



KODIAK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

JANUARY-MARCH 2024

KEDC QUARTER 1 REVIEW

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FIRST QUARTER REVIEW

*From Executive Director
John Whiddon*

KEDC staff have been exceptionally busy during the first quarter of 2024 continuing with existing programs and pursuing new opportunities.

The Storefront Improvement Program was very well received and after reviewing the applicants, five businesses were awarded grants provided by the City of Kodiak and KANA totaling over \$28,000. The total investment including the matching portion of the grant is over \$62,000. KEDC intends to offer another round of grants later this year.

The Career Expo has attracted significant interest from both the private and public sectors. This event will expand on the success of last year's event and will culminate in a Job Fair to be held at the Kodiak Marketplace.

KEDC was awarded a grant from the Alaska Mariculture Cluster to conduct a feasibility study to build a kelp processing facility at Gibson Cove. This project has garnered interest from the mariculture community and created an expectation that there could be a way forward to expand kelp farming in the future. KEDC applied for an additional grant for \$80K through the USDA Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) fund to augment the Gibson Cove research and allow for a

more robust analysis. Grant award for the RBDG will be announced in June. The grant research will kick-off in late May or June.

Raincoast Data in Juneau was contracted to produce a Business Climate Survey. A wide variety of businesses including fishermen, retail, health care, tourism, native corporations, real estate, and municipalities were contacted. **Over 125 businesses representing 2700 employees responded to the survey.** The final report will be presented at an Economic Forum and Luncheon in June.

KEDC AWARDED GRANT TO BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) awarded KEDC a \$45,000 grant to build organizational capacity and to assist with program development. Melissa has been assigned as the "Community Coordinator" and will work directly with RCAC to fulfill the grant objectives.

During a recent trip to Washington DC to meet with the Congressional Delegation, conversations were held regarding Kodiak's housing crisis, the Coast Guard expansion and opportunities through MARAD to fund the St. Paul Harbor restoration. KEDC was a prominent participant in all discussions and was able to convey a strong message about the challenges and opportunities facing Kodiak's economy.

HOUSING REMAINS THE TOP PRIORITY FOR KEDC BOARD AND STAFF

Housing remains the top priority for the KEDC board and staff. Community members were invited to a stakeholder meeting that was held at the Koniag Native Corporation building in February.

A second meeting was held in March which resulted in assigning four top issues as priorities for further action:

1. Apply for funding to develop a Housing Action Plan
2. Work with City officials to assess infrastructure needs, specifically wastewater treatment limitations that might impede home development
3. Develop a coordinated public outreach process to educate the public and begin to galvanize support for the necessary actions to increase affordable housing
4. Assist the Kodiak Island Housing Authority with their efforts to pursue funding through Alaska Rural CAP and the USDA to develop a “self-help” housing program

A grant application was submitted to the Denali Commission to fund the development of a Housing Action Plan. The next housing steering committee meeting will be held on May 9th.

KEDC staff has met several times with regional representatives from

HUD, Housing Alaskans Public/Private Partnership (HAPP), Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and USDA (Under Secretary Basil Gooden) and Kodiak Island Housing Authority to discuss options and solutions to Kodiak’s housing crisis.

KEDC attended a meeting hosted by the Kodiak Island Housing Authority to consider the Rural CAP “Self help housing project. The meeting resulted in an agreement for KIHA to begin the process to obtain property on Selief Street while completing the steps necessary to participate in the USDA/Rural Cap loan program. Great first steps towards addressing Kodiak’s affordable housing shortage.

Fisheries issues, in both the processing and harvesting sectors, will take a more prominent role in Kodiak’s economy in the immediate future. KEDC has engaged with United Fishermen of Alaska, the Pacific Seafood Processors Assoc., and the Alaska Groundfish Data bank to gain insights and become more familiar with changes that will affect Kodiak’s economy.

KEDC will present at a Climate Adaption Workshop to discuss the role that a coastal economic development organization might have in strengthening, adapting and creating a more resilient economy.

Staff continues to work at a high level on existing programs while seeking opportunities that will further Kodiak’s economy.



FIRST QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS TIMELINE

JANUARY

The Storefront Improvement Program made front page news in the Kodiak Daily Mirror on Friday, January 26th with the announcement of five awardees for the grant: Cactus Flats, AEM Enterprises, Sunrise Studio, MSR Rentals, and Kodiak Jacks.

KEDC Board held elections with the results being: KEDC President Karl Hertz, Vice President Mark Anderson, and Secretary Mike Pfeffer.

KEDC Board also welcomed Jessica Johnson to serve as the newest member.

MARCH

First Housing Steering Committee meeting held

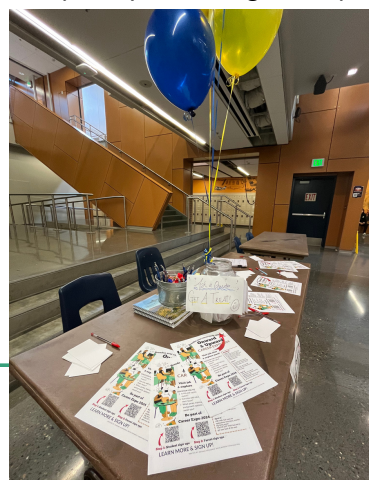
Melissa represented KEDC at Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC) 2024 Economic Summit

Career Expo 2024: Onward and Upward preparations continue. More than 312 hours devoted to event since January. Effort focused on getting into the school to educate students and staff as to the value of this event



FEBRUARY

- Kodiak Economic Development Corporation, with support from Koniag, held a Housing Discussion on February 14, 2024 to bring housing, banking, municipal and community leaders together for a working lunch meeting to discuss the challenges and opportunities with addressing the need for more affordable housing.
- Kodiak Business Climate survey gets strong engagement
- KEDC was awarded a grant from the Alaska Mariculture Cluster to conduct a feasibility study to build a kelp and oyster processing facility at Gibson Cove.



Career Expo 2024: Onward & Upward provides Kodiak High School students the opportunity to explore local employment while emphasizing further training, certification, and upward mobility on the career path.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Kodiak Economic Development Corporation has partnered with Kodiak Island Borough School District, organizations, and employers to provide Career Expo 2024: Onward & Upward on April 11th and 23rd for high school students at KHS, AKTEACH, and rural schools. While the focus of Career Expo is preparing those entering the workforce after graduating, all of the events and training created are viewed through the lens of how KEDC can support local businesses.

This two-day training event provides the students with direct connections to businesses, agencies, and organizations. Featured participants will share examples of various personal success pathways during a morning "Storyteller" segment. Immediately after, a panel of speakers representing KANA, Providence, Kodiak Veterinary Clinic, Midtown Automotive, Brechan Construction, Highmark Marine Fabrication, USCG, Alaska Army National Guard, and more will participate to answer student questions and share employment opportunities. We will hold a training session in the afternoon covering job applications, resume development, successful interview skills, and practical strategies for starting a new job. A second day will provide students job shadowing and on-site learning.

"Workforce in Kodiak is like any other scarce resource on our island, it must be cultivated, nurtured, and grown. The Career Expo is designed to do just that; inform, partner and share local opportunities with our young people to grow our workforce and ensure our future Kodiak economy."

Karl Hertz, Providence Medical Center, KEDC Board President



KEDC continues to progress with Main Street America Institute certification

- The Main Street America organization advances shared prosperity, creates resilient economies, and improves quality of life through place-based economic development and community preservation in downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts across the country. These values are in direct alignment with KEDC's dedication to strengthen and revitalize Downtown Kodiak.
- Main Street America provides access to resources, grants, educational opportunities, and more. This help has been instrumental in continued development and refinement of KEDC's Storefront Improvement Program.
- To date, more than 100 hours have been spent in training and work towards Main Street America Institute certification, and immediate applications practiced by KEDC in planning efforts.

MAIN STREET AMERICA & RURAL COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE CORPORATION (RCAC) COMMUNITY COORDINATOR POSITION

KEDC completes foundational requirements, moves forward with RCAC work

- KEDC worked through RCAC onboarding process to complete all requirements to satisfy the Building Rural Economies Community Assessment Form (BRE) totaling more than 35 hours.
- KEDC transitioned to new RCAC grant leadership and support from Noa Kornbluh, who last fall was the CG Expansion Discussion guest facilitator, to Laura Dublin and Amy Williams.
- Next steps for scope of work (per BRE) will develop organizational infrastructure within KEDC, support Workforce Development projects, through Melissa's role of Community Coordinator.

KEDC ATTENDS SWAMC 2024 ECONOMIC SUMMIT

Melissa attended the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference 2024 Economic Summit in Anchorage on March 7th and 8th to represent KEDC. The event's theme was Charting a Course Forward in a Dynamic World. Terry Haines, President of the SWAMC Board of Directors, shared: "We are entering a period of unprecedented infrastructure investment by the federal and state governments. New industries like mariculture and new tools like robust broadband connectivity offer the potential for a more diverse and stable regional economy...How do we develop the workforce necessary to build the future, and how do we provide a safe and healthy environment for them?"

Several panels were presented to cover various topics and provide answers to audience questions. Especially appropriate for KEDC were panels such as *Workforce Development and Job Training for Future Projects* and *Mariculture Momentum: Cultivating Sustainable Growth in Coastal Economies*. The

topic's significance was strongly emphasized, and the panel allocated twice as much time as the others. Coastal communities were advised to consider mariculture as a sustainable addition to their economy. Through Erik O'Brien's presentation *It Takes A Village To Farm*, Kodiak Island was positioned as a leader in mariculture. Additionally, a video documentary created by the World Wildlife Foundation Nick Mangini's kelp harvesting spotlighted Kodiak.

Melissa connected with various panelists regarding workforce development initiatives, projects, and support. She had the opportunity to speak with representatives and senators who were also present at the event.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- KEDC and John Whiddon were mentioned by panelists and speakers at times during the event as examples of positive work
- More representation from Kodiak was encouraged for next SWAMC event
- Serious concern voiced for the lack of qualified ammonia refrigeration technicians

CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP)



As the weather improves, the Storefront Improvement Program Awardees prepare to begin work. Each business submitted a plan outlining work to improve the overall appearance of their store or building. The grant will match up to \$7500 of their expenses. In January, the SIP Application Selection Committee selected five businesses: **Cactus Flats, AEM Enterprises, Sunrise Studio, MSR Rentals, and Kodiak Jacks.**

KEDC supports these businesses in additional ways, with a specific focus on marketing assistance. KEDC will showcase the efforts of the SIP Awardees, highlighting their investment in improving Downtown Kodiak to the Kodiak community.

KEDC Associate Director Melissa Schoenwether and KMXT Radio's News Director Davis Hovey developed a means for the community to learn more about the Storefront Improvement Program, the awardees, and the importance of downtown revitalization work.

The recurring radio module produced by Hovey will:

- highlight SIP Awardees,
- discuss the personal stories of business owners and building managers, and explore their daily operations,
- describe what work they are undertaking through the SIP grant
- showcase the value of public/private investments in downtown

KEDC will individually feature Cactus Flats, AEM Enterprises, Sunrise Studio, MSR Rentals, and Kodiak Jacks on our website and digital communications, highlighting the before, during, and after transformation. KEDC will partner with Kodiak Daily Mirror to broadcast the work.

The SIP Awardees will assist KEDC in gathering data on the positive impact of their business or building improvements, which will be shared with Kodiak businesses to foster growth and prosperity. As KEDC works toward accreditation with Main Street America, further opportunities will be created to support the revitalization efforts of Downtown Kodiak.

KEDC thanks Kodiak Area Native Association and the City of Kodiak for the generous support and investment in the Storefront Improvement Program. The \$28,000 to be awarded has been matched, and exceeded, by the five participants, creating a total investment of over \$62,000 to support a revitalization of Kodiak's downtown core area.



KEDC GOALS FOR Q2

Housing

A third steering committee meeting is scheduled for May. A grant application has been submitted to the Denali Commission to fund a Housing Action Plan.

KEDC will continue to collaborate with stakeholders, including KIHA and Koniag to explore opportunities for near term housing developments, assess infrastructure gaps that have been obstacles to housing development.

KEDC Staff plan to attend a U.S. Housing Community Development Conference and Expo in May.

Economic Forum

The Business Climate Survey will be completed by mid-May with the release of the latest State of Alaska labor data. Plans are in place to hold the Economic Forum and Luncheon in mid-June where the survey will be presented. Panelists are being selected for the event with the expectation that the audience will be able to engage in discussions about Kodiak's economy.

Mariculture

KEDC received a \$150,000 grant from the Alaska Mariculture Cluster to conduct a feasibility study to build a kelp processing facility at Gibson Cove. Recent developments indicate that other waterfront areas could become available which would require the study expand its research to include existing waterfront facilities.

Growth of KEDC Staff

To accommodate the work anticipated from the various grants received, KEDC anticipates the need to hire additional part-time staff and contractors to fulfill the grant obligations. The areas of interest will focus on housing and mariculture development.