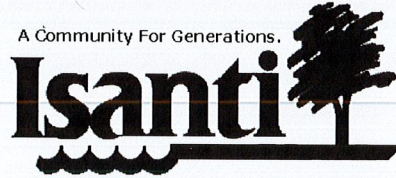


City Council Chambers

Tuesday, February 4, 2020

Immediately Following the 7:00pm City Council Meeting

A Community For Generations.



Economic Development Authority Agenda

1. Call to Order
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance
 - b. Roll Call
 - c. Agenda Modifications
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Approve Minutes of January 7, 2020 Regular Economic Development Authority Meeting
4. Business Items
 - a. Marketing/Work Plan Update
5. Other Business / Updates / Communications
6. Adjournment

Economic Development Authority
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2020

1. **Call to Order:** EDA President Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm.
 - a. **Pledge of Allegiance**
 - b. **Roll Call:** Members Present – Johnson, Bergley, Gordon, Reller, Lundeen and Collison. Staff Present: Community Development Director Sheila Sellman, and City Administrator Josi Wood.
 - c. **Agenda Modification:** None
2. **Consider Adoption of Resolution Approving Organization of Advisory Board:**
Bergley motioned to nominate Mayor Johnson for the 2020 EDA President, second by Collison, motion passed 6-0. Collison motioned to nominate Lundeen for 2020 EDA Vice-President, second by Bergley, motion passed 6-0. Motion by Lundeen to remove EDA President pro-tem, second by Gordon, motion passed 6-0. Lundeen motioned to keep the Secretary and Treasurer the same – appointing the Community Development Director as Secretary and the Finance Director as the Treasurer, second by Bergley, motion passed 6-0. Motion by Lundeen second by Bergley to adopt Amended and Restated Bylaws motion passed 6-0. Motion by Bergley to adopt the 2020 meeting schedule second by Collison, motion passed.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Motion by Collison, second by Bergley to approve December 3, 2019 meeting minutes motion passes 6-0.
4. **Business item**
 - a. **Revolving Loan Policy update:** Motion to approve by Lundeen second by Gordon, motion passed 6-0
5. **Other Business:** Sellman provided an overview of business prospects, building permit activity, business arrivals and departures for 2019, GPS45:93 2019 highlights and a list of businesses that she and the Mayor visited in 2019.
6. **Closed Session:** The EDA went into closed session to discuss the sale of EDA land at 825 East Dual Blvd. The regular meeting resumed and the EDA directed Sellman to start negotiations on the sale. Motion by Lundeen, second by Bergley for Director Sellman to start negotiations for the sale of 825 East Dual with the parameters discussed in the closed session, motion passed 6-0.
7. **Adjourn:** Motion by Bergley, second by Collison to adjourn, motion passed 6-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:58.

Respectfully Submitted

Sheila Sellman, Community Development Director/EDA Secretary



Memo for EDA Action

To: Economic Development Authority

From: Sheila Sellman, Community Development Director

Date: February 4, 2020

Subject: Marketing/Work Plan update

Background:

In 2015 the EDA adopted an EDA Marketing/Work plan. Now that five years have passed it is important for the EDA to review and update the plan. Attached for discussion is a draft of the update, suggested changes are shown by strikethroughs and underlining new language. As part of the process the EDA filled out a short survey the results are attached.

As part of the update staff would specifically like to discuss the following items:

1. Memberships
2. Facebook
3. Rail Options
4. Housing Study update
5. Clinic/medical campus

Recommendation:

Staff recommends discussion on the draft plan and to direct staff to make any changes and bring back a final version for adoption.

Attachments:

- Draft Plan
- Survey Results

2015 EDA Marketing / Work Plan
Adopted March 3, 2015 Updated

MISSION

The Economic Development Authority promotes and supports the growth of commercial and industrial development and tax base through the use of economic development methods and tools.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1) Strengthen the City of Isanti economy through the support of local business, attraction of new businesses, creation of jobs and the diversification of industries.

Objectives

- 1-1.1 Sell / deed vacant industrial land in Isanti Centennial Complex to manufacturing/warehousing businesses.
- 1-1.2 Help promote the sale or lease of vacant space in commercial and industrial properties owned by private sector.
- 1-1.3 Utilize all economic development tools available that support retention, expansion and attraction of industry.
- 1-1.4 Identify industries vertically integrated to industries in Isanti and recruit.
- 1-1.5 Support efforts to develop a rail served industrial park in Isanti.
- 1-1.6 Use Market/Tourism Feasibility study to bring a hotel to Isanti.
- 1-1.7 Support efforts to bring a clinic/medical campus and related business to Isanti. Is this still a goal?
- 1-1.8 Maintain prospect database and contact prospects in a timely manner.
- 1-1.9 Consider zoning changes that reflect the market conditions and will increase the tax base of the City.
- 1-1.10 Maintain Membership in the Initiative Foundation to keep financial resource flexibility for project financing
- 1-1.11 Maintain membership in GPS 45:93 to take advantage of regional marketing and prospect generation through Community Venture Network. Economic Development Director Sullivan is a member of the Executive Committee of this organization for 2015. Community Development Director Sheila Sellman is designated as the Isanti County Rep for the Minnesota Marketing Partnership (MMP).
- 1-1.12 Maintain membership in Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM) to increase exposure for the City of Isanti and to

increase business leads. ~~Economic Development Director Sullivan is elected to Board of Directors (2014-2015)~~

1-1.13 Maintain membership/partnership in the Chamber of Commerce

1-1.14 Maintain partnership with East Central Regional Development Commission

- 2) Position Isanti as a low cost, business/developer friendly, growing, healthy community with small town feel and amenities, with a plan to grow in an orderly manner. ~~cutting edge, modern alternative to Anoka County for industrial development.~~

Objectives

- 2-1.1 Utilize city website and other marketing mediums to promote Isanti in general including low taxes for business operations growing/young community, new infrastructure, parks, small town feel in Isanti.
- 2-1.2 Targeted direct marketing ~~to East Bethel, Blaine and Ham Lake manufacturers to relocate and /or expand in Isanti~~ -is this still an objective?
- 2-1.3 Promote "Minnesota Shovel Ready Certification" for industrial sites with the assistance of ~~the WEBSITE, LOIS, MNCAR,~~ brochures and the Internet.
- 2-1.4 ~~Market local success stories through the City Website, GPS 45:93, EDAM, Facebook and local media.~~
- 2-1.5 Highlight availability of City Sewer and Water Services outside of Metropolitan Council Control.
- 2-1.6 ~~Market stability of City Council and the streamlined development process that allows for projects to be approved quickly.~~
- 2-1.7 Market SAC and WAC Deferral program to area developers and businesses.
- 2-1.8 Market advantages of lower tax assessed values and omission from fiscal disparities which result in lower property taxes.

- 3) Enhance the appeal of Isanti as a place to work and live.

Objectives

- 3-1.1 ~~Initiate efforts to improve winter driving conditions of County and State Roads and efficiencies for travel corridors~~
- 3-1.2 Support improved trail and sidewalk connectivity for residents, schools, commercial and industrial areas, and neighboring communities.
- 3-1.3 Market existing quality housing stock and new schools.

- 3-1.4 Support marketing activities that highlight community events or organizations. ~~((i.e. adding additional signs for other events held in Isanti on a seasonal basis at the NW corner of Hwy 65 and CSAH No. 5 (Johnson Property))~~
- 3-1.5 Support and assist in the recruitment of the development of a medical clinic, hotel, restaurants and other retail developments that will bring people to Isanti to live.
- 3-1.6 Work with local organizations which includes but is not limited to: such as Rum River BMX, Cambridge Isanti Soccer Association, ISD 911, Firefighter's Rodeo and Chambers of Commerce to market successes and activities in Community

4) Support redevelopment and expansion efforts in Historical Downtown/Heritage Blvd.

Objectives

- 4-1.1 Utilize East Central Minnesota ~~Regional~~ Housing Study and Executive Summary to bring investment to Isanti for Senior and Market Rate Housing. City Council is looking to update this -partner in those efforts?
- 4-1.2 Work with existing businesses on the enhancement, maintenance, rehabilitation and renovation of property utilizing Tax Increment Financing, RLF Fund and other local economic development incentive programs.
- 4-1.3 Encourage new capital investment by brokering transactions and marketing development opportunities in Isanti.
- 4-1.4 Support connections between the Historic Downtown and Heritage Blvd retail districts.

5) Increase City of Isanti visibility and participation in business community.

Objectives

- 5-1.1 Support chamber initiatives that are consistent with City Policy and attend meetings.
- 5-1.2 Coordinate and host Mayor's Employer Appreciation Luncheon
- 5-1.3 Conduct Business Retention and Expansion visits and listen to business needs and concerns.
- 5-1.4 Keep Information on City Website current and highlight community successes.

- 5-1.5 Work with Isanti Mayor to issue proclamation for Minnesota Manufacturer's Week, visit with businesses and present Certificate of Commendation from Governor.
- 5-1.6 Continue to provide updates on city programs and services that are helpful to businesses and promote local events in the Isantian Newsletter or via the business list.
- 5-1.7 Email to Businesses
- 5-1.8 Establish new relationships and nurture existing relationships with area banks, brokers and contractors.
- 5-1.9 Update Isanti Business List semi-annually.
- 5-1.10 Attend functions as approved by the City Council that allow Isanti to express concerns regarding the creation or maintaining of an economic development friendly environment (i.e. legislative forums)
- 5-1.11 Distribute marketing items for the City of Isanti. (Pencils, pins, coffee cups, higher-end item for dignitaries, or other appropriate items as needed).
- 5-1.12 Explore Signage on Hwy 65 to increase visibility and identity for Isanti
- 5-1.13 Utilize memberships in economic development organizations (EDAM, GPS 45:93) to market the City of Isanti to a larger audience.
- 5-1.14 Continue meet and greet visits with the Mayor and tours of all businesses in town
- 5-1.15 Attend and participate in Isanti County EDA Meetings.

LOCAL SWOT ANALYSIS While this is good information it is not necessary for a marketing/work plan and is quickly outdated. Staff suggests removing it from this document.

- 1) **Availability of development sites and facilities:** Isanti has many industrial and commercial site and buildings available for sale or lease. The myriad of options serve as a *strength*. The City also has areas available for expansion and is not land locked. The City has four "Minnesota Shovel Ready Certified" sites within Isanti Centennial Complex ready for immediate development. There is approximately 30,000 square feet of vacant industrial buildings in the industrial park in Isanti. In addition, there is also five vacant, Minnesota Shovel Ready Certified, lots in the City owned industrial park. The affordable available space, and lots is a strength for the community. This is a competitive advantage for the City of Isanti.
- 2) **Business Incentives:** Many assistance programs are available for new businesses choosing to locate in Isanti and this is a *strength*. Most programs available to the city

are for new construction and aren't targeted to existing businesses which serves as a *weakness*. Tax Increment Financing, Tax Abatement, and SAC and WAC Deferral are available to spur investment. The State of Minnesota implemented and funded the MN Job Creation Fund and MIF in 2014. These programs require a minimum of 10 new jobs to be created. The economy is improving but there is still a reservation by many business prospects to move this far out regardless of the attractive incentives. The City owns approximately 150 acres of vacant land and this is a *strength* and potentially a competitive advantage. Well priced, privately owned land east of State Hwy 65 along the highway is also available for development.

- 3) **Business Retention and Expansion Program:** The City of Isanti conducts business expansion and retention visits which serves as an *opportunity* for growth and stability. In 2014, 15 formal visits were conducted. Many informal visits are conducted by the Economic Development Director and Mayor throughout the year. Continuation of this program will help identify expansion opportunities and strengthen relationships with businesses.
- 4) **Cambridge:** Cambridge is a large regional center in Isanti County. Home to the county seat and regional educational and health care facilities serves as a *threat* to the City of Isanti. Cambridge continues to draw large scale commercial investment along State Hwy 95. Fleet Farm and Aldi opened in 2013 and create a draw to the region. Industrial development in Cambridge has been slow and poor access to major roadways is a *strength* for Isanti. The combination of the Isanti and Cambridge Chambers of Commerce serve as an *opportunity* for Isanti to benefit from the membership and funds of the Cambridge Chamber.
- 5) **Chamber of Commerce:** The Isanti Area Chamber of Commerce and Cambridge Area Chamber of Commerce are in the process of a merger. It has been communicated that the collective office will remain in Isanti but move to 2 Enterprise. The merger is anticipated to be complete in April 2015 with the new fiscal year starting in July. The new name for the combined chamber will be North 65 Chamber of Commerce. There are concerns as to the City of Isanti losing its identity as a result of the merger would could be a *weakness*. The EDA has communicated a willingness to have the same level of access as the City of Cambridge to the Board of Directors. Current leadership of each chamber feels that pooling resources will result in a more robust and effective chamber and if this is accomplished it could serve as an *opportunity* for more business development.

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6) **Economic Conditions:** Economic conditions have improved in 2014 and more investment is being made in Minnesota. Still, the City of Isanti, is still considered too far out by many brokers and site selectors. The volume of deals getting done is improving and trying to gain a share of this growth is realistic. Identifying and targeting companies where their workforce and ownership is closer to Isanti would be a way to capitalize on the improving economy. Downsizing has been a trend for businesses during the poor economic conditions and this serves as an *opportunity* for Isanti. Isanti has available building inventory and lower cost alternatives to property located in the metropolitan area. Improvement in the economy and the implementation of the SAC and WAC deferral program lead to 14 new housing starts in 2013 and 38 more in 2014.

7) **Education Opportunities:** Primary, Intermediate and Middle Schools are located in Isanti and proximity to post-secondary education at Anoka Ramsey Community College is a *strength*. School District 911 and community leaders held a strategic planning session in late 2014-15. The session lead to some bold new initiatives based on "leading", "achieving" and "innovation". The 5 year plan put in place is highlighted by 1) Learning and Research, 2) Partnerships and Innovation, 3) Spanish Immersion and Career Readiness, 4) Leadership and Character Development and 5) Personalized Learning and Planning for the Future". The addition of the Arts and Science Academy Charter School in 2014 provides access to another education alternative. This school also has the ability to draw residents from outside of Isanti to the community which is an opportunity. Both the additions of the Charter School and the adoption of the new plan for School District 911 serve as great *opportunities* for Isanti to improve business and resident recruitment to the community. The availability of online and cohort learning opportunities for 4 year colleges has minimized the *weakness* of not having a four year college within 20 miles.

8) **Environmental Aspects:** Soils and hydrology in the City are generally *strengths* for development. The City does not have a regional pond system for some of its development sites and the required onsite ponding for projects can serve as a *weakness* where it is required. The State of Minnesota continues to require higher water quality standards for storm and wastewater. These items are costly and the result of the pass through costs of maintaining these higher standards is yet to be understood. Staff anticipates that this will prove to be short term *weakness* until other communities are required to maintain the same standards.

9) **Financial Institutions and Finance:** The City has four financial institutions located within the City limits which provide options for financing. Investment by the banking

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community in the City constitutes a strength. The potential for financial partnerships with these institutions is an opportunity. In 2015 there have been some indications that some of the financial institution may be acquired which could be viewed as an opportunity to bring investment from outside of the community and to increase lending amounts. The city currently has an A+ bond rating which demonstrates the financial stability of the City and is a strength.

10) **Fuel Prices:** Prices for fuel have fallen significantly into the range of \$2.10-2.30 per gallon range for regular unleaded gasoline. Lower fuel prices increase the marketability of the City of Isanti by creating more connectivity to the 7 County Metro Area. In order to have businesses and future residents commit to Isanti the prices need to stabilize so that there can be confidence in commuter and transportation costs. \$2.75 gallon or less for regular unleaded gas for an extended period of time would help investment for the community. The decreased cost of transportation for raw materials, manufactured or distributed goods could be looked at as a strength for a community located 30 miles outside of Minneapolis/St Paul for travel over the roads.

11) **Governmental Factors:** Government regulation and requirements that cities are bound by serve as a weakness. The ability of the City to manage zoning and planning outside of the Metropolitan Council control is a strength and opportunity to react quickly to the market if needed. The City council for the City of Isanti has had very few changes in policy and leadership over the past 5 years. In relation to cohesiveness, especially compared to neighboring communities it may be considered a strength.

12) **Health Care:** A strength with the presence of health care facilities (hospital and clinics in Cambridge) nearby. An opportunity for a local clinic exists and should be explored in 2015. Adding a clinic along the Hwy 65 corridor would add to convenience to commuters and residents and take some reliance off the over-utilized clinic in Cambridge.

13) **Housing Market / Foreclosure:** Based on the continued economic recovery in 2014, it appears as if the foreclosure crisis has come to an end in Isanti. To originally address the aforementioned foreclosure crisis, the Foreclosure Committee was created on April 1, 2008 by the City Council. The committee was created to track and monitor foreclosed homes, to ascertain their condition and address nuisance situations and property situations to stabilize the condition of the foreclosed housing stock. In April 2010, 171 single family homes were in the foreclosure process with 57 of those homes being vacant, which represented 12% of the entire housing stock in the City of Isanti which

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was one of the highest rates in the state. On October 21, 2014, the City Council adopted Resolution 2014-252—Sunsetting the Foreclosure Committee citing that less than 3% of the city housing stock is in the process of foreclosure. Over the course of 2014 the city has seen market values begin to recover and 38 new housing permits were pulled in 2014. As of November 7, 2014 there were 324 platted single family lots in Isanti. This is a strength for the community. According to the Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors the Average Sales Price when comparing December 2013 to December 2014 has increased from \$125,682 to \$179,325 (+42.7%) when comparing 2013 to 2014 as a whole the Average Sales Price has increased from \$131,403 to \$153,033 (16.5%) Days on the market has decreased from 82 to 66 which is trending positively for Isanti. Similar numbers exist for Cambridge with Average Sales price slightly lower in Cambridge.

14) **Image:** In the past, Isanti has been hurt immensely from the news relating to foreclosures and unemployment in the construction industry which was a perceived weakness. Changes in the economy in the construction of 14 new homes in 2013 and 38 in 2014 is improving this image and there have not been any recent articles written about Isanti and the foreclosure crisis that shed a poor light on the community. Isanti has worked at establishing itself as a low cost alternative to the Metro Area but the overtones of the poor economy and foreclosure are an obstacle that will need to be overcome. The development of a current brochure, attainment of "Shovel Ready Certification", and being present at site selection conferences will improve the image of Isanti. Neighboring Communities have not enjoyed the stability that the City of Isanti City Council has provided and this creates a "trusting" environment for potential developers.

15) **Isanti County GIS System:** Isanti County has a Beacon GIS Maps and a Pictometry system with 2011 aerial maps and enhanced pictometry available for use. This system allows the city to produce maps that can be used for marketing purposes and it is able to generate meaningful tax reports which would be considered a strength.

16) **Isanti Indoor Arena — Home of Rum River BMX:** In 2014, The Isanti City Council voted to issue tax abatement bonds to construct the Isanti Indoor Arena — Home of Rum River BMX. The facility will be 75,000 square feet and will allow for year round racing in this cold weather climate state. This project was made possible by an agreement between Rum River BMX Association and the City of Isanti. Rum River BMX Association will be leasing the facility from the city of Isanti for a period of 40 years. Based on estimates provided by Rum River BMX, it is anticipated that this one of a kind facility will bring up

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to 80,000 participants/spectators to the City of Isanti each year. It also is considered a huge demand generator for bringing a hotel to the City of Isanti.

17) **Labor:** The unemployment rate for Isanti County was reported at 4.0% in November 2014. This represents a drop of 0.3% over the past year which is very positive. The availability of this workforce is a *strength*. Isanti County also has a higher percentage of people with high school diplomas or GEDs (91.6%) than the nation, but a lower percentage of people with a bachelor's degree or higher (16.5%). Instead, Isanti County has a very high percentage of people with some college, but no degree (26.2%) and a higher percentage of people with associate degrees (9.3%) than the U.S. In sum, more than one in every four adults in Isanti County has a college degree. 20% of workers in Isanti were employed in the construction industry which was hit hard under the current economic downturn. When the economy improves, the availability of the skill set of this workforce will be an *opportunity* for employers in the region.

18) **Lodging:** The City of Isanti does not currently have a hotel in the community which is a *community weakness*. The City of Isanti loses the ability to capture commerce and dollars from outside of the community if participants of sporting venues, business travelers, vacationers are not able to stay in town overnight. The closest hotel to Isanti is a Grand Stay Crossings in Cambridge which is 7 miles north of Isanti. The City Council Authorized a Market/Tourism Feasibility Study in 2014 with preliminary results showing a good market for a hotel in Isanti. Establishing a hotel in Isanti is a City Council/EDA Priority.

19) **Overall Cost of Doing Business:** Isanti has a solid industrial base and its proximity to the Twin City Metropolitan Area is a *strength* and it serves as an opportunity for recruiting prospects. Property taxes for comparable building sizes are less in Isanti than in the Metropolitan Area due to the materials of construction allowed and lower land values. Land is less expensive for retail and industrial users when compared to the Twin Cities Metro Area and Cambridge which serves as an *opportunity* for Isanti. From a retail perspective Isanti is challenged. Three to five mile trade areas do not support populations that larger retailers generally need which is a *weakness*. However, when adding Cambridge to our Market area the numbers look much more promising. Work was done to compare the development costs for surrounding communities and the results were varied. Generally speaking property taxes for Isanti were lower when compared to developed cities but fees associated with Sewer and Water usage and SAC and WAC were higher. When compared to townships, the development costs for all cities was significantly higher. A rate study will be conducted in 2015 which should give

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some insight into future costs in this area. Currently, Isanti County does not have a coordinated approach to rural development and does not encourage growth to occur in the developed cities.

20) **Population Characteristics:** Isanti has an estimated population of 5,395 based on information from the US Census in 2012. Based on staff assumptions it is estimated that the population is closer to 5,500 as of December 2014. Isanti grew at a very rapid rate from 2000 to 2008. Isanti County is still projected to be the fourth fastest growing county in the state for the next two decades. The relatively young population with a median age of 28.4 and growth in recent years is a *strength*.

21) **Prospect/Project Management Capabilities:** In March 2010 an Economic Development Director position was filled and is held by the same individual. This constituted a change in how Isanti operates and devotes more staff time to addressing economic development needs and concerns. The continuity in this position and the City Council is an advantage over communities that do not have staff related specifically related to economic development and is a *strength*. With more devoted staff, response time to prospect inquiries has improved.

22) **Proximity to Twin Cities Metropolitan Area:** The distance from the Twin Cities and its strong manufacturing industries is a *weakness* for Isanti. Travel times from suppliers and related industries not in Isanti County add costs for businesses. Being outside of the Metro Area is a *strength* in that it is not governed by the Metropolitan Council and land and development costs for projects can be much more inexpensive.

23) **Quality of Life:** Isanti has a historic downtown with a small town feel, smaller local retail options and located close enough to the regional center of Cambridge to satisfy the needs of its residents. Proximity to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area serves arts and recreation needs not met within the community. The development of the city trail system and the connectivity to other communities is a *strength*. In 2012, Legacy Park was completed. This park/trail system is unique and has the potential to draw visitors from outside the community. In 2014, a full time Parks and Event Coordinator was hired to increase programming and to operate the Isanti Family Farmers Market and street dances re-established by the EDA in 2013. The mix of housing stock highlighted by the over-abundance of starter homes and lack of the senior component serve as a *weakness* for the community.

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24) **Rail:** Isanti is located on rail and this is an *opportunity*. Commuter rail and transportation of freight are potential draws for both residents, and businesses within the region. A concept plan for a rail-served industrial park is complete and the Isanti County EDA headed up a study in 2011 to determine the feasibility within Isanti County. Site for Cambridge, Braham and Isanti were analyzed and only the City of Isanti site was deemed financially feasible. The current national and regional economy does not currently support this type of development now. Once the economy improves the City of Isanti Site is a valid option for a Rail-Served Industrial Park for the Northern Metropolitan Area. If economic conditions continue improve this would be considered a *strength*.

25) **Relationships and Memberships with Economic Development Organizations:**

Membership in Economic Development Organizations and taking advantage of marketing and networking opportunities is a *strength* for Isanti. Isanti is directly or indirectly affiliated with the following organizations: Economic Development Association of Minnesota, GPS 45:93, Greater MSP, MN Prospector, Positively Minnesota, Community Venture Network, and Isanti County EDA. A competent local chamber of commerce will help the City of Isanti succeed. The creation of the North 65 Chamber of Commerce serves as an *opportunity* for the region to rebrand and to work together.

26) **Telecommunications:** The City is adequately served for phone service for landline and wireless technologies. Broadband services are generally available via fiber optic or cable. It is unknown what the future of communications will be in regards to fiber optics or wireless options. Isanti has a reliable system available for both residents and businesses so this would be considered a *strength*. Fiber Optic has been installed in portions of Centennial Industrial Complex in 2012 which serves as a *strength* for Isanti. There is a broadband initiative that will extend fiber to Anoka-Ramsey Community College in Cambridge which could be an *opportunity* to build the area network.

27) **Transportation System (roads):** Isanti is situated at the intersection of State Hwy 65 and Isanti County Hwy 5. Improvements have been made to the intersection of these roads and the stoplight serves as a *strength* and *opportunity* for business development. Isanti is not located on an interstate highway/freeway and this is viewed as a *weakness* to larger manufacturers, distribution centers and large format retailers. Average daily traffic counts for the intersection of Hwy 65 and County Road 5 are 20,500 trips per day which is a strong potential market. Winter driving conditions on state and county roads is poor after significant winter precipitation events and this serves as a *weakness*. Working to improve winter driving conditions and for major transportation corridors would help alleviate this evident *weakness*. In 2014 a Pavement Management Plan was

adopted by the City Council. This document serves a guide to keep the roads in good condition now and into the future.

28) **Utilities:** Isanti is fully served by City Services for Sewer and Water. The capacity and functionality of this system is a *strength*. The debt generated by the extension of city services east of Highway 65 is a *weakness* due to its impact on the City tax levy, connection charges and rates. Isanti is outside of the Metropolitan Council Service Area which is viewed as a *strength* because of the local government control. Centerpoint Energy and Connexus Energy are capable primary providers of electricity and natural gas for the community. Connexus Energy could be a partner in economic development initiatives and could be viewed as an *opportunity*.

29) **Web Presence:** The City of Isanti enhanced its web presence in 2014 by upgrading the City Website. The addition of the City of Isanti to the GPS 45:93 regional marketing website and updates to the existing city site improve the city presence in the market. Isanti is also being marketed on the LOIS site and by Greater MSP. Isanti industrial sites are now listed on the MNCAR System. Isanti County launched a "Tools for Business Success" site that also serves as a resource for area businesses and another avenue for marketing Isanti. City Staff was very involved in the development of the site. Increased use of these mediums is an *opportunity* to enhance the image of Isanti.

COMPETITION

Northern Anoka County, Isanti County and the Chisago County represent areas that are competing against the City of Isanti for business and market share. Communities within the geographic boundary include: Athens Township, Cambridge, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Ramsey, and North Branch.

Athens Township is the first community outside of Anoka County with substantial industrial development on Hwy 65. Strengths for Athens Township include: 1) significantly lower tax rate than Isanti, 2) successful, visible industrial development along Hwy 65, and 3) closer proximity to Minneapolis St. Paul and other manufacturers. Improvements to Hwy 65 to the South of Athens will increase its appeal to business looking to locate out of the Metro Area. Economic Development efforts by Isanti County which allows development in the Townships serves as a *threat*.

Cambridge has developed into a regional retail center and has more amenities than the City of Isanti. Anoka Ramsey Community College, healthcare facilities, the county seat and

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government center all serve as additional trip generators for that community which makes it formidable competition to the city for retail and industrial investment. Cambridge boasts the closest JOBZ district to the Twin Cities at a distance of 45 miles from Minneapolis and Isanti does not have that incentive to offer businesses it is recruiting. Fleet Farm is scheduled to open in 2013. This store should bring commerce to the region and Isanti is positioned to receive residual benefit from increased commerce in the region. The strengths for Cambridge include: 1) a strong retail tax base, 2) a strong governmental services presence, 3) healthcare facilities, 4) a strong political lobby for the region, 5) many choices for shopping, eating and recreational opportunities, 6) GIS capabilities and GIS staff and 7) a hotel. Weaknesses include: 1) poor transportation corridors and parking issues within older portion of city, 2) highest tax rate in Isanti County, and 3) lack of synergy relating to the development of industrial development.

East Bethel is an emerging competitor for the City of Isanti. In 2010 a large sewer and water project was approved by the East Bethel City Council. Construction for this project commenced in 2011 and phase one was completed in June of 2013. This project has brought sewer and water to the intersection of Trunk Hwy 65 and County Road 22. Aggressive Hydraulics opened its 60,000 square foot manufacturing facility in 2013. Future phasing of the project will add city services north along State Trunk Highway 65. The second phase of the project is estimated to be completed in 2014 and future phase have been put on hold. The joint project between the City of East Bethel and the Metropolitan Council was estimated to be upwards of 27 Million Dollars. The project financing is dependent on hook ups to the city by new and existing businesses. East Bethel has reported the hookups have not occurred at the rate originally projected. It would appear as if development could become expensive in the foreseeable future for East Bethel. This project positions East Bethel as the first city North of Blaine on Hwy 65 with city services and could serve as a barrier to development moving North to Isanti. Currently Isanti has many advantages over East Bethel including: 1) education institutions, 2) an established downtown and organized business district, 3) consolidation of population and workforce, 4) freedom from Metropolitan Council control 5) a solid industrial tax base, 6) a stable City Council and lower land costs and tax assessment values. Advantages for East Bethel include: 1) population over 10,000, 2) closer proximity to Minneapolis / St. Paul and the established industry, 3) movie theatre, 4) larger city area, establishment of frontage road systems along Hwy 65.

Ham Lake does not have city utility services and there are no plans to add them. Industrial and retail development is focused along Hwy 65. Ham Lake has some advantages over

the City of Isanti that include: 1) an AmericInn on Hwy 65, 2) closer proximity to Minneapolis / St. Paul and the established industry and 3) the lowest tax rate in Anoka County for 2014. Ham Lake is primarily a competitor for smaller industrial projects.

North Branch has many strengths for economic development. The strengths include: 1) Interstate 35 access, 2) construction of new infrastructure to the west of Interstate 35, 3) Tanger outlet mall, and 4) more established commercial tax base. In 2010, this community removed an economic development position so the level of service for future prospects might not be as good as other communities that have staff dedicated to that position. Transportation corridors East of Interstate 35 could be viewed as a competitive disadvantage. North Branch has room to grow industrially in the future. The Chisago County HRA has become very active in marketing the area which makes North Branch a viable competitor for Isanti. Essby Industrial Park currently serves as a weakness for North Branch. There has been recent turnover in the City Council and this could serve as an opportunity for the City of Isanti. This industrial park was financed by North Branch and the holding costs have become difficult to manage.

The City of Ramsey has seen significant industrial and retail development over the past 15 years. The primary focus of that community was to grow industrial tax base and to build a Town Center project on US Highway 10. The industrial development has been very successful for the aforementioned period and the remaining industrial land owned by the city is limited to 10 acres or less. The City purchased the bankrupt Town Center project in 2010 and has been working on developing the center now called the "COR". Ramsey is competing for the same type of industrial users as Isanti and has many attributes favorable for businesses. The strengths for Ramsey include: 1) established transportation corridors, 2) educated workforce, 3) high per-capita income, 4) proximity to Anoka Technical College, Anoka Ramsey Community College and other higher learning institutions, 5) available tax base dedicated to the City levy, 6) construction of a new health care facilities for residents and Veterans, 7) activity and support of the Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce for events, 8) two championship golf courses and 9) the availability of City utility services. The Ramsey City Council has given the appearance of being unstable at times which could be construed as a danger to potential developers. The City of Isanti will have a difficult time competing head to head with Ramsey. In 2014, a decision was made to not hire an economic development director and to outsource and reallocate some of those tasks to existing staff. The lack of clear direction in the economic development field and a lack of expertise serve as an opportunity for Isanti. Focus on developing positive relationships with business prospects and making the development process less time extensive are things Isanti can

compete with Ramsey on. Ramsey has done a lot of things successfully in terms of their industrial development and those items can be reproduced in Isanti.

Competitive advantages for Isanti include: 1) Availability of low cost sites, 2) First city North of Blaine with an established historical downtown, 4) first city North of Twin City Metro area with Sewer and water that is not under the "control" of the Metropolitan Council, 5) stable city council with some continuity, 6) direct access to rail with city owned land, 7) membership in GPS 45:93 and EDAM and the regional marketing medium it provides and 8) low tax assessment values compared to competition outside of Isanti County.

Competitive disadvantages for Isanti include: 1) distance from Minneapolis / St Paul and hub of manufacturing, 2) no direct interstate access, and 3) Sewer and Water infrastructure debt for expansion east of Hwy 65 (higher Sewer and water cost).

STRATEGY AND ACTIVITY

Isanti needs to position itself as a low cost, aggressive, progressive city that is business friendly. City staff needs to be proactive in locating prospects that are looking to save costs or are looking to move. This can be done by establishing and growing relationships with financial institutions, construction companies, real estate brokers, print media, and economic development organizations. These organizations all have similar goals to the City in that they want to see development occur and stand to gain a financially better position by doing so. Securing a medical clinic, pharmacy, hotel, restaurants, retail, manufacturers and senior housing have been identified in the past by the EDA and the City Council and remain important projects. This information needs to be communicated to the above mentioned organizations so that they can help Isanti locate and finance these prospects. Once prospects are identified a coordinated effort needs to be made by City staff to follow-up with them until the prospect is no longer viable. A Direct Mail piece and follow-up with brokers, select members of the Minnesota Manufacturers Association and businesses along Highway 65 and northern Anoka County. Establishment of a prospect matrix in 2010 and its maintenance has helped with prospect management.

Isanti needs to continue highlight items that make it unique such as the existence of a historic downtown and its small town feel, low total development costs in comparison to Anoka County, the walk/bike trail connecting Isanti to Cambridge, lack of Metropolitan Council control, the availability of City and regional business incentive programs and staff willing to help the businesses through that process, Legacy Park, and Isanti Indoor Arena – Home of Rum River BMX.

Recruitment of businesses is helped immensely by existing businesses being ambassadors for the community. Visiting key businesses on a regular basis and showing appreciation to all existing businesses can nurture positive relationships that will result in a positive image for the city.

Northern Anoka County is the home to many manufacturing businesses. Identifying and recruiting businesses that are expanding, leasing or are unhappy with excessive tax burdens and offering Isanti as a viable low-cost alternative is another opportunity. Utilizing existing networks with business owners, realtors and banks can assist in identifying these opportunities.

A professional presence is required on the internet and site selectors are looking toward that medium more than print. A continued effort needs to be made to keep information on that medium fresh and to utilize existing media to support city efforts. The City has properties listed on LOIS, MNCAR and the State of Minnesota has added certification to the 4 "Shovel Ready Certified" lots located in Isanti Centennial Complex. It is vital for Staff to maintain current information on this site and to work with realtors to help them lease vacant properties.

Traditional marketing mediums such as signage and print need to be utilized as well. Installation of real estate signs for city owned property was completed in 2011. Expanding print and internet media coverage for successes in our community at a reasonable cost needs to be a focus. Utilizing memberships in EDAM, GPS 45:93, and relationships in print media can provide a low-cost marketing medium for the City of Isanti.

Continued revitalization of historic downtown and the development of a rail served industrial park have been a focus of the EDA for a number of years. Staff needs to be looking for funding opportunities and partner to help these projects move forward. Both projects will require substantial funding and changing economic conditions which could prove to be difficult for the next few years.

Continued Support by the City for the Isanti Family Farmer's Market, Street Dances and facilitating business meetings with area businesses downtown and throughout the community will help strengthen community in Isanti.

Economic conditions are improving and Isanti needs to position itself as a viable option for all types of development. This can be done by marketing the community and establishing a presence in the financial, real estate, construction, print media and economic development communities.

Focusing on existing industry in the City and looking vertically at the companies supply chains and customers are another method of business development. Isanti has an opportunity to try to grow green businesses and manufacturing sectors within our community.

AUDIENCE

The EDA is trying to reach an audience with this marketing plan. Each entity has different needs or methods of communication. Identifying how to communicate Isanti marketing goals with these entities is important to the success of the marketing plan.

Existing Businesses: Need information and support readily available in person, print and on website. Opportunities for training, loans, capital, assistance and other resources need to be directly communicated to businesses when applicable. Utilization of the Isanti Area Chamber of Commerce, City Webpage, Facebook and the Isantian newsletter can be an effective way to reach businesses.

Real Estate Community (brokers, agents, construction firms): Information on pricing, available land, development costs, financing tools, demographics and labor needs to be available upon request. Staff is working on an interactive map for available properties within the city which would provide information on the property and real estate contacts (reference City of Blaine's page).

Print Media (Real Estate Journal, County Star, Isanti County News, ABC Paper, and Star Tribune): Groundbreakings, local business success stories, local events and the new business arrivals to Isanti.

Online Media (GPS 45:93 and E-link (prospects), City of Isanti Website (prospects and residents), Real Estate Journal, Linked In, County Star, Facebook, Isanti County News, ABC Paper, and Star Tribune): Press releases on positive news need to be provided to these entities when appropriate for publication on the internet. City economic development web pages need to be fresh.

Financial Community (Banks, and SBA Lenders, Initiative Foundation, and ECRDC): Need information on site availability, pricing, financial tools, and timeline and process for approvals.

Business Prospects: Provide current data on labor force, site availability and cost and maps, public and private assistance programs, approval process and timelines, business subsidy policy

guidelines, attractive development brochure that answers important questions quickly. Utilization of Invest In Isanti Brochure, Welcome to our Community of Generations Brochure, DEED Labor Market Profile, LOIS and MNCAR are ways to reach this audience.

Economic Development Organizations (Positively Minnesota, Chamber of Commerce, Isanti County EDA, EDAM, GPS 45:93, Greater MSP, ECRDC, Initiative Foundation, Score, and Connexus Energy): Must be able to provide information on site availability cost, and ownership, public and private assistance programs when appropriate.

RESOURCES AND INITIATIVES – This information changes yearly and will be outdated quickly staff suggests removing dollar amounts

In 2011, the City of Isanti re-allocated \$26,000 to the EDA marketing budget from the revolving loan fund. These funds have been authorized by the Isanti City Council to supplement spending on items identified in annual budgets and plans. The following are some initiatives that are anticipated in 20202015 and others that continue from past directives: have commenced and are being continued into the future:

- 1) Mayor's Employer Appreciation Luncheon and awards (\$600)
- 2) Distribution of marketing materials (Pencils, Pins, Shirts, Dignitary items, etc.)
- 3) Direct Mail of Letter and Brochure to Members of Minnesota Manufacturers Association and Attendees of Minnesota Real Estate Journal Industrial Conference and other mailings (\$250-500)
- 4) Utilize GPS 45:93 LOIS and MNCAR to market the City of Isanti for Industrial development prospects (\$750)
- 5) Utilize various forms of media to highlight City of Isanti successes and to market (EDAM Developer, Real Estate Journal, Isantian Newsletter, County Star, Isanti New, etc.
- 6) General marketing and research - miscellaneous signage donations and sponsorships as appropriate including investment/coordination in other signs for community events, (i.e. Johnson Property), (\$300)
- 7) Minnesota Real Estate Journal: Work to craft a package that includes print advertising and attendance and sponsorship at Industrial Development Conference, (\$500)
- 8)7) Presence in other conferences (Business Expos, DEED, EDAM, i.e.) where site selectors will be present (Free to \$650)
- 9)8) Update Community Profile in LOIS.
- 10)9) Other cost effective marketing opportunities with media or economic development organizations as identified (Free to \$150).

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- ~~11)~~10) Miscellaneous Marketing Budget (\$2,000-\$5000)
- ~~12)~~11) Explore Signage on Hwy 65 to further establish an identity for the City of Isanti.
- ~~13)~~12) Continue communication with State and County jurisdictions to improve the winter driving condition for key business travel routes.
- ~~14)~~13) Utilize ~~Hotel and~~ Housing Market Studies to identify prospects and investors to help increase tax capacity in Isanti.
- ~~15)~~14) Continue to support East Central Minnesota Job Fair and encourage businesses to participate.

Other marketing items not identified above, and not currently identified in the EDA budget, but deemed necessary need to have prior approval from the EDA before expenditures can be made. Final cost estimates for items listed above will be communicated to the EDA when identified.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The City of Isanti has many organizations it can partner with to achieve the goals outlined in this the 2011 Plan and specifically the goal of growing tax base in Isanti. Potential roles and activities for each strategic partner are outlined below:

- 1) Isanti City Council: Consider approvals from recommendations from EDA and Revolving Loan Fund Committee relating to: project financing, level of financial assistance, awarding of business subsidies, execution of development agreements, and real estate transactions for development in Isanti.
- 2) Chamber of Commerce: Serves as a non-governmental resource for existing businesses, prospects and residents. Source of business recruitment referrals and a potential marketing partner for the City of Isanti. Pertinent economic development information can be communicated through the online Isanti Informer Newsletter and the chamber website. A new relationship will need to be established once the merger between Cambridge and Isanti Chambers is complete. Continue to be an active member and relationship development.
- 3) Anoka-Ramsey Community College (Cambridge Campus): A partner in providing training opportunities and business start-up assistance for local businesses.
- 4) Centerpoint Energy: Natural gas provider for the City of Isanti. A potential financial contributor for joint marketing efforts.
- 5) Community Organizations / Events / Partnerships: Isanti is home to many exciting events each year. From 2010-2013 the City played host to the Minnesota State Cup (Soccer Event at Isanti Soccer Complex), Rum River BMX has been selected multiple times for the State and National BMX Finals, Isanti Civic Arena is the home venue for the

Minnesota Owls and the 2012 Class C State Champions call Isanti Home. The Isanti Fireman's Rodeo – Jubilee brings thousands to Isanti in July of each year. The Farmers Market and Street dances sponsored by the EDA and operated through the newly created Park, Recreation and Culture Board. All of these events serve as an excellent opportunity for the City of Isanti to work with area businesses to showcase our community. Efforts should be made to maximize the economic impact for Isanti and the region.

- 6) Connexus Energy: Primary electric utility provider for the City of Isanti. Connexus has previously been very involved in the development of industrial parks within its service territory. Currently, economic development activities for the utility have been focused on energy cost saving programs for end users and marketing "Shovel Ready" sites. This entity provides business prospect referrals when appropriate.
- 7) Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM): The City of Isanti is a marketing partner with EDAM. Representation by Economic Development Director Sullivan on the Board of Directors is an opportunity for Isanti.
- 8) East Central Arts Council (ECRAC): A financial partner for grants and art related projects in historical downtown.
- 9) East Central Regional Development Commission (ECRDC): A knowledgeable partner in identifying financing option for projects. Has funds available in its own revolving loan program to be utilized in region. Host economic development networking and marketing events and provide business prospect referrals.
- 10) GPS 45:93: This regional economic development organization is a marketing partner for the city of Isanti and the region.
- 11) Greater MSP: Rm Marketing group focused on attracting development and investment to the 13 County MSA. Use of Sales Force Portal in 2014.
- 12) Initiative Foundation: A financial and educational partner. The Initiative Foundation provides leadership training, financial investment in area projects, staff assistance and business referrals to member communities in the region.
- 13) Isanti County EDA: A financial and collaborative partner for: financial assistance, marketing, business recruitment, and market analysis.
- 14) Local Financing Institutions (Community Pride Bank, Lake State Federal Credit Union, Landmark Community Bank, Minnco Credit Union): Area banks are a financial partner for the City of Isanti. Investment into the community helps both the City and Area banks. A coordinated effort by all banks to recruit business to Isanti is vital to the success of Isanti.
- 15) MNCAR: This organization is the best venue to advertise commercial properties. Staff will maintain membership as long as it's financially feasible.

- 16) Small Business Development Center: An educational partner in business development in Isanti County. The SBDC is helps start-up business develop business plans and existing businesses grow. Tom Willet is the local associate.
- 17) DEED: A financial partner through available state financing programs. LOIS site will benefit all of Minnesota to market sites to out of state prospects. Provides valuable demographic and research information and generates reports upon request. DEED provides updated Labor Market Profiles upon request for no charge.
- 18) SCORE: An educational partner in business development in Isanti County. SCORE provides free and confidential business counseling tailored to meet the needs of your small business and your personal objectives. SCORE also offers workshops, for a modest fee, for both start-up entrepreneurs and in-business small business owners. SCORE assists people in starting a new business and by providing counseling to existing small and mid-sized business owners.
- 19) Workforce Center (Cambridge office): WorkForce Centers help job seekers find employment, help businesses find workers, and help anyone at any stage explore and plan careers. Most services provided by the WorkForce center are free of charge.
- 19)20) Minnesota Marketing Partnership – the DEED run coalition works to market Minnesota as a destination for business. Community Development Director Sheila Sellman is the Isanti County Rep.

POSITIONING

Positioning is defined as a statement crystallizing the critical difference setting a product apart. Positioning is the message that is associated with your product or place that can be built around factual, geographical or psychological characteristics.

Positioning Isanti as a low cost, aggressive, progressive city that is business friendly is an excellent draw for businesses and residents alike. This message still needs to be communicated. In order to be successful, the City of Isanti needs to deliver on its promise. In order to deliver on that promise Isanti will need to grow significantly industrially, commercially and residentially to increase its tax base to share the cost of development. In 2014, the "Welcome to your Community for Generations" brochure was developed to market the quality of life as well as some key demographics for the young and vibrant community. A marketing effort that states the message that Isanti is positioned to grow like it did in the mid 2000's, has some great amenities and that there is great investment opportunities here for a limited time needs to be communicated.

When comparing Isanti to Cambridge, North Branch and other communities to the north, the focus is on being closer to the Twin Cities and having a commitment to keeping historical

downtown viable. Celebrating the founders of the community but also embracing the new population that has moved here since 2000 is a key component to what Isanti is today. Highlighting the fact that the City of Isanti has higher median incomes than the rest of Isanti County and that the median age is 31.28.4 helps us create a vision of opportunity and excitement. Advertising that there is new, reliable city infrastructure and that we are ready for immediate development and investment and there are not huge infrastructure costs on the immediate horizon is appealing to a growing business or family.

When comparing to Anoka County and the Metro Area championing the fact the Isanti truly has local government control by not being a part of the Metropolitan Council District sparks the interest of independent business owners. Having the sewer and water capacity that is available in the Metro and "shovel ready" lots is key to companies. Large tracts of land with City Sewer and Water infrastructure, priced significantly lower than the Metro on Highway 65 is a viable option for both retail and office development. High speed internet through fiber optic and satellite connect businesses in Isanti to the Metro. Well known manufacturers located in Isanti such as Advanced Telemetry Systems, Granger Machine, Metal Coatings and Evercat Fuels serves as ambassadors for the community to show that Isanti is a place a business can be successful. Moving to Isanti isn't a gamble, it's a smart business decision.

2020 EDA Marketing/Work Plan Update Survey Results

1. Are you satisfied with this mission statement? **6 Yes 0 No**
Adopted Mission Statement: "The Economic Development Authority promotes and supports the growth of commercial and industrial development and tax base through the use of economic development methods and tools".
2. I Support redevelopment and expansion efforts in Historical Downtown/Heritage Blvd.
6 Yes 0 No
3. I support the SAC and WAC Deferral program **6 Yes 0 No**
4. I support Tax Increment Financing (TIF) **6 Yes 0 No**
5. I support Tax Abatement **5 Yes 0 No 1 no answer**
6. I would support other assistance programs **3 Yes 1 No 2 maybe**
7. I want to explore rail options in the City of Isanti **6 Yes 1 No**
8. The most important businesses to attract were ranked in the following order: 1)Restaurants, 2)Retail, 3)Office, 4)Entertainment, 5)Manufacture, 6)Industrial, 7)Multi-family, 8)single-family
9. There have been inquiries about the city owned industrial parcels, however the users have wanted to do a small building with a significant amount of outdoor storage and a minimal number of employees; this is not the highest and best use for these parcels. What type of business would you support in our industrial Park? What's the target number of employees?
Responses: manufacturing/industrial uses. 15-25+ employees. Depends on tax revenue.
10. What type of marketing efforts do you want to see? *Responses: Discussion on ideas, all and the best you can do, signage, tradeshow, in person, networking, Facebook, one on one efforts to contact interested businesses, phone calls, handouts.*
11. What does Economic Development mean to you? *Responses: Increase the tax base by recruiting in more businesses with mid-to-high employees. Selling and structure of the cities business parks or areas. A good balance of industries and good planning to make it work best for everyone. Promoting job & service creation. Business brought into the city. Value to the city & residents.*
12. Other Comments: *"I would love to see more apartments ASAP for new residents to start putting down roots in Isanti." "We need more recruiting efforts to bring in more businesses." "You know your job woman"*