CORNERSTONES SWOT – ALL RESPONSES

Human Capital – Strengths (All Responses)

- Reasonable wage expectation
- Good work habits/hardworking labor force
- education
- Labor force
- Education
- Education Opportunities
- Good work ethic.
- Educational institutions
- work ethic
- Well educated
- Universities and community colleges
- Higher Education (Colleges, Universities, Trade Schools, Etc.)
- people who cherish the natural resources
- educated
- available labor force
- Skilled tradesmen that need work
- 2 year colleges in local communities
- Labor Force
- Educated Workforce
- high graduation rates
- Higher then state average unemployment rate so there are able bodies for a workforce
- Large labor force
- Strong workforce productivity
- available labor for some types of jobs in some parts of region
- Productive labor force
- Educational opportunities
- Highly educated retired population
- Educational institutions
- good access to training at CLC - Brainerd
- Local higher education institutions have programs that develop individuals to meet industry needs.
- Many higher education options
- Low turnover
- training programs available
- Education
- Work ethic
- Access to Training
- Minnesota nice.
- Pragmatic
- Public education
- Institutes of higher learning
- on job training
- access to good technical post-secondary training
- Solid community college system
- Hard working people
- Good Work Ethics
- well educated labor force
- Local Community Colleges to obtain education
- Dedicated workers
- Articulate, educated people
- in general - workforce still has strong work ethic
- Quality k-12 schools
- Generally good work force to hire from
- unemployed or underemployed labor
- Productive
- people want to live here, willing to work to make it happen
- Skills
- Experienced workforce
- access to public workforce system for support, planning and tuition/support funding
- Strong water protections
- Ethical, hardworking political leaders
- MN access to jobs training
- Great community with parks, trails, shopping, homes to buy/rent
- Quality of place helps with retention/attraction of workers
- many engineers and science people in region (mining and healthcare)
• Number of post-secondary/technical options
• Local office for Jobs training - Aitkin Workforce Center
• High graduation rates
• good network of tech/community colleges
• Access to training
• Collaboration between public workforce system, higher education, and secondary schools (could lead to further opportunities for alignment around worker pipeline development)
• Health care
• Excellent K-12 schools
• good educational institutions
• Job training success through NHED
• Good work ethic
• natural resources such as logging and mining means there will always be some jobs available
• Regional partnerships with industry
• Active regional workforce planning between City of Duluth and the balance of the region through Workforce Councils (currently focusing on career pathways in healthcare and the skilled trades)
• Most have broadband
• Excellent post-secondary educational institutions
• Higher wages in core industries

**Human Capital – Opportunities (All Responses)**

• Trainable
• Proximity to Mpls/St Paul metro
• 19-34 year old nontraditional students
• Technical skills training
• Childcare
• Attract additional rock solid daycare options for working parents.
• Educational institutions that meets the needs
• Vocational training
• Easy to expand housing

• Community college/employer connections
• Interns from local Education Facilities
• Advertising outside of the area to bring in talent and tourism
• Larger unemployment rate disparities between whites and minorities (vs. other areas in MN); this could be considered a weakness, but also offers opportunities for mitigating this to increase labor force participation
• Cold weather testing
• More focus on buying locally made goods
• Access to jobs and training
• Downtown housing
• Need to capitalize on skills training-existing workers training younger labor force
• Reopen local airport for commercial travel, but Hibbing does have airport access
• High unemployment rate creates large labor force
• Low-skilled/no skill workers should receive tuition assistance for two year college training
• Available workforce for business expansions
• Aging demographic will provide openings/succession plans for entrepreneurs
• Training at all levels for today’s needs in the work force
• Unemployed or underemployed labor - could utilize!
• Market the needs for transportation workers from truck drivers, road maintenance workers, technical and managerial and support skills.
• Closer connection to business & industry needs
• State training funding
• New mining opportunities
• Short-term training certificates
• Trades training in schools
• Available energy resources
- Attracting more young people to the area
- Workforce Development Center
- Opportunity exists to recruit individuals to the Northeast region, particularly in mid- to high-skill positions
- Forest industry resources
- Need to connect with high school population or the skills will be lost
- Several community colleges in region
- Tourism bureaus could expand their focus to attract workers/residents - not just visitors
- Available workforce for recruiting new business to region
- Access to technology/broadband provide work from home/remotely
- Additional living wage jobs across region
- Limited access to daycare - could use more
- Increase labor participation rates
- Broadband allows for telecommuting
- Pop-up programming
- Northforce
- Create more Bachelor and advance degree offerings
- Tourism destination with conversion to residents
- Need to have apprenticeship and internships for both adult and student populations
- Economic development financing for housing developments should not be limited to low income housing only
- Truck driver shortage
- Better childcare offerings in rural areas
- Innovation in wood fiber uses
- Increase career awareness and work readiness services to local school districts
- Remote desktops
- Support Northland Foundation, AMFA and other organizations working to expose K-12 students to manufacturing and skilled job opportunities
- Train tech skills in high school - shop class
- Entrepreneurial people in the Arrowhead
- Better promote job opportunities in region to general public

Human Capital – Weaknesses (All Answers)

- Lack of tech in high schools
- Lack of public transportation
- Access to jobs
- Lack of school collaboration
- Education
- Lack of skilled workforce - trades
- Need to do more to train people for jobs in Human Services and the Medical fields.
- Need more traditional skills in small motors/construction/masonry
- Educated youth tend to leave the area
- Excess of political history on iron range
- Aging population
- Most people move into the area for higher education and then move away
- Communities, City officials/counselors placing dollar over protecting land
- Skilled labor vocational education in high schools would help
- Movement toward twin cities causes hard recruitment
- Lower labor force participation than other regions and state
- Computer literacy
- Ready access to welfare/social services
- Education and skills
- Homeless population, especially teenagers
- Don’t have a strong marketing message on this issue
- Educated workforce
- Isolation
- Too many tourism jobs (low wages)
- Workforce is tightening
- Lack of skilled labor in mfg. sector
- Not enough well-paying jobs
• Extreme Lack of Childcare in the County, especially outside of Grand Marais
• High rate of low income families - transportation and other problems accessing employment and education/training
• Limited access to daycare - could use more
• Lack of qualified applicant pool for transportation related jobs.
• Too much reliance on mining
• Some generational lack of motivation
• Older workforce
• K-12 silos
• Cost of living
• Perceptions of trade’s workforce
• Need to provide more job opportunities for (our Armed Services) Veterans of all ages.
• No 4 year college on iron range
• Ability to draw students to educational institutions from beyond the region
• Large segments of population are low-skilled with little education
• Public transportation
• Local students get better financial incentives to leave area for college
• Childcare
• Affordable housing
• Poor school-employer relations for internships
• Childcare
• Lack of adequate training
• Too much focus on job growth in Duluth and other urban centers, exacerbating housing shortages and other issues
• Good trainable entry level workers hard to find
• Difficult to recruit if spouse has career with no openings
• Lack of businesses to locate to rural areas
• Lack of technically skilled labor pool
• Unemployed or underemployed labor - people leave area for better employment
• Significant lack of Civil Engineer and civil engineering technical skills.
• Lack of childcare
• Large classroom sizes
• Amenities other than fishing and hunting are lacking
• Higher education silos
• We need to attract more mentors for programs like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and Boys & Girls Clubs.
• Transportation is a significant barrier for many potential workers
• Protectionist attitude preventing job creation
• Programming changes at local community colleges force local graduates to go elsewhere for college
• Lack of adequate educational opportunities (programs at the community colleges)
• Tourism marketing efforts are isolated and care nothing for long-term economic development gains
• Transportation to jobs
• College degree holds higher esteem than tech certificate
• Lack of housing
• Lacking soft skills
• People are set in their ways
• Lack of visionary educational leadership
• We need to better support youth programs like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and Boys & Girls Clubs.
• Barriers for families: school bus time, child care
• Large population of rental properties and low home ownership
• Very little interest among K-12 educators to expose students to trades, especially ISD 709
• Housing, child and elder care availability for workers who are caretakers.
• Too many on long term disability
• Lack of foundations and similar org's other than Blandin
• Parochial politics in local communities keep them from collaborating on
initiatives to solve crime/income inequality
- Local council members and community leaders spend too much time focusing on environmental issues and social causes, with little focus on business development and job growth
- Climate

Human Capital – Threats (All Responses)
- Drug tests
- Over regulating logging and mining
- Lack of child care
- Higher wages in other regions
- Lack of skilled workforce - trades
- No tax reciprocity between Minnesota and Wisconsin and that leads to a ‘double’ the State taxes a person needs to pay.
- Loosing quality labor force and skills
- Aging population
- Iron Range focus
- Achievement gaps in schools
- Twin Cities Metro area being so close (higher paying jobs and more opportunities)
- Aging population creating significant need for replacement workers (projected need of 45,000 replacement worker through 2022)
- Lack of market
- Funding of rural public schools is abhorrent
- Political gridlock
- Growth and jobs flat leveled due to low population growth in region
- Mining has been hit hard by illegal dumping of product - requires better federal oversight
- Unskilled work force
- Other competing regions, like St. Cloud and MSP, are much more business-friendly and focused on job growth and are draining our skilled workforce.
- Wage and benefit mandates
- Lack of affordable daycare for shift workers
- Individuals continue to move to larger communities
- Aging population
- Many companies owned by large corporations with less affinity to our region
- Workforce recruiting from outside area
- Nimby’s
- Aging demographics
- Access to more technical jobs in our region
- Poor pay jobs
- Lack of education funding
- Disengaged and uninformed community about threats
- Rich public benefits system prevents many from seeking self-sufficiency
- Distributor price collaboration
- Funding of rural community colleges is reprehensible
- Lack of investment in infrastructure
- High level of chemical addition in Itasca County
- Decrease in consumption of paper
- Concentration of low wage jobs will hurt healthcare institutions, as population of under-insured continues to grow.
- Metro-centric state policy and decision making
- Boom cycles discourage younger workers
- Businesses that want to relocate to larger communities
- Poor childcare choices in rural
- Automation in many industries
- Lack of quality and daycare
- Departure of qualified/talented graduates
- Legislation favoring urban vs. rural
- Transportation costs keep mfg. jobs close to large airports/rail/ports
- Students who are well educated, but see only service industry jobs in their region, will need to move away
• Decline in funding to rural areas
• Cost of ownership in logging industry difficult for succession
• Social security limits ability to work
• Population loss
• Percent public land and tax implications
• Parochial communities fight each other for investments
• Lack of public transportation in rural areas
• People wanting an urban vs rural lifestyle
• Influx of street drugs and unsavory characters

Economic Competitiveness – Strengths (All Responses)

• Access to debt
• SBCD's
• Economic development infrastructure/financing
• Entrepreneurship Programs
• NE Entrepreneur Fund
• Economic development groups well-integrated
• Center for Economic Development
• The NE is a net importer of workers (in 2015 29,939 workers drove in to region for jobs)
• Large mineral and forest resources
• Northeast Small Business Development Center
• Entrepreneurship programs
• In MN, Region, in City Programs exist more so than in other states
• Many financial institutions willing to lend
• Tourist season
• Orgs like the Entrepreneur Fund do great work for businesses and entrepreneurs in all parts of the region - not just Duluth - with financing, but also training/counseling for business managers and entrepreneurs
• Several entrepreneur and business startup program in northeastern MN
• Strong SBDC network
• Go Strong natural resource base
• Community/Tech Schools
• Robust infrastructure (utilities)
• Technical Assistance for small business owners
• Northspan
• Strong foundation support
• The Entrepreneur Fund
• Lower cost of living compared to other areas
• AURI, UM and local labs
• Spirit of Entrepreneurship is emerging from Recharge the Range
• Technical assistance
• Many high-tech companies already exist
• Rural grant/loan opportunities
• Several non-traditional ED financing programs exist in NE Minnesota.
• Natural resources
• Variety of local, regional and state resource programs
• IRRRB and others to support growth
• Small Business Admin in Brainerd also helpful
• Entrepreneur Fund opportunities for capital, short term loans
• Aitkin Co Growth - a great help to new business
• UMD SBDC
• Good technical assistance
• NE Ent Fund
• Highly educated workforce
• IRRRB
• ARDC
• Cheaper child care than elsewhere in state
• Retired experts
• Incredible Ely Small Business Development Conference
• Cohesive, collaborative working relationships between different ED service providers.
• Workforce available for resource development
• NRRI for research & development
- IRRRB
- Productive workforce
- SBA
- NRRRI
- Area Chamber
- Strong entrepreneurship - both resources to support and the desire to be an entrepreneur
- New Laurentian Chamber president and direction
- Strong history of independence and entrepreneurship, especially in rural communities.
- Transportation infrastructure
- Strong incentives/loans through IRRRB
- SBDC's in local communities
- Natural resource based industries provide excellent markets for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

**Economic Competitiveness – Opportunity (All Responses)**

- Crowdfunding
- This is a region people want to live in
- DRI
- Incentives for small businesses
- Promote the practice of buying locally.
- Technical assistance for small business
- Entrepreneurship programs in high schools
- Greater cooperation on a regional/inter-community level
- Many Banks and Credit Unions in the area
- Assess/document the work skills and education of general populace (working and unemployed) to use for economic development/business recruitment
- New focus on purchasing locally made goods
- Stronger marketing needed on programs available
- Continue to expand broadband access
- Unskilled workforce
- Business attraction/expansion work and ED financing should not be used for tourism/service sector businesses with low wage jobs.
- Natural resource development
- More room for entrepreneurial programs in k-12
- Communities interested in growing businesses
- Broadband
- Provide funding to start ups
- Work for on expanding existing businesses versus attracting new ones
- Financial literacy in schools
- Non-ferrous
- Keep promoting volunteerism as a way to strengthen the community.
- More startup capital
- Develop incumbent worker training program through state and federal workforce funds (currently no resources to help businesses train existing workers)
- Value added business with local resources
- New studies showing best practices for local entrepreneurship
- Focus business growth in rural communities with available land, housing, etc. vs. urban areas where these assets are limited or lacking.
- Mining development in particular
- Mentorship programs for young entrepreneurs
- Work force available - may require training
• Teach students about opportunities in manufacturing
• Internet in both the cities and rural areas.
• More funds for renovation/remediation/rehabilitation
• Providing recruitment/hiring assistance to small businesses without dedicated HR or very small staff
• Cliff’s investment in new technology at UTAC
• Establish more business incubators in small towns, similar to success found in Two Harbors.
• Transportation-related: value added, warehousing
• Advanced manufacturing
• Encourage more people to run for public office.
• Work with existing businesses to sell more products/services outside of the region.
• Seaway has capacity to handle more traffic
• Need to build technology for the future-affordable high-speed
• Identify products/services that are widely used in the region, but come from outside the region, and develop attraction/small business growth strategies to satisfy the needs locally.

Economic Competitiveness – Weaknesses (All Responses)

• Lack of access to equity
• Conservative bankers
• Sustainable income revenues
• Lack of equity capital
• Incentives for small businesses
• Student loans that burden people.
• Access to capital
• Not enough value added industries
• Reliance on global commodity markets
• If not in the right network, may not know of the opportunity

• Bio-chemical
• Significantly lower household income than other areas (in terms of being difficult to recruit from outside the area). Only 15% of households earned over $100K compared to nearly 25% of households statewide; average annual wages are 40,508 which is 11% lower than the state’s average.
• Access to capital
• IRRRB controls mining tax revenue instead of local gov’t
• Access to capital
• Programs at Center for Economic Development ineffective
• Taxes are high
• Educated labor force
• Isolation
• Many small businesses and entrepreneurs depend on natural resource industries, which are not well supported anymore by the general public, due to a lack of education.
• Environmental fringe group opposition to mining development
• Border States lower tax rates
• Lack of space for industrial park development
• Not a large enough pool of capital locally to make investments
• Competitive Job market for higher paying jobs
• Sometimes too reliant on IRRRB
• Permitting slow and uncertain
• Captive rail
• High cost of post-secondary education.
• IRRRB governance structure
• High concentration of low-pay, low-skill jobs that have difficulty being filled (job vacancy survey in 2015 revealed 40% of openings are PT and only about 1/3 required postsecondary education of 1+ years; median wage was $11.53 despite a 16% increase in job vacancies vs. 2014
• Utility monopolies
• No venture capital fund
• Funding for entrepreneurial start ups
• Small populations outside of tourist season
• Too many new businesses are tourism-related, which means low wages for workers and few benefits.
• Need more affordable training for startups.
• Lack of awareness of assistance
• Salaries not at living wage
• Slow customs / border operations
• The NE region has recovered more slowly from the recession, a 3% increase in jobs from 2010-2014 compared to 6.5% for the state
• Lack of market: farm products, commerce
• No angel investors
• High rent in commercial buildings
• The regulatory environment in Minnesota makes it very costly to start a business.
• Union perception in region
• High taxes
• Local business retention
• Risk adverse nontraditional lenders
• ED financing programs are getting tougher to access, due to increased credit/collateral requirements.
• Funding start-up companies
• Winter road conditions
• Focus on failures makes entrepreneurship hard to promote
• Orgs like the Entrepreneur Fund have limited resources to provide counseling to entrepreneurs and new business owners, but the need for such education is great in this region.

Economic Competitiveness – Threats (All Responses)

• Too few entrepreneurs
• Overall economy is still weak in NE MN
• Environmental extremism
• Barriers to Entry for small business
• Few new business seen as able to chart the waters
• Lack of economic diversification in some areas
• Focus may be on "Big Business" and not so much small business
• The perception that all jobs are or must be unionized
• Legislation
• Global access to steel makes for less local employment long-term
• Always other locations to do business cheaper
• Young people moving for better employment opportunities in larger cities
• Environmental fringe group from outside area opposing economic development
• Regulatory environment
• Competition across the region
• Eco / enviro terrorism
• Wage increases
• Jobs-vs.-environment debate
• Cold winters!
• Large projects that drain resources
• Outside groups demonizing non-ferrous mining
• Aging population
• Reduction of funding for training and assistance
• Environmental protection vs. development
• Activist city council - anti-business
• Healthcare cost for small business
• Transportation systems
• State legislature not working with local organizations to determine best places for investments
• Invasive species
• Venture capital/angel funders focused in larger cities

Community Resources – Strengths (all Responses)

• Natural resources
• Diversity of ethnicities
• Tourism
• Access to outdoor recreation
• Outdoor recreation
• Emerging Leaders
• Progressive Art scene like: ‘Take it With You’ at the Underground, Zeitgeist Arts, Beer and Hymns at Sir Bens.
• Outdoor recreation
• Outdoor recreation
• Natural beauty
• Great Music
• Natural resources, artesian wells
• Active communities
• Many groups looking at quality of place now - ReGen, Recharge the Range - there seems to be energy around developing stronger communities
• Public recreational opportunities
• New Laurentian Chamber President, Jaimie Niska
• Outdoor recreation
• Summer Tourism
• Have outdoor natural resources
• Great natural resources for tourism
• Many parks, state and national
• From the north shore, to the range, to Duluth, this region has outstanding arts, cultural and recreational activities.
• Beautiful area
• Well managed resources - land, forests, water
• Strong recreational area
• Arts/Culture
• Culture
• Blandin Foundation Leadership active in area
• This community has a lot of offer in these areas.
• Duluth has lots to offer and is a regional hub
• Greenspace
• Dedicated community leaders
• Outdoor recreation
• Natural resources
• Natural resources

• Tourism
• Natural resources
• Natural resources
• Strong arts scene in Duluth/North Shore
• Lots of Local Artists
• Importance on environment
• Land of non-profits! Many out there trying to make a difference
• Arts, spectator and participant
• Whitney Ridlon brings a new focus on community planning for success instead of spending $$ willy nilly
• Natural resources
• Natural resources
• Proactive Itasca County Board for business development
• Strong timber industry
• All we need to do now is maintain what we have.
• Clean water and land
• Voyageurs National Park
• Good support from retail and businesses
• Outdoor Recreation
• Outdoor recreation
• Aitkin, Cuyuna, McGregor Chambers are active and engaged
• The location provides a variety of outdoor activities that help recruit new workers
• Outdoor opportunities set us apart
• Trails
• Water quality
• Water quality
• Water quality
• water quality
• Tourism
• Tourism infrastructure
• Strong Tourism
• Quality of life
• Strong tourism (could also be weakness from earnings standpoint)
• Volunteers
• Betsy Olivanti’s strengths in bringing people and ideas together
• Water quality
• Excellent arts community (theater, galleries, etc.)
• Excellent Itasca County Board and Grand Rapids City leadership and cooperation
• Younger population moving into leadership positions
• Outdoor enthusiasts
• Quality healthcare facilities
• Rural Healthcare
• Water quality
• The ample great outdoors in our lakes area
• ReGen
• Music & Arts
• Air quality
• Entertainment
• Placemaking
• Parks, trails, and opportunities for outdoor recreation
• Many Participants in the Blandin Leadership Training
• Outdoor recreation opportunities
• NHED President Bill Maki’s ability to see outside the proverbial MnSCU box
• Arts
• Many cultural and artistic opportunities - Rief Center for example
• Good healthcare systems
• Tourism valued
• Chamber sponsored activities to get businesses together to help each other
• Water
• Civically engaged population
• Millennial generation leadership
• Tony Sertich’s focus on developing a more resilient Iron Range
• Many outdoor recreation opportunities - Get Fit Itasca
• Arts and recreation support

Community Resources – Opportunities (All Responses)

• Races / events around trails
• Emerging leaders
• Arts
• Entertainment
• Tourism is important for the area--keep progressive ideas moving ahead.
• Arts, night photography work on night light pollution
• Quality of life marketing of the area
• Bring in more young people
• Bringing in new people to the community
• Better align all those non-profits to work in concert
• Marketing tourism
• Kauffman research on Entrepreneurship
• Emerging leaders
• Broader variety of businesses catering to tourists
• Need to ensure opportunities for young professionals to connect
• Increase branding or Itasca County - lot of work already accomplished on this front
• Promote outdoor activities to increase tourism
• Use these assets to attract new businesses with living wage jobs.
• Take advantage and promote our great outdoors.
• More tourism facilities
• Development of a solid Economic Development Plan and goals to work from
• Better placemaking (Superior Street design, for example MISSED this opportunity)
• Capitalize on outdoor / rec activities
• Build upon strengths
• Festivals
• Culture
• Arts
• Encourage ownership in our community by promoting volunteering in our community.
• Healthy communities access to the outdoor rec.
• Need to appeal to young adults as desirable location
• Remediation of polluted sites
• Letting people know this is a place to LIVE, not just Vacation
• Branding communities
• UMD's programming through CED and Engineering needs to be expanded
• Winter tourism
• Need more placemaking and culture
• Use these assets to attract highly skilled workers.
• Additional investment in trails
• Older buildings still around to create that unique sense of place
• Capitalize on space - room to grow and build
• Employee recruitment
• Tourism
• Structure for swimming other than school and the lake in town of IF
• Protection of natural areas
• Get more students involved so they want to stay long-term
• Strong Towns research on placemaking
• More engagement by young people in community organizations
• Organizations like Zeitgeist and Healthy Duluth to partner with
• Clean water research center
• Engaging the younger generations in outdoor play
• More regional leadership at state/congressional levels
• Could do more with connecting our communities via bike trails ala Cuyuna Range
• Commercialize research done in region
• Engaging the younger generation in the arts and music
• Do more to promote organizations like CHUM--they make a difference. I do not think we support this enough.
• Training leaders and supervisors in the how to's
• Perception of being a "backwater"
• Need to better advertise assets
• Media doesn't talk enough about the good things happening
• Drug and alcohol use
• Parochial community leaders
• Weather
• Need more placemaking and cultural options
• Many things are seasonal in northern MN
• All of these amenities require upkeep, which requires tax dollars.
• Not enough people willing to lead
• Contentious local issues keep quality candidates from leadership
• Continue to work with same people in community and not a lot of new individuals stepping forward
• Limited leadership programs available - only Blandin
• This community does not attract couples that are both looking for employment opportunities as well as larger communities.
• Many small city downtowns need revitalization
• Maintenance resources spread thin
• Healthy communities
• Culture
• Promote individuals like 'Mrs. Delicious'--she makes a difference in our community too.
• Retention of young people
• Affordable all age recreational facilities
• Dependence on social programs
• Parochial Community
• Lack of alternative family activities during inclement weather
• The local political leaders seem to only want to focus on continuing to expand these amenities, not the harder work of
improving infrastructure and attracting new job growth.

- Cultural disconnect between rural and urban communities
- Cold weather perception
- Need broader involvement of community leaders
- Us vs them mentality
- Cost of recreation: equipment, fees, permits
- Too many different organizations working in Silos
- Need more tourism in the winter
- Health of population
- Available time to participate
- Local schools not collaborating more closely in the arts and academics like they do in vocational classes
- Distance for participation in meetings, etc.
- Limited access to broadband technology
- Smaller communities lack capacity to maintain rec/tourism facilities
- The Baby Boomers do not listen to the Millennials to position our communities for the next generation
- NIMBYism
- Parochialism
- Over-reliance on tourism does not create many well-paying jobs
- Road conditions
- Transportation costs
- Decline of timber/paper product industry
- Cost of lakefront challenging resort ownership
- "Exclusive" trails - no biking signs
- Lack of entrepreneurs who are attached to the Iron Range
- Arts funding decreasing in k-12

Foundational Assets – Strengths (All Responses)

- Electric utilities
- Public and private infrastructure
- Public transportation
- Port
- Continue the work with improvements to the Superior Hiking Trail and the Mountain Bike trails in the Duluth and Northshore area.
- No significant traffic problems compared to larger metro areas
- Large, regionally engaged utilities
- Public Transportation
- Good connections between regional centers
- Internet availability
- Highway system
- Public utilities
- Public Transit
- Good utilities
- Many walking and biking paths
- Well maintained road system
- Walking, biking, motorized etc trails
- Continued investment in transportation

Community Resources – Threats (All Responses)

- Eco / enviro terrorists
- Water quality
- Environmental balance
- Lack of education on mining and trades workforce
- Lake of structured activities in our city and parks for children and adults
- Jobs-vs.-environment debate
- Weather (depending on what you are looking for)
- Bringing in and supporting businesses that are harmful to people/health and devalue property values
- Cost of gas, travel (tourism)
- Global marketplace
- Proximity to Duluth is a positive and negative as placemaking and cultural options then limited locally
- Pollution
- Aging population
- Broadband!
- Quality electric available
- Multi-modal hub is key to the economic success of Duluth/Superior.
- Broadband
- Water
- Walking and biking facilities
- Rail
- Trail systems
- Cheap housing
- Skywalks in Downtown area
- Arrowhead Transit / DTA / Hibbing / Tribes
- Regional library system with bookmobile, mail-a-book
- Rail system
- Biking facilities, trails
- Lot of houses for rent and sale
- Many new biking/hiking trails
- Minnesota Power
- Competitive utility rates
- Good roads
- Utilities
- Port
- Airport
- Trail networks
- Emergency health
- Access to airports
- Continued expansion of rental units
- Many ski and snowmobile trails
- Broadband investment and redundant networks growing
- Availability of homes for sale
- Trails
- Rail Service
- World port in Duluth-Superior
- Mesabi Bike Trail
- Blandin Foundation
- Lower housing costs
- Airport with daily commercial service
- Airport
- Rail network
- Laurentian Divide Hiking Trail
- More planning around bike/ped trails

**Foundational Assets – Opportunities (All Responses)**

- Public transportation
- Walking and biking facilities
- Broadband
- Broadband
- Highways
- Sliding fee for downtown parking.
- Build a for modern tourists, internet, biking, skiing, snowmobiles
- Broadband
- Redevelopment of downtowns/lessened sprawl to make things more accessible
- Higher Broadband Speeds
- Distance learning
- More people investing in fat tire bikes
- Broadband access
- Young people like public transportation for leisure travel
- Bring more buildable housing lots online and affordable prices
- Public transportation - need to extend outside the Grand Rapids Area
- Large amounts of land for use
- Promote trails THROUGHOUT THE REGION
- Additional public transportation in rural areas
- More broadband. Some areas do not have any now and jobs and opportunities have been lost due to this
- Completion of Gitchi Gami Bike Trail!
- Increased public housing - income based rent
- Market our strengths more
- Multi-family housing
- Public transportation
- Downtown revitalization
- Streetscape
- Continue to improve roads and streets.
- Better bike/ped infrastructure
- Encouraging more Foot Traffic
- More people recreating in high dollar ways - golf, ski, boats
• Public transportation
• More bike trail connections
• Need broadband
• Continued expansion of Broadband
• Better cell phone coverage
• Rental properties
• Commuting by bike or walk vs drive
• Housing
• Downtown
• Rehabilitation of older housing stock
• Jefferson bus lines
• More businesses support healthy living
• Expanded broadband access
• Broadband
• Expanding sanitary sewer near Rainy Lake basin
• Connecting trails

**Foundational Assets – Weaknesses (All Responses)**

• Poor housing rental stock
• Road conditions
• Housing
• Walking and biking facilities
• Public Transit
• No housing for felony families
• Inadequate transit services in rural areas
• Broadband access across entire region
• Housing is focused to College Students
• Poor public transportation options
• Lack of affordable housing in Duluth
• Public transportation options
• Rural public transportation funding
• Limited broadband connectivity
• Roads
• Downtown planned around cars, parking
• Region lacks buildable housing lots
• Lack of adequate public transportation
• We don't promote our trails in rural areas
• Gaps in broadband/cell coverage
• Lack of internet connectivity
• SIGNIFICANT Lack of workforce housing

• Lack of public transit
• Affordable quality housing
• 10-month quality housing
• Infrastructure
• Rail transportation
• Roads
• Lack of quality housing for the poor and what is available is isolated from food and employers
• Geography and climate make walking/biking difficult in winter
• Overpriced housing units
• Access to broadband in remote areas
• High percentage of rental housing instead of owned
• Transportation
• Housing stock is old, needs work, and is over priced
• Long distances to travel between communities
• We need to finish some trails that were left undone
• Areas of aging water sewer infrastructure
• Limited bike trails and support for future development
• Lack of public transportation
• Lack of rental properties
• Public transportation
• Roads are deteriorating
• Most cities not large/dense enough to justify regular public transit
• Roads
• Lack of good housing stock
• Blight in downtowns
• Some housing is very old
• Broadband in rural areas
• Lack of mixed/affordable housing
• Lack of planning on long term basis
• Lack of Broadband - Aitkin Co ranks last in state
• Increasing food desserts
• Reduced local government aid to spend on standard services in rural cities/towns
- Road conditions have worsened and rural public transportation
- Extremely limited access to public transportation in the rural areas
- Lack of economic development funding

**Foundational Assets – Threats (All Responses)**

- Deferred maintenance
- Downtown demise
- Broadband
- Broadband
- Lack of funding for these investments
- Winter damage to roads/constant need for repair money
- Aging infrastructure
- Inadequate gravel resource
- The new economy is a service and technology based economy
- Housing
- Failure to look at long term trends
- Cheaper to live elsewhere in the state due to incremental growth patterns
- Winter, it wreaks havoc on pavement
- Funding availability
- Rural vs metro divide over transportation
- Lack of community support financially for schools
- Complacency
- Aging infrastructure
- Housing
- Continued development patterns in exurban areas
- Ongoing maintenance costs
- Minntac’s re-route of County Road 102 has impacted traffic patterns
- Development planned around cars versus other forms of transportation
- Can’t compete with other areas that have better broadband utilities
- Wetland restriction on development
- Aging educational facilities
- Entertainment
- Public lands reduce tax resources

- Re-route of US 53 will impact traffic patterns
- Cost of energy
- Low cost of living
- Higher wages

**Top Economic Development Priorities in Next 5 Years (All Responses)**

- Specialty skills training
- Trades Education & Workforce
- Education to have a skilled work force
- Workforce education
- Supporting the development of a stronger future workforce pipeline through education and awareness
- Workforce development
- Realistic workforce strategy
- Better aligning the non-profits and governmental programs that offer assistance to job seekers and employers
- Improving internet and alternative communication
- Sustained broadband investment
- Broadband accessibility
- Broadband
- Broadband
- Broadband is a must rural MN needs must be recognized
- Diversification of economy
- Economic Diversification
- Attracting diversification
- Economic diversification Iron Range economic diversification
- Diversifying the Iron Range economy
- Diversification away from mining; other uses for natural resources
- Attract smaller diverse and distributed businesses
- Value added industries related to mining and timber
- DRI and non-ferrous/bio-chemical
- Bring in new industry
- Help bring new opportunities to region
- Housing availability
- Rental home accessibility - senior housing
- Improved housing
- More quality, affordable housing
- Workforce housing
- Quality affordable housing
- Housing
- Improve the housing conditions/costs
- Workforce housing can be an issue
- Job creation and market development
- Pursue better paying jobs to region
- Improve employment opportunities for skilled labor
- Job/industry growth
- Improve employment opportunities for unskilled labor
- Job retention
- Quality employment - expansion of businesses

- Spreading the word about opportunities available to entrepreneurs
- Incentives for business
- Economic development
- New workforce attraction initiatives
- Business retention
- Promote angel investment via some sort of incentives
- Business expansion and entrepreneurial support.
- Continue the strong efforts on entrepreneurship
- Bringing in capital
- Education for new businesses ideas
- New business attraction initiatives
- Focus on helping existing business/ determine their needs
- Leveraging & commercializing research
- Bringing city, county and local interest together for master ED planning

- Demanding timely, predictable review & permitting
- Community collaboration
- Encourage people to serve or volunteer.
- Invest in existing cities
- Develop downtown like Nicollet Mall
- Child care
- Traffic planning in DECC area
- Supporting manufacturing
- Public Education on Mining & Forest Products Industry
- Train organizations to work together.
- Improving access to larger shipping world
- Aviation & related
- Build on Duluth’s growth as a cultural destination
- Working closer with local colleges and university to place interns
- Reduction in costs of transporting goods in/out of region
- Put as much emphasis on good streets as good trails
- Further develop tourism
- Plan for five and ten years down the road.
- Working on how to improve the art community
- Technology
- Rehabilitation of existing properties
- Share the opportunities available locally (let people know they don't have to travel to a large city to be successful)
- Access to rail for new industries
- Trail development