



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, JUNE 16, 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 May 19, 2026 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. | Storefront Facade Program | ACTION |
| f. | Market Area Profile | ACTION |
| g. | Comprehensive Plan Update | INFO |
| h. | 2027 EDA Budget | ACTION |
8. NEXT MEETING - July 21, 2026 - 3:30 PM
9. 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:

Presenter:

Date: 01/28/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: Approval of May 19, 2026 EDA Meeting Minutes

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority Super Majority



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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR AGENDA
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 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, May 19, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Sara Paul led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

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

Absent:

Remote:

Others Present:

Notes:

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

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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, Marshall Saunders, 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 April 21, 2026 EDA Meeting Minutes

ACTION

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Jessica Thelander

SECONDER: Dennis Johnson

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

ABSENT:

NOTES:

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

ACTION

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Jessica Thelander

SECONDER: Dennis Johnson

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

ABSENT:

NOTES:

7. REPORTS

a. Chisago County HRA-EDA Update

VERBAL
UPDATE

Nancy Hoffman, the Executive Director of the Chisago County HRA-EDA, gave the Chisago County HRA-EDA update.

Chisago County HRA-EDA is starting its strategic planning process, starting with hiring Chatfield LLC. The North Branch EDA will be contacted as stakeholders to participate in surveys. The HRA-EDA has some grant programs available; one is for entrepreneurs and new ventures, and the other is for small business building improvements, fourteen has been approved already. The HRA-EDA did a trade analysis, which the U of M did. The HRA-EDA is continuing to break down the report and develop a way to use the information to attract retail-trade-type businesses.

b. North Branch Area Chamber of Commerce Update

VERBAL
UPDATE

Mayor Kevin Schieber gave the North Branch Area Chamber of Commerce update. This Thursday is a business after-hours network event from 3:30 pm-6:30 pm. There will be appetizers and a complimentary drink ticket with a paid entry, along with exciting door prize giveaways at 6 PM. This is a great way to connect with multiple professionals for a relaxed networking experience.

c. North Branch Area Schools Update

VERBAL
UPDATE

Chair and North Branch School District Superintendent Sara Paul gave the North Branch Area Schools Update. The School District has had concerts for all of the students K-12th grade. On Wednesday night, we have scholarship night, where community members have generously donated towards the future of our students by giving away a lot of scholarships. Sara Paul wanted to thank three entities in particular, the North Branch Area Education Foundation, the Edelstein Foundation, and Max Malquist, who has generously donated to support student scholarships, financial literacy, and STEM.

d. EDA Executive Director Update

VERBAL
UPDATE

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave the EDA Executive Director Update. Residential development activity remains very strong throughout the community, and we wanted to provide an update on a few projects currently moving forward.

Starting with the Meadows North Town homes project, construction activity continues onsite as they work toward paving and infrastructure improvements for the second phase of the development that was approved last November. The developer is also proposing a modification to the final plat, reducing the total number of lots from 105 down to 82. The overall layout and development concept would remain largely the same, but this adjustment would better align the project with market demand, home sizes, and building configurations while still meeting our density and development objectives.

Another project currently under discussion is a proposed residential development consisting of three apartment buildings located south of Ecumen on the east side of Falcon Avenue. The developer has submitted a request for Tax Increment Financing assistance. They will be meeting with the City Council tomorrow evening to discuss the application, review the process, and gain a better understanding of what the City is looking for and whether there may be a potential path forward for the site. I'd encourage any EDA members who are interested to attend that discussion.

Another project requesting TIF assistance is the Westside Commons senior housing development. This project is proposed for the south-west corner of Falcon Avenue and Highway 95. The current concept includes approximately 170 units of independent senior living west of Ecumen. The proposal also includes extending the roadway network and potentially connecting access up to Highway 95, which would help support future development opportunities across the remainder of the site. The developer has prepared a broader concept plan showing what the entire area could look like at full build-out, and staff will continue working with the developer with the expectation of bringing the request back to the City Council on May 27.

Mayor Kevin Schieber wanted to provide an update on the transportation and infrastructure funding request we've been pursuing at the State Capitol. We had requested approximately \$4 million in funding for design and redesign work associated with the corridor project. Toward the end of last week, we believed the project would likely make the final bonding bill list, although we were uncertain what level of funding, if any, would ultimately be approved.

We did not receive final confirmation until Sunday following the joint meeting of the Senate and House Capital Investment Committees, but I'm pleased to report that the project was awarded \$1 million in funding.

While it's less than the full request, this is still a very significant first step. We've been working on this effort for many years, and these funds will allow us to continue advancing the planning and design process while strengthening coordination with all of our regional and federal partners, including the Federal Transportation Board, East Central Regional Development Commission, Chisago County, and Isanti County.

This funding will allow us to elevate the project, develop more detailed plans, and better define the long-term vision for the corridor. It also positions us more competitively for future funding requests by demonstrating local and state investment in the project. As we continue seeking additional funding, we'll be able to present a clearer vision backed by stronger technical information and planning data.

This corridor is becoming increasingly important when you look at the amount of growth occurring in the north-west portion of the community. There are currently approximately 900 homes somewhere in the planning process in that quadrant alone, compared to roughly 1,300 total existing homes citywide. Combined with the anticipated expansion of the industrial park along 400th Street, improving connectivity and access in that area will be critical not only for transportation efficiency, but also for emergency response and public safety purposes. Those points have been strongly emphasized during our discussions at the Capitol over the past several months.

I also want to specifically acknowledge Matthew Hill for his work throughout this process. He's been heavily involved every step of the way — from coordination efforts and planning discussions to countless hours spent at the Capitol helping move the project forward. Matthew, your work has been greatly appreciated and has played a major role in helping us continue building momentum and achieving results for the community.

e. Consider approval of 2026 Interstate Business Park Farm Lease

ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol presented the approval of the 2026 Interstate Business Park Farm Lease. 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. Farming of the land with Mr. Engdahl has been part of the life estate agreement on the property. As a result, neither the EDA or the 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.

Director Sondrol provided 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 is to discuss and recommend terms and consider approving a Farming Lease Agreement with Barry Engdahl, allowing farming of EDA-owned land in the North Branch Interstate Business Park.

Motion to approve the 2026 Interstate Business Park Farm Lease.

RESULT: **Passed**

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

f. Storefront Facade Program

ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave an overview of the Storefront Facade Program. At the last meeting, we briefly discussed the storefront façade program. We reviewed a variety of applications and also identified several areas where the application process and overall program could potentially be improved or updated. Since the program has now been in place for a little over a year, this seemed like a good opportunity to evaluate what modifications, amendments, or general reviews might be appropriate as part of the program's scope.

Just as a brief overview, the program currently offers forgivable loans ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000. To date, we've funded five projects totaling approximately \$83,000.

Looking at the application as a whole from an administrative perspective, there are a variety of smaller improvements we could make to streamline the process and make it easier for applicants. For example, we could develop more detailed checklists for application requirements and project eligibility standards. We also want to ensure there is consistent language throughout the application materials, particularly in areas where the program is referred to as both a loan and a grant. Those are relatively minor administrative items, but they would help improve clarity and consistency.

As far as larger discussion items, I think it would be helpful to receive direction from the commission on several topics.

One is the application timeline and review process. We touched on this briefly at the last meeting. Should applications remain open year-round with monthly or quarterly review periods? Should funding be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis? Or are there other approaches the commission would prefer? There are pros and cons to each option, and additional guidance would be helpful as we continue refining the program.

Another consideration is whether we should implement a formal scoring or evaluation system to provide additional transparency in the review process. I included several possible criteria for discussion, such as project visibility, property conditions, assessed value impacts, and other factors that could help guide application evaluations more consistently.

There are also a few policy-related questions that came up during our review. Currently, if a property is sold within the five-year forgiveness period, the remaining balance becomes due based on the declining forgiveness schedule of 20% per year. However, situations involving LLC ownership changes, refinancing, or similar transactions are not specifically addressed. We should consider whether those situations should trigger repayment requirements or whether they should be allowed under the program guidelines.

We also discussed projects involving multiple storefronts or parcels. For example, if a business combines adjacent storefronts into one redevelopment project, should the program allow funding assistance for both portions of the project? Similarly, if a property previously received funding through the program, should it be eligible for additional funding in the future?

Finally, we discussed the geographic boundaries of the program. When the program was initially developed, the focus was primarily on the historic downtown core, particularly along Main Street South, with less emphasis on portions of County 30. We discussed whether the program boundary should be expanded to include the entire central business district. Currently, the program does allow some discretionary flexibility if a project aligns with the overall goals and intent of the program.

With that, we're mainly looking for discussion and direction from the commission on these topics and any other items you would like staff to evaluate further as we continue reviewing the program. Looking to review this together for the June meeting.

g. Comprehensive Plan Update

INFO

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave the Comprehensive Plan Update. City staff have continued to work on compiling documents from the meetings, and those will be sent out to all the EDA members. This will give ample time for the June meeting, during which we can have a full discussion.

h. Marketing Strategy Plan

ACTION

Community Development Director Nate Sondrol gave the Marketing Strategy Plan and the overall budget and marketing plan for 2026. Nate discussed the marketing strategy for 2026, including the budget, outreach events, and the need for a comprehensive marketing plan. Director Sondrol asked the EDA their thoughts on looking at developing an RFP for marketing or if there are other items that they may want to consider, other than having a digital marketing campaign, looking at website development enhancements, and developing a digital marketing plan. Chair Sara Paul shared that she thinks it's critical that we have a comprehensive strategy for communication, and getting some professional help would be wise. It was a consensus amongst the EDA that the city should move forward to solicit those RFP's and get some quotes from marketing agencies.

8. CLOSED SESSION

Motion to enter into Closed Session pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, sub. 3 (c) at 4:25 PM.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Jessica Thelander

SECONDER: Dennis Johnson

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

ABSENT:

NOTES:

Motion to enter into Open Session at 4:44 PM.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Patrick Meacham

SECONDER: Jessica Thelander

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

ABSENT:

NOTES:

- 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

The Economic Development Authority Meeting adjourned at 4:44 PM.

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Sara Paul

SECONDER: Dennis Johnson

AYES: Kevin Schieber, Marshall Saunders, Patrick Meacham, Sara Paul, Dennis Johnson
Jessica Thelander, Cassie Keocher

ABSENT:

NOTES:



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter:

Date: 06/08/2026

Board & Commission:

Subject: Chisago County HRA-EDA Update

Chisago County HRA-EDA Update

Voting Requirements:



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Date: 06/08/2026

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: 06/08/2026

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: 06/08/2026

Board & Commission:

Subject: EDA Executive Director Update

The EDA Executive Director will provide an update at the meeting

Voting Requirements:



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Date: 06/08/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: Storefront Facade Program

Background

The North Branch EDA established the Storefront Façade Improvement Program in 2024 to foster the rehabilitation of historic structures, as well as guide possible new construction, along Main Street in Downtown North Branch. The current program provides Forgivable loans ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000; a (5) Five-year forgiveness period and a 50 percent private match requirement.

Five (5) projects have been approved to date, including: Merchants Café; MN Home Guys; Acoustic Ave North Branch Barbers Hungry Farmer with a total amount awarded to date of \$83,090.61.

As the program continues to evolve, staff is seeking feedback from the EDA regarding potential updates to the policy and addressing the following items:

1. Application Process
2. Evaluation/Scoring Criteria
3. Transfer/Sale Situations
4. Multiple Storefronts and Repeat Applications
5. Geographic Eligibility
6. Program Goals

Discussion Items

1) Application Process

Applications are currently being reviewed on a first come, first served annual basis.

- Should applications continue to be accepted year-round?
- Should applications be reviewed monthly, quarterly, or on another schedule?
- Should funding continue to be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis?
- Should applications be evaluated competitively if funding requests exceed available resources?
- How should the program address requests received after annual funding has been exhausted?

2) Evaluation Criteria

Currently, applications are generally reviewed for eligibility and compliance with program requirements. Should a formal evaluation criteria be established to prioritize projects and, if so, how to weigh the factors?

Potential evaluation factors include:

- Historic significance of the building
- Visibility and contribution to community image
- Economic impact and investment potential
- Existing building condition
- ADA accessibility improvements
- Amount of private investment leveraged
- Vacancy reduction or business retention benefits
- Other?

3) Ownership Transfers and Property Sales

Staff has identified several situations that may warrant clarification regarding loan forgiveness and repayment requirements.

- Should exemptions be provided for:
 - LLC ownership restructuring
 - Estate transfers
 - Refinancing transactions
 - Family transfers
- Under what circumstances, if any, should repayment be required?

4) Multiple Storefronts and Repeat Applications

- Should a two-tenant building be eligible for one award or separate awards for each storefront?

- Should a maximum award amount be established per building or property owner?
- Should previous recipients be eligible to apply for additional funding?
- If repeat applications are allowed, should a waiting period be required between awards?

5) Geographic Eligibility

- Should the program continue to focus primarily on Downtown properties?
- Should eligibility be expanded to include the broader Central Business District?
- Should all commercially zoned properties be eligible?
- Are there specific commercial corridors or redevelopment areas that should be prioritized?

6) Program Goals

- Is the primary purpose of the program downtown revitalization, economic development, historic preservation, business retention, or a combination of these objectives?
- Is the program requirements aligned with desired outcomes?
- How should we evaluate the program's success?

Requested Action

Staff is requesting discussion and direction regarding the questions outlined above.

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options **Simple Majority Super 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.



APPLICANT / OWNER INFORMATION

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
	Canopy & Awnings		Signage & Lighting		Other:

PROJECT COST & TIMELINES					
PROJECT ESTIMATES <i>(Detailed opinion of probable cost required.)</i>					
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	
<i>In the space below provide a brief description of the proposed project (attach an additional sheet if necessary).</i>	



NORTH BRANCH FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT FORGIVABLE LOAN PROGRAM

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.



NORTH BRANCH FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT FORGIVABLE LOAN PROGRAM

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: 06/08/2026

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**

Below is timeline for the process:

- **March 18, 2026:** Landuse, Economic Development, Parks, Trails & Open Space
- **April 15, 2026:** Housing, Transportation, Utilities, Public Safety
- June 16, 2026, 2026: EDA Review of Plan
- July 15, 2026 Council Work Session for full review

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 Super 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)

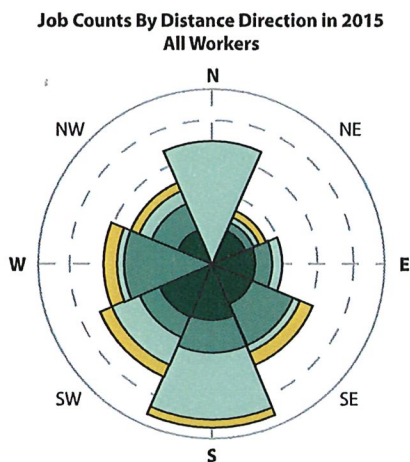
Table 5 –A Business and Employment Statistics

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: 06/08/2026

Board & Commission: Economic Development Authority

Subject: 2027 EDA Budget

Attached is the DRAFT preliminary 2027 EDA budget along with the current debt schedule for Industrial Park.

Recommended EDA Action

Staff are looking for initial discussion and direction from the EDA.

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority Super Majority

EDA Fund

2026 Revenue and Expenditure Budget

Description	2025 Actual				
EDA Revenue	2024 Actual	(unaudited)	2026 Adopted	2026 Actual	2027 Proposed
Current Ad Valorem Taxes - HRA	\$ (284,194)	\$ (284,955)	\$ (315,827)	\$ -	\$ (332,736)
Current Ad Valorem Taxes - EDA	(278,519)	(279,256)	(309,510)	-	(326,081)
Delinquent Ad Valorem Taxes	-	-	-	-	-
Application Fees	-	-	-	-	-
Mkt Value Credit	(1,185)	(1,060)	-	-	-
Other Revenues	-	-	-	-	-
Interest Earnings	(3,936)	(11,342)	(200)	-	-
Other Rents and Royalties	(3,600)	(77,550)	(3,600)	(11,400)	(3,600)
Transfer From Other Fund	(185,000)	(185,968)	(135,000)	-	(185,000)
Total Revenue	\$ (756,434)	\$ (840,131)	\$ (764,137)	\$ (11,400)	\$ (847,417)

Description	2025 Actual				
EDA Expenditures	2024 Actual	(unaudited)	2026 Adopted	2026 Actual	2027 Proposed
Employees Wages & Salaries	\$ 57,466	\$ 76,199	\$ 95,675	\$ 27,031	\$ -
PERA	3,544	5,391	7,175	2,258	-
FICA and Medicare	3,883	5,166	7,319	2,263	-
Employer Paid Health	2,680	11,799	18,325	4,606	-
Paid Family Medical Leave	-	-	-	106	-
Worker s Comp Insurance	-	-	750	-	-
Operating Supplies	941	126	500	-	-
Professional Svcs	52,738	-	15,000	33,773	-
Auditing and Acct g Services	-	847	1,054	-	-
Engineering Fees	9,199	7,400	10,000	-	-
Attorneys Fees	18,250	21,224	10,000	8,090	-
Travel Expenses	75	1,224	1,100	9	-
Conference & Training	20	1,415	1,700	280	-
Meeting Expense	307	-	-	-	-
Marketing	1,180	982	30,000	-	-
Legal Notices Publishing	-	56	120	57	-
Insurance	1,157	1,089	1,200	1,161	-
CBD Improvement Fund	-	18,464	75,000	3,409	-
Dues and Subscriptions	1,520	1,180	2,300	1,885	-
Recording Fees	-	46	-	-	-
PropTaxes/ Assessments	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer Out	341,579	345,874	345,000	-	-
Total Expenditures	\$ 494,539	\$ 498,482	\$ 622,218	\$ 84,928	\$ -