

LAKE ORION DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

TO: Lake Orion Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors
FROM: Matthew Gibb, Executive Director
DATE: September 2026
RE: Executive Director's Report – September 2026

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board with a consolidated report of significant activities, accomplishments, project work, community partnerships, and initiatives undertaken by the DDA and Lake Orion Main Street program during the current reporting period.

This has been an exceptionally active period for the organization. In addition to substantial advancement of the Lumber Yard at Paint Creek, staff, Board members, committees, Illuminators, businesses, sponsors, and community partners have undertaken significant work in national Main Street recognition, community engagement, special events, business support, sponsorship development, marketing, and preparation for the fall and holiday seasons.

BY THE NUMBERS

Measure	Current Impact / Result
Great American Main Street Award interview supporters	Nearly 50
Illuminators participating in the program	80+
Fully sponsored Illuminators Dragon Boat teams	2
LOLive summer concert attendance	Nearly 3,500
Estimated print marketing reach	80,000+
Estimated social media impressions	60,000+
Email communications distributed through DDA and partners	35,000+
LOLive concerts produced	8
Major fall/holiday programs currently being produced or supported	10+
Major Lumber Yard project areas currently being advanced	15+

These numbers provide only a snapshot of the broader activity occurring through the DDA. Increasingly, the impact of the organization is being multiplied through partnerships with businesses, sponsors, volunteers, community organizations, artists, and other organizations that extend the reach of DDA investments well beyond the direct expenditure of DDA funds.

1. GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD – NATIONAL INTERVIEW

Lake Orion completed its formal interview with the national Main Street program as part of the selection process for the Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA).

Nearly 50 business leaders, community leaders, residents, volunteers, and supporters were assembled to demonstrate the depth of community support behind Lake Orion's Main Street program.

Board Chair Debbie Burgess and Executive Director Matthew Gibb participated in the formal interview with the national organization. The interview provided an opportunity to tell Lake Orion's broader story – including its economic performance, community resilience, volunteer engagement, business partnerships, preservation efforts, programming, public investment, and the community's continued commitment to its downtown.

The interview went exceedingly well and provided an opportunity to demonstrate that the success of Downtown Lake Orion extends well beyond the DDA itself. We expect to learn the results of the selection process shortly. Regardless of the ultimate award decision, reaching this stage represents significant national recognition of nearly two decades of Main Street work in Lake Orion.

2. DRAGON ON THE LAKE – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The DDA participated extensively in Dragon on the Lake, using the festival both as a community celebration and an opportunity to engage residents and visitors regarding the future of Downtown Lake Orion.

The DDA helped transform the Flint Street Alley into a large family activity and community-engagement area. Participants were invited to provide ideas regarding future infrastructure and public improvements, streetscape and aesthetic improvements, business recruitment and retention, public gathering spaces, arts and cultural opportunities, events and programming, and additional downtown amenities.

The feedback gathered through this effort will help inform future DDA, committee, and Transformation Strategy priorities.

3. ILLUMINATORS – COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ACTION

The continued growth of the Illuminators was highly visible during Dragon on the Lake. The DDA successfully populated two fully sponsored Illuminators Dragon Boat teams, bringing together dozens of volunteers, businesses, sponsors, commercial partners, and community supporters.

Despite extremely rainy conditions on Sunday, both teams competed and generated significant participation and visibility. The Illuminators now include more than 80 participants and increasingly represent an important bridge between residents who want to become involved downtown and the formal work of the DDA's Board and committees.

4. LOLIVE SUMMER CONCERT SERIES – IMPACT & REACH

The 2026 LOLive summer concert series concluded with strong attendance and significant exposure for Downtown Lake Orion. All committed sponsorship revenues for the series have been affirmed and deposited.

Preliminary results indicate nearly 3,500 attendees across the eight-concert season, 80,000+ print marketing recipients, 60,000+ social media impressions through DDA and partner efforts, and 35,000+ email communications distributed through DDA, 20 Front Street, artists, businesses, and participating partners.

Staff will prepare a comprehensive Marketing and Promotional Impact Report documenting attendance, sponsorship, print distribution, email reach, social impressions, partner promotion, earned exposure, and other measurable impacts.

5. TURNING EVENTS INTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The DDA continues to emphasize that successful programming must ultimately create opportunities for downtown businesses. Businesses such as Michigan By The Bottle and others have actively taken advantage of audiences generated through concerts and other downtown activities.

Staff continues to encourage businesses to coordinate promotions, extended hours, special offerings, cross-promotions, and other activities around major events. The objective is not simply to produce successful events, but to introduce new customers to Downtown Lake Orion and provide our businesses with opportunities to convert those visitors into customers and repeat visitors.

6. SPONSORSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The DDA continues to expand private sponsorship as an important component of programming. Additional sponsorship has been secured for Children's Movie Night, and all sponsorship revenue associated with the LOLive/Gazebo concert series has been affirmed and deposited.

Sponsorship development is also underway or has been completed for other fall programming, Witches Night, Illuminators activities, Dragon on the Lake participation, and holiday programming. This strategy allows the DDA to expand the quality and reach of programming while leveraging private investment alongside public resources.

7. COMMUNITY EVENT & PARTNER SUPPORT

The DDA continues to provide promotional, logistical, coordination, volunteer, and other support to programs produced by community partners. Recent or upcoming programs include Children's Movie Night, Sick Car Check-In, Zombie Walk, Downtown/Homecoming Parade activities, Massive Fallout mountain biking event, Here Lies Lake Orion, Halloween Extravaganza, Witches Night, Light Up Lake Orion, Shop Small Saturday, Polar Express activities, and other business and community-led programming.

8. FALL & HOLIDAY PROGRAMMING

Staff is actively preparing for one of the busiest programming periods of the year. Work includes sponsorship development, permits, vendor coordination, volunteer assignments, entertainment, marketing, public safety coordination, site logistics, business participation, and licensing requirements.

As part of this work, the traditional Sing & Stroll program is being repositioned as Light Up Lake Orion, providing a stronger identity for the beginning of the downtown holiday season. The horse-and-carriage experience will continue as a recurring component of Light Up Lake Orion and Shop Small Saturday, consistent with prior programming and the adopted event budget.

9. LUMBER YARD AT PAINT CREEK – PROJECT ADVANCEMENT

Significant staff time continues to be devoted to advancing the Lumber Yard at Paint Creek toward completion and public activation.

During this reporting period, work has included comprehensive project budget reconciliation; cost-to-complete analysis; contractor change-order reconciliation; electrical invoice review; site-development cost comparisons; roadway and parking planning; water and sanitary sewer budgeting; stormwater infrastructure; aggregate and pathway planning; electrical distribution; site lighting and illumination;

native landscaping and irrigation; restroom construction; Bakery building improvements; bike shop/commercial building planning; concession structure planning; trailhead improvements; public-art infrastructure; and development of remaining project contingencies.

A comprehensive comparison of available project resources against anticipated remaining expenditures has now been prepared for Board consideration as part of this month's agenda.

10. LUMBER YARD – PUD & DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

A draft Planned Unit Development Agreement for the Lumber Yard at Paint Creek has been prepared for Board consideration. The agreement establishes a framework for phased development of the property while allowing building-specific construction and code requirements to be addressed through final design and permitting.

Particular attention has been given to fire suppression, infrastructure responsibilities, future commercial buildings, phased construction, code compliance, and maintaining sufficient flexibility as individual components move toward construction. Staff will continue coordinating any necessary revisions directly with the Village Attorney and appropriate Village departments.

11. LUMBER YARD – BUILDINGS, UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Staff has continued advancing the remaining structures and infrastructure required to activate the Lumber Yard, including the public restroom building, Bakery building, bike shop/commercial building, concession area, market structures, trailhead amenities, and potential secondary restroom solutions.

Competitive HVAC proposals have been obtained for the Bakery building, and a recommendation is included separately within the Board agenda. Electrical planning has also continued. DTE service is now available at the site, with substantial panel and distribution infrastructure already installed.

12. LUMBER YARD – LIGHTING, LANDSCAPING & PUBLIC REALM

Staff continues development of the comprehensive site illumination plan, including architectural building lighting, market lighting, parking areas, pedestrian pathways, public art, trailhead areas, bollards, and other exterior illumination.

Design work also continues around native landscaping, irrigation, railroad-inspired pedestrian treatments, signage, gathering areas, shade structures, building colors and finishes, and public art. The objective remains to create a development that reflects the historic lumber and railroad character of the property while functioning as a modern public marketplace, community gathering space, trailhead, event venue, and economic-development catalyst connecting Downtown Lake Orion with the Paint Creek Trail.

13. MAIN STREET COMMITTEES & FOUR-POINT APPROACH

The DDA has renewed its focus on organizing work through the Main Street Four-Point Approach – Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Vitality. Following the August all-committee meeting, participation has strengthened and additional working meetings have occurred.

Staff is working with committee leadership to translate the Transformation Strategy into specific projects and measurable objectives. The growing Illuminators network also provides an opportunity to connect volunteers with project-specific work occurring through the four committees.

14. MARKETING, WEBSITE & COMMUNICATIONS

The DDA continues to expand its communications infrastructure and its ability to market Downtown Lake Orion. Recent work has included website improvements, event-calendar integration, development of the Illuminators web presence, mobile website optimization, online forms, email infrastructure, event landing pages, sponsor promotion, and improved email authentication and delivery.

These efforts are increasingly being viewed as one integrated communications system rather than individual event promotions. The long-term objective is to consistently market Downtown Lake Orion as a destination while providing businesses, events, organizations, and community partners with an audience they can leverage.

15. BUSINESS SUPPORT & ECONOMIC VITALITY

Staff continues regular interaction with downtown businesses regarding events, promotions, development opportunities, physical improvements, operational issues, marketing, and opportunities generated by DDA programming.

Our broader economic-development strategy continues to connect these activities: Improve the place → create reasons to visit → market those opportunities → generate visitors → connect those visitors with businesses → create repeat customers and investment.

16. NEXT 30–60 DAYS

Immediate priorities include completion of fall programming; Children's Movie Night; Zombie Walk; Halloween programming; Witches Night; Light Up Lake Orion; Shop Small Saturday; continued expansion of the Illuminators; completion of the LOLive marketing-impact analysis; advancement of remaining Lumber Yard contracts and infrastructure; PUD coordination; and continued planning for activation of the Lumber Yard at Paint Creek.

We also anticipate learning the outcome of Lake Orion's Great American Main Street Award selection process.

SUMMARY

This reporting period illustrates the breadth of work now occurring through the Lake Orion DDA and Main Street program. The organization is simultaneously advancing a major redevelopment project, supporting downtown businesses, producing and supporting community programming, attracting private sponsorship, expanding volunteer participation, strengthening its communications infrastructure, implementing the Main Street Four-Point Approach, and representing Lake Orion at the national Main Street level.

Most importantly, these accomplishments increasingly represent community accomplishments rather than DDA accomplishments alone. The involvement of our Board, committees, more than 80 Illuminators, businesses, sponsors, Village partners, residents, artists, and community organizations substantially multiplies the impact of the resources invested through the DDA.

The objective remains consistent: create a stronger business environment, an exceptional downtown experience, and more reasons for residents, visitors, businesses, and investors to choose Downtown Lake Orion.