

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2022**
**ARROWHEAD REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

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 than 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.
- Losing 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/grants/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

Community Resources – Weaknesses (All Responses)

- Fearmongering over environment
- Social capital (lack of)
- Distance to everything
- Educating our community on the facts around mining

- 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

Community Resources – Threats (All Responses)

- Eco / enviro terrorists
- Water quality
- Environmental balance
- Lack of education on mining and trades workforce
- Lack 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

- 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

- 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 THROUGH OUT 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 shipping season
- 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 deserts
- 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

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

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

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
- Housing
- 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