



CITY OF LE SUEUR  
REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

TO: Mayor and City Council  
FROM: Samantha DiMaggio – Community Development Director  
SUBJECT: EDA Annual Update and Approval of 2021 Work Plan  
DATE: For the City Council Meeting of January 11, 2021

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**PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED**

Review the 2020 activities of the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and consider approving the proposed 2021 EDA Work Plan.

**SUMMARY**

The following Members served on the Economic Development Authority in 2020:

- Chair Jesse Wensch
- Vice-Chair Dan Mahoney
- Brian Pfarr
- Melissa Meger
- Irene Manke
- Marvin Sullivan – Council Liaison
- John Favolise – Council Liaison

The EDA has compiled a list of their 2020 accomplishments as well as a 2021 Work Plan based on the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This plan will be used as a reference and tool for developing priorities, budgets, and goals for the EDA.

**ACTION REQUESTED**

Staff is recommending the approval of the 2021 Economic Development Authority Work Plan.

## OVERVIEW

The Economic Development Authority (EDA) has developed the following 2021 Work Plan to be used as a reference and tool for developing priorities, budgets, goals, and initiatives derived from the cities 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan encourages the EDA to take leadership in the Downtown Master Plan and in various economic development and housing initiatives. These strategies are detailed below.

### 1. Strategy 5 – Downtown Master Plan

Downtown Master Planning is highly recognized as the focal point of need for Le Sueur. The downtown carries significant historical roots and significant momentum exists to plan for the future of downtown Le Sueur. The plan is not starting from scratch, but rather building off the envision Le Sueur process facilitated through the Minnesota Design Team (MDT) process in 2007. A downtown master plan would provide the following directions:

- ✓ Build a stronger understanding of how the mall site can be reconfigured to re-open Main Street to vehicle traffic while maintaining an optimal use for the mall site that contributes to the vibrancy and resiliency of downtown.
- ✓ Identifying opportunities for investments in public improvements that strengthen connections to adjacent neighborhoods and enhance the pedestrian environment (walkability and bikability) and generally define the cost implications of the improvements.
- ✓ Identifying locations for organized civic events, activities and gathering places that bring more people into downtown for entertainment, cultural and social opportunities and devise a strategy for establishing such spaces/places (can Giant Days be brought back downtown?)
- ✓ Evaluate redevelopment and reuse needs and demonstrate opportunities for new development aligned with creation of new downtown housing opportunities, new office opportunities, niche retail/services and civic attractions (museum, other???)
- ✓ Devise a strategy and plan for how redevelopment can occur including public financial incentives/assistance

- ✓ Ensure a coordinated parking and wayfinding strategy that enables smooth traffic flow and circulation in downtown and a complete street element to street design
- ✓ Provide design direction relative to scale and massing of new development so that it can retain the small town, traditional downtown character desired by Le Sueur
- ✓ Recommend streetscape and signage that defines the downtown district
- **Action Steps**
  - ✓ Complete a Downtown Master Plan

## 2. Strategy 6 – Economic Development & Housing

Expanding the commercial and industrial base of the City is an ongoing effort. Identifying new, effective strategies for Le Sueur will most likely come in response to the needs articulated by existing and prospective businesses. Thus, listening and establishing relationships with existing businesses, and even business prospects, is the best initial step. Housing is a vital part of economic development. Offering a diverse supply of quality housing is important to attracting a strong and qualified labor force. The City of Le Sueur Housing Study completed in 2014 contains a number of recommendations, some of which are highlighted within as key priorities. Initiatives which do and can benefit economic development efforts include:

- **Action Steps**
  - a) Support and Enhance Educational Institutions - Schools are perhaps the most prominent asset within the community of Le Sueur. Schools are a primary factor in a family's location decision. In order to attract entrepreneurs and business interests, the city must continue to maintain high quality school facilities and educational programming.
    - ✓ At minimum, conduct an annual meeting between school board and city council to ensure open communication
    - ✓ Continue and explore new city-school cost sharing and seek opportunities to supplement school activities with city facilities when possible such as through the community education program
    - ✓ Attract young families that will support the school system
    - ✓ Consider impacts on school planning and engage district administration in master planning processes that can bring new energies (tax base, employees, student growth)
  - b) Increase connectivity to regional centers – Creating access to amenities and work opportunities in Mankato or the Twin Cities will make Le Sueur an attractive place to live for those who are less mobile due to age, socioeconomic status, physical disability, or those who want to limit car usage. Safe transportation for children to recreational facilities not available in Le Sueur would enhance the quality of life for families in Le Sueur.

- ✓ Work with local property/building owners and the EDA to create a co-working space or telecommuting space where residents who work in regional centers can share conference rooms or technology or have a place to work and collaborate with other professionals.
  - ✓ Seek grant opportunities through MN DOT or regional transit providers to expand bus services/transit opportunities and plan future neighborhoods with long term transit service in mind
  - ✓ Develop a forum for residents to seek ride-share opportunities
  - ✓ Explore business spin offs or startups that build off of the identity and image of major regional businesses but are more interested in the quality of life offered by a smaller, bedroom community.
- c) Facilitate Planned Housing Development - Housing development is an important component in economic development. Housing can define the character of a community, and is often a primary factor in people's location decision. Housing development can affect property values throughout the city and aid or hinder other economic development. Le Sueur must ensure that a diverse and abundant supply of housing at all price ranges will make this community an attractive place to locate for individuals and families with diverse socioeconomic characteristics.
- ✓ Assist with the development of senior housing/assisted living so individuals have the option of staying in Le Sueur throughout their lives or can live close to family members.
  - ✓ Market available property to potential home builders
  - ✓ Facilitate connectivity between future housing and current and future commercial/retail
  - ✓ Create a diverse housing stock with affordable housing options to ensure that Le Sueur workers can also afford to live in Le Sueur.
  - ✓ Promote housing opportunities in and near downtown to support community vibrancy and resiliency of downtown.
  - ✓ Collaborate with property owners and developers who wish to develop new neighborhoods on the edge to make sure adequate public services are provided.
  - ✓ Continue to promote housing rehab and maintenance of existing neighborhoods through zero or low interest loan programs.
  - ✓ Work with the local and regional chambers of commerce to host an annual trade show that links homeowners to vendors, remodelers, builders, landscapers, lenders, designers, etc. This could include collaboration with other nearby towns.
- d) Encourages Appropriate Commercial Development – Commercial development provides goods and services to local residents, eases the tax burden on residents for city services, and creates employment opportunities within the local workforce. Increasing the local workforce will have secondary and tertiary benefits for local commercial and retail businesses as these workers spend money within the local economy.
- ✓ Establish objective measures to evaluate development projects that seek financial assistance. These might include number of new jobs, type of jobs created, potential tax benefits, possible externalities (spin off growth,

support of local businesses), as well as secondary and tertiary economic benefits.

- ✓ Facilitate marketing of available industrial/commercial property and buildings.
  - ✓ Offer competitive tax/fee benefits for industrial projects that display long-term benefits for the community
  - ✓ Collaborate with businesses to meet service needs
  - ✓ Continuously explore emerging retail consumer behavior and trends to understand what retail form and markets are best suited for the community
  - ✓ Create continuity among businesses that complement each other
- e) Encourage Entrepreneurship and Business Retention – Part of being a great place to live is fostering an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and supports long standing businesses. The following key strategies are in support of business development and retention:
- ✓ Assist business development services such as financial planning, marketing, and market research
  - ✓ Maintain the revolving loan fund to assist with small capital investments and gap financing
  - ✓ Ensure that business has adequate workspace to expand within the community
  - ✓ Partner with the Le Sueur Chamber of Commerce to identify and address business needs relating to public services
  - ✓ Survey current businesses to gauge satisfaction with city services
- f) Encourage consumption of local goods and services - Due to the great percentage of residents that commute into Mankato or the Twin Cities, where retail is plentiful and convenient, business in Le Sueur suffers. Le Sueur businesses and the city should work to have businesses capture consumption of goods and services by Le Sueur residents.
- ✓ Develop a public relations/marketing campaign to create awareness
  - ✓ Ensure that new development has convenient access to commercial business
  - ✓ Create greater access and higher visibility from Highway 169 through wayfinding and programming

## 2021 GOALS:

- Recommend streetscape and signage that defines the downtown district as part of the Main Street Redesign.
- Continue working with Housing Developers to market Le Sueur and to utilize various economic development tools to ensure a variety of housing types are constructed.
- Continue surveying and meeting with local entrepreneurs.
- Utilize economic development tools and make application as necessary to aide in the development of the vacation land owned by the EDA at 169.

## 2020 ACOMPLISHMENTS:

- Listed the EDA owned land at 169 for sale with Cushman & Wakefield.
- The EDA approached the Jahn Family on a purchase option and will continue communications with them moving forward in hopes of securing this.
- The EDA Tracking is actively tracking vacant land sales within the City of Le Sueur and is working specifically on the following housing development:
  - a. Multi-Family (Apartments):
    1. The EDA assisted CommonBond with \$24,500 in Sewer Access Charge (SAC) Credits.
    2. The EDA assisted with the TIF for CommonBond Communities.
  - b. Single Family:
    1. The EDA has accessed the viability of numerous single-family parcels in the City and has marked these parcels to various developers.
- Downtown Redevelopment:
  - a. The EDA applied for and were awarded \$857,689 from the State of Minnesota, Department of Employment & Economic Development Redevelopment Grant Program to assist with the Valleygreen Sq. Mall Redevelopment.
  - b. The EDA assisted with a TIF for Building Good Downtown's LLC.
  - c. The EDA is partnering with the City of Le Sueur to sell the downtown parking lot (PID 21.999.0150) to Building Good Downtown's LLC.
  - d. Reviewed the proposed Main Street Reconnection Plan and recommended it's approval by the City Council.
- The Rural Entrepreneur Venture Program continued in Le Sueur.
  - a. Received business surveys from 14 local businesses. These surveys were used to:
    1. Assist in revamping the City's Revolving Loan Fund Program.
    2. Marketing information was created for the RLF and it was put on the City of Le Sueur's website.
  - b. A COVID business resource page was created on the City of Le Sueur's website. The EDA also discussed a micro-loan program but decided to hold off at this time.
  - c. The EDA updated the Ripple Map that originally created in Nov 2018.
  - d. A REV Business resource page was updated on the City of Le Sueur's website.
  - e. The EDA completed a REV Sustainability plan for the City of Le Sueur.
  - f. The EDA held a virtual training for Businesses on Succession Planning.
  - g. The EDA discussed a coworking space at the Community Center. Instead of investing more funds, the EDA would like to partner with the City Council on utilizing space at City Hall more efficiently for local entrepreneurs.