

For immediate release:

Greater La Porte Chamber of Commerce and the Greater La Porte Economic Development Corporation (GLEDC) forge a new Alliance designed to grow La Porte's competitive advantage.

In an effort to build a high-functioning, multi-faceted economic development and business support center, the Greater La Porte Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, and the Greater La Porte Economic Development (GLEDC) Board of Directors agreed recently to combine expertise under one umbrella and form a new alliance.

The new alliance will continue to operate chamber of commerce and economic development functions independently with oversight from the two boards of directors, but will share staff, workspace, and overall vision so the organizations can be more closely aligned as they represent the business interests of the greater La Porte community.

"Over the last several years, we have listened closely to our business community, local government and citizens. Time and again we have heard the desire to have our services and professionals located in one, convenient place, under one roof," said Matthew Hagenow, GLEDC Board Chair. "By aligning the two organizations, we will be able to develop programs and services under a unified vision, which we believe will accelerate La Porte's widespread competitive advantage in attracting and retaining business," Hagenow said.

Jackie Dermody, Board Chair for the Chamber of Commerce, said the Chamber believes the organizations are perfectly poised to make an innovative change that will exceed member and investor expectations.

"The La Porte Community is on the verge of exciting developments. Our new Alliance will help to ensure that these two organizations continue to be leaders in this area. I have no doubt that this new Alliance will set a standard for service in this community," Dermody said.

Bert Cook, newly named Director of the Alliance, said now that the groups have agreed to align, the next step is to hold a series of strategic visioning workshops that will determine their shared vision, new name, and brand identity, which will ultimately be the forward-facing image of the community's economic and business services engine.

Cook expects the Alliance will provide focused, high-value services and programs to each organization's respective members and clients, with economic development professionals focused on business prospects and chamber professionals focused on creating the ideal environment for businesses to thrive.

The Alliance likely will create capacity for additional staff resources in key areas, so the organizations can inject necessary resources into programs like the Chamber's Workforce Development Task Force and GLEDC's prospect development initiatives.

"Essentially, we want to invigorate and improve what is working well and shed what isn't. The best way to do that is to rebuild our organizations in conjunction with each other," Cook said. "It is a tremendous opportunity. Our boards have entrusted us with the challenge of building an innovative center for economic prosperity. We are up for it, and cannot wait to get started!"

The "better together" concept regarding economic development and chamber organizations has gained popularity in recent years and dozens of such hybrid organizations have emerged across the nation over the last several years. Cook said the visioning group intends to pull from best practices, but ultimately will structure the new business center to be closely aligned with La Porte's unique and specific needs.

More information will be announced in the coming weeks, including a major staffing announcement at the upcoming State of the City Address on March 8.

For more information visit www.gledc.com or www.lpchamber.com.