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## **LSCP and GINCC Announce Shared Vision for Expanded West End Business Support Services**

MARQUETTE COUNTY – The Lake Superior Community Partnership (LSCP) and the Greater Ishpeming Negaunee Chamber of Commerce (GINCC) have announced a shared vision for continuing and expanding direct, local access to business support services in western Marquette County. Ensuring the continuation of on-the-ground business support services – including Business After Hours, ribbon cuttings, and informational events – has been a priority for both organizations to maintain the economic momentum in western Marquette County as the GINCC addressed internal matters.

“Ensuring that West End businesses and communities are able to continue accessing critical local networking and business support services has been top of mind for the GINCC Board during these past few months,” said GINCC President Angela Hentkowski. “Through this vision, we are turning a challenging situation into something positive, not only re-establishing services many of our businesses value, but enhancing them through the LSCP’s deep bench of business development tools. The outcome of these discussions is a natural extension of other conversations which had already been taking place under new leadership at the LSCP.”

To guide implementation, the LSCP will establish a West End Advisory Council comprised of 6 – 8 small businesses from western Marquette County who will work directly with LSCP staff to develop a West End Services Strategy for delivering on-the-ground networking and informational events that consider the unique priorities and needs of the business community in western Marquette County. Additionally, the LSCP will establish the West End Business Hub in the current office space occupied by the GINCC. The updated space will be staffed part-time by LSCP staff and be available for other economic development organizations to provide a convenient local space for in-person meetings and services.

For 2024, the LSCP will offer discounted membership to businesses who were GINCC members as of the day its operations ceased if they join the LSCP before July 1. Details will be announced at an event scheduled for February 12<sup>th</sup>. Membership in the LSCP comes with significant value, including affiliate

memberships with the Small Business Association of Michigan (SBAM) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Full details can be found at <https://marquette.org/become-a-partner/>.

LSCP CEO Christopher Germain expressed excitement for the new agreement.

“Since I joined the LSCP in 2022, we have worked to strengthen our relationship with the GINCC and communities and businesses in western Marquette County. From our enhanced partnerships with the cities of Ishpeming and Negaunee to our work with Partridge Creek Farms, the West End Health Foundation, and major west end businesses like UPPCO and Cleveland Cliffs, the LSCP has deep roots in the area. We know there is true economic momentum in the West End. While LSCP services have always been available in the West End, we’re excited to expand our on-the-ground presence to maximize the momentum we can help push forward. Creation of the advisory group and the new physical office space will allow us to do that while ensuring we’re appropriately tailoring services to meet local needs.”

Separately, the GINCC Board of Directors has voted to recommend to its full membership that the organization dissolve and name the LSCP as the receiver of its assets. A membership meeting will occur on February 12<sup>th</sup> to conduct the vote. Full details will be announced via a separate GINCC meeting notice.

Work is underway to establish the advisory council and open the West End Business Hub. Updates on West End activity will be available throughout the year. Businesses and the public are encouraged to attend a “West End Looking Forward” event on February 12 to learn more about the vision, the LSCP’s work, and west end economic development highlights for 2024. LSCP staff will be on hand to meet businesses and answer any questions. More details can be found at [marquette.org/WestEndForward](https://marquette.org/WestEndForward)

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Prepared by Ashley Szczepanski. For more information, contact the Lake Superior Community Partnership at (906) 226-6591. The Lake Superior Community Partnership (LSCP) is Marquette County’s resource for economic development, providing a wide variety of affordable and effective development services. The LSCP helps our partners make the connections that matter – between businesses, organizations, leaders and legislators, and provides a powerful legislative voice for programs and policies that strengthen our regional economy. More information on the Lake Superior Community Partnership can be found at [www.marquette.org](https://www.marquette.org).