

Economic Development Plan

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Major Economic Development Issues

The following economic development issues were identified through the analysis of conditions and considered in the planning process.

- 1. Economic Development, Transportation and Land Use:** Which areas should be developed, planned or preserved for business or industrial parks based on 9-ton or 10-ton access, rail development potential and reasonable access to sewer and water? What can the city do to avoid conflicting land use or transportation-related problems for business and industrial park tenants?
- 2. Business Development:** What types of businesses does the city want to help grow or attract? What actions and policies are needed to support business development?
- 3. Tax Base Development:** What, if anything, should the City do to strengthen its tax base and fiscal health? Should the city seek to strengthen its commercial/industrial tax base? What policies or strategies could the City use to enhance its tax base and fiscal health?
- 4. Workforce and Talent Attraction:** What strategies can the City use to create a community that attracts and retains talent attractive to area employers?
- 5. Redevelopment:** What role does redevelopment play in strengthening Big Lake? Which locations have priority for redevelopment during the next decade? What policies, tools or actions are needed to support redevelopment?
- 6. Transit Oriented Development:** What strategies will enable Big Lake to maximize the potential benefits of the Northstar Commuter Rail and Northstar CommuterLink service?



Corner Oaks Family Dentistry, a locally-owned business

Business and Industrial Parks

Build on Big Lake’s competitive advantages for manufacturing by anticipating and supporting the development of business and industrial parks appropriate for Big Lake market conditions

1. Preserve Development Sites

Preserve land long-term for business and industrial park development in areas with good utility and 10-ton road access. Ensure that Big Lake expands its commercial and industrial tax base long-term through the preservation of well-located land for business and industrial park development and maintains its capacity to provide high quality employment opportunities.

2. Planning and Design

Ensure long-term success through thoughtful location and control of adjacent uses; excellent transportation access and design for trucks; design standards that support robust tax base density and reasonable opportunities for business expansion; and area amenities that support talent attraction and employee wellness. Work with the Township and the County to establish design standards for unincorporated locations along Highway 10 that further these aims.

3. Business Park for Small Businesses

Support the development of a business park in Big Lake that meets the need for facilities in the 7,000 to 20,000 square foot range by small businesses in the construction trades, repair, automotive service sectors and start-up manufacturing. Consider different design standards and a smaller lot configuration, so the city can maintain good tax base density while meeting a market need for smaller, affordable space for small businesses in these sectors.

4. Rail-Served Industrial Park

Participate in the 2018 study with Sherburne County, the City of Becker and Big Lake. Identify the appropriate niche for an industrial park in Big Lake along County Road 17 with access to Minnesota 25 and US 10. If the Big Lake site is the preferred site for a rail-oriented industrial or logistics park, explore the benefits and challenges that such a district might present to the community and region and learn about best practices for designing such facilities to manage traffic, noise and other factors.

Tax Base Development

Increase commercial and industrial tax base as a percentage of the total tax base in Big Lake over the long term

1. Tax Base

Consider commercial and industrial tax base as a percent of total tax base in the community when making planning, land-use and economic development decisions. Explore strategies to strengthen Big Lake’s commercial and industrial tax base because the cost of serving households typically exceeds the tax revenue they generate, and commercial/industrial properties pay a higher property tax rate under state law and typically demand less in services than they generate in revenue. Over the long term, seek to increase the commercial and industrial tax base as a percent of total tax base to 30-35 percent from 22 percent.

Monitor tax base composition annually and integrate consideration of the fiscal implications of land use, planning and economic development decisions into city policies and decision-making processes.



Arconic Titanium and Engineered Products, a national corporation in advanced materials

Workforce Development and Talent Attraction

Actively support workforce development initiatives that strengthen Big Lake's competitiveness as a manufacturing location and quality of life initiatives that attract a skilled workforce to the community

Big Lake has an exceptional concentration of employment in manufacturing, nearly double the concentration of the county or the state, and a high concentration of residents employed in manufacturing. The City's concentration of employment in the Accommodation and Food Service sector is also double the concentration of the county and state.

1. Connect to Jobs

Partner with area organizations and employers to connect young people and area residents to the opportunities for skilled employment in manufacturing with good wages and benefits. Build on partnerships with LISI MEDICAL Remmele, Wright Technical Center, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training, the Big Lake School District and others to connect young people and area residents to manufacturing jobs and build employee skill sets that enable area manufacturers to thrive. Tactics may include job fairs, apprenticeships, mentorships, customized training and other techniques.

2. Community and Quality of Life

Continue to build a strong sense of community and a highly regarded quality of life by providing recreational and cultural activities and events. Celebrate Big Lake assets, including parks, businesses and its history as a recreational area through events such as concerts, water sports festivals, art festivals, farmers markets, recreational competitions, food or wine festivals. Integrate with talent attraction and development of the hospitality industry.

3. Hospitality Sector

Build on Big Lake's heritage and concentration of employment in the hospitality sector. The visitor industry has several economic development benefits – it provides commercial and industrial tax base, introduces people to the community, provides amenities (e.g. dining and entertainment) that are attractive to visitors as well as area residents, while providing entry-level and part-time employment opportunities. The hospitality industry can also meet the needs of area employers for accommodations and meeting room space.

4. City Center

Create an attractive environment for small, locally owned businesses that meet the needs of area residents and visitors and provide a walkable area enjoyed by area residents and visitors.



CentraCare Health has a major clinic in Big Lake, offering family medicine, specialty and out-patient services.

Financing Tools and Incentives

Work with county, utility and regional partners to sustain and build competitive financing tools and incentives

1. Financing and Incentive Tools

The Big Lake Economic Development Authority will evaluate financing and incentive tools and seek to develop more competitive tools when specific gaps or opportunities are identified.

Review financing and incentive tools on an annual basis to identify gaps and opportunities to address Big Lake's economic development priorities. When gaps or opportunities are identified, work with state, regional, county and utility partners and local policy makers to create financing tools and incentives that enable Big Lake to be competitive and meet its economic development priorities.

Financing redevelopment has long been a challenge for communities because it is less expensive to purchase raw land than purchase and remove a building, possibly deal with soil contamination, and prepare the site for new development. However, without redevelopment, the core of many communities deteriorates, dragging down the community image and adjacent property values.

Another challenge in redevelopment is timing, especially when site assembly is needed. Thus, it is helpful for a community to have funds set aside to help with acquisition when parcels become available. The legislature did not provide funds for the Redevelopment Grant Program in 2017, increasing the pressure on local communities. (That program was administered by the Department of Employment and Economic Development.)

Marketing

Continue to pro-actively market Big Lake

1. Marketing Strategy

Regularly update and execute Big Lake's marketing strategy.

Update the marketing strategy annually to ensure that Big Lake is reaching its key audiences. Update key messages that the City wants to reinforce with these audiences. Determine the best tactics to reach these audiences, including the City's Website, print, trade shows and broker events, networking, tours, media placements, social media, etc.

Utilities and Public Safety

Regularly review public and private utility services in the community to ensure that the community remains competitive

1. City sewer and water and public safety

Ensure that municipal utilities and public safety are managed to provide adequate capacity, excellent service and competitive pricing for the current and emerging needs of business and industry.

2. Private utility services – electric, gas and broadband

As part of city business retention efforts, identify any concerns with private utility services. Work with utility partners to address issues and opportunities and ensure that utility services in the community meet current and emerging needs.

Northstar Commuter Rail Service

Build on Northstar commuter rail and CommuterLink bus service

1. Diverse Housing Options

Encourage housing development with ready access to the Northstar station that meet the needs of a broad range of ages and incomes and provides a variety of housing types, sizes and costs.

2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections

Create safe bicycle and pedestrian connections among the Northstar station and Big Lake neighborhoods and employment concentrations. Address the need for improved bicycle and pedestrian crossings of US Highway 10.

Plan Action Steps

The City will take the following steps to implement the recommendations of the Economic Development Plan

Table 16-1
Major Natural Resources Plan Actions

Action	Timing
Continue to apply the guidance of this comprehensive plan and the City's zoning regulations to ensure an adequate supply of well-designed and intensively developed industrial and commercial sites.	Continuous
Explore creating redevelopment financial assistance tools.	Continuous
Participate in the 2018 study with Sherburne County and the City of Becker regarding a possible rail-served industrial park.	2018 and 2019
Continue to enhance quality of life amenities that help attract and retain competitive employers and a skilled workforce.	Continuous
Work with county, utility and regional partners on marketing, workforce attraction, and financial incentives.	Continuous
Build on the Northstar and CommuterLink services.	Continuous



A wayfinding sign at the Big Lake Northstar commuter rail station