



CHISAGO LAKES

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION PLAN

Prepared for the
America's Best Communities Competition

By
The People of Chisago Lakes Minnesota

ADDENDUM MARCH 2017
PROJECT SUMMARY

Chisago Lakes ABC Revitalization Plan Summary – March 2017

Over the past year, our revitalization plan has served Chisago Lakes well. While we have needed to pivot in several of our priorities, the plan has guided our efforts to help us mainly achieve our initial visions of success. Through the year, our vision has expanded in what we believe we can accomplish to make our community vital and appealing.

We have made rewarding progress on the most important component of our vision: *becoming one community from five small towns*. Our branding as Chisago Lakes is an accurate reflection of our community with five interesting and unique downtowns connected by Highway 8 and our interconnected lakes.

Our pivots have had a pattern of moving from building structures and seeking outside resources to a focus on our people and existing internal resources. The following examples illustrate our increased confidence that, together as a unified community, we have the capacity and expertise to be more successful. As one community, we are learning that improved solutions can emerge from thinking differently.

For example:

- Our Higher Education team pivoted away from a focus on a building structure and college campus to an increased awareness of the specific educational needs of our employers' workers and the use of existing community facilities.
- Our Healthy Living team moved from a focus on a specific community health framework and an expensive set of consulting services to a reliance on resources from our community health stakeholders.
- Our Water Trail project morphed from an expensive, controversial project requiring multi-year reconstruction of several bridges connecting three lakes to a now-open, ten lake water trail, all accomplished by shifting our focus from motorized boats to canoes, kayaks and paddleboards.

At the same time, we have made extensive use of outside resources and investigated best practices for each of our projects. Our teams have been anxious to learn, incorporate findings and move to service delivery. By incorporating these resources, expertise and experience, we have been able to make great progress in a short time.

For example:

- Our Higher Education team discovered the Cook County Higher Education Center in Grand Marais, MN. Their model of strong industry partnership, student support and targeted partnerships with a variety of higher education institutions is now working for Chisago Lakes.
- Our Energy Conservation and Development team partnered successfully with Eutectics, CERTS, the St. Paul Port Authority and energy contractors to plot strategy, conduct assessments, and finance and implement projects. Eutectics had developed this strategy with the University of Minnesota – Morris and the Morris community and we adapted these strategies to work for us.
- We have relied on our private sector broadband providers to make the investments in our telecommunications infrastructure necessary to support today's tech-dependent economy and community. We look forward to maximizing our use of these new infrastructures.

Overall, we have been able to closely follow our plan. We credit much of that ability to the hard work devoted to creating our plan by our project teams. They recruited the right participants, worked together to identify assets and barriers, and created plans of the right scale for our community. Over time, these plans have become more detailed, more ambitious and more successful. We have built the foundation for a prosperous future.

The Future

Our Chisago Lakes ABC team is committed to continuing our community-driven revitalization efforts. In addition to our original six areas of focus, we have added two additional priorities – Housing and Chisago Lakes ABC Initiative Fund.

The resources available to do this work – in addition to our passionate and talented pool of residents and staff – are not completely dependent on any ABC prize money that we may be fortunate to receive. No matter what happens in Denver, we plan to reconvene our teams to celebrate our successes and set our course for the future. We do have aggressive plans to continue making our existing projects successful and sustainable. The details of these current plans are listed below.

Chisago Lakes ABC Initiative Fund

We have entered into a partnership with the Initiative Foundation, a rural based 14 county foundation to manage our new fund for the purpose of financing collaborative, Chisago Lakes economic development projects. We have an initial board of advisors ready to continue the behaviors that have led to successful Chisago Lakes ABC efforts. With or without prize money, this board is committed to creating and managing this fund.

Key tasks:

- Develop and adopt by-laws and operating processes.
- Develop tools to clearly inform Chisago Lakes about the new fund, the process, procedures, priorities and timelines.
- Determine fund-raising goals and targets.
- Begin to fund projects meeting our vision and goals.

Branding and Marketing

We now have a well-established team implementing our collaborative branding and marketing efforts. The team includes a great combination of local marketing-dependent businesses, the Chamber of Commerce and local creative and marketing professionals. We have a great plan and a scalable implementation strategy.

Moving forward, we will focus our efforts to:

- Continue to advocate for our Chisago Lakes identity and collaboration.
- Finalize our lodging tax to sustain our marketing efforts.
- Create and deploy marketing content and share it with our partners using our blogs and other social media.
- Understand and meet our shared marketing objectives.
- Market area assets to residents so they are both community consumers and advocates.
- Monitor Google Analytics to track our impact and adjust strategy.

Broadband Access and Training

This group will continue to work on both broadband access and utilization across Chisago Lakes. We expect to begin enjoying the benefits of the broadband infrastructure investments by our broadband providers which are now in the final stages. We have seen the economic benefits of helping our local businesses adopt new technologies through our training programs and social media breakfasts.

Broadband Access

- Continue to monitor infrastructure improvements by our broadband providers.
- Advocate for these providers to continue their investments to expand both network reach and capacity so that all residents and businesses have access to broadband at the 2026 Minnesota broadband goal of 100 Mb/20 Mb.
- Monitor and promote the use of our new public Wi-Fi hotspots via a ribbon cutting, signage and marketing.
- Identify the need for additional public access sites.
- Promote the video conferencing equipment to the public.

Broadband Training

- Our business technology trainings and social media breakfasts are scheduled through the end of 2017.
- Make it a priority for the Chisago County EDA and the ABC Higher Education team to make use of the public access videoconference equipment for both business and workforce training.
- The Chamber of Commerce will continue to offer Google Map verification as a chamber benefit.
- Pursue continued funding for this work through our county's alumni status as a Blandin Foundation Broadband Community.

Future Workforce

Our workforce efforts will continue to intensify as we formalize our emerging partnerships and workforce development systems. With a focus on creating a balanced workforce with unlimited opportunities, we will continue to engage our existing employers. We will continue to seek to improve educational opportunities and attainment for our children, in school and as they select higher education paths, and for adults of any age as they select and complete lifelong educational training to prepare them for what's next.

Higher Education

- Work with Bush Foundation to obtain their \$200,000 Community Innovation grant to create and implement our envisioned community education and workforce development system. This effort will focus on helping displaced and unemployed adult workers improve their futures via career-focused education and training tied to local employment opportunities.
- Continue ongoing communications, through focus groups and other means, with manufacturers and health care industry sectors. Begin discussions with the construction and dentistry sector.
- Enter into a long-term contractual agreement with higher education consultant (from Cook County Higher Education) to help guide our efforts and create our support and tracking systems.

- Market and secure students for our next round of manufacturing classes beginning June 2017.
- Collect and utilize evaluation data from our initial group of manufacturing students and discuss results with Pine Technical College.

Future Workforce

- Continue our industry tours and relationship building between local employers, teachers and students.
- Complete and submit funding grant requests to create the Music in our City project where students, teachers and local artists create musical street sculpture.
- Support Chisago Lakes High School's efforts to support manufacturing, including teacher certification, curriculum development and facilities expansion.
- Seek additional industry financing of trade school scholarships and support of On-The-Job training opportunities.

Energy Conservation and Development

Our Clean Energy team is highly motivated by our measurable impact and growing interest in energy conservation and solar development. We have gained expertise in using utility and government programs designed to spur investment in these technologies and are focused on maintaining our status as 'Solar Capital of Minnesota'.

- Partner with the Chisago County HRA/EDA to expand our initiative countywide.
- Host energy-focused events and participate in existing community festivals and events to spread the word to residents about the cost-savings and other positive impacts of clean energy.
- Add our electric cooperative into our partnership.
- Promote and leverage the St. Paul Port Authority PACE program to finance larger projects.
- Build a more complete energy economy by targeting and supporting business development in solar manufacturing, installation and support services.

Healthy Living

Our Health Living team has a firm foundation of committed, collaborative stakeholders including health care providers, local companies and citizen volunteers. Using evidence based community wellness strategies; we will work to achieve a healthier community. We have prioritized projects that will yield measurable results.

- Our workplace wellness project will spur our initial cohort of businesses to complete their planning and initial projects and will recruit additional firms.
- Help restaurants offer suggestions for making "the healthy choice the easy choice".
- Review a wide range of public policies that affect health and build coalitions to adopt health oriented policies. Institute a tobacco-free public grounds policy as a priority.
- Complete the pending community health survey with detailed analysis to further guide our strategies.
- Continue awareness building around the importance of community design/pedestrian-friendly development.
- Work with local farmers and vegetable growers to market their products locally.
- Continue our outreach efforts through the newspaper, social media and events.

Trails

Our Trails team has helped create a vision of a comprehensive and safe trail system between and within our towns. The trail creation process required vision, planning, funding and construction. Our activities are focused on each of these elements across our Chisago Lakes community and within our individual towns.

Swedish Immigrant Trail

- Continue to advocate for the trail.
- Support the county as they:
 - Pave the trail between Tern Avenue and Interstate State Park in Taylors Falls.
 - Acquire property from Tern Avenue and the City of Shafer to construct trail.
- This summer, construct the shared trailhead for the Swedish Immigrant Trail and Water Trail in downtown Lindstrom.
- Support the grant application for a similar shared trailhead for the Swedish Immigrant Trail and Water Trail in Center City.

Chisago Lakes Water Trail

- Install trail signs.
- Hold annual Memorial Day Paddle in May.
- Complete installation of Lindstrom trailhead kiosk.
- Submit grant application for Center City trailhead.
- Construct two campsites in Ki Chi Saga Park.

Connector Trails

- Construct the 288th Trail in Lindstrom scheduled for 2018.
- Submit Taylors Falls Safe Routes to School construction grant application.

Housing

Our Chisago Lakes Housing Task Force continues its work to mobilize housing stakeholders to pursue the development of housing in our area, especially workforce housing.

They have the following short-term activities planned:

- Schedule the Chisago Lakes Housing Summit for Summer 2017 to receive input from local lenders, realtors, contractors and local elected officials and to provide them with information on markets, finance programs and priority sites.
- Advocate for the completion of a comprehensive countywide housing study by the Chisago County HRA/EDA.
- Assist an investor with plans, approval and construction of an eight-unit multi-family apartment project in Lindstrom.
- Help market a ten-acre site in Chisago City for single-family development.

Future Projects and Community Engagement

- Participate in the Community Blandin Leadership Program when selected.
- Host the Minnesota Design Team in 2018.

**Chisago Lakes ABC Community Awards
2016-2017**

Chisago Lakes Community Ambassador 2016

Chisago Lakes Chamber

Excellence in Community Development 2016

University of Minnesota

Collaboration for Community Impact Finalist 2016

Minnesota High Tech Association (Tekne)

Minnesota Clean Energy Community 2016

MN Department of Commerce

America's Best County 2016

MN Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED)

Partnership Award 2017

Economic Development Association of MN (EDAM)

Chisago Lakes ~ United We Thrive!

PRIORITY PROJECT: CHISAGO LAKES BRANDING AND MARKETING INITIATIVE

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Create the Chisago Lakes website	Finalize the scope document	100%	ACT Team
	Select the vendor	100%	ACT Team
	Identify the website manager	100%	ACT Team
	Build the website	100%	Vendor/Manager
	Launch the website	100%	Vendor/Manager
	Obtain links	100%	Vendor/Manager
	Launch the social media strategy	100%	ACT Team
	Quarterly social media contests/events	100%	ACT Team
Promote Chisago Lakes new logo	Create logo	100%	ACT Team
	Promote logo to key stakeholders – community, businesses, economic development, schools	100%	ACT Team
	Include logo on new website	100%	ACT Team
	Create swag with logo	100%	Chisago Lakes Chamber, ACT Team
Implement Marketing Plan	Finalize marketing plan	100%	ACT Team
	Begin implementing marketing plan	100%	ACT Team, Chisago Lakes Chamber
Implement a lodging tax, for either Chisago Lakes or countywide	Continue discussions within Chisago Lakes with lodging facilities	100%	ACT Team, Chisago County HRA-EDA, Lodging Facilities, County Board
	Begin discussions countywide	100%	Chisago County EDA
	Obtain approval for lodging tax	100%	ACT Team, Chisago County HRA-EDA
Increase online marketing and technology use by businesses and organizations	Hold the Chisago County Technology Summit to provide perspective and motivation around the adoption of technology.	100%	Chisago County Blandin Broadband Communities Team
	Within Chisago Lakes, hold two workshops per month on marketing, technology and e-commerce.	100%	Chisago County BBC Team, Chisago Lakes Chamber, Pine Technical College
	Promote the use of Google Places	100%	Chisago County EDA and Local Chambers

PRIORITY PROJECT: ENHANCE BROADBAND ACCESS

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Ensure broadband availability	Share broadband survey results with all broadband providers	100%	Blandin Broadband Community (BBC) Team
	Monitor Frontier CAF2 network improvements	Ongoing	BBC Team
	Keep county board, city and town councils informed on broadband progress	100%	BBC Team
Improve WiFi Access	Apply for funding from Blandin Foundation	100%	BBC Team
	Inventory existing WiFi sites	100%	BBC Team
	Identify new prospective sites	100%	BBC Team
	Install WiFi in at least one location in each Chisago Lakes community	100%	BBC Team
Technology	Investigate uses for Frontier Office Building Videoconference Center Installed in Lindstrom Assist Lindstrom Office Center market new CoWorking Space	On Hold	Chisago City Lindstrom Chisago County EDA's
Increase the online marketing sophistication and technology use of Chisago Lakes businesses and organizations	Hold the Chisago County Technology Summit to provide perspective and motivation around the adoption of technology.	100%	Chisago County, BBC Team
	Within Chisago Lakes, hold two workshops per month on marketing, technology and e-commerce.	Ongoing	Chisago County EDA, BBC Team, Chisago Lakes Chamber, Pine Technical College
	Promote the use of Google Places by businesses and community organizations.	Ongoing	Chisago County EDA & Chisago Lakes Chamber

PRIORITY PROJECT: HIGHER EDUCATION HUB (COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY CENTER)

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Determine best site for CTC	Identify available alternatives	100%	
Conduct Due Diligence	Have buildings analyzed for value, potential, defects, remodeling costs, etc.	100%	Chisago City EDA, Chisago County EDA
Identify Partners	Contact prospective higher education partners	100%	Higher Ed Team, Chisago County EDA, Chisago Lakes Schools
Develop financing plan	Identify and pursue grant opportunities and sponsors	80%	Higher Ed Team, Chisago County EDA, Chisago Lakes Schools
	Develop financing scheme and pro forma	On Hold	Chisago City EDA, Chisago County EDA, Chisago Lakes Schools
	Develop prospective partnerships, such as Pine Technical College	100%	Higher Ed Team, Chisago County EDA, Chisago Lakes Schools
Final Decision	Review feasibility and community support for Tech/Ed building	On Hold	Chisago City EDA, Chisago County EDA, Chisago Lakes Schools
Obtain control of the building and complete remodeling	Sign lease or purchase agreement	On Hold	Chisago City EDA, Chisago County EDA
	Hire contractor	On Hold	Chisago City EDA, Chisago County EDA
Market the facility	Hire facility manager or management company	On Hold	Chisago City EDA, Chisago County EDA
	Promote the facility to existing businesses and commuting residents.	On Hold	Higher Ed Team, Chisago County EDA, Chisago Lakes Schools

PRIORITY PROJECT: WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Market Work Based Learning	Create and promote through publications and website and make presentations to stakeholders	100%	CLHS Staff & ABC Task Force Members
Subsidize Work Based Transportation	Provide community transportation for students to & from work experiences if needed	100%	CLHS Staff
Work Based Orientation Grants	As a business incentive for community placements, orientation hourly wages would be granted up to 5 hours	100%	CLHS Staff along with CL District Payroll
Annual Work Based Open House	An evening Open House with the community partners invited to CLHS for connection and demonstrations	100%	CLHS Staff along with ABC Task Force Members
Work Based Learning Coordination	Assistance with program delivery, supervision, and evaluation	100%	CLHS Staff

PRIORITY PROJECT: ENERGY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Obtain resources to create the Energy Hub	Identify resource	100%	Team
	Write and submit grant applications	100%	Team
Create the hub	Create and Implement the Chisago Lakes Clean Energy Hub to streamline access to technical expertise and clean energy financing for all area constituents.	100%	Team in partnership with Eutectics
	Create the work program, documented in a Gantt chart in partnership with Eutectics	100%	Team in partnership with Eutectics
	Establish a Community Renewable Energy Standard to reach 100% locally generated renewable energy and \$40 million of investment by 2025 - including a benchmarking process with the Regional Indicators Initiative.	100%	Team in partnership with Eutectics
	Establish a technical expertise network of energy auditors, engineers, electrical contractors and renewable energy developers - including a local preference component.	100%	Team in partnership with Eutectics
	Integrate existing public and private capital funding tools into a ‘green bank’ for Chisago Lakes Clean Energy Hub, including a County-wide Joint Powers Agreement to provide Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing for long-term funding of solar and deep energy efficiency projects	100%	Team in partnership with Eutectics
	Partner with Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTS), Xcel Energy’s Home Energy Squad and others on a community-wide outreach campaign to ensure broad access to Clean Energy Hub resources and financing.	100%	Team in partnership with Eutectics
	Complete the demonstration projects identified by Eutectics by the end of 2016, and maximize residential, commercial and institutional solar PV projects by the end of 2016.	100%	Team in partnership with Eutectics
	Establish mechanisms to ensure ongoing sustainability for the Chisago Lakes Clean Energy Hub and a continuous evaluation and improvement process.	100%	Team in partnership with Eutectics

PRIORITY PROJECT: HEALTHY LIVING

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Work collaboratively toward implementing well-being strategies within our communities	Continue support of the Community Leadership Team/Community Health Strategy Framework Committee	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Meet with community healthy living partners to coordinate programs and resources. Determine the programs that currently exist, along with those to pursue. Include citizen representation.	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Create a common vision of healthy living.	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Define Well-Being and the specific domains within it.	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Determine community healthy living slogan.	100%	Healthy Living Team
Enhance well-being within our communities.	Pursue grant opportunities	Ongoing	Healthy Living Team
	Create a comprehensive list of community connectors and services– physical, mental, social	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Offer 2-4 new well-being classes	100%	Healthy Living Team
Promote healthy eating	Work with school to complete "School Health Index Assessment" to serve as a baseline to measure progress	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Define "healthy eating" with Community Leadership Team/Community Health Strategic Framework committee.	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Continue to increase awareness of local farmers markets	Ongoing	Healthy Living Team
	Make a plan to create 1-2 more community based gardens	100%	Healthy Living Team
Communicate well-being opportunities	Hold forum educating community members on the community well-being	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Hire wellness speaker/Blue Zones speaker for 1-3 community events	100%	Healthy Living Team
Increase walkability within communities	Blue Zone walking audit completed	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Complete Safe Routes to School initiative in Taylors Falls	Ongoing	Healthy Living Team
	Develop a Walk Your City campaign	100%	Healthy Living Team
	Promote designing a "gateway" for each community"	In Process	Healthy Living Team
	Create trail/pathway along 288th street in Lindstrom to allow for safe passage	50%	Healthy Living Team

Project Updates – March 2017

PRIORITY PROJECT: CHISAGO LAKES WATER TRAIL (CLWT)

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Hold a Water Trail Summit	Contact stakeholders, including DNR, other water trail organizations, etc.	100%	Trails Team
	Host the water trail summit in Chisago County	100%	Trails Team
Physical creation of the water trail.	Test the water trail routes with students and residents.	100%	Trails Team
	Prepare portages and camp sites	100%	Trails Team
	Purchase and install signage	95%	Trails Team
	Purchase and install canoe & kayak racks and boats.	95%	Trails Team
Market the water trail	Create maps & brochures.	100%	Trails Team
	Market to area residents through local media and schools	100%	Trails Team
	Include as an attraction on the Chisago Lakes website	100%	Trails Team
	Water trail grand opening celebration	100%	Trails Team

Project Updates – March 2017

PRIORITY PROJECT: SWEDISH IMMIGRANT REGIONAL TRAIL

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Advocate for the Swedish Immigrant Regional Trail	Provide information to the public about the trail and the steps necessary for completion	Ongoing	Trails Team
	Collect signatures on petitions, both paper and online, to document citizen support to key decision makers	100%	Trails Team
	Advocate with the Minnesota DNR regarding trail completion through Interstate Park to Taylors Falls.	80%	Trails Team
	Present information to key decision makers	100%	Trails Team

Project Updates – March 2017

PRIORITY PROJECT: ENSURE CONTINUED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Key Activities	Key Steps	% Complete	By Whom
Complete application process to the MN Design Team	Recruit a leadership team	Moved to 2018	Chisago Lakes Chamber
	Obtain financial sponsorship	Moved to 2018	Chisago Lakes Chamber
	Complete the necessary forms	Moved to 2018	Chisago Lakes Chamber
	Host the site visit prior to selection	Moved to 2018	Chisago Lakes Chamber
	Host MN Design Team visit	Moved to 2018	Chisago Lakes Chamber
Complete Blandin Foundation Community Leadership Program	Apply for Blandin Foundation Community Leadership Program	100%	Chisago Lakes Area Community Foundation (CLACF)
	Await decision	2017	CLACF
	Recruit attendees	2017	CLACF
	Attend training	2018	CLACF