

Le Sueur Initiative for Entrepreneurship (LIFE)

Creating a strong and business-friendly community

Have approved two so far -- sparked interest in things happening downtown -- people are noticing some of the improvements

Treasures in Town and Wise Furniture utilizing the façade program

\$857,000 Redevelopment Grant from DEED -- retention of 22 jobs & re-opening of Main Street

They allowed the community to recognize its needs to create business opportunities

New businesses emerges in the community and are successful

Element Exteriors in new business center

City Council and other groups in town are really talking about how to help small business. They seem more tolerant for risk taking because they see the benefit of small business. They are also more supportive of the businesses that we do have to help e's be more successful.

The team that is in place now is willing to listen and connect the dots -- making sure that funding is in place to work with programs like REV, EDA. They are providing matching funds with other programs that support entrepreneurs

ADDDvantage Creations -- new company just launched last Friday - also iBother Studio -- motion graphics animations

There is a new craft shop in the Mall -- it is called Why Not?

New Mexican Grocery Store (Chabilitas owners started spin-off)

New Dog Groomer downtown

Canopy Group expanded downtown

Toppers and Trailers Plus -- new business along 169.

Kwik Trip also acquired land along 169 for a future store.

Identifying our assets also part of our first networking event, and learning that it is important to build on assets

Learned from the asset mapping about different businesses that are in the community which they were unaware of

Businesses are calling to ask for help because they have heard about the REV program

Le Sueur has connected with EDA, which is part of REV

Mall is now under contract from CBC Fisher Group -- scheduled to close in 06/2020

Re-energizing the Chamber and service clubs

There are younger people involved in the chamber, as well as City Council, and the service clubs as well.

Chamber has also been planning a Job Fair for the spring. Part of the bigger plans for 2019.

As part of the Chamber, they recognized a situation and they created a foundation for business involvement -- recognition of lack of involvement and outreach led to new programs for the future.

For 2019, they've got some big plans. But they first needed to recognize that there was an issue. The fact that we are having this discussion means that this entire town is moving forward.

REV helped create the energy here. We are seeing this drive for our community, talking about our business. It prompts us to keep that momentum going.

It is important for entrepreneurs to get involved with these clubs. Getting involved is one way to be more stable. If you've got people standing behind you, you will have a better chance of success.

Lions selling Christmas trees in the heart of downtown now -- improving traffic into the downtown during the holidays

Rotary partnered with the City on the Christmas Tree in Mothers Louise Park

We have a fantastic base of service clubs -- their support is key -- Rotary, Lions, Friends of the Library, Knights of Columbus -- we've lost a few clubs, but these others have picked up the mantel and have moved forward. Their club memberships are increasing when others are decreasing!

Chamber "night on the town" -- Thursday before Thanksgiving, also a focus of the Chamber.

Business Expo -- as events are happening over the next year, we are trying to make them bigger and better and stronger. Business Expo hasn't popped up on Chamber's radar yet. It is something the Chamber will be using to get more involvement. We are focusing more on Chamber members and trying to get them more involved.

Chamber has grown business expo to include almost a small "taste of Le Sueur" -- local restaurants serving food

Promoting an attitude shift about local businesses

In past two years, businesses have become recognized not just as a tax base, but as a vital part of the community -- last year's Parade of Lights, and this year's Halloween Trick or Treating -- the change in town in these two events have been astronomical. On Halloween, the sidewalks were packed with kids. It is exactly as I'd envisioned this to be.

I was trick or treating with my kids and they said "mom you know everyone."

The kids weren't at my house, they were downtown trick or treating! The downtown trick or treating ended early This was the second year we've done this. One business said they had 250 kids.

There were entrepreneurs that don't have businesses downtown who had "trick or trunking" so they weren't excluded.

Sent school kids home with a note inviting them to trick or treat downtown. This would not have happened without cooperation of the school.

Trick or treat event has almost doubled in businesses and participants

B-Fierce donated back to LeSueur HS Athletics the profits from their sales once this Fall

Trying to promote a cultural mindset -- you get out of your community what you put into it -- and you don't expect to get stuff when you don't invest your energy -- and don't complain unless you are working.

Amount of people showing up for events and the involvement of the community -- both strong -- our community has become involved with wanting to make changes -- more interest and people coming forward to make this a place where people want to be. To get other people to see the same things that we see is a positive.

Businesses sponsoring MORE activities at Christmas on Main (Christmas Carolers, petting zoo, etc.)

Downtown Le Sueur has 1,000 Facebook followers

Employees of the newly created businesses attend the events and spend their money on those businesses

Possible new residents coming into town with these new businesses -- some of them are existing LeSueur residents, but there is a sense that some people are coming in from elsewhere

People finding out more about businesses in town -- trying to keep things local

New Giant Celebration Kick off Event

School district sharing a Career Counselor who's also working with local businesses

20+ students attended Manufacturing week 2019

Challenges (or opportunities) moving forward

Expense of retail space -- fees and taxes that make it difficult for business owners

Housing issues -- lack of housing for middle income. We have "dumpy" houses and fancier homes, but many of our workers come from out of town.

What is available if "fixer uppers." There is very little that you can walk in and it will be ready.

Apartment -- there isn't much available in town. The rental housing stock is sub-par.

We don't have life cycle housing

We do have spaces that are being underutilized. For instance, we have building that is being used to store junk.

For commercial and small manufacturing, there is really a lack of available space.

Entrepreneurs looking for employees -- hard to compete with manufacturers, because manufacturer salaries are quite high.

Entrepreneurs want to be more involved -- want to feel more supported by the community -- want to be more connected to service clubs

Service clubs also have time constraints -- Lions' meet once/week in the evening, which is hard for young parents to do.

Turnout is amazing for public service events -- people want to give back to the community -- but difficult to get people to meetings -- same 15-20 people show up for meetings. Many people want to do the service but not do the meeting part.

If I were looking at coming into town, I'd want to know about what is going to happen with the mall. It is a detriment the way it is now as far as attracting entrepreneurs. The uncertainty about its future makes people look elsewhere. Plus, buying space isn't an option at the mall.

Trying to re-open Main Street, but there is some challenge with other decision makers. Whether this road can be opened is the first step needed to support the mall.

Mall Redevelopment -- retention of three upper level businesses

We offer far less here for entertainment, as compared with the cities. Tens of thousands of dollars leave here every week to go to Mankato or the cities for entertainment purposes. That's revenue that could be staying here in town if businesses had those entertainment options.

We have no incubation space for entrepreneurs to start out -- lacking a "third space." The mall might make sense, but they'd have to reduce their rents to make this possible.

COVID-19

Patti's Kitchen Cupboard Restaurant and Flower Shop have both closed in the downtown.

Business loss

Fun to hear people talk about our partners -- SMIF, Region 9, Extension -- I love that people are connecting with those groups as partners.

It was in the basement of a local bar and everybody upstairs was wondering what we were doing down there. We brought in a financing person. Important to learn about government financing programs. Plus the guy from Mankato Brewing brought samples, which always is good!

First networking event -- entrepreneurs would have liked to just visit the entire time -- pocket of them gathered together -- local food co-op people gathered together and made connections.

There was someone there who is interested in opening up a winery. Property was an issue. They can't find commercial property to open up even a small commercial operation.

Community event had 25 people attend to learn about entrepreneurship, had guest speakers, one an entrepreneur and one financial business

Connections with schools led to collaborations -- young people in the schools could learn more from entrepreneurs about running a business

Collaboration with city assets and schools - entrepreneurs finding out what is available to them

Stronger connections with businesses, city, social groups, school

Shared experiences on how they became entrepreneurs, working with schools and businesses. There are many entrepreneurs in Le Sueur

Networking of entrepreneurs -- getting together and collaborating -- both individuals and organizations -- people got together in a couple of meetings

There were 5 pastors present and they seemed genuinely interested, had good questions, and were appreciative.

I was able to present the LIFE PowerPoint using hard copies to the Ministerial Association at their monthly noon lunch meeting at the Pizza Ranch.

To begin the LIFE presentation I found it relevant to hold up a copy of the Comp Plan and talk about how Strategies #2 (Partnerships) and Strategy and # 6 (Economic Development & Housing) related directly to both Entrepreneurship and the Ministerial Association.

Working to do an online Resource Library

Updated Revolving Loan Fund Guidelines

*Potential Micro-loan Program

Business Succession Training (lack of participants but video on City's website)

20+ In-person Business visits

40+ Business surveys completed.

Connecting entrepreneurs with each other and with resources

Local bank has a person who can work locally with our entrepreneurs. They talked about utilization of SBA.

Guy from Mankato Brewery (Tim) had used one of these SBA programs -- he discussed the process and lessons learned.

Also learned about programs offered by SMIF, DEED -- SBA isn't the only financing resource.

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This type of thing would be great in the mall.

Always bringing my ten year old to Mankato for bouncy house birthday party and pizza.

Movie Theater

Could also be a coffee shop there.