



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

7A
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: April 28, 2026

Title of Item: Information Only- Economic Development Impact update

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA	Action Requested: <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Only
Submitted by: Mark Jeffers		Department: Economic Development
Presenter (Name and Title): Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator		Estimated Time Needed: 15 minutes
Summary of Issue: Mark Jeffers will present the Q1 economic impact update.		
Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:		
Recommended Action/Motion:		
Financial Impact: <i>Is there a cost associated with this request?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$</i> <i>Is this budgeted?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		

AITKIN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Mark Jeffers

Aitkin County Economic
Development Coordinator



Naturally Better.



Strategic Priorities to Drive Change

**Promote Recreation
and Tourism**

**Improve
Broadband**

**Support
Childcare**

**Support Career
Development**

**Business Retention,
Expansion and
Attraction**

**Support Housing
Initiatives**

Housing

1. Bunker Hill Apartments- open August 1, 2026
2. Bunker Hill Senior complex- projected for 2027 opening
3. McGregor development moving forward (slowly)
4. HRA update



Business Retention, Expansion & Attraction

Fact

Aitkin County has experienced steady, incremental growth driven by small businesses, tourism, and local investment.

Population Growth

- 2020: 15,697
- 2025 est.: ~16,500
- Growth: ~3–4%

Business Base

- 500+ employers
- 1,100+ self-employed businesses
- Economy driven by small and local businesses

Key Growth Drivers

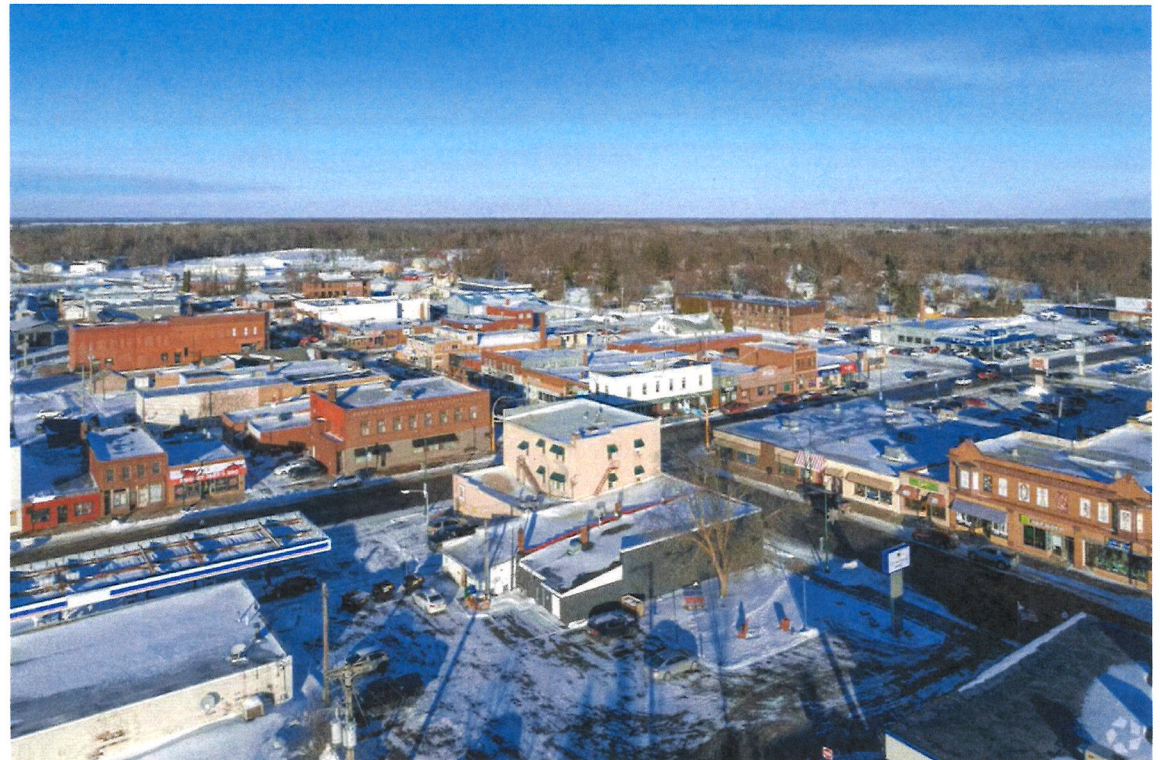
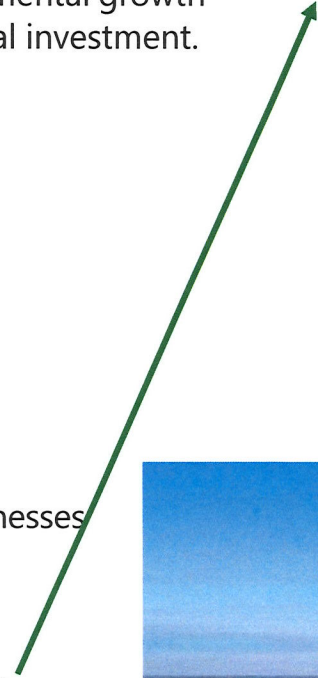
- Rise in remote work and entrepreneurship
- Expansion of tourism and recreation economy
- Local grant programs supporting reinvestment
- Broadband expansion enabling modern business

What Growth Looks Like

- Small business startups and expansions
- Downtown and storefront improvements
- Increased event and tourism activity

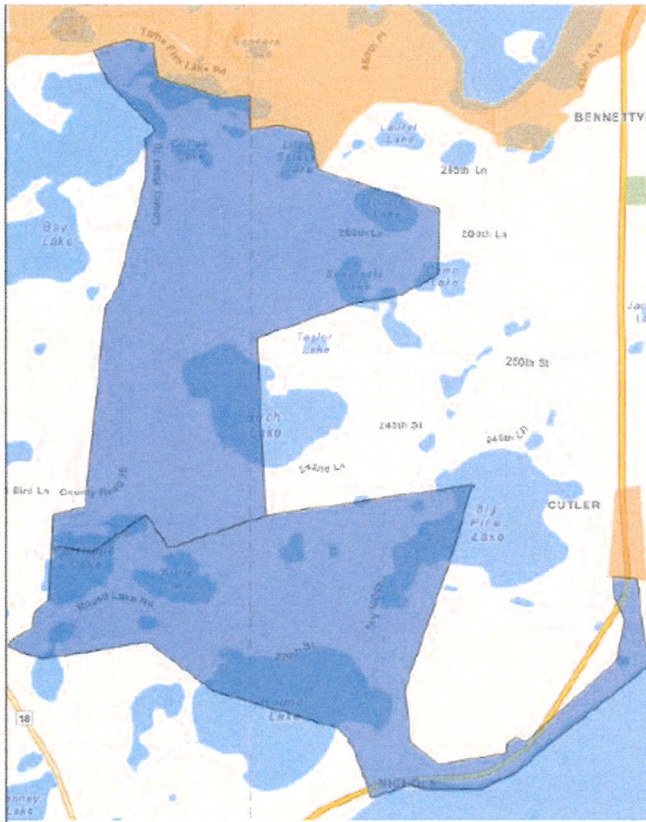
Bottom Line

Aitkin County is seeing sustainable, resilient growth—more businesses, not necessarily bigger ones.

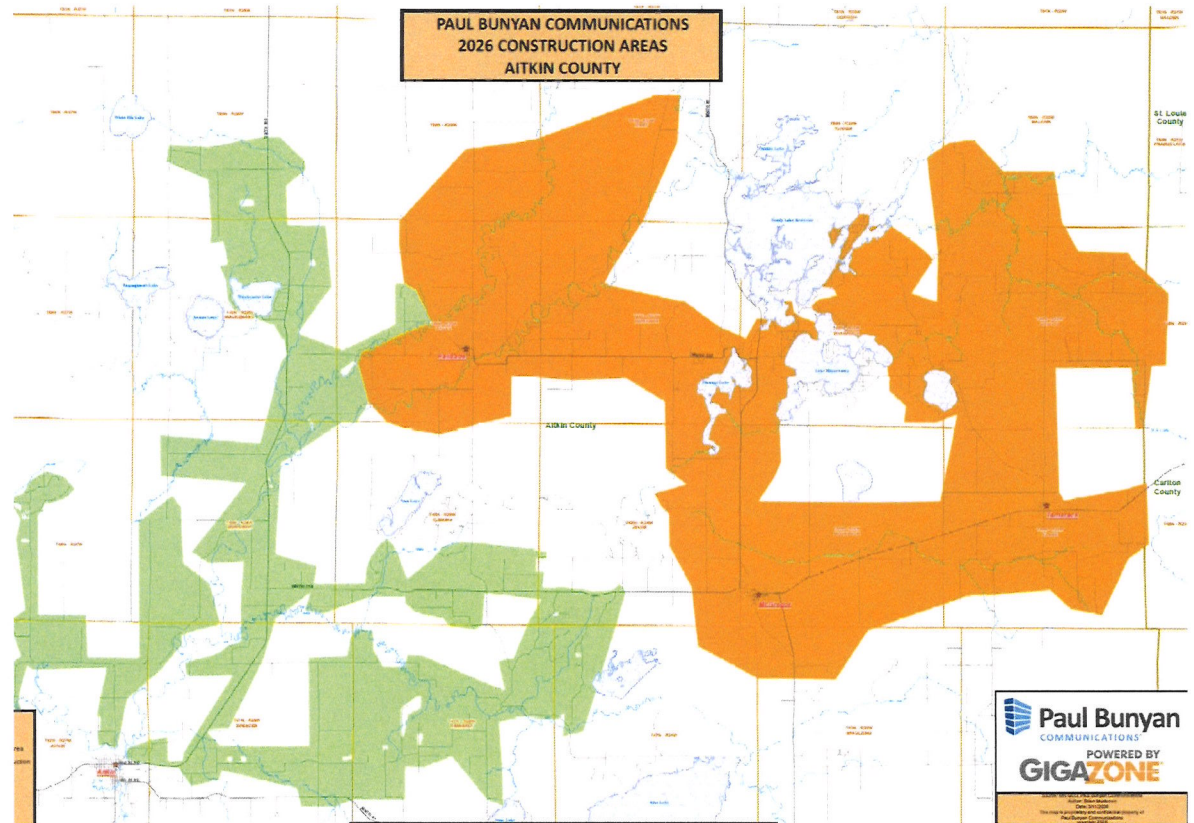


Broadband

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative Fiber announces network expansion in Bay Lake and Hazelton townships



Major Broadband Expansion Will Bring All-Fiber Optic Internet to over 2,400 Homes and Businesses in Central Aitkin County



Outreach

- 42nd Annual State of the Band Address
- IEDC Training- Business Retention & Expansion
- HRA stakeholder's summit for redevelopment
- McGregor Area Development Corporation
- Revitalization Employee Training
- Quarterly City Roundtables
- Aitkin County Leadership Training event
- AMC Legislative Conference
- MAPCED Quarterly meeting & MAPCED Day at the Capitol
- AMC Leadership Summit
- AMHI Meeting (Housing)
- ARDC Commission meeting
- ACAT meeting (presentation with Public Health)

Organizations

- MAPCED- current President
- Northspan- Board member and previous Chair
- ARDC Commission member
- AMC Learning & Member Programs Committee
- Aitkin Chamber of Commerce- Board member and previous President
- City of Aitkin Planning Commission member

Focus moving forward: Where do we go from here?

1. Complete tax abatement update for Senior complex
2. Work with American Peat Technology to secure funding for their expansion
3. Utilize HTF dollars for builders
4. Support McGregor projects to move forward

