



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

5F
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: November 14, 2023

Title of Item: Economic Development Q3 Impact Report

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA	Action Requested:	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested
<input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item
<input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY		<input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing* <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>

Submitted by: Mark Jeffers	Department: Administration
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Presenter (Name and Title): Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator	Estimated Time Needed: 20 minutes
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Summary of Issue:

Mark Jeffers will present the Q3 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? Yes No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted? Yes No

Please Explain:



Naturally Better.

Economic Development Update

Board of Commissioners

November 14, 2023

Priorities to Invoke Change

Promote Recreation
and Tourism

Support Career
Development

Improve
Broadband

Business Retention,
Expansion and
Attraction

Support
Childcare

Support Housing
Initiatives

Naturally Better.

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COUNTY

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COUNTY



Recreation & Tourism

- **Naturally Better Branding: digital marketing results (Aug).**

Aitkin County - Naturally Better - Digital Advertising Campaign Metrics

Tactic	Dates	Digital Ad Impressions	Clicks on Digital Ad to Naturally Better Here Website	Click Through Rate	National Average Click Through Rate	Video Views	YouTube Video View Through Rate	National YouTube Video View Through Rate
YouTube	August 2023	17,108	11	0.06%	.04% - 0.8%	16,345	95.5%	30-40%
Digital Display	August 2023	25,257	43	0.17%	.08% - 0.12%	758	-	-
Facebook	August 2023	637,098	4,672	0.7%	0.89%	-	-	0
Total		679,463	4726	0.70%		17,103		
Average				0.32%	0.9%			

- **Ripplesippi River Trails Committee:** The committee has worked to identify our river trail system and have named the Aitkin County trail system and the first 3 trails. A coordinated effort to inform the public and celebrate the naming will be held in early 2024.

Aitkin County Riverboat Trails

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Trail 1 | Pine Knoll Loop (Pine Knoll) |
| Trail 2 | Cedarbrook Way (Aitkin County Campground to Pine Knoll) |
| Trail 3 | Ripplesippi Trail (Aitkin City Park to Aitkin County Campground) |
| Trail 4 | Kimball Run (Kimball Access to Aitkin County Campground) |
| Trail 5 | (Waldeck to Kimball) |
| Trail 6 | (Palisade to Waldeck) |
| Trail 7 | (Wolds Ferry to Palisade) |
| Trail 8 | (Sandy Lake Recreation Area) |
| Trail 9 | (Lee Ferry to Wolds Ferry) |
| Trail 10 | (Verdon to Lee Ferry) |
| Trail 11 | (Jacobson to Verdon) |



Broadband

- **McGrath Project:** Construction is complete and home hook-up is underway. The project will be completed by December 2023. Stay tuned for the project completion celebration in the near future.
- **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.
- **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.
- **DEED Border to Border Grants:** 2024 applications are being submitted by ISPs. MLEC will present their 2024 plan to the economic development committee.



Child Care

- **2023 Childcare Acceleration Grant:** \$100,000 (DEED Grant) will be awarded to potential new childcare facilities in Aitkin County.
 - McGregor: A 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.
 - Tamarack: Aitkin County Economic Development is currently collaborating with the City of Tamarack, Talon Metals, a childcare provider to establish a childcare center in Tamarack.



Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction

- **Revitalization Grant:** Aitkin County has awarded over \$64,000 in an effort to help support building upgrades and building aesthetics for economic growth. Over \$143,000 has been requested.

Grants by City:

Aitkin	10
Hill City	3
McGregor	3
Palisade	1
Tamarack	1

- **Business Development & Recreation Grant:** Aitkin County has awarded over \$12,900 in grants in an effort to support tourism growth. Over \$27,000 has been requested.

Grants by City:

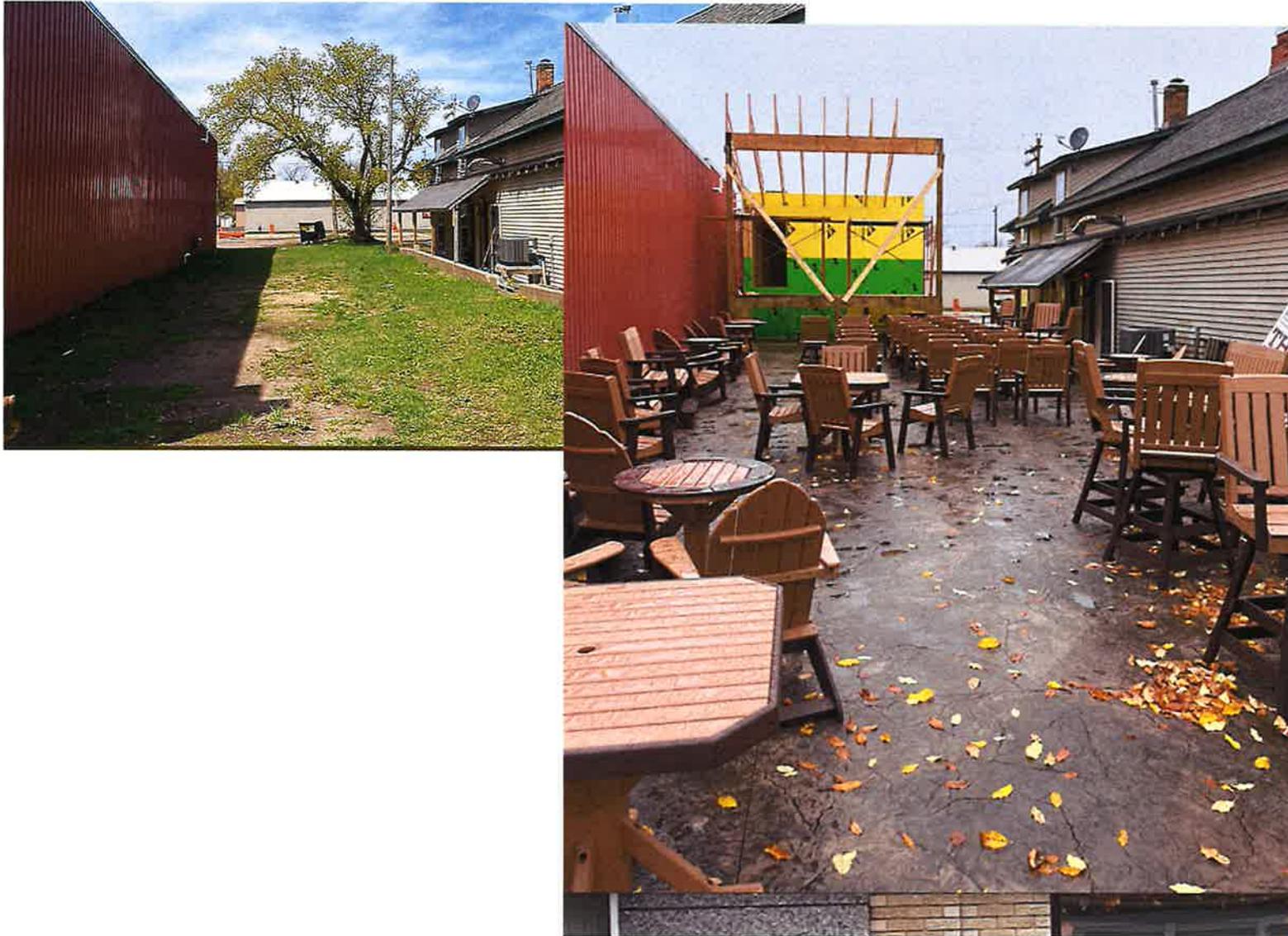
Aitkin	5
Hill City	1
McGregor	1
Palisade	2

- **Workforce Summit:** Aitkin County will host the first annual workforce summit March 7, 2024.

Revitalization Grant Execution: Hello Gorgeous

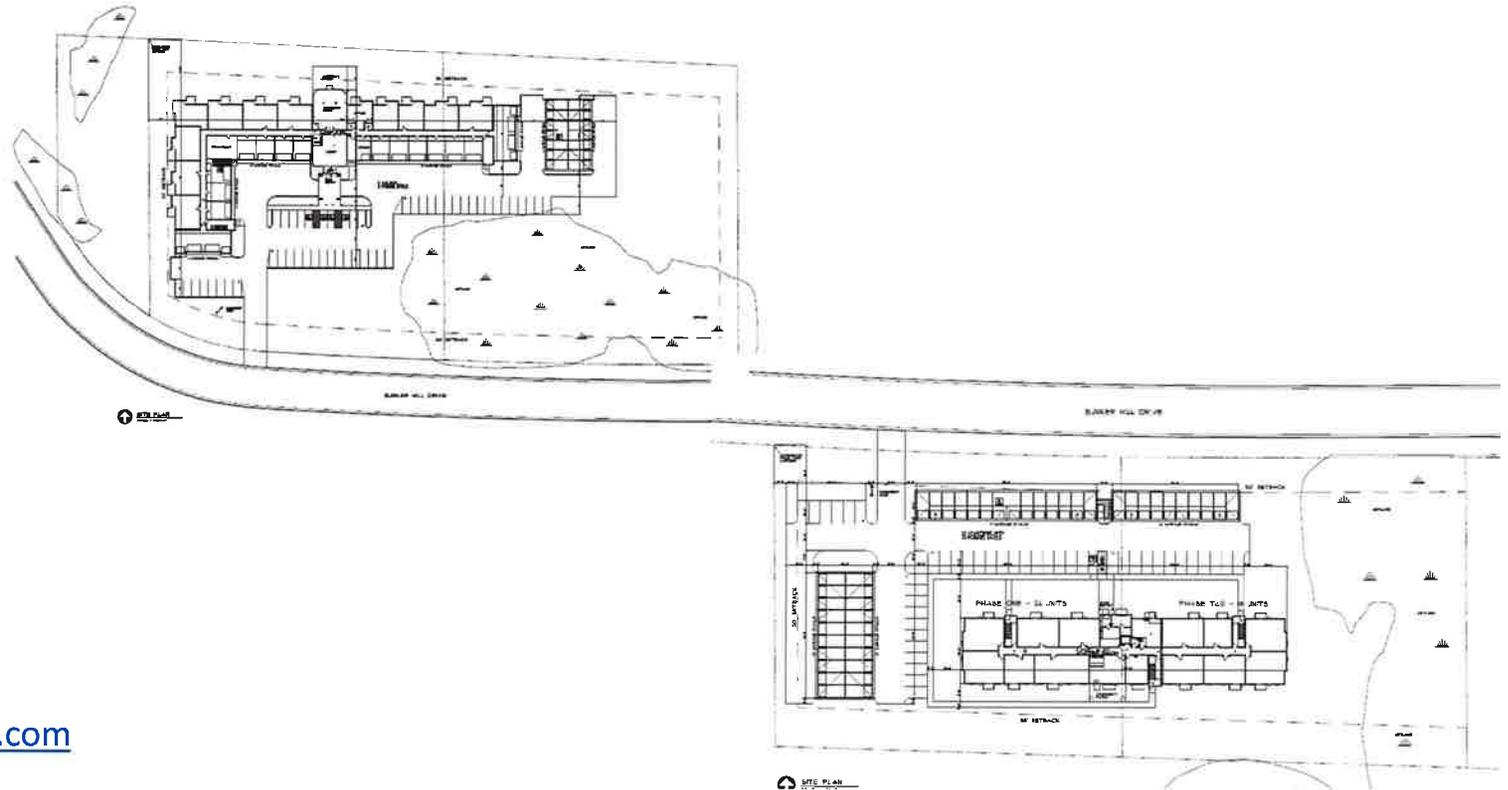


Revitalization Grant Execution: The Terrace



Support Housing Initiatives

- **Bunker Hills Housing**
 - Executed Developer Agreements for 44 unit workforce and 51 unit senior housing complex
 - Groundbreaking in June 2024
- **Housing Trust Fund**
 - Drafted ordinance
 - Drafted Housing Trust Fund implementation plan
 - Participating in the City Participation Program (new home buy down payment assistance)
 - Planning to engage cities with implementation plan ideas
 - Planning to engage developers with implementation plan ideas
 - Aitkin County will host the first annual housing development summit in Q1 2024.



Coordinator Updates

- **Organizations served:**
 - City of Aitkin Planning and Zoning Commission
 - Northspan Board of Directors, Vice-Chair
 - Iron Range Economic Alliance (IREA) Board of Directors, Vice-Chair
 - Minnesota Association of Professional Economic Developers (MAPCED) Legislative Priority Chairperson
 - Aitkin Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, current Chamber President
 - Aitkin County Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors
- **General updates:**
 - Completed a social media policy and organized a social media advisory group.
 - Hosted both the IREA and MAPCED quarterly meetings here at the Government Center.
 - Virtually attended Civic Engagement training in August.
 - Collaboration meetings with City officials for Aitkin, McGregor, Hill City, Tamarack and Palisade.
 - Visited the City of Sandstone, City Administrator, to learn more information on childcare development.
 - Attended and engaged in City of Tamarack future planning sessions
 - Attended and engaged in the County Revitalization Initiative.
 - Continued Grant Award Audits.

Coordinator Updates

- Grant Award Audits:

#	YEAR	Grant	Facility Name	Contact Name	\$ Awarded	payment complete	All Docs	MJ check in	MJ check in 2	MJ visit to confirm wo	Grant project completed
30	2022	Community Grant Program	Northwoods ATV Alliance	Harlan Kingsley	\$ 3,500.00	yes	yes	6/22/2023			yes
31	2022	Community Grant Program	ALANO Club	Jim Jenson	\$ 5,000.00	yes	yes				yes
32	2023	Business Development & Recreation	Long Lake Conservation Foundation	Bob Markum	\$ 2,000.00	yes	yes	6/27/2023			Yes
33	2023	Business Development & Recreation	Palisade Event Committee	Nancy Havila	\$ 925.00	yes	yes				yes
34	2023	Revitalization Grant	Lowe Properties	Peter Lowe	\$ 5,000.00	yes	yes	8/15/2023			Yes
35	2023	Revitalization Grant	Northland Hydraulic Services	Phil Gerber	\$ 5,000.00	Yes	yes				
36	2023	Revitalization Grant	My Crafts & Things	Michiyo Schanz	\$ 1,150.50	yes	yes	10/10/2023			
35	2023	Revitalization Grant	The Locker Room	Peter Lowe	\$ 3,000.00	yes	yes				
36	2023	Revitalization Grant	Jaques Art Center	Pamela Andell	\$ 1,020.00	yes	yes				
37	2023	Revitalization Grant	Smokey Jake's BBQ	Jacob Schanz	\$ 1,006.00	yes	yes	6/27/2023			Yes
38	2023	Revitalization Grant	Roadside Market	Anita Klennert-Sonaglia	\$ 5,000.00	yes	yes				
39	2023	Business Development & Recreation	Habitat for Humanity	Ann Schwartz	\$ 1,100.00	yes	Yes	6/27/2023			yes
40	2023	Business Development & Recreation	Jaques Art Center	Pamela Andell	\$ 1,400.00	yes	yes	9/28/2023	N/A	N/A	Yes
41	2023	Revitalization Grant	Growth Innovations (Bldg 2)	Stan Gustafson	\$ 1,521.00	yes	Yes	6/27/2023			Yes
42	2023	Revitalization Grant	The Village Pump Saloon	Allison Jensen	\$ 4,600.00	yes	Yes				
43	2023	Business Development & Recreation	Aitkin Chamber of Commerce	Taylor Erckson	\$ 1,550.00	yes	yes	8/15/2023			yes
44	2023	Business Development & Recreation	Rialto Theatre	Kirk Peysar	\$ 1,257.00						

Strategic Plan Tracking



Priority	Project	Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Status
Promote Recreation and Tourism	Aitkin County Branding Project		June, 2022	June, 2023	On track or Completed
	Pipplesippi naming of trails		March, 2023	May, 2023	On track or Completed
	Boost Grant		2022	2023	On track or Completed
	Business Development & Recreation Grant	Annual County Grant		ongoing	On track or Completed
Improve Broadband	McGrath Project	CDBG Grant, 5 Million to build internet availability	Aug, 2021	March, 2024	On track or Completed
	Border to Border Projects	continued support of ISP projects in Aitkin County	June, 2021	ongoing	On track or Completed
	Blandin Accelerate Cohort	County led committee on broadband knowledge	June, 2021	December, 2021	On track or Completed
	Digital Inclusion Committee	County led committee on inclusion of rural residences	April, 2023	August, 2023	On track or 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	On track or 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	Caution on timing
	INH Development Tax Abatement	developer agreements complete			On track or Completed
	Established Housing Trust Fund		23-Oct		Caution on timing
	Statewide local Housing Aid	\$97,000 available for Housing Trust Fund type events			Caution on timing