

FOR RELEASE
January 29, 2024

MEDIA CONTACT
Mason Everett
Vice President, Marketing and Communications
269.553.9588
meverett@southwestmichiganfirst.com

Southwest Michigan First Grows Board of Directors to 75

The community and economic development organization's Board has become one of the largest of its kind in the state.

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – Southwest Michigan First today announced its [Board of Directors](#) has added 18 new members, bringing its influential governing body to 75. Comprised of accomplished business and community leaders from the seven-county region that defines southwest Michigan, the bolstered Board will accelerate the organization's work to grow the region's economy.

In 2023, Southwest Michigan First introduced a three-year action plan, Path to Regional Prosperity, designed to unite the region and advance its mission to increase economic prosperity for all in southwest Michigan. With the addition of high caliber leaders representing major employers from each of the region's seven counties, the Board puts southwest Michigan in a better position to be one of the most economically prosperous regions in the state.

"We're absolutely thrilled to welcome so many high-profile leaders to our Board of Directors. Their skills, expertise, and support will be invaluable as we work together to unite the region and advance our ambitious action plan," said Aaron Zeigler, Chairman of Southwest Michigan First and President of Zeigler Automotive Group.

As of January 2024, the Southwest Michigan First Board of Directors has added:

- Marlee D'Arco, CEO, Safety Services, Inc.
- Steve Carlisle, President, Wightman
- Jose Gomez, CEO, Edwards Garment
- Travis Grimsley, Vice President of Aircraft Services, Duncan Aviation
- Bob Hance, CEO, Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC)
- Brian Janssen, Regional Banking Market Manager, Huntington Bank
- Dean D. Kindler, M.D., CEO, Ascension Michigan Southwest
- Brian McDaniel, Senior Human Resources Manager, American Axle
- Mitch Moldovan, Partner, Kreis Enderle
- Mike Odar, CEO, Greenleaf Trust
- Chris Orlowski, General Manager, Burke Porter
- Tim Rayman, CEO, Greenleaf Hospitality Group
- Marjorie Simmons, CEO, Landscape Forms
- Rob Stachlewitz, Corporate VP, General Manager – Mattawan, Charles River
- Eric Stoll, VP of Commercial Services, Advia Credit Union
- Devon Voster, VP of Organization & Talent Center of Expertise, Whirlpool
- Matt Weishaar, Vice President, Sturgis Molded Products
- Carrie Yunker, Executive Vice President, Bell's Brewery

Southwest Michigan First's Path to Regional Prosperity is a multi-year roadmap for enhancing regional collaboration, driving economic growth and providing equitable opportunities for individuals, families,

and businesses in economic, community, and workforce development. All focus areas of the strategic action plan include an ongoing commitment to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion.

About Southwest Michigan First

Southwest Michigan First is an organization of privately funded economic development advisors who act as the catalyst for economic success in southwest Michigan. Founded in 1999 on the principle that the greatest force for change is a job, the organization works across all industries throughout the seven counties making up the southwest Michigan region.

#