

## Economic Development Resources



**i-places, a place-based decision making tool for Local Units of Government in Central Minnesota.** The i-places tool will be used in Central Minnesota to help local units of government make decisions regarding land use. As described in resource documents, “i-places [is a] web-based land use modeling tool facilitates land use planning for agriculture and rural communities. A base-case scenario represents how the study area would be expected to perform if current crops and expected development projections were unchanged. All other alternative development scenarios are compared to the base case to determine long-term next change.”



**BUSH FOUNDATION** (For more information see [www.sacog.org/rucs](http://www.sacog.org/rucs) or Region Five Development Commission, Jake Huebsch [jhuebsch@regionfive.org](mailto:jhuebsch@regionfive.org) or Tad Erickson [terickson@regionfive.org](mailto:terickson@regionfive.org). Use of the i-places tool in Central Minnesota was funded by the Bush Foundation).



**Blandin Foundation™**  
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

**Blandin Lightspeed Project.** An issue uncovered during the planning process was the need for smaller-, all volunteer, fire departments to provide mandated training. Although the Brainerd Fire Department invited smaller fire departments to join in their training sessions, most of the fire fighters were volunteers with full-time jobs so they were unable to attend. In some cases, mileage and stipends to attend such training were not provided, another barrier to attendance. A grant from Blandin Foundation enabled the region to address these needs. It assisted with the development of the Resilient Region website as a portal for providing innovative, cost effective training to fire fighters in the five-county area. The training sessions are conducted at the Brainerd Fire Department, recorded, and then streamed to the website for viewing via the internet. The regional fire departments to benefit include: Randall, Pequot Lakes, Nisswa, Mission Township, Ironton, Garrison, Deerwood, Cuyuna, and Crosslake. Outcomes from this work includes: decreased vehicle miles traveled, decreased travel time, improved connectivity and communication, and improved government efficiency because fire-departments can pool limited resources to purchase the mandated training. (For more information contact Tad Erickson [terickson@regionfive.org](mailto:terickson@regionfive.org).)



**Hazard Mitigation Plans.** Hazard mitigation planning is designed to protect the health, safety, and economic interests of citizens by reducing the impacts of natural, technological, and human-related hazards. The resulting plans provide steps to be taken to help reduce injuries, loss of life, and destruction of property due to hazardous conditions. R5DC, as part of the work to build resilient communities, continues to work with Cass County, Crow Wing County, Morrison County, Todd County and Wadena County and has been approached by the Leech Lake Tribe to prepare these vital documents. The [Morrison County](#), [Wadena County](#), [Cass](#), [Crow Wing County](#) and [Todd County](#) plans are included on this site. For more information regarding the hazard mitigation work please contact Tad Erickson [terickson@regionfive.org](mailto:terickson@regionfive.org) (Final Report Reference: Appendix D-3).



**Triple Bottom Line Tool.** The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), in partnership with Portland State University developed a tool to help public, private, and non-profit investors and decision-makers weight benefits of economic development projects. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) tool helps assess the economic, environmental, and social impact of a project.



One of the studies conducted to support the planning process was ***Solar Thermal in Central MN: Solar Feasibility Analysis for Local Units of Government*** (Final Report Reference: Appendix D-4) by the Rural Renewable Energy Alliance (RREAL). Local Units of Government throughout Region Five face the challenge of financing growing expenditures for essential services in the presence of continued budget cuts. The RREAL study assessed the potential for solar thermal technologies to stabilize and reduce municipal heating costs. This led to a pilot project at the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport funded by USDA. The efficiency and effectiveness is being evaluated and the results will be released at a later date. For more information contact [RREAL](#).



Central Minnesota Food Hub

Feasibility Study



**Central Minnesota Food Hub** is a feasibility study conducted by Happy Dancing Turtle in partnership with Agricultural utilization Research Institute (AURI), Central Lakes College Small Business Development Center, the Farm on St. Mathias, the Initiative Foundation, JBJ World LLC, Region Five Development Commission, University of Minnesota Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, and University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). The overall results provide *“strong evidence supporting the development of a food hub in Central Minnesota.”* This work will help support the HUD/DOT/EPA Sustainable Communities

Resilient Regional plan by providing crucial information needed for Recommendation EC2 “Local Foods: Promote and support the expansion of the local food economic sector.”

**CEDS 2011 - 10 Vital Projects.** The white papers have been combined into the [CEDS Vital Projects](#). A summary of these follows:



TARGET INDUSTRIES

**Execs Program Marketing Plan.** This new Executive Initiative (EXECS) strives to better utilize the knowledge and expertise of business leaders that now reside in the Brainerd Lakes Area by fostering connections with the common goal of expanding business, building community and growing jobs in Crow Wing County. Volunteers are matched in one of two committees: Mentoring and Counseling, or Economic and Community Development. **“TECH Services” Economic Development Project.** The Brainerd Lakes Area is fortunate to have several technology businesses or businesses that utilize technology to their advantage. We want to build on this economic development cluster for the future. Both Proposals submitted by: [Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corporation](#) (BLAEDC).



**The Depot in Staples.** The depot was the cornerstone of early economic development in Staples; a hub of activity, employment and travel for residents of Staples and the surrounding areas for many years. It continues to serve Amtrak passengers daily and is a place of rest and cultural activity for our residents, travelers and members of the Staples Historical Society (SHS). All other buildings that related to the significance of the railroad in Staples have been lost. It is our plan to preserve this 102-year-old building as a living history of the railroad in Staples. Submitted by: [Staples Historical Society](#).



**Bridges Business & Teacher Exchange: Bridges Workplace Connection.** Bridges Workplace Connection and Career Academies (“Bridges”) is to provide high school students work force exploration and preparation for regional high pay, high demand careers through a partnership of area businesses, high schools, and Central Lakes College. The ultimate goal of the Bridges initiative is to provide a qualified employee pipeline to regional businesses to ensure long-term economic vitality for our rural Minnesota region. Submitted by: [Brainerd Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce](#).



**Connection of the Paul Bunyan Trail to Soo Line Trail.** The Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail officially received its state trail designation in 2009 and when completed will provide a connection between Crow Wing State Park and the Soo Line Trail, effectively linking the Central Lakes, Lake Wobegon, Soo Line, Paul Bunyan, Heartland and Mi-Gi-Zi Trails into one continuous recreational route. As a first in Minnesota recreational trail construction, it will also be a true multi-use trail from its inception, accommodating motorized as well as non-motorized users. The inter-connection of these trails is considered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to be the most important missing link in the State trail system. With this connection it would mean there are 400 continuous miles of recreational trails in our region. Submitted by: [Morrison County Community Development](#)



**High Performance Homes.** Hunt Utilities Group in partnership with Habitat for Humanity will create a high performance house.

It will become an on-site training opportunity for residents of the Leech Lake Reservation and will serve as a model house for builders interested in learning about high-performance buildings. Submitted by: [Habitat for Humanity](#) and [Hunt Utilities Group](#).



**Creative Place-making in Region Five.** According to Anne Markuson, author of "Creative Placemaking," "Arts and Culture are proving their power as economic and social catalysts. Through

smart collaborations with other sectors – government, private business, foundations – they are creating opportunities for rejuvenation and economic development.” Our goal is to create a more vibrant, interconnected region where creativity is valued and integrated into all aspects of life—from schools to hospitals, city halls to libraries, neighborhood coffee shops to the average kitchen table, resulting in a thriving economic and social environment. Submitted by: [Five Wings Art Council](#).



**Solar Thermal Site Assessment at Regional School Districts.** RREAL will provide solar thermal site assessments to 10 regional school districts in an effort to educate school district building and grounds managers, school boards and support staff on the energy cost-stabilizing benefits of solar thermal technologies. RREAL will also increase leadership capacity via board development in order to enhance the organizations’ ability to deliver services to the rural region. Submitted by [Rural Renewable Energy Alliance](#) (RREAL).



**RMFR-Rural Microloan Revolving Fund.** Micro-lending is a tool that will allow the poor to elevate themselves with dignity. It is a free market approach to poverty eradication vs. state programs that help alleviate daily needs. Coupled with professional technical assistance and peer-to-peer opportunities of the micro-lending approach, poverty eradication is addressed through micro-lending. By the award of the USDA proposal, North Central Economic Association will provide microloans to start-up/small business capital that they may otherwise not have had access to.



**Local Foods.** There is NOT a rural model for a local foods distribution system anywhere in Minnesota, however many trend setters throughout the nation such as Vermont, Sacramento, Bolder, parts of Oregon, Wisconsin and Mexico had to eventually address the need for a distribution system of some sort, we therefore patterned our model from their successful examples in building a local foods regional economy. This project will build on the work over the past three years to develop a regional local foods distribution system. Submitted by: [North Central Economic Development Organization](#) and [The Farm On St. Mathias](#).

#### **Additional Resources**

There are numerous other organizations whose primary function is not economic development work in partnership with economic developers. They include the news media, foundations, utilities,

schools, health care providers, faith-based organizations, and colleges, universities, and other education or research institutions.

In its broadest sense, policies of economic development encompass three major areas:

- Governments undertaking to meet broad economic objectives such as price stability, high employment, and sustainable growth. Such efforts include monetary and fiscal policies, regulation of financial institutions, trade, and tax policies.
- Programs that provide infrastructure and services such as highways, parks, affordable housing, crime prevention, and K–12 education.
- Job creation and retention through specific efforts in business finance, marketing, neighborhood development, workforce development, small business development, business retention and expansion, technology transfer, and real estate development. This third category is a primary focus of economic development professionals.