



2019

# ALBION

STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATIONS  
PLAN





"THE SINGLE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN COMMUNICATION IS THE ILLUSION THAT IT HAS TAKEN PLACE."

- GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

As part of Project Rising Tide, the City of Albion has identified the need for a Strategic Communications Plan to assist in the implementation of the city's Branding, Marketing and Strategic Plans, positioning the City to be proactive and become the trusted source for local information. The Strategic Communications Plan is also a component of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Community certification. The following will detail the steps to improve communications with current and potential residents and business owners, and share the story of Albion with visitors and media alike. To focus their efforts, the city created the Brand, Vision, and Mission statements below to better articulate their position among competing communities.

## BRAND STATEMENT

As part of the recent Place Branding services Albion received through Project Rising Tide, a brand statement was developed to help convey the community's uniqueness. The tone of this brand statement is one of pride and to welcome new people and businesses to the community. This tone should be carried through as part of Albion's brand in its communications as well.

**Albion.**

**A river town, a trail town, a college town and, an arts town.**

**Albion is a place where things are made, crafted and shaped.**

**A place of true connection.**

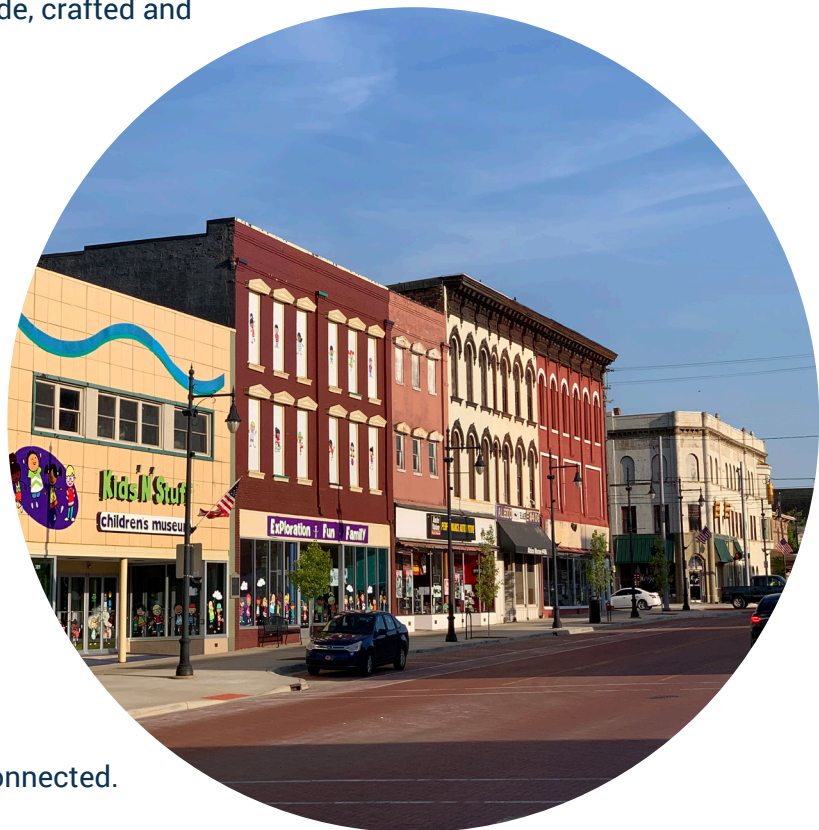
**A place with 21 bridges that span our river.**

**A place with 4,000,000 sq ft of parks.**

**A place where tee ball was invented and Mother's Day first celebrated.**

**A place with streets paved of bricks, eclectic shops and local businesses, neighborhoods lined with trees, and friendships made of gold.**

**We are Albion, and we are naturally connected.**



## **VISION STATEMENT**

The Vision Statement puts forth an aspirational goal for what Albion should be in the next ten years. It covers the desired appearance and functionality of the of the community.

Building a sustainable community requires diverse partnerships and collaboration, sound and thoughtful public policy, business and economic opportunity, stable residential neighborhoods, quality education institutions, diversity in arts, entertainment and recreational offerings, conservation and protection of the natural environment and access to services for all residents.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Mission Statement for Albion puts forth the Albion City government's role in helping make the Vision Statement a reality.

The City of Albion is responsible for creating an environment to improve and protect the quality of life for its residents, and a positive atmosphere for its businesses to thrive. It creates and maintains the organizational and physical infrastructure of the community to engage residents and businesses adjust to the ever-changing economic climate.

## **GOALS**

The goals of the Strategic Communications Plan should mirror the overall goals of the community. The City's 2017 Comprehensive Plan puts forth the following goals:

**Goal 1: Retain and attract jobs to Albion by supporting business growth, development and attraction**

**Goal 2: Deliver high quality municipal services that improve the quality of life in Albion**

**Goal 3: Achieve consistency between the existing zoning code and the City's long-term goals for housing, commercial, and industrial development – note: this goal has been accomplished**

**Goal 4: Strengthen and beautify Albion's neighborhoods**

**Goal 5: Stabilize the downtown, enhance its historic character, and support its economic growth**

**Goal 6: Support and strengthen a Pre-K education system for the community**

**Goal 7: Build a capacity and a network of organizations and services to address poverty and meet the needs of residents who cannot afford basic services**

**Goal 8: Improve Albion's transportation network to accommodate and promote various modes, including walking, biking, automobiles, passenger rail and public transportation**

**Goal 9: Focus planning and resources to enhance and transform the city's major corridors**

**Goal 10: Forge local, regional and global collaborations that support the City of Albion – its people, its needs and its opportunities**

**Goal 11: Support networks and systems that promote healthy living**

## STAKEHOLDERS + TARGET AUDIENCES

The stakeholders and target audiences are groups of people you want to reach with an Albion message. Messaging to the audiences should vary based on the respective group. There may be overarching themes, but each message should be specific to each group.

### City of Albion Residents

### City of Albion Businesses

### Visitors / Tourists

### Potential new residents and businesses

### City Government

- City Council
- City Employees
- Albion Building Authority
- Albion Downtown Development Authority
- Albion Economic Development Corporation
- Albion Housing Commission
- Albion District Library Board of Trustees
- Albion Trust
- Board of Review
- Brownfield Redevelopment
- Building Board of Appeals
- Election Commission
- Local Officers Compensation Committee
- Planning Commission
- Public Safety Pension Board
- Sister City Committee
- Zoning Board of Appeals

### Education Institutions

- K-12
  - Marshall Public Schools
  - Starr Commonwealth
  - Jackson Area Career Center
- Higher Education
  - Albion College
  - Kellogg Community College
- Other Colleges / Universities in the area
  - Hillsdale College
  - Jackson College
  - Olivet College
  - Spring Arbor University
- Alumni

### Community Organizations

- Albion Chamber of Commerce
- Albion Community Foundation
- Albion Community Partners Committee
- Albion Farmers Market
- Albion FoodHub
- Albion Historical Society
- Albion Reinvestment Corporation

### Neighboring Municipalities

- Albion Township
- Village of Springport
- Village of Parma
- Village of Concord
- City of Marshall
- Village of Homer
- Spring Arbor Township

### Regional, State, and Federal Partners

- Calhoun County
- Governor's Office
- State of Michigan Departments
  - Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
  - Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
  - Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth
  - Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
  - Michigan Department of Natural Resources
  - Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Michigan Works
- State and Federal Legislators
- Travel Michigan (Pure Michigan)
- Calhoun County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Southwest Michigan First

**Albion Faith-based Organizations**

- Albion Church of the Nazarene
- Albion Faith Based Initiative
- Albion Free Methodist Church
- Albion Ministerial Association
- Bread of Life Ministries
- Caring Community Church
- Christ Apostolic Church
- Church Women United
- First Baptist Church
- First United Methodist Church
- Grace Free Will Baptist Church
- Grace Temple Church of God in Christ
- Holy Ascension Orthodox Church
- John 3:16 Ministries
- Leggett Chapel AME Zion Church
- Lewis Chapel AME Church
- Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church
- Mount Calvary Baptist Church
- New Hope Worship Center
- Redeemed Christian Center
- Salem United Church of Christ
- Sisters of Grace
- St. James' Episcopal Church
- St. John Parish
- St. Paul Lutheran Church

**Additional Albion Non-Profit Organizations**

- Albion Community Gardens
- Albion Innovation
- Albion Volunteer Service Organization
- Albion-Homer United Way
- Friends of the Mary Sheldon Ismon House

**News Media**

- Local Media
  - The Recorder
  - Battle Creek Enquirer
  - Albion E-News
  - WWMT CBS 3
  - WBCK AM 930
- Regional Media
  - MI Biz
  - Grand Rapids Business Journal
  - Grand Rapids Press
  - Kalamazoo Gazette
  - Jackson Citizen Patriot
  - WJIM AM 1240
  - WILS AM 1320
  - WOOD AM 1300
  - WJRW AM 1340
  - WOOD NBC 4
  - WZZM ABC 13
  - WXMI FOX 17
  - WILX NBC 10
  - WLNS CBS 6
- Statewide Media
  - Mlive.com
  - Crain's Detroit Business
  - Detroit Free Press
  - Detroit News
  - WJR-AM760
  - WWJ-AM 950
  - Michigan's Big Show
  - Michigan's Morning Show
  - Michigan Radio Network

## COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

Creating a clear and concise process will ensure successful and timely communications. This step requires the City to identify the appropriate staff, board members, or volunteers to assist in the communications process. Below are the draft recommendations of the process.

Position	Responsibilities	Target Audiences
City Manager	Internal & External Communications, Event Planning & Coordination, Strategic Communications Planning, Online Communications, Legislative Communications, Media Relations, Regulatory Communications, Community Outreach	Residents, City Council, Employees, State and Federal Partners, Community Groups, Regional Partners, Media Partners, Business Community
Clerk	Internal & External Communications, Event Planning & Coordination, Public Records, Community Outreach	Residents, City Council, Employees, Community Groups
Administrative Assistant	Internal & External Communications, Event Planning & Coordination, Online Communications, Community Outreach	Residents, City Council, Employees, Community Groups, Regional Partners, Media Partners, Business Community
Public Safety Director	Internal & External Communications, Media Relations, Community Outreach	Residents, City Council, Regional Partners, State and Federal Partners, Media Partners
Public Services Director	Internal & External Communications, Media Relations, Regulatory Communications, Community Outreach	Residents, State + Federal Partners, City Council, Business Community



## COMMUNICATION METHODS

Determining the best way to communicate with each of the target audiences is key. In order to have your message heard, you must get your message in front of your target audiences in a format they will see. Below are the recommended mediums and channels for each audience.

Target Audience	Medium	Channel	Frequency
Residents, Businesses, Community Groups, Partners	Personal Contact	In-Person Communication	As Needed
Residents, Businesses	Printed Materials	City Annual Report	Annually
Residents, Businesses	Printed Materials	Doorknob Hangers	As Needed
Residents, Businesses	Printed Materials	Utility Bill Insert	As Needed
Residents, Businesses, Community Groups, Partners, Visitors	Social Media	Facebook Page	Daily Posts
Residents, Businesses, Community Groups, Partners, Visitors	Social Media	Instagram Page	Daily Posts
Residents, Businesses, Community Groups, Partners, Visitors	Social Media	Twitter Account	Daily Tweets
Residents, Businesses, Community Groups, Partners, Visitors	Online Marketing	Web Posts	Daily/Weekly
Residents, Businesses, Community Groups, Partners, Visitors	Online Marketing	Email Blasts	As Needed
Residents, Businesses, Media	Media Relations	Press Releases	Monthly
Residents, Businesses, Media	Media Relations	Media Alert	As Needed
Residents, Businesses, Community Groups, Partners, Media	Media Relations	News Conferences	As Needed
Residents, Businesses, Community Groups, Partners, Visitors	Media Relations	TV/Radio Interviews	As Needed

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT

All residents of the City of Albion are key stakeholders and will continue to be involved in the future development of our community. The City of Albion will take a proactive approach to communications, and public engagement, making a concerted effort to ensure a variety of open and authentic two-way communication between residents and city entities.

## STATEMENT OF CIVILITY

The City of Albion is dedicated to fostering productive, spirited, and meaningful dialogue and debate in an environment of civil discourse that is respectful of all points of view. To guide this effort, respectful behavior expressed through verbal, text, visual or physical communications is essential in all communications including offices, meetings, workplaces, events, and social media.

The community is home to a diverse range of perspectives and opinions, and we uphold the importance of civil debate. We fully support the free exchange of authentic ideas and beliefs. Freedom of expression may create conflict and strong emotions, however all members of the community have the responsibility to behave in a manner that does not harm others nor create a hostile environment. Everyone is asked to do their part in creating a healthy and positive culture that truly values the authenticity of the community.



## STRATEGIC KEY MESSAGES

Messaging, and medium used to communicate, to target audiences should vary based on the respective group. Below are a few draft recommendations of key messages to the various audiences.

**GOAL: Retain and attract jobs to Albion by supporting business growth, development and attraction**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Business Community, Community Partners, Regional/State Partners, Media

The City will work to support the business community, with and through community partners such as the Albion Economic Development Corporation, in retention and attraction efforts to ensure a strong and viable local community.

**KEY MESSAGE:**

The City of Albion supports business and community partnerships, and is an effective team player in moving the community forward.

**GOAL: Deliver high quality municipal services that improve the quality of life in Albion**

The City will work to identify and determine the needs to offer top quality municipal services (public safety, community health, infrastructure, and more) to meet the satisfaction of all Albion residents.

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Albion Residents, Business Community, Community Partners

**KEY MESSAGE:**

The City of Albion values the residents, business community, and other community organizations, and wants to create the best atmosphere for achievement.

**GOAL: Achieve consistency between the existing zoning code and the City's long-term goals for housing, commercial, and industrial development**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Business Community, City, Residents

Note: this goal has been accomplished.

**KEY MESSAGE:**

The City is ready and willing to make necessary changes to improve the community.

## STRATEGIC KEY MESSAGES (CONT.)

### **GOAL: Strengthen and beautify Albion's neighborhoods**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Residents, Business Community, Community Partners

The City will work with community partners to develop the needed beautification strategy to eliminate blight, improve public safety and environmental health, strengthen residential areas and former industrial sites, as well as expand and diversify housing options.

#### **KEY MESSAGES:**

The City of Albion is committed to creating community pride and believes the appearance of the community is a major factor.

Pride is a considerable motivator in a community. With community pride it's amazing what can be accomplished.

### **GOAL: Stabilize downtown, enhance its historic character, and support its economic growth**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Albion Residents, Business Community, Community Partners

The City will work to support advancing downtown with and through city departments and community partners such as the Albion Downtown Development Authority, to grow the vibrant downtown.

#### **KEY MESSAGES:**

Downtown is the hub of the Albion community and a gathering place for all.

The City is a collaborative partner in supporting the continued development of downtown, helping it reach its true potential.

### **GOAL: Support and strengthen a Pre-K education system for the community**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Residents, Educational Partners, Community Partners, Media

The City will work to support, strengthen and promote area educational institutions.

#### **KEY MESSAGES:**

The City of Albion will continue to foster partnerships with area educational institutions.

Strong, authentic and engaged connections between the community and educational institutions will result in a positive outcome for Albion residents and business community alike.

## STRATEGIC KEY MESSAGES (CONT.)

**GOAL: Build a capacity and a network of organizations and services to address poverty and meet the needs of residents who cannot afford basic services**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Residents, Community Partners, Regional/State Partners, Media

The City of Albion will support the community needs assessment and assets mapping project to identify and elevate any gaps.

**KEY MESSAGES:**

The City is committed to the well-being of all residents and community alike.

We value the residents of our community. All residents matter and the City is committed to work to see everyone succeed.

**GOAL: Improve Albion's transportation network to accommodate and promote various modes, including walking, biking, automobiles, passenger rail and public transportation**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Residents, Business Community, City, Community Partners, Media

The City of Albion will work with strategic partners to assist, improve movement through and within the community by all modes of transportation, including motorized and non-motorized.

**KEY MESSAGES:**

The City understands a walkable, easy to traverse community not only removes barriers to allow access to the community but also aids in creating a healthy environment.

**GOAL: Focus planning and resources to enhance and transform the city's major corridors**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** City, Residents, Business Community, Community Partners

The City will work with strategic partners to strengthen the gateways and corridors into Albion to ensure a positive first impression for all entering into the area.

**KEY MESSAGES:**

We want residents and businesses to take pride in the way the community looks, and have visitors notice the pride we share in the community.

Pride is a considerable motivator in a community. With community pride it's amazing what can be accomplished.

## STRATEGIC KEY MESSAGES (CONT.)

**GOAL: Forge local, regional and global collaborations that support the City of Albion -- its people, its needs and its opportunities**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** City, Regional/State/Federal Partners, Community Partners

The City will be a collaborative partner to further the success of the community, businesses, and residents alike.

**KEY MESSAGE:**

Residents of the City of Albion are important to us and we want to do the best we can to offer opportunities to and within our community.

**GOAL: Support networks and systems that promote healthy living**

**TARGET AUDIENCES:** Residents, Business Community, Community Partners

The residents are the future of Albion and the city is committed to supporting programs to encourage a healthy lifestyle.

**KEY MESSAGE:**

We value the community, residents and business owners alike, and want only the best for them.

# MATERIALS

The following identifies the most common media materials, including how and when to use these materials, to share information with the media. Templates for these materials are available.

## PRESS RELEASES

Write the press release as if writing the actual article about the topic at hand. Include as much of the 'who, what, where, when, and how' in the opening paragraph. A quote by the appropriate spokesperson, additional background information as necessary as well as a call to action on how or where to obtain additional information should also be included in the release.

### Timing / Tips

- The press release should be cut and pasted into the body of an email, not sent as an attachment. Let the journalists/new outlets know if you have photos available but do not attach them. It is best to use a file sharing system (We Transfer, DropBox, YouSendIt) and send a link as most outlets will require high resolution images (300 dpi @ 4x6).
- If sending a press release to a group of journalists, send it to yourself and bcc the journalists, or use an email service such as MailChimp to send to everyone at once without each email address being visible in the 'to' line. MailChimp is a free service that will help organize distribution lists including media and other external lists.
- Event press releases should be sent out 4-6 weeks prior to the event date. Use a media alert as a reminder as it gets closer to the event.
- It is best to send press releases out in the morning (after 9am), however if it is necessary to distribute in the afternoon do so prior to 4pm to give journalists enough time to review and take action if necessary.
- Press releases should not be distributed over the weekend.
- Avoid sending out a release the day before a holiday or long weekend, unless it is related to the holiday.
- Make sure to include contact information on the release, including the best way to get a hold of the contact should the media outlet have questions.



## MATERIALS (CONT.)

### MEDIA ALERTS

Media Alerts are a great communications tool with the media for announcements and/or upcoming events, serving as an invitation to an event such as a press conference, grand opening, check presentation, etc. The alert is a concise at-a-glance summary of the event.

#### Timing / Tips

- A media alert is usually sent out twice, once a few weeks prior to the event, and again a day or so before the event to serve as a reminder.
- The media alert should be cut and pasted into the body of the email, not sent as an attachment.

### MEDIA LISTS

To assist in sharing key messages with the media, media lists of local, regional and statewide media have been provided. The media list file includes many tabs, across the bottom, with lists of media who may be interested in hearing about projects and happenings in Albion. The tabs in the media list file include business writers, travel and outdoor writers, radio, television, and print.

Given that social media has become another way to tell your story, in addition to listing the media contacts on each of the tabs, links to Facebook profiles and Twitter handles, where applicable, have been included. As you grow your social media efforts make sure to 'like' and 'follow' these folks as many use these non-traditional media outlets as a source of gathering story ideas.

### Business Writers

These are the journalists writing about a variety of business topics in Central Michigan. On the 'contact topic' column it shows what types of stories each contact tends to be interested in. Also, included area business writers who cover statewide topics including economic development, as well as business contacts in the other major media markets across Michigan. The intent is not to send every release to every contact but rather to those who would be interested in receiving the information. For example, do not send a ribbon cutting announcement release to Crain's Detroit Business unless the ribbon cutting is a Detroit area-based company expanding and/or relocating to the Albion area.





## MATERIALS (CONT.)

### Travel / Outdoor Writers

The writers included in the travel and outdoor tab include many Michigan-based journalists who cover various aspects of travel and outdoor recreation. Look to the 'contact topics' column to see what type of information the journalist is interested in, as well as the 'outlet topics' to see what the outlet covers.

### Radio

The radio tab includes many of the area radio stations who have a news director covering local news on a daily basis. Share local news updates with these contacts. Also included are a few radio stations and programs covering statewide business. Use these contacts to share major announcements and/or milestone anniversaries.

### Television

The television tab includes television stations throughout the state. It is likely you will share more information with the local stations and less with the Metro Detroit stations. In addition, this complete list is a great resource for social media. These are the media outlets to follow.

### Daily Newspapers

This tab includes the list of daily newspapers throughout the state. This was included more as a resource, along with an opportunity to follow many of these media outlets on social media rather than proactively sharing story idea or press releases.

*Note: There will be times where media will ask to be removed from your distribution. Do not take offense to this. Acknowledge the message has been received, remove the contact from your media list and move on. This does happen when a journalist changes what they write about or if they feel the information received is not timely or on topic.*



## MATERIALS (CONT.)

### SOCIAL MEDIA

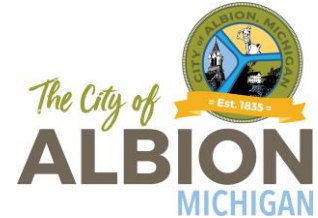
Social media brings together the latest news and trends, along with offering a means to network. Social media can, and should, be used as a communications tool with both internal and external audiences. Use social media outlets to share the stories of what is happening in Albion with current and potential residents, business owners, visitors, and media alike. Below are best practices for social media use.

#### General Social Media Tips

- Treat the page as an ongoing conversation. The most successful Facebook pages rely on 2-way interaction with their fans.
- Pay attention to what works and what doesn't, adjust content and frequency based on results. Keep a spreadsheet with the following info to see what kind of content, posting schedule generates responses:
  - Date
  - Time
  - Post Content (actual text of the post, and indicate if a photo/link/video was included)
  - Comments
  - Likes
  - Feedback Sentiment (mostly positive comments, any complaints, etc)
- Be cognizant of spelling and grammar. While occasional typos are common and forgiven easily, consistently poor writing skills can have a detrimental effect on brand perception.
- Manage your posts efficiently. If there are 3 posts planned for the week, DO NOT post them one after another all on the same day. It is not an acceptable practice and not appreciated by fans/followers.
- Be selective of the photos posted. 10 photos that capture the essence of the event are better than 100 that cover every little thing. Fans won't typically have the patience to pour through large photo albums.
- Additional resources including Social Media Informational Guides for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Blogging and more can be found online in the MEDC / Pure Michigan Social Media Learning Library ([michigan.org/industry/social-media-learning-library](http://michigan.org/industry/social-media-learning-library)).



## **APPENDICES**



For Immediate Release  
{Date}

Contact: {Name}  
{Telephone / email}

**{PRESS RELEASE TITLE – attention grabbing}**  
*{Subtitle – specific info}*

Albion, MI – {Intro paragraph that is catchy, but also covers enough of the who, what, where when, how that is being conveyed in the release. If a reporter reads only this first paragraph, they will understand top level what the release is about.}

“Quote from organization contact and/or expert issuing the release,” commented {name, title, company / organization.} “If there is more to add to the quote, add it here.”

{Additional information on ‘the what’ of the release.}

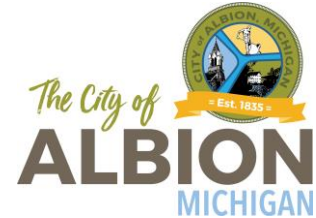
{Any additional background information that is needed to tell the story.}

{Always close the release with how a journalist can find additional information, including organization / event website and telephone number.}

###

*Nestled along the forks of the Kalamazoo River in south central Michigan is a place where things are made, crafted and shaped. Where 21 bridges span the river. With streets paved of bricks, eclectic shops and local businesses, neighborhoods lined with trees, and friendships made of gold. This is Albion.*

**Editor’s Note:** {if images are available make sure to note that here.}



## MEDIA ALERT / PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

**{MEDIA ALERT TITLE – catchy/attention grabbing}**  
*{Subtitle – gives more specific info about the content of the alert}*

**WHO/WHAT:** {A brief paragraph description of what is happening and why it is important for the media to be on-site and cover the event. Include details just in case the media is not available to attend but still wants to run a story about the happenings.}

**WHERE:** {Name of Destination / Where does this story take place. This is good to include for television stations who might want to come out with a crew to get video footage}  
{Address}

**WHEN:** {Day, Month, Day, Year}  
{Time}

**CONTACT:** {Name}  
{Title}  
{Phone / Email}

-30-

*Nestled along the forks of the Kalamazoo River in south central Michigan is a place where things are made, crafted and shaped. Where 21 bridges span the river. With streets paved of bricks, eclectic shops and local businesses, neighborhoods lined with trees, and friendships made of gold. This is Albion.*



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