



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

3B
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: July 25, 2023

Title of Item: Economic Development Q2 Impact Report

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	Action Requested: <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*
Submitted by: Mark Jeffers		Department: Administration
Presenter (Name and Title): Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator		Estimated Time Needed: 20 minutes
Summary of Issue: Mark Jeffers will present the Q2 Impact Report to Commissioners at the Board meeting.		
Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments: 		
Recommended Action/Motion: No action needed		
Financial Impact: 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>		



Economic Development

Update

Board of Commissioners

July 25, 2023



Priorities to Invoke Change

**Promote Recreation
and Tourism**

**Improve
Broadband**

**Support
Childcare**

**Support Career
Development**

**Business Retention,
Expansion and
Attraction**

**Support Housing
Initiatives**

Recreation & Tourism

- **Communication and Branding:** Naturally Better campaign is currently in motion. Naturally Better logo and marketing material are complete. The Website is live. This project will now shift to a development plan to continue to improve on our recreation and tourism assets.
 - **River Trails:** Economic Development is collaborating with Ripplesippi Trail committee and running a contest to have the community help name our river trail system.
 - **Northwoods ATV Trail System:** promoting the trail system and vision for Axtell area to be the “Valley Fair of the North”. Currently building out the Mille Lacs Connector.
 - **Arts & Entertainment:** Continued collaboration with community stakeholders that are creating momentum in our community.

- **Business Development & Recreation Grant:** Aitkin County has awarded over \$11,900 in grants to area businesses and events in an effort to help promote recreation assets and business development. Over \$25,000 have been requested.

Long Lake Foundation	Palisade	\$2,000
Palisade Event Committee	Palisade	\$925
Habitat For Humanity	Aitkin	\$1,100
Jaques Art Center	Aitkin	\$1,400
Aitkin Chamber of Commerce	Aitkin	\$1,550
Rialto Theatre	Aitkin	\$1,257
Trails Inn Quadna Mountain	Hill City	\$2,000
The Craft House	McGregor	\$1,745

Broadband

- **McGrath Project:** Construction is underway and the project is on schedule. The grant completion deadline is March 31, 2024.
- **ISP Projects:** SCI continues building in the McGregor area for 2023. Paul Bunyan is completing construction in Ball Bluff Township and building out their RDOF area north of Aitkin.
- **Digital Connection Committee:** Aitkin County is the lead on a team of local community leaders focusing on identifying the specific needs for broadband in our community. This committee work will benefit our unserved and underserved residents. The work has concluded and we have submitted our survey results to the MN Office of Broadband.
- **DEED Border to Border Grants:** SCI was awarded \$794,822 to build out Broadband in Aitkin County. This was the only Border to Border grant awarded in Aitkin County for the current round of funds.



McGrath Project

www.naturallybetterhere.com



Child Care

- **DEED Economic Development Childcare Grant:** Aitkin County was awarded \$100,000 to be used to increase new childcare facilities in Aitkin County
- **2023 Childcare Acceleration Grant:** \$100,000 (DEED Grant) will be awarded to potential new childcare facilities in Aitkin County. Eligible applications can include licensing and training fees, home remodel to meet state requirement standards and equipment and supplies for new childcare providers. We are also developing a scholarship program with Central Lakes College for Aitkin County residents to study early childhood education.
- I am working with a local business and a local municipality to plan a childcare center.
- One childcare provider in the McGregor area has applied for re-zoning in an effort to complete the transition from an at home provider to a childcare center, greatly increasing the amount of child slots available in that area.



Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction

- **Revitalization Grant:** Aitkin County has awarded over \$45,000 in grants to area businesses in an effort to help upgrade their building aesthetics. Over \$121,000 have been requested.

The Terrace	Aitkin	\$2,000
Low Properties	Aitkin	\$5,000
Sam's Custom Meats	Tamarack	\$5,000
Northland Hydraulics Service	Hill City	\$5,000
The Locker Room	Aitkin	\$3,000
Jaques Art Center	Aitkin	\$1,020
Roadside Market	Hill City	\$5,000
My Crafts & Things	Aitkin	\$1,151
Smokey Jake's BBQ	Aitkin	\$1,006
Growth Innovations	Aitkin	\$1,521
Village Pump Saloon	Tamarack	\$4,600
Sunny's	Hill City	\$5,000
Ginger Marie's	Aitkin	\$2,000
Palisade One Stop	Palisade	\$3,000
Hello Gorgeous	Aitkin	\$712

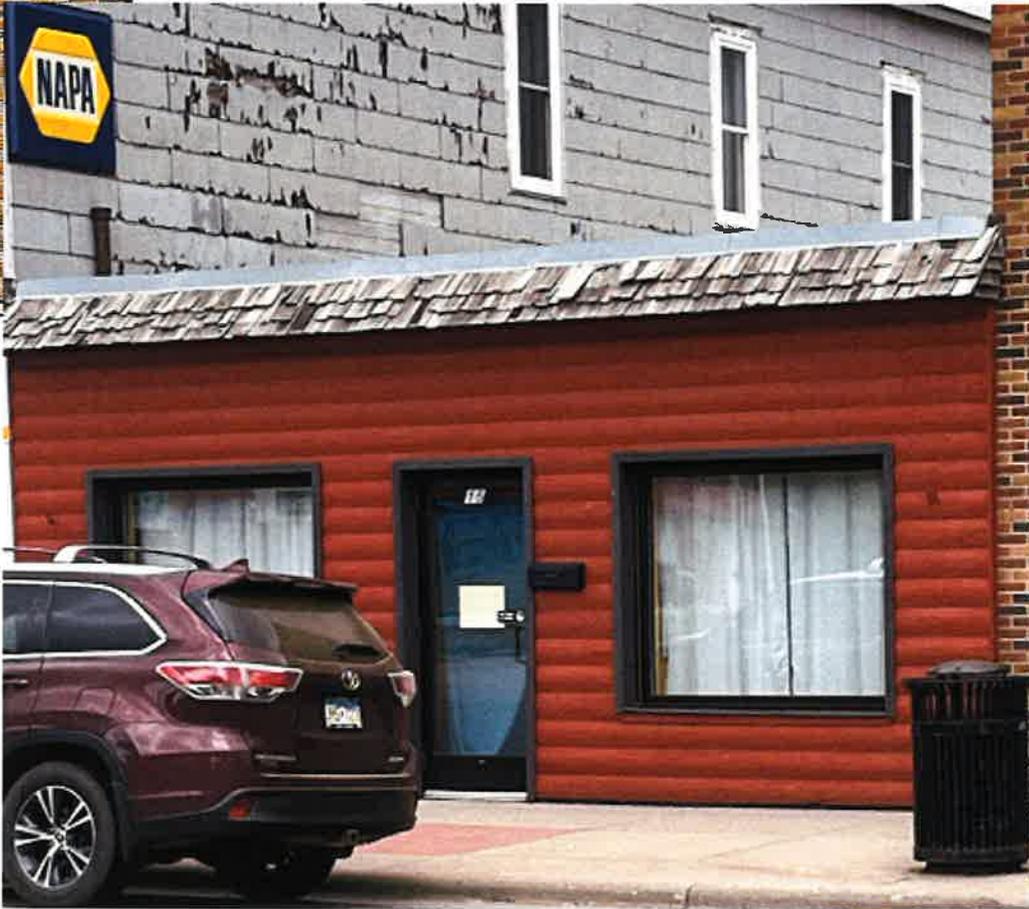
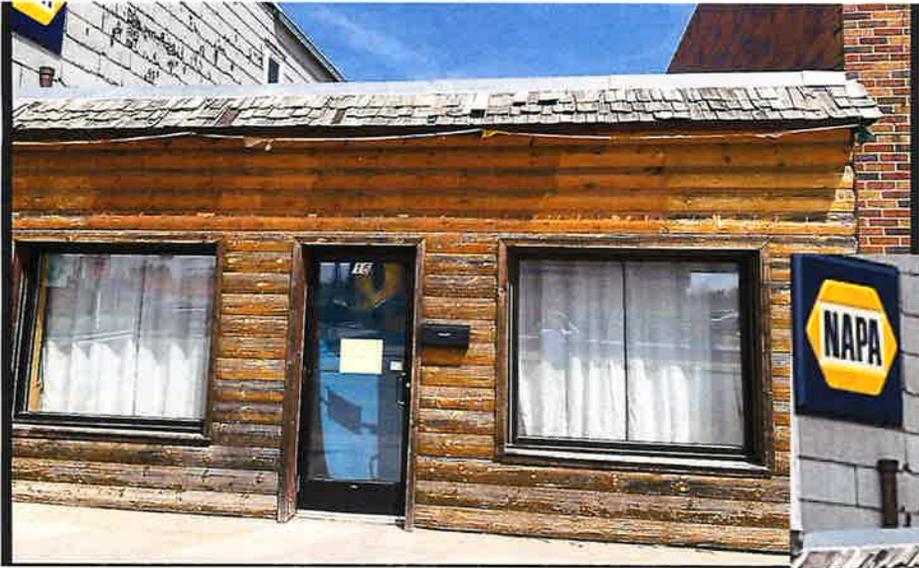
Revitalization Grant Execution: Lowe Properties



Revitalization Grant Execution: Smokey Jake's

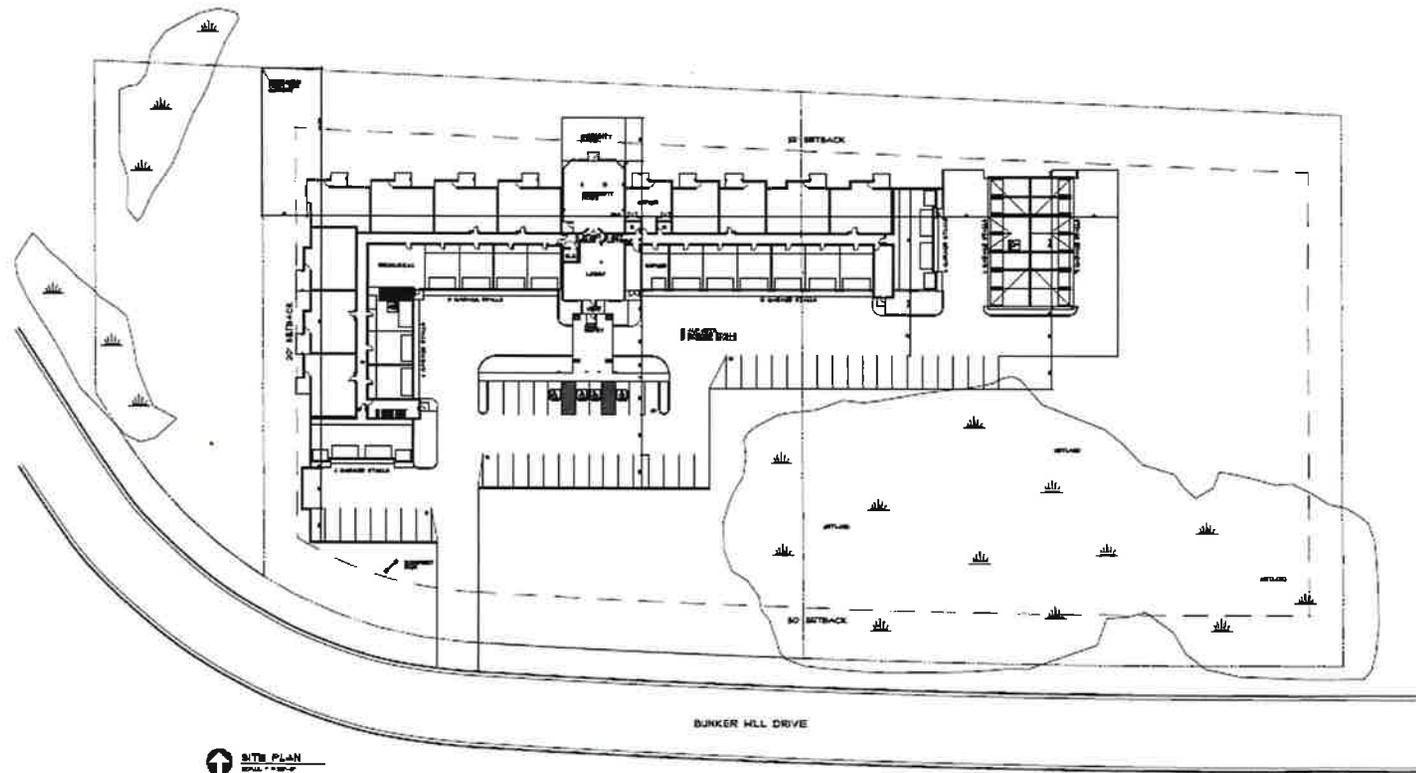


Revitalization Grant Execution: My Crafts & Things



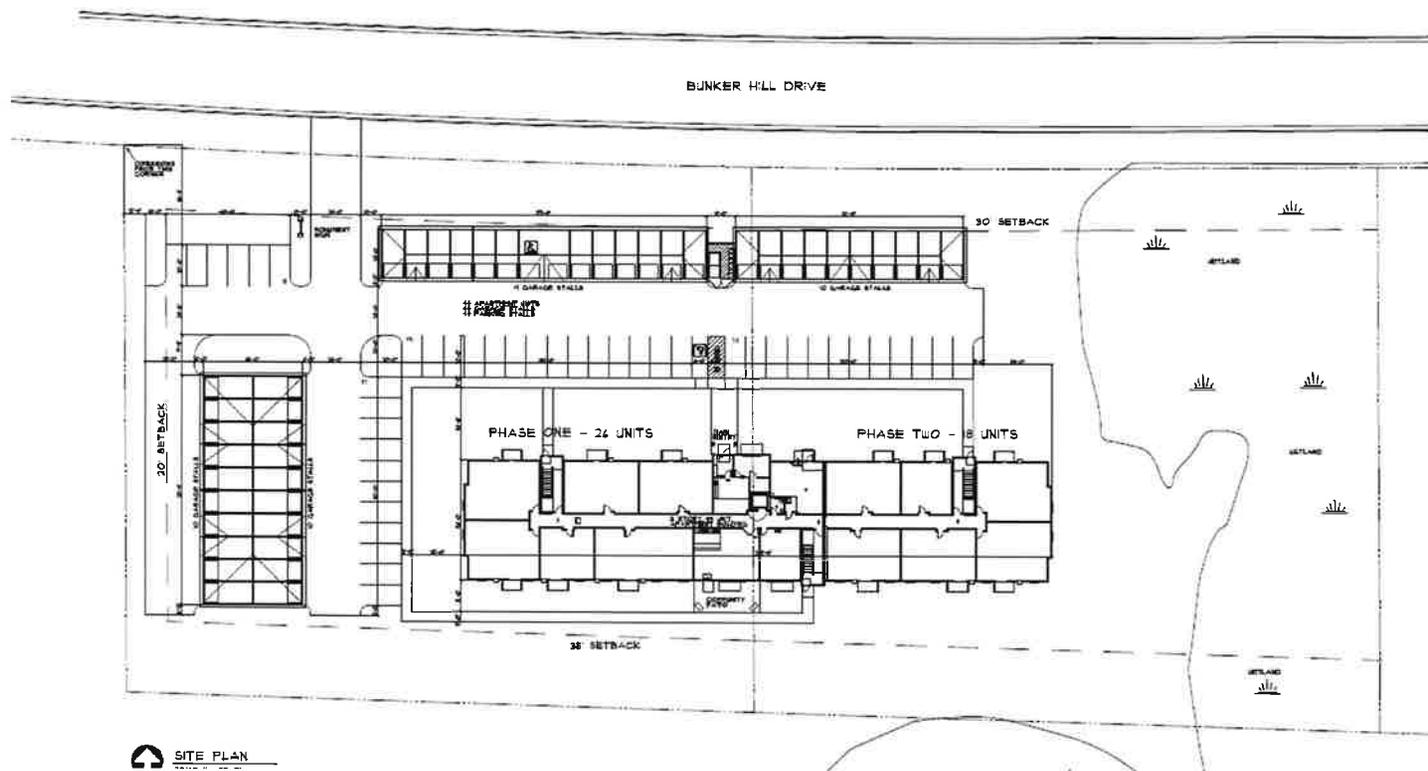
Support Housing Initiatives

- **Housing:** Aitkin County is currently working to approve a tax abatement application for INH Development. INH plans to build a 51 unit 55+ complex and a 44 unit multi-family market rate housing complex, both on Bunker Hill Drive in the City of Aitkin.



Support Housing Initiatives

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 SITE PLAN

Strategic Plan Tracking

Completed
Not on Track
Caution on timing
On track or Completed

Priority	Project	Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Status
Promote Recreation and Tourism					
	Aitkin County Branding Project		June, 2022	June, 2023	Completed
	Pipplesippi naming of trails		March, 2023	May, 2023	Completed
	Boost Grant		2022	2023	Completed
	Business Development & Recreation Grant	Annual County Grant		ongoing	Completed
Improve Broadband					
	McGrath Project	CDBG Grant, 5 Million to build internet availability	Aug, 2021	March, 2024	Completed
	Border to Border Projects	continued support of ISP projects in Aitkin County	June, 2021	ongoing	Completed
	Blandin Accelerate Cohort	County led committee on broadband knowledge	June, 2021	December, 2021	Completed
	Digital Inclusion Committee	County led committee on inclusion of rural residences	April, 2023	August, 2023	Completed
Support Childcare					
	Childcare facilities grant program	2022 Aitkin County Grant	April, 2022	Dec, 2022	Completed
	Childcare summit		June, 2022	June, 2022	Completed
	DEED Childcare grant		Dec, 2022	Dec, 2023	Caution on timing
	Childcare Acceleration Grant		Dec, 2022	Dec, 2023	Completed
Support Career Development					
	Aitkin HS FAB LAB	Collaboration with School District to improve program		ongoing	Caution on timing
	Collaboration with JET			Feb, 2023	Completed
Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction					
	Business Revitalization Grant	Aitkin County Grant	Jan, 2023	Dec, 2023	Completed
	Community Grant Program	Aitkin County Grant	Jan, 2022	Dec, 2022	Completed
Support Housing Initiatives					
	Housing Strategy Sessions			ongoing	Not on Track
	INH Development Tax Abatement				Completed
	Statewide local Housing Aid	\$97,000 available for Housing Trust Fund type events			Completed