

ANNUAL RECAP REPORT 2023-2024

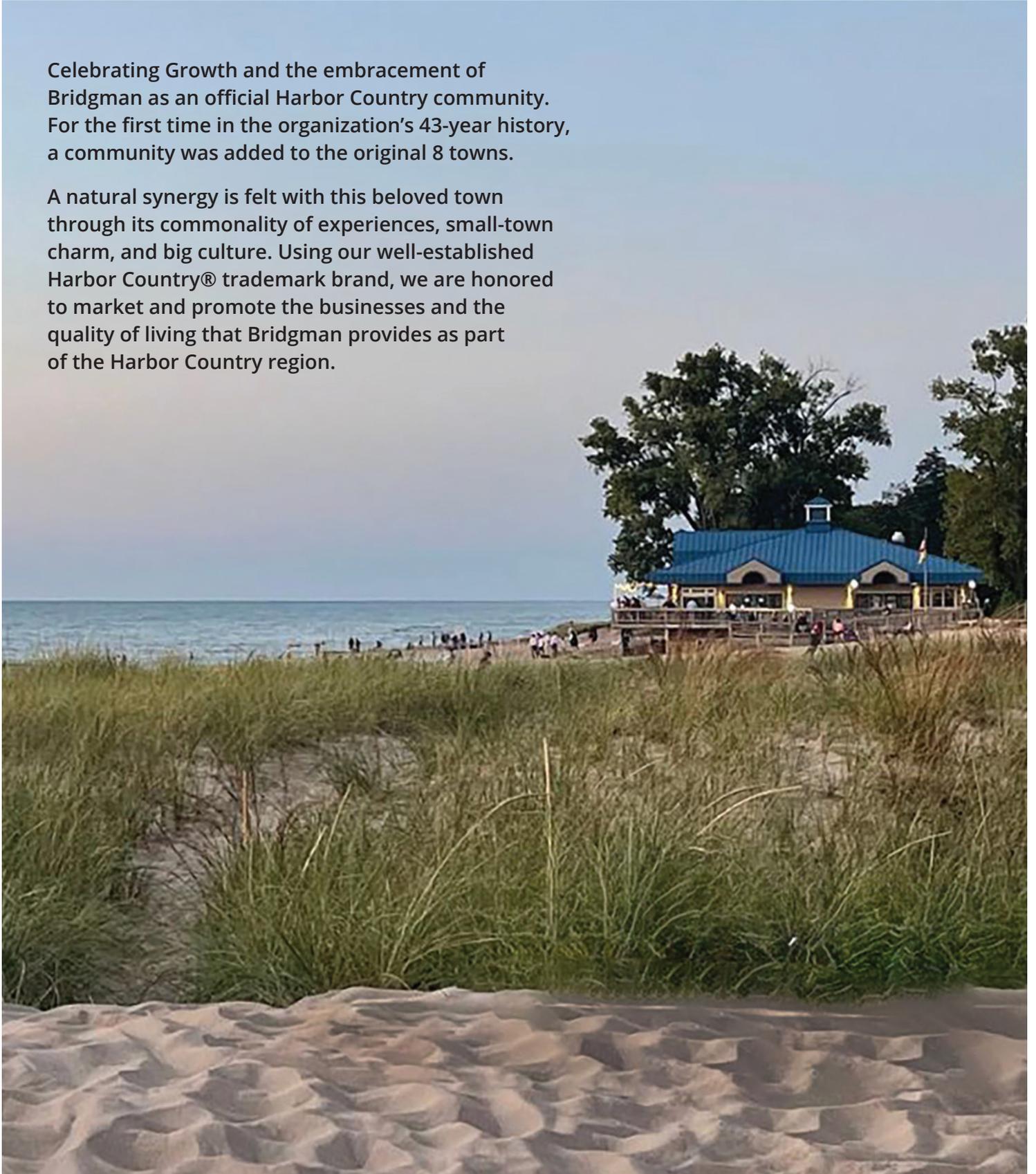


Growth

A CELEBRATION

Celebrating Growth and the embracement of Bridgman as an official Harbor Country community. For the first time in the organization's 43-year history, a community was added to the original 8 towns.

A natural synergy is felt with this beloved town through its commonality of experiences, small-town charm, and big culture. Using our well-established Harbor Country® trademark brand, we are honored to market and promote the businesses and the quality of living that Bridgman provides as part of the Harbor Country region.



Thank you SPONSORS



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meridiantitle.com



newbuffalo.org

Member to Member Award Winners

Largest Economic Impact

Four Winds Casino Resort
Director of Sales and Special Events:
Ronald Source



Outstanding Young Entrepreneur

Melanie Owen - Owner
O & Co.



Most Community Minded

Chikaming Open Lands *Director: Ryan Postema*



It's all about MEMBER BENEFITS

New Benefits Added 2023-2024

- Member Madness Mixer - Brochure Exchange
- Member Direct Email Link - Member Portal
- Quick Learn Seminar Series



It's All About Member Benefits

Networking

- Harbor Country Mixers & Happy Hour
- Harbor Country Annual Dinner
- Direct E-Mail To Business Members
- Chamber introductions

Social Media Presence #Harbor Country

- Harbor Country® Facebook - Member Post Reshares + Ad Programs
- Instagram - Branding Harbor Country®
- Chamber Member Group Private FB Page - Member Direct Posts
- Linked In

Tourism

- Coast In Campaigns - member co-op advertising
- Pure Michigan - tourism bureau affiliation

- Chamber Visitor Center - member literature stock
- Referrals for your business - center visitors, phone calls, emails

HarborCountry.org Website

- Your Own Business Web page to customize as you wish
- Community Web Pages highlighting living and visiting here
- Direct Access To Post To Community Calendar
- Feeds From Pure Michigan and Global Websites

The Harbor Country Guide

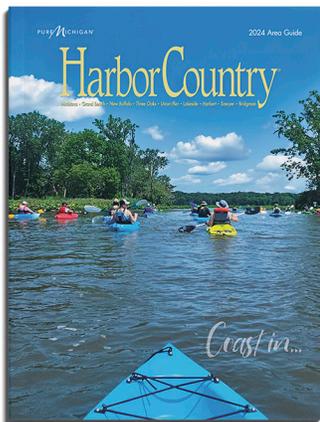
- The Gold Standard For Visitor Publications - Award Winning
- Your Member Directory Listing with your website hyperlink

- Member Exclusive Advertising
- 45,000 copies - #13,500 Michigan Welcome Centers

Community Support

- Letters of Support For Community Grants and Projects
- Business Association Relations and Support
- New Business Consultation and Ribbon Cuttings
- Economic Encouragement And Collaboration With Municipalities
- Pitching In At Community and Non-Profit Endeavors
- Encouraging Harbor Country Living and Residency

Marketing



Website Development

Pure Michigan Collaboration

Co-Op Campaigns

Travel Shows

Harbor Country Guide

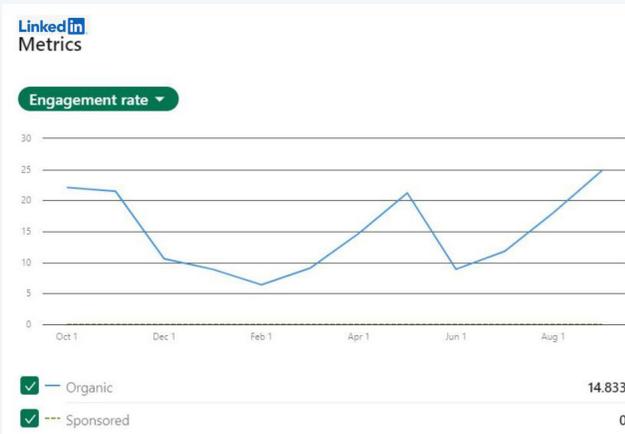
Airport, Train and Travel Centers

Marketing Committee

Kimberlee Wendt, Patty Knicker, Tim Rogers - Fusion Design, Kurt Houseman - Lake Homes Realty, Valerie Gangas - Juniper Home & Holiday, Dan Saunders - Third Coast Vacation Rentals, Colleen Neubauer

Social media REPORTS

We take pride in our area of Southwest Michigan and are dedicated to promoting the best our region has to offer by consistently acknowledging our members and drawing attention to Harbor Country. We have sustained brand recognition by incorporating membership category links into our social media posts and utilizing hashtags to increase engagement among our followers. ~ *Patty Knicker Member Development Manager*



Audience Demographics:

Top 5 cities: Chicago, New Buffalo, Three Oaks, St. Joseph, Michigan City

Average ages:

	34-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Women	14.3%	20%	20.1%	15.9%
Men	4.7%	5.9%	6.5%	5.5%

Harbor Country.org Website Traffic

Active Users #58K. February 28 highest date #763. July 1 second highest date #381

Top Keyword searches:

- Hot Tub
- Trails
- Golf
- Rentals
- Botanic
- Wedding
- Kid Friendly
- Shopping
- Cannabis
- Tours
- Coffee
- Boating

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Organization

A Message From The President



WOW! It has been an exciting year. Thank you to all of you that helped us move to bring in a new community to Harbor Country for the first time! Bridgman is now included in the fold of communities we consider Harbor Country. With that in our rear-view mirror, our exceptional Chamber staff of Kimberlee and Patty have taken our membership to near record levels. Our Mixers are back to pre-pandemic levels of excitement and involvement. Our Harbor Country Happy Hours over the summer of 2024 had the greatest participation yet.... With our August happy hour reaching nearly 100 participants. We had 10 ribbon cuttings this year, continuing to help raise our ranks of business owners in Harbor Country that call themselves members to nearly 475 members. We even participated in a 50th celebration at a founding members business, Skip's Restaurant this past summer.

Change in our board for 2024 was also very noticeable, with many of our seasoned members moving on in the fall of 2023. We sincerely miss them... however we did not miss a beat. We had great involvement this year from our board, with participation at most of the mixers, ribbon cuttings and happy hours.

I want to thank every one of our board members by name. Each of you has brought something special to our meetings. Jessica Nance, my Vice President, has been a great help all year. Colleen Neubauer as our Secretary has kept our notes moving forward, as well as lent great expertise in our events and social media strategies. John Quackenbush as our treasurer has worked countless hours keeping our budget tight and communicating with our CPA; as well as managing our mandatory audit with Kruggel Lawton in 2024. Erika Milovich in the lodging and vacation rental market has added her expertise regularly, along with Justin Erikson lending a perspective from the restaurant industry. Rachel Watkins and John Bonkoske with their extensive business and management experience have given great feedback and help when it comes to our internal organization, and board strategies. Thank you to all of you for your hard work!

I want to thank Kimberlee Wendt and Patty Knicker for their hard work and efforts this past year. We are very fortunate to have such capable staff that manage our growth and service to our members. Their innovative ideas and service-oriented approach has helped us feel served, enjoy our memberships, and network together to keep our businesses front and center in our communities.

What is coming next year? John Bonkoske will be taking over the President role. I have complete trust that he will carry on the hard work and continue to spend our time and resources where it serves the members best. What are some of the new things to come in 2025? We are spending time and efforts to help facilitate economic development and coordination in Harbor Country among the municipalities and heads of key nonprofits. We will continue to spend our resources on our amazing Mixer schedule, Harbor Country Guide book, Harbor Country Happy Hours over the summer, new and innovative social media posts and initiatives, and overall growth and prosperity to Harbor Country.

Thank you and have a great Holiday Season!

David McNabb

Board of Directors

President

John Bonkoske - Social Member

Vice President

Jessica Nance - Red Arrow Roasters

Treasurer

John Quackenbush - Social Member

Secretary

Colleen Neubauer - Social Member

Directors

Erika Milovich - Bluefish Vacation Rentals

Rachel Watkins - Fifth Third Bank

Justin Frederickson - Gather All Day

Ambassador Committee

Karen Poff, Jan Tomecek, Louise Valentin, Mary Lou Johnson, Jen Baron, Becky Martin, Rebecca Reilly-Gardner, Tiffany Wood

Staff

Executive Director

Kimberlee Wendt

Member Development Manager

Patty Knicker

The Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce is a 501(c)(6) corporation, established in 1981 to represent the nine communities Michiana, Grand Beach, New Buffalo, Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, Sawyer, Bridgman, Three Oaks. With rich heritage leadership and collaboration, works partnership with local municipalities advocate for business area lead economic development efforts make premier place stay, play, work, create home. trademark name ® held by Commerce. All rights reserved.

Continued Growth And Financial Soundness



Membership dues and guide ad sales continued to grow year-over-year. Rental income increased significantly as the Chamber continued to make efficient use of the space in our building.

Guide costs leveled off in FY2024 after increasing significantly due to higher paper and printing costs in FY2023. Payroll expense increased year-over-year but remained below half of total expenses. Operating costs remained relatively

flat although building repair and maintenance costs were higher year-over-year. Net Operating Income came in slightly below but close to \$0 for the year.

Chamber finances remained sound due to the Operating Reserve Fund established during FY2018–2019. With higher interest rates prevailing during FY2024, the Operating Reserve Fund generated \$11,126 in interest income more than double the FY2023 level of \$5,520.

I am glad to report that Kruggel Lawton CPA completed an objective third-party audit and opined that the Chamber’s FY2023 financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the Chamber’s financial position in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

John Quackenbush, Treasurer

Finance Committee

John Quackenbush

Dick Saurman

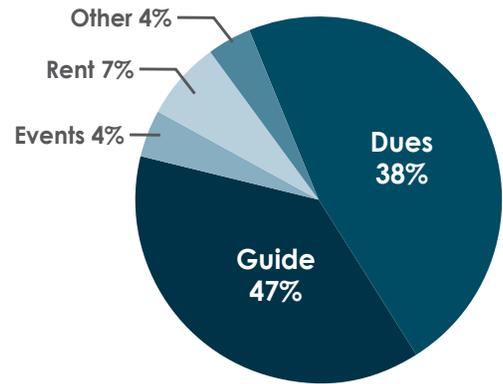
Frank Tomecek

Abigail Moore - Moore & Company CPA

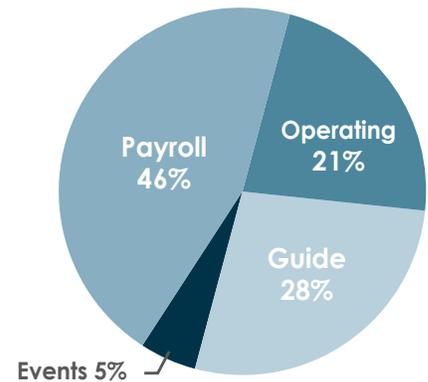
Bradley Martin Wintrust Mortgage

Thank you for your partnership with our organization. Our connection between members and the communities that Harbor Country serves is vital to drive economic growth, nurture welcoming communities, and amplify our voice on larger platforms. Your monetary support of the Harbor Country Guide and Membership Dues make it all possible.

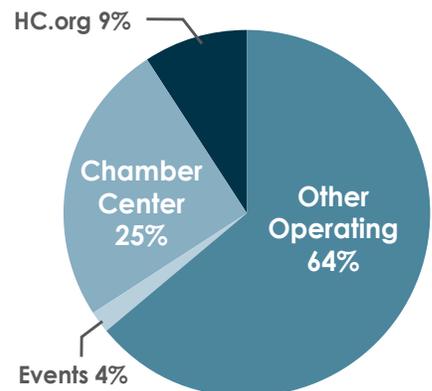
FY2024 Income



FY2024 Expenses



FY2024 Operating Expenses



HarborCountry®

Michiana • Grand Beach • New Buffalo • Three Oaks • Union Pier • Lakeside • Harbert • Sawyer



Coast in...



New Buffalo

A HARBOR COUNTRY COMMUNITY



Union Pier

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Harbert

A HARBOR COUNTRY COMMUNITY



Grand Beach

A HARBOR COUNTRY COMMUNITY



Michiana

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Lakeside

A HARBOR COUNTRY COMMUNITY



Three Oaks

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Sawyer

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Bridgman

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