

City celebrates RRC certification

Posted by Michelle Graves on January 20th, 2017



The Michigan Economic Development Corporation recognized the City of Manistee for its certification as a Redevelopment Ready Community on Friday. Pictured (from left to right) are Sarah Rainero, MEDC Regional Director; Denise Blakeslee, Manistee Planning and Zoning Administrator; Mayor James Smith; City Manager Thad Taylor; and Michelle Parkkonen, MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities Manager. (Michelle Graves/News Advocate)

Redevelopment ready equals business friendly

MANISTEE — The City of Manistee is open for business.

That's the message that was conveyed over and over again on Friday during a presentation recognizing the city as the 10th community to be certified under the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities program.

About 50 people, including members of the community as well as members of local and state government, attended the celebration at the Vogue Theatre.

"Manistee is a Redevelopment Ready Community, that's a designation," said Mayor James Smith. "What does that mean? That means we're open for business. Let's get going; let's move on."

The goal was achieved through "a collaborative effort and expending a lot of energy," he said.

"It wasn't just a check-off of items on a checklist. It was a deliberate attempt to understand and focus on the aspects of becoming redevelopment ready," Smith continued. "We stepped through a process of understanding the elements to certification. We put those elements into place with a purpose to stimulate development in the community of Manistee."

The process to achieve the certification took two years and a lot of hard work.



Mayor James Smith spoke on Friday during a presentation recognizing the city as the 10th community to be certified under the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities program. (Michelle Graves/News Advocate)

"One of the many great things the city has done is really bringing together the boards and commissions to prioritize and identify the available sites for redevelopment," said Michelle Parkkonen, MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) manager.

She said getting everyone on the same page can be a big challenge for some communities. "The City of Manistee has done that from the very beginning, and it shows. It really shows in the hard work and commitment from all the parties involved," she said.

The Redevelopment Ready Communities program evaluates and certifies communities that make development easy and have a vision for the future. "(It says) you're open for business; you're business friendly," said Parkkonen.

The certification shows developers that the City of Manistee has "integrated transparency, predictability and efficiency in our development practices," said Denise Blakeslee, the City's Planning and Zoning administrator.

Redevelopment Ready Communities:
Manistee;
Allegan;
Boyer City;
Eastpointe;
Lathrup Village;
Roseville;
Ypsilanti;
Muskegon;
Marshall;
Southfield.



The City had many partners in the process, like the Manistee County Board of Commissioners, the DDA, the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce, the Manistee County Visitors Bureau, the Alliance for Economic Success, the Manistee County Planning Department and more.

"The other partners are silent partners, those are the ones who assist and promote development on a daily basis," Blakeslee said. "Those are the people who own a business downtown, who have invested in our community, those are servers at a restaurant who tell people when they're visiting the community: Go visit the beach, go for a ride

on the trolley. They are the person who walks down the street and shares a smile with a developer and makes a great impression. ... Manistee is a unique community. With the RRC certification, we are going to take it into the future with development."

Smith reminded those present of the growth achieved during the certification process. "Welcome Famous Flynn's; welcome to the Fillmore. Memory Lane Automotive Detailing is open for business. The Record Vault is coming," he said. "Stillwater Cottage Condos is planning to add 13 units of housing. Edgewater Condominiums and North Channel apartments will add 34 residences to the city. North Channel Brewery also is going to bring locally brewed beer to the city and food service for yet another dining and entertainment opportunity. Joslin Cove is approved to complete their project, bringing 42 more homes to Manistee."

Manistee joins nine other Michigan communities that have qualified as thoroughly prepared when it comes to planning and zoning along with other key features that remove traditional barriers and promote opportunities for prospective private investors. Other certified Redevelopment Ready Communities are Allegan, Boyer City, Eastpointe, Lathrup Village, Roseville, Ypsilanti, Muskegon, Marshall and Southfield.

"The process itself has seen results, very tangible results. It is certainly encouraging that with the designation we should move even further," said Smith. "We will not rest with the recognition of the certification; we're not at the end of our mission. We have begun our journey to attract, retain and support businesses vital to the growth and prosperity of this community."