



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**3A**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** September 27, 2022

**Title of Item:** Economic Development Impact Update

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
<b>Submitted by:</b> Mark Jeffers		<b>Department:</b> Administration
<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator		<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 30 minutes
<b>Summary of Issue:</b> The Economic Development Coordinator will present an update on the status of the strategic plan and current projects.		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b> Information only for discussion.		
<b>Financial Impact:</b> Is there a cost associated with this request? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$ Is this budgeted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		

Legally binding agreements must have County Attorney approval prior to submission.



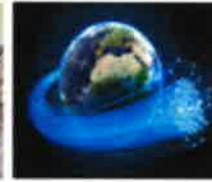
# Economic Development

## Strategic Plan: 2022 update

September 27, 2022



## Economic Development Priorities to Invoke Change



- Recreation and Tourism
- Improved Broadband
- Child Care
- Career Development

- Business Retention
- Business Expansion
- Business Attraction
- Housing Initiatives

## Economic Mission

**To develop and promote resources for Economic Growth in our community.**

**Primary objectives include**

- **Provide a single point of contact for existing business owners, new business owners and Entrepreneurs, that identifies all resources available for their business success.**
- **Improve quality of life in Aitkin County by highlighting our extensive outdoor recreational resources.**
- **Improve Broadband access to all Aitkin County residents and visitors to support vibrant communities.**
- **Attract businesses located outside of Aitkin County.**
- **Listen to the needs of the community to drive the economic engine.**





## Recreation and Tourism

- Economic Development (ED) is collaborating with Ripplesippi Trail committee and Tim Terrill, Mississippi Headwaters Board, to identify, name and promote the exceptional river trail system in our county.
- 2022 Business Development & Recreation Grant awarded funding to 10 businesses/organizations including area businesses: **Smokey Jake's BBQ, Forgotten Heroes Ranges & Retreat, Cozy Cove Coffee Company, Unbound Adventures.**
- ED has hired Strateligent to establish a marketing plan for Aitkin County, creating our story and preparing us to market to the Midwest areas. This will be a main driver for resident and business recruitment. Planning sessions are being scheduled in all districts.
- ED is working with Land Department to promote the Northwoods ATV trail system and vision for Axtell area to be the "Valley Fair of the North".
- ED created "Aitkin County Newsletter" to further our marketing to areas in the Midwest, attracting tourist and future residents that fit our story.

"To develop and promote resources for Economic Growth in our community."

V9 October 2022



**strateligent**

Communicate with purpose.

**Aitkin County Marketing/Branding Project:** I will be conducting public meetings for all community members interested in building our marketing plan and preparing Aitkin County for future growth. I am looking for experts from our community in many areas including motorized recreation, human (biking, hiking, kayaking) recreation, arts & entertainment, main street employers and citizen influencers. Our goal is to together create the Aitkin Story and prepare to communicate that story to residents, visitors and future residents. **If you are interested in engaging to create a positive change, reach out to me directly.**



Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative



**Broadband McGrath Project update:** Final engineering plans have been created and the project is moving forward and on schedule. This 4.8 million dollar project is scheduled to be completed by fall of 2023. Reach out to Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative to sign up for this great opportunity.

**Border to Border Broadband Grant Opportunity:**

Thank you to our local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) for your commitment to our community. Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative, Savage Communications, Paul Bunyan Communications and Frontier Communications have all submitted applications to receive funding through this grant program. If awarded, funding will allow the ISPs to bring fiber to the home in some of our most rural areas of the County.

# Northwoods ATV Trail

## 250+ Miles of ATV Trails

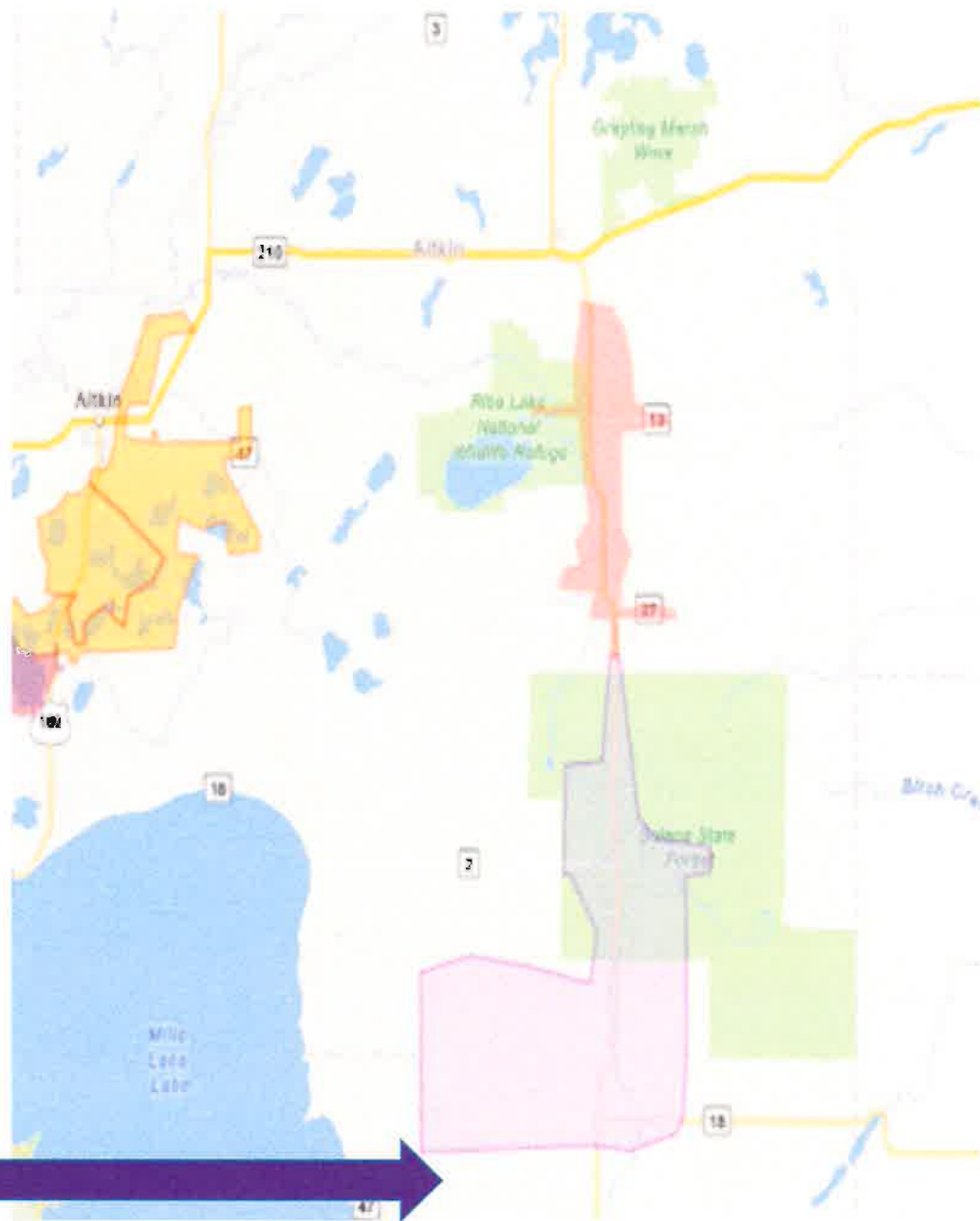
[northwoodsatvtrail.com](http://northwoodsatvtrail.com)

For a **FREE** Northwoods ATV Trail Map, email [acd@co.aitkin.mn.us](mailto:acd@co.aitkin.mn.us)



## Broadband

- CDBG-CV Grant: (McGrath area project)
  - Environmental and construction engineering work is close to completion.
  - Construction map and staking is complete.
  - First meeting for Aitkin County/Mille Lacs Energy (MLEC) and township residents complete.
  - 80+ residents have signed up for service so far.
  - **Project on track to be completed in fall of 2023**
- Border to Border grant opportunity:
  - 4 Internet Service Providers (ISPs) applied for this grant opportunity.
    - MLEC
    - SCI
    - Paul Bunyan
    - Frontier Communications
- General Information:
  - RDOF
    - FCC has denied awarding LTD's application for RDOF areas in Aitkin County.
    - Decision pending on how the areas will be re-awarded.
    - ISPs are now allowed to build in those areas if they choose to be aggressive.
  - MLEC continues to be very aggressive improving broadband in Aitkin County and has plans to continue growth in 2023.
  - Paul Bunyan Communications plans to begin build out of their RDOF awarded areas for Aitkin County in 2023.
- Map of McGrath CDBG Project: (Purple shaded area is the entire CDBG Project)







## Child Care

- Economic Development (ED) developed and implemented the first Child Care Facilities Grant in 2022.
  - ED Committee awarded \$25,000+ to 6 child care providers in the Aitkin, Malmo and McGregor areas.
  - **The grants were intended to increase or not reduce child care slots in Aitkin County. Each grant achieved that goal.**
- ED is attending Aitkin County Childcare summit in September of 2022, organized by HHS (Brenda Butterfield).
- ED applied for the DEED Economic Development Childcare Grant.
  - The idea when awarded will be focused on new childcare providers in Aitkin County.
  - ED met with CLC (September) and will meet with Pine Tech (TBD) to understand and identify opportunities for new childcare providers.
  - HHS/ED will collaborate on additional summits/meetings in all districts to attract new childcare providers.



## Career Development

- Aitkin HS FAB LAB
  - ED Committee toured the Aitkin High School FAB LAB to understand what is currently available to students.
  - Superintendent Stifter and staff would like to expand and improve this program in 2022-2023 and beyond.
  - A successful program in the school can provide trade occupations for students and provide critical workforce options for businesses.
  - A successful program in the school can be expanded to vocational training center for all residents.
- ED plans to visit with McGregor and Hill City School Districts in 2022-2023 school year to learn about their program opportunities.
- Continue current programs that develop workforce training, vocational training and specialized trade training for all age demographic by offering or increasing funding to high school vocational training laboratories



## Business Retention, Expansion & Attraction

- BRE visits:
  - ED has established a routine to conduct BRE visits in all districts of the County.
  - ED has advised new local businesses on funding opportunities.
  - Through the Business Development & Recreation grant, opportunities were provided to many local businesses.
- Business Attraction:
  - Attraction will increase as the marketing program and momentum continues.
  - New business collaboration: **Unbound Adventures, Smokey Jakes BBQ, Forgotten Heroes Ranges & Retreat, Bonham Construction Project, McGregor Diagnostic Repair, Gun Lake Campground...**
  - ED is in direct collaboration with the City of Tamarack to build their comprehensive plan in 2022-2023.



## Housing

- ED continues to attempt to collaborate with HRA on redevelopment opportunities.
- Collaboration continues with Habitat for Humanity.
- Working with local organizations and developers to support multi-family housing, senior housing and workforce housing in Aitkin, McGregor and Tamarack areas.
- Discussions continue with City of Aitkin Mayor and City Administrator. Everyone is aware of our housing crisis and we are attempting to work together to find solutions.



Strategic Plan Timeline

Priority	Status	Projects to Invoke Change
Recreation & Tourism		River Trails- trail identification, ATV advertising, Communications Project, ATV project on Mille Lacs
Improve broadband		CDBG-CV Grant \$4.8 million, Border to Border ISP projects, Internet for all grant opportunity
Child Care- Health & Wellness		2022 Child Care Facilities Grant, Creating Aitkin County Child Care Start-up Grant., Applied for DEED Economic Development Childcare grant
Career Development		Aitkin HS FAB LAB- future vocational opportunities
Business retention, expansion & attraction		measured by impact report
Housing Initiatives		collaboration with HRA and Habitat for Humanity, redevelopment projects





## Economic Development Impact Report

Strategic Priorities

On Track

### Business Connect Notables 2022

- Applied for the Blandin Leadership Boost Grant- decision pending.
- Applied for the DEED Economic Development Childcare grant-decision pending.
- Applied for the DEED Redevelopment Grant in collaboration with Forgotten Heroes Ranges & Retreat- decision pending.
- Communications Project launched June 1, 2022.
- Established and identified 4 River Trails for recreation & tourism promotion. Naming of trails will be marketed in the winter of 2022 and spring of 2023.
- Assisted with new businesses (Smokey Jake's BBQ) for funding, guidance and collaboration with other funding organizations.
- Established a tracking and verification process for grant awards to endure compliance, including site visits.
- Submitted Congressionally Directed Spending application for Broadband improvement to Senate Appropriations Committee by Senator Klobuchar and Senator Smith- decision pending.
- Aitkin County Grant opportunities:
  - 2022 Business Development & Recreation Grant: Awarded \$10,000+ to area businesses.
  - 2022 Child Care Facilities Grant: Awarded \$25,000 to 6 childcare providers.
  - 2022 Community Grant Program: Launched \$100,000 community opportunity and have awarded \$54,469 to 9 community projects to date.

### Grant Follow up

#	YEAR	Grant	Facility Name	\$ Awarded	payment complete	MJ check in	MJ check in?	MJ visit to confirm work	Grant project completed
1	2022	BD&R	Jaques Art Center	\$ 1,000	yes	7/10/2022	N/A	7/10/2022	Yes
2	2022	BD&R	Brother's Construction LLC	\$ 800					
3	2022	BD&R	Habitat for Humanity	\$ 1,000	yes	8/14/2022	N/A	8/14/2022	Yes
4	2022	BD&R	Forgotten Heroes Ranges & Retreat	\$ 1,000	yes				
5	2022	BD&R	Long Lake Conservation Foundation	\$ 1,000	yes	N/A	N/A	7/15/2022	Yes
6	2022	BD&R	Smokey Jake's BBQ	\$ 1,000	yes	6/30/2022	N/A	7/21/2022	Yes
7	2022	BD&R	McGregor Chamber of Commerce	\$ 1,000					
8	2022	BD&R	Aitkin Chamber of Commerce	\$ 1,000	yes	6/25/2022	N/A	8/4/2022	Yes
9	2022	BD&R	Aitkin County Friends of the Arts	\$ 1,000	yes	8/19/2022	N/A	8/19/2022	Yes
10	2022	BD&R	Cozy Cove Coffee Company	\$ 1,000					
11	2022	CCFG	Little Pine Academy	\$ 10,000	yes	9/13/2022			
12	2022	CCFG	Cheryl's Kids and Company	\$ 2,500	yes	8/25/2022			
13	2022	CCFG	Red Robin Childcare	\$ 2,500	yes				
14	2022	CCFG	Sarah's Tiny Tots Daycare	\$ 5,000	yes	8/25/2022			
15	2022	CCFG	Beth's Home Daycare	\$ 2,500	yes	8/4/2022	N/A	8/4/2022	



## Economic Development Impact Report

### Staff Community Outreach

- Establishing collaboration routine with Mayors and City Administration Staff through the entire county.
- Completed Grant Writing USA training class, April 2022.
- Attended Community Venture Network quarterly meeting, April 2022.
- Participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Aitkin Chamber Tour of Opportunities, May 2022.
- Moderated the 2022 Aitkin Chamber Legislative Luncheon at the Aitkin County Government Center, June 2022.
- Attended Mille Lacs Tribal Economy Summit, May 2022.
- Conducting site visits to all awarded grantees, July-Aug-September 2022.
- Attended Region 5 Cultivating Communities Conference, Baxter, September 2022.
- Board of Directors/Organization Engagement:
  - Board member of Northspan
  - Board member of Iron Range Economic Alliance (IREA)
  - Board member of Habitat for Humanity
  - Board member of Growth Innovations
  - Board member of Aitkin Chamber of Commerce
  - Aitkin Chamber of Commerce VP
  - Chair of the Aitkin Chamber Economic Development Committee
  - Member of the City of Aitkin Planning & Zoning Commission
  - Member of the Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union Advisory Council