



**ALPENA
DOWNTOWN**
Development Authority

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION

The Alpena Downtown Development Authority (DDA) cultivates economic vitality in Downtown Alpena by bringing people together to create a thriving community for businesses, residents, property owners and visitors.

VISION

Downtown Alpena: a year-round cultural destination in Northern Michigan, blending historic charm with authenticity and unique waterfront experiences.

DDA Board Members

Mike Mahler, Chairperson
Melissa Tolan-Halleck, Vice Chairperson
Todd Britton
Corey Canute
Loren Jackson
Brian Peterson
Rachel Smolinski
Matt Wojda
Ben Young
Andrea Yoxximer

DDA Staff

Anne Gentry, Executive Director
Savannah Peterson, Administrative Assistant
Mike Davis & Becky Eller, Seasonal Clean-Up Crew

12 NEW BUSINESSES

Opened brick-and-mortars throughout the downtown



\$29,500

DDA funds invested into business launches & expansions through the Activation Grant program

\$150,000

DDA funds invested into transformative facade projects

2025 AT A GLANCE

\$905,401

Total grants secured by the DDA for downtown projects

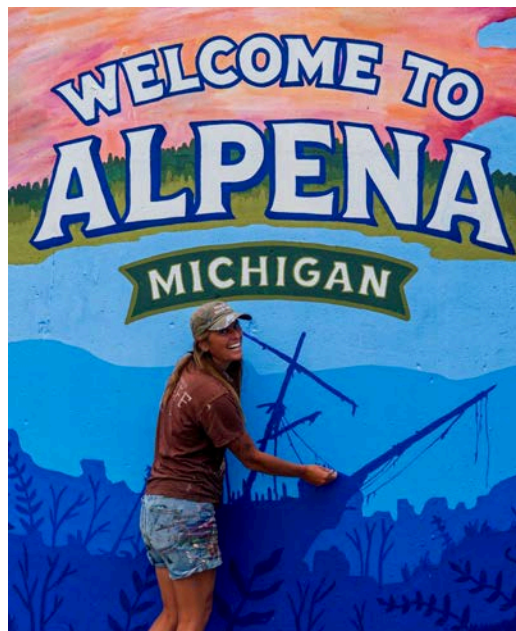


2 MURALS

Painted as part of Fresh Waves 2026 along the riverfront

19 FACADES

Under construction with private, DDA, and state funds



17 NEW BUSINESSES

Who joined downtown at the newly opened Water Street Commons

12 NEW BRICK-AND-MORTARS

- **Lulu's Sweet Shop** (125 W Chisholm St)
- **Riverside Ice Cream** (480 W Fletcher St)
- **Sanctuary Dogs** (480 W Fletcher St)
- **Marithyme** (109 N 2nd Ave)
- **Suncatchers** (106 N 2nd Ave)
- **Rewildings** (526 W Chisholm St)
- **Elevate Salon** (311 W Chisholm St)
- **Tastes of Thailand** (424 W Chisholm St)
- **Bay Athletic Club & Thunder Bay Community Health Services** (200 W Chisholm St)
- **Crepe Diem** (123 Lockwood St)
- **Water Street Commons** (123 Water St)-17 new businesses



NATIONAL REGISTER

As part of a Resilient Lakeshore Heritage Grant Program through the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Downtown Alpena was listed on the National Register of Historic Places!

The listing highlights **136 properties for their historical and architectural significance**, allowing them access incentive programs such as historic preservation tax credits.

FROM VACANT TO VIBRANT

Bay Athletic Club & Thunder Bay Community Health Services transformed a formerly vacant bank building (200 W Chisholm St) into a vibrant gym and office space, bringing daily activity to a key downtown corner.

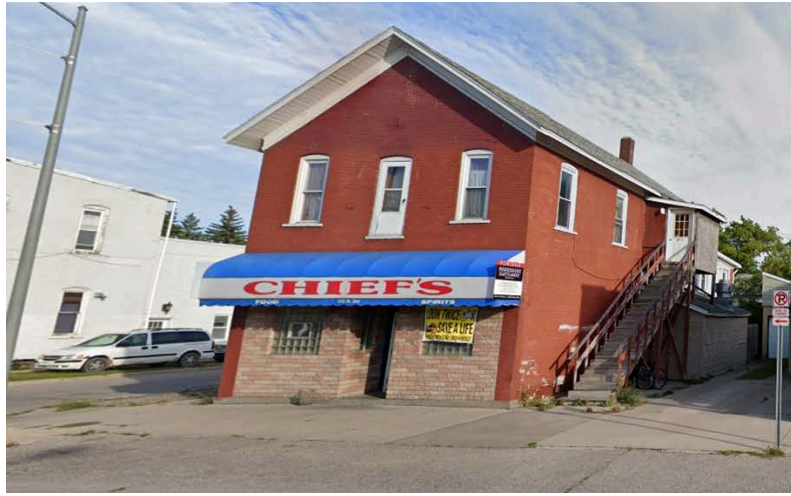
The Alpena DDA turned a vacant riverfront property into the **Water Street Commons**, creating a new space on the Thunder Bay River for new shops, tasting rooms, and food trucks to test the downtown market and connect with new customers.



Public-private partnerships brought new life to **Culligan Plaza** and **Bay View Park**. The renovation of Culligan Plaza, supported by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, City of Alpena, and First Federal Legacy Foundation, updated this community gathering space with a new stage, water feature, public restrooms, and fire feature, encouraging year-round use.

Construction continued on major projects downtown in 2025, including **Thunder Bay Theatre** (400 N 2nd Ave), **Murphy Contracting** (1020 W Chisholm St), **the former Big Boy**, and **HPC Credit Union** (1234 W Chisholm St). We are excited to see the progress in 2026.





\$2.6 MILLION INVESTMENT INTO FACADES

In 2025, **19 facades** were under construction throughout the DDA district. These projects were supported by \$1,239,401 of grant funding through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation + \$150,000 of funding from the DDA. The projects will total over **\$2.6 million of investment** into the exteriors of key downtown buildings.



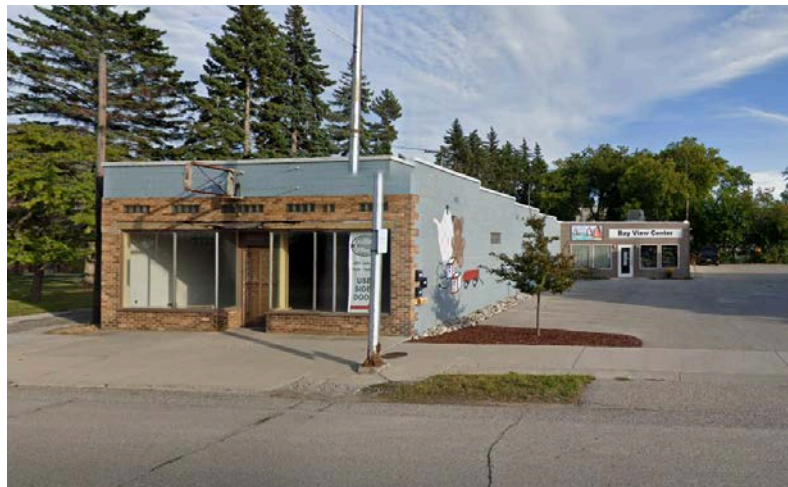
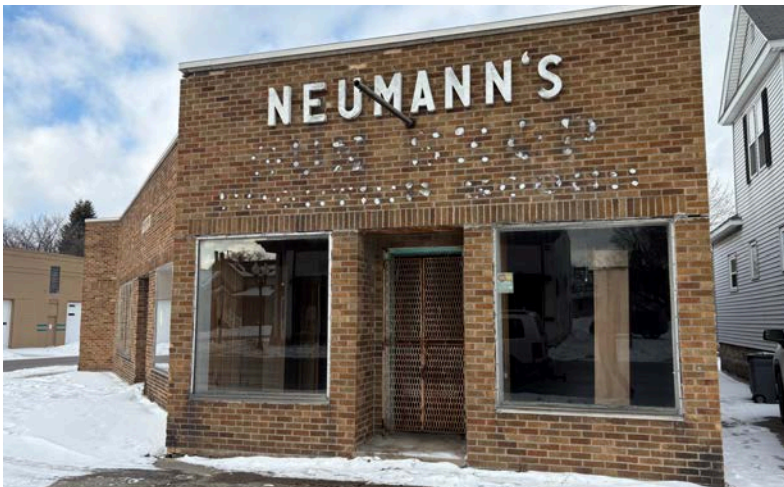
2025 FACADE TRANSFORMATIONS

- **Bolenz Jewelry Block**
- **102 S 3rd Ave (Alpena Agency)**
- **304 N 9th Ave (Clem's Bait & Tackle)**
- **626 N 2nd Ave (Old Polish Corner)**
- **113 S 9th Ave (Players Pub & Grub)**
- **121 W Washington Ave**
- **616 N 2nd Ave (Old Town Coworking)**
- **200 W Chisholm St (Bay Athletic Club & Thunder Bay Community Health Services)**



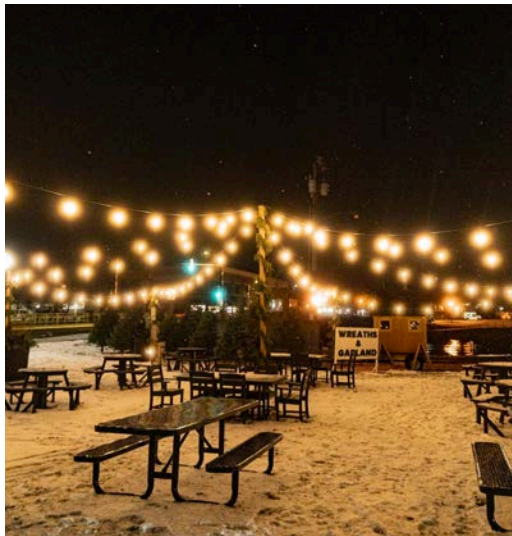
The following facades will be renovated over the next two years with support from DDA Facade Grants:

- **311 W Chisholm St**
- **835 W Chisholm St**
- **712 N 2nd Ave (Smigelski Kielbasa)**
- **106 N 2nd Ave (Parallel 45 Books & Gifts)**
- **309-313 N 2nd Ave**
- **1020 W Chisholm St**
- **616 W Chisholm St**
- **144 W Washington Ave (Emery Enterprises)**
- **700 N 2nd Ave**
- **701 N 2nd Ave**



WATER STREET COMMONS

The Alpena DDA opened the Water Street Commons on June 6, 2025. Located near the drawbridge along the Thunder Bay River, the property had been vacant for over 10 years. With over \$150,000 of DDA investment, the property welcomed 17 new businesses to test the downtown market, including 4 that the DDA has been actively recruiting for over 5 years. The site is home to 5 tiny shops, 1 tasting room, hook-ups for food trucks, and a public seating area. The Water Street Commons is open May through December.



A fresh wave of 17 creative entrepreneurs tested the waters downtown at Water Street Common's first season by renting a storefront or offering a pop-up:

Blu Blends, Knaebe's, Birch Hill Grocery, Callia'sEmpURRium, Mana Wellness, Alpena Sourdough, Briar Hill Bakehouse, Falls Creek Produce & Flowers, the Art Nook, Choucas Hats, Sunrise Side Co-Op Market, Truck Your Pizza, Pig on the Run, Across the Board, Schultz Tree Farm, Uncle Mike's, Tastes of Thailand

CREATING A BEAUTIFUL & WELCOMING DOWNTOWN

In 2025, the DDA invested in beautifying downtown and enhancing public spaces:

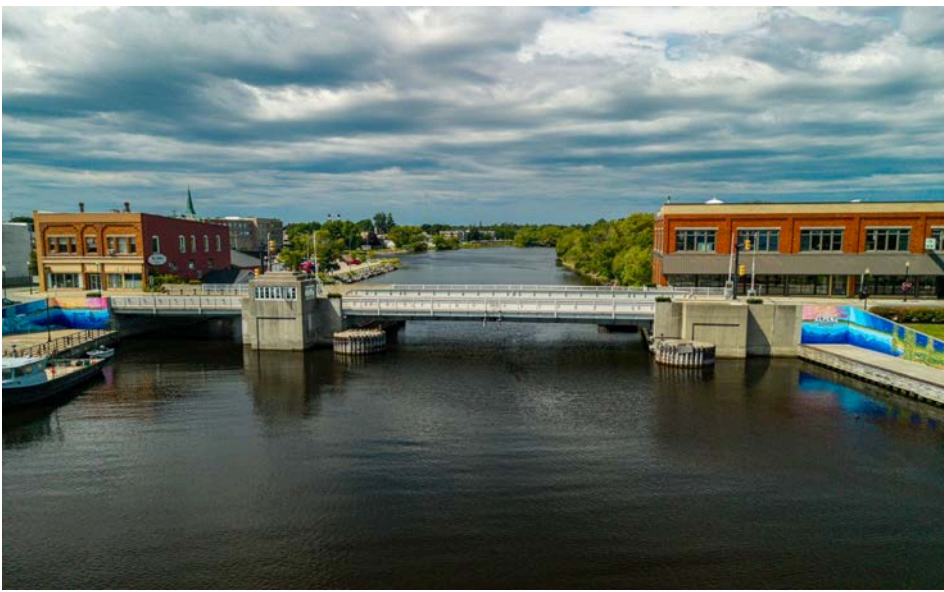
- **116 hanging flower baskets**
- **1,872 feet of fresh garland** for Christmastime
- **16 alleyway planters** planted by students from Pied Piper School
- **2 employees** through NEMROC who weeded gardens and picked up trash
- **Re-landscaping the Chisholm St. Pocket Park** with grass, trees, and flowers, plus new seating
- **Partnering with the City of Alpena Department of Public Works** to keep downtown parks and spaces clean and welcoming



VOLUNTEER FLOWER PLANTING & FUNDRAISING

The community raised \$4,800+ to plant flowers throughout the downtown. Over 150 tree boxes were planted with native perennials and annual begonias on our Clean-Up & Planting Day in May. Over 20 volunteers planted 1,500 plugs of flowers to get downtown ready for summer!

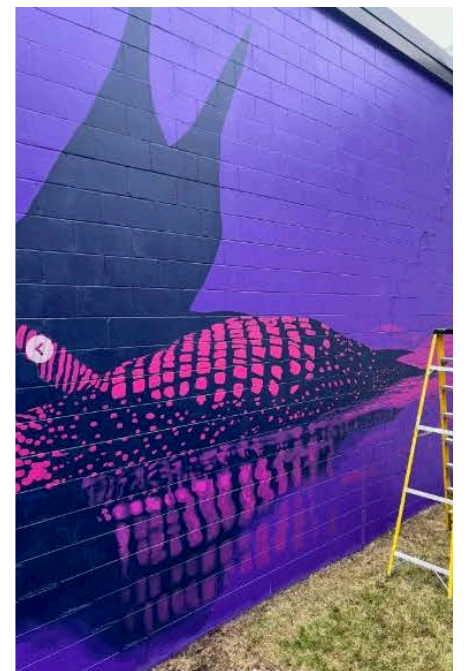




2 NEW FRESH WAVES MURALS

Two new murals were completed downtown as part of Fresh Waves 2025. Both murals added colorful new pieces of public art along the Thunder Bay River, creating a vibrant welcome downtown for those fishing, boating, and visiting via cruise ship.

The first mural was completed on the **2nd Ave bridge** by artist **Molly Keen**, entitled “Pines to Port.” It honors Alpena’s identity by blending its rich maritime history, natural beauty, and downtown landscape. The second mural, entitled “Howling Loons” was completed at **215 Water St** by artist **Seth Bishop**. With vibrant colors and bold style, it celebrates the loons that call Thunder Bay home.



PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

In 2025, thousands of visitors came downtown for events hosted and supported by the DDA:

Cozy Crawl- Jan 25

Alpena Ice Festival- Feb 15

Flower Planting Day- May 17

Friday Night Street Performers- May-Aug

Alpena Flower Festival- June 6-8

Sidewalk Sales- Aug 8-9

Witches Night Out- Oct 17

Day of the Dead- Nov 1

Holiday Sneak Peek- Nov 8

Christmas at the Commons- Dec 13

Visit with Santa- Fris & Sats in Dec

New Years Eve- Dec 31



MARKETING

In 2025, we promoted Downtown Alpena through:

- Investing in professional videography, photography, and graphic design
- Media relations and appearances with True North Radio, WATZ, WBKK, MLive, and WCMU Public Media
- Downtown Alpena's digital presence
 - Facebook views 4,221,972
 - 1,938 new followers + 82,640 interactions
 - Instagram grew by 834 followers
 - Tik Tok 1,230 followers
 - Youtube 746 subscribers
 - 37,830 unique views on our website
 - 5,196 visitors to Blog Downtown Alpena
- 30 stories in the Alpena News about DDA projects; 101 highlighting major happenings



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS WHO SUPPORTED DOWNTOWN PROJECTS & EVENTS IN 2025!



Alison Jakubcin
 Jovi Stevens
 Maren Winter
 Mollie Allen
 Andi Yoxsimer
 Joey Plowman
 Brian Peterson
 Cristi Johnson
 Chanda Stafford
 Susie Morrell
 Laura Shearer
 Jessica Luther
 Ben Young
 Isabel Luther
 Loren Jackson
 Melissa Tolan-Halleck
 Erin Pilarski
 Karen Bennett
 Montiel Birmingham
 Corey Canute
 Mike Mahler
 Phil Agius
 Derk Vanvlerah
 Nick Poli
 Todd Britton
 Steve Schultz
 Shannon Smolinski
 Matt Hepburn
 Matt Wojda
 Don La Barre



ALPENA DOWNTOWN
 Development Authority

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