

# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT THINGS TO CONSIDER



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Communities should consider assessing their current conditions and determine the opportunity for growth and long-term viability. Below is a list of items to consider in that assessment. There may be other items individual communities include.

We hope communities can develop local and regional strategies for building on strengths and correcting weaknesses in order to be in a position to proactively respond to development and redevelopment opportunities.

### 1. INFRASTRUCTURE

Communities should consider what infrastructure is in place and what the condition of that infrastructure is? Communities should consider how to capitalize on the use of existing infrastructure. If the community is poised to grow, how will infrastructure needs be met and what is the cost?

- a. **Roads & Bridges:** What is the condition of existing roads and bridges in the community? Do they provide adequate capacity for commerce and residential use? Is there a long-range plan in place for road and bridge repair and maintenance?
- b. **Water & Sewer:** What is the condition of the existing water and sewer infrastructure to residential and business clients? Is it fully funded to maintain and potentially capture future expansion? Is there a long-range plan in place to repair and replace?
- c. **Gas & Utilities:** What is the condition of the existing additional public utility infrastructure to residential and business clients? Is it fully funded to maintain and potentially capture future expansion? Is there a long-range plan in place to repair and replace?
- d. **Rail:** What is the condition of the existing rail infrastructure for business clients in order to retain and attract commerce? Is there a long-range plan in place to provide business access on a local and regional level?
- e. **Air:** What is the condition of the existing air infrastructure for business and residential clients in order to retain and attract commerce and residents? Is there a long-range plan in place to provide access on a local and regional level?
- f. **Telecommunications & Networks:** What is the condition of existing telecommunication and network infrastructure for quality telecommunications and network access for businesses, workers, and residents?

- g. **Awareness of Infrastructure Overbuilding:** With the changing demographics, communities may consider watching the potential overbuilding of infrastructure that can tax a community. Right sizing the infrastructure may require further examination. Some Iron Range communities continue to lose population and the infrastructure may become an ever increasing problem to maintain.

## 2. HOUSING

Communities should consider what is the condition of their existing housing stock and where is there opportunity for future residential development? What type of additional housing stock is needed? How can communities maximize use of existing housing and available lots?

- a. **Rehabilitate & Preserve Existing Workforce Housing Stock:** As housing ages, there is a need to expand the rehabilitation and preservation of the existing housing stock. This also improves the community character, historical preservation, and stabilizes the existing housing stock for long-term viability. What is the need for rehabilitation? If needed, how would it be accomplished?
- b. **Promote In-Fill Housing:** There are opportunities to further provide both single family and multi-family housing options on available lots within neighborhoods. This would capitalize on existing infrastructure and minimize the communities' exposure to costly new infrastructure. What is the need for in-fill housing? If needed, how would that be accomplished?
- c. **Promote Redevelopment & Reuse:** As buildings age, there are opportunities to redevelop and reuse existing buildings. This would minimize the need to further extend infrastructure to new sites while capitalizing on existing infrastructure. What is the need for residential redevelopment? If needed, how would that be accomplished?
- d. **Promote the Use of Existing Land:** There are opportunities to promote the use of existing land and subdivision lots for housing development. This would provide options to prospective residents to custom build homes on a variety of land options such as lakeshore, subdivision lots, and in-fill lots. What existing residential land is available for development? If available, what is needed to develop the property?
- e. **Promote Existing Housing Stock:** There are opportunities to promote the purchase and use of existing housing stock for potential home owners. What tools are available to make use of existing housing stock for homeowners?
- f. **Promote Preservation of Existing Public & Subsidized Housing:** Promote the rehabilitation and preservation of existing public and subsidized housing stock. This provides stability to lower-income families by ensuring their access to quality and safe affordable housing. Has the community lost subsidized housing? What is being done to maintain quality public and subsidized housing units?

- g. **Establish Requirements on Temporary Workforce Housing:** With many potential economic impacts proposed for the Iron Range, communities may provide information guides addressing temporary workforce housing options and zoning requirements. Does the community have ordinances in place to address temporary housing?

### 3. SCHOOLS

As St. Louis County, and particularly the Iron Range, experiences change and opportunities arise to attract new families to the area, communities may want to consider partnerships with the school districts on new and enhanced strategies for the schools to attract new residents. The area is in competition with other schools in the region and the state. Therefore, communities may consider the condition, appearance, consolidation, and potential growth of community and regional schools.

### 4. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community services are services that can attract residents and businesses to an area, as well as provide a high standard of living. Communities may examine the condition and quality of various community services from parks to public safety, and whether there are opportunities to improve and streamline services.

- a. **Parks, Trails & Recreation:** As a new generation of individuals and families migrate to new areas, they are searching and reviewing not only the quality of jobs, schools and homes, but also the amenities an area provides such as parks, trails, and recreational opportunities. Communities may consider what is the condition of the existing inventory and what is the need to expand or improve?
- b. **Police & Fire:** Communities may consider reviewing the police and fire protection and response for emergency operations for the community and region.
- c. **Hospitals & Health Care:** With healthcare a critical aspect of quality of life, communities may consider reviewing the healthcare industry in the community and region.
- d. **Permitting & Plan Review:** Opportunities exist to improve and streamline permitting and plan reviews. This could include streamlining internal processes and forms, and/or expanding into providing online web applications and forms. Is there adequate processes and resources in place to provide information, meet developers/residents, review permits and plats, and approve?
- e. **Information & Web:** Is there adequate information available via web and in print for businesses' and residents' services to be accessed? Is the community utilizing the web to the fullest capacity to efficiently disseminate information and provide access to services?

## 5. PLANS & ORDINANCES

Plans and ordinances are important tools to guide a community in a certain direction for development, and are effective when applied and actively used by the city. Below are some areas in which a community may consider assessing to further lay the groundwork for a clear direction.

- a. **Comprehensive Planning:** Does the community have an up-to-date comprehensive plan to guide overall direction of the community? Does the community need additional plans to assist in redevelopment?
- b. **Master Planning:** Refining a community many times starts with master planning. Master planning provides a community vision for the future with many design elements, steps for action, and financial components to make the vision come to reality. Master planning may focus on a whole community, a corridor, or intersection and provides direction to move forward.
- c. **Capital Improvement Planning:** Developing and implementing capital improvement plans can improve infrastructure planning and budgeting. A well conceived plan improves the efficiency of infrastructure repair, replacement, and expansion. When tied to a comprehensive or master plan, it can also improve budgeting for infrastructure expansion.
- d. **Ordinances:** Are the city's ordinances (zoning, subdivision, and temporary housing) up to date? Does the community need to refine and further define areas in the city's ordinance that are obsolete or in need of an update? Communities may consider beginning to review these official controls and updating.

## 6. COMMERCE

Commerce or private enterprise is a significant component of any community and many times is the driver to redevelopment. Communities may consider reviewing how they work with, and partner with these businesses to make them successful enterprises in the community.

- a. **Commercial Centers:** Communities may consider reviewing their existing and future commercial centers for focusing on the condition of existing centers and ways to strengthen them, and review potential expansion of existing and new centers by looking at various aspects of where growth should occur, and future stress points of incompatible land uses.
- b. **Developers:** As developers of residential and commercial projects are brought forward, communities may consider their capacity and resources in place to assist plans move forward in a thoughtful and efficient manner.

- c. **Tourism Capacity:** Communities may consider the impact on the tourism industry if units are used for temporary workers for construction projects. This could impact hotels, resorts, RV parks, and campgrounds.
- d. **Property & Lots:** Communities may consider how a community could maximize the use of existing housing, commercial property, and lots. This provides some advantages over expansion.

7. **DIVERSITY**

Communities may consider how a community will embrace a more diverse population as new residents, construction workers, and businesses examine the area's potential and business opportunities. Communities may consider what support systems are in place.

8. **REGIONAL-PARTNERS**

With numerous cities scattered across the Iron Range, communities identify housing needs and begin to seek funding sources to fill those needs, it is encouraged that communities work together on applications rather than compete. This may have better potential of success at the federal, state, and local levels of government.

9. **OTHER**

What are other important issues for your community?