.

(X.2.) Match on Main Update

The Match on Main submission for Ionia is Grand Event Rentals with their project paving the parking lot and adding a community art wall. There was only one application received.

(X.3.) Strategic Plan

A draft of the strategic plan was provided to board members with a request to review and provide and requested edits, clarifications, etc. It was requested to add the adoption of the strategic plan to April's meeting agenda.

XI. OTHER

It was requested to potentially move the DDA meeting location to the Theatre foyer. If the meeting changes locations, it will need to be updated on the main meeting schedule.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Board Member Wilson made a motion, seconded by Board Member Sommer, to adjourn.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 am.

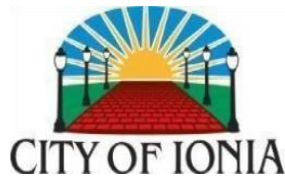
Respectfully Submitted,
Cassie Rice, Recording Secretary
for Heather Poland-Sizemore, DDA Secretary

DDA REPORT GL FOR CITY OF IONIA
Balance As of 03/31/2025

GL Number	Description	End Balance 06/30/2024	24-25 Amended Budget	YTD Balance 03/31/2025	% Bdgt Used
Fund: 248 DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT OPERATING					
Account Category: Revenues					
Department: 000.000					
248-000.000-415.000	2 MILL LEVY	44,293.87	46,000.00	42,218.60	91.78
248-000.000-655.000	PROMOTIONS AND SPONSORSHIPS	4,300.00	4,300.00	4,080.00	94.88
248-000.000-655.000-248.001	PROMOTIONS AND SPONSORSHIPS	11,850.00	8,500.00	50.00	0.59
248-000.000-655.000-248.002	PROMOTIONS AND SPONSORSHIPS	(140.00)	0.00	0.00	0.00
248-000.000-665.000	INTEREST	2,194.42	500.00	4,501.38	900.28
248-000.000-676.002	Reimbursement for IFF Agreeemnt	27,500.00	30,000.00	7,500.00	25.00
248-000.000-688.000	OTHER REVENUE	1,360.21	750.00	134.75	17.97
248-000.000-699.101	CONTRIBUTIONS FROM GENERAL FUN	250,000.00	270,000.00	0.00	0.00
Total Dept 000.000		341,358.50	360,050.00	58,484.73	16.24
Revenues		341,358.50	360,050.00	58,484.73	16.24
Account Category: Expenditures					
Department: 558.000 ADMINISTRATIVE					
248-558.000-702.000	SALARY & WAGES	74,842.71	96,900.00	84,667.97	87.38
248-558.000-710.000	PAYROLL TAXES & FRINGE BENEFIT	51,543.44	59,000.00	38,063.60	64.51
248-558.000-727.000	OFFICE SUPPLIES	1,421.28	1,800.00	1,029.96	57.22
248-558.000-801.000	CONTRACTUAL & PROFESSIONAL SEV	1,154.93	0.00	981.11	100.00
248-558.000-851.000	TELEPHONE	900.00	900.00	655.00	72.78
248-558.000-860.000	TRANSPORTATION AND TRAINING	1,803.17	1,600.00	1,775.00	110.94
248-558.000-954.000	INSURANCE	5,790.00	5,400.00	5,286.26	97.89
248-558.000-980.700	CAPITAL OUTLAY - THEATRE	44,200.00	155,000.00	0.00	0.00
Total Dept 558.000 - ADMINISTRATIVE		181,655.53	320,600.00	132,458.90	41.32
Department: 600.000 DOWNTOWN MAINTENANCE					
248-600.000-740.000	OPERATING SUPPLIES	5,233.00	21,000.00	3,127.95	14.90
248-600.000-920.000	PUBLIC UTILITIES	8,031.96	6,500.00	6,046.22	93.02
Total Dept 600.000 - DOWNTOWN MAINTENANCE		13,264.96	27,500.00	9,174.17	33.36
Department: 610.000 DDA DEVELOPMENT					
248-610.000-801.000	CONTRACTUAL & PROFESSIONAL SEV	359.64	20,000.00	2,947.51	14.74
248-610.000-972.000	PROMOTIONS AND FIREWORKS	14,955.92	5,000.00	1,349.33	26.99
248-610.000-972.000-248.001	PROMOTIONS AND FIREWORKS	0.00	15,000.00	7,000.00	46.67
Total Dept 610.000 - DDA DEVELOPMENT		15,315.56	40,000.00	11,296.84	28.24
Expenditures		210,236.05	388,100.00	152,929.91	39.40
Fund 248 - DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT OPERATING:					
TOTAL REVENUES		341,358.50	360,050.00	58,484.73	16.24
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		210,236.05	388,100.00	152,929.91	39.40
NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES:		131,122.45	(28,050.00)	(94,445.18)	

DDA REPORT GL FOR CITY OF IONIA
Balance As of 03/31/2025

GL Number	Description	End Balance 06/30/2024	24-25 Amended Budget	YTD Balance 03/31/2025	% Bdgt Used
Fund: 250 THEATRE FUND					
Account Category: Revenues					
Department: 000.000					
250-000.000-633.000	MOVIE ADMISSIONS	73,184.58	80,000.00	60,745.00	75.93
250-000.000-634.000	MOVIE CONCESSIONS	100,846.75	110,000.00	89,519.35	81.38
250-000.000-635.000	LIVE ENTERTAINMENT REVENUE	1,038.40	2,000.00	57.98	2.90
250-000.000-636.001	PREPAID TICKET SALES	335.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
250-000.000-639.000	THEATRE RENTAL	8,275.00	7,500.00	3,675.00	49.00
250-000.000-640.000	ADVERTISING REVENUES	4,301.50	5,000.00	5,166.38	103.33
250-000.000-665.000	INTEREST	497.43	1,000.00	(376.77)	(37.68)
250-000.000-675.000	GIFTS DONATIONS	1,796.82	2,500.00	7,242.44	289.70
250-000.000-688.000	OTHER REVENUE	1,445.36	2,000.00	2,880.00	144.00
250-000.000-699.248	CONTRIBUTION FROM DDA	35,000.00	155,000.00	0.00	0.00
Total Dept 000.000		226,720.84	365,000.00	168,909.38	46.28
Revenues		226,720.84	365,000.00	168,909.38	46.28
Account Category: Expenditures					
Department: 442.000 OPERATIONS					
250-442.000-702.000	SALARY & WAGES	100,489.13	103,000.00	75,515.47	73.32
250-442.000-710.000	PAYROLL TAXES & FRINGE BENEFIT	8,226.43	11,000.00	6,210.14	56.46
250-442.000-727.000	OFFICE SUPPLIES	1,154.27	800.00	811.77	101.47
250-442.000-728.000	POSTAGE	0.62	100.00	21.44	21.44
250-442.000-729.000	CREDIT CARD FEES	6,454.65	6,000.00	3,352.24	55.87
250-442.000-732.000	LIVE ENTERTAINMENT EXPENSE	0.00	1,000.00	0.00	0.00
250-442.000-740.000	OPERATING SUPPLIES	3,768.60	3,750.00	595.85	15.89
250-442.000-801.000	CONTRACTUAL & PROFESSIONAL SEV	11,885.77	18,000.00	11,494.93	63.86
250-442.000-804.000	FILM EXPENSE	41,662.27	45,000.00	37,409.90	83.13
250-442.000-805.000	CONCESSION EXPENSE	40,955.53	42,000.00	29,136.27	69.37
250-442.000-851.000	TELEPHONE	1,020.00	1,100.00	735.00	66.82
250-442.000-861.000	MEMBERSHIP AND DUES	0.00	500.00	500.00	100.00
250-442.000-862.000	SUBSCRIPTIONS	366.99	500.00	222.50	44.50
250-442.000-920.000	PUBLIC UTILITIES	30,421.43	35,000.00	28,288.59	80.82
250-442.000-931.000	BUILDING REPAIR & MAINTENANCE	20,942.45	25,000.00	27,517.02	110.07
250-442.000-956.001	SALES TAX	5,561.99	6,000.00	4,623.82	77.06
250-442.000-962.200	ADVERTISING - PROMOTION	7,305.50	5,000.00	6,687.75	133.76
250-442.000-968.000	DEPRECIATION	25,434.93	0.00	0.00	0.00
250-442.000-980.000	CAPITAL OUTLAY	0.00	55,000.00	0.00	0.00
Total Dept 442.000 - OPERATIONS		305,650.56	358,750.00	233,122.69	64.98
Expenditures		305,650.56	358,750.00	233,122.69	64.98
Fund 250 - THEATRE FUND:					
TOTAL REVENUES		226,720.84	365,000.00	168,909.38	46.28
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		305,650.56	358,750.00	233,122.69	64.98
NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES:		(78,929.72)	6,250.00	(64,213.31)	
Report Totals:					
TOTAL REVENUES - ALL FUNDS		568,079.34	725,050.00	227,394.11	31.36
TOTAL EXPENDITURES - ALL FUNDS		515,886.61	746,850.00	386,052.60	51.69
NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES:		52,192.73	(21,800.00)	(158,658.49)	



**Ionia Downtown Development Authority Director's Report
April 2025**

Economic Development / Special Events / District Activity / Business Updates:

- Parking Parcel Project – met with vendor on producing items for parking map and downtown map
- Continued introductions with businesses in DDA district – providing contact request information
- Continued cultivation of Marketing Projects
- Match on Main Grant – one submission made
- Attended ICEA 2025 Economic Outlook
- Numerous Apps in for Events: Memorial Day Parade, Ionia Cruisin' Classic Car Show, IFF Grand Parade, Ionia Cow Pie Classic Bike Race, Ionia Criterium/Grand River Shootout Bike Race,
- Social District Exploration and Presentation Creation
- The Appliance Patch Ribbon Cutting and The Rabbit Hole Reopening Event

Meetings / Seminars / Webinars:

- Regular Meetings: City Council, City Manager Connections, Legislative Update, Department Head and DDA Board of Directors meetings.
- Connections made: Cow Pie, Ionia Criterium/Grand River Shootout, Autumn Celebration, Ionia Historical Society, Brick Street Studio
- Webinars/Training attended: City of Ionia Website Training, Agenda Minutes Training, Capital Asset Management and Planning

Theatre:

- Lighting Walk Through with Vendor
- Special Events: Private Showing, Memorial Program
- Extended Spring Break Showings
- Continue to develop volunteer outreach program/orientation, general policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassie Rice, Ionia DDA Director/Assistant Theatre Director

Upcoming DDA Educational Opportunities:

- PFCU: 8 Strategies to Improve your Business Social Media, scheduled for April 15, 2025
- Edward Jones: Estate Planning Financial Workshop, scheduled for May 14, 2025
- Mercantile Bank: Fraud Prevention, schedule for June 3, 2025

IONIA THEATRE MONTHLY RECAP



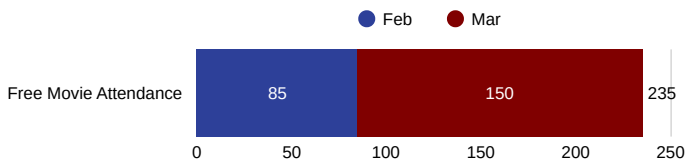
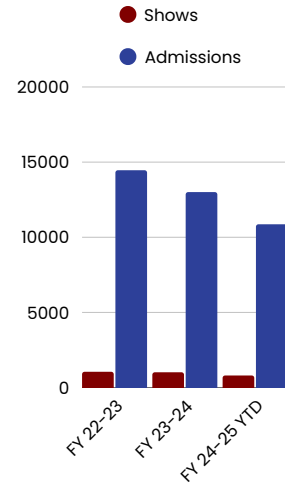
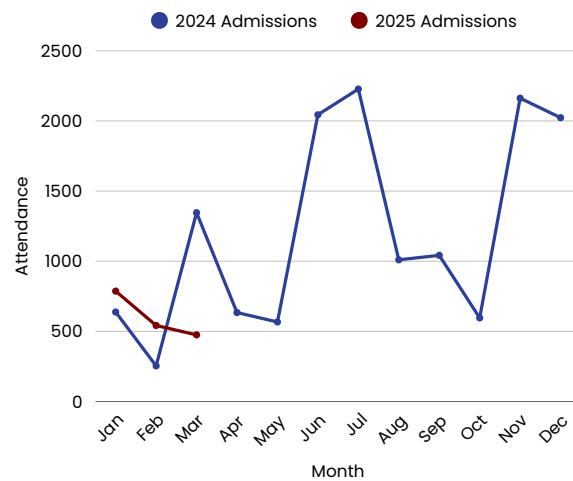
MOVIES PLAYED IN MARCH



BY THE NUMBERS...

MONTHLY SHOWINGS
80
Compared to Last Year +1

MONTHLY ATTENDANCE
475
Compared to Last Year -871



UPCOMING @ THE THEATRE

EVENTS

4/15 DDA Educational Event - Social Media	4/22 IACC Coffee & Connect	5/2-5/3 MSDA Dress Rehearsal and Recital	5/5 WION Free Movie Monday	5/14 DDA Educational Event - Estate Planning
5/17 Performance Dixon's Violin	6/13-6/14 Cow Pie Classic Bike Race	7/9 Hannah Rae and Shelby Hometown Concert	8/10 Jake Slater - Elvis Tribute	10/23 Autumn Celebration

MOVIES

STARTING 4/4 Private Showings for: • Sensory Friendly • Emerson Elem. • Saranac Elem.	STARTING 4/10 Private Showings for: • SSPP • Jehovah's Witness

IN THE WORKS...

- Sensory Showings
- Summer Showings
- Private Showing Marketing
- Summer Parks and Rec Camp Movie Field Trips



**CITY OF IONIA
STAFF REPORT FOR DDA AGENDA ITEM**

TO: DDA Board of Directors
FROM: Cassie Rice, DDA Director
DATE: April 16, 2025
RE: Adoption of Strategic Plan

Background

The Ionia DDA Board of Directors recently convened with a moderator to develop a strategic plan aimed at guiding the organization’s efforts moving forward. The meeting focused on identifying key priorities, setting actionable goals, and ensuring alignment with the community’s evolving needs. Board members engaged in thoughtful discussions to outline long-term objectives and immediate actions, with an emphasis on enhancing local development, fostering economic growth, and improving services for the community.

Determined DDA Objectives

- Objective 1: Revitalize the Downtown Ionia Brand
- Objective 2: Strategic Business Recruitment & Retention
- Objective 3: Preservation and vibrancy of the Ionia Theatre
- Objective 4: Increase the impact and frequency of events in the downtown

Approval and further planning discussions are requested to proceed with implementation.

Requested Action/Motion:

It is requested the DDA Board of Directors consider making a motion to approve the Strategic Plan developed for adoption as presented.

Motion By: _____ Seconded By: _____

Key Objectives – Spring 2025

To maximize the City of Ionia Downtown Development Authority's (DDA's) positive impact on the future prosperity of the downtown development district and community as a whole, the DDA Board of Directors has established this set of key objectives to maintain focus and guide the DDA's initiatives.

This set of focus areas is the result of a facilitated process where the DDA Board – along with key City staff - worked through past, current and potential future initiatives to determine where focusing DDA resources & efforts will fulfill the goals of the DDA and further define the DDA's role as a collaborative, leading organization that is catalytic to the prosperity of the greater Ionia community.

As part of the process, the DDA board and key staff members were invited to weigh-in via online survey on the various existing and potential initiatives of the DDA, as well as provide input on SWOT items and suggest other areas of focus. This was further fleshed out during an extended worksession held in-person within the DDA district.

➤ **S.W.O.T. Analysis**

A SWOT Analysis is a simple but useful framework for analyzing an entity's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It helps to build on what is going and/or being done well, to address what is lacking, to minimize unnecessary risks, and to take the greatest possible advantage of chances for success. The DDA participated in a general, open-ended SWOT analysis of the Ionia DDA District and of the DDA organization itself. The comments submitted by these parties are summarized below, in no particular order:

➤ **Downtown Ionia's Primary Strengths:**

- Historic building stock and accompanying brick Main Street
- Extremely walkable, pedestrian-centric downtown
- Street trees & landscaping
- The Ionia Theatre
- A good mix of businesses uses along with a couple anchor retailers
- Several dedicated building and business owners
- Low barrier to entry (cost of real estate) is an opportunity for investors
- Location of the community between Grand Rapids and Lansing metros

➤ **DDA's Primary Strengths:**

- Our new, energetic, full time DDA director
- A collaborative & supportive city council and city staff
- Open collaboration with the Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce
- Because the downtown is beautiful, the DDA receives emotional goodwill
- Dedication from board leadership to continue to revitalize downtown

➤ **Downtown Ionia's Primary Weaknesses:**

- Vacant storefronts
- Properties falling into disrepair / blight. Historic buildings are great, but can be money pits.
- Lack of consistency: business hours, business stability, connectivity, foot traffic
- Negative perceptions of downtown
- Limited retail / business mix
- Perceived insufficient parking in the district

- We are an “8 hours per day 5 days per week” town. This needs to expand drastically.
- Lack of actionable tools to incentivize investment and business expansion downtown

➤ **DDA’s Primary Weaknesses:**

- A lack of a unified direction / strategic plan, especially for investment of DDA Director’s time
- Limited funding without DDA TIF
- Communication gaps due to limited social media and low website usage
- Our biggest weakness is silence. The DDA should be more visible and connect more with local businesses, owners and community.
- There is a disconnect of vision, experience and observation between the DDA/City and investors (Property tax payers and business owners).
- The DDA organization is not known or visible to the people that fund it. Some poor relationships.
- Staffing capacity bottleneck: managing DDA responsibilities as well as Ionia Theater responsibilities
- Decision-making processes – DDA being a public entity, things can take longer than ideal

➤ **Downtown Ionia’s Primary Opportunities Moving Forward:**

- Plenty of vacant storefronts to bring in new businesses
- Development of housing units enhances financial investment in property and brings more potential customers downtown
- Incremental change/improvement in attitude by community and business/building owners
- Activation of vacant spaces, mixed use spaces, public art opportunities
- Utilize the adjacency to M-66, including advertising
- Armory building could be utilized for stronger purposes than current tenants
- Leverage the Ionia Theater for additional uses = more foot traffic
- Acquisition pricing of downtown real estate is low / attractive. ROI opportunity is there, but negative perception remains a challenge. *“There’s more commercial square footage in downtown Ionia than the Wealthy Street corridor of Grand Rapids.”*
- Work to change the narrative of downtown Ionia to a more positive one, using specific case study examples
- Data shows there is significant untapped financial wealth in the Ionia area
- Development of Social District boundaries and establishment partnerships to help facilitate and impact events in downtown.

➤ **DDA’s Primary Opportunities Moving Forward:**

- New DDA Director means new opportunities to strengthen connections with downtown stakeholders
- Ionia Theater should be leveraged to enhance the DDA district
- DDA doesn’t have a lot of financial resources, but we can put together data and evangelize to help change the narrative about downtown Ionia in a positive way
- We can make DDA meetings the place where ideas are brought and people go to get connected.
- Increase downtown residential living & gathering spaces
- Enhanced collaboration between the DDA, Chamber of Commerce and other community partners

➤ **Threats to Downtown Ionia's Future Success:**

- Loss of the Ionia Theater or Fuller's Furniture would be devastating for downtown
- Property/business owner apathy
- Doing nothing and letting the Downtown Ionia's potential further deteriorate
- Lack of community interest and involvement. Negative people.
- Continuous business closings & property value decrease
- Economic uncertainty
- Building deterioration due to deferred maintenance
- More non-profits and government entities purchasing property = increasing property tax burden on current/future investors.
- Businesses "up the hill" (M-66 corridor) increasing in critical mass and popularity, potentially making the traditional downtown less relevant
- There is a tiredness, a sense of "that's Ionia" which seems to dim so many people's view of the area.

➤ **Threats To The DDA's Future Success:**

- Lack of buy-in from the property tax payers, investors and businesses within our district.
- Stagnant feeling that translates to low meeting attendance from the public and trouble getting board members.
- Limited funding
- Volunteer fatigue
- Inconsistent marketing
- Negative attitudes from the community, business & property owners
- A loss of City support

➤ **DDA Key Objectives**

Utilizing a combination of electronic surveying (anonymous responses), research and thorough group discussion, the DDA Board has established a list of focused, key objectives to pursue.

It is the DDA's intent to revisit, reevaluate and potentially amend this set of key objectives in its entirety on an annual basis. It should also be considered how these objectives could/should be incorporated into an official re-establishment of the DDA TIF plan.

➤ **Objective 1: Revitalize the Downtown Ionia Brand**

- Immediate priority initiatives:
 - Electronic marketing & communication
 - ◆ Discoverionia.com
 - ◆ Social Media – potentially leverage existing Ionia Theater presence
 - Develop high-quality collateral materials
 - ◆ e.g. brochure and/or rack card
 - ◆ Focus on building awareness of the downtown district
 - Place-based activation – Bulldogs projects
 - Conduct a digital assets inventory – photography, video, branding
- Longer-term priority initiatives:
 - Launch the development of an authentic (re)brand effort for Downtown Ionia
 - ◆ Solicit meaningful input & engagement from downtown stakeholders

- ◆ New brand should permeate all communications with unified call-to-actions

➤ **Objective 2: Strategic Business Recruitment & Retention**

- Establish, publish and promote a dynamic vacant/available property inventory
- Crunch the numbers / data / demographics (e.g. commercial leakage report) to quantify the business opportunities in Downtown Ionia
- Develop compelling case studies to showcase as development “wins” for downtown Ionia
 - ‘Shop around’ opportunities to regional districts (e.g. areas of Grand Rapids) where rent is high and opportunity is limited
 - Also focus on local entrepreneurship
- Grow captive customer base via upper floor residential development

➤ **Objective 3: Preservation and vibrancy of the Ionia Theatre**

- Rely on Theatre Ad Hoc Group Findings and Suggestions for implementation in the near future.
- Assist with finding volunteers or supporting the events put on by the Ionia Theatre.

➤ **Objective 4: Increase the impact and frequency of events in the downtown**

- Focus on non-festival-type events (DDA to explore & own)
- Recruit specific DDA stakeholders to help spearhead (sense of buy-in)
- Twinkle Town holiday event – Support w/ City
 - Explore chalet village concept
- Autumn Celebration - support w/ Chamber
- 4th of July Fireworks – funding support



IONIA THEATER AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT 2025



*Recommended for adoption by Ionia Theatre Ad Hoc Committee on [insert date].
Adopted by Ionia City Council on [insert date].*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ionia Theatre, located in Ionia, Michigan, has been a cultural cornerstone since its opening in 1931. Initially launched as a Vaudeville and Movie Theatre, it has evolved into a multifaceted venue cherished by the community for its contributions to arts and entertainment. Despite its historical significance and community appreciation, the theatre faces significant financial and operational challenges. It relies heavily on financial contributions from multiple city sources and has seen a decline in volunteer support.

In 2024, Mayor Milewski formed the Ionia Theatre Ad Hoc Committee to develop a sustainable operational and financial strategy for the theatre. Double Haul Solutions (DHS) was engaged to facilitate the committee's work and generate recommendations for the City Council. The committee, comprising various community stakeholders, is driven by a deep love for the theatre and a commitment to ensuring its sustainability for future generations.

The theatre's challenges include financial sustainability, capital maintenance, a decline in volunteers, evolving audience expectations, and shifts in national theatre trends. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning and robust community support.

The committee's recommendations include extending the term and expanding the role of the Ad Hoc Committee, developing a leadership succession plan, conducting market research, creating a communications plan, establishing a nonprofit and board, exploring capital fundraising opportunities, and considering the incorporation of alcohol sales to enhance patron experience and generate additional revenue.

The Ionia Theatre exemplifies the enduring impact of the arts and the significance of preserving historic landmarks. However, its future depends on a resurgence of community passion and strategic efforts to ensure its continued success and sustainability.





**FREE MOVIE MONDAY
MARCH 17 7 PM
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK**

INTRODUCTION

The Ionia Theatre, located in Ionia, Michigan, has a long history of bringing cultural value to the community dating back to its opening in 1931. Initially launched as a Vaudeville and Movie Theatre by Butterfield Theatres of Detroit, it has since evolved into a multifaceted cultural venue appreciated by the local community for its contributions to arts and entertainment.

Despite community appreciation and love, the Ionia Theatre relies on the support of financial contributions from multiple city sources. Due to numerous challenges, the ability to operate and maintain the theatre solely through theatre revenues is impossible based on the current business model. In addition to financial challenges, the theatre has seen a decline in volunteer assets. The theatre needs to find strategies to address these challenges and ensure its continued operation.

AD HOC COMMITTEE

In 2024, Mayor Milewski enlisted the Ionia Theatre Ad Hoc Committee to engage the collective strength and brain power of community stakeholders to strategize a more sustainable operational and financial strategy for the Ionia Theatre. The City of Ionia procured Double Haul Solutions (DHS) to support the facilitation of the Ionia Theatre Ad Hoc Committee and generate a series of recommendations based on the committee’s work for presentation to the City Council.

The Ad Hoc Committee* included the following individuals:

Name	Representation
John Milewski	Mayor-City Council
Rich Starr	City Council
Tom Millard	City Council
Ashley Brownell	Ionia Chamber of Commerce
Janet Balice	Ionia Community Foundation
Mike Clark	Ionia Free Fair Association
Karlee Bailey	Downtown Business Owner
Gary Ferguson (ex-officio)	Theatre Director
Precia Garland (ex-officio)	City Manager



*Also in attendance were Assistant City Manager Jonathan Bowman and Downtown Development Authority Director/ Assistant Theatre Director Cassie Rice.

Committee Member Motivations

The members of the Ionia Theatre Ad Hoc Committee participated for several compelling reasons. They are driven by a deep love for the theatre and its rich history, and they are passionate about ensuring its sustainability for future generations. Their goal is to find ways to create an operational strategy that drives patronage and revenue growth, resulting in the theatre's financial health for years to come. Improved financial health will support operational enhancements and capital investment. Additionally, they are committed to community engagement with the aim of showcasing and reminding the community that the theatre is a vibrant cultural hub to be embraced, not forgotten by the whims of technology and convenience. The Committee’s work will drive life and vibrancy to the theatre, making it a central point for culture and entertainment in the community.

AD HOC COMMITTEE

Committee Member Assets

The members of the Ionia Theatre Ad Hoc Committee bring a diverse range of skills and experiences to the table. These skillsets and experiences are summarized below:

- **Passion for Live Shows:** Members are deeply passionate about live performances, which drives their commitment to the theatre's success.
- **Commitment:** They are dedicated to the theatre's mission and its role in the community.
- **History:** Some members have a long-standing connection with the theatre, contributing valuable historical insights. Members recall working at the theatre as youth or making core memories with live shows and movies. These nostalgic experiences drive a desire to ensure such opportunities are reserved for future generations.
- **Fundraisers:** Their involvement in fundraising activities offers perspective in the development of strategies to secure financial support for the theatre.
- **Symphony Experience:** Members with a background in symphony bring a unique perspective on live music and performances.
- **Marketing and Communications:** Expertise in marketing and communications helps in promoting the theatre and engaging with the community.
- **Finance and Real Estate:** Knowledge in finance and real estate is crucial for managing the theatre's financial health and exploring potential investments.
- **Fresh Perspectives:** Innovative ideas and fresh perspectives are vital to inspiring the committee and encouraging new opportunities.

These diverse skills and experiences enable the committee to effectively strategize and work towards the theatre's sustainability and long-term growth.

*Meetings**

Committee members participated in four (4) meetings over a five-month period. Each meeting had a predetermined focus. Meeting summaries are provided in the appendix.

- Meeting #1 Kick Off
- Meeting #2 Organizational Structure
- Meeting #3 Live Events
- Meeting #4 Marketing and Communications



CHALLENGES

The Ionia Theatre is approaching its centennial with several noteworthy challenges. While the theatre holds a rich history and remains a cherished landmark in Ionia, it has been grappling with both operational and capital funding shortfalls for years. These deficits have historically been mitigated through contributions from the City General Fund and the reallocation of local road millage funds. Projections indicate that these funding gaps are approaching \$200,000 annually based on current data.

The Ionia Theatre currently contends with several substantial challenges:

- **Financial Sustainability:** Ensuring the theatre's financial health is a primary concern. The theatre needs to develop sustainable revenue streams to support its operations and future growth, weaning itself off the city's general fund and other resources.
- **Capital Maintenance:** Continuous maintenance and upgrades to the theatre's facilities and technology are essential. This includes modernizing stage lighting, sound systems, and other critical infrastructure to align with contemporary standards.
- **Decline in Volunteers:** There has been a noticeable decline in the number of volunteers, which impacts the theatre's ability to host events and maintain its operations effectively.
- **Modern Expectations:** Audience expectations have evolved, necessitating enhancements such as improved accessibility features, upgraded seating, and cutting-edge technology. This challenge is exacerbated by the dearth and easy access to home entertainment options.
- **National Theatre Trends:** Shifts in audience preferences and attendance patterns within the broader theatre industry pose a challenge. The Ionia Theatre must remain relevant and competitive in this changing landscape.

Addressing the challenges outlined above demands strategic planning and robust community support to secure the theatre's continued success and sustainability. The Theatre Ad Hoc Committee presents an opportunity to convene and catalyze the community around a shared mission to address these challenges.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Built in 1931, the Ionia Theatre was originally constructed for Vaudeville entertainers, featuring a full stage, orchestra pit, and Art Deco design elements inspired by the New York Roxy Theatre. However, with the onset of the Great Depression, the theatre transitioned to showing movies, installing a large screen and projector.

Following years of decline, disinvestment, and decay, the community identified the theatre as a top restoration priority. Restoration efforts began in earnest in 1984. A committee led by Monroe McPherson raised funds and partnered with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). With the support of state grants, the committee purchased and worked to renovate the theatre. Key renovations included a new projector, roof, stage drapery, seat upholstery, paint, and wiring. An exact replica of the original marquee was also installed.

Today, the theatre boasts DTS Digital Sound, high-resolution projection, computerized ticketing, and automated movie projection. A small balcony to house the AV equipment for live shows was added to the main theatre, and a “green room” was created for performers. Additionally, with the continued rise of the movie industry and patronage, a second theatre was added in the early 1990s.

Operations continue to be led by the Ionia Downtown Development Authority and the City of Ionia. Staffing is provided by a director, assistant director, two part-time managers, and a part-time janitor. Although numbers continue to decline, volunteers continue to provide an important and invaluable level of support. The community’s patronage contributes to the theatre’s ability to offer live performances and first-run movies at a low cost.

FACILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY

Although built in 1931, the theatre and city have made a concerted effort to stay up with technology and audience expectations. In summary:

SCREEN 1

The larger of the two auditoriums seats 730 patrons. It features a 2k digital cinema projector and Dolby 7.1 audio for an immersive experience. In September 2022, Screen 1 saw upgraded accessibility with Odyssey hearing and closed caption assistance via infrared transmitters.

For live shows, Screen 1 has a dedicated audio system and stage lighting controlled from the rear balcony. The stage extends over the orchestra pit and is accessible for individuals with mobility issues. The movie screen can fly, allowing smooth transitions between films and live performances, with a motorized curtain operable from backstage and the projection booth. The fly loft facilitates dynamic setups. Screen 1 hosts around 20 to 30 live events annually, including local plays and national tours.

Performers have access to five dressing rooms, a restroom, and a greenroom adjacent to the stage. An overhead door and truck dock streamline load-ins for live shows.

SCREEN 2

With a seating capacity of 107, functions primarily as a movie theatre. It features a 2k digital projector and Dolby 7.1 audio system to ensure high-quality film presentations.

This setting provides an intimate atmosphere for moviegoers.

The **main lobby** of the Ionia Theatre can accommodate up to 202 people. It serves as the hub for concession sales including a full-sized Gold Medal popcorn machine, and two selling stations. In 2022, the concessions area was updated to include self-serve automatic butter dispensers and two eight-head Coke soft drink dispensers to streamline the customer experience and reduce waiting times

For larger events, the theatre's **ticket booth** acts as an additional point for ticket pick-up and sales, ensuring efficient crowd management. The theatre's front entrance has power-assisted doors to provide easy access for strollers and wheelchairs, enhancing the theatre's inclusivity.

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

The current revenue sources for the Ionia Theatre include:

- 1. General Fund Contributions:** The theatre has been receiving financial support from the General Fund to cover operational expenses.
- 2. Local Road Millage Diversion:** A previously applied local road millage has been reassigned to support the theatre's capital needs.
- 3. Movie and Live Show Tickets & Concessions:** Approximately half of the theatre's revenues come from ticket sales and concessions.
- 4. Venue Rentals:** The theatre generates revenue through venue rentals, including charges for the use of lighting, sound, and projection systems.

These sources have been crucial in filling the operational and capital funding gaps that the theatre has been facing for years. Additional information is outlined in the City Manager's July 20, 2023, memo available as Appendix I.



A HUB FOR CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

The Ionia Theatre is more than merely a venue; it stands as a cultural institution integral to the community. The theatre's diverse programming encompasses first-run movies, live theatrical performances, concerts, and community events. This variety guarantees that there is something to appeal to everyone, whether they are cinephiles, music enthusiasts, or families with children.

The theatre's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity is evident through its continuous upgrades and enhancements. The installation of infrared transmitters and receivers for hearing and closed caption assistance, alongside power-assisted doors, underscores its dedication to ensuring all patrons can fully enjoy the theatre's offerings.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are grounded in the insights and deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee, reflecting both direct input from members and ideas inspired by the committee's work.

They represent a strategic path forward based on observed needs, community priorities, and organizational goals. While the recommendations are presented in a general order of priority, it is important to note that several initiatives can and should be pursued concurrently to maximize impact and momentum. Together, these actions aim to support sustainable progress, strengthen operations, and enhance overall community outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTEND THE TERM AND EXPAND THE ROLE OF THE IONIA THEATRE AD HOC COMMITTEE:

To effectively implement the recommendations provided within, it is beneficial to both City of Ionia staff and Ionia Theatre staff to have the additional support offered by the Ad Hoc Committee. Committee members can function not only as strategic thought partners but also utilize their skillsets to enhance community engagement and volunteer participation.

GET ACTIVE AND STAY ENGAGED:

Networking and staying engaged with organizations such as the League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT) will be invaluable to the Theatre and community’s efforts to build and sustain a self-supporting business model. Find opportunities to network with national arts and cultural leaders as a strategy to inform new programs and initiatives that help ensure the Theatre’s relevancy.

THEATRE LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLAN:

The Ionia Theatre Director has been an invaluable asset to both the Ionia Theatre and the broader community. Over the course of 17 years as an employee, and many more as a volunteer and advocate, his dedication, expertise, and leadership have ensured the Theatre’s continued success. Moreover, the theatre’s rich history has been protected while adapting to evolving audience expectations and industry trends. The depth of knowledge and skills that have been amassed while managing operations, programming, finances, community engagement, and facility maintenance cannot be overstated.

However, to safeguard the long-term sustainability and seamless operation of the Theatre, it is imperative that a comprehensive succession plan is not only developed but implemented. This plan will ensure that the wealth of institutional knowledge held by the current Director is documented, transferred, and made accessible to future leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE SUCCESSION PLAN:

Knowledge Documentation & Institutional Memory

- Conduct knowledge transfer sessions with the current Director to capture critical insights.
- Develop a comprehensive operations manual detailing essential responsibilities, workflows, and decision-making processes.
- Maintain an archive of key historical records, financial reports, contracts, and stakeholder relationships for continuity. Consider document imaging for greater security.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Development

- Formalize and document daily, weekly, monthly, and annual operational procedures, including:
 - Event scheduling and management.
 - Budgeting and financial reporting.
 - Vendor and sponsorship management.
 - Facility and equipment upkeep and technical operations.
 - Marketing, outreach, and community partnerships.
- Establish a clear chain of command and delegation strategies to distribute responsibilities effectively.

Training & Professional Development Strategy

- Identify and develop internal staff members or community stakeholders who show leadership potential.
- Implement a structured mentorship program where potential successors shadow the current Director.

Transition Timeline & Implementation

- Develop a phased transition plan, including interim leadership roles if necessary.
- Outline a timeline for the leadership handover, ensuring adequate overlap for knowledge transfer.
- Establish a succession review team to periodically assess progress and adjust as needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustaining the Theatre's Mission & Vision

- Ensure that the Theatre's core values, cultural impact, and community-driven mission remain at the forefront of a leadership transition.
- Engage key stakeholders, including board members, local government, patrons, and sponsors, to support a smooth leadership transition and maintain financial stability.

A structured Leadership Succession Plan can be leveraged to maintain the theatre's operational continuity, status as a cultural hub, and ensure that its rich legacy is preserved for future generations.

CONDUCT MARKET RESEARCH:

Data is essential for guiding the strategic direction of the Ionia Theatre. Market insights will inform programming, engagement strategies, and marketing efforts.

Survey of the Community and Surrounding Areas

Develop and distribute a survey using SurveyMonkey or another online tool. If resources are available, consider a more robust and statistically significant survey tool administered by a professional firm such as Cobalt Community Research.

- Include demographic questions to segment responses and identify audience needs.
- Ensure participation from diverse groups, including families, young professionals, and retirees.

Conduct Focus Groups

Organize small, targeted discussions to better understand community preferences, barriers to attendance, and engagement opportunities. Target audiences for focus groups should include, but not be limited to:

- Youth: Under 8 years old, 8–12 years old, 13–17 years old
- Adults: Young professionals and mid-career individuals
- Families: Parents with school-age children
- Seniors: Retirees and older community members

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholder Analysis

- Facilitate a Power/Interest Grid discussion to prioritize communication efforts based on stakeholder influence and engagement.

Additional Market Research Approaches

- Analyze ticket sales trends to understand audience behaviors, popular showtimes, and event preferences.
- Review social media engagement metrics to gauge interest in diverse types of events and promotional content.
- Identify local and regional competitors to understand what other entertainment venues offer and where Ionia Theatre can differentiate itself.



DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN:

A structured communications strategy will help the Ionia Theatre engage the community, increase attendance, and develop a sustainable marketing approach.

Create a Comprehensive Plan

1. Define goals and objectives:
 - Increase attendance by X% over the next year. Set a target goal.
 - Improve community engagement through digital and in-person interactions.
 - Establish Ionia Theatre as a cultural and entertainment hub in the region.
2. Craft key messages focused on:
 - The theatre’s historic charm and role in the community.
 - Unique entertainment experiences available at the theatre (e.g., The Ionia Theatre is more than just movies).
 - The impact of attending and supporting local arts and entertainment.
3. Identify current and potential communication channels:
 - Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter).
 - Email Newsletters: Monthly updates on upcoming events and special promotions.
 - Community Partnerships: Collaborate with local schools, senior centers, and businesses for joint promotions.
 - Traditional Media: Utilize local newspapers, radio, and community bulletin boards.
 - In-Theatre Promotions: Display upcoming events, loyalty program details, and member benefits during showings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Assigning Roles and Responsibilities

A communications plan is only as good as the resources assigned to support it. Ensuring the appropriate human capital is assigned to lead key plan roles will help support plan effectiveness and accountability. Roles should include, but not be limited to:

- **Marketing & Communications Lead:** Oversees messaging, digital strategy, and social media campaigns.
- **Community Outreach Coordinator:** Builds relationships with schools, businesses, and local organizations.
- **Event Manager:** Ensures that promotional efforts align with scheduled programming and ticketing strategies.
- **Volunteer & Street Team Coordinator:** Organizes volunteers and ambassadors to spread awareness through grassroots efforts.

These roles can often be supported by trained volunteer resources. Such volunteer roles should be explored and discussed further as the community discusses the future of the Theatre Ad Hoc Committee.

Recommended Next Steps for Strengthening Communications:

1. Execute a phased approach: Start with research and immediate engagement strategies, then refine based on feedback.
2. Pilot new programming ideas: Use data from surveys and focus groups to introduce trial events and monitor their success.
3. Strengthen digital presence: Invest in consistent social media engagement, video content, and interactive elements.
4. Develop membership and loyalty programs: Provide incentives for frequent attendees and community supporters.
5. Evaluate success through metrics: Track attendance, audience engagement, and marketing effectiveness regularly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CREATE THEATRE NONPROFIT & BOARD:

Much of the Ad Hoc Committee’s discussion kept circling back to creating a nonprofit that is associated with the Theatre. There are a host of ways that a nonprofit could be structured and the strategic priorities the nonprofit would be created to address. A new nonprofit might play a supporting community engagement role, an operational role, or even an ownership role. There are pros and cons to each approach and such roles could and should evolve over time. It is recommended that at this stage of reimagining the theatre, such efforts should start slow and evolve as the nonprofit matures.

It is advisable, if created, that the new nonprofit board not only includes those passionate about the theatre, but those strategic collaborators who have the potential to help bolster the theatre’s success through their roles and relationships. Consider board members that represent:

- Ionia Public Schools
- Ionia County Community Foundation
- Large industry such as Herbruck’s
- Civic Clubs such as Rotary

“Friends of the Ionia Theatre”

Bolster the theatre’s membership/sponsorship programs. Such programs should offer everyday citizens, corporate community cheerleaders, and everything in between, a chance to support the theatre outside of patronage. Various levels of membership/sponsorship should offer benefits scaled to sponsorship levels. Ideas might include discounted concessions, members only private screenings, first access to tickets to premiere events and movie releases, or tickets to support corporate culture prizes.

It should be noted that the theatre’s existing programs have seen low levels of participation. Utilize the Market Research recommendations above to better understand community and patron sentiment towards the theatre’s existing efforts such as:

- Theatre Loyalty Program: A \$2 rewards card allows patrons to earn points towards free movie tickets.
- Theatre Donor Program: Six donor levels are currently offered by the theatre as outlined below:
 - Friend - \$100 to \$999 (12)
 - Patron - \$1,000 to \$4,999 (31)
 - Contributing - \$5,000 to \$9,999 (1)
 - Benefactor - \$10,000 to \$24,999 (0)
 - Legacy - \$25,000 to \$49,999 (3)
 - Visionary - \$50,000+ (2)

RECOMMENDATIONS

“Friends of the Ionia Theatre” continued...

The program’s largest contributions come from State Grants and both City and DDA contributions.

Reviewing the theatre’s [donation information](#), there are no “benefits” associated with each donor level other than recognition. The Ad Hoc Committee hosted the Executive Director of Tibbit’s Oprah House. Note their [membership](#) and [sponsorship](#) pages with benefits provided at each level with clarity on said benefits.

- Volunteer Benefits: According to Committee Members, benefits of volunteering include a free movie, small popcorn, and soda for volunteering at shows. However, no such benefits are noted on the [theatre website](#). It is unclear what efforts are being made to advertise volunteer opportunities and the associated tangible and intangible benefits.

EXPLORE CAPITAL FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES:

A key role that a new nonprofit could play would be to support capital fundraising efforts. Oftentimes it can be easier when donations are collected through a nonprofit verse directly through the city making the tax benefits of donating clearer.

Creating a nonprofit is not overly burdensome but will require time and resources. Again, there is a compelling case for the continued engagement of the Ad Hoc Committee to support such efforts. The nonprofit could be a standalone entity, or be a function of the City or DDA, which would not be out of the ordinary. The Michigan Nonprofit Association provides a great resource on [How to Start a Nonprofit](#).



RECOMMENDATIONS

THE IONIA THEATRE AND THE CASE FOR ALCOHOL SALES:

The historic Ionia Theatre is a beloved cultural and entertainment hub in downtown Ionia, offering a mix of first-run movies, classic films, live performances, and community events. Adding alcohol sales to the theater’s offerings could:

1. Enhance Patron Experience: Modern theaters and entertainment venues often serve alcohol, and offering this option could make the Ionia Theatre more appealing, particularly for adults attending evening events.
2. Generate Additional Revenue: Alcohol sales would provide much-needed financial support for the theater’s programming, maintenance, and community initiatives.
3. Attract Event Rentals: Serving alcohol could make the Ionia Theatre a more desirable venue for private events, such as weddings, corporate meetings, and celebrations.
4. Revitalize Downtown: Expanded offerings at the theater would contribute to downtown Ionia’s growth by attracting visitors and supporting nearby businesses.

Michigan Liquor License Types as they May Apply to the Ionia Theatre

Class-C License

- Definition: A Class-C license is a permanent liquor license that allows the on-premises sale and consumption of beer, wine, and spirits. These licenses are typically issued to businesses like restaurants, bars, or entertainment venues.
- Requirements: This license requires approval from the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) and may also need local government approval. Class-C licenses are limited in number within each municipality, and in the City of Ionia, there are currently no available licenses. However, there are a few inactive licenses in the city that have not reported revenue in the past couple of years, which might present an opportunity for purchase or transfer.
- Utilization for a Non-Profit Movie Theatre: If the non-profit organization owning the Ionia Theatre were able to secure a transfer of one of the inactive Class-C licenses, they could sell alcoholic beverages during movie screenings, live performances, and special events. This would require compliance with operational requirements, including staff training, zoning laws, and creating designated consumption areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Michigan Liquor License Types as they May Apply to the Ionia Theatre continued...

Special License

- Definition: A Special License is a temporary liquor license granted to non-profit organizations for specific events. These licenses allow the sale and consumption of alcohol on the premises for the duration of the event, typically up to 7 days. Special Licenses are not renewable and must be applied for each event.
- Requirements: Non-profits must prove their charitable status (e.g., 501(c)(3)) and submit an application to the MLCC with event details. Local government approval may also be required.
- Utilization for a Non-Profit Movie Theatre: The Ionia Theatre could apply for Special Licenses to sell alcoholic beverages during one-time events such as film festivals, fundraising galas, or themed movie nights. This approach allows the theater to offer alcohol for specific events without the commitment and cost of a permanent license, making it a flexible and cost-effective option for occasional sales.

Downtown Liquor License

To support redevelopment efforts, particularly in downtowns, PA 501 of 2006 created Redevelopment Liquor Licenses. There are specific provisions that must be met to qualify for the application process. Required provisions include:

1. Investment Requirements: In smaller communities, the required investment is \$1,000,000 per 1,000 people. For Ionia, the DDA District would need to have seen a total investment of \$12,249,000.
2. Rehabilitation Requirements: The building where the license would be used requires a minimum of \$75,000 investment in rehabilitation or restoration within the past five years or committed to a capital investment to be spent before the license is issued.
3. Local Government Approval: The local government (city, village, or township) must pass a resolution supporting your application. This step is crucial as it demonstrates community backing for the business.
4. Application Process:
 - a. Resolution: Obtain a resolution from the local government.
 - b. Forms: Submit the resolution along with the Retailer License & Permit Application (LCC-100) and the New On-Premises Redevelopment or Development District License Questionnaire (LCC-109b) to the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC).
 - c. Review: The MLCC will review the application, ensuring all criteria are met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Liquor License continued...

5. The license fee is \$20,000, with potential additional fees depending on the specific licenses and permits requested.
6. Operational Requirements: The business must be open to the public for at least 10 hours a day, five days a week, and at least 50% of total sales must come from food.

Redevelopment Liquor Licenses were designed to support redevelopment and rehabilitation in defined redevelopment districts such as a DDA. The availability of such licenses can be leveraged to attract and support businesses with what is oftentimes a lower cost alternative to a Class-C License, contributing to local economic growth and revitalization.

Civic Auditorium Designation

- Definition: Under Michigan law (MCL 436.1509), the MLCC allows municipalities to designate facilities as civic auditoriums. This designation enables the on-premises sale and consumption of alcohol without requiring one of the limited Class-C licenses. Civic auditoriums are typically venues that provide cultural, educational, and entertainment opportunities to the community.
- Requirements:
 - The municipality must adopt a resolution designating the Ionia Theatre as a civic auditorium.
 - The non-profit would need to comply with MLCC regulations for operating a civic auditorium, including filing the appropriate applications and adhering to liquor control laws.
 - Local government and community support are essential for this designation.
- Utilization for a Non-Profit Movie Theatre: This route provides a streamlined and potentially faster way for the Ionia Theatre to legally serve alcohol during its events without requiring the transfer or acquisition of a limited Class-C license. Alcohol could be served at a variety of events, such as movie screenings, live performances, fundraisers, and private rentals, creating a consistent revenue stream.

Key Challenges and Opportunities in Ionia

While there are no available Class-C licenses in Ionia, the presence of inactive licenses offers a potential avenue for acquisition. However, designating the Ionia Theatre as a civic auditorium under MCL 436.1509 appears to be the most straightforward and sustainable option. This approach bypasses the limited license availability, avoids the event-specific restrictions of Special Licenses, and aligns with the theater's mission as a community-focused non-profit organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Challenges and Opportunities in Ionia continued...

Recommendations

1. **City Attorney Review:** Before pursuing any of these options, it is strongly recommended to consult with the City Attorney to ensure compliance with local ordinances and state laws.
2. **Confirmation with the MLCC:** Contact the MLCC to confirm the process for each option, particularly the steps involved in designating the Ionia Theatre as a civic auditorium under MCL 436.1509.

Other Considerations

When evaluating the incorporation of alcohol sales into the Ionia Theatre's business strategy, the costs associated with such additional operations should also be considered. Such as insurance, but more importantly the required training and staffing arrangements that may be necessary.

In Michigan, liquor license holders must ensure that their staff undergoes specific training to comply with state regulations. These requirements include:

- **Mandatory Server Training:** All new on-premises licensees or those transferring more than 50% interest in an existing on-premises license must complete an approved server training program.
- **Supervisory Personnel:** At least one server-trained supervisory person must be on duty during all hours when alcoholic beverages are served.

Volunteer servers and supervisory personnel may be used; however, they must meet the same training and legal requirements regardless of whether they are paid employees or volunteers. This includes completing an approved server training program and adhering to all state regulations regarding the sale and service of alcohol. Should the theatre pursue such volunteer activities, be sure to engage with the City Attorney and review insurance coverages to limit volunteer exposure to liability.

The strategic incorporation of alcohol sales and taking the necessary legal steps, can enhance the Theatre's offerings, strengthen its financial sustainability, and support the ability to continue service as a vital part of the community's cultural and social fabric.

RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS:

The City's resources for Capital investments have historically been limited, and recent inflationary trends have exacerbated the challenge of meeting capital needs, not only for the City of Ionia but also for communities nationwide. Tough decisions must be made, balancing "needs" versus "wants," even when those wants enhance quality of life.

For the Ionia Theatre, many of its capital improvement priorities could be considered both wants and needs. These capital improvements directly impact the Theatre's ability to operate, adapt to changing markets, and host revenue-generating programs and events.

Furthermore, in recent years, resources intended to support Theatre Capital Improvements have been redirected towards Theatre operations. There are multiple funding strategies that could be explored by the City of Ionia. Through strategic community engagement and communication, evaluate capital funding approaches such as:

- **Membership Program:** As noted above. Membership and sponsorship benefits need to be clearly articulated to potential donors. This would include ideas such as a dollar bill that demonstrates the amount per dollar that goes towards operations versus capital.
- **Planned Gifts:** A planned financial or estate gift is a donation arranged in advance, often as part of a donor's estate plan, to provide long-term support to a nonprofit organization. These gifts can include assets like property, retirement savings, or insurance benefits.
- **Capital Campaign:** Focused fundraising efforts on specific, tangible needs. Collaborate with the City Attorney to ensure that contributions qualify as non-profit donations and are tax-deductible.
- **Recreation Millage:** The Theatre has previously been considered part of the City's Parks and Recreation facilities. Assess community interest in implementing a millage to support recreation facilities and/or operations.
- **Voted Bond:** Depending on the Theatre's needs and other municipal requirements, consider proposing a voted bond. A voted bond often garners more support due to its specific and tangible nature compared to a millage.

DEVELOP NEW PROGRAMMING:

As discussed, diversifying the program offerings available through the Ionia Theatre is essential for enhancing revenue streams and attracting new patrons. However, creating and managing new and innovative programs requires considerable time and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee has proposed numerous ideas for programming and promotions. Additionally, market data and survey responses will provide further insights informing new program ideas. While there may be an inclination to undertake multiple initiatives, it is advisable for staff, the committee, and other volunteers to concentrate on identifying and focusing on a select few initiatives to start. Develop and implement these select new programs with excellence, focusing on achieving small victories. Small victories help build momentum. Such examples could include:

- **Community Engagement:** Host community events such as local talent showcases, workshops, or educational programs. This can help build a loyal audience base and keep the theatre active even during off-peak times.
- **Collaborations and Partnerships:** Partner with local schools, businesses, and other nonprofits to co-host events. This can help share resources and attract a wider audience.
- **Special Events and Festivals:** Organize themed festivals, film screenings, or special performances that can draw in crowds. These events can be marketed as unique experiences that are only available during certain times of the year.
- **Utilize Digital Platforms:** Stream performances or host virtual events to reach a broader audience. This can also include online workshops or Q&A sessions with artists.

Such strategies could be particularly leveraged during slow times of the year to drive patronage and revenues. A more extensive list of committee-generated ideas is available in Appendix iv.

As both momentum and resources grow, consider a Volunteer Special Events & Programs Coordinator or collaborating with other organizations to provide this level of support. Special events and programs demand substantial resources. Failing to allocate the necessary resources could adversely affect the Theatre's efforts to diversify its cultural recreation offerings.



RECOMMENDATIONS

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT:

There was significant discussion by the Committee about the potential to more aggressively leverage the theatre’s acoustics to bolster interest in hosting additional live entertainment opportunities. In 2022, the theatre conducted a study of the theatre’s current acoustic conditions. The space is described as very "live," which is suitable for live music performances. However, the high reverberation time (RT) that benefits live music can be detrimental to other uses, such as movie presentations and speech-heavy events.

It was also noted that the theatre's high RT is more appropriate for live music performances, yet the recommended acoustic treatments, which aim to reduce RT for movies and speech intelligibility, may also benefit amplified live music performances.

The Committee hosted experienced Live Event Promoters for a tour and discussion regarding the theatre and its live performance potential. In general, the theatre was seen to be a great venue with a large stage and fantastic acoustics. However, many challenges were also discussed about the music industry such as event promotions, prepayment/deposit requirements, financial risks, lack of performer housing options, and more.

With further study, adequate resources, and a better understanding of market preferences and interest in live entertainment, there appears to be a clear opportunity to amplify the role that live entertainment plays in the theatre’s operations. Partnering with a third-party promotor who understands the regional market and live entertainment trends may help limit the theatre’s exposure to financial risks if it is done in conjunction with the implementation of a robust communications and marketing strategy.



CONCLUSION

The Ionia Theatre exemplifies the enduring impact of the arts and the significance of preserving historic landmarks. Having transformed from its inception as a Vaudeville and movie theatre in 1931 to a contemporary multi-functional venue, its history is one of resilience, innovation, and community spirit. As the Ionia Theatre continues to evolve and adapt, it remains a vibrant emblem of Ionia's cultural heritage.

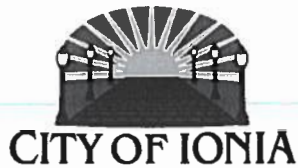
However, the Ionia Theatre and the legacy of community investment and passion is at risk. The theatre needs a resurgence in community passion and a “roll up the sleeves attitude,” much like that seen in the early 1980’s. Only through such a surge in passion can the DDA and City hope to ignite the interests of new and future generations of community members to carry and protect this legacy long into the future.




APPENDICES

1. City Memo
2. Speaker Profiles
3. Meeting Notes
4. Ideas Inventory
5. Market Data (available separately)

APPENDIX i: CITY MEMO



TO: Mayor Balice and City Councilmembers
FROM: Precia Garland, City Manager 
DATE: July 20, 2023
RE: Ionia Theatre

Current Financial Situation:

When the FY23-24 budget was approved in May, we discussed concerns regarding financial outlook for the Ionia Theatre Fund. For reference, I've attached the PowerPoint slides that provided basic information regarding FY23-24 anticipated revenues and expenditures. A chronic problem the theatre has is an **operating gap**, meaning operating revenues do not cover operating expenses. For FY 23-24, the gap is expected to look like this:

\$196,600 – Revenues
\$283,200 - Expenditures
(\$ 86,600) - GAP

During fiscal years 19-20, 20-21, and 21-22, either General Fund contributions (due to Covid) or the Shuttered Venues Grant helped to subsidize operations, thus injecting some much-needed cash and staving off a negative cash fund balance at fiscal year-end. However, no such subsidy occurred in the fiscal year just ended (FY22-23) and the projected operating gap is as follows (unaudited):

\$223,308 – Revenues
\$346,428 – Expenditures
(\$123,120) – GAP

Given the above performance for FY22-23, we estimate a remaining cash fund balance of \$52,610. With the expected operating gap of \$86,600 in FY 23-24, we currently expect a negative fund cash balance at the end of FY23-24 of (\$33,990). While net position will still be positive due to theatre assets (building and equipment) less depreciation, the fund will have no operating cash and in fact, will likely owe a “due to” liability to the General Fund, unless a subsidizing transfer from the General Fund is approved, or funds currently earmarked for capital projects are instead used to subsidize the operating gap.

Historical Gap Analysis:

The Ionia Theatre has consistently experienced an operating gap over the majority of the past nine fiscal years. Here are the numbers, in summary (detail is provided in the attached spreadsheet):

FY	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Revenue	\$ 278,677	\$ 297,603	\$ 279,007	\$ 263,311	\$ 283,812	\$ 400,494	\$ 185,495	\$ 509,588	\$ 223,308
Expense	\$ 312,299	\$ 342,411	\$ 333,436	\$ 313,568	\$ 326,027	\$ 294,233	\$ 209,934	\$ 339,588	\$ 346,428
GAP	\$ (33,622)	\$ (44,808)	\$ (54,429)	\$ (50,257)	\$ (42,215)	\$ 106,261	\$ (24,439)	\$ 170,000	\$ (123,120)
Cash	\$ 36,350	\$ 59,135	\$ 56,320	\$ 50,525	\$ 42,669	\$ 45,928	\$ 41,503	\$ 165,160	\$ 52,610

Cash balance does not directly correlate to the operating gap because of variable annual asset depreciation and capital purchases that do not show as expenditures. It should be noted that since FY19-20 the DDA budget has included a capital outlay account for Theatre capital projects. The revenue for this subsidy is derived from a dedicated City property tax mill, which was previously levied for street improvements but reassigned to the theatre when the County passed its county-wide road millage and the City received its proportionate share. The County millage is up for renewal this year and should it not pass, then Council will likely have to reconsider if this one property tax mill will be continue to be used for Theatre capital projects or be rededicated to street projects. Today, one mill generates approximately \$125,000 in revenue; we've been allocating \$100,000 of that to Theatre capital projects.

Capital Projects Transfer In (subsidy)

As noted above, since FY19-20, the Theatre Fund has received a contribution from other funds (DDA and General Fund) for capital projects. During the Covid fiscal years, part of this funding was used to cover the expanded operating gap.

FY23-24 includes another \$100,000 appropriation in the DDA fund intended for Theatre capital projects. However, what is now obvious is that if Theatre operations are to continue, most of that appropriation will need to be reassigned to cover the gap between operating revenues and expenses – as the budget currently stands, we see expect an \$86,600 operating gap in FY23-24.

The City's Capital Improvement Plan includes \$550,000 in various capital projects for the Theatre, which are detailed as follows by fiscal year:

FY	Project	Cost
23-24	House One Improvements	\$ 100,000
23-24	Restroom upgrades	\$ 40,000
24-25	Movie Project Equipment	\$ 140,000
25-26	Main Roof Replacement	\$ 95,000
26-27	Dressing Room and Roof Repairs	\$ 95,000
27-28	Stage Improvements	\$ 80,000
		\$ 550,000

We recently wrote a grant for Theatre capital projects that includes the above-noted movie projection equipment and stage improvements, plus a few other amenities that were added to try to boost the competitiveness of the grant application. We will hear if the grant is approved (or not) in September. The application included a total project cost of \$525,000 with \$275,000 in grant funding; \$250,000 local match.

As noted above, absent additional funding for Theatre capital projects, most of the annual capital appropriation of \$100,000 is about to be consumed instead by the operating gap, to the tune of \$75,000 to \$85,000 per year. If we are not making capital improvements to the building and related equipment, within a few years, the Theatre will reach a state of disrepair that makes it inoperable.

This reality begs numerous policy questions City Council must consider for the current FY23-24 and future fiscal years. These questions include:

1. We have historically considered the Ionia Theatre as part of our recreational offerings in the city. Is that an appropriate classification? Is this a public good that should be funded through taxpayer dollars?
2. The subsidy to continue theatre operations plus necessary capital projects is realistically in the range of \$175,000 to \$200,000 per year, almost double what it has been in recent years. If the one-mill dedicated for capital projects continues, where will the balance of monies come from to cover the theatre operating gap? Is it taken from the General Fund, creating opportunity costs and potential funding shortfalls for other public goods and services? Is it time to implement a one-mill property tax levy for recreation operations, as is permitted under the City Charter?
3. Are there other ways in which to increase theatre operating revenues besides increasing ticket prices, which will likely have a nominal impact at best, since 60% of ticket sale revenue goes to the movie companies?
4. Should other forms of theatre ownership be explored, such as ownership by a private, nonprofit organization?
5. Can a "Friends of the Theatre" group be encouraged to form, which would conduct fundraising activities to benefit the theatre?

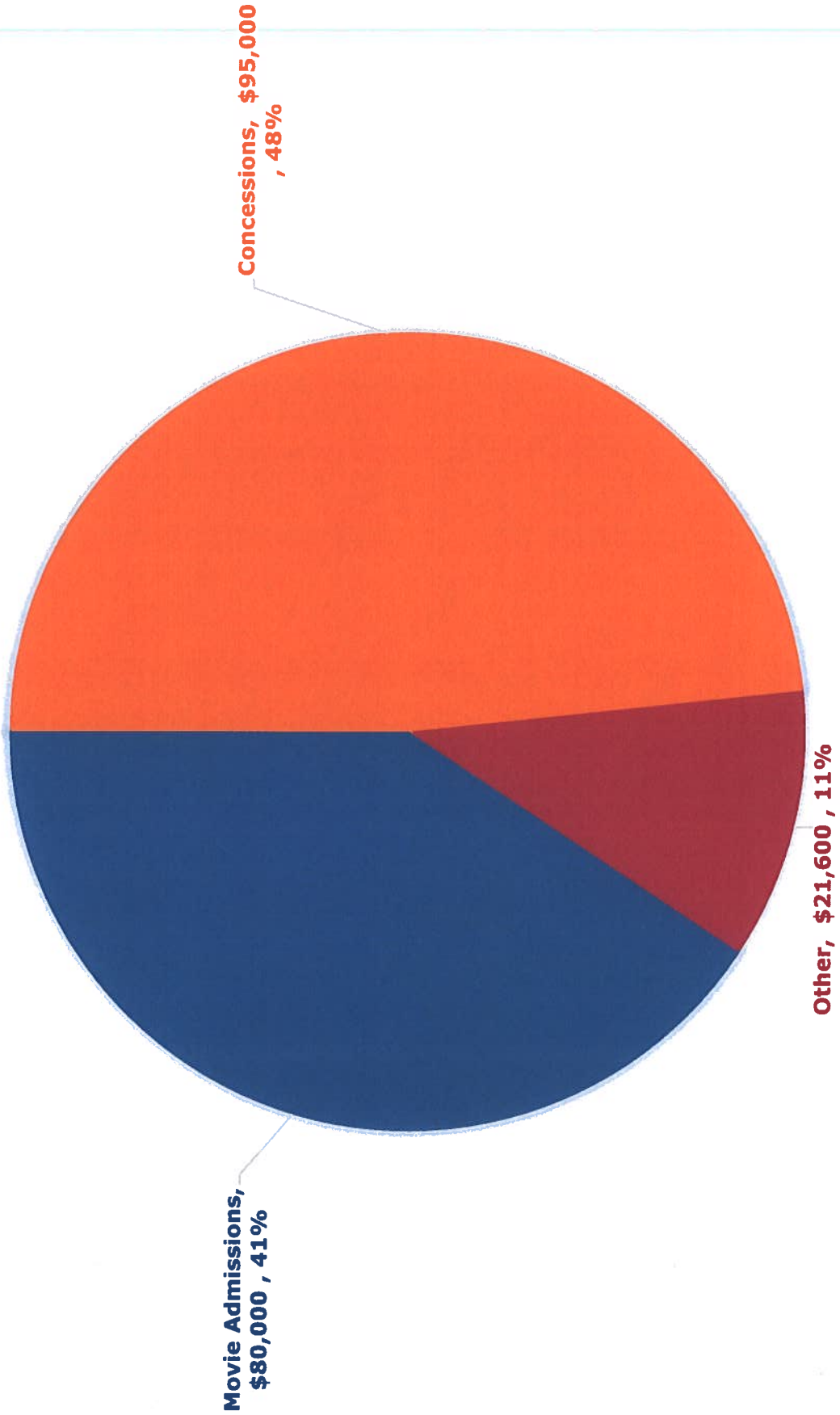
There are likely more questions than these to be considered but hopefully this will generate some thought and discussion regarding what is the path forward for the theatre. Please provide the mayor and/or me with feedback regarding how you would like to proceed to further examine and discuss this issue. A reasonable option is to add it to a future council agenda, or to schedule a special work session meeting, if a majority feel a deeper dive is needed.

Theatre Fund: Revenue Highlights

- ▶ City acquired Ionia Theatre in 1985; operates with 3 FTEs plus volunteers
- ▶ Largest Revenue Source– theatre concessions - \$90,000; ticket sales \$80,000
- ▶ Ticket prices (unchanged since mid 2010s)
 - ▶ Adults - \$7; Adult matinee - \$6
 - ▶ *Students - \$6; Student matinee - \$5
 - ▶ Children (<11) \$5; Child matinee \$4
 - ▶ *Senior pricing same as student
- ▶ Total revenues
 - ▶ FY23 \$195,600; FY24 \$196,600



**THEATRE REVENUES
2023-2024: \$196,600**



Theatre Fund: Expenditure Highlights

Balanced Budget:

\$196,600 – Revenues

\$283,200 – Expenditures

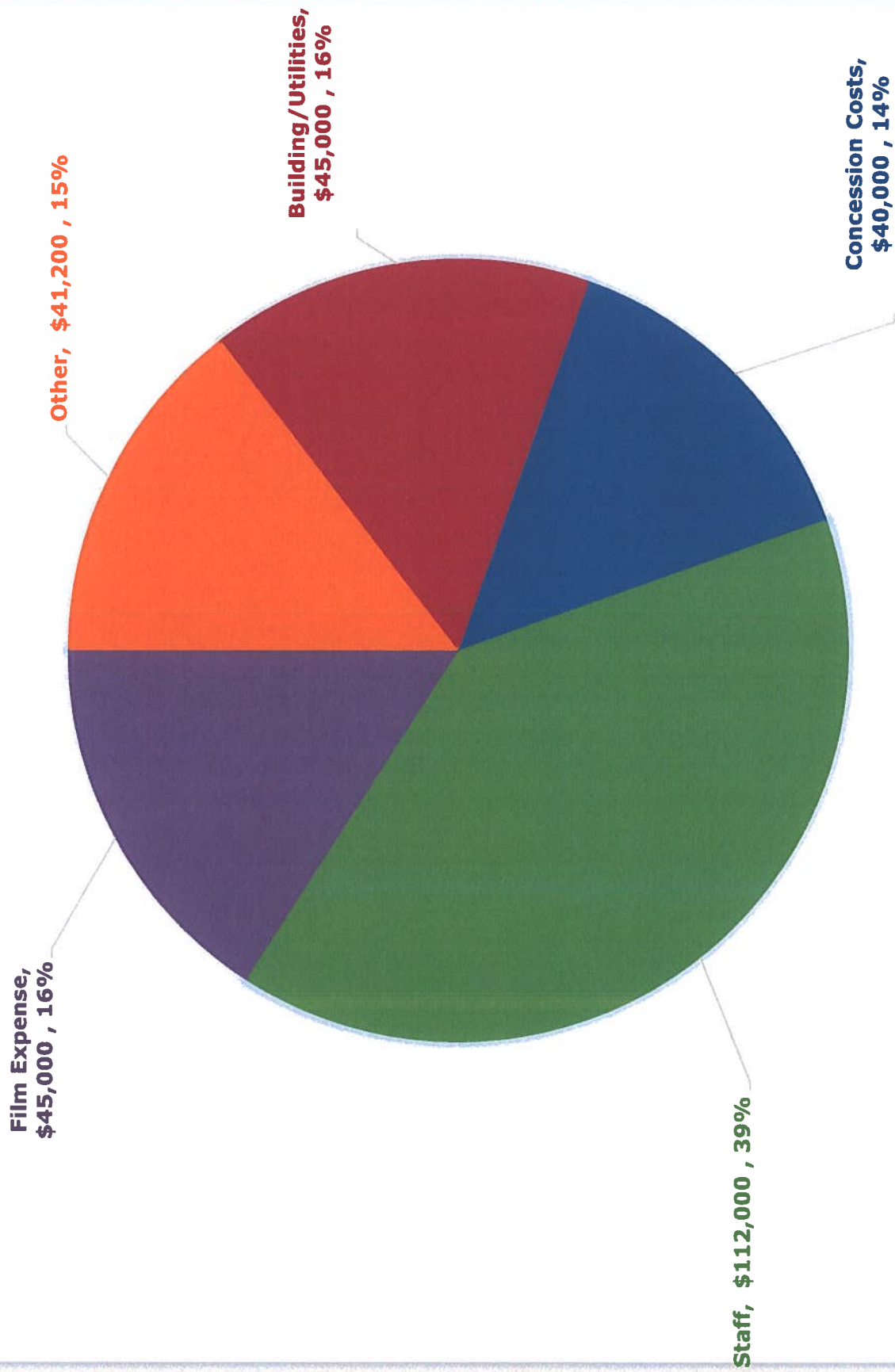
\$ 86,600 - Gap from fund balance

- ▶ FY24 year-end fund balance projected at \$0
- ▶ FY22 - \$202,000 Shuttered Venues federal grant-will be exhausted by end of FY24

▶ Theatre Fund – Critical sustainability issue

- ▶ Needs more revenue to continue operations
 - ▶ Ticket price and concession price increases currently under review
 - ▶ City currently levies 1.0 mill dedicated to theatre capital projects; generates \$120K annually – consider reassigning \$75K to operations
 - ▶ Seek grants/fundraising events for theatre capital projects

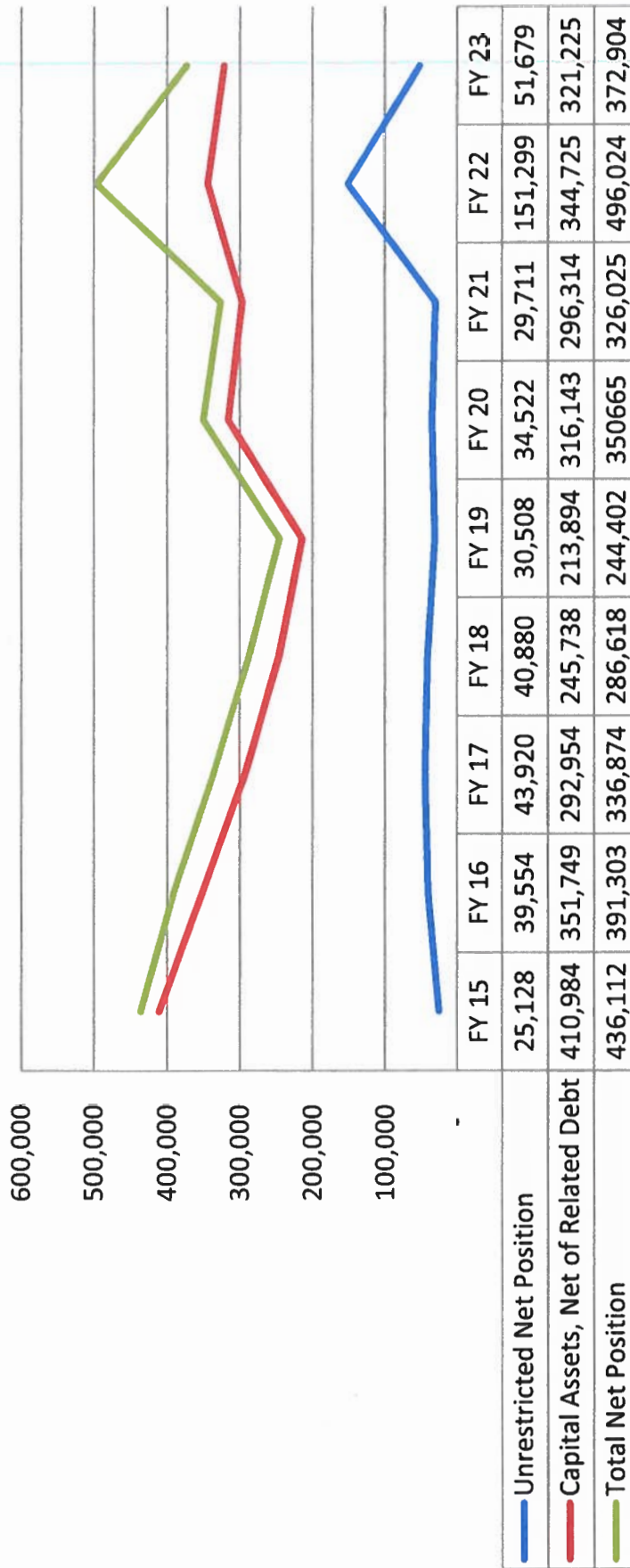
THEATRE EXPENDITURES 2023-2024: \$283,200



City of Ionia - Theatre Fund

Description	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2015	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2016	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2017	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2018	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2019	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2020	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2021	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2022	BALANCE AS OF 06/30/2023
REVENUES									
FEDERAL GRANT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	201,929.57	0.00
MOVIE ADMISSIONS	127,269.42	132,278.00	131,044.79	124,800.09	125,390.75	82,377.00	20,053.00	89,346.25	80,737.75
MOVIE CONCESSIONS	125,706.33	136,265.25	129,133.50	124,012.99	132,507.45	94,674.03	31,665.25	99,489.50	101,855.25
OTHER REVENUE	19,595.69	29,059.80	18,829.09	14,498.07	25,913.73	23,594.35	12,553.68	26,527.42	16,254.82
CONTRIBUTION FROM DDA	6,105.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	199,848.89	121,022.60	92,295.09	24,460.00
TOTAL REVENUES	278,676.90	297,603.05	279,007.38	263,311.15	283,811.93	400,494.27	185,294.53	509,587.83	223,307.82
EXPENDITURES									
PERSONNEL COSTS	67,138.82	70,852.46	76,222.78	79,184.40	83,317.88	89,188.02	78,602.14	91,838.50	103,674.71
FILM EXPENSE	72,527.29	79,116.10	79,862.19	74,130.91	73,507.73	53,736.04	10,102.64	52,687.19	49,462.67
CONCESSION EXPENSE	37,442.68	41,646.60	37,250.62	34,376.89	41,462.58	28,766.71	13,164.25	36,076.87	40,290.87
PUBLIC UTILITIES	28,853.06	25,046.09	27,866.02	29,356.58	31,804.07	28,801.67	26,908.69	37,678.65	36,656.74
BUILDING REPAIR & MAINTENANCE	14,813.66	32,964.75	20,105.93	16,980.05	15,779.38	15,505.45	10,468.23	24,023.85	21,160.56
DEPRECIATION	59,234.16	59,234.16	58,795.88	47,215.54	36,543.60	37,599.91	40,851.28	46,316.21	48,000.00
OPERATING COSTS - Miscellaneous	32,288.94	33,551.14	33,332.55	32,323.40	43,611.40	40,635.45	29,837.17	50,966.44	47,182.48
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	312,298.61	342,411.30	333,435.97	313,567.77	326,026.64	294,233.25	209,934.40	339,587.71	346,428.03
TOTAL REVENUES	278,676.90	297,603.05	279,007.38	263,311.15	283,811.93	400,494.27	185,294.53	509,587.83	223,307.82
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	312,298.61	342,411.30	333,435.97	313,567.77	326,026.64	294,233.25	209,934.40	339,587.71	346,428.03
NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES	(33,621.71)	(44,808.25)	(54,428.59)	(50,256.62)	(42,214.71)	106,261.02	(24,639.87)	170,000.12	(123,120.21)
BEG. FUND BALANCE	469,732.83	436,111.12	391,302.87	336,874.28	286,617.66	244,402.95	350,663.97	326,024.10	496,024.22
END FUND BALANCE	436,111.12	391,302.87	336,874.28	286,617.66	244,402.95	350,663.97	326,024.10	496,024.22	372,904.01
Capital Purchases that did not show as expenditures									
		-	-	-	4,700.00	139,849.00	21,022.00	94,727.00	24,460.00
Cash	36,350.00	59,135.00	56,320.00	50,525.00	42,669.00	45,928.00	41,503.00	165,160.00	52,609.65

Theatre Fund



BALANCE SHEET REPORT FOR CITY OF IONIA
Balance As of 08/31/2024

GL Number	Description	YTD Balance 08/31/2023	Beg. Balance 07/01/2024	YTD Balance 08/31/2024
Fund: 250 THEATRE FUND				
*** Assets ***				
250-000.000-001.000	CASH	1,006.22	1,008.30	1,008.74
250-000.000-004.000	PETTY CASH	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
250-000.000-007.000	COMMON CASH ACCOUNT	47,614.31	(18,848.70)	(31,367.18)
250-000.000-130.000	LAND	46,892.00	46,892.00	46,892.00
250-000.000-136.000	BUILDINGS	1,267,515.60	1,267,515.60	1,267,515.60
250-000.000-137.000	ACCUMULATED DEPREC. BUILDINGS	(1,066,935.78)	(1,066,935.78)	(1,066,935.78)
250-000.000-140.000	MACHINERY & EQUIPMENT	323,691.55	323,691.55	323,691.55
250-000.000-141.000	ALLOWANCE FOR DEPREC.MACH.&EQU	(238,951.77)	(238,951.77)	(238,951.77)
Total Assets		<u>381,832.13</u>	<u>315,371.20</u>	<u>302,853.16</u>
*** Liabilities ***				
250-000.000-202.000	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	9,142.22	9,621.40	5,366.13
250-000.000-203.000	OTHER SHORT-TERM PAYABLES	0.00	130.00	0.00
250-000.000-214.101	DUE TO GENERAL FUND	0.00	0.00	1,013.06
250-000.000-237.000	SALES TAX PAYABLE	0.00	0.00	510.23
250-000.000-257.000	ACCRUED PAYROLL	0.00	5,210.90	0.00
Total Liabilities		<u>9,142.22</u>	<u>14,962.30</u>	<u>6,889.42</u>
*** Fund Equity ***				
250-000.000-345.000	CONTRIBUTED CAPITAL	422,711.10	422,711.10	422,711.10
250-000.000-390.000	FUND BALANCE CREDIT BALANCE	(33,807.50)	(33,807.50)	(33,807.50)
Total Fund Equity		<u>388,903.60</u>	<u>388,903.60</u>	<u>388,903.60</u>
Total Fund 250:				
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>381,832.13</u>	<u>315,371.20</u>	<u>302,853.16</u>
BEG. FUND BALANCE - 23-24		388,903.60	388,903.60	388,903.60
+ NET OF REVENUES/EXPENDITURES - 23-24		0.00	(88,494.70)	(88,494.70)
+ NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES		(16,213.69)	0.00	(4,445.16)
= ENDING FUND BALANCE		372,689.91	300,408.90	295,963.74
+ LIABILITIES		9,142.22	14,962.30	6,889.42
= TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE		<u>381,832.13</u>	<u>315,371.20</u>	<u>302,853.16</u>

REVENUE & EXPENDITURE REPORT - CHRIS FOR CITY OF IONIA
 Balance As Of 08/31/2024
 % Fiscal Year Completed: 16.99

GL Number	Description	End Balance 06/30/2024	YTD Balance 08/31/2023	24-25 Amended Budget	YTD Balance 08/31/2024	Activity For 08/31/2024	Available Balance 08/31/2024	% Bgdt Used
Fund: 250 THEATRE FUND								
Account Category: Revenues								
Department: 000.000								
250-000.000-502.600	FEDERAL GRANT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
250-000.000-533.000	MOVIE ADMISSIONS	73,184.58	18,753.00	80,000.00	18,856.00	6,042.00	61,144.00	23.57
250-000.000-634.000	MOVIE CONCESSIONS	100,846.75	19,975.00	95,000.00	23,860.00	9,120.00	71,140.00	25.12
250-000.000-635.000	LIVE ENTERTAINMENT REVENUE	1,038.40	1,038.40	2,000.00	1,920.50	1,920.50	79.50	96.03
250-000.000-636.001	PREPAID TICKET SALES	335.00	150.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
250-000.000-639.000	THEATRE RENTAL	8,275.00	1,500.00	7,500.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	6,500.00	13.33
250-000.000-640.000	ADVERTISING REVENUES	4,301.50	0.00	4,000.00	650.00	650.00	3,350.00	16.25
250-000.000-665.000	INTEREST	497.52	370.78	1,000.00	0.44	0.21	999.56	0.04
250-000.000-675.000	GIFTS DONATIONS	1,796.82	539.13	2,500.00	246.83	53.48	2,253.17	9.87
250-000.000-688.000	OTHER REVENUE	1,445.36	165.50	2,000.00	(110.00)	65.50	2,110.00	(5.50)
250-000.000-699.248	CONTRIBUTION FROM DDA	0.00	0.00	155,000.00	0.00	0.00	155,000.00	0.00
Total Dept 000.000		191,720.93	42,491.81	349,000.00	46,423.77	18,851.69	302,576.23	13.30
Revenues		191,720.93	42,491.81	349,000.00	46,423.77	18,851.69	302,576.23	13.30
Account Category: Expenditures								
Department: 442.000 OPERATIONS								
250-442.000-702.000	SALARY & WAGES	100,489.13	15,487.31	103,000.00	15,960.51	8,493.46	87,039.49	15.50
250-442.000-710.000	PAYROLL TAXES & FRINGE BENEFIT	8,226.43	1,267.60	11,000.00	1,312.64	698.57	9,687.36	11.93
250-442.000-727.000	OFFICE SUPPLIES	1,154.27	30.77	800.00	75.82	55.83	724.18	9.48
250-442.000-728.000	POSTAGE	0.62	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
250-442.000-729.000	CREDIT CARD FEES	6,454.65	1,784.53	6,000.00	1,013.06	450.35	4,986.94	16.88
250-442.000-732.000	LIVE ENTERTAINMENT EXPENSE	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
250-442.000-740.000	OPERATING SUPPLIES	3,768.60	120.00	3,750.00	210.97	45.00	3,539.03	5.63
250-442.000-801.000	CONTRACTUAL & PROFESSIONAL SEV	11,885.77	2,158.17	18,000.00	3,235.31	796.13	14,764.69	17.97
250-442.000-804.000	FILM EXPENSE	41,662.27	10,191.10	45,000.00	12,682.25	4,680.18	32,317.75	28.18
250-442.000-805.000	CONCESSION EXPENSE	40,955.53	17,852.76	42,000.00	8,642.12	3,704.13	33,357.88	20.58
250-442.000-851.000	TELEPHONE	1,020.00	225.00	1,100.00	195.00	0.00	905.00	17.73
250-442.000-862.000	SUBSCRIPTIONS	366.99	0.00	500.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00
250-442.000-920.000	PUBLIC UTILITIES	30,421.43	3,933.09	35,000.00	3,937.86	1,863.60	31,062.14	11.25
250-442.000-931.000	BUILDING REPAIR & MAINTENANCE	20,942.45	3,069.27	10,000.00	1,148.83	639.43	8,851.17	11.49
250-442.000-956.001	SALES TAX	5,561.99	1,118.66	6,000.00	1,338.57	510.23	4,661.43	22.31
250-442.000-962.200	ADVERTISING - PROMOTION	7,305.50	1,467.24	5,000.00	1,115.99	610.12	3,884.01	22.32
250-442.000-968.000	DEPRECIATION	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
250-442.000-980.000	CAPITAL OUTLAY	0.00	0.00	55,000.00	0.00	0.00	55,000.00	0.00
Total Dept 442.000 - OPERATIONS		280,215.63	58,705.50	343,250.00	50,868.93	22,547.03	292,381.07	14.82
Expenditures		280,215.63	58,705.50	343,250.00	50,868.93	22,547.03	292,381.07	14.82
Fund 250 - THEATRE FUND:								
TOTAL REVENUES		191,720.93	42,491.81	349,000.00	46,423.77	18,851.69	302,576.23	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		280,215.63	58,705.50	343,250.00	50,868.93	22,547.03	292,381.07	
NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES:		(88,494.70)	(16,213.69)	5,750.00	(4,445.16)	(3,695.34)	10,195.16	
BEG. FUND BALANCE - ALL FUNDS		388,903.60	388,903.60	388,903.60	388,903.60		388,903.60	
END FUND BALANCE - ALL FUNDS		300,408.90	372,689.91	394,653.60	384,458.44		384,458.44	

City of Ionia Capital Improvement Project

Fiscal Year: 24-25

Project Title: Movie projection equipment replacement

Department: Theatre

Project Description: Upgrade to 4K digital projectors, processors and associated audio improvements as needed.
Current equipment was installed in 2012 and does not meet today's entertainment requirements and customer expectations.

Project Impact/Benefit: Improved audio and video quality of movie projection.

Operating Fund Impact: Reduced maintenance expense; purchase extended warranties to extend savings

Estimated Cost: \$ 140,000.00

Funding Source for this project: Fundraising/grant \$40,000
Operating Fund \$100,000



City of Ionia Capital Improvement Project

Fiscal Year: 25-26

Project Title: Main Roof Replacement

Department: Theatre

Project Description:

Replace main roof over house one. (large theatre area)
This is a rubber membrane roof last replaced in the late 80's.
The proposed replacement roof will be a rubber membrane material and is expected to last 25 years.
This roof is approximately 14,000 square feet.

Project Impact/Benefit:

Reduced maintenance cost, and a 20 year warranty will be secured on the new roof

Operating Fund Impact:

Negligible

Estimated Cost:

\$ 95,000.00

Funding Source for this project: Fundraising/grant \$20,000

Donations \$10,000

Operating Fund \$65,000



City of Ionia Capital Improvement Project

Fiscal Year: 26-27

Project Title: Dressing room area wall and roof repairs

Department: Theatre

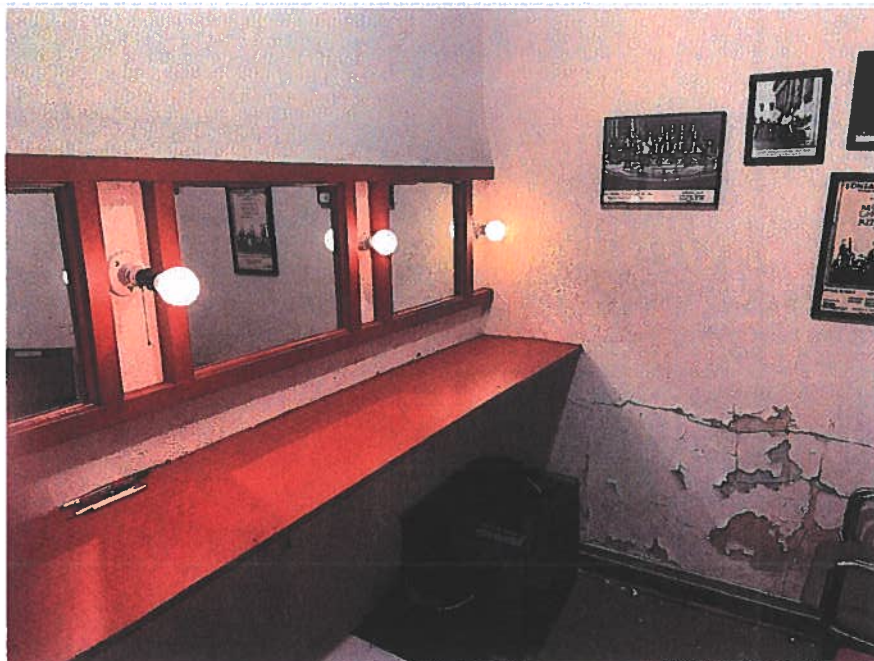
Project Description: Repair outside dressing room wall to stop water penetration. Replace roof over dressing rooms. Repair plaster in rooms and paint. Upgrade electrical outlets in all dressing rooms.

Project Impact/Benefit: Repair and improve appearance of the theatre to ensure long-term integrity/sustainability of building.

Operating Fund Impact: Negligible

Estimated Cost: \$ 95,000.00

Funding Source for this project: Fundraising/grant \$15,000
Donations \$5,000
Operating Fund \$75,000



City of Ionia Capital Improvement Project

Fiscal Year: 27-28

Project Title: Stage Improvements

Department: Theatre

Project Description: Repair or replace stage floor, curtain, exit steel door, stage lighting with LED lighting. These improvements will increase utilization of the stage and modernize the space.

Project Impact/Benefit: Reduced maintenance, repair and improve appearance

Operating Fund Impact: Negligible

Estimated Cost: \$ 80,000.00

Funding Source for this project: Fundraising/grant \$15,000
Donations \$5,000
Operating Fund \$60,000



City of Ionia Capital Improvement Project

Fiscal Year: 28-29

Project Title: House One Improvements

Department: Theatre

Project Description: Finish acoustical plan, paint, plaster bad areas, replace and combine work and house lighting.

Project Impact/Benefit: Improve intelligibility of movie dialogue, beautify, streamline lighting with dimming LED's

Operating Fund Impact: Negligible

Estimated Cost: \$ 100,000.00

Funding Source for this project: Grant \$15,000
Operating Fund \$85,000



City of Ionia Capital Improvement Project

Fiscal Year: 29-30

Project Title: Theatre Restroom Upgrades

Department: Theatre

Project Description: Upgrade all fixtures with donated fixtures by Matt and Jo Ann Johnson. repaint walls, repair all stalls or repair, replace mirrors and dispensers. strip floors and reseal. Replace exterior steel door.

Project Impact/Benefit: Improved appearance, less maintenance required

Operating Fund Impact: Reduced maintenance expense

Estimated Cost: \$ 40,000.00

Funding Source for this project: Theatre Fund



APPENDIX ii: SPEAKER PROFILES

Nate Geinzer, Founder & CEO, Double Haul Solutions, Project Facilitator

[About Us | Double Haul Solution](#)

Nate began his local government career in 2005, inspired by a deep commitment to understanding the unique needs of communities and fostering collaboration to drive meaningful progress. As the founder of Double Haul Solutions, he has dedicated his career to helping governments build stronger relationships, align their strategies, and overcome challenges to achieve their goals. Nate's approach is rooted in listening to diverse voices, facilitating understanding, and creating cohesive environments where elected leaders and appointed staff can work together effectively.

With experience partnering with communities like Traverse City, Berkley, Northville, Lexington, Tecumseh, and DeWitt Charter Township, Nate has demonstrated success in strategic planning, interim management, economic development, and organizational leadership. His work focuses on cutting through challenges—whether they stem from misalignment, inefficiency, or broken relationships—and creating a foundation of trust, accountability, and shared purpose.

Christine Delaney, Executive Director, Tibbits Opera Foundation and Arts Council

[TIBBITS OPERA FOUNDATION AND ARTS COUNCIL, INC. – MORE THAN JUST A THEATRE](#)

Christine Delaney is the executive director of the Tibbits Opera Foundation and Arts Council, the nonprofit that owns and operates the Tibbits Opera House, built in 1882. She has held the position since 2001, though her history with Tibbits extends more than 30 years, giving her a thorough understanding of the progress and growth of the theatre operations as well as an in-depth appreciation for its restoration journey. She oversees administration, daily operations, general fundraising, grant writing, and programming. Under her leadership (to date) \$4.3 million has been raised and invested in the restoration of the historic theatre. She served as owner representative through two major construction projects including the \$1.2 million award-winning transformation of the theatre's French Second Empire façade.

Tibbits Opera House is a 500-seat theatre located in the rural community of Coldwater, Michigan. With a county population of only 44,000, Tibbits is the only fully equipped theatre and professional arts organization in the county. The program includes self-produced professional summer stock as well as a children's theatre program, professional touring artists, live performance programming for area schools, an art gallery and visual arts events, and a classic film series. The theatre is also a rental facility for approximately 20 area organizations and schools. In 2017 the theatre was occupied 257 days with 92 events.

APPENDIX ii: SPEAKER PROFILES

Cal and Whitney Stone, 2 Stones Events

2 Stones Events

We (Cal Stone and Whitney McClellan-Stone) are passionate about music and how it relates to economic development in communities -- the importance of building and branding a live music series, festivals and other music-related events, as well as the impact it has on the well-being of a community, its residents and business owners.

Our Michigan-based company's roots go back to March 2002 with a Wynton Marsalis fundraising concert at the Brighton Center for the Performing Arts, and we officially incorporated as 2 Stones Events in March 2009. Larger productions have included the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives, Ramsey Lewis, a Chicago Blues Bash!, James Carter & Mike Morgan, Fernando Ortega, George Winston, and Branford Marsalis.

We present regular music series, like Kittens & Crooners and Turn Up the AMP! in Brighton, but 2 Stones Events also helps area clubs/restaurants and other venues with live music bookings (Brighton Bar & Grill, Baronette Renaissance Hotel Novi, Southfield Town Center, The Main Crossing, Leaf Barley Vine, Mt. Brighton, Hyatt Fireside, Michigan Beer Company, Downtown Main Martini Bar & Grille, The Grapevine, Lake Street Tavern, Aberrant Ales and the Tipping Point Theatre). We also book musicians (and occasionally DJs) for weddings and private and corporate parties throughout the year.

Torri Mathes, Communications and Engagement Specialist, Double Haul Solutions

About Us | Double Haul Solution

Torri Mathes is an accomplished communications professional with a decade of hands-on experience in digital marketing, public relations, community engagement, and management across municipal and nonprofit landscapes. Her expertise lies in guiding, streamlining, and executing strategic communication initiatives. Torri's focus is to empower organizations with effective communication strategies and build stronger audience relationships through transparent communication, collaboration, and community connections. With a Master of Public Administration and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, coupled with certifications in emergency management and DEI, Torri brings a unique blend of expertise to the table, ensuring that organizations not only communicate effectively but also resonate deeply with their constituents.

APPENDIX iii: MEETING NOTES

September 24, 2024

Meeting #1 Kick Off

Following a “State of the Theatre” presentation by city staff, the Ad Hoc Committee’s discussions focused on:

Revenue Creation: The ad hoc emphasized the need to find ways to generate revenue for the theatre. This includes exploring various uses for the theatre such as movies/film festivals, live shows, private events, corporate training, weddings, church events, organized fights, recitals, comedy shows, and other community events.

Sustainability: Ensuring the theatre's sustainability for future generations was a major focus. This involves strategic planning and finding ways to maintain the theatre's functionality while preserving its historical significance.

Community Engagement: The ad hoc discussed the importance of engaging the community and showcasing the theatre's life and vibrancy. This includes involving the community in various events and activities at the theatre.

Strategic Planning: The ad hoc highlighted the need for strategic planning to achieve the theatre's goals. This includes setting clear objectives and timelines for various projects.

The discussion also dove into a series of challenges, such as:

Volunteer Shortage: The theatre has lost many volunteers and needs to find ways to attract new ones. This includes creating a "Friends" group to not only increase financial support for the theatre, but to reinvigorate the community with mission-driven energy.

School Collaboration: There is a need for more collaboration with schools to involve students in theatre activities and events.

Market Competition: The theatre faces competition from streaming services and other entertainment options. Finding ways to compete with these alternatives is a significant challenge.

Funding and Amenities: The ad hoc discussed the need for more amenities, such as obtaining a liquor license, to attract more patrons. Additionally, they explored various funding options, including community foundations, arts and theatre related grants, and legacy or estate donations.

APPENDIX iii: MEETING NOTES

October 23, 2024

Meeting #2 Organizational Structure

Guest: Christine Delaney, Executive Director, Tibbits Opera Foundation and Arts Council

Ms. Delaney guided the ad hoc through the organizational models and operations of the Tibbits Theatre in Coldwater, MI. The meeting focused on comparing the Tibbits to other theatres, particularly Ionia Theatre, and the commonalities in challenges that historic theatres are facing across the country. Key discussion points included:

Experience and Background: Ms. Delaney has 40 years of experience with theatres, including 23 years at the Tibbits Theatre. The Tibbits Theatre, established in 1882, has undergone several renovations and transitions over the years, including a shift to film in the 1930s and the creation of a foundation in 1962.

Operations and Programming: The Tibbits Theatre hosts a variety of events, including summer theatre, kids' theatre, concerts, comedy shows, special film screenings, and consistent rentals for 15 organizations. It is the only arts organization in Branch County and has a liquor license, which is highly recommended.

Volunteer Involvement: Volunteers play a crucial role in the theatre's operations, including ushering, concessions, house management, event greeting, office data entry, and organizing auctions and fundraisers. However, there has been a significant decline in volunteer participation post-COVID, leading to more responsibilities being placed on staff.

Funding and Financials: The theatre operates as a non-profit, which provides an advantage in fundraising. It has an annual budget of \$900K, with 53% earned income, and relies on annual membership and community support. The theatre also benefits from being a part of the city's master plan and receives some funding from the city.

Challenges and Opportunities: The theatre has faced challenges, particularly with volunteer participation and financial stability post-COVID. However, it has also seen positive outcomes, such as its ability to continue programming through COVID, increased donations, and positive public relations.

Marketing and Community Engagement: The theatre uses various marketing strategies, including direct mail, Google Ads, social media, and onsite content design. It also engages with the community through surveys, membership engagement, and collaboration with other organizations.

Advice and Best Practices: Ms. Delaney recommended leveraging conversations with donors, involving historic architects to avoid harming the building, and considering the advantages and disadvantages of different organizational structures such as public ownership versus becoming a non-profit.

APPENDIX iii: MEETING NOTES

November 20, 2024

Meeting #3 Live Events

Guests: Cal and Whitney Stone, 2 Stones Events

The meeting covered various aspects of live music, including marketing, programming, and community engagement. Key points discussed include:

Challenges in Marketing and Sales: The hardest part about live events is getting the word out, with post-COVID sales falling off and people waiting until the last minute to buy tickets. Younger audiences tend to wait longer, and tiered ticket pricing, offering things like early bird pricing, can entice early ticket sales.

Programming and Audience Preferences: Tribute bands are currently immensely popular, and country music is the biggest live draw in the area. There is a need to ask younger people what they are looking for in live music events.

Venue and Community Engagement: Event promoters look for a venue that partners in marketing and evaluating demographics to engage the community. Currently the school's events are the primary events that fill the theatre. There is an opportunity to tie in more events to support students.

Examples of Successful Theatres: Examples include the Garden Theatre in Frankfort, Michigan, which has a membership program and charitable giving, and the Elks Theatre in Rapid City, SD, which uses branded merchandise and events like Battle of the Bands for community engagement. Review best practices that would resonate with the Ionia community and apply your own unique twist.

Additional Insights: The meeting also touched on the importance of having a liquor license for events, the need for creative agreements with bands and agents, and the significance of understanding the local market and demographics.

APPENDIX iii: MEETING NOTES

January 22, 2025

Meeting #4 Marketing and Communications

Guest: Torri Mathes, Communications and Engagement Specialist, Double Haul Solutions

The meeting delved into various aspects of Ionia Theatre's communication strategies, audience engagement, and future planning further summarized below:

Communication Values and Focus: The discussion began with an exploration of what drives Ionia's communication values and focus. It was emphasized that attention should be paid to where engagement is being attracted and to shift investments of time to those areas.

Event Ideas and Audience Targeting: Several event ideas were proposed to enhance audience engagement. These included family nights with the schools, costume events, and partnerships with farms or farmers' markets for farm-to-table events. The meeting also covered the best ratio of events versus movies, how this plays out on the audience attendance and revenue side, and whether there should be a transition away from movies. The importance of targeting specific audiences and measuring their interests was also discussed.

Challenges and Community Partnerships: The meeting highlighted several challenges, such as declining movie audiences, lack of strategic planning, and the absence of a liquor license. The state of community partnerships with schools, dance companies, and commission on aging was reviewed. It was noted that schools mostly want movies for elementary kids, and there was a discussion about the misconceptions on what the theatre offers, indicating a messaging gap.

Future Planning and Communication Tools: The need for a communications toolkit, social media strategies, and leveraging community connections was emphasized. The meeting touched on the importance of telling the theatre's story, starting with an audience analysis, and consistently posting general messaging to the theatre's communication channels. There was a mention of hiring an assistant to support communications across the city and building the capacity for effective communication.

Audience Engagement and Feedback: Discussion was held on theater feedback and the role of reviews. It was noted that schools and older adults tend to fill the theatre when there is an alignment between events and community interest, barriers such as the lack of a liquor license is a repeated theme.

Strategic Planning and Programming: There was a mention of the need to work on an annual event calendar and to step in slowly guided by strategic planning.

APPENDIX iii: MEETING NOTES

January 22, 2025

Meeting #4 Marketing and Communications

Guest: Torri Mathes, Communications and Engagement Specialist, Double Haul Solutions

Community Influence and Resources: The meeting highlighted the power and influence of community partners and the importance of leveraging these connections. It was also noted that prioritizing where resources are invested helps manage capacity.

Communication Tools and Campaigns: The need for a communications toolkit was reiterated, along with the importance of designing social media images, understanding the process for obtaining a liquor license, and the benefits of establishing a theatre non-profit group. The idea of building out a campaign and attracting people from outside Ionia was also discussed.

Entertainment and Concessions: The meeting touched on the types of concessions offered. Live entertainment was identified as being the biggest gamble for the theatre, but when successful, live entertainment holds the potential for strong revenues and patronage.

APPENDIX iv: IDEAS INVENTORY

Sure, I can help with that! Here is a cleaned-up and more readable version of your document:

- Junior Theatre Day: Showing a PG movie earlier in the day with a scheduled break in the middle, assisting young viewers and parents to ease into the movie experience.
- Sing-along Showings: Showings that encourage viewers to sing along throughout.
- Dress Up Showings: Encourage themed outfits for viewing, offer a gift card to the “best dressed,” and provide photo booth style opportunities.
- Candlelight Gala: Base ticket with nibbles/drinks, silent auction event.
- Double Show Days: Reduced ticket cost for seeing two regular movies or back-to-back sequels.
- Business Lip Sync Battle: Decade-themed, corporate, or team-building event where participants perform lip sync renditions of popular songs. This could be a well-attended event post-Covid.
- Monthly Themed Showings: Create a calendar for the year including themed showing days like 80’s night, Holiday Favorites, 90’s rom coms, Pixar, etc.
- Dinner and a Movie: Options with local restaurants – potential for partnerships with local establishments or hosting tables and food trucks in front of the theatre.
- Snow Day Showings: Run a movie at noon on snow days or days when schools are closed throughout the regular school year.
- Video Game Contests: Partner with Parks and Rec to provide an opportunity to play video games on the big screens.
- Rent-A-Home Theatre: Allow people to bring in their own movies for parties, etc.
- Dungeons and Dragons Simulcasts: Grand Ledge has a huge following. A company named Critical Role runs it.
- Pajamas and Popcorn Nights: Free popcorn for anyone who wears pajamas.
- Daddy-Daughter/Mother-Son Date Nights
- NFL/NCAA Football Games: What are the licensing needs for such showings?
- Karaoke Nights
- Trivia Nights
- Open Mic Nights
- Promoting Weddings: What more can we do to promote weddings? Would green room improvements support?
- Corporate Events and Birthday Parties: What more can we do to promote?
- Film Festivals
- Create a Film Society: Show indie movies, classics, black and white, home movies, etc. Offer a class in filming?

APPENDIX v: MARKET DATA

Market data available separately.



**CITY OF IONIA
STAFF REPORT FOR DDA AGENDA ITEM**

TO: DDA Board of Directors
FROM: Cassie Rice, DDA Director
DATE: April 16, 2025
RE: Marketing Committee Update

- **Videos/Photos – budget spent to date: \$0**
 - Projects: Stock Photos, Library for Businesses
 - Status: A connection was made with Brick Street Studio to review images and provide draft documents as a reference for the desired direction. In addition to images intended for brochures and marketing materials, the need for a collection of stock images for general business use was also identified. If specific images are required, they can be captured as needed. A proposal is currently pending, with an indication that the cost will be below the initial budget.
- **Discover Ionia Updates – budget spent to date: \$0**
 - Projects: Public Website, City Website
 - Status: Slight updates have begun on both the Discover Ionia website and the DDA City page. Currently, working on cleaning up outdated content, refreshing information, and improving overall navigation. The goal is to make both sites more user-friendly, concise and reflective of what's currently happening in the community. Additional updates will continue to roll out over the coming weeks as events have begun to be solidified.
- **Promo Info – budget spent to date: \$0**
 - Projects: Full District Listing, Downtown Business Focus, Stackable Experiences, Vacancy Listing, Ionia Sell Sheet
 - Status: Drafts for the promotional materials are in progress, with several versions currently at different stages of development. These drafts are helping to shape the final direction, but production cannot begin until all necessary images and inventory details have been gathered. Once those elements are finalized, the materials can move into the production phase. Draft items can be viewed at meeting.
- **Project Bulldog – budget spent to date: \$2,016**
 - Projects: Bulldogs painted
 - Status: Progress on Project Bulldog has seen a slight delay due to school not being in session. Adjustments are being made to the Ice Cream Social teaser to better align with updated plans and timing. Draft marketing messages were provided to Art students assisting with marketing pieces, focusing on building excitement and community engagement. A number of organizations have reached out to host a dog.

April 11, 2025

Cassie Rice
Director, Ionia Downtown Development Authority
203 West Main Street
Ionia, MI 48846

Re: City of Ionia DDA Parking Marketing Materials

Dear Ms. Rice,

We are pleased to offer this proposal to assist the City of Ionia's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) with the creation of marketing materials to highlight downtown businesses and available parking. Based on our similar project work and your description of requested services, we have assembled a work scope that will support the City's request for technical assistance.

Project Understanding. Ionia's historic downtown is surrounded by traditional, walkable neighborhoods, high-quality natural features, and is connected to the region via M-66 and the Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Trail. The DDA is currently in the process of updating marketing materials to further elevate downtown. As part of this process, we understand that the DDA would like to engage in a project that communicates downtown offerings and conveys where ample parking exists.

Presently, there is a perceived lack of parking in the Downtown. The DDA has begun cataloging on-street and publicly available off-street spaces to better inform businesses and visitors about parking availability. A diagrammatic map illustrating parking options downtown has been created. The DDA wishes to see an enhanced representation of this parking map that can be easily be interpreted in digital, print, and signage formats. Additionally, interest has been expressed in the development of a downtown wayfinding map that highlights area landmarks and businesses.

The desired parking and downtown wayfinding maps are intended to enhance patronage, guide visitors to nearby public parking, enhance circulation and user experience during peak times, and provide valuable communication tools for local businesses.

Project Scope. Our approach is flexible and can be tailored to meet your project needs. Proposed is an outline of tasks and deliverables for this project reflective of items discussed during our conversation on April 3, 2025. Williams & Works will assist in the creation of two wayfinding maps that identify available parking areas and landmarks within the boundaries of the DDA. The extents for both maps will be the same, illustrating approximately two blocks north and south of Main Street, from Dexter to Rich Streets.

A. Tasks. The following is a description of the work tasks to execute this scope of work.

1. **Inventory & Data.** This task includes gathering publicly available data from local, regional, state, and/or national sources to provide a basis for design. This may include reviewing past plans or parking studies, acquiring aerial imagery, County GIS data for parcels, roads, topography, water bodies, wetlands, as well as data on parking counts, and building polygons. Note that we will not be completing any on-site assessment of parking facilities, as the DDA has already provided their parking counts, but may utilize aerial data to confirm dimensional requirements for formal and informal parking areas. Verification of landmarks and destinations to include, and a photograph of each, will be requested from the client.

This data will inform our initial assessment of the area, including sightlines, walksheds, and circulation routes, helping us define content to exclude, accentuate, or further develop for the map. Additionally, if the DDA has branding standards, such as logos, colors, or fonts, they would like these maps to coordinate with, this information will be needed prior to preliminary map development

2. **Preliminary Map.** A preliminary map for available parking and downtown wayfinding will be created. Map elements will likely include streets, parcels, buildings, walksheds, landmarks, and City-owned parking areas. It is our intent that the map be visually appealing and easily interpreted. This deliverable will be exported in a digital draft document for initial review with the DDA director and/or City staff during a virtual meeting.
3. **Revised Map.** The available parking and downtown wayfinding maps will be further developed through one round of revision, based on feedback shared during the preliminary map review meeting. This deliverable will be exported in a digital draft document for initial review by the City of Ionia DDA. We anticipate a virtual meeting with the DDA director and/or City staff to review and discuss a final round of revision.
4. **Final Draft.** The available parking and downtown wayfinding maps will be developed. These deliverables will be exported in several digital formats and packaged as original files for the use by the City of Ionia DDA.

B. Timeline. We understand that this project is to be tentatively complete before June 30, 2025 for use during the Ionia Free Fair.

C. Project Staffing. We have assembled a team of skilled planners and designers to aid in the completion of this work. Williams & Works has a long-standing relationship with the City of Ionia that includes the development of a new master plan, conceptual park designs, grant writing, and planner of record work. Maleah Rakestraw, PLA, will act as the project manager and will be the primary point of client contact, manage project scheduling, and coordinate the Williams & Works team. Toby Hayes, AICP Candidate will

assist with the formulation of GIS maps and other materials for distribution. Kim Nguyen is the firm's on-staff graphic designer and will work with Toby on creating iconography and develop illustrations for pictorial maps (if selected).

D. Professional Fees and Billings. Professional fees for this project will be provided on a time and materials basis for a not-to-exceed fee. Proposed project costs listed below include overhead and expenses for the scope of work described in this proposal, excluding costs for document printing and mailing.

Two map styles were discussed during our client consultation and included *Plan View Maps*, which represent elements as being viewed from directly above, and *Pictorial Maps*, which shows an oblique plan view with illustrations depicting landmarks. Note that the illustrations generated for a *Pictorial Map* can be used as stand-alone images for other marketing needs.

Differing map styles and their associated fees are provided below. Please select one of the two map style combinations listed.

- **Plan View**, both maps **(\$3,300)**
- **Plan View** Available Parking Map + **Pictorial** Downtown Wayfinding Map **(\$6,800)**

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this letter proposal and are happy to discuss our arrangement further should you have questions. If this approach is acceptable, a Professional Service Agreement will be provided for your review and signature. We look forward to working with you on this unique assignment.

Sincerely,

Williams & Works

[via email]

Maleah Rakestraw, PLA
Landscape Architect + Project Manager

c: Toby Hayes, AICP Candidate
Community Planner

Upcoming events..

APR

22

IACC COFFEE &
CONNECT @
IONIA THEATRE

MAY

8

MEGA MIXER
@ OLD STONE
PORCH

MAY

14

ESTATE
PLANNING
WORKSHOP

MAY

17

DIXON'S
VIOLIN @
IONIA
THEATRE

MAY

26

MEMORIAL
DAY PARADE

JUN

7

IONIA CRUISIN'
CLASSIC CAR
SHOW

JUN

14

COW PIE
CLASSIC MI
GRAVEL SERIES
BIKE RACE

JUN

26

ANNUAL IONIA
FIREWORKS
DISPLAY @
FAIRGROUNDS

JUL

9

HOMETOWN
CONCERT @
IONIA THEATRE

JUL

10-19

IONIA FREE
FAIR

JUL

12

IONIA FREE
FAIR GRAND
PARADE

AUG

23

IONIA
CRITERIUM
BIKE RACE

2025

Street Closures

MAY, JUNE & JULY

A series of upcoming summer events in the downtown area will require temporary street closures. We kindly ask building and business owners to inform their employees and tenants to use city parking lots during these periods. Vehicles parked on the street may be subject to towing.

MAY
26

**MEMORIAL
DAY PARADE**

Street closure on Main from Dexter to Library Street from 8:00AM to 11:30AM. Parade kicks off at 10:00AM and travels to the Courthouse for a special ceremony including a full gun salute.

JUN
7

**IONIA CRUISIN'
CLASSIC CAR
SHOW**

Street closure on Main from Dexter to Library Street; Steele Street south of the north parking lot to the Wilson Building drive; Depot Street from north of the future Library Building to Adams Street; Kidd Street to remain open; Main closed from Kidd to Library closed to traffic. Above closings begin at 5:00AM and run through 4:00PM.

JUN
14

**COW PIE
CLASSIC MI
GRAVEL SERIES
BIKE RACE**

Closure of Main Street from Steele Street east to Jackson Street and all alleys beginning at 7:00AM. Side streets off Main to Jackson will also be closed for a period of time. An estimated 1,200 competitors will be riding their bicycles within the community- so please be aware and cautious.

JUL
12

**IONIA FREE
FAIR GRAND
PARADE**

Street closures run from 7:00AM to 1:00PM for Main Street from Steele east to Jefferson Street; Steele Street south to Brown Blvd; Brown to Fairgrounds entrance and crossing Dexter. Parade line-up will run from Main at Kidd Street to Jefferson.