



NORTH BRANCH

—Minnesota—

Sara Paul
Chair

Dennis Johnson
Vice Chair

Jessica Thelander
Commissioner

Marshall Saunders
Commissioner

Patrick Meachem
Councilmember

Cassie Koecher
Commissioner

Kevin Schieber
Mayor

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR AGENDA
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026 @ 3:30 PM
CITY HALL, 6408 ELM STREET, NORTH
BRANCH, MN 55056**

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Provides an opportunity for the public to address the Council on items that are not on the Agenda. Please raise your hand to be recognized. Please state your name and address for the record. This section is for the express purpose of addressing concerns of City services and operations. It shall not be used to clarify individual's views for political purposes.

5. AGENDA APPROVAL

a. Approve Agenda

ACTION

6. CONSENT AGENDA

All matters listed under Consent Agenda are considered routine and/or non-controversial and will be approved by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Councilmember or citizen so requests, in which case the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the Agenda.

a. Approval of April 21, 2026 EDA Meeting Minutes

ACTION

b. Approval of April 30, 2026 Special EDA Meeting Minutes

ACTION

7. REPORTS

- | | | |
|----|---|------------------|
| a. | Chisago County HRA-EDA Update | VERBAL
UPDATE |
| b. | North Branch Area Chamber of Commerce Update | VERBAL
UPDATE |
| c. | North Branch Area Schools Update | VERBAL
UPDATE |
| d. | EDA Executive Director Update | VERBAL
UPDATE |
| e. | Consider approval of 2026 Interstate Business Park Farm Lease | ACTION |
| f. | Storefront Facade Program | ACTION |
| g. | Comprehensive Plan Update | INFO |
| h. | Marketing Strategy Plan | ACTION |

8. CLOSED SESSION

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| a. | Closed meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, sub. 3 (c) to consider the sale of real property in the Interstate Business Park | INFO |
| b. | Closed meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, sub. 3 (c) to consider the sale of real property at Outlot B, Cherokee Place 3rd Addition | INFO |

9. NEXT MEETING - June 16, 2026

10. ADJOURNMENT

EDA Mission Statement.

To be proactive in maintaining and enhancing the economic viability of North Branch through partnerships, innovation, and strategic action.

EDA Goals:

- Successfully become one of the first communities in the region mentioned as a choice for business location.
- Attract new industries that bring an enhanced tax base, quality jobs, and new capital into the community.
- Support existing businesses and encourage their continued prosperity and growth.
- Address critical systems that influence site location decisions.



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Date: 01/28/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: Approval of April 21, 2026 EDA Meeting Minutes

Approval of April 21, 2026 EDA Meeting Minutes

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority



NORTH BRANCH —Minnesota—

Sara Paul
Chair

Dennis Johnson
Vice Chair

Jessica Thelander
Commissioner

Marshall Saunders
Commissioner

Patrick Meachem
Councilmember

Cassie Koecher
Commissioner

Kevin Schieber
Mayor

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR AGENDA
TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2026 @ 3:30 PM
CITY HALL, 6408 ELM STREET, NORTH
BRANCH, MN 55056**

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH BRANCH IN THE COUNTY OF CHISAGO AND IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Sara Paul called the Economic Development Authority Meeting to order at 3:30PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Sara Paul led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Kevin Schieber, Councilmember Patrick Meacham, Commissioner Sara Paul, Commissioner Dennis Johnson, Commissioner Jessica Thelander, Commissioner Cassi Koecher

Absent: Commissioner Marshall Saunders

Remote:

Others Present:

Notes:

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Provides an opportunity for the public to address the Council on items that are not on the Agenda. Please raise your hand to be recognized. Please state your name and address for the record. This section is for the express purpose of addressing concerns of City services and operations. It shall not be used to clarify individual's views for political purposes.

5. AGENDA APPROVAL

a. Approve Agenda

ACTION

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Jessica Thelander

SECONDER: Dennis Johnson

AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Koecher

ABSENT:

NOTES:

6. CONSENT AGENDA

All matters listed under Consent Agenda are considered routine and/or non-controversial and will be approved by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Councilmember or citizen so requests, in which case the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the Agenda.

a. Approval of March 17, 2026 EDA meeting minutes

ACTION

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Jessica Thelander

SECONDER: Dennis Johnson

AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Koecher

ABSENT:

NOTES:

7. REPORTS

a. Consider Approval of a Storefront Facade Application Request for North Branch Barbers at 6420 Main Street ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the consideration of approval of a Storefront Facade Application Request for North Branch Barbers at 6420 Main Street. The Economic Development Authority (EDA) budget for Fiscal Year 2024 included \$75,000, allowing the EDA to establish a Storefront Rehabilitation Grant Program. The funding is intended to help incentivize façade restoration and enhancements by businesses and/or property owners that restore the “historic” existing buildings within the old downtown area. The program funding is set up as technically a 0% forgivable loan over a five (5) year term, with repayment waived 20% each year through the end of the term. At that time, the funding becomes a “grant.” Should the property change hands at any time during the five (5) year timeline, the remaining balance would be due at the time of said transaction. The property owners would be required to agree to either a mortgage or some type of loan security.

The policy funds covering 50% of the improvement cost up to \$25,000. This would allow for up to three (3) “grants”. The EDA has discretion to approve a larger funding award to a business, if the project

meets the program intent and also meets the program goals with the district, and also supports the vision and goals for the Central Business District / Downtown area. The program establishes guidelines and defines eligible and ineligible improvements for the funding, as well as maintenance requirements.

Funding is intended to restore the storefronts of the existing buildings to their original appearances as they existed at the time of their construction. Given the age of many of the buildings, and historic photos, those storefronts included large floor-to-ceiling windows with recessed doors. Most of the buildings were brick facades.

Although the focus is on restoration of existing buildings, the guidelines can serve as guidance to new buildings and/or restoration of newer buildings. Thus, the EDA has discretion to award funding to update and upgrade non-historic buildings within the district, but are still important to fund such improvements.

There has been interest expressed in the program and an application has been submitted by Timothy Kropper from North Branch Barbers for improvements to their building located at 6420 Main Street.

Motion for Approval of a Storefront Facade Application Request for North Branch Barbers at 6420 Main Street.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Cassie Kecher
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher
ABSENT: Marshall Saunders
NOTES:

b. Consider Approval of a Storefront Facade Application Request for The Hungry Farmer at 6241 Main St ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the consideration of Approval of a Storefront Facade Application Request for the Hungry Farmer at 6241 Main Street. The Economic Development Authority (EDA) budget for Fiscal Year 2024 included \$75,000, allowing the EDA to establish a Storefront Rehabilitation Grant Program. The funding is intended to help incentivize facade restoration and enhancements by businesses and/or property owners that restore the “historic” existing buildings within the old downtown area. The program funding is set up as technically a 0% forgivable loan over a five (5) year term, with repayment waived 20% each year through the end of the term. At that time, the funding becomes a “grant.” Should the property change hands at any time during the five (5) year timeline, the remaining balance would be due at the time of said transaction. The property owners would be required to agree to either a mortgage or some type of loan security.

The policy funds covering 50% of the improvement cost up to \$25,000. This would allow for up to three (3) “grants.” The EDA has discretion to approve a larger funding award to a business, if the project meets the program intent and also meets the program goals of the district, and also supports the vision and goals for the Central Business District / Downtown area. The program establishes guidelines and defines eligible and ineligible improvements for the funding, as well as maintenance requirements.

Funding is intended to restore the storefronts of the existing buildings to their original appearances as they existed at the time of their construction. Given the age of many of the buildings, and historic photos, those storefronts included large floor-to-ceiling windows with recessed doors. Most of the buildings were brick facades.

Although the focus is on restoration of existing buildings, the guidelines can serve as guidance to new buildings and/or restoration of newer buildings. Thus, the EDA has discretion to award funding to update and upgrade non-historic buildings within the district, but is still important to fund such improvements.

There has been interest expressed in the program and an application has been submitted by The Hungry Farmer to their building located at 6241 Main Street. The applicant is proposing improvements to the site include siding, paint, lighting, signage and concrete. The proposed project is located outside the current downtown storefront facade program boundary. However it is located within the central business zoning district.

There was some discussion regarding the project being located outside the current downtown, as it is located within the central business zone district. It's in line with a lot of what the program was intended to do. Nate was requesting discussion and direction from the EDA related to the boundary. The Hungry Farmer would like to start the project on May 1st.

Motion to Approve the Storefront Facade Application Request for the Hungry Farmer at 6241 Main Street up to \$20,000.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Dennis Johnson
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher
ABSENT: Marshall Saunders
NOTES:

- c. Consider Approval of Resolution R-321-2026 approving engineering and environmental oversight agreement for building removal at 6247 410th Street ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the consideration Approval of building removal at 6247 410th Street. The EDA approved a purchase agreement with Louisiana Pacific (LP) is proposing a minimum of a 200,000 square foot facility manufacturing facility on 120 acres located in the northeast portion of the Interstate Business Park on December 9, 2025. The manufacturing at this facility will include LP's Expert finish facility which specializes in pre-finishing engineered wood siding trim with durable, factory applied paint in various colors, reducing the installation time and labor for builders by eliminating field painting and caulking needs. The site will require the outdoor storage of materials on the site.

The EDA approved the 1st Amendment to the purchase agreement at the March 17, 2026 that allowed for the removal of the structures on the property post closing date, establishing a closing date of April 21, 2026 and removal of the fixed wireless tower within 90 days of the termination of the tower lease.

Staff have been in the process of obtaining quotes for the removal and engineering/environmental services for the project.

Staff is requesting the following approvals:

1. Approval of Demo Service Environmental/Engineering Contract with WSB
2. Approval of Quitclaim Bill of Sale and Building Removal Agreement
3. Approval of Low Quote for Building Demolition and Site Clearance

Motion to Approve Resolution R-321-2026 Approving Environmental and Engineering Oversight Agreement for 6247 410th Street.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Patrick Meacham
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Koecher
ABSENT: Marshall Saunders
NOTES:

Motion to Approve R-322-2026 Approving Quitclaim Bill of Sale and Removal Agreement.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Patrick Meacham
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Koecher
ABSENT: Marshall Saunders
NOTES:

Motion to Approve R-323-2026 Approving a Demolition and Site Clearing Agreement at 6247 410th Street.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Patrick Meacham
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Koecher
ABSENT: Marshall Saunders
NOTES:

- i. Consider Approval of Resolution R-322-2026 approving quitclaim bill of sale ACTION and removal agreement
- ii. Consider Approval of Resolution R-323-2026 approving site demolition and ACTION clearing agreement at 6247 410th Street

d. Comprehensive Plan Update INFO

City Administrator Matthew Hill gave a Comprehensive Plan Update. Matthew said that in the last couple of months, there have been some steering committee meetings and work sessions. The City has gotten some really great feedback. We will be providing that feedback to the City Council in May as part of the larger group, along with all the information that we received from the values and vision portion of the comp plan as well. We will hopefully have everything ready for a June approval and get it documented for prosperity's sake.

e. Chisago County HRA-EDA Update VERBAL UPDATE

Community Development Director gave the Chisago County HRA-EDA Update due to Nancy Hoffman being unable to attend. There a Real Estate Redevelopment Event on Wednesday, May 13, 2026 from 11:30am-3pm. The cost is \$40 per person. Registration deadline is May 6th, 2026.

- f. North Branch Area Chamber of Commerce Update VERBAL
UPDATE

Chair Sara Paul gave a shout-out to the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Clink Link, appreciating the time he gives to the Chamber.

- g. North Branch Area Schools Update VERBAL
UPDATE

Chair Sara Paul gave the North Branch Area Schools Update. An interesting challenge in education is that while data is valuable, it often arrives with significant delays due to state processing. For example, our Class of 2025 graduated last June, but we only received official graduation data from the state two weeks ago. This lag is largely due to tracking student cohorts from ninth grade through graduation and ensuring the data is accurate. That said, the results are worth celebrating. The statewide graduation rate is 84%, while North Branch reached 93%. That’s a reflection of years of intentional work. When I joined six years ago, one of our district’s strategic priorities was redesigning the high school experience to better prepare students for their futures. I credit our school board for having the courage to rethink and reshape that model.

We’re proud of the 93%—one of the highest rates in the region—but what matters most is our commitment to every student. While we celebrate those who graduate on time, we also support students who need more time, ensuring they leave with a meaningful plan that fits their life.

It’s an exciting time in our district beyond academics as well. We have concerts coming up, a production of Mamma Mia!, and a full slate of spring activities—from softball and baseball to track. There’s always something happening in North Branch.

- h. EDA Executive Director Update VERBAL UPDATE

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave the EDA Executive Director Update. Just a few quick updates on development projects: Valvoline has submitted a building permit, with plans to locate near Holiday, in front of Cartfull. Their application is currently under city review.

We also have a battery energy storage project moving through the Public Utilities Commission. This site is planned near County Road 14 and Lincoln Road, in the southeastern part of the area by the substation. In addition, we’ve met with another company exploring a separate battery storage project on the west side, just south of that location. We’ll share more details as that progresses.

Jersey Mike’s has submitted a building permit as well, which is a great addition to the community.

Finally, we received a TIF application for the Westside Commons senior housing project. This proposal includes a 105-unit building and is an important step in expanding local housing options and will be discussed at a meeting on April 28, 2026 at 6pm

- i. Consider approval of signage in Interstate Business Park ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the approval of signage in Interstate Business Park. The North Branch EDA has discussed and identified marketing of the Interstate Business Park as one of its top priorities, and has discussed the purchase and installation of new marketing signage for the Interstate Business Park as a way to help meet those efforts.

The addition of new signage would be intended to enhance the visibility and marketability of the industrial park and reinforce a cohesive, professional brand identity. Updated signage will better showcase available spaces, attract prospective tenants, and support ongoing efforts. The cost would be around \$2,500 for one side and there is money budgeted for marketing. Commissioner Cassie Koecher brought up the idea of utilizing QR codes for updates.

Motion to approve signage in the Interstate Business Park up to \$3,000 in cost.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Dennis Johnson
SECONDER: Jessica Thelander
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Koecher
ABSENT: Marshall Saunders
NOTES:

8. CLOSED SESSION

- a. Closed meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, sub. 3 (c) to consider the sale of INFO real property in the Interstate Business Park

Motion to enter closed meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, sub. 3 (c) to consider the sale of real property in the Interstate Business Park at 5:02 PM.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Dennis Johnson
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Koecher
ABSENT: Marshall Saunders
NOTES:

Entered into open session at 5:25 PM.

9. NEXT MEETING - May 19, 2026 - 330 PM

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Economic Development Authority meeting adjourned at 5:25 PM.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Dennis Johnson
SECONDER: Patrick Meacham
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Koecher
ABSENT: Marshall Saunders
NOTES:



Prepared By:

Presenter:

Date: 04/27/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: Approval of April 30, 2026 Special EDA Meeting Minutes

Approval of April 30, 2026 Special EDA Meeting Minutes

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority



NORTH BRANCH —Minnesota—

Sara Paul
Chair

Dennis Johnson
Vice Chair

Jessica Thelander
Commissioner

Marshall Saunders
Commissioner

Patrick Meachem
Councilmember

Cassie Koecher
Commissioner

Kevin Schieber
Mayor

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR AGENDA
THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026 @ 4:00 PM
CITY HALL, 6408 ELM STREET, NORTH
BRANCH, MN 55056**

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH BRANCH IN THE COUNTY OF CHISAGO AND IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, April 30, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol called the Economic Development Authority to order at 4:04PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Kevin Schieber, Commissioner Marshall Saunders, Commissioner Jessica Thelander, Commissioner Cassie Koecher

Absent: Councilmember Patrick Meacham, Commissioner Sara Paul, Commissioner Dennis Johnson

Remote:

Others Present:

Notes:

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Provides an opportunity for the public to address the Council on items that are not on the Agenda. Please raise your hand to be recognized. Please state your name and address for the record. This section is for the express purpose of addressing concerns of City services and operations. It shall not be used to clarify individual's views for political purposes.

5. AGENDA APPROVAL

a. Approve Agenda

ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol added 6a under Reports to appoint a temporary Chair for the meeting, as Chair Sara Paul and Vice Chair Dennis Johnson were not present.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Cassie Kecher
SECONDER: Marshall Saunders
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher
ABSENT: Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson
NOTES:

Motion to Approve the Agenda.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Marshall Saunders
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher
ABSENT: Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson
NOTES:

6. REPORTS

a. Appoint a Temporary Chair as Chair Sara Paul and Vice Chair Dennis Johnson were absent.

ACTION

Motion to appoint Commissioner Jessica Thelander as Temporary Chair for the April 30, 2026 meeting.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Cassie Kecher
SECONDER: Marshall Saunders
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher
ABSENT: Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson
NOTES:

b. Consider Approval of Resolution R-325-2026 approving amended engineering and environmental oversight agreement for building removal at 6247 410th Street

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the Approval of Resolution R-325-2026 approving an amended engineering and environmental oversight agreement for building removal at 6247 410th Street. The EDA approved a purchase agreement with Louisiana Pacific (LP), which is proposing a minimum of a 200,000 square foot manufacturing facility on 120 acres located in the northeast portion of the Interstate Business Park on December 9, 2025. The manufacturing at this facility will include LP's Expert finish facility, which specializes in pre-finishing engineered wood siding trim with durable, factory-applied paint in various colors, reducing the installation time and labor for builders by eliminating field painting and caulking needs

The EDA approved the 1st Amendment to the purchase agreement on March 17, 2026, that allowed for the removal of the existing structures on the property to be removed post closing date, establishing a closing date of April 21, 2026, and removal of the fixed wireless tower within 90 days of the termination of the tower lease.

Staff obtained and provided quotes for the removals and engineering/environmental services for the project to the EDA on April 21, 2026. The EDA approved the resolutions for:

R-321-2026 - Approval of Demo Service Environmental/Engineering Contract with WSB

R-322-2026 - Approval of Quitclaim Bill of Sale and Building Removal Agreement

R-323-2026 - Approval of Low Quote for Building Demolition and Site Clearance

Following EDA approval of the resolutions on April 21, 2026, it was found that moving the buildings could not be able to be completed within the timeframe allowed, resulting in the need for the EDA to fully demo all structures as originally planned on the site. Quotes were previously obtained for the full removals at the site and the low quote has been confirmed still valid from the low quote from the contractor. The engineering and environmental services quote has been updated to reflect changes for the additional services. Attached are resolutions that amend and rescind the previous approvals related to the removals.

Requested Action is to Consider Approval of Resolution R-325-2026, amending the Demolition Service Environmental/Engineering Contract with WSB

Motion to Approve Resolution R-325-2026 approving amended engineering and environmental oversight agreement for building removal at 6247 410th Street.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Jessica Thelander

SECONDER: Cassie Kecher

AYES: Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher

ABSENT: Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson

NOTES:

- i. Consider Approval of Resolution R-326-2026 approving quitclaim bill of sale ACTION and removal agreement

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the Approval of Resolution R-326-2026 approving the quitclaim bill of sale and removal agreement.

Motion to Approve Resolution R-326-2026 approving the quitclaim bill of sale and removal agreement.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Marshall Saunders
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher
ABSENT: Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson
NOTES:

- ii. Consider Approval of Resolution R-327-2026 approving site demolition and ACTION clearing agreement at 6247 410th Street

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the Approval of Resolution R-327-2026 approving the site demolition and clearing agreement at 6247 410th Street.

Motion to Approve Resolution R-327-2026 approving site demolition and clearing agreement at 6247 410th Street.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Cassie Kecher
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher
ABSENT: Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson
NOTES:

7. NEXT MEETING - May 19, 2026 - 330 PM

8. ADJOURNMENT

The Economic Development Authority Meeting was adjourned at 4:13 PM.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Jessica Thelander
SECONDER: Marshall Saunders
AYES: Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Jessica Thelander, Cassie Kecher
ABSENT: Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson
NOTES:



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter:

Date: 05/14/2026

Board & Commission:

Subject: Chisago County HRA-EDA Update

Chisago County HRA-EDA Update

Voting Requirements:



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter:

Date: 05/14/2026

Board & Commission:

Subject: North Branch Area Chamber of Commerce Update

North Branch Area Chamber of Commerce Update

Below is a link to the January 2026 Chamber update

<https://vimeo.com/1154409513?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Voting Requirements:



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Date: 05/14/2026

Board & Commission:

Subject: North Branch Area Schools Update

North Branch School Update

Voting Requirements:



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Date: 05/14/2026

Board & Commission:

Subject: EDA Executive Director Update

The EDA Executive Director will provide an update at the meeting

Voting Requirements:



NORTH BRANCH
City of North Branch
Staff Report

Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Date: 05/14/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: Consider approval of 2026 Interstate Business Park Farm Lease

Overview / Background

The North Branch Economic Development Authority (EDA) has approved an annual lease, allowing for farming of land owned by the EDA in the North Branch Interstate Business Park. The agreement is with Mr. Barry Engdahl. Parcels subject to the agreement and related farm activities are shown on the attached map. Farming of the land with Mr. Engdahl have been part of the life estate agreement on the property. As a result, neither the EDA nor City may permit farming by any other person. Given this, Mr. Engdahl was given the go-ahead to commence farming activities. The life estate has a termination date in January 2025. Mr Engdahl has expressed a desire to continue farming the property.

Attached is the lease agreement from previous years where Mr. Engdahl paid rent to the EDA to cover the property taxes due for 2025; not to exceed \$3,260. The lease agreement did not prohibit the EDA from marketing, selling and developing land in the Interstate Business Park.

Recommended Action

Discuss and recommend terms and consider to approve a Farming Lease Agreement with Barry Engdahl, allowing farming of EDA-owned land in the North Branch Interstate Business Park.

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority

FARMING LEASE AGREEMENT

THIS FARMING LEASE AGREEMENT (“Agreement”) is made and entered as of this ___ day of May, 2026 (“Effective Date”) by and between **BARRY ENGDAHL** (“Tenant”) and the **NORTH BRANCH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY** (“Landlord”), a political subdivision, under the laws and constitution of the State of Minnesota.

RECITALS

- A. The Landlord is the fee owner of a parcel of real property located in the City of North Branch, County of Chisago, State of Minnesota, located east of Interstate Highway 35 and depicted on Exhibit A hereto as the North Branch EDA Parcel (such area not otherwise excluded from the parcel shall be referred to as the “Leased Premises”) which is generally held by Landlord for commercial development and resale (“Development Activities”).
- B. Tenant desires to lease the Leased Premises from Landlord and to plant, cultivate and harvest agricultural crops (“Farming Activities”) on the Leased Premises.
- C. In order to protect the Leased Premises, until such time as Landlord implements Development Activities on the Leased Premises, or described portions thereof, Landlord shall allow Tenant to conduct such Farming Activities on the Leased Premises in consideration of Tenant’s payment of the 2026 property taxes, per Section 4 – Rent of this Agreement, for the Leased Premises.
- D. Landlord and Tenant desire to set out the mutual rights and obligations of each in this Agreement.

AGREEMENT

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants and agreements herein contained and other good and valuable consideration in hand paid to the Landlord by the Tenant the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged by the Landlord, it is hereby agreed as follows:

1. Commencement and Termination Dates. The provisions of this Agreement shall commence on the Effective Date and shall terminate on December 31, 2026 (“Termination Date”).
2. Farming Activities; Termination by Landlord. Landlord agrees that from and after the Effective Date and until the Termination Date, unless earlier terminated by Landlord, Tenant shall be allowed to enter on the Leased Premises for the sole purpose of and conducting Farming Activities thereon provided however that as to all or any described portion of the Leased Premises. Landlord may terminate this Agreement, in whole or in part as to portions of the Leased Premises that are the subject of Development Activities as described in section 3 below, on not less than thirty (30) days written notice to Tenant

(“Termination Notice”). Except in the case of the termination of this Agreement by Landlord, if Tenant plants crops, grows hay or commences Farming Activities on the Leased Premises, Tenant shall be obligated to complete such Farming Activities commenced by Tenant in a manner so as to return the Leased Premises to Landlord on the Termination Date in substantially the same condition as existed prior to this Agreement. In no event will Farming Activities include the raising of livestock on, construction of fences on, construction of improvements to, or other non-crop production activities on the Leased Premises.

3. Development Activities. Tenant acknowledges that as part of its Development Activities, Landlord intends to subdivide, plat and/or develop the Leased Premises for purposes of selling all or designated portions of the Leased Premises to third parties (“Release Parcel”). Accordingly, Tenant agrees to cooperate with Landlord in all activities conducted by Landlord with respect to or relating to the Development Activities, including but not limited to ceasing any Farming Activities on such portion or portions of the Leased Premises as are described in the Termination Notice on the date specified in such Termination Notice. Landlord agrees that, if Tenant has commenced Farming Activities on a Release Parcel, and as a result of a Termination Notice, Tenant is not able to harvest and use or sell the crops being grown thereon, Landlord shall pay Tenant the actual expenses incurred up to a maximum of \$350.00 per acre (“Termination Payment”) for each acre (to the nearest acre) and the portion of the taxes for the same acreage contained in the Release Parcel or the portion thereof subject to this Agreement.
4. Rent. Landlord believes that Tenant’s conducting Farming Activities on the Leased Premises will help to preserve the Leased Premises until such time or times as Landlord desires to conduct Development Activities thereon. Accordingly, the parties acknowledge that Tenant’s rent for conducting the Farming Activities on the Leased Premises will be payment to Landlord of the property taxes for the Leased Premises due and payable in 2026, provided that such amount shall not exceed \$3,580.00. Tenant shall pay the real estate tax (rent) amount in two equal installments on May 15, 2026, and October 1, 2026. This agreement is intended to cover parcels 11.01072.19, 11.01072.41, 11.01072.42 11.00359.26, 11.00359.30, as adjusted or renumbered from time to time, as graphically depicted on Exhibit A.
5. Agreement Personal to Tenant. The rights granted hereunder are personal to the Tenant and may not be sold, transferred, conveyed or assigned, voluntarily or involuntarily, by the Tenant without the prior written consent of Landlord.
6. Tenant’s Responsibilities. Prior to the termination of Tenant’s rights granted hereunder, Tenant shall be responsible for conducting Farming Activities on the Leased Premises in a manner at all times consistent with good and prudent crop farming practices. Tenant shall provide Landlord with a summary of the planned Farming Activities to be conducted during the term of this Agreement and such operations shall be subject to Landlord’s consent, which shall not be unreasonably withheld or delayed.

7. Insurance. Tenant shall insure Tenant's Farming Activities on the Leased Premises against liability claims at levels acceptable to the Landlord. Tenant shall provide Landlord with a Certificate of Insurance satisfying the foregoing requirements on the date of execution of this Agreement.

8. Indemnification. Tenant does hereby agree that he will at all times hereinafter during the existence of this Agreement indemnify and hold harmless the Landlord, its officers, employees and all elected and appointed officials against any and all liability, claims, loss, damages, costs or expenses, including all attorneys' fees and costs of litigation, which Landlord may hereafter sustain, incur or be required to pay:
 - a. By reason of any action or inaction by Tenant which may cause someone personal injury, death or property loss or damages either while participating in or receiving services from Tenant, or while on the Leased Premises.

 - b. By reason of Tenant causing injury to, or damage to property of another person during any time when Tenant is occupying the Leased Premises as provided under this Agreement.

 - c. By reason of Tenant's failure to pay the rent payments as and when due under this Agreement.

 - d. In the event any action is brought against the Landlord or any of its agents or employees because of the conduct of the Tenant or any of its employees, officers or agents, Tenant shall assume full responsibility for defense thereof, and upon its failure to do so upon proper notice, the Landlord reserves the right to defend such action and charge all costs thereto to Tenant.

9. Notices. Except as otherwise provided herein, all communications, demands, notices, or objections permitted or required to be given or served under this Agreement shall be in writing and shall be deemed to have been duly given or served if delivered in person or deposited in the United States mail, postage prepaid, for mailing by certified or registered mail, return receipt requested, and addressed to a party to this Agreement, to the address set forth below, or if a person not a party to this Agreement, to the address designated by a party to the Agreement in the foregoing manner. Any party may change its address by giving notice in writing, stating its new address, to any other party as provided in the foregoing manner. Commencing on the tenth (10th) day after the giving of the notice, the newly designated address shall be the party's address for the purpose of all communications, demands, notices, or objections permitted or required to be given or served under this Agreement.

TENANT'S ADDRESS

Barry Engdahl
 49082 Hawk Ave
 Rush City, MN 55069

LANDLORD'S ADDRESS

North Branch EDA
 6408 Elm Street, PO Box 910
 North Branch, MN 55056
 Attn: Nate Sondrol, Executive Director

10. Binding Effect. This Agreement shall be binding on and inure to the benefit of the parties hereto and the assigns, executors, heirs and successors of the parties. It is understood and agreed that this Agreement shall not be deemed to be nor intended to give rise to a partnership relation. Neither party shall have the right to bind the other without written consent.
11. Amendment, Modification, or Waiver. No amendment, modification, or waiver of any condition, provision, or term shall be valid or of any effect unless made in writing, signed by the party or parties to be bound or a duly authorized representative, and specifying with particularity the extent and nature of such amendment, modifications, or waiver. Any waiver by any party of any default of another party shall not affect or impair any right arising from any subsequent default. Except as expressly and specifically stated otherwise, nothing herein shall limit the remedies and rights of the parties hereto under and pursuant to this Agreement.
12. Severable Provisions. Each provision, section, sentence, clause, phrase, and word of this Agreement is intended to be severable. If any provision, section, sentence, clause, phrase, and word hereof is illegal or invalid for any reason whatsoever, such illegality or invalidity shall not affect the validity of the remainder of this Agreement.
13. Captions, Headings, or Titles. All captions, headings, or titles in the paragraphs or sections of this Agreement are inserted for convenience of reference only and shall not constitute a part of this Agreement as a limitation of the scope of the particular paragraphs or sections to which they apply.
14. Reference to Gender. Where appropriate, the feminine gender may be read as the masculine gender or the neuter gender; the masculine gender may be read as the feminine gender or the neuter gender; and the neuter gender may be read as the masculine gender or the feminine gender.
15. Minnesota Law. This Agreement shall be construed and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of Minnesota.
16. Termination. Except for termination by Landlord as provided in Section 3 hereof, Landlord may terminate this Agreement on not less than 30-days written notice and without financial obligation (including costs and damages) to Landlord. Further, if Tenant abandons or fails to complete his obligations hereunder, Landlord shall be entitled to receive its actual costs and damages, including reasonable attorneys' fees resulting therefrom and Tenant shall not be entitled to any Termination Payment or other payment from Landlord.
17. Arbitration. In addition to all other remedies available to the Landlord, if a dispute arises, the Tenant and the Landlord may demand that such dispute be resolved by final and binding arbitration before a single arbitrator to be agreed upon by Tenant and the Landlord or failing such agreement, pursuant to rules for commercial arbitrations adopted by the American Arbitration Association. Landlord and Tenant will each pay one-half

(½) of the cost of such arbitrator unless the arbitrator determines that such proceeding was brought or defended in bad faith whereupon the arbitrator may award all of his or her costs against such party who is determined to have acted in bad faith.

18. No Right to Sublet. Landlord does not convey to the Tenant the right to lease or sublet any part of the Leased Premises or to assign this Agreement to any person or persons whomever.
19. Right of Entry. Landlord reserves the right, in person or by agent, to enter the Leased Premises at any reasonable time to: consult with Tenant or to make repairs, improvements, and inspections.

[Remainder of this page intentionally left blank.]

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have caused this Agreement to be executed effective the day and year first set forth above.

TENANT

Barry Engdahl

STATE OF MINNESOTA)
)ss.
COUNTY OF)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____, 2026 by Barry Engdahl.

Notary Public

LANDLORD

North Branch Economic Development Authority

Sara Paul, Chairperson

Nate Sondrol, Executive Director

STATE OF MINNESOTA)
)ss.
COUNTY OF)

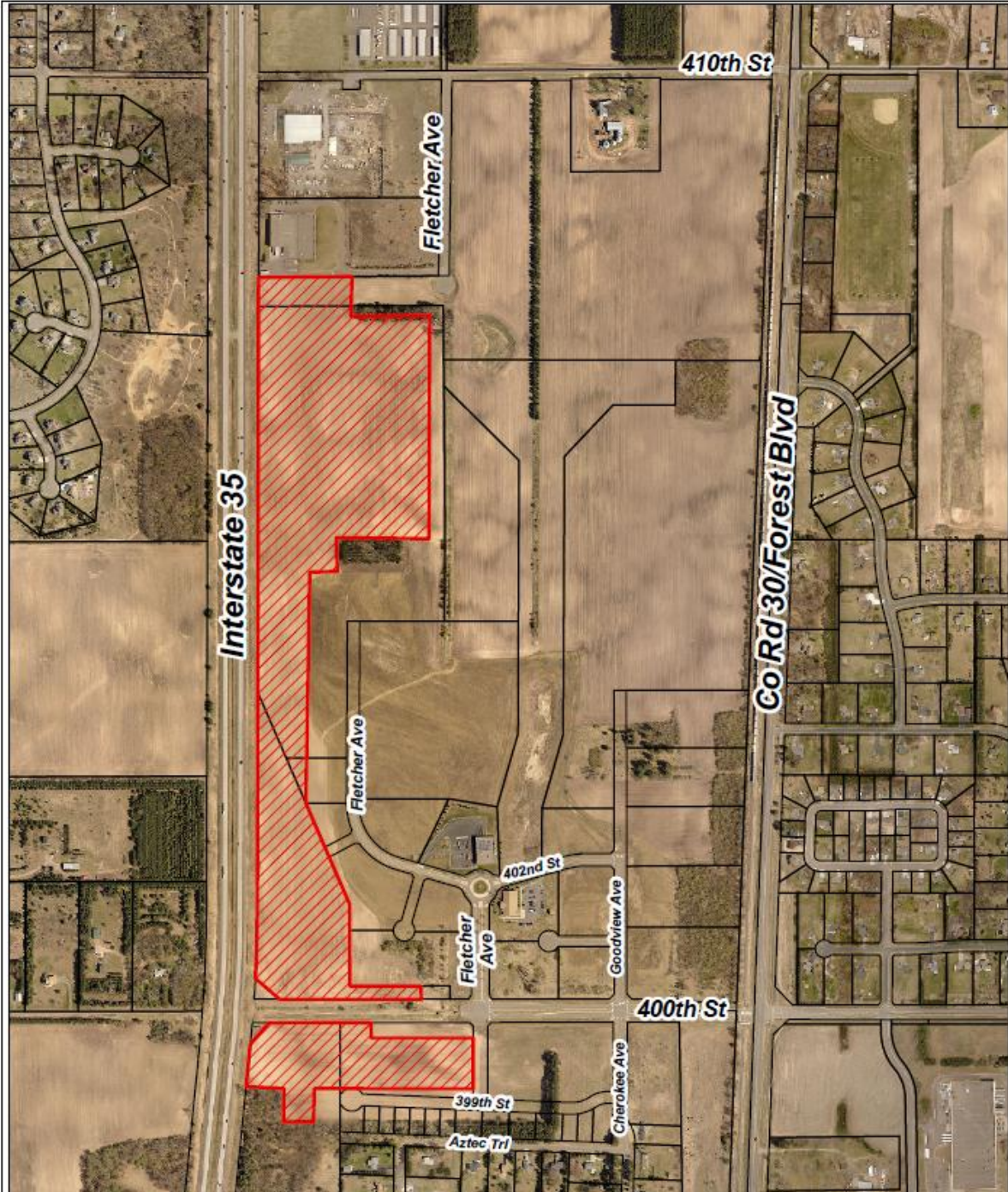
The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____, 2026 by Sara Paul and Nate Sondrol, Chairperson and Executive Director, respectively, of the North Branch Economic Development Authority, a Minnesota Political subdivision on behalf of the Authority.



Notary Public

THIS INSTRUMENT WAS DRAFTED BY:

City of North Branch
6408 Elm Street. PO Box 910
North Branch, MN 55056-0910
(651) 674-8113
(651) 674-8262 Fax

EXHIBIT A
FARMING
LEASED AREA



 FARM LEASE	EXHIBIT A NORTH BRANCH EDA PARCEL LEASED PREMISES	General Location Map
<small>Disclaimer: The City of North Branch provides this map "as is" and assumes no responsibility of the accuracy of the data delineated hereon.</small>	North Branch - Chisago County, MN	 <small>Date: 4-MAY-2025 Scale: 1"=700'</small>



Prepared By:

Presenter:

Date: 05/14/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: Storefront Facade Program

Storefront Facade Program

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority

Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Existing Structures and Historic Façades

Background

Downtown North Branch is a traditional Main Street, featuring a variety of historic buildings occupied by small retail shops. It is generally located east of Interstate-35, between County Road 30 / Forest Boulevard and 6th Avenue. The historic core is part of the larger Central Business District zoning district, comprised of a mix of small businesses, public and institutional uses and single-family homes. The Downtown core area is more automobile-oriented with existing buildings that are small and older, finer-grained district features with storefronts fronting sidewalks and historic façades along Main Street.

The existing assets hold great potential for serving as an organizing force for the City's commercial, residential and economic development, and furthering the City's prosperity. Recognizing the vital role that downtowns play in a community's civic, cultural and economic life, the City is seeking to leverage these existing assets to develop and strengthen the City's "sense of place" and build a foundation for development and redevelopment that could take place in future years. This will be supported by a process of deciding what to protect, and what to encourage and discourage as a powerful and lasting markers for orienting Downtown's future evolution.

Desires for quality of life, healthy living and better local economies are showing that the future will belong to communities that can still function as small towns - communities that are walkable, with convenient connection to daily needs, with varied local businesses and institutions, a strong identity, and necessary resources available in a convenient location.

Places that are able to offer these qualities while also being located within convenient distance to larger urban centers will be the ones that attract Millennials, young families and retiring seniors alike - because of their sense of community, natural assets, cultural amenities, and sense of independence. Thus, North Branch is well-positioned for this future by leveraging its history to help redefine the community as a more desirable location for living and working.

Downtown Guidelines

Several of the buildings that affront Main Street / Minnesota Highway 95 are of significant, historic value to the Central Business District and its character. These structures offer opportunities for North Branch to build from its current assets, further its identity, and attract new visitors, residents and businesses. Unfortunately, over time, the majority of these buildings have had many of their architectural details and treatments covered up, altered or removed.

The purpose of these guidelines is to foster the rehabilitation of those historic structures, as well as guide possible new construction, along Main Street in the Central Business District – aka Downtown North Branch. The aim of this reinvestment strategy is to not just rehabilitate those buildings, but also highlight the unique character of Downtown, thereby revitalizing this important place to make it a more attractive destination for residents, businesses and visitors.

These guidelines apply to already-existing buildings built before 1960, and located along Main Street / Highway 95 between County Road 30 and 6th Avenue (east-west) and Elm Street and Maple Street (north-south). The same design characteristics shall also apply to new construction to ensure general consistency of theme for the Downtown area.

Goals for Building Rehabilitation

1. The City's pre-1960s buildings are cultural resources and assets to the cultural heritage of North Branch.
2. Historic buildings should be protected from negative impacts
3. Historic buildings should be rehabilitated and adaptively re-used when feasible

For the purposes of these guidelines, a structure built before 1960 is considered historic.

Purpose of Guidelines

The purpose of rehabilitation guidelines for buildings along the North Branch Main Street area is to define standard treatments for the exterior renovation, restoration and maintenance of pre-1960s buildings within the geographic extent of the district.

The guidelines aim to foster the restoration, repair and preservation of buildings' original exterior façades while incorporating updated materials and practices like thermal pane windows, and upgraded electrical circuitry, fire suppression and heating plants. The goal of the standards is to improve the Main Street area's commercial attractiveness and civic vitality by exhibiting the authentic qualities of the City's pre-1960s buildings.

The Guidelines Require:

1. Review and approval by Zoning Administrator of construction plans and building material samples.
2. Application of the guidelines when more than ten percent (10%) of a building's front or street facing side exterior is the subject of construction activities / modifications.
3. Use of authentic building materials (e.g., brick, cut / finished stone, painted steel, painted wood and transparent glass) when making repairs to or restoring pre-1960's buildings.
4. Restoration of the original building's doorway and window opening patterns and sizes when making repairs or updates to these components.
5. Restoration of the original building cornice and parapet detailing when making repairs or updates to these components.
6. Screening of rooftop mechanical equipment using materials matching or highly compatible with the building's exterior.
7. Exterior renovations and restorations to remove previously applied, non-original materials, awnings and signs.
8. Surface parking lots to be located to the rear and or non-street facing side of the building.

The Guidelines Allow:

1. Replacement of original single pane windows with thermal pane windows that match traditional Main Street architecture.
2. Replacement of wood frame doors and windows with steel or aluminum frame products.

3. Replacement of exterior decorative steel or wood moldings with High-Density Polyurethane, PVC, Glass Fiber Reinforced Polymer (GFRP / fiberglass), and Glass Fiber Reinforced Gypsum (GFRG).
4. Decorative doorway and window awnings in fabric or metal.
5. Externally illuminated projecting signs.
6. Externally illuminated wall signs within a traditional horizontal running upper sign band.
7. Internally illuminated indoor window signs not exceeding five (5) square feet.
8. Restoration of original, historic painted wall signs.
9. Installation of new painted murals of an artistic, non-advertising nature.

Activities that are allowed are those consistent with the historical era and context of the building, and that match or approximate historical images of a building's original storefront

The Guidelines Prohibit:

1. Infilling or covering over original window and door openings.
2. Mirrored , opaque or heavily tinted (greater than 20%) glass.
3. Substitution of nontraditional window types and style such as transom or awning windows substituted for double hung or fixed plate glass display windows.
4. Use of building materials that are not consistent with the history, era, materials or type of the buildings (e.g., use of lap or panel siding, EFIS as a primary material, brushed and polished metal panels (steel, aluminum), concrete block masonry units, etc.).
5. Significant changes (more than 5%) in doorway and window opening shapes and sizes .
6. Combining of adjacent building facades into a single, new façade.
7. Filling/obscuring more than 25% of display windows with signs, temporary and/or permanent.
8. Roof or cornice signs.
9. Free-standing pole or monument signs.

Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program

Purpose of Matching Grant

The purpose of the City of North Branch Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program ("Matching Grant") is to increase business and civic vitality in the North Branch Main Street area by providing economic incentives to improve the appearance of building façades and stimulate private investment in area buildings.

Program Oversight

The North Branch Economic Development Authority (EDA) shall oversee the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program, including reviewing and approving grant applications, awarding funds, monitoring projects and funding, and other responsibilities as required by the program.

Eligibility to Apply for the Matching Grant Program

Building owners and commercial tenants, with property owner's approval, can apply for a City of North Branch Façade Improvement Matching Grant if all of the following conditions are met.

1. They are located within the City of North Branch Main Street area; see map.
2. The façade improvements are for a commercial business or commercial building.
3. The applicant is the property owner or a tenant with written permission from the property owner to make façade improvements to the building.
4. There are no delinquent bills, charges, or taxes due to the City.
5. The project results in permanent, external building improvements.
6. The property has conforming uses.

All façade improvements must follow the principles and guidelines of the City of North Branch Building Code, Zoning Code, and the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program.

For-profit and not-for-profit entities are eligible to apply, as long as the grant is for a commercial building, including mixed-use buildings hosting both commercial and non-commercial uses.

A property owner who leases a commercial building for religious use is eligible to apply for the Matching Grant if the improvements do not promote the religious use and would remain in place regardless of changes in the tenant (e.g., tuckpointing, windows, lighting). Signs, stained glass windows, and murals, which would in typical cases be eligible, would be ineligible when used to promote a religious use.

Eligible and Non-Eligible Improvements

Eligible Improvements

The Matching Grant can be used for a wide variety of exterior, façade improvements. The work must be visible from a Main Street, along the building's front. Eligible improvements for the Matching Grants include:

- Exterior painting or re-siding
- Restoration of exterior finishes and materials
- Masonry repairs and tuck pointing
- Removal of architecturally inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes and materials
- Restoration of architectural details or removal of materials that cover architectural details
- Repair, replacement, or installment of windows and doors (replacements must be architecturally compatible)
- Window and cornice flashing and repair
- Canopy or awning installation or repair
- Installation or repair of exterior signage
- Removal of barriers to access the building from the outside for people with disabilities
- Exterior lighting
- Window, wall, and hanging signs advertising the business name and identity

Ineligible Improvements

The following activities are not eligible for the Matching Grants:

- Improvements that are in progress or were completed prior to preliminary approval of the applicant's Matching Grants application
- Routine maintenance that is not part of an eligible façade improvement project

- Billboards
- Roofing
- Mechanicals and HVAC systems
- Interior work
- New construction
- Pylon, temporary, or roof signs
- Interior window displays
- Security systems (including metal roll down gates, window bars, cameras)
- Fire suppression / sprinkler systems
- Trash and mechanical enclosures
- Fencing
- Landscaping
- Parking areas
- Improvement to a building interior, rear, or side not visible from Main Street
- Purchase of property

Matching Grants Terms and Conditions

General Terms

Matching Grants range from a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$25,000 per storefront or building. All grants must be matched by the property owner. The Matching Grant will pay only for 50% of the total project costs, up to the \$25,000 grant limit. The EDA reserves the right to adjust the grant award based on available funding and if the project meets an established vision, priority or goal of the Downtown area and/or Central Business District.

The Matching Grant is structured as a five (5) year loan with no payments, with 20% of the loan being forgiven each year for five (5) years. If there is a change of ownership of the building before the five (5) years, the balance of the loan must be repaid by the property owner, unless otherwise approved by the EDA.

The final design is subject to the review and approval of the North Branch EDA. All projects must comply with City ordinances, building standards and other laws. The North Branch EDA has the right to terminate any agreement under the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines, or if work is not completed within required timelines.

In addition, the following requirements apply:

- A signed and approved grant agreement is required for the applicant to be eligible to receive any funding from the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program.
- The Property Owner must consent to a mortgage.
- All work must be done in accordance with all local, state, and federal building codes, the City of North Branch Zoning Code, Downtown Design Guidelines, other applicable Downtown standards, and the rules and regulations for the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program
- Labor costs are only eligible to be covered by the grant if the labor is done by a third party who has no financial interest in the building (i.e. the building owner may not receive funds for labor that he/she completed on the project).

- All construction must be made in strict compliance with any approval plans and applicable local, state and federal rules and regulations.
- All work must be completed within 6 months from the date the grant is approved by the City and any applicable agreements, as required by the City, are executed

Design Guidelines

All proposals/applications are required to follow the **Guidelines** as stated above. These Guidelines ensure the appropriateness of the proposed work, and provide for compatibility with buildings and urban fabric of the North Branch Main Street area.

Building Maintenance Requirements

Buildings receiving Matching Grant funds must receive proactive maintenance to ensure that the Matching Grant investment is protected and leading to the intended outcome for individual buildings and the Main Street area overall.

Maintenance activities include, but are not limited to:

- Upkeep / painting of trim if peeling, fading, and/or flaking conditions exist
- Staining of wood surfaces if fading
- Tuck pointing may be required if loose mortar or brick exists
- Stucco repair may be required if cracked, falling, or discolored conditions exist
- Awning replacement or removal may be required if faded, torn or otherwise in disrepair
- Windows should be in good repair, caulked and sealed as necessary
- Buildings receiving funds from the Matching Grant Program will be inspected once per year by a City staff representing the program, on or around the anniversary date of the receipt of funds, to ascertain that proactive maintenance is being duly completed and that the City's investment is being properly stewarded by the building's owner.
- Failure to adequately maintain the building and its associated improvements and to promptly respond to lawfully issued citations will result in termination of the Matching Grant loan, and the balance of the loan must be repaid by the property owner.



NORTH BRANCH FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT FORGIVABLE LOAN PROGRAM

APPLICANT / OWNER INFORMATION

Full Name:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Name of Business Owner:		Same As Applicant
Name of Business:		
Name of DBA:		

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Site Address:		PID	
Building Status:	Owner Occupied	Tenant Lease	
Use Type:			
Current Land Use:			
Current Zoning:			

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Full Restoration	Masonry Repairs	General Maintenance	Windows & Doors
Canopy & Awnings	Signage & Lighting	Other:	

PROJECT COST & TIMELINES

PROJECT ESTIMATES *(Detailed opinion of probable cost required.)*

Total Project	Eligible Costs	Private Match	Request	Start Date	Completion Date
\$	\$	\$	\$	/ /	/ /

CITY REVIEW

Total Project	Eligible Costs	Private Match	Public Match	Grant Maximum	Review Date
\$	\$	\$	\$	\$25,000.00	/ /

ARCHITECT/ CONTRACTOR INFORMATION

Company Name:	
Company Contact:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	

PROJECT SUMMARY

In the space below provide a brief description of the proposed project (attach an additional sheet if necessary).

**PROGRAM TERMS & CONDITIONS****PROGRAM FUNDING**

Matching Grants range from a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$25,000 per storefront or building. All grants must be matched by the property owner. The Matching Grant will pay for only 50% of the total eligible project costs, up to the \$25,000 grant limit. The approved Matching Grant amount will only be paid by the City upon completion of the work, and a formal written request for payment and final invoice is provided by the Applicant to the City.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

The Matching Grant is structured as a 5-year loan with no payments, with 20% of the loan being forgiven each year for 5 years. If the building is sold before 5 years, the balance of the loan must be repaid by the Applicant.

The City of North Branch has the right to terminate any agreement under the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program, if an Applicant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines, or if work is not completed within required timelines. If terminated by the City, the City shall not be obligated to make any payment to the Applicant. If at any point after the project is completed, the Applicant is found to have violated the terms and conditions of the Program or Grant Agreement with the City, the Applicant shall be responsible for repaying 100% of the Matching Grant to the City.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. A signed and approved Grant Agreement is required for the applicant to be eligible to receive any funding from the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program.
2. All work must be done in accordance with all local, state, and federal building codes, the City of North Branch Zoning Code, Downtown Design Guidelines, other applicable Downtown standards, and the rules and regulations for the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program.
3. Labor costs are only eligible to be covered by the grant if the labor is done by a third party who has no financial interest in the building (i.e. building owners may not receive funds for labor that they completed on the project).
4. All construction must be completed in strict compliance with any approved plans and applicable local, state and federal rules and regulations.
5. All work must be completed within 6 months from the date the grant is approved by the City and any applicable agreements, as required by the City, are executed.
6. The Applicant may not assign the program obligations and/or payment of the Matching Grant to any other party or person.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

APPLICANT STATEMENT

I acknowledge the Program Terms and Conditions, as stated herein, and to the best of my knowledge, all of the applicable materials and documents and information I have submitted are true and correct. I have read the Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program and Terms and Conditions, and understand the rules and regulations as set therein. I agree to hold harmless and indemnify the City, and its officers and employees, for any claims for damage to property or injury to persons which may be occasioned by any activity carried on under the terms of this license.

Applicant Signature

Date

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

Financial	Project budget with Opinion of Probable Cost and/or detailed, line-item estimate.
Architectural Drawings	Scaled drawings of proposed façade improvements with color renderings.
Photos	Pictures of current storefront.
Other	Other information as may be required by the City.



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director, Matthew Hill, City Administrator

Date: 05/14/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: Comprehensive Plan Update

Background Info

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee requests that the Planning Commission review two specific sections of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan:

- **Section 2: Values and Vision (all groups will review this section)**
- **Section 5: Economic Development**

Your focused review is vital as we move toward the final revision of the plan. This should include a thorough overview of the current language, and listing any changes that the group feel are necessary due to the changes and growth of the City.

Below is timeline for the process:

- **March 18, 2026:** Landuse, Economic Development, Parks, Trails & Open Space
- **April 15, 2026:** Housing, Transportation, Utilities, Public Safety
- **May 19, 2026:** EDA Review of Plan

Staff are working on compiling the updates and will have them available for discussion at the meeting.

Requested Action

To review the attached documents and be prepared for full discussion at the meeting.

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority

2

VALUES AND VISION

Values

Residents and other stakeholders were asked what they loved about North Branch at the Community Expo, at a chamber meeting, and at the first community café. The values expressed most often were:

THE STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY

A HOME TOWN FEEL

THE CITY'S COMMITMENT TO ITS PARKS AND TRAILS

A COMMUNITY THAT ENCOURAGES BIKING AND WALKING

QUALITY SCHOOLS

These values were reiterated at each of the other three community cafes and served as the foundation for the vision statements expressed below.

Vision for North Branch in 10 years

North Branch is a growing and safe community with outstanding natural and recreational amenities and opportunities for all, and well maintained infrastructure, vibrant business districts and neighborhoods, and provides residents with an excellent quality of life.

Vision for Land Use

The City of North Branch is a complete community that provides a well-balanced and wide range of places to live, work, shop and play. Land uses make efficient use of existing infrastructure, contribute to a strong local economy, preserve natural resources and contribute to a high quality of life.

Residential Uses

A diverse housing stock allows people at any stage in their life to be able to find a home in North Branch. Older housing is well maintained while new development expands housing options to complement existing neighborhoods.

Commercial and Industrial Uses

A significant amount of commercial and industrial uses can be found within the City that allow residents to work in North Branch, while also being able to meet all of their day-to-day needs. Commercial and industrial uses are compatible with their surrounding land uses.

Public/Institutional

Public and institutional uses are viewed as valued resources to the community and contribute to making North Branch a better place to live and do business.



North Branch is a growing and safe community with outstanding natural and recreational amenities and opportunities for all, and well maintained infrastructure, vibrant business districts and neighborhoods, and provides residents with an excellent quality of life.

Parks, Open Spaces and Trails

Quality parks and open space are within close proximity to all residents, providing recreational opportunities to encourage an active lifestyle. A wide variety of community facilities are provided to serve a range of interests. The City of North Branch has a proposed trail system that will allow bicycle and pedestrian access to most of the major pedestrian generators within the city, including schools, shopping areas, and parks. Many of the proposed trails are destinations in themselves, offering scenic walks or rides around many of the city's scenic views. With recreational activities such as running, bicycling, and walking increasing in popularity, the city's trail system will not only offer a recreational opportunity in itself, but will also help to connect the community's parks with the neighborhoods.

Vision for Economic Development

A strong business community is the cornerstone of a vibrant city. Economic development encompasses the policies and activities that improve the long term economic and social wellbeing of the community. Communities with strong economies have financial resources to support the levels of service that their residents need and desire. Successful communities realize that economic development is about bringing together social, natural, infrastructure, and economic assets in the community to sustain the "whole" community.

Vision for Municipal Utilities

The City of North Branch, individually and in collaboration with the North Branch Water & Light Utility, has a significant investment in its existing public utilities systems (water, wastewater and stormwater). The continued expansion and development within the Urban Service Area will require the extension of public utilities. In general, the existing infrastructure system is well-positioned and of adequate size to support expansion. However, coordination will be required between community development and the required expansion of the utility system. In some cases, the cost of providing utility service may dictate where and when future growth will occur.

Vision for Transportation

North Branch is located at the cross roads of I35 and TH95, providing for ease in and out of the city. Within the city limits, however, these features will require a coordinated approach to providing movement of traffic through the city to local destinations, safe pedestrian and bike corridors, and improved intersections to safely serve the increasing number of commercial vehicles passing through North Branch.

Vision for the Environment and Sustainability

Natural infrastructure includes all systems that relate to natural resources and contribute to an improved public life. Natural infrastructure considers the full range of natural resource uses including economic, environmental, health, cultural, and aesthetic. This broad view leads us to include surface water, groundwater, stormwater, wastewater, drinking water, geology, topography, soils, natural areas, open space, green spaces, urban forest, habitat, vegetation, scenic views, and parks and trails in natural infrastructure.

Natural infrastructure is a key element in planning where development should or should not take place within a city. This element is important to communities and development as it avoids certain development hazards, provides health benefits to citizens, protects ecological systems and enhances biological diversity, and offers communities unique quality of life components. Consideration of natural infrastructure ensures that homes are built upon stable dry soils, provides clean drinking water, accounts for resource based economic activities, provides scenic views and open spaces, and plans development that respect the integrity of natural systems and incorporate natural features into development.

Minnesota GreenStep City

In 2018, the Mayor and City Council approved a resolution to make North Branch a GreenStep City through the MPCA and League of Minnesota Cities' program. Minnesota GreenStep Cities is a voluntary challenge, assistance and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability and quality-of-life goals. This free continuous improvement program, managed by a public-private partnership, is based upon 29 best practices. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more actions at a 1, 2 or 3-star level, from a list of four to eight actions. These actions are tailored to all Minnesota cities, focus on cost savings and energy use reduction, and encourage civic innovation. North Branch is currently a Step 1 City. As North Branch plans for the future, it will continue to consider GreenStep City Best Management Practices as they relate to the goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan.



5

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

A strong business community is the cornerstone of a vibrant city. Economic development encompasses the policies and activities that improve the long term economic and social wellbeing of the community. Communities with strong economies have financial resources to support the levels of service that their residents need and desire. Successful communities realize that economic development is about bringing together social, natural, infrastructure, and economic assets in the community to sustain the “whole” community.

The City’s Economic Development Authority recently adopted a strategic plan to guide and inform its decision making over the next 3 - 5 years. The EDA identified the following strategic priorities:

- Expansion of broadband (high speed internet)
- Business growth, including continued land sales and development
- Transportation
- Community
- Housing

Inventory and Analysis

Existing Characteristics of the Economy

A significant number of North Branch residents commute to work, but have indicated via survey and other tools, that they would prefer to work in the city if comparable jobs were available. Therefore, retaining and attracting jobs is an ongoing objective for the City of North Branch. As of 2018 Assessment Year, non-residential property values amounted to \$146,754,700, as follows: commercial \$91,277,300, industrial \$22,953,100 and apartments \$32,524,300. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development estimates the unemployment rate in Chisago County at 3 percent, higher than the state average of 2.9 percent.

Table 5-A shows the employment and business profile of North Branch. The highest employment industry is health care and social assistance which provides 17.5 percent of all jobs in North Branch. Educational services is the second highest source of employment (13.1 percent), and construction, and other services provide about 12.6 percent each of the community’s total jobs. (Data-USA.com)

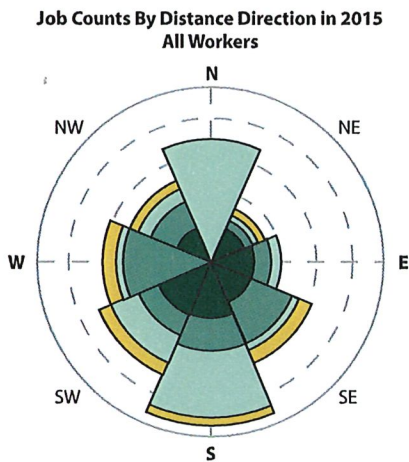
Table 5 -A Business and Employment Statistics

Name	Industry	Approximate # of Employees
North Branch School District	Education	388
Villages of North Branch	Elder Care	185
Andersen Windows	Manufacturing	180
Lakes Region EMS	Emergency Medical Services	92
County Market	Retail	90
Fairview Health System	Health Care	85
Branch Manufacturing	Manufacturing	72
Environmental Stoneworks	Manufacturing	69
Zinpro	Manufacturing	62
ShopKo	Retail	60
Wisconsin Coil Spring	Manufacturing	56

Commuting

According to the US Census as of 2015, 59.4 percent of North Branch residents commute more than 10 miles to work, resulting in an average commute time of 32.3 minutes trip.

Figure 5-1: Commute Distances



Jobs by Distance | Work Census Block to Home Census Block

2015

	Count	Share
Total Primary Jobs	3,366	100.0%
Less than 10 miles	1,368	40.6%
10 to 24 miles	1,148	34.1%
25 to 50 miles	614	18.2%
Greater than 50 miles	236	7.0%

Finance Tools

Community development actions require a framework for financial decision-making. The investment of public dollars to achieve community development objectives should be guided by several key principles:

- Financial resources are limited. The city has limited funding to apply to community development initiatives, so the use of resources must be targeted to achieve the greatest effect on community needs.
- Financial decisions require a long-term perspective. The current use of financial resources may reduce monies available in the future. In evaluating short-term opportunities, it is important to question the long-term impact on community development.
- Public funds should lead to private investment. While this section focuses on public finance actions, the Comprehensive Plan cannot become reality without private investment. The use of public funds should be targeted to actions that encourage private investment in North Branch.

The area of North Branch located north of TH95 received Opportunity Zone designation by the US Department of Treasury. While the tax credit opportunities that this designation allows are a private sector concern, the City will promote this designation as a tool for land sales and development in the City's Interstate Business Park as well as the other undeveloped portions of the City within the designated Opportunity Zone census tract.

Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing (TIF) is the primary development finance tool available to Minnesota cities (Minnesota Statutes, Sections 469.174 through 469.179). TIF is simple in concept, but complex in its application. Through tax increment financing, the property taxes created by new development (or redevelopment) are captured and used to finance activities needed to encourage the development. The challenge in using TIF lies with the complex and ever-changing statutory limitations.

Tax Abatement

Tax abatement acts like a simpler and less powerful version of tax increment financing. With TIF, the city controls the entire property tax revenue from new development. Under the abatement statute (Minnesota Statutes, Sections 469.1812 through 469.1815), the city, county and school district have independent authority to grant tax abatement.

Special Assessments

Public improvements are often financed using the power to levy special assessments (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 429). A special assessment is a means for benefiting properties to pay for all or part of the costs associated with improvements, and to spread the impact over a period of years. This tool can be applied to both the construction of new improvements and the rehabilitation of existing improvements.

Grant Programs

Cities can leverage funding from various grant programs to help take on economic development initiatives. There are numerous grant programs available to cities provided by various state and federal agencies related to economic development and downtown redevelopment. The Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides grants on an annual basis to states and eligible local governments for community development activities. In some cases, communities may choose to use these dollars for business retention and job growth activities. The City should also explore the use of these dollars for downtown redevelopment. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development is another agency with financial assistance available to local governments for business development, infrastructure, community development and site cleanup and redevelopment. Many other funding sources exist and city staff should monitor and pursue these opportunities when appropriate.





A significant number of North Branch residents commute to work, but have indicated via survey and other tools, that they would prefer to work in the city if comparable jobs were available.

GOAL 1

Encourage economic growth to meet the demand for commercial and industrial development.

Vision for Economic Development

The City of North Branch will remain focused on retaining a high quality of life, while at the same time working to encourage and facilitate job growth in its commercial and industrial sectors.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The following section outlines the primary goals for economic development, followed by a series of objectives and policies intended to influence future economic development efforts that align with the community visions in this plan.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

DEVELOP THE INTERSTATE BUSINESS PARK.

Policy 1.1.1

Strive to maximize the community's strategic location as a valuable resource, promoting the Opportunity Zone designation whenever possible.

Policy 1.1.2

Actively target companies, both large and small, that offer good employment prospects, draw from the local labor pool, and are good corporate citizens.

Policy 1.1.3

Work to maintain a labor force in the immediate area that supports the growth of business and industry in the Interstate Business Park, including but not limited to expanding the inventory of affordable housing, providing transportation alternatives and encouraging expansion of services.

Policy 1.1.4

Coordinate with stakeholders and regional partners to identify users of rail and support development of rail spur adjacent to the Interstate Business Park.



OBJECTIVE 1.2

REVITALIZE THE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN AREAS OF NORTH BRANCH.

Policy 1.2.1

Address unique development challenges including the reuse and redevelopment of vacant buildings in the historic downtown areas.

Policy 1.2.2

Explore and implement plans to enhance pedestrian friendly features, promote available parking, and collaborate with Minnesota Department of Transportation to establish safe pedestrian crossings at intersections within the downtown area.

GOAL 2

Balance the use of undeveloped land and infill development throughout the City.

OBJECTIVE 2.1

CONTINUE AND EXPAND REDEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

Policy 2.1.1

Foster private investment and economic activity without compromising community objectives to maintain and enhance North Branch's natural environment.

Policy 2.1.2

Promote the areas north of TH95 as being designated for Opportunity Zone tax treatment to further enhance private investment in those areas.



OBJECTIVE 3.1

RETAIN AND SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY.

Policy 3.1.1

Set attracting new, and retention of existing, businesses and industries as a priority of the City's economic development plan.

Policy 3.1.2

Continue outreach by City Staff and Elected Officials whereby the City representatives meet periodically on an individual basis with businesses and industries to listen to concerns and discuss opportunities for success. During these meetings, identify any perceived or real barriers or obstacles (such as overly restrictive ordinances) that the City could potentially remove or minimize to help industries and businesses prosper, while still protecting the overall health, safety and welfare of the community.

Policy 3.1.3

Coordinate with regional organizations, the North Branch School District, higher education institutions, and others in their efforts to promote training opportunities that can help businesses and industries prosper. If appropriate, co-sponsor and/or offer City facilities and/or meeting space for employee training programs.

Policy 3.1.4

Continue to promote North Branch's high quality of life as a means to help attract new businesses and industries.

Policy 3.1.5

Continue to work with local businesses and industries to ensure needs for expansion and development are adequately met.

Policy 3.1.6

Pursue ways to streamline the development approval process while still maintaining high quality development standards, by using consistent work flow practices, checklists, and hosting developer information sessions regularly.

Policy 3.1.7

Periodically review and promote economic development incentive programs such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Tax Abatement, utility energy and water efficiency design and improvement programs, county and state waste and pollution prevention assistance and other regional, state and national loan, grant and incentive programs to support business growth and development.

GOAL 3

Enhance North Branch's reputation as a resource to new and expanding businesses.



Comprehensive Plan Questionnaire: Key Patterns and Trends

1. Community Strengths and Identity

Across the early sections of the questionnaire (pages 2–3), respondents consistently highlight:

- A strong sense of community pride and belonging.
- The small-town feel and safety that make the area family-friendly.
- Deep appreciation for natural spaces, recreation, and access to the outdoors.
- Recognition that schools and local events form the heart of community identity.

Trend: The community’s greatest strength lies in its cohesion and shared values. Schools, local partnerships, and volunteerism serve as anchors of civic pride and engagement.

2. Transportation and Accessibility

From the middle portion of the survey (around page 6), respondents discuss:

- A strong desire for safe biking and walking routes, particularly for students and families.
- Concerns about traffic flow near schools and main corridors.

Trend: Participants want more walkable, connected routes—aligning with health, safety, and sustainability goals. There is clear community interest in making it easier to move around town without a car.

3. Education and Workforce Alignment

Later responses (pages 7–8) show widespread recognition of:

- Education quality as a defining strength of the community.

- Calls for more career-connected learning, technical training, and real-world skills.
- Alignment with the district’s goal of ensuring students graduate with a plan, not by chance.

Trend: The community supports educational innovation—especially programs that bridge academics with career readiness and local workforce opportunities.

4. Economic and Environmental Balance

Responses from pages 9–10 highlight the desire to:

- Support small businesses and encourage local job creation.
- Promote sustainable growth that balances targeted industry development with environmental preservation.
- Explore renewable energy and responsible land use; Maintain and protect natural resources and open spaces.

Trend: Residents value a balanced approach—advancing economic opportunity while safeguarding the environment and rural character that define the community.

5. Community Engagement and Governance

The final sections (page 11 and beyond) emphasize:

- Appreciation for transparent communication from local leaders.
- Calls for inclusive planning that welcomes voices from all age groups, especially youth and families.
- Recognition that civic collaboration is essential for moving forward.

Trend: There is strong appetite for collaboration and communication—people want to be informed, involved, and part of shaping the community’s future.



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Date: 05/14/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: Marketing Strategy Plan

Discussion on marketing strategy plan for Interstate Business Park

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority