



SPARTA

CHAMBER • DDA • EVENTS

2018 Annual Report

Festivals, Events, and Activities of the Chamber.DDA.Events Office
Submitted by Elizabeth Morse, Chamber/DDA Chamber Director
Submitted December 31, 2018

2018 SUMMARY



Visitors from
36 States &
9 Countries



Engagement with
18,000
Followers on Social
Media

50,000 +
Guests in
Attendance at
Community Events

Over
75,000
Twinkle Lights for
Christmas

1,500
Volunteer
Hours

\$350K +
Downtown
Investments



1000 +
Princesses &
Superheroes in
Rogers Park

Partnered with
21 non-profit
organizations

Introduction

The Chamber, DDA, and Events had a major reorganization in 2018 which separated the operations of the events and festivals into a separate 501c3 Non-Profit Organization. The separation was for tax write off purposes for donations to the entity. Additionally, the reorganization allowed boards to reprioritize and focus on their individual missions and see the overlap of each mission toward the overall benefit of Sparta – the three organizations that make up the department consist of the Sparta Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Development Authority, and the new Events nonprofit. Each organization has two board members from the other groups appointed to the board for synergy and to keep the missions working toward the overall focus of making a better Sparta.

Mission of the Sparta Chamber of Commerce:

Promoting Local Business Development Through Community Interaction

The Mission of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) as established by Public Act 197 of 1975 is:

- to correct and prevent deterioration in the established DDA district;
 - to encourage historic preservation;
 - to acquire and dispose of interests in real and personal property;
 - to create and implement development plans in the district;
- And to promote the economic growth of the district.

The Mission of the Events Non-Profit 501c3 board (Sparta Community Works):

Sparta Community Works is a non-profit corporation that exists to support and advance the community of the Village of Sparta, Michigan, through community engagement, event hosting, and other fundraising, dedicated to the creation and support of a positive community feel, appearance, and impression, by lessening the burdens of government, building and or maintaining public buildings, monuments, and works, and otherwise combating community deterioration in and around the Village of Sparta.

The operations of the Chamber.DDA.Events department moved from the Village Office to the newly renovated 194 E. Division DeLange Harness Shop office in July 2018.

The DeLange Harness Shop

Through the effort of several donations of products, services, and labor to the project, the interior of the 194 E. Division St. Building called the DeLange Harness Shop, was completed in early July 2018. The new operations opened the doors during the height of event season, but the impact of having front doors open on main street was immediate as it became an information hub during the events. The exterior improvements to the office building was approved at the regular April 2018 DDA meeting to meet the historical appearance of the building from the late 1800's and include a history of the building on the exterior. An interior plaque will list the donations given to the construction and remodel of the building once the exterior construction is complete so we can include all possible donors on the interior donation plaque anticipated in mid 2019.

Building Operations

In 2018, staff worked to create the new building operations policy and procedures, noting that this office will run more like other economic development offices and has reviewed those types of structures to implement and include in our plan. The plan was adopted in October 2018 and included items such as personal cell phone use, hours to work, earned time off, and other relevant items in an office which operates as a downtown economic development driver, events coordination location, and Chamber member marketing office.



Harvest Moon, 1996

Reorganization 501c3 Events: Sparta Community Works

The “Events” organization operated financially independently of the Sparta Chamber in 2018, and worked through the process of creating the 501c3 to become a separate operating Nonprofit Organization. The operation officially started January 1, 2019 with a separate Events board that consists of 2 DDA appointed members, 2 Chamber appointed board members, and 2 festival representatives which currently include Town & Country Days and Apple Fest, and one member of the community at large. The entity board members operate and oversee the activities of the events held through the department, and is able to keep the mission and goals of each event in check with the mission of the DDA and the Chamber. Currently, the DDA pays the salary of the Events Coordinator and the DDA receives a stipend from the Events Nonprofit for time spent on Events by the staff person. The Events Nonprofit does not hire its own staff.

Capital Improvement

In 2018, the Capital Improvement purchases included technology purchases for the DeLange Harness Shop office including new computer and printer purchases. The 2019 proposed and approved Capital Improvements include a UTV purchase for irrigation/fertilization and for use during events. This purchase is recommended to be made in 2019 thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Sparta Community Foundation. An additional 2019 planned capital purchase is for the installation of a cross the road banner system for banners, similar to the one that was in place prior to 2013. That pole system was removed during the Alley Project between Rogers Hardware and Dollar General but not replaced. It is most likely going to be replaced in that location.

Parklet

In 2018 the DDA installed a new “Parklet” that took planned improvement concepts from the 2015 Arches Master Plan and integrated the placemaking concept of a pop up park that overlooks Nash Creek along the Balyeat Pedestrian Bridge. The Parklet was a trial to activate the space, and the benefit of the temporary pop up was to evaluate how the community and visitors would utilize the space without the upfront permanent infrastructure expense that was estimated at \$384,000 and included a boardwalk over the creek. By creating the space as a temporary pop up through the months of June, July, August, and September, the DDA invested less than \$5,000 to get a better understanding of how people choose to utilize the space. The parklet amenities were



simple and included bistro lighting, outdoor seating, shade umbrellas, a painted floor area in the parking lot to define the space. The budget also included funds to repaint the gazebo. We were able to add the year round bistro lighting to the bridge, too, which added a new vibrant dynamic to the pedestrian bridge. The “trial” pop up parklet was met with good usage, virtually no theft or vandalism, and a general desire to see more expanded improvements to the area in 2019. The 2019 plans include higher quality seating, additional greenscape/flowers, and scheduled entertainment in the space throughout the summer that has been named, “Bash on the Nash” and will begin May 31.

Communication Survey to Chamber Members

After an online survey response from Sparta Chamber members, 99% of the responders preferred communication to them via email instead of phone, in person, or other avenues. We will continue to do the bulk of our communication through email but continue other communication methods for those who prefer other methods.

SPARTA FARM & ARTISAN MARKET (Events)

The SFAM operated from June 6th – August 22nd in the area of the Civic Center parking lot on the east side of Rogers Park. The SFAM did not participate in state programs such as SNAP, Double Up Food Bucks, WIC or other. To the best of our knowledge we did not have any vendors that chose to accept those payments participating in the 2018 season.

During the 2018 season the market was able to draw new artisan food vendors to the area but struggled capturing produce vendors. The produce vendors who chose to participate were irregular in attendance and often had limited supply as most were multi market vendors who either sold at earlier markets in the same day or had limited availability of local in season produce in stock. The vendors with the larger amount available were produce brokers who bought to resell at the SFAM. The non-produce food vendors were able to bring a good amount of “snackable” stock and overall had the highest percentage of sales.

The 2018 market season had some significant challenges and obstacles. Most of these issues were the result of the relocation, miscommunication, and updates within the new shared space. The friction of the use and special use of the space caused serious concerns for the vendors and their view of the market a whole. While the vendor feedback of Sparta, the concerts, and staff were favorable, the feedback that the functionality of the new event location and conflicts during the set up and operations of the market was not a positive experience for the vendors. Most of the vendors did not choose to participate weekly and most did not complete the season.

Proposed changes for the 2019 season include allowing the market to pause for a season which will allow all parties operating within the shared space the time to reassess the needs of the community during that Wednesday night period. The venue or snack food style vendors will certainly be welcomed back for the concert season and other special events. If there is a request from committed produce vendors to reset a market in 2019, we will certainly look for ways to fit them in the space. Currently the only vendor who has requested to return is Mike’s Concession (the kettle corn and lemonade seller).

2018 Rev. \$2,725	2017 Rev. \$2995	2016 Rev. \$5,120	2015 Rev.: \$ 6,128
2018 Exp. \$2,140	2017 Exp. \$2076	2016 Exp. \$ 3,323	2015 Exp. \$ 5,262

**Moved Farmers Market in 2018 to the new location which allowed for the same staff person to run the farmers market and the concert from the same position; removed the expenses coordinated with the SNAP benefits (bridge card) and staff time associated with that in 2017*

CONCERTS IN ROGERS PARK (EVENTS)

The 2018 Summer Concert series featured ten performances at the bandshell located in Rogers Park. The season opened with The Crane Wives, a Michigan band with a large following. The attendees for that concert came from many areas outside of Sparta and that attendee reach continued through the first three concerts with Delilah DeWylde and Princess & Superhero Night.

We were able to track attendees geographically for the Superhero & Princess Night which showed that the majority of the attendees were traveling from a greater than 10 miles to the venue area. The percentage was roughly 80% outside of the 49345-zip code. This information was consistent with other events that collected location data through the year.



To supplement the concerts, dinners were hosted either within the Civic Center or outside. When a meal was not provided by a group or organization, a food vendor was brought in. While we would like to

encourage attendees to eat locally the convenience of having food **on site** was noted as very favorable by most of the concert goers and included requests for information in regards to the food options for after the concerts ended.



The largest visual change was to set up tables and umbrellas in the area on the edge of the parking lot overlooking the concert and park area. This helped to create an atmosphere of vibrancy. Having color at eye level with people mingling encourages attendees to linger while feeling invited into an intimate concert space. This also allowed for conversation between staff and attendees about what they enjoyed or would like to see more of in the future. The overall message was that themed or trendy food and events within that space and timeline were a draw. People enjoyed a festival environment in a limited

period.

2019 proposed growth includes continuation of the outdoor venue and small festival event feel by reducing the season by one date to allow for a larger budget on another band with a larger following and/or host a themed adult night such as an 80's or 90's night with an appropriate cover band. Continuation of dinners and cooperation with food trucks and or market vendors who provide "snack food" type items. Close the concert season with a local night mix to support the performers who call the Sparta area home.

REV: 2018 \$6000 2017: \$3,240 2016 \$6,168 2015 \$5930 2014 \$6100
EXP: 2018 \$7,621 2017: \$4,400 2016 \$6,075 2015 \$5497 2014 \$6,735

*DDA last cash contribution to concerts was in 2014; 2018 first year DDA did not contribute pay of DPW part time person for Concert onsite staff

HARRY POTTER IN THE PARK FESTIVAL (Events)

Potter in the Park 2018 once again took place in Rogers Park with the addition of a food truck rally located in the Choice One Bank parking lot. Weather was cooperative. Between the event in the park and the rally, Potter in the Park drew a crowd of approximately 5000 attendees during that Saturday. The crowd has consistently grown in both attendance and reach outside of the Sparta area. GVSU participated with Quidditch and was tremendously popular with many of the kids being repeat players and recognizing the college students. Flowerland played a strong role in support and participation as well as set up and tear down. The event has a growing group of garden enthusiasts who now come for the HERBOLOGY activities alone. Non-profit relationships grew and were vital to the volunteer efforts as an exchange of services. Now Playing for Kids a non-profit that services at risk kids volunteered during the event in exchange for fundraising efforts. . The marketing for this event was done primarily through social media which worked for the previous years but will need to expand into other areas going forward.



Proposed additions for 2019 include seeking additional revenue streams, increasing in kind partnerships and financial contributions with local businesses, working collaboratively with more non-profits in exchange for

volunteers. Without additional financial and labor support it will be challenging to maintain strong growth and steady ticket sales. With concerns in regards to Warner Brothers copyright issues the name has been changed to Potter in the Park's Spellbound Festival.

2018 REV 40,004
EXP 19,499

MOVIES IN THE PARK (EVENTS)

In 2018 the Sparta Events Department hosted two movies, Grease during Sparta Town and Country Days and The Secret Life of Pets in August. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate with either evening. A registration for a prize drawing was run for Grease night with the largest majority of registrants living greater than 10 miles from downtown Sparta. The evening consisted of prizes, a costume contest, and the movie. The winner of the contest was from east of Greenville. Although the weather did not cooperate for that night approximately 200 people were in attendance with the majority not from the Sparta area. The Secret Life of Pets was moved indoors due to heavy rain. People were allowed to bring their pets on a leash and that was enjoyed however the weather certainly played a role in the lower turnout.

Feedback to movies has been moderate with most requests being for adult themed movies due to the late start time. Grease night did draw a predominately adult crowd and while it is not known if the pet night would have had more children, people with pets and without kids came out because it was billed as a pet friendly event.

The 2019 proposed movie night will feature an adult orientated movie outdoors likely in August prior to the start of school. The events department will look for alternative ways to meet the needs of kids and pet owners in other areas.

2 movies	1 movie	2 movies	4 movies	2 movies
2018 Rev. \$500	2017 Rev. \$0	2016 Rev. \$0	2015 Rev. \$0	2014 Rev. \$0
2018 Exp. \$1400	2017 Exp. \$900	2016 Exp. \$2000	2015 Exp. \$4792	2014 Exp. \$1288

BLOCK PARTY (Previously known as THURSDAY STREET FEST (EVENTS))

The 2018 Thursday Street Fest was successfully absorbed into the 2018 Sparta Town and Country Days Thursday Farm Night. Although the night had a few logistical issues the overall attendance was exceptional with the majority of the attendees expressing positive feedback. Most notably people expressed interest in seeing more opportunities for competitions and games of all age groups.

2019 proposed changes include a solid continuation of the Farm Night activities within the Town and Country Days footprint and creating a new street feel event in the parklet area which will allow us to have smaller events over a longer period of time while encouraging foot traffic and working within the logistical concern of having no road closures due to work to be done on Elm Street.

2018 REV \$1,800	2017 Rev. \$3890	2016 Rev. \$5,165	2015 Rev. \$1,500	2014 Rev. \$0
2018 EXP \$2,523	2017 Exp. \$4167	2016 Exp. \$4,668	2015 Exp. \$1,192	2014 Exp. \$2250

TOWN & COUNTRY DAYS (EVENTS)

Sparta's 2018 Town and Country Days celebration kicked off on July 18th with a concert and dinner hosted by the Sparta Lions Club in Rogers Park and the carnival opening. The event was fortunate to have two days of good weather, Wednesday and Thursday. Thursday evening's entertainment took place downtown with a street closure on Division to host Farm Night. Farm Night had positive overall feedback from most attendees with requests to expand activities to allow a greater age group participation. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate through the continuation of the festival. Friday started with activities for kids early in the day at Rogers Park and down Union Street. The 1K Fun Run hosted by Northern Physical Therapy was once again well attended as was the Kids Parade. By Friday evening it was apparent that the weather was not going to hold out and most outdoor events in the surrounding Sparta area were being cancelled. The committee chose to go on as scheduled and had good overall success at the entertainment tent. Grease was shown in Rogers Park with approximately 200 in attendance. A large percentage of those attendees were from greater than 10 miles outside of the Sparta area. Saturday was challenging. Several of the vendors for the Village Marketplace craft show were not in attendance because of the light rain. The parade however took place as planned as did the car show. The late afternoon Pulln' the Ridge truck and tractor pulls in Balyeat Field were cancelled due to heavy rain and thunderstorms. This resulted in very low beer tent attendance and a rescheduling of the planned fireworks. The fireworks were held Sunday evening with a good crowd coming to watch. Overall weather was a serious factor in the 2018 event which was disappointing for all involved.



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With proposed road construction in 2019 it has been decided that Sparta Town and Country Days will take place predominately on the north side of E. Division, in Rogers Park, and Balyeat Field with the exception of the parade which will take place once again on main street. Changing the footprint will allow for new opportunities of growth in smaller activities during the day as well as increasing the activities on Farm Night by hosting it in Balyeat Field.

2018 Rev. \$82,012	2017 Rev. \$119,000	2016 Rev. \$88,433	2015 Rev. \$84,196	2014 Rev. \$101,710	2013 Rev. \$107,449
2018 Exp. \$60,706	2017 Exp. \$100,000	2016 Exp. \$88,600	2015 Exp. \$87,827	2014 Exp. \$94,241	2013 Exp. \$118,537
2018 P/L \$21,305	2017 P/L \$19,000	2016 P/L (\$167)	2015 P/L (\$3,630)	2014 Profit \$7,469	2013 P/L (\$11,087)

CELTIC FESTIVAL

The Celtic Fest created their own 501c3 and has moved away from under the Chamber. The festival was not fundraised through the DDA/Chamber event offices in 2018.

MICHIGAN APPLE FEST (Events)

Michigan Apple Fest 2018 was celebrated on September 22nd in the heart of downtown Sparta. With a focused plan of celebrating the health and wellness attributes of the apple the event was slated originally to create an orchard feel in Rogers Park and hosting a trail run through the ridge area to kick off the day. The decision to relocate the event was made after the completion of Sparta Town and Country Days upon the request of the downtown businesses to get closer to the footprint of the festivities.

The morning of the event kicked off as planned with a trail run at Fruit Ridge Hay Rides. The run overall was successful however the sponsorship dollars came in shorter than expected. This was simply due to a shortage of dedicated staff time because of many unknowns that occurred after the original planning took place. The run itself was very well received and people were thrilled to have an unusual course and receive both a medal and a shirt that had a higher end marathon feel. As all of the participants indicated, the shirts play a very important part in the decision making of why a race is chosen. The race was vital in that the physical activity was the key start to the health and wellness message throughout AF.



Mainstreet of downtown was filled with entertainment, vendors, businesses and most of all people. From the beginning to the end of the area there were opportunities to either participate in movement or to watch movement happen. On the west end of Division, a human foosball area stood to greet the attendees as they entered the event. Looking to the east a 35-foot rock wall stood waiting for climbers to adventure their way to the top. In the arches parking lot, a human circus performed two full and active shows. In the center of the area was the mainstage where competitions and seminars took place. In an open area street side, a badminton net and rackets were put out for walk up play. Encouraging movement was achieved and welcomed favorably. In between the movement there were tasting contests and a scarecrow build off. Food and music completed the day.



A key component in the event was the brand partnerships. 2018 provided many opportunities to work with businesses or groups to move towards a shared goal of brand awareness. An example of this came with the partnership of Flowerland as a support in the race management and through the use of the climbing wall from Camp Newaygo. Both of these partnerships allowed us to grow our reach beyond Sparta through their brand and allowed them to be seen in a new environment where they feel is growth potential for their organizations. While no monies were exchanged the dollar value of the time and staff that they

provided was a tremendous savings to the event. The rock wall alone was provided with only the request of having the Camp Newaygo logo on the race shirt and to allow a space within the event for a table with their promotional material. Approximately 185 climbers enjoyed the activity. Camp Newaygo spent the day with their 7-person staff attending to the crowd. The estimated value of the rock wall and staff was greater than \$3000.

2019 will build on the successes of 2018 with a discussion of relocating the race to have the finish line be at the event entrance, to seek out more brand partnerships, and to include opportunities to showcase what the apple also represents: Technology and business. By working with business members in the apple industry Michigan Apple Fest has potential to reach their future workforce through a fun environment by showing opportunities not only in farming but also other components that are important in bringing the apple from the farm to the consumer.

REV: 2018 \$16,110	2017 \$23,709	2016 \$13,693	2015 \$12,614	HOTR 2014 \$8,215
EXP: 2018 \$17,690	2017 \$16,316	2016 \$11,773	2015 \$13,096	HOTR 2014 \$7,889

SHOP SPARTA CHRISTMAS EVENT (EVENTS)

In 2018 the Shop Sparta Christmas Event on the Friday before thanksgiving coincided with the Buck Pole, and downtown Sparta was packed with people to enjoy both events. The Tree lighting event included the new addition of a movie outdoors in the parking lot, two new s'mores fire pits for warming, and a beautiful display of fireworks in Balyeat Field.

The DeLange Harness Shop hosted the Mistletoe Market that showcased and sold retail items of artists and vendors. The purpose of the Market was to do two things:

- 1) create a trial retail outlet in downtown Sparta as incubator space to test the market
- 2) to push the retail opportunities in one of the many vacant non-retail storefronts downtown



The Mistletoe Market had several positive outcomes, which included a decent amount of traffic shopping for Christmas considering the exterior of the building isn't finished and there isn't a sign on the building yet and hearing from visitors that the need for something like this has been apparent in Sparta and people were glad to see it coming to fruition. Onsite salaried staff split shifts to cover the retail hours, which made the Marketplace feasible, because if we had to "hire" a retail sales person, the Market would not have covered expenses. However, with the current staff we were able to showcase "Sparta" items that were well received including mugs, glasses, and ornaments.

Christmas downtown décor and lighting is budgeted and expended through the DDA, and event and special décor related expenses are managed through the Events budget. In 2018, we had more labor in hanging up the twinkle lights than anticipated for the DDA budget, but it is because of a requested "tight wrap" for the street trees which makes for less chance to get caught on by a semi driving under the lights. Next year, we will keep the "white" twinkle lights on through February as requested by the board.

2018 REV \$500	2017 Rev. \$2783	2016 Rev. \$1,880	2015 Rev. \$660	2014 Rev. \$300
2018 EXP \$5617	2017 Exp. \$4942	2016 Exp. \$6001	2015 Exp. \$5217	2014 Exp. \$2400

SPARTA TODAY NEWSPAPER (CHAMBER)

Chamber & Sparta Schools have partnered to send to entire Sparta School District by mail. The mailing cost is near \$2400 per edition, printing 5 editions per year. Sparta Schools pays to print the pages they use, and covers half of the mailing charges. This has been the primary communication tool from our department to the public

other than social media. The Chamber general fund has taken the burden of the expense of the publication and has dedicated its Integrity Business rebate (approximately \$2500 per year) to off set the General Fund expense.

2018 Rev. \$11634	2017 Rev. \$9,051	2016 Revenue \$10,734	2015 Revenue \$11,485
2018 Exp. \$12,225	2017 Exp. \$12,500	2016 Expense \$ 12,816	2015 Expense \$ 13,179

COLLABORATIVE MARKETING (EVENTS)

Our 2018 marketing plan consisted of over 35,000 printed I LOVE SUMMER IN SPARTA folded pamphlets, over 300 11x17” posters distributed, date reminder stickers, postcard reminders, I LOVE SUMMER IN SPARTA balloon handouts at events, handouts delivered and distributed through schools, and extensive social media presence that included growing the Instagram page, creating targeted Facebook posts, developing the Sparta TODAY Live Facebook presence, and regular website updates. Additionally, we printed over 500 T-shirts with sponsor names and handed them out at various events and to our sponsors.

2018 Rev. \$37,000	2017 Rev \$12,064	2016 Rev. \$0	2015 Revenue \$0
2018 Exp. \$14,700	2017 Exp \$12,913	2016 Exp. \$4,955	2015 Expense \$4,997

SPARTA DDA PROPERTY REINVESTMENT GRANTS

The DDA awarded one grant in 2018, to the following:
 81 N. State Street for \$10,000 for complete front exterior renovation and landscaping plan.
 The budget set for 2019 is \$10,000 for Reinvestment Grants.

ANNUAL COMMUNITY STREETScape/DÉCOR PLAN 2018

The 2018 spring did not go as planned with extreme cold leading to late winter and early spring heavy snows making the removal of the 2017 Christmas décor challenging. Recognizing the importance of keeping something in the curbside flower pots as a tool to



keep trash out of the pots, bright summer colors were used until we were able to plant with summer flowers. During the summer metal apples were made to use beginning in September through mid-November



when the holiday seasonal decorating begins. The apples are metal and will last for several years requiring only recoating of paint. Fall decorating moved into Halloween with a Monsters on Mainstreet Concrete Cauldron Competition. Halloween decorating grew in popularity with people requesting information on how to participate in the future. Christmas 2018 was the final year for the candy theme on main street. The Events department successfully partnered with the Rotary Club of Sparta and Kent City to create the light and blow up display in the Candy Cane Lane area. All decorations were removed prior to the end of 2018.

Plans for 2019 include continuing to encourage community involvement in the seasonal décor as a form of public art in the spring and the Halloween season. Summer will again have potted flowers through the downtown corridor with hanging baskets on the light poles. The apples will take center stage again during the harvest season. The downtown will usher in the holiday season with a Winter Wonderland theme.