



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

## 4B

Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** October 8, 2024

**Title of Item:** Economic Development Update

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
<b>Submitted by:</b> Mark Jeffers		<b>Department:</b> Administration
<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator		<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 10 minutes
<b>Summary of Issue:</b>  Presentation of the economic development update.		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b> No action needed		
<b>Financial Impact:</b> Is there a cost associated with this request? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$ Is this budgeted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		

Legally binding agreements must have County Attorney approval prior to submission.



## Economic Development Update



October 8, 2024



# Priorities to Invoke Change

Promote Recreation  
and Tourism

Improve  
Broadband

Support  
Childcare

Support Career  
Development

Business Retention,  
Expansion and  
Attraction

Support Housing  
Initiatives

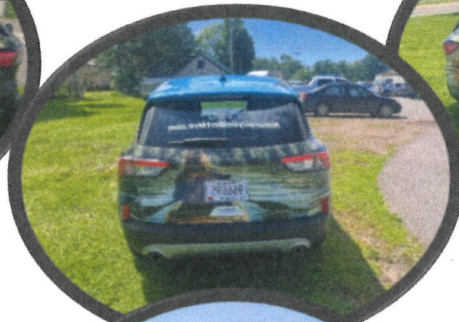


[www.naturallybetterhere.com](http://www.naturallybetterhere.com)



## RECREATION AND TOURISM

- Currently conducting an Economic Impact Assessment( EAI) through the U of M Extension, focusing on ATV trail activity and time spent at economic amenities in Aitkin County. EIA will be completed late fall, 2024.
- City of Hill City completed the sign project and utilized the Naturally Better logo opportunity.
- Naturally Better branded fleet car #11.
- Working with Aitkin County Water Trails committee and the public to name and advertise more existing river trails as part of the Aitkin County Riverboat Trail System.
- Awarded \$16,300 in Business Development & Recreation Grants to 8 organizations, directly affecting tourism and economic increase opportunities.

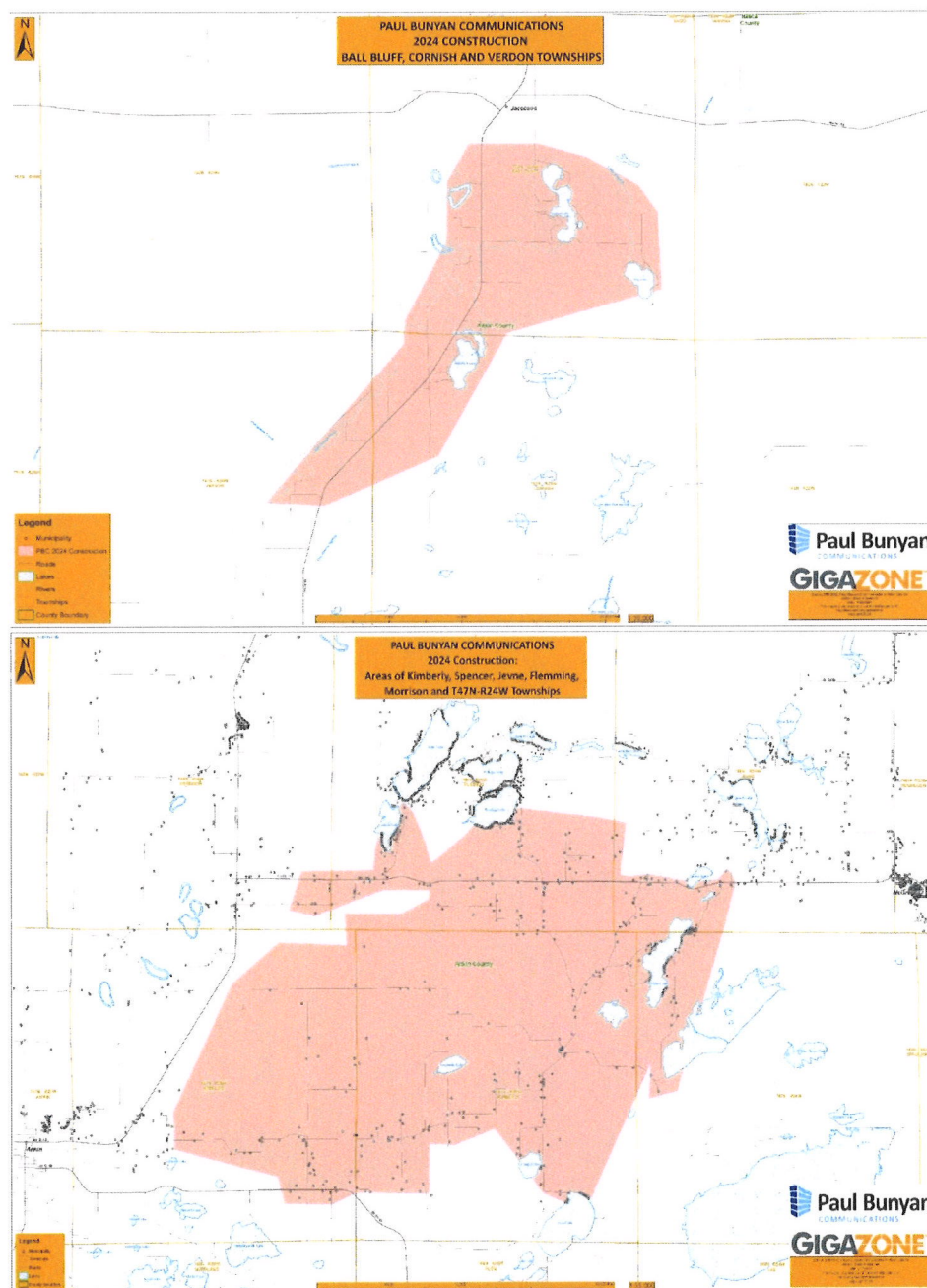




# BROADBAND

## New Construction

- March , 2024: Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative completes construction on McGrath Project, adding 97 miles of fiber and passing 565 homes.
- July 5, 2024: Paul Bunyan Communications announces expansion in Ball Bluff, Cornish and Verdon Townships of Aitkin County.
- August 1, 2024: Paul Bunyan Communications announces Broadband expansion to areas of Kimberly, Spencer, Jevne, Fleming and Morrison Townships of Aitkin County.
- 3 Border to Border grant applications have been submitted by MLEC and Tremolo, pending grant award announcement.



## CHILDCARE

### **Childcare updates:**

- Aitkin County Board of Commissioners awarded \$60,000 toward the construction of the Tamarack Learning Center.
- The next round of DEED Childcare Economic Development Grant is due on October 19, 2024. Aitkin County has plans to submit a grant application.
- October 24, 2024: I will attend the Future Childcare Provider Summit in Brainerd.

## BUSINESS RETENTION EXPANSION AND ATTRACTION

### **BRE updates:**

- The next phase of the Naturally Better marketing plan is to focus on overall business attraction.
- Aitkin County is creating a County Business Profile used for attraction and awareness to what we have to offer.
- This profile includes economic statistics, geographical information (maps and city info), Broadband info, major employers, available properties, transportation highlights, healthcare, education, recreation, public safety and business incentives.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- JET Career Fair was held on September 26, 2024. Over 500 students from Aitkin, Hill City, McGregor, Crosby, Mille Lacs Band attended.
- Attended the DEED Workforce Summit on September 12, 2024, in Duluth

# HOUSING

## **Housing Trust Fund**

- Established a Housing Trust Fund utilizing Local Housing Aid funding that may focus on 5 key areas of opportunity:
  1. Multi-family development tax abatement program (for the developer)
  2. New construction/development incentive programs (for the developer)
  3. New development/redevelopment financing programs (for the developer)
  4. Rehabilitation incentive programs (for the homeowner)
  5. Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (Minnesota City Participation Program (for the homeowner)
- I am in the process of researching and creating a revolving loan fund to complete #3 above.
- I am working with Dennis to identify any possibilities of County owned land for development.
- Attending the Brainerd Lakes Housing Summit on October 23, 2024.
- Requesting Board approval of our Housing Trust Fund Guidelines.

## **Local Housing Project Updates**

- 2 developments identified in the McGregor area. Continued dialogue with each owner.
- Hill City development- Lange Estates continues to progress.
- Bunker Hill Properties:



## COORDINATOR UPDATES

### **Organizations served:**

- City of Aitkin Planning and Zoning Commission
- Northspan Board of Directors, Vice-Chair
- Iron Range Economic Alliance (IREA) Board of Directors, Vice-Chair
- Minnesota Association of Professional Economic Developers (MAPCED), current President
- Aitkin Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, current Chamber President
- McGregor Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

### **Outreach (July-September):**

- July 12: IREA Board meeting
- July 16: IRR Community Development workshop
- July 16: monthly dialogue meeting with City of Aitkin Administrator
- July 18: ACAT meeting
- August 1: Northspan Board meeting
- August 5: Paul Bunyan Communications meeting- Grand Rapids
- August 12: Riverwood Surgical Center grand opening
- August 13: monthly dialogue sessions with City Administrator
- September 11: IREA Board meeting
- September 11: City of Aitkin-ISD#1 discussion meeting
- September 12: DEED Workforce Summit- Duluth
- September 13: AMC Fall Policy Conference- legislative platform presentation
- September 19: Mille Lacs Energy new building tour and open house
- September 20: Naturally Better momentum group quarterly meeting
- September 24: monthly dialogue session with City of Aitkin Administrator
- September 26: Hill City Water Treatment Facility groundbreaking
- September 26: Aitkin Career Fair
- September 27: MAPCED quarterly meeting



## STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL PROGRESS

Completed
Not on Track
Caution on timing
On Track

Priority	
Promote Recreation and Tourism	On Track
Improve Broadband	On Track
Support Childcare	Caution on timing
Support Career Development	On Track
Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction	On Track
Support Housing Initiatives	Caution on timing