



**Imagine Duluth 2035**  
**Economic Development Focus Group #1 Minutes**  
**First Meeting – Monday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016, 4:00pm**  
**Room 303, Duluth City Hall**

**Guests Present:** Deb Baumgartner, John Bastan, Diana Brainard, Starr Brainard, Tony Cuneo, Carmel DeMajoribus, Deb DeLuca, Hadrian DeMajoribus, Gary Eckenberg, Danielle Goldfarb, Rosemary Hampton, Keith Hamre, Elaine Hansen, Aaron Kelly, Janet Kennedy, Jenna Kowaleski, Pam Kramer, Rachel Johnson, Katie LePlant, Josh MacInnes, Carol Metzger, Garner Moffat, Carole Newkumet, Nancy Norr, Madison Ohm, David Peterson, Rachel Phillips, Heather Rand, Steven Robertson, David Ross, Mike Schrafper, Jesse Stork, Anna Tanski, Kate Van Daele, Chad Watzak, and Tom Werner.

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

City staff and participants introduced themselves.

**2. Brief Overview – Timeline and Process**

City staff reviewed the four phases of updating the 2006 comprehensive plan. Phase one was just completed and included data analysis and collecting the public's input. In June, a needs assessment survey was created to collect input from the public. In September, the survey closed and a total of 4,175 surveys were collected. Phase one also included creating social media pages, the creation of the Vision Committee, and attending over 65 community events throughout Duluth.

Phase two began in September with a Kick-off Event that took place at Denfeld High School. Preliminary survey results, updated area maps, and small group discussions were held around big ideas for the future and the two newly proposed governing principles: fairness and health. Over 250 residents attended the event and gave valuable feedback that will be used throughout the next year in the planning process. Phase two

will launch focus groups around four topics; economic development, housing, open space and transportation.

The plan is scheduled to be finalized by August of 2017 and implementation will begin in September.

**3. Review implementation strategies that have been completed or partially completed from 2006 Comp Plan to determine if the strategy is still relevant**

A Comprehensive Plan is a road map that communities use to plan their future. It asks questions like 'where are we now, and where do we want to go'? Generally, a comprehensive plan is updated every 10 -20 years. In Duluth our first comprehensive plan was created in 1927 with our first update in 2006. It is time to update the plan again in anticipation of further growth and increased development.

Heather Rand discussed some major projects completed since 2006 include the following:

- Bluestone
- Pier B Resort
- Maurice's
- Sheraton
- Atlas Industrial Park
- Kenwood Village
- Miller Hill Lofts
- Essentia expansion
- ENDI
- Duluth International Airport renovation and expansion

**4. Review research questions for the Imagine Duluth 2035 process. *Do other topics need discussion or further research?***

There will be four focus groups that will meet over the next six months to provide clarity and understanding around economic development efforts in Duluth. To do this we need to start at the beginning. What is economic development and what does it entail? Economic development includes the city's tax base, employment, attracting new employers, increasing economy and housing.

Looking directly at the survey that was recently closed, there are several questions that this group will be paying attention to in recognizing trends within economic development.

Survey Question #5: What housing type(s) do you feel is most needed for Duluth's success?

-The top two responses were single family homes and mixed use.

Survey Question #7: Where should the city encourage business and commercial growth over the next 20 years?

-Top two responses were commercial business centers and downtown.

Survey Question #8: What should be the City of Duluth's highest priorities over the next 20 years?

-Top responses were attracting new employers and improve the existing road network even if it means raising taxes or fees.

A factor that some do not realize about Duluth is that, in addition to the transportation center of the harbor, we have a very competitive railway system. Duluth has a total of four rail lines which make us very competitive with other communities for railway expansion and rail trade.

## **5. Review preliminary data gathering / identify other potential resources**

This is a list of comments made by room participants:

- These seem to be broad and very open ended. Can we create something (this time) with specific end goals?
- I would challenge the group to write into the plan ways to support local businesses, create more jobs, invest in housing, and create new TIFF fund opportunities that will help guide decisions made from this plan update.
- I found the survey question about encouraging commercial areas challenging. In Lincoln Park we are working very hard to develop the entire neighborhood not just the commercial area.
- TIFF funds are for large projects.
- Let's focus more on density in neighborhoods
- Giving TIF funds to developers is okay, but let's make sure that they are giving back to Duluth too.
- Where do new businesses want to locate? Where do WE want businesses to be located? Do these two viewpoints align with the community's needs?
- We are not competing with other cities (like Rochester and Madison) we are competing with other regions. How much does Duluth talk about our region and the benefits that our region has? Is there a conscious conversation about the regions assets?
- Is the city connected with APEX meetings? This could be a great partnership.

## **6. Discuss any other emerging issues for this section of the Comp Plan Update**

The following are data sources suggested by attendees:

- WPAN study
- 2015 American Community Survey
- Downtown Duluth demographic characteristics and retail sale
- Urban Land studies
- Central Entrance survey
- Food desert studies
- Riverside Small Area Plan
- Brookings Institute DEEDA report

- NE Minnesota trade sector jobs

Emerging trends in Economic Development and comments about topics to be on the lookout for:

Trends: transportation, energy, higher education, medical, manufacturing, aerospace, arts/culture, timber, and taconite.

Topics to watch and comments:

- What is the cost of doing business in Duluth compared to other cities?
- Do we have a good mix of employment diversity?
- Are we doing enough to make aviation successful?
- How do we use water? APEX is wanting to learn about how water is used and if there is an economic value
- Do universities and colleges in the area promote construction employment opportunities through educational track programs? Construction and specifically building jobs are hurting in Duluth because of not enough experts in the field are here to be plugged into jobs.
- How does the City work with broadband companies? Can't there be more than one option to provide some competition?
- Look into solar technology resources and wind alternative energy sources
- Technology and drones specifically. How do we determine what our policies in comparison to state and federal?
- The comprehensive plan has long term values what steps are we taking to share these values with underrepresented communities in Duluth so that they know what our goals are? How are we ensuring their involvement?
- For outdoor recreation and tourism what resources could help to continue growing those two sectors?
- Are we keeping right of way for rail lines from East to West for connectivity?
- We need better branding for the city. Duluth has so much character how are we marketing that?
- How do we track our failures? When businesses choose not to come here do we know why they didn't choose Duluth? What steps are we taking to learn from past mistakes? How much investigation do we do to collect this information?
- To create a strong economic development, you need to determine your assets. Spend time and resources on the businesses that Duluth already has and support them. We are leaving many out of the process instead of promoting them.
- Look at survey results and what the city is wanting. We need to invest in manufacturing jobs. Determine what the survey results concluded, and compare them to actual needs of the city.

- Don't throw away any policies. The aspirational goals of 2006 were well addressed they just need to be updated and become more specific to the trends of today.
- When looking at our growth rate do we have benchmarks or income goals?
- Is Bluestone (or developments like it) an economic win for the community?
- Create metrics to follow and track. Examples could include population growth, downtown workplaces and poverty reduction.
- Looking at green infrastructure and recreation opportunities. What are zoning policies around them and do they need to be updated?

## **7. Wrap-Up & Next Steps**

The comments from this meeting were a first step in identifying what the focus group will be working on through the next two phases of updating the plan. All of the comments taken from this group will be analyzed before the next meeting. Next steps will be emailed to those who attended the first focus group in addition to be posted on [www.imagineduluth.com](http://www.imagineduluth.com)

The second focus group will be in January 2017. Once a date is set it will be posted on [www.imagineduluth.com](http://www.imagineduluth.com) and emailed to those that signed in at the meeting.