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MISSION

The Right Place is the economic development organization that drives current and long-term economic prosperity in West Michigan.

VISION

Building on more than three decades of knowledge and experience in understanding the opportunities and challenges affecting the West Michigan economy, The Right Place, Inc. develops and implements comprehensive strategies to retain, expand, and attract businesses vital to the region’s long-term health. These strategies include marketing the region globally, connecting area businesses to national and international resources, identifying emerging growth opportunities, and strengthening the global competitiveness and innovation of area firms. Through these and other activities, The Right Place is fostering an environment of sustainable economic growth, high quality employment and economic prosperity for West Michigan.
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

TO OUR INVESTORS AND PARTNERS

In January 2014, we announced a new three-year strategic plan for economic growth in West Michigan. With the close of 2016, we come to the end of that plan; a plan that guided our work resulting in over 4,300 new jobs and $731 million in capital investment.

We are very proud of these metrics and outcomes, but it only tells half of the story. What isn’t reflected in these numbers are the hundreds of businesses, employees, and their families that are better off today because of these investments. Today, thousands of West Michiganders have new careers. Careers that build prosperity and strengthen communities and families throughout our region. This is why economic development exists. It is about strengthening families and communities through the power of a job.

This year, The Right Place completed 22 economic development projects in West Michigan, resulting in 635 new and retained jobs, $29.4 million in payroll, and $240.4 million in new capital investment for our region. Looking back at our history, there are few times when we have ever completed so many projects in one year.

The world is taking notice of the incredible economic progress occurring in West Michigan. In 2016, Grand Rapids was ranked #3 in the country in Area Development Magazine’s Leading Locations Report and #7 by News and World Report in terms of best places to live in the U.S. for quality of life. The Right Place was also ranked one of the best economic development organizations in the country by Global Trade Magazine.

But, as much as we have accomplished, there is more work to be done. The increased adoption of technology in business is fundamentally changing how companies are expanding, investing, and creating jobs. Near-term policy uncertainty will impact business investment decisions. Equity in West Michigan’s economic prosperity must be on our agenda. These are just a few of the challenges and opportunities West Michigan will face in the coming years. We look forward to working together with you on these and others initiatives.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to The Right Place. Your engagement and investment enable us to continue to build West Michigan’s economy.

Richard C. Breon
Chair, The Right Place, Inc.
President & CEO,
Spectrum Health

Birgit M. Klohs
President & CEO,
The Right Place, Inc.
2016 Economic Development Projects

**By Industry Type**
- Manufacturing: 50%
- Medical Devices: 14%
- Logistics: 23%
- Food: 9%
- Technology: 4%

**By Investment**
- NEW/RETIAINED JOBS: 782
- NEW/RETIAINED PAYROLL: $35,883,946
- NEW CAPITAL INVESTMENT: $247,074,792

**By Jobs**
- Manufacturing: 42%
- Medical Devices: 13%
- Logistics: 5%
- Food: 5%
- Technology: 37%
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**TOTALS**                     | **782**             | **$35,833,946** | **$247,074,792**

Although there is no crystal ball in economic development, The Right Place does believe in the value of a plan. A plan that provides a road map for long-term economic growth. Our latest 2014-2016 Strategic Plan was developed in partnership with PwC, based on global market research and input from our staff, Board of Directors, and more than 100 local business and community leaders.

Working the plan

The basis of the latest strategic plan focused our work on four foundational components of economic growth: business support systems, infrastructure, work-ready talent, and quality of life. These areas of our regional economy have a direct impact on our ability to drive new investment and the creation of jobs.

Building on that foundational work, we selected five industries with the greatest job-creation potential: smart manufacturing, agribusiness and food processing, life sciences and biotech, information and communications technology, and industrial design.

The 2014-2016 strategic plan has guided our priorities and enabled The Right Place to be extremely effective over the past three years. We experienced great success as exemplified by the game-changing Switch SUPERNAP deal, the largest economic development project in our 30-year history.

Measuring results

We are very proud of our three-year results: new capital investment in the region nearly doubled our goal, and we were able to bring over 4,300 new jobs to the region.

Businesses are choosing to expand locally and move to West Michigan at an unprecedented rate, making Grand Rapids one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. Area Development Magazine listed us as the third-best area in the nation for businesses to prosper, and Global Trade magazine ranked The Right Place as one of the top 18 economic development corporations in the nation.

The Right Place is well positioned and poised to build on the successes of the past three years, and drive new economic growth and job creation over the next three years. With your continued support, West Michigan’s economy will continue to grow and prosper.
NEW/RETAINED JOBS

GOAL: 5,500

NEW/RETAINED PAYROLL

GOAL: $183,000,000

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

GOAL: $390,000,000

2014-2016 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

BY INDUSTRY TYPE

Distribution: 17%
Food: 7%
Logistics: 5%
Medical Devices: 25%
Manufacturing: 47%
Professional Services: 22%
Technology: 5%

BY INVESTMENT

BY JOBS

Distribution: 17%
Food: 7%
Logistics: 5%
Medical Devices: 25%
Manufacturing: 47%
Professional Services: 22%
Technology: 5%
STRATEGIC GROWTH INDUSTRIES
TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS

West Michigan’s information technology industry continues to be one of the fastest growing clusters in the nation, growing at a rate of 13.8 percent, 9.4 percent higher than the national average. The 13-county region is home to more than 14,000 technology professionals, from custom app and web developers to IT providers and security analysts.

Working with industry leaders in West Michigan, The Right Place is bringing new growth tools and collaborative resources to ensure the sector’s continued long-term growth.

SWITCH TO WEST MICHIGAN

After four months of intense work with the company, elected officials and local business and community leaders, The Right Place announced the largest economic development project in its 30-year history. Las Vegas-based Switch, confirmed the company will establish a new SUPERNAP data center in Gaines Charter Township.

This announcement not only welcomed Switch to Michigan, but also opened the state to compete for the attraction of future high-tech companies. Switch’s decision to locate in the State, firmly established Michigan in the center of the U.S. data center industry.

The Right Place played an integral role in the business attraction process, bringing together private business leaders and public elected leaders to ensure this project became a reality. The organization partnered with several key leaders, including The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Senate, House, Governor and The Right Place Board of Directors.

The new SUPERNAP data center will be located at the former Steelcase Pyramid in Gaines Township, establishing the beginning of a 2 million square-foot state-of-the-art, high-tech campus in West Michigan. The campus will create hundreds of local construction jobs over the
“Economic development is a team sport ... Without the assistance and support of countless elected officials, business and community leaders, Switch would not be coming to West Michigan.”

-Birgit Klohs, President and CEO, The Right Place Inc.

estimated 10-year build out of the entire project. A majority of Switch’s subcontractors will be engaged from the local workforce.

The SUPERNAP Michigan will be the largest data center campus in the eastern U.S. and will serve the company’s current clients in geographic redundancy and new clients with national connectivity. The company’s clients include major internet companies and several Fortune-level enterprises. The campus will provide transformational infrastructure and serve the eastern U.S. by offering the only Uptime Institute rated Tier IV Gold carrier-neutral colocation data center location outside of the SUPERNAP facilities in the western U.S.

TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL OF WEST MICHIGAN

Creating a whole greater than the sum of its parts

Managed and facilitated by The Right Place, the Technology Council of West Michigan is a group of West Michigan tech companies that are working together, finding new ways to make West Michigan top of mind for companies across the country. Using market research and targeted messaging throughout the U.S., the group is raising the awareness of the incredible tech resources located in West Michigan.

The council’s members include companies that can build solutions from the ground up, from full-service, large-scale managed IT solutions to custom software, online and app development. Our region’s unique design, applied technology, and manufacturing capabilities make West Michigan’s technology sector an ideal resource for a wide variety of companies.
SMART MANUFACTURING

2016 was a year of manufacturing growth and investment in West Michigan. The Right Place completed 11 Smart Manufacturing-related economic development projects, resulting in 325 new and retained jobs, $13 million in new payroll, and $73.4 million in new business investment in West Michigan. In all, manufacturing accounted for approximately 50 percent of The Right Place’s economic development projects this year.

MMTC-WEST

Building globally competitive manufacturers

Small and medium-sized manufacturers in West Michigan have turned to the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center – West (MMTC-West) for expert manufacturing assistance for nearly three decades.

The federally and state funded technical services group, based in The Right Place offices, provides objective, straight-forward support for companies in the 13-county West Michigan region. It’s one of five regional offices that make up Michigan’s MMTC network.

Services include:

- Assessment tools
- Growth and innovation
- Continuous improvement (lean) solutions
- Quality and safe food management
- Environmental, health and safety solutions

2016 was one of the busiest and most productive in the 26-year history of the MMTC-West Office. Regional collaboration continues to grow, driving new opportunities throughout West Michigan. The group also responded to increased customer demand in Lean leadership, systems, and tools; quality systems, and auditing, due to recall activity in manufacturing and ISO 9001:2015 standard changes.

Laser focused on zero defects

Hilite International is an automotive supply chain manufacturer, specializing in systems and components to improve fuel consumption and reduce emissions. Hilite’s goal is to achieve zero defects throughout the production process, and the experts at MMTC-West had the tools to make that goal a reality.

After meeting with Hilite professionals and listening to their challenges, the experts at the MMTC-West began a 14-week Six Sigma program to track quality and defect reduction. With a new system for identifying and addressing defects in the production process, the company is already experiencing positive results. First time production quality is above goal, scrap is down .2%, and quality audit scores have improved 1.5%; since the short time the program has been in place.
Manufacturers Council

Collaborating for best-in-class manufacturing

Competitiveness. Talent development. Best practices. Changing perceptions. These were just a few of the challenges addressed by The Right Place/MMTC-West Manufacturers Council this year. Founded in 1989, the council’s vision is to be the regional forum for advancing manufacturing success in West Michigan. The council’s 38 member companies and five institutions act as the voice of manufacturing in West Michigan. The group also works together to solve common problems, share best practices, collaborate with other members and connect with educational institutions.

This year, the council toured several member company facilities, including: Leggett & Platt, Inc., Terryberry, and Hutchinson North America. The group also hosted the Manufacturing Technology xChange event in collaboration with The Right Place and MMTC-West to bring the latest manufacturing technology trends to West Michigan manufacturers.

Ionia and Montcalm manufacturers join forces

Manufacturers in the eastern part of the region formed their own Ionia-Montcalm Manufacturers Council. Monthly meetings were held throughout the year at participating companies. Since its launch in late 2015, the group has focused on lean manufacturing, ISO certification and talent initiatives.
SUCCESS STORY: STIKWOOD

Rethinking walls, rethinking location

Stikwood, the California-based manufacturer of peel-and-stick wood planking, encourages customers to rethink their walls. And now, thanks to The Right Place, Stikwood is rethinking its location. The company plans to move its operations into Kentwood, Michigan, a $4.2 million investment that will bring 73 new jobs over the next three years.

Attracting Stikwood to West Michigan was very competitive. Working with the McCall family that owns the company, the family stated that West Michigan’s strong manufacturing heritage, combined with the support that they received from The Right Place and our partners won the deal.

As the agreement was being created, the family stated that West Michigan’s strong manufacturing heritage, combined with the support that they received from The Right Place and our partners won the deal.

This is a classic example of when collaboration counts. It was the reason The Right Place was created over 30 years ago, to act as a single front door for all companies looking to grow in West Michigan.

MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY XCHANGE EVENT


Presenters at the 2016 Manufacturing Technology xChange Event, held at DeVos Place in November, read like a Who’s Who of advanced manufacturing. The event brought together the region’s manufacturing community for a day of exploring the latest industry advancements and future trends. Topics of discussion included: Industry 4.0, robotics, product development, lean practices, 3D printing, leadership development and innovation.

“The economic support, talented workforce, and great quality of life make the region an ideal place to locate our new facility, and we look forward to joining the West Michigan Community.”

- Laura McCall, CEO and Owner, Stikwood
SUCCESS STORY: SWOBODA

Global strategy, local growth

It’s been nearly 20 years since German-based Swoboda opened its first U.S. manufacturing facility in West Michigan, thanks to assistance from The Right Place back in 1996. Since then, the high technology automotive supplier has remained committed to the area.

However, before its latest expansion this year, Swoboda weighed its options carefully. The company was under pressure to expand abroad and currently has locations in Germany, China, Mexico, Romania, and the Czech Republic.

To facilitate the expansion and ensure it occurred in West Michigan, The Right Place assembled a team of state and local resources to help Swoboda’s West Michigan facility remain competitive. And it worked.

With support from the Michigan Strategic Fund, The Right Place was not only able to keep Swoboda in West Michigan, but secured the company’s $15.1 million investment and 37 new high-tech jobs at its Kentwood, Michigan, location.

“Our presence here plays a critical role in Swoboda’s global strategy. The support and assistance we have received from The Right Place and other organizations in the area make West Michigan an ideal place to grow our business.”

- John Fuhs, Vice President of Sales and Engineering, Swoboda Inc.
FOOD PROCESSING & AGRIBUSINESS

Cereal. Ice cream. Yogurt. Cookies. Turkey. Baby food. Beer. These are just a few of the hundreds of foods and beverages produced locally and shipped around the world. Abundant fresh water resources, a diverse supply chain and a strong commitment by The Right Place have contributed to the double-digit growth of this sector over the past five years.

West Michigan’s food processing and agribusiness sector is a strong contributor to the region’s healthy, stable and diverse economy. The area produces one-third of Michigan’s total agricultural sales, contributing a hefty $1.5 billion to the economy with more than 26,000 jobs. This year, The Right Place enhanced our business support for West Michigan food processors by building new collaborations and connections in the region.
FOOD PROCESSORS COUNCIL

Never too many cooks

Michigan is second only to California in agricultural diversity. And it’s growing stronger, thanks to the Food Processors Council. Facilitated by The Right Place and the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center - West (MMTC-West), the council is taking on key strategic issues to ensure the future of food processing in West Michigan, including:

• **MIFood Summit.** This popular annual event celebrates successes and tackles challenges including sustainability, trends, quality and growth through strategic relationships.

• **Water minimization pilot program.** Nine companies have received no-cost consultations from a local environmental engineering firm to create site-specific improvement plans.

• **Waste water minimization pilot program.** Processors, stakeholders and municipal officials are collaborating around challenges and opportunities related to waste water system capacity and fee structures.

• **Best practice tours.** Members have visited livestock processors, a dairy facility and a biodigester to understand processes and best practices.

• **Strategic meetings.** The Food Safety Modernization Act, export information and infrastructure opportunities and challenges have all been topics of discussion between the Council and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

WATER MINIMIZATION

Managing a vital natural resource

• **The bad news:** Millions of gallons of water are used each day by West Michigan food processors, creating an unsustainable impact on the environment.

• **The good news:** A Water Minimization Pilot Assessment Program was developed this year to reduce the use of fresh water and waste water throughout the food processing system. The Right Place applied for program funding, which was granted by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and supported by the West Michigan Food Processors Council.

• **The bottom line:** Five food processors participated in the pilot program, and the results and best practices were shared at the 2016 Food Processors Regional Summit. New approaches are helping production facilities to decrease their environmental footprint and ultimately save money through reduced water, electricity and treatment costs.
LIFE SCIENCES & MEDICAL DEVICES

West Michigan is home to some of the most state-of-the-art healthcare, research, and health education facilities in the Midwest, bringing billions in investment to the region. With one of the fastest growing healthcare and life science clusters in the Midwest, West Michigan today touts 85 medical device companies as part of a bioscience industry that employs more than 40,000 individuals in our 13-county region. Over the past 10 years, job growth within the region’s bioscience sector has grown 38.7 percent, 18 points higher than the national average. The Right Place continues to maximize on this growth, attracting new companies to the region, and providing growth and collaboration support to existing companies in West Michigan.

SUCCESS STORY: NXGEN MDX

Genetic Screening Growing in West Michigan

NxGen MDx is a women’s healthcare organization that offers genetic screens for a variety of inherited diseases, such as Cystic Fibrosis, Spinal Muscular Atrophy and Fragile X Syndrome, so women can plan their reproductive journey. The company is facing a growth explosion, with demand for its services expected to increase 300 percent over last year. NxGen MDx needs more laboratory testing capacity and high-tech life science employees. So it decided to invest $2.8 million in Grand Rapids over the next three years, creating 37 jobs. Why grow in Grand Rapids instead of expanding its Florida location?

The decision was made easier with support from a cross-functional team of state and local resources who worked with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to build an aggressive business retention/expansion package that included a Michigan Strategic Fund incentive.

“The expert support provided by The Right Place, combined with the collaborative resources of Grand Rapids’ Medical Mile, made the decision easy on where the next chapter of our growth would take place.”

- Kristin Sherman, Chief Financial Officer, NxGen MDx
SUCCESS STORY: FIRSTRONIC

Grow, grow, grow again.

While other companies in the industry are expanding offshore, Firstronic continues to invest at home in Grand Rapids. The company creates specialty electronics manufacturing services for a broad base of automotive and industrial customers. However, Firstronic’s new growth is coming more and more from medical customers in the life sciences sector.

Firstronic began operations with less than 50 employees. In 2013, The Right Place assisted the company with an investment of $2.45 million, which added 110 jobs. Now, it is investing $1.83 million in new equipment at its Michigan Street facility, which will create another 50 new jobs.

The company chose to expand locally, despite pressure to locate manufacturing in China and Mexico. This expansion project was boosted by a Michigan Business Development Program grant to support the company’s investment in automation technology and employee training.

“With assistance from The Right Place and their partners, we can ensure that we will continue to increase our investment and job creation here in West Michigan.”
- John Sammut, CEO, Firstronic

MIDEVICE CONSORTIUM

Made in West Michigan: MiDevice Consortium

Success begets success. That’s the philosophy of MiDevice Consortium, Michigan’s only organization dedicated to medical device design, development, manufacturing and distribution.

MiDevice, which is facilitated by The Right Place in partnership with the Grand Rapids Smartzone™, encourages collaboration among medical device companies in West Michigan. The goal is to build a collaborative infrastructure of companies that offer solutions throughout the entire product lifecycle and supply chain.

Today, West Michigan’s medical industry firms are part of a life science community that provides world-class health services and is supported by more than a dozen institutes of higher learning including universities and medical schools.

As a result of this collaboration and strategic work, West Michigan now has the largest concentration of medical device manufacturers in Michigan.
FOUNDATIONS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH
Over the past three decades, The Right Place has become West Michigan’s leading resource for business assistance. This critical area of our strategic plan represents the core of our work. From conducting confidential meetings with strategic business leaders to hosting world-class educational conferences on emerging trends, our team is constantly working to provide area businesses with the tools and resources they need to grow in West Michigan.
REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Although The Right Place headquarters is in Grand Rapids, our reach and influence extend throughout the West Michigan region. We’re proud of the partnerships and collaboration we have built with organizations throughout the region, including:

**Lake County.** Rich in beauty but among the poorest in the state, Lake County is ready to begin a new chapter of growth. The recently formed Lake County Economic Development Alliance (LCEDA) is setting a new economic development framework for the county, and The Right Place is providing support as part of its mission to think and act strategically, encouraging cooperation across political and municipal borders.

**Newaygo County.** A new agreement between The Right Place and the Newaygo County Economic Development Office has launched a “restart” for economic growth in Newaygo County. The three-year contract means Newaygo County’s business community will be able to leverage The Right Place’s extensive business retention, expansion and attraction services. Plus the addition of a new, dedicated Business Development Coordinator, with an office in Newaygo County, means The Right Place can provide immediate access to Newaygo businesses.

**Montcalm County.** Since the Montcalm Economic Alliance first established an economic development partnership with The Right Place in 2014, the county has experienced a renewed boost of economic activity. From new capital investment and jobs, to broadband infrastructure planning, talent initiatives, and the creation of a Montcalm Manufacturers Council, The Right Place is providing the support and resources Montcalm businesses need to grow and succeed.

**Ionia County.** The partnership between The Right Place and the Ionia County Economic Alliance (ICEA) continues to bring strategic economic growth tools to the county’s business community. This year, business development resources reached out to more businesses in the community extending the organization’s reach and support services. ICEA also led a comprehensive broadband study in the county that will be used to guide future investments in broadband infrastructure.
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

West Michigan is getting a positive reputation worldwide, thanks to $8 billion in annual exports, which ranks it among the top 50 metropolitan areas in the country.

To build on this success, The Right Place conducts foreign direct investment (FDI) missions to countries around the world, raising awareness of our strengths and building strategic relationships.

In 2016, The Right Place participated in the SelectUSA Investment Summit, which is geared towards companies seeking to establish or expand operations in the United States. This two-day event, organized by the U.S. Department of Commerce in Washington D.C., welcomed more than 2,500 participants from 70 foreign markets and the United States.

In addition, The Right Place President and CEO Birgit Klohs joined Michigan Governor Rick Snyder’s delegation on a German foreign trade mission. She also met with companies from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands and Czech Republic at the HANNOVER MESSE trade fair.
ASSISTING EXISTING WEST MICHIGAN BUSINESSES

The best potential for growth and prosperity lies in businesses already in our region. For that reason, The Right Place spends nearly 85 percent of its efforts in supporting West Michigan companies.

In 2016, that included more than 300 local business retention meetings, with The Right Place business development team meeting face-to-face with West Michigan owners and business executives to discuss challenges, growth needs and concerns.

The outcomes are two-fold: First, we connect companies with the resources they need to grow and invest in West Michigan. And second, we’ve implemented a new business retention program that enables us to analyze information we receive from these meetings, creating a better guide for our future work and focus areas.
INFRASTRUCTURE

Quality infrastructure is the base of all economic growth; without it commerce grinds to a halt. From roads and rail, to air, water, and broadband West Michigan’s industrial infrastructure is a key component of our region’s economic growth potential.

The Right Place is ensuring West Michigan’s businesses have the physical and digital infrastructure they need to succeed — today and tomorrow — in a global economy. From improving multimodal freight logistics options, to improvements in broadband service and water usage, we’re collaborating with key partners to build a connected region for growth.

SUCCESS STORY: KNIGHT TRANSPORTATION

Moving freight through the mitten state

In March, The Right Place announced that Phoenix-based Knight Transportation will establish its first Michigan Logistics branch in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The new branch will house the company’s “Solutions team,” focused on leveraging all of Knight Transportation’s capabilities and technology to create an efficient high service solution for their customers.

The Arizona-based logistics company engaged a third-party site selection firm, Indiana-based Ginovus, to help choose a new location in the Midwest. And The Right Place was there to make the decision easier.

Our business development team assembled a cross-functional team of state and local resources from workforce development and training, to tax abatements and grant programs that ultimately landed the project here in West Michigan.

"When selecting a site for our new office, we felt it was important to locate in a city with a vibrant and growing economy that provides access to a highly skilled workforce.”

- Mike McClelland, Senior Vice President, Knight Transportation
BROADBAND INITIATIVE

**Reliable broadband = economic opportunity**

Nearly every business we work with in West Michigan is intimately tied to technologies that require being connected online. Without fast, reliable internet access, West Michigan businesses cannot compete and will be left behind.

Many studies have confirmed a direct link between broadband access and economic growth. And unfortunately, there are critical broadband gaps in many West Michigan communities today.

That’s why The Right Place and other area economic development organizations are partnering with Connect Michigan’s “Connected Community” program to address those gaps. By the end of 2016, the program had assessed the broadband landscape in 12 of 13 West Michigan counties.

Next steps? Develop and implement an action plan in each county to increase broadband access, specifically in underserved areas.

PORT OF MUSKEGON

**Leveraging an underutilized resource**

As Lake Michigan’s only industrial deep-water port, the Port of Muskegon has the potential to serve as a major logistical hub in the Midwest, similar to the busy port of Milwaukee.

To ensure the future use and availability of this critical piece of infrastructure, The Right Place is collaborating with regional partners in Muskegon County to make sure this valuable resource is not lost due to underutilization.
WORK-READY TALENT

West Michigan has a highly motivated and creative workforce. Half of the region’s 1.5 million residents are under the age of 35, so area employers are able to draw from a large pool of young, tech savvy, energetic workers.

However, with the unemployment rate hovering at all-time lows, The Right Place isn’t resting on its laurels. Instead, it’s proactively partnering with a variety of talent initiatives in the region to connect people and businesses in innovative new ways.

HELLO WEST MICHIGAN

Attracting and retaining talent

Hello West Michigan is a member-based organization that assists people interested in relocating to the area. It connects job seekers with businesses and educates people about the area.

In 2016, Hello West Michigan moved into The Right Place offices in downtown Grand Rapids and expanded its vision to reach region wide. Both organizations share a goal of attracting and retaining world-class talent and companies.

With a hyper-focused scope of work, Hello West Michigan brings expertise to the job with tailored programs for people interested in relocation, out-bound marketing campaigns promoting the region, and a variety of events for interns. They also provide resources for trailing significant others and “boomerangs” coming back to West Michigan.

In addition, hellowestmichigan.com is a one-stop guide to information about the region, from outdoor recreation and cultural opportunities to neighborhood profiles, multi-cultural resources, school district information, profiles of recently transplanted individuals, and much, much more.
Rethinking West Michigan

On a day when many former West Michigan residents are back in the area for the Thanksgiving holiday, Hello West Michigan and The Right Place convened 16 area companies and several non-profit organizations to educate former Michiganders that now is time to “rethink” West Michigan.

Not designed as a typical career fair, the 5th annual ReThink West Michigan provided a casual environment to network and discover many of the great career possibilities, and growing companies in the region.

In total, the event attracted nearly 100 attendees, with 48 percent from outside the area or recently relocated to West Michigan. The last 4 events have resulted in 40 total hires.

Discover Manufacturing

Redefining a career in manufacturing

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” It may be a question with a new answer for thousands of West Michigan students, thanks to Discover Manufacturing, a regional initiative sponsored by The Right Place, The Right Place/MMTC-West Manufacturers Council, and West Michigan Works!

Discover Manufacturing promotes careers in manufacturing, impacts training and education, and engages the community on the importance and value of manufacturing.

This year, volunteers concentrated on two key events: National Manufacturing Day and MiCareerQuest. Manufacturing Day in West Michigan has turned into a weeklong event dedicated to improving the perception of manufacturing careers and the value of the industry. Events included facility tours, hands-on activities, videos and discussions with students, teachers, and administration about careers in manufacturing that touched over 3,100 students.
QUALITY OF LIFE

A job isn’t just a job. And a business isn’t merely a business. The best and brightest talent are seeking an exceptional quality of life. And businesses recognize the added benefit of working in a vibrant community. This is why our team at The Right Place is engaged in a wide spectrum of programs that promote diversity and inclusion, improve public schools, develop affordable living options and inspire a world-class arts and culture scene. Our active participation in 62 different area organizations and initiatives throughout the region is an investment that will pay dividends today and in the future.
MARKETING WEST MICHIGAN

Today, West Michigan is known as one of the fastest-growing, most productive, and most innovative regions in the country. And while much of the credit goes to the companies and initiatives behind that growth, the rest of the world would remain unaware without the marketing and communication efforts of The Right Place and our partners. Today we’re proactively promoting West Michigan as a global destination for business success, using both digital and traditional media.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MARKETING AWARD

The Right Place recently received two awards this year from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). The IEDC Excellence in Economic Development Awards honor organizations and individuals for their efforts in creating positive change in urban, suburban and rural communities.

The awards recognized The Right Place’s redesigned website, rightplace.org, and RPI Insider, The Right Place’s quarterly update to investors, stakeholders and strategic partners.

THE RPI INSIDER

Now in its second year of publishing, the RPI Insider provides Right Place investors, stakeholders and strategic partners with quarterly economic growth updates including the accomplishments of our organization, in-depth industry overviews, and upcoming opportunities to engage.

The newsletter, which received an Excellence in Economic Development Award, is a coffee-table worthy publication. In fact, you’ll find it prominently displayed in the lobbies of many regional businesses across West Michigan.

Rightplace.org: 119,000 visits

Twitter: 3,988 followers
LinkedIn: 2,191 followers
Facebook: 2,123 followers

200+ news articles and stories
THE RIGHT PLACE STAFF

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Birgit Klohs
President and CEO

Twayne Howard
Chief Operating Officer/
Assistant Treasurer

Cindy Brown
Vice President, Talent Initiatives and
Hello West Michigan Executive Director

Natalia Kovicak
Vice President,
Conferences and Events

Rick Chapla
Vice President,
Strategic Initiatives

William Small
Vice President, Technical Services /
MMTC-West Regional Director

Tim Mroz
Vice President, Marketing
and Communications

Brad Comment
Vice President, Investor Relations

Therese Thill
Vice President,
Business Development
THE RIGHT PLACE STAFF

STAFF

Jackie Beering
Accounting Clerk

Rachel Bartels
Hello West Michigan Program Manager

Lorraine Brügger
Office Administrator

Justine Burdette
MMTC-West Executive Assistant

Morgan Carroll
Business Development Coordinator
- Ionia County

Dave Riley
Business Intelligence and Research Manager

Jess Cruz
MMTC-West Business Development Specialist

Andria Romkema
Digital Marketing Manager

Kelly Hansen
Office Administrator

Mark Guzniczak
Business Development Coordinator
- Newaygo County

Eric Heys
Marketing Coordinator

Tami Hugger
Assistant to the President

Eric Icard
Sr. Business Development Manager

Maulin Pont-McClelland
Business Development Assistant

Kathy Jo Vanderlaan
Business Development Coordinator
- Montcalm County

Thad Rieder
Sr. Business Development Manager

Jennifer Wangler
Business Development Manager

Amy Winkler
MMTC-West Client Coordinator

Ben Wood
MMTC-West Business Development Specialist
THE RIGHT PLACE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President/CEO, Herman Miller, Inc.

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Regional President, The PNC Financial Services Group

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President/CEO, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce

Todd Blake
President, Newaygo County Economic Development Organization

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County Administrator/Controller, Kent County

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Dan R. Gaydou
President, MLive Media Group

Thomas Haas, Ph.D.
President, Grand Valley State University

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BTHarris Consulting, LLC

Richard P. Haslinger
President, West Michigan Region, Chase Bank

John T. Hendrickson*
President, Perrigo Company plc

John Irwin
West Michigan Regional President, Huntington Bank

Sandy Jelinski
President/CEO, Lake Michigan Credit Union

Mitchell Joppich
Managing Partner, PwC LLC

James P. Keane
President/CEO, Steelcase
ACCOUNTING
Baker Holtz
BDO USA, LLP
Beene Garter, LLP
Brickley DeLong
Crowe Horwath, LLP
Dan Carter Advisors CPA PLC
Deloitte
EHTC
Ernst & Young LLP
H & S Companies, PC,
Hungerford Nichols CPAs & Advisors
Plante Moran
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Rehmann Group

ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Clark Communications

BUSINESS SERVICES
Comprenew
Custer Workplace Interiors
DWH
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
Ionia County Economic Alliance
McAlvery, Merchant and Associates
Montcalm Economic Alliance
Newaygo County Economic Development Office
Pondera Advisors
Powell Relocation Group
Praeco Skills
Sustainable Research Group

CONSTRUCTION: ASSOCIATIONS
American Subcontractors Association of Michigan
Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.
Builders Exchange of Grand Rapids
West Michigan Mechanical Contractors Association

CONSTRUCTION: ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS
Buist Electric Incorporated
Feyen-Zylstra
Van Haren Electric Inc.
Windemuller

CONSTRUCTION: ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERING & CONSULTING
ATC Group Services LLC
Driesenga & Associates, Inc.
Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber, Inc.
Fleis & VandenBrink Engineering, Inc.
GMB Architecture+Engineering
Hoffman Consultants LLC
Integrated Architecture
Materials Testing Consultants, Inc.
Moore & Bruggink, Inc.
Prein & Newhof Inc.
Progressive AE
TowerPinkster

CONSTRUCTION: GENERAL CONTRACTORS
Dan Vos Construction Co.
Elzinga & Volkers, Inc.
Erhardt Construction
Owen-Ames-Kimball Co.
Pioneer Construction
Rockford Construction Company, Inc.
The Christman Company
Triangle Associates, Inc.
Wolverine Building Group

CONSTRUCTION: MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS
Allied Mechanical Services
Andy J. Egan Company, Inc.
Pleune Service Company
Quality Air Heating & Cooling
River City Mechanical
Total Fire Protection
Van Dyken Mechanical, Inc.

FINANCIAL AND CAPITAL SERVICES
Bank of America
Blackford Capital
JPMorgan Chase & CO
Chemical Bank
Citizens Bank
Comerica Bank
Fifth Third Bank – Michigan
First National Bank of Michigan
Huntington Bank
Lake Michigan Credit Union
Macatawa Bank
Mercantile Bank of Michigan
Old National Bank
PNC Financial Services Group
The Wirt-Rivette Group
United Bank of Michigan
Wells Fargo
West Michigan Community Bank

FOOD PROCESSING
Cole’s Quality Foods, Inc.
Founders Brewing Co.
Gordon Food Service
Hudsonville Ice Cream
Litehouse, Inc.
Michigan Turkey Producers
Roskam Baking Co.

FOUNTAIN: FOUNDATIONS
Frey Foundation
The Fremont Area Community Foundation
Whitescaps Community Foundation

GOVERNMENT: CITIES
City of Cedar Springs
City of East Grand Rapids
City of Grand Rapids
City of Grandville
City of Kentwood
City of Lowell
City of Rockford
City of Walker
City of Wyoming

GOVERNMENT: COUNTIES
Kent County

GOVERNMENT: TOWNSHIPS
Ada Township
Algoma Township
Alpine Township
Caledonia Township
Cannon Township
Cascade Charter Township
Gaines Charter Township
Grand Rapids Charter Township
Lowell Charter Township
Nelson Township
Plainfield Township

EDUCATION
Aquinas College
Calvin College
Cornerstone University
Davenport University
Ferris State University
Grand Rapids Community College
Grand Valley State University
Michigan State University
Western Michigan University

ENERGY
AMRA Energy
Crystal Flash

RIGHT PLACE INVESTORS
advancing the west michigan economy / rightplace.org
HEALTH SERVICES/HOSPITALS
Bowie Dental
Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital
Mercy Health Saint Mary’s
Metro Health Hospital
MVP Sports Clubs
Spectrum Health

INDIVIDUALS
Jeff & Georgia Gietzen
Brian Harris, Owner, BTHarris Consulting LLC
Michael & Susan Jandernoa

INFRASTRUCTURE & ICT SERVICES
AT&T Michigan
Consumers Energy
DTE Energy
Gerald R. Ford International Airport
ITC Holdings
Plummer’s Environmental Services
US Signal Company, LLC
Windstream

INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT
Highland Ridge Capital
Milestone Wealth Management
RDV Corporation
The Windquest Group
Westwater Group

LAW FIRMS
Barnes & Thornburg LLP
Dickinson Wright PLLC
ImLaw, PC
Kotz Sangster Wysocki, PC.
Law Weathers
Miller Canfield
Miller Johnson
Mitchell Intellectual Property Law, PLLC
Rhoades McKee
Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge
Varnum
Warner Norcross & Judd LLP

LOGISTICS AND DISTRIBUTION
Classic Transportation & Warehousing
Nichols
Notions Marketing Corporation

MANUFACTURING
ADAC Automotive
Airo Steel
Alternative Engineering
American Seating
Amway
ATEK Medical Manufacturing
Autocam Medical
Avasure
Betz Industries
BISSELL, Inc.
Burke E. Porter Machinery Co.
Byrne Electrical Specialists
Cascade Die Casting Group Inc.
Cascade Engineering Inc.
D + M Metal Products
Dematic Corp.
DeWys Manufacturing
Eclipse Tool & Die, Inc.
Flexco
GE Aviation
Gentex Corporation
Gill Industries, Inc.
Grand Rapids Controls LTD
H & L Advantage
Haviland Enterprises, Inc.
Herman Miller, Inc.
Irwin Seating Company
Kent Design & Manufacturing
Kent Manufacturing Company
Knape & Vogt
Lacks Enterprises
Leggett & Platt
Master Finish Company
Medbio, Inc.
Michigan Industrial Tools
Nucraft Furniture Co.
Louis Padnos Iron & Metal Company
Paragon Die & Engineering Co.
Perrigo
Plasan Carbon Composites
Rainier LLC
Rapid-Line, Inc.
RoMan Manufacturing, Inc.
Root Lowell Manufacturing
Spectrum Industries
Steelcase Inc.
Terryberry Company
The Armada Group
Thierica, Inc.
Universal Forest Products, Inc.
vistore systems, inc.
Viking Group
Wolverine Coil Spring Co.
Wolverine World Wide, Inc.
Woodward
X-Rite

MEDIA
MLive Media Group
MiBiz

REAL ESTATE: ASSOCIATIONS
Commercial Alliance of REALTORS
Grand Rapids Association of REALTORS

REAL ESTATE: INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL/PROPERTY MANAGERS
Colliers International
Cushman & Wakefield | Signature Associates
CWD Real Estate
Demco/Lormax Stern Industrial Holdings
Eenhoorn, LLC
Ellis Parking Company Inc.
First Companies
Franklin Partners
NAI Wisinski of West Michigan
Sibsco, LLC

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Franklin Partners
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Sibsco, LLC

RETAIL
Fox Motors
Home Acres Building Supply Co.
Meijer Inc.
Meritage Hospitality Group
The Sharpe Collection
SpartanNash
Wolverine Power Systems

RISK MANAGEMENT/INSURANCE
Berends Hendricks Stuit
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
Farmers Insurance Group
Hylant
Lighthouse Insurance Group, Inc.
Marsh

TALENT RESOURCES
Express Employment Professionals
Fettig
Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand Rapids
Hope Network West Michigan
HR Collaborative
Manpower Inc.
West Michigan Technical

TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS
Atomic Object
Iserv Corporation
Mighty in the Midwest
The KR Group, Inc.
Town & Country Group

UNIONS
Operating Engineers Local #324
West Michigan Plumbers, Fitters & Service Trades, Local #174