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Bay Future, Inc. Kicks off "The Future is Now" Capital Campaign, Announces Investment Success

BAY CITY, Mich. – [Bay Future, Inc.](#) (BFI), the county wide economic development organization responsible for business retention, expansion, and attraction for Bay County, MI, has also been attracting additional investors in its organization. "The Future is Now" Capital Campaign was kicked-off, to great success, at the [DoubleTree Hotel – Bay City Riverfront](#) in beautiful [Downtown Bay City](#), April 6, 2016.

In January, 2015, Mark D. Litten was selected as BFI's new President & CEO. With over 25 years of acclaimed economic development experience, he was tasked with developing and implementing a strategic economic development plan to retain and attract industry to Bay County.

In April, 2015, BFI conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (S.W.O.T) to determine where to best focus its efforts. This resulted in the foundation for what would become a multi-year strategic growth plan. A draft plan, which was the first plan since BFI's inception in 2004, was developed throughout the summer of 2015. Before moving forward BFI was determined to test the viability of the plan with stakeholders throughout Bay County.

BFI retained [Santiago Consulting Services, Inc.](#) to conduct a Feasibility Study to solicit input and feedback on the draft plan and assess funding potential for economic development in Bay County. Over 70 business and community leaders confidentially provided valuable input regarding the proposed plan.

The results of this process indicated there was support for a \$1.2 million, three-year plan (\$400,000 per year) with relevant and measurable goals. A Plan Refinement Committee was then convened to address stakeholder concerns. In November 2015, the revised plan was presented to BFI's Board of Directors and received unanimous approval.

To continue its successful economic development efforts, BFI and key community leaders have developed this three-year Strategic Action/Work plan. Although there are many strategies and action items, they all focus on reaching the following specific three-year Goals and Initiatives:

- ❖ Retain and expand the existing business base in greater Bay County.
- ❖ Establish and reinforce the image of Bay County as a "pro-growth" location within the Great Lakes Bay Region.
- ❖ Increase the inventory of "shovel-ready" sites/acres in Bay County and targeted available building space/square feet.
- ❖ Increase the interest (measured by contacts, visitations, etc.) amongst strategic targeted companies in Bay County.
- ❖ Improve all aspects of the support network for Bay County entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Establish an Opportunity Fund to be able to incentivize economic development projects in the County.

Now, with the plan tested, refined and approved, BFI has embarked upon *The Future Is Now* campaign, a bold three-year economic growth plan focused on these Tactics for Success:

- Retaining, Supporting and Expanding Existing Industries & Entrepreneurial Growth
- Global Business Attraction & Marketing
- Workforce Retention, Recruitment, and Development
- Delivering a High Quality, Results Driven Service System to Investors and Stakeholders (Communication & Collaboration)

The proposed \$1.2 million program has the following three-year goals:

- The creation of 600 new jobs in Bay County.
- An average wage of \$19.25 per hour creating new annual payroll totaling \$24,024,000 in Bay County.
- \$300 million of New Capital Investment in Bay County.

Tim Boutell, owner of [Firehouse Soft Car Wash](#)/Boutell Enterprises and Platinum Division Co-Chair, was one of many campaign supporters to speak at the event calling private business in the community to support Bay Future in its efforts.

“As a life-long resident of Bay County, I certainly have witnessed many changes here. The loss of our manufacturing base alone accounts for some significant reductions to every budget in the County, City, and Townships, over the years. Names like The Defoe Shipbuilding Company, Prestolite, Bay Refining, Wolverine Knitting Mills, are just a sample of some of the names I remember... The truth is that a community that is not growing is dying. A community that is not investing in its future, is failing that future generation,” he said.

Guest Speaker, [Congressman Dan Kildee](#) (MI-05) spoke to the importance of continued economic development efforts in Bay County, along with the region.

“The Great Lakes Bay Region is an important part of our state that is uniquely positioned to attract new investments and new jobs. Having a multi-year economic development plan for growth is critical to expanding business and hiring new workers. Bay County is open for business, and this new initiative will keep our region competitive in the twenty-first century for good-paying jobs,” Congressman Kildee said as part of his remarks.

Tim Rokosz, Bay Future, Inc. Board Chair, and Controller for [Michigan Sugar Company](#) said, “As Bay County’s largest manufacturer, growth is important to us at Michigan Sugar, in more ways than one. We feel very strongly about helping to lead economic growth efforts alongside Bay Future, Inc. for continued economic vitality in our community. (Michigan Sugar) has been here for more than 100 years and we plan to be here for the next 100 years. This plan and this campaign is a step in making that statement a reality.”

Mark Litten thanked the Campaign Leadership Committee and those in attendance, Wednesday night, for getting behind the strategic action plan.

“We would be unable to implement this plan without the public and the private sector’s generous support. We aim to work with community leaders on the successful implementation of this plan over the next three years. The staff and board of BFI are committed to seeing Bay County grow its business base, job base, and wage base, with living wage opportunities for our residents,” he said.

Bay Future, Inc.'s Board of Directors, in partnership with area business and community leaders, will guide strategic initiatives. The Board of Directors will remain accountable for program implementation, management oversight and disbursement of funds.

For additional information on *The Future is Now* Campaign please visit: www.BayFuture.com.

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Established in 2004, Bay Future, Inc. is a public-private alliance of government, business and other organizations that support economic growth in Bay County and the Great Lakes Bay Region. Bay Future, Inc. is dedicated to facilitating economic development strategies that promote and secure opportunities for business retention, growth, and the attraction of new industries that create quality jobs for community residents.