City of New Ulm

Economic Development Authority Strategic Plan

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  - Jason Godfrey, CEO
  - Serra Gullu, Director
  - Ann This, Stakeholder Engagement Advisor

I. Executive Summary

- **Purpose of the Plan**
- **Summary of Key Priorities and Vision**
  - Vision Statement
  - Mission Statement
  - Strategic Direction
  - The Path Forward

Purpose of the Plan

New Ulm's Economic Development Authority (EDA) has a broad mandate to improve the economic ecosystem of the City and achieves this through a range of activities — from helping first-time homebuyers, to providing capital to startups, and supporting childcare projects. The EDA has been exceptionally effective in its execution of these programs and has seen significant success and impact.

Over the past decade results include:

1. Childcare Support Innovation: Recognizing that facility space was a barrier to entry for new childcare providers, the EDA provided 4 physical spaces for in-home providers to scale into licensed care — enabling more families to access safe, affordable options and helping parents participate in the workforce. Additionally, the EDA organizes an annual training weekend for childcare providers, allowing them to complete most of their required annual training hours in a single weekend.

2. Pathways to Homeownership (established in 2019): Provided 44 homebuyer assistance loans totaling $318,285, helping dozens of New Ulm families — all first-time buyers — put down roots and invest in the city's future.

3. Small Business Growth (established in 2019): Awarded 48 small business grants totaling $450,000 to launch or stabilize businesses across industries, from downtown retail to restaurants, childcare, and light manufacturing.

4. Business Capital & Commercial Investment (established in 1991): Approved 162 commercial property rehabilitation and small business loans totaling $2.55 million, helping businesses expand, modernize, and strengthen New Ulm's commercial properties and businesses.

5. Housing Preservation (established in 2021): Funded 15 "Get It Ready" rehabilitation loans ($362,545) to prepare older homes for sale, and 10 multifamily rental rehabilitation loans ($471,715) to preserve and upgrade rental housing stock, ensuring aging housing remains a community asset rather than a liability.

6. COVID-19 Emergency Response: Provided critical support to local businesses during the pandemic through multiple grant tiers and loans:

- COVID Grant Tier 1: 56 grants totaling $140,000
- COVID Grant Tier 2: 64 grants totaling $96,000
- COVID Grant Tier 3: 35 grants totaling $67,543.51
- COVID Loans: 31 loans totaling $289,500

Prudence dictates periodic assessments to ensure that programs are aligned with current needs and are providing the desired results. City Manager, Chris Dalton, explained:

We have great programs, but we need to ask: do they align with our priorities? And how do we define those priorities together?"

This Strategic Plan will:

- Identify the most important purposes, priorities, and long-term vision of economic development in New Ulm and provide clear direction for the EDA's role in New Ulm's economic future.
- Ensure that EDA programs support the overall strategy and are achieving critical public benefit.
- Position the EDA as a proactive, collaborative leader in New Ulm's economic ecosystem
- Provide metrics by which the programs can be evaluated.

Heather Bregel, Economic Development Director, put it this way:

"The goal is to help us to think more strategically — to move beyond the details of individual programs and into conversations about how we're growing New Ulm's economy as a whole."

Summary of Key Priorities and Vision

Strategic Direction

New Ulm stands at a pivotal moment. After decades of population stability, the City has begun growing again — increasing from 13,522 to 14,120 residents between 2010 and 2020. With over 400 housing units in development, a thriving downtown, and renewed energy around economic development, now is the time to be strategic about where we focus our efforts and resources.

This plan identifies five strategic priorities that will guide the EDA's work over the next 3-5 years:

1. Housing Density

Ensure an adequate supply of diverse housing at varying densities to meet New Ulm's projected demand through 2030. With 61% of our workforce commuting into the City, strategic housing development presents our greatest opportunity to convert existing workers into residents, deepening the tax base and stabilizing the local labor market. The EDA will:

- Promote infill and higher-density development
- Restructure homebuyer assistance programs
- Expand rehabilitation efforts for aging housing stock
- Monitor housing needs to ensure data-driven decision-making

Vision Statement

Be recognized as the trusted partner and leader in shaping a vibrant, resilient, and competitive community for generations to come. As an organization, drive innovation, attract investment, and create lasting opportunities for both residents and businesses.

Mission Statement

Drive sustainable growth through collaboration, stewardship, and innovation — ensuring New Ulm remains a vibrant community with a strong economy and a high quality of life.

2. EDA Identity and Branding

Develop a strong and unified EDA brand identity that celebrates New Ulm's heritage while projecting a forward-looking image for economic development. A distinct EDA identity — aligned with but separate from the broader City brand — will position the Economic Development Authority as a recognizable partner for businesses and developers, improve professional communications, and create consistency across all economic development marketing efforts.

3. Business Retention & Ecosystem Support

Shift from reactive to proactive business support through a formal Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program grounded in "economic gardening" principles. Rather than focusing solely on attracting outside firms, the EDA will nurture homegrown companies by:

- Implementing structured business visitation programs
- Providing customized growth acceleration support for high-potential local firms
- Partnering on Career and Technical Education Center improvements
- Maintaining enhanced small business financing options

4. Tourism and Hotel Development (Tourism 2030 Strategy)

Grow New Ulm's tourism sector into a robust, year-round economic driver by expanding attractions and events beyond traditional German festivals, improving visitor infrastructure, and executing a long-term tourism strategy. The centerpiece of this priority is facilitating development of a 60-80 room downtown hotel by 2030, which feasibility studies show could increase lodging capacity by 50% and support significantly expanded tourism activity. The EDA will also work with partners to diversify tourism offerings across all four seasons.

5. Coordination Between Economic Partners

Achieve seamless coordination and collaboration among the EDA, Chamber of Commerce, NUBRIC, and other economic development stakeholders. By formalizing the New Ulm Partnership, creating a "no wrong door" business support system, and aligning marketing efforts, the EDA will ensure all partners work toward common goals, communicate regularly, and leverage each other's strengths rather than duplicating efforts.

The Path Forward

These priorities are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Housing enables workforce growth, which supports business retention. A strong brand attracts both businesses and tourists. Coordinated partners amplify every initiative. Together, these priorities position New Ulm to capitalize on current momentum while addressing lingering challenges before they become constraints on growth.

This plan represents a shift from program administration to strategic leadership — from asking "what programs should we offer?" to "what outcomes do we want to achieve?" With clear priorities, defined metrics, and committed partnerships, the EDA is positioned to lead New Ulm into a period of sustainable, purposeful economic growth that preserves what residents cherish while creating opportunities for the next generation.

II. Background

- Situational Imperative
- Project Background and Planning Process
- Stakeholder Engagement Summary
- Summary of Economic Conditions
- What Economic Development Means in New Ulm

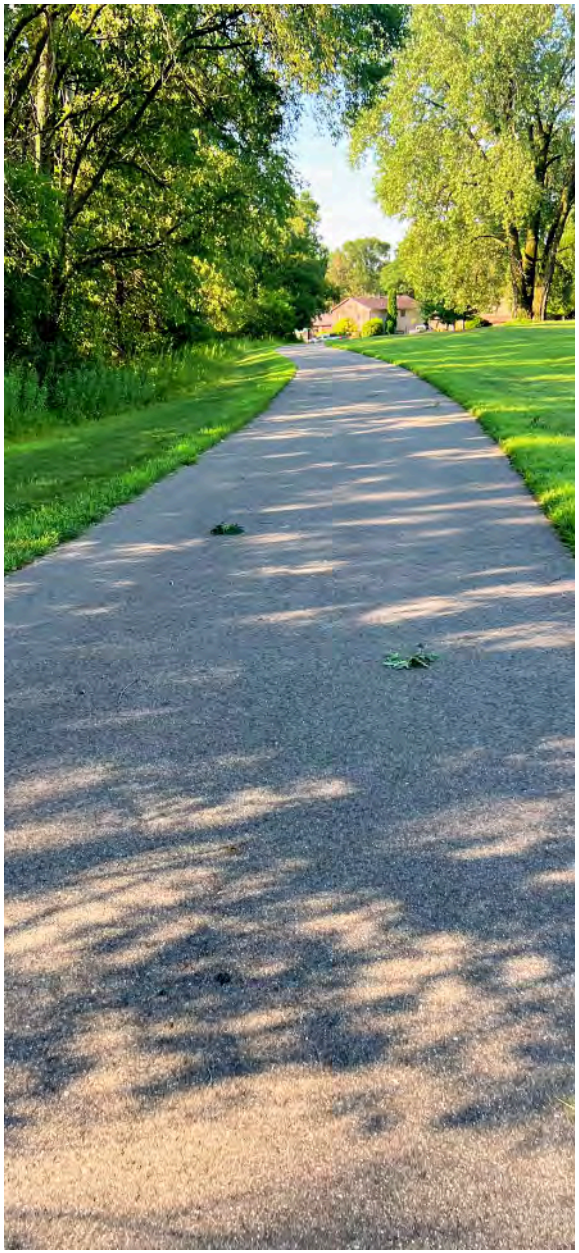
Situational Imperative

New Ulm stands at a moment of strategic opportunity.

- After decades of population stability, the City has begun to grow again. Between 2010 and 2020, the population increased from 13,522 to 14,120 — the first sustained rise in over 40 years.
- The past five years have brought fresh energy to longstanding conversations around housing, downtown development, and economic resilience.
- The EDA itself is evolving. 40% of EDA Commissioners have joined within the past three years (each has 6-year term), bringing new perspectives, energy, and expectations.
- As housing projects come online, downtown spaces become full, and there have been inflection points in the City's economy and demographics, it is a good time to review the EDA's programs.

A strategic plan will enable the EDA to clarify its purpose and priorities, ensuring that both Board and staff are pulling in the same direction.

Now is the time to chart a proactive course – taking advantage of positive momentum (in housing development, downtown revitalization, etc.) while addressing lingering challenges (like workforce shortages and childcare gaps) before they hinder growth. So, it's a plan to amplify what's working and anticipate what's next.



Project Background and Planning Process

The development of this strategic plan was a collaborative and data-driven effort initiated in May of 2025. The EDA engaged Better City, LLC – an economic development consulting firm – to facilitate the process and ensure an objective, thorough review.

What We Did

The planning process included four key phases:

- **Phase 1: Research and Analysis**
  - Compiled local economic and demographic data into an interactive dashboard for the EDA
  - Reviewed past plans and studies, including New Ulm's 2024 City Strategic Plan and 2024 Comprehensive Plan
  - Analyzed existing EDA programs and performance metrics
- **Phase 2: Community Engagement**
  - Surveyed EDA Commissioners on priorities and concerns
  - Conducted stakeholder interviews with elected officials, EDA Commissioners, City staff, Chamber of Commerce leadership, NUBRIC leadership
  - Facilitated focus groups with local entrepreneurs and industry representatives
- **Phase 3: Strategic Work Session**
  - Convened the EDA Board to review data on housing, workforce, and economic trends
  - Identified areas of consensus and concerns
  - Previewed potential recommendations and strategies
  - Discussed roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes
- **Phase 4: Plan Development and Refinement**
  - Drafted strategic priorities based on stakeholder input
  - Gathered feedback from key stakeholders on preliminary recommendations
  - Refined initiatives and implementation timelines
  - Developed metrics for measuring success

The result is a strategic plan that reflects both data-driven analysis and community wisdom — grounded in New Ulm's unique strengths while addressing real challenges. Most importantly, this plan represents genuine consensus among stakeholders about where the EDA should focus its energy and resources over the next 3-5 years.

Stakeholder Engagement Summary

The development of this strategic plan was informed by extensive engagement with New Ulm's economic development ecosystem. Between May and September 2025, Better City facilitated a stakeholder engagement process designed to capture diverse perspectives on New Ulm's economic opportunities and challenges.

Engagement Activities Included

- **EDA Commissioner Survey:** All commissioners completed a detailed survey assessing current programs, priorities, and areas for improvement, providing baseline data on internal perspectives.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** One-on-one conversations were conducted with elected officials, EDA commissioners, City staff, Chamber of Commerce leadership, and NUBRIC representatives to explore organizational effectiveness and strategic opportunities.
- **Focus Groups:** Local entrepreneurs and industry representatives participated in structured discussions about the business climate, operational challenges, and support needs.
- **EDA Work Session:** Commissioners and staff reviewed economic and demographic data, identified areas of consensus, discussed concerns, and previewed potential strategic recommendations.

Key Economic Development Topics Discussed

Throughout the engagement process, stakeholders consistently raised several interconnected economic development themes that informed this plan's priorities:

Housing as a Workforce Strategy

Housing emerged as the most frequently cited economic development challenge. Stakeholders emphasized that New Ulm's position as a regional employment hub, with over 5,700 workers commuting into the City daily, creates a unique opportunity: converting commuters into residents would simultaneously address workforce shortages, expand the tax base, and boost downtown spending. The conversation focused not just on housing quantity but on strategic infill development, upper-story downtown conversions (recognizing the significant cost barriers), and creating diverse housing types to serve different life stages and income levels.

Childcare as a Workforce Enabler

Childcare capacity was identified as a critical bottleneck limiting labor force participation. With New Ulm's exceptionally high labor force participation rate (84% versus a national average in the low 70s), stakeholders noted that removing childcare barriers could unlock additional workforce capacity. Discussions centered on the economics of childcare provision, the aging of in-home providers approaching retirement, and innovative models like the EDA's childcare pod project. Stakeholders also raised mental health services as an emerging workforce issue deserving attention.

Business Support Ecosystem and Organizational Roles

A recurring theme was the need for clearer delineation of roles among the EDA, Chamber of Commerce, and NUBRIC. While stakeholders praised each organization's work, they identified opportunities to create a more seamless "no wrong door" system for businesses seeking support. Discussions explored how to better coordinate business retention efforts, streamline access to financing and technical assistance, and ensure businesses understand the full range of available resources. The conversation also touched on supporting existing business expansion versus recruiting new businesses.

Downtown Development and Placemaking

Stakeholders celebrated recent downtown momentum while recognizing continued opportunities. Discussions focused on downtown as both the city's cultural heart and a regional economic center. Topics included maintaining the German heritage character, supporting upper-story residential conversions despite cost challenges, balancing event programming with business needs, and ensuring downtown vitality contributes to broader economic competitiveness. The feasibility of renovating historic second-floor spaces was a particular focus, with stakeholders noting the significant cost barriers related to code compliance, elevator installation, and sprinkler systems.

Strategic Focus and EDA Identity

Throughout engagement, stakeholders questioned whether the community had correctly identified its priorities or was simply repeating accepted wisdom. There was strong interest in data-driven analysis to validate assumptions about housing and childcare as top priorities. Commissioners expressed a desire for the EDA to be more proactive and strategic rather than reactive, with clearer identity and messaging about what the EDA does and how it differs from partner organizations. The conversation also explored how to balance the EDA's broad mandate across housing, business support, and infrastructure with the need for focused impact.

Regional Positioning and Industry Diversity

Stakeholders noted New Ulm's exceptional industry diversity -- spanning manufacturing, healthcare, retail, tourism, and services -- as a strength that differentiates it from other communities. The City's role as a regional hub drawing from surrounding smaller communities was seen as both an asset and a responsibility. Discussions touched on leveraging this position through workforce attraction, tourism development (including hotel capacity), and serving as an innovation center through NUBRIC's planned incubator.

Emerging Opportunities

Stakeholders identified several forward-looking opportunities including expanding the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center's role in workforce development, developing NUBRIC's technology hub and incubator space, exploring economic gardening approaches to support existing business growth, and addressing mental health infrastructure gaps that impact workforce participation.

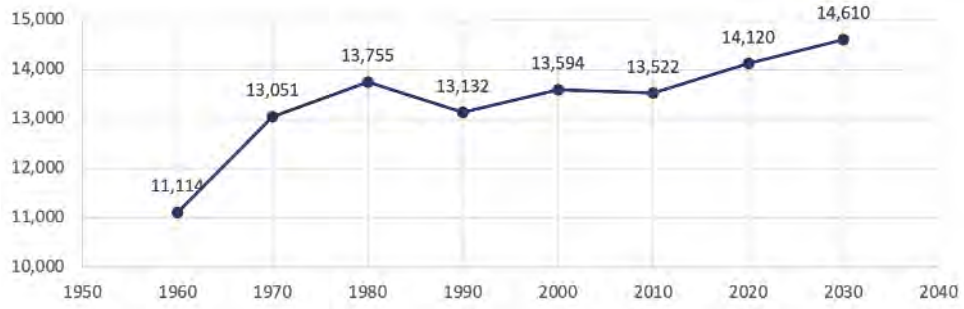
These insights from commissioners, staff, business owners, and community partners directly shaped the strategic priorities, action steps, and implementation approach outlined in this plan. The engagement process revealed both celebration of recent progress and recognition that New Ulm stands at a strategic inflection point requiring intentional focus to maintain momentum and address emerging challenges.

Summary of Economic Conditions

Overview

New Ulm today is a community of approximately 14,120 residents (2020 Census) with a stable economic base, a thriving vibrant downtown, diverse industries, and an exquisitely high quality of life. After decades of the population stabilizing around 13,500 residents, the City has experienced steady growth between 2010-2020, driven primarily by international in-migration. This growth stands in contrast to Brown County overall, which has been shrinking during the same period.

Figure 1: New Ulm Population Trends



*Source: U.S. Decennial Census and *MN State Demographic Center*

We are a regional employment hub. Our daytime population swells by over 5,700 because of workers commuting into the City. Unemployment has modulated in the 3–4% range in recent years and currently stands at 2.5- which signals a tight labor market. When job growth outpaces worker in-migration, the gating variables are housing fit and family logistics (childcare). Converting a portion of the people who already work here into residents is the cleanest path to stabilizing hiring, growing the tax base, and boosting downtown spending without relying solely on business attraction.

Population Dynamics and Demographics

New Ulm's recent population growth is particularly significant because it runs counter to broader regional trends. While surrounding areas lose residents, New Ulm is attracting newcomers—but sustaining this momentum requires intentional strategy around housing, quality of life, and economic opportunity.

Key Population Metrics:

- Population grew from 13,522 (2010) to 14,120 (2020)
  - First sustained increase in over 40 years
- Growth driven primarily by international in-migration
- Brown County overall is shrinking during same period
- Median age: 43.0 years (aging population typical of rural Minnesota)
- Continued growth depends on maintaining attractiveness to newcomers

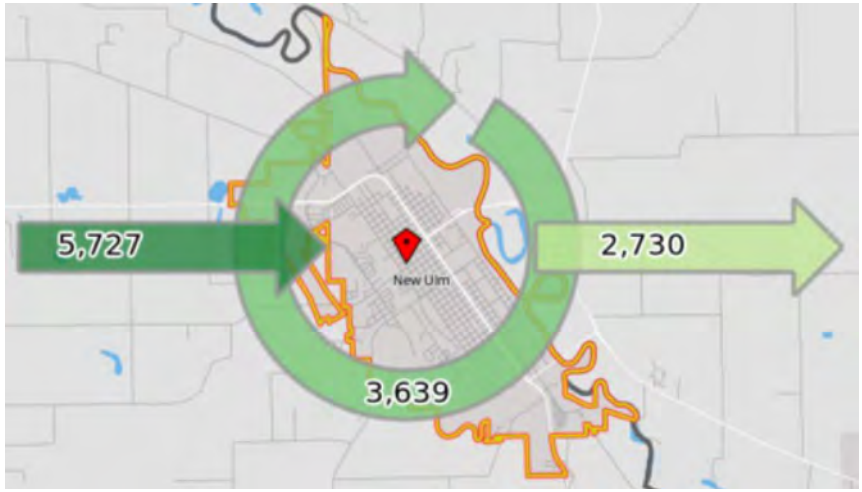
Labor Market: A Regional Employment Hub

New Ulm is an employment center for the region.

- There are 9,366 total jobs in the City
- 38.9% of jobs are filled by New Ulm residents (3,639 workers)
- 61.1% of jobs are filled by in-commuters (5,727 workers)
- 18.7% of our workforce commutes more than 50 miles to work in New Ulm
- Talent comes from a wide geographic area including Sleepy Eye (4.0% of workforce) and Mankato (2.0%)

What this means in practice: Commuter conversion is our lowest-friction growth lever. The people we want already clock in here. When we add the right rental townhomes, workforce apartments, and starter-ownership options near jobs and services, we turn today's day-time population into tomorrow's neighbors.

Figure 2: New Ulm Labor Migration Patterns



Source: OntheMap

Many New Ulm residents work outside the City:

- 42.9% of residents commute outside the city for work (2,730 workers)
- 10% commute more than 30 minutes
- Only 6.5% work from home
  - Is 13.8% nationally
  - Is correlated to educational attainment – 57th percentile in the US

The local workforce is operating at nearly full capacity:

- Labor force participation rate is at 84%
  - 62% for the US
  - 69% for Minnesota
- 2.5% unemployment
- Payroll per employee has risen more than 20% over the past 5 years

The number of workers who commute into the City every day represents a significant opportunity: many who work here don't live here yet, often due to housing availability or preferences. Converting even a portion of our existing workforce into residents through strategic housing development could deepen the tax base, stabilize hiring, and boost downtown spending.

Where Workers Live (2022)

	County	Share
New Ulm	**3,639**	**38.9%**
Sleepy Eye	**370**	**4.0%**
Mankato	**191**	**2.0%**
Courtland	**148**	**1.6%**
Lafayette	**108**	**1.2%**
Springfield	**102**	**1.1%**
North Mankato	**99**	**1.1%**
Hutchinson	**86**	**0.9%**
St. James	**79**	**0.8%**
Marshall	**77**	**0.8%**
All Other Locations	**4,467**	**47.7%**

Source: OntheMap

Economic Base & Industry Structure

We have a diversified and resilient base for a city our size. Major manufacturers (e.g., 3M, Kraft Heinz) anchor a strong goods-producing sector; New Ulm Medical Center and related providers form a robust healthcare hub; and a healthy small-business ecosystem spans retail, services, trades, and tourism. The presence of Martin Luther College adds education-sector depth and talent inflows.

Over the past 5 years, however, there has been a shift with large manufacturers declining in employment and small businesses and entrepreneurs growing. There is also a trend toward more professional employment.

Core Industries:

- Manufacturing ≈ 24.4% of employment (~2,289 jobs), with a location quotient of 2.2, indicating that this industry concentration is significantly above national averages
- Healthcare & social assistance: 1,433 jobs
- Retail trade: 1,242 jobs

GDP / Major Industry Plateau:

- Brown County Real GDP peaked in 2018
  - Has fallen 3.3% since then
- Manufacturing employment has declined by 6% (154 jobs) from 2020 to 2024
- 2.2% fall in employers in Brown County from 2018

Rise in Professional Sectors / Entrepreneurship:

- Growth in Professional Jobs 2020 to 2024
  - Public Administration – 12%
  - Management – 29%
  - Health Care – 4.6%
- Shift to Entrepreneurship (2018 to 2024)
  - 29% rise in business applications
  - 4% growth in non-employer jobs
  - $3.3M / year average loans to local small businesses

So what? The mix argues for a both/and strategy:

1. Protect and upgrade our industrial base through incumbent-worker upskilling (maintenance techs, quality leads, line supervisors), supplier development, and modern sites/utilities.
2. Layer in professional services (engineering, IT, finance, scientific/technical) that support local firms and lift average wages.

Rising wages alongside shrinking headcount suggests automation, process efficiency, and a shift toward contracting. That's not a death knell—it's a design prompt. We can help solos become employers by de-risking the first hire (shared HR/payroll, small equipment grants, child-care solutions for opening/closing hours) and anchoring them in visible corridors (storefront rehab, pop-ups, light-touch design assistance).

Housing Market

The housing situation presents both challenges and opportunities. Brown County has actually added housing units (11,493 in 2010 to 11,780 in 2020) while average household size declined slightly (2.25 to 2.20 people per home). Despite having more homes per capita than in 2010, we experience a housing shortage with only 1% vacancy -- well below the healthy market threshold.

Critical housing insights:

- 46% of homes were built before 1960, with 30% at least 85 years old
- Average list prices surged dramatically: $148,301 (2021) → $200,783 (2022) → $259,267 (2023) -- a 75% increase in two years
- Since early 2023, median list prices have been falling and days on market rising, suggesting a cooling market
- There are over 400 housing units under construction, in permitting, and planned.

The number of units under construction together with falling prices are a signal that supply is catching up with demand. Future housing efforts should be focused on achieving specific public benefits.

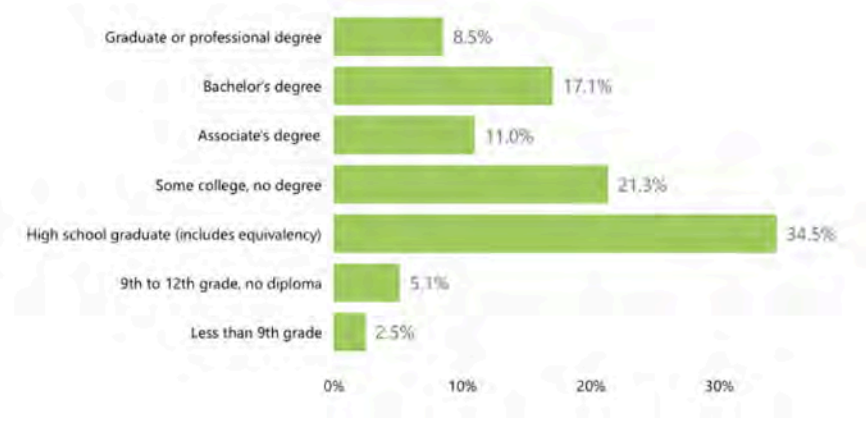
The net: We don't just need "more units," we need the right units—workforce rentals and starter ownership near jobs and services, plus senior-friendly homes that let older residents right-size and free up entry-level houses. As of 2025, several projects are in motion that together add hundreds of units. The strategic task is sustaining delivery and ensuring product-market fit.

Education and Skills

Educational metrics reveal both a challenge and an opportunity. While formal degree attainment trails state averages, solid median incomes suggest the local economy rewards skilled trades. The underutilized CTE Center represents a near-term opportunity to strengthen the workforce pipeline by training for jobs that already exist locally.

- 27% of residents hold bachelor's degree or higher (below state average)
- Educational attainment aligns with production-heavy economy
- Economy effectively rewards skilled trades and manufacturing expertise
- Stakeholder concerns about K-12 performance affecting talent retention

Figure 3: New Ulm Educational Attainment by Level



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS Data

Economic Development Implications

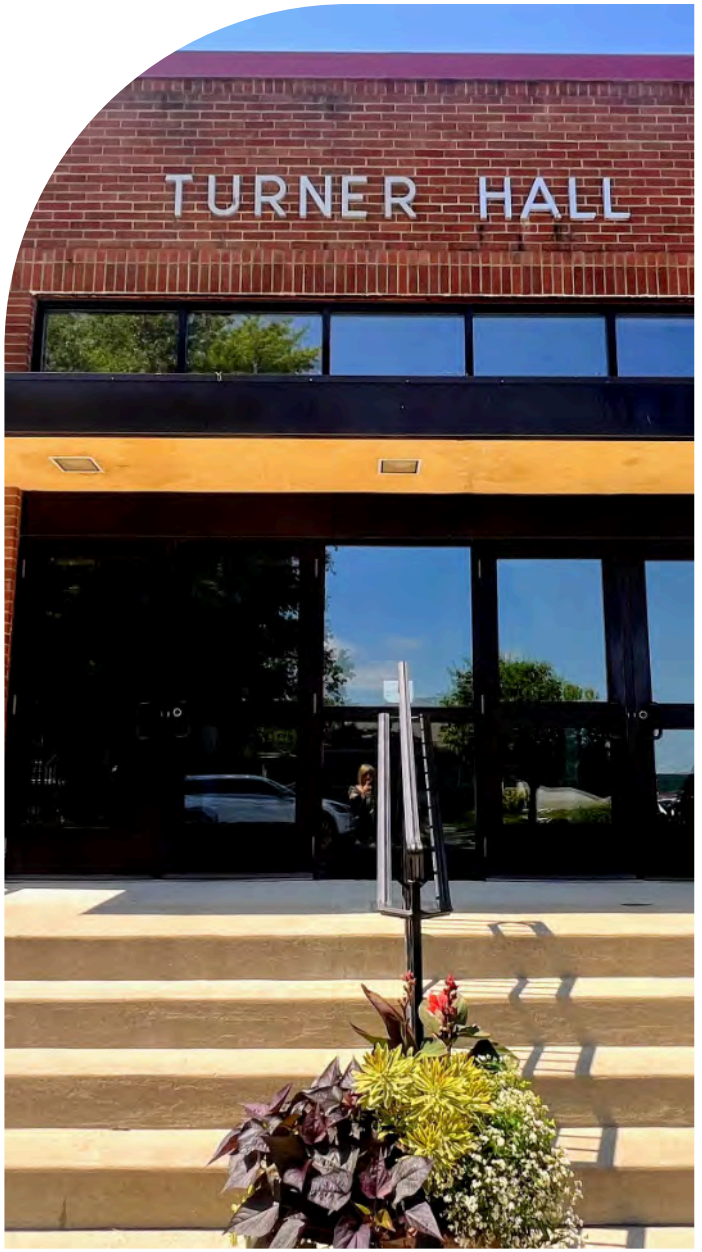
Several key patterns emerge from this data analysis:

1. **Housing conversion opportunity:** With 61% of our workforce commuting in, strategic housing development could capture existing workers as residents

2. **Business ecosystem evolution:** Post-pandemic trends show fewer traditional jobs despite rising wages, potentially due to automation or changing demand patterns

3. **Education pipeline:** Strengthening K-12 performance and CTE programming is crucial for long-term competitiveness

Understanding these dynamics informs our strategic priorities, particularly around housing density, business retention, and workforce development partnerships.



What Economic Development Means in New Ulm

In New Ulm, ***"economic development"*** isn't just about industrial parks or recruiting big companies – it's a holistic effort to improve the community's prosperity and quality of life.

- It means helping local businesses grow and stay, so that existing employers like our manufacturers and clinics remain strong.
- It means attracting new opportunities – whether a new employer that brings good jobs or a new boutique downtown that adds to our vibrancy.
- It also means building the foundations that a healthy economy rests on: adequate housing for workers, available childcare for working parents, infrastructure and sites ready for development, and a welcoming environment that can draw talent.

New Ulm's approach recognizes that housing, jobs, and childcare are "basic requirements" for economic success. Thus, the EDA's scope includes traditional business development as well as supporting initiatives in housing and workforce.

Economic development here also leverages what is unique about New Ulm – our cultural heritage, historic downtown, and community spirit – as assets to build upon. Our residents clearly see that things like downtown vibrancy, cultural events, and even recreational amenities are intertwined with economic progress.

In summary, economic development in New Ulm means growing our economy in a way that preserves what we cherish, addresses what we need, and creates opportunities for the next generation. It is about making New Ulm not only a place where businesses want to locate, but also where people want to live, work, and invest for the long term.

III. Comprehensive and Strategic Plans

- How This Plan Builds on the Comprehensive & Strategic Plans
- Key Themes from the Comprehensive & Strategic Plans

How This Plan Builds on the Comprehensive & Strategic Plans

This EDA Strategic Plan is aligned with New Ulm's existing planning frameworks – it builds on the 2024 City Strategic Plan and the 20-year Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2024. Those plans established broad community goals, and this EDA Strategic Plan serves as a focused blueprint for how the Economic Development Authority will contribute to achieving them. For example, the City's Strategic Plan identified Economic Resilience as one of five key themes, calling for a "collaborative approach to business retention and attraction, job creation, and workforce development". The EDA Board's own priorities echo this exactly – commissioners ranked housing, workforce supports (like childcare), and downtown vitality among their top priorities, mirroring the City's emphasis on those building blocks for growth. Likewise, the Comprehensive Plan's Economic Development chapter, informed by resident input, stresses downtown investment, diverse housing, and a balanced economy – the very same priorities the EDA has identified.

In places, this EDA Strategic Plan deliberately references actions in the City plans: for instance, the City's Strategic Plan's call to develop a business marketing plan is carried forward here as a near-term initiative for the EDA. By grounding this plan in established community goals, we ensure consistency and maximize impact.

This strategic plan is an extension of New Ulm's broader vision, zooming in on the EDA's specific role.

Key Themes from the Comprehensive & Strategic Plans

The key themes related to economic development voiced by the community in New Ulm's Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan are:

Housing Supply, Diversity, and Preservation

- Expand the quantity and mix of housing types across incomes and life stages (senior, workforce, multifamily, townhomes, accessory units) and preserve/rehab existing stock.
- Emphasize infill, upper-story housing, and context-sensitive design in established neighborhoods and downtown.

(Strategic Plan: B1.1, B1.2. Comp Plan: Housing Goal 1, Strategies 1.1–1.5; Goal 2, Strategies 2.1–2.7; ED Goal 1, Strategy 1.13.)

Workforce, Childcare, and Education Pipeline

- Tackle the daycare shortage to boost labor force participation; use incentives and partnerships to expand licensed childcare capacity.
- Build a stronger post-secondary and skills pipeline via the school district, CTE Center, and regional providers; align training to local employer needs.

(Strategic Plan: C5.1; C6.1; Theme C framing. Comp Plan: ED Goal 1, Strategies 1.6 and 1.15.)

Business Retention, Expansion, and Targeted Recruitment

- Stay in close contact with major employers; remove barriers and help existing firms expand.
- Maintain an up-to-date inventory of available commercial/industrial sites; pursue adaptive reuse and redevelopment of underutilized properties.
- Recruit complementary, export-oriented firms that diversify the base and grow net new income.

(Strategic Plan: C2.1–C2.2; C3.1–C3.2; C4.1–C4.2; A1.2. Comp Plan: ED Goal 1, Strategies 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.12; Goal 2, Strategy 2.1.)

Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and NUBRIC

- Advance a "One Voice, One Plan" approach with NUBRIC, Chamber of Commerce and regional partners.
- Stand up a technology hub/incubator with spaces for education, automation, commercialization, and startup support; expand access to training, services, and startup capital.

(Strategic Plan: C1.1–C1.2. Comp Plan: ED Goal 1, Strategies 1.2 and 1.8.)

Unified Marketing, Branding, and Partnerships

- Develop and refresh a coordinated economic development marketing plan and brand; tell a compelling story about strengths and opportunities.
- Clarify and honor lanes among the City/EDA, Chamber, and NUBRIC; collaborate to leverage resources and avoid duplication.

(Strategic Plan: A1.1–A1.4, A1.2 business marketing. Comp Plan: ED Goal 1, Strategies 1.1, 1.10–1.11, 1.5.)

Infrastructure and Access that Enable Growth

- Prioritize capital projects and active transportation links that support downtown, job centers, and housing.
- Keep fiscal stewardship front and center while aligning budgets and tools with strategic economic outcomes.

(Strategic Plan: B4.1–B4.5 Utilities; B5.1–B5.3 Active Transportation; B6.1–B6.2 Corridor Enhancements. Comp Plan: ED Opportunity 7, "Sites with existing infrastructure"; Intermodal hub.)

IV. Organizational Capacity and Governance

- Economic Ecosystem
- Recommended Training & Orientation for Board Members
- Tools to Support Decision-Making
- Strategic Thinking & Program Administration

Economic Ecosystem

The Economic Development Authority operates within a network of organizations contributing to New Ulm's economic success. In this ecosystem, each organization has distinct roles and expertise that, when coordinated effectively, create a comprehensive support system for businesses and economic growth of New Ulm.

New Ulm Economic Development Authority (EDA)

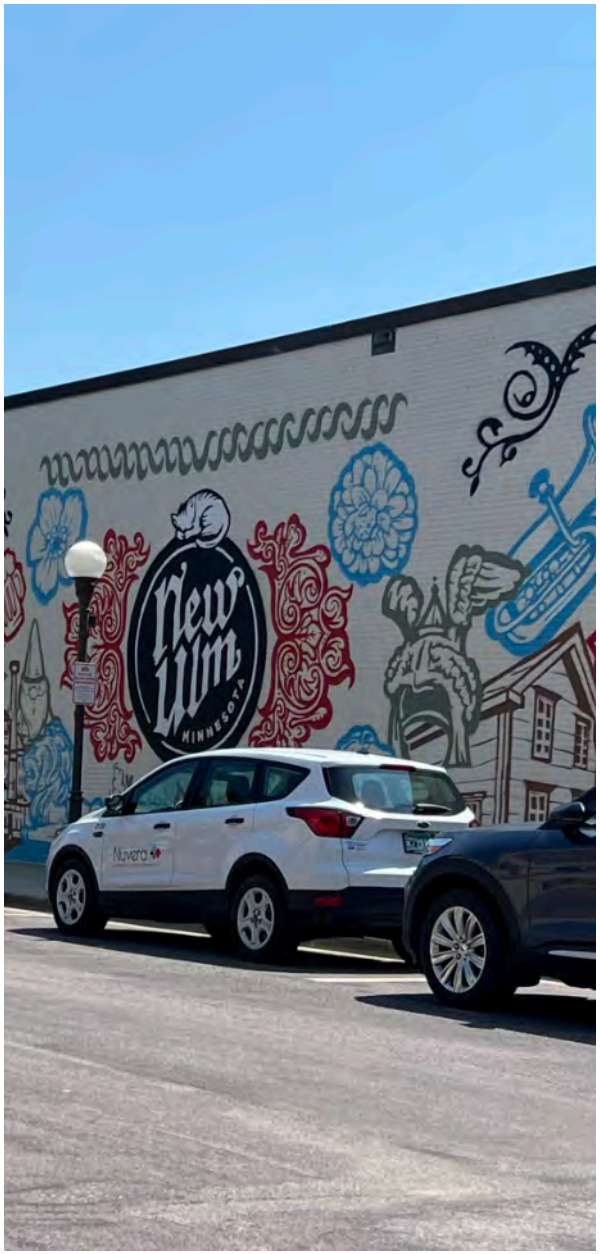
Role: Primary development arm of City government

We as the New Ulm Economic Development Authority are the City's dedicated economic development arm. As a public entity, we have access to financing tools, incentive programs, and policy influence that uniquely position it to guide the community's long-term economic prosperity. The EDA's mandate extends beyond projects; it is charged with ensuring that growth is sustainable, equitable, and aligned with the values of New Ulm residents.

Current Core Functions

At present, the EDA fulfills the following core functions:

- City's lead organization for economic development
- Administration of public financing tools such as loans, grants, and gap financing
- Lead business recruitment and retention efforts
- Coordinate with external agencies (DEED, Minnesota Housing, regional partners)



- Manages housing programs and initiatives that expand and preserve the community's housing supply
- Support small businesses and entrepreneurs through technical assistance and partnerships with resource providers
- Advisement of City leadership on economic policy and ensuring alignment with the Comprehensive and Strategic Plans

Future and Expanded Roles

As New Ulm looks ahead, the EDA is poised to expand and refine its role in several strategic areas:

- Will strengthen its role as a **convener**, clarifying responsibilities and coordinating with the Chamber, NUBRIC, and other partners.
- Will act as a **strategic investor** in catalytic projects, including housing density, downtown redevelopment, and workforce/childcare initiatives.
- Will add **data-driven metrics**, tracking and reporting key housing, workforce, and business indicators to guide decisions
- Will serve as a **community connector**, ensuring that business, workforce, and resident voices are integrated into policy and program development.

Unique Assets:

- Access to public financing mechanisms unavailable to private organizations
- Authority to negotiate development incentives and public-private partnerships
- Direct connection to city planning, engineering, and regulatory processes
- Responsibility to align projects with broader public interest and community goals

Organizational Roles

EDA Commissioners

- The New Ulm EDA operates under a Board of Commissioners (typically 7 members, including representatives from the City Council and community). The volunteer Board members are the strategists and stewards of the EDA.
- Their role is to set policy and priorities, approve budgets and program guidelines.
- Commissioners bring diverse perspectives – currently, backgrounds include non-profits, private business, and finance – which help ensure decisions reflect community values.
- Commissioners also serve as ambassadors of the EDA in the community. They engage with businesses and residents, listen to concerns, and share information about EDA resources.
- They are subject to open meeting laws and ethical requirements, ensuring transparency.
- The President of the EDA leads meetings and works closely with staff on agendas.
- The Board focuses on strategic leadership – charting direction and evaluating outcomes – rather than day-to-day management.

EDA Staff

- The City's professional staff carry out the EDA's work on a daily basis.
- New Ulm has a dedicated Economic Development Director (Heather Bregel) who serves as the point person for businesses and project developers.
- Staff responsibilities include:
  - Administering EDA programs (processing loan or grant applications, monitoring repayments, etc.)
  - Responding to business inquiries
  - Marketing sites/properties
  - Coordinating projects across city departments
  - Conduct research and due diligence to present options to the Board (for example, analyzing a potential incentive deal)
- In short, staff are the implementers and advisors. They bring professional expertise to inform the Board's decisions and then execute those decisions efficiently.
- Beyond the ED Director, the City Manager, Chris Dalton, also sits on the EDA Board and is the Executive Director.
- Other city staff play supporting roles: the Finance Director helps manage EDA funds, the City Attorney assists with legal agreements, the City Planner and Building Official assist with development review, etc.

It was frequently noted in stakeholder feedback that our ED staff goes "above and beyond" to help – they have a reputation of being business-friendly and solution-oriented, which is a huge asset.

New Ulm Area Chamber of Commerce

Role: Represents and supports local businesses. Supports downtown through events and marketing.

Mission: "To encourage economic growth in our community by supporting our members through business development, networking, education, advocacy and access to resources."

Core Functions:

- Tourism promotion and marketing (operates as Convention & Visitors Bureau)
- Event coordination and management (festivals, downtown events, and networking events)
- Business advocacy and representation of member interests
- Member networking and professional development programs
- Visitor services and travel information center operations

Unique Assets:

- Deep relationships with local business community through membership model
- Expertise in tourism marketing and event management
- Established brand recognition for community promotion
- Direct connection to visitor services and hospitality sector

New Ulm Business Resource & Innovation Center (NUBRIC)

Role: Focuses on workforce and entrepreneurial development and large business recruitment. Working on developing an incubator.

Mission: "To promote the City and facilitate economic growth by providing resources to attract and stimulate business expansion."

Core Functions:

- Startup support and entrepreneurship development
- Business consulting and fractional executive leadership services
- Workforce development initiatives (including CTE Center leadership)
- Innovation and technology-focused economic development
- Strategic collaboration with universities and industry partners

Unique Assets:

- Specialized expertise in "fractional executive leadership consulting that assists companies with new product ideation and development, sales, marketing, and distribution strategies"
- Focus on innovation-driven economic development
- Ability to pursue grant opportunities as nonprofit organization
- Active development of business incubation projects

City Government

Role: Policy and infrastructure support

Core Functions:

- Set overall policy environment through City Council actions
- Provide infrastructure support (utilities, roads, public safety)
- Land use planning and development review
- Capital investment in community assets
- Administrative coordination across departments

How the Partnership Works

Coordinated Approach:

- Initial Business Contact: EDA typically serves as first point of contact for major business recruitment or expansion projects
- Resource Assembly: Chamber provides networking and advocacy; NUBRIC offers specialized consulting; EDA packages financial incentives
- Project Implementation: City provides regulatory support; all partners coordinate marketing and communication

Information Sharing:

- Monthly Coordination Meeting
- Informal communication between organization leaders as issues arise or new information emerges
- Cross-referral system for businesses seeking different types of assistance
- Joint participation in major projects requiring multiple expertise areas

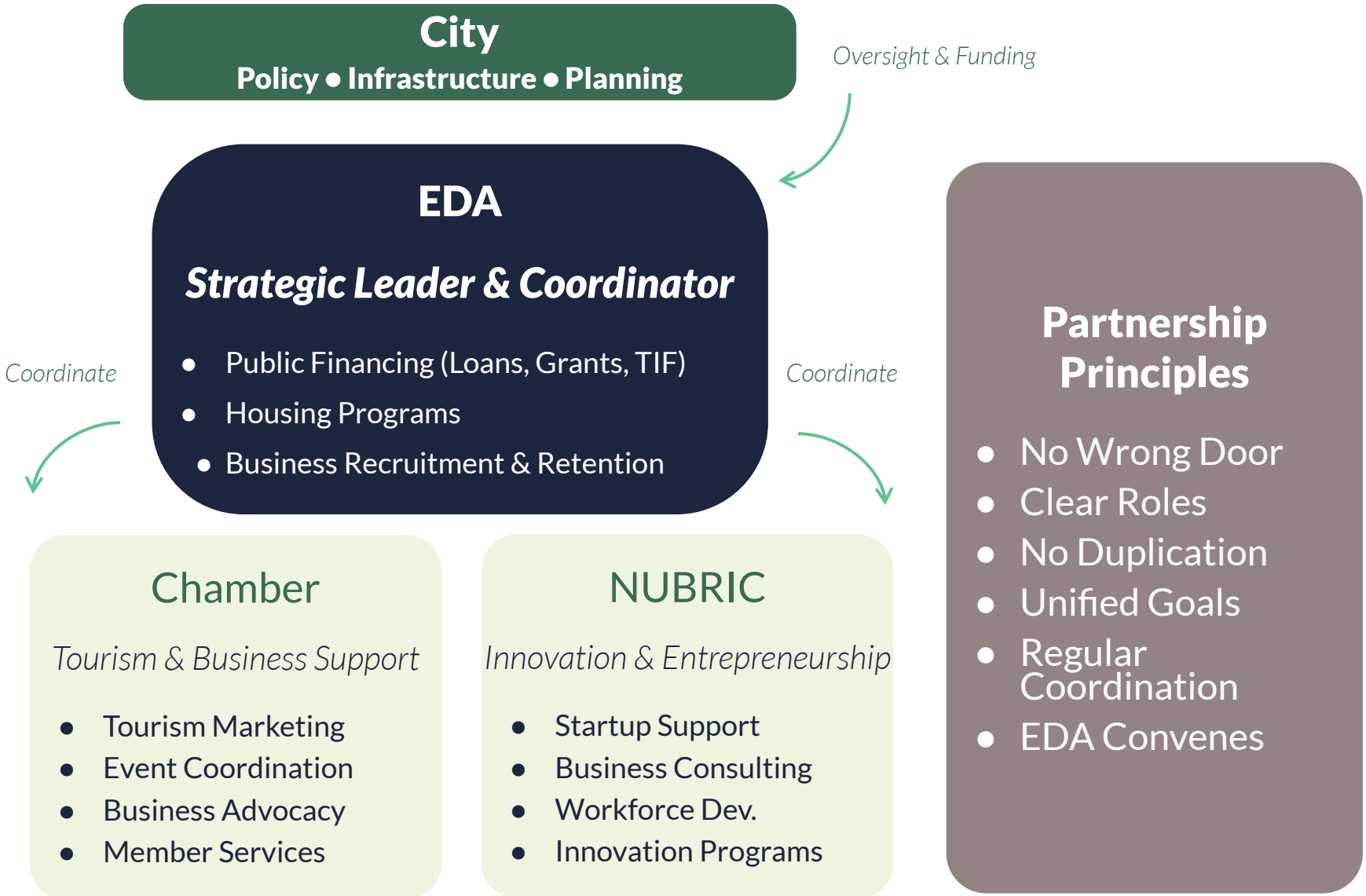
Complementary Strengths:

- EDA focuses on financing, major projects, policy
- Chamber excels networking, tourism, member services
- NUBRIC specializes in innovation and startup development, and workforce development
- Each avoids duplicating others' core competencies while supporting shared goals

Beyond the local organizations, the EDA also partners with Brown County (especially on housing and infrastructure efforts that may cross City limits), regional groups like the Region 9 Development Commission, and state agencies (DEED, Minnesota Housing) to leverage their additional resources.

In summary, the EDA's role is to be the strategic driver and coordinator of New Ulm's economic development: leading on key projects, managing local incentive programs, and convening partners to align efforts. We often act as the "glue" that holds multi-faceted economic initiatives together. By playing to each organization's strengths and sharing information, New Ulm's economic ecosystem can function as a cohesive unit – and the EDA will be at the center, driving the agenda forward.

Partnership Philosophy



Recommended Training & Orientation for Board Members

Given that EDA Commissioners come from various walks of life, a structured orientation and ongoing training program help them to build the capacity:

- **Formal Orientation Packet (One-Pager & Handbook):** New commissioners should receive an orientation one-pager summarizing the EDA's mission, current programs, key contacts, and meeting procedures.

- **ED 101 Training:** Within the first few months of on-boarding, new commissioners (and existing ones as a refresher) should undergo an "Economic Development 101" training. This could be a workshop led by the EDA Director or a state EDA specialist. Importantly, our survey of commissioners showed strong interest in training on economic development finance basics (4 out of 5 commissioners requested a "Finance 101" on tools like loans). Many also wanted to learn about incentive policy best practices and how to forge strategic partnerships. These topics can be covered in training sessions.

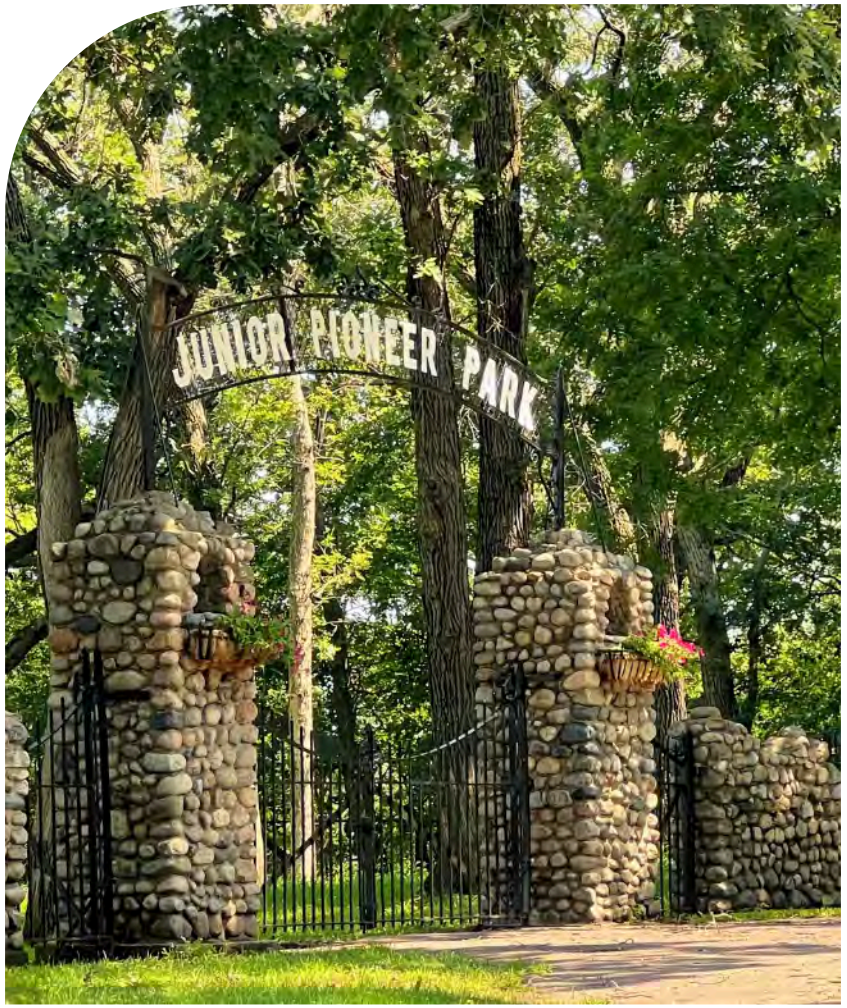
- **Training and Conferences:** We encourage new commissioners to be provided with opportunities to receive specific training including attending economic development conferences or training courses (such as the Minnesota Basic Economic Development Course or conferences by the Economic Development Association of Minnesota). Exposure to the wider ED community can help Board members pick up new ideas and understand their role in context.

Tools to Support Decision-Making

To elevate the EDA's strategic capabilities, we will implement several tools and processes that provide better information for decisions:

- **Data Dashboards and Metrics Tracking:** As part of this plan, we define specific metrics for success (see Section VI). The EDA will develop a dashboard of key economic indicators – updated annually – to track progress. This will include metrics like housing units under construction, unemployment rate, childcare slots, business openings/closures, etc. Having these metrics at our fingertips will ground Board discussions in data, ensuring decisions respond to trends. Additionally, program-specific metrics (number of loans made, vacancy rates downtown, etc.) will be reported to the Board regularly, so we can quickly spot what's working or not.
- **Standardized Project Evaluation Criteria:** When faced with decisions such as whether to approve a business incentive or which projects to fund if resources are limited, the EDA will use clear criteria aligned with our strategic priorities. For instance, we will evaluate business subsidy requests against criteria like: number of primary jobs created, wage levels, alignment with target industries, and impact on tax base. We already begun moving in this direction – our Small Business Incentive Grant program now uses a priority scoring system (assigning points to applicants who meet certain goals). In 2025, 6 of 7 applicants met the Board's priority criteria, indicating the criteria are meaningful. We will refine such scoring systems for all relevant programs, making the decision process more objective. Essentially, the Board should be able to answer, "why are we funding this?" with confidence, tying it back to plan objectives.

- **Enhanced Business Retention Intelligence:** To systematically track local businesses' health and needs, the EDA will implement a BRE visitation program and database. This tool involves scheduling regular check-ins with major employers and a selection of small businesses each year, using a standard survey to gather info on their outlook, expansion or contraction plans, workforce issues, etc. The results will be compiled using Customer Relationship Management software or even a shared Google sheet so we can analyze patterns and quickly respond to red flags (like if several manufacturers cite a need for welders, we coordinate a solution). The Chamber and NUBRIC can be involved to avoid duplication (e.g., splitting up the list of businesses to visit). This systematic approach is a tool that helps ensure that businesses don't "fall through the cracks" without the EDA knowing if they are at risk of closing or moving.
- **Decision Calendars and Checklists:** Internally, the EDA will create decision support tools such as checklists for common actions (for example, a checklist for reviewing a potential TIF project might include: consult City finance, project meets statutory "but-for" test, alignment with comp plan land use, etc.). Also, an annual decision calendar can help the Board allocate time for strategic versus operational matters. For example, every August might be designated for reviewing progress on strategic plan initiatives; year-end for program budget allocations (with staff supplying performance data ahead of that meeting). These tools impose a structure that keeps us strategy-focused and prepared.



By adopting these decision-support tools, the EDA can make choices that are data-informed, transparent, and aligned with our goals. It moves us away from ad hoc decision-making to a more systematic, strategic process.

2026 Program Review Calendar

2026 will serve as a ***status quo year***—no new projects or program changes will be implemented during this period. The ***current budget should be approved as-is***, ensuring operational stability, while all program updates and project adjustments will begin implementation in 2027.

Month	Work Session Focus	Meeting Action
January		Approve planned 2026 Budget and confirm that all reviewed and adopted program changes will take effect in 2027
February	Review Commercial Property Rehab Loan and Small Business Loan programs	
March		Adopt changes to Commercial Property Rehab Loan and Small Business Loan programs
April	Review Small Business Grant program	
May		Adopt changes to Small Business Grant program
June	Review Get It Ready Rehab Loan program	
July		Adopt changes to Get It Ready Rehab Loan program
August	Review Homebuyer Assistance Loan program	
September		Adopt changes to Homebuyer Assistance Loan program
October	Review Multifamily Rental Rehab Loan program	
November		Adopt changes to Multifamily Rental Rehab Loan program
December	Evaluate the need to develop any new programs or incentives	

Strategic Thinking & Program Administration

Board time centers on strategy and outcomes while routine program actions are fulfilled by staff under clear delegation. This aligns agendas with long-term priorities, accelerates decisions, and keeps discussions at the level where the Board adds the most value. Staff has stewardship over administering the programs.

Key Principles:

- The Board will delegate administrative functions to staff where possible. This frees up Board meetings for big-picture discussions (like: 'Is a program meeting its objectives?' 'Do we need to pivot focus?'). It also speeds up service to applicants. Policy and programmatic changes should be considered and implemented by the Board.
- Board meetings will include a "strategy spotlight" agenda item. At least every quarter, an entire meeting (or a significant portion) will be devoted to a strategic topic – e.g., "Workforce Attraction Strategy" or "Downtown Housing". This enables the Board to look outward and forward. Commissioners expressed a strong desire to have a "good direction that we can then base all our decisions on" – spending time on strategic planning (even after this document is published) will keep that direction fresh and clear.
- The Board will use the Strategic Plan as a guidepost for agendas. Each initiative and goal in this plan will be assigned a timeline (see Section xxx). We will map out over the next 1–2 years when certain strategic decisions need to be made or initiatives kicked off. Agendas will then be crafted to ensure those discussions happen. For instance, if establishing a new marketing plan is slated for Q2 next year, we'll schedule meeting time then

to review a draft. This proactive calendaring prevents the Board from getting bogged down only in reactive items.

- Meanwhile, program administration is routine and efficient. Staff will generate concise reports on program usage and outcomes (as they did in January 2025 when reviewing each program's stats). The Board's role is to periodically refine programs to ensure alignment with goals. For example, after a strategic discussion, the Board might set a new policy that the Small Business Grant should target only businesses in certain needed sectors – staff can then execute that without further Board input on each grant.

In summary, the EDA Board is a governing board. It will provide oversight on finances and compliance, but the focus will be on vision, policy, and partnership – the strategic levers – while trusting staff with execution. This elevates the EDA's effectiveness.

V. EDA Vision, Mission, and Values

- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement
- Core Values

Vision & Mission Statements

Vision Statement

Be recognized as the trusted partner and leader in shaping a vibrant, resilient, and competitive community for generations to come. As an organization, we drive innovation, attract investment, and create lasting opportunities for both residents and businesses.

The EDA shares the community's aspiration to be "a growing resilient economy that fosters innovation and accountability rooted in German heritage", as articulated in the City's vision.

Mission Statement

Focus on driving sustainable growth through collaboration, stewardship, and innovation. We ensure New Ulm remains a vibrant community with a strong economy and a high quality of life.

The EDA exists to drive economic development that benefits New Ulm's residents and businesses. This mission will guide all EDA actions and decisions. Importantly, it balances multiple roles: the EDA exists to assist existing businesses (through resources like loans, grants, and technical help), attract and grow new businesses (through marketing, site development, and incentives), address foundational workforce needs like housing and childcare that underpin economic health, and coordinate with partners to achieve these goals. The mission underscores that the EDA is not just about quick wins or isolated projects – it's about sustained improvements that increase jobs, tax base, and quality of life in New Ulm.

Core Values

The EDA will uphold a set of core values in executing this plan. These values define how we work and interact with the public and partners:

- **Collaboration & Partnership:** We believe economic development is a team sport. The EDA values strong collaboration with City departments, the Chamber of Commerce, NUBRIC, educational institutions, and regional/ state agencies. We actively share information and coordinate efforts, recognizing, as one commissioner observed, that we can *"really leverage ourselves if we work together…rather than…protecting our unique positions"*.
- **Stewardship & Strategic Impact:** We prioritize initiatives that deliver measurable benefits to the community. The EDA is committed to being strategic – focusing on high-impact projects rather than spreading resources thin. This means using data and clear criteria when making decisions. As one commissioner put it, decisions will be driven by asking, *"Is this going to achieve what we want to achieve?"*. We value accountability for results.
- **Innovation & Entrepreneurship:** We champion innovation in economic development. The EDA encourages creative ideas – from new business startups to inventive solutions for housing and childcare. We strive to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit in New Ulm by reducing barriers for startups and embracing new industries or technologies. Internally, we also seek innovative approaches to our programs (for example, re-imagining incentive programs to better meet current needs).
- **Community Identity & Heritage:** We are committed to strengthening New Ulm's historic, cultural, and economic character as a foundation for growth. The EDA values the City's unique German heritage, vibrant downtown, and strong sense of place - recognizing these as assets that attract visitors, businesses, and new residents. Our development efforts seek to honor these traditions while creating opportunities for the next generation.

These core values will be reflected in everything from how meetings are run to how we design programs. They ensure the way we implement this plan is as thoughtful as the content of the plan itself.

VI. Strategic Priorities (3-5 Years)

- Housing Density
- EDA Entity and Branding
- Business Retention & Ecosystem Support
- Tourism and Hotel Development (Tourism 2030 Strategy)
- Coordination Between Economic Partners

1. Housing Density

Objective

Ensure an adequate supply of diverse housing at varying densities to meet New Ulm's projected demand through 2030, supporting growth and workforce needs.

Current Situation

- The New Ulm EDA commissioned a 2022 Housing Study (by Maxfield Research) which found the City needs an estimated 633 new housing units by 2030 across various types.
- ~ 420 new housing units are already under construction or in the pipeline.

Project / Type	Units	Category
Highland Apartments	148	Market-rate apartments
River Haven (all unit types)	118	Mixed housing
Tiny Homes (workforce)	15	Workforce tiny homes
Land Haven Development	20	Barndominium-style residential units
George's Ballroom	~80	Market-rate apartments, downtown mixed-use
Garden Terrace Expansion	39	Market-rate rentals
Subtotal	420	-

- We currently offer residential rehabilitation loans/grants to preserve older housing stock and have leveraged state programs like Minnesota's Workforce Housing Development grants.
- The Comp Plan calls to "encourage…low to medium density housing that meets the needs of current and new residents" – this means promoting townhomes, cottages, mixed-use buildings, etc., not just single-family homes.

Why it matters

Attainable housing for young people, families, and seniors is "a critical concern and the top priority"[1] for New Ulm's future.

Sufficient housing options (from single-family homes to apartments) are essential to attract new residents and retain local employees, as identified by the 2022 Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis.

Housing availability directly impacts quality of life and economic development, since new businesses and talent require ample, affordable homes.

[1] New Ulm Strategic Plan, Engagement Summary, p.1

Current EDA Housing Programs - Performance and Strategic Alignment

1. Homebuyer Assistance Loan Program

Current Program:

- 0% interest, deferred-payment loans up to $10,000 for first-time homebuyers
  - Addresses need for young families to afford homes, serves moderate-income first-timer buyers, works by reducing upfront cost.

Performance up to date:

- 67 applications received
- 44 loans funded/approved (65% approval rate)
- 35 loans currently active
- $318,285 total capital deployed
- $254,317 in active outstanding loans

- **August 2026:** Review Homebuyer Assistance Loan program
- **September 2026:** Adopt changes to Homebuyer Assistance Loan program

Strategic Assessment - Critical Issues:

- **Equity concerns:** First-come, first-served basis without considering relative need, income levels, or community benefit priorities (such as giving preference to first responders and teachers)
- **Economic logic problem:** Subsidizing demand when supply shortage is the core issue likely worsens price pressures and competition
- **Outdated assistance level:** $10,000 hasn't increased despite 75% housing price surge since 2021
- Missing targeting: No preference for essential workers or income limits to focus assistance where needed most

Strategic Alignment:

- **MODERATE** - Supports workforce attraction but may exacerbate underlying supply problem.

2. "Get It Ready" Single-Family Rehab Loan Program

Current Program:

- Low-interest loans (2% APR) up to $40,000 for homeowners making improvements, with deferred payments for seniors 65+
    - Addresses need to maintain older homes and transition them to new owners, serves current homeowners (often seniors) and indirectly young buyers who get a move-in-ready house, works by providing affordable financing and deferring costs.

Performance up to date:

- 19 applications received
- 16 loans funded/approved (84% approval rate)
- 13 loans currently active
- $395,665 total capital deployed
- $333,937 in active outstanding loans
- Average loan size: ~$24,730

- **June 2026:** Review Get It Ready Rehab Loan program
- **July 2026:** Adopt changes to Get It Ready Rehab Loan program

Strategic Assessment - Critical Issues:

- **Strengths:** Preserves aging housing stock (46% of homes pre-1960), helps senior transition, creates housing turnover
- **Issues:** About half of current borrowers are 65+ deferring payments indefinitely, potentially defeating "turnover" purpose
- **Need:** Tighter guidelines requiring listing within reasonable timeframe to ensure housing transitions to families

Strategic Alignment:

- **HIGH -** Directly addresses aging housing stock preservation and creates housing availability through turnover

3. Multi-Family Rehab Loan Program

Current Program:

- Low-interest loans (2% APR) up to $50,000 for landlords to improve rental properties and multi-family housing units
    - Addresses need for quality rental units (many built mid-20th century needing updates), serves landlords (private, maybe some smaller ones), works via low-cost capital for improvements.

Performance up to date:

- 16 applications received
- 10 loans funded/approved (63% approval rate)
- 9 loans currently active
- $471,715 total capital deployed
- $334,682 in active outstanding loans
- Average loan size: ~$47,172

- **October 2026:** Review Multifamily Rental Rehab Loan program
- **November 2026:** Adopt changes to Multifamily Rental Rehab Loan program

Strategic Assessment - Critical Issues:

- **Strengths:** Addresses need for quality rental units, supports workforce housing for in-commuters
- **Issues:** Low awareness among landlords, may need better marketing or adjusted terms to compete with private financing
- **Opportunity:** With 61% workforce commuting in, improved rental stock could capture workers as New Ulm residents
- **Missing element:** No requirements linking improvements to workforce housing goals or rent stabilization

Strategic Alignment:

- **HIGH -** Critical for workforce housing conversion, but needs enhanced promotion and strategic targeting

Strategic Initiatives and Actions

1.Infill & Density Incentive Program: Promote Higher-Density and Downtown Housing

Action steps:

- Implement incentives for projects that add housing in the downtown core or other targeted areas.
- Encourage redevelopment of under-utilized sites into multi-family housing. This aligns with the Comp Plan strategy to locate high-density housing where infrastructure supports it.
- Under-utilized sites could include retail centers with excess parking and surplus government property

Incentive options:

- Waive or defer building permit, plan review, water/sewer connection, and park dedication fees for projects that add net new units in the downtown core or priority corridors.
- Reimburse a portion of sprinklers, egress, fire separation, accessibility upgrades, and structural improvements for conversions of vacant upper floors to housing.

Expected Impact:

- Increased residential density downtown (upper-floor lofts, mixed-use buildings) and along transit corridors, boosting foot traffic for businesses and providing options for young professionals and retirees.

Responsible Parties	City Planning & EDA (jointly develop incentive policy), Chamber of Commerce (identify sites), developers.
Timing	Short-Term (incentive policy in 2 year) and ongoing implementation.
Metrics	Number of new housing units created in downtown or high-density zones; utilization rate of incentives (e.g. count of projects using them); downtown vacancy rates and population changes.

2. Updated Homebuyer Program: Expand Pathways to Ownership for Local Workforce and New Residents

Action steps:

- Restructure current homebuyer assistance with income targeting (80-120% AMI), prioritization of essential workers, and need-based criteria.
- Increase assistance amount to reflect current market conditions.

Expected Impact:

- More equitable assistance distribution while reducing demand-side pressure on limited housing stock

Responsible Parties	EDA
Timing	Short-Term (program design in one year) and ongoing implementation.
Metrics	Assistance reaching target populations; reduction in competition effects on housing prices

3. Housing Rehabilitation & Preservation 2.0: Expand Rehab Programs for Existing Homes

Action steps:

- Continue "Get It Ready" program.
- Refine program to fund only loans for energy-efficiency and structural upgrades.

Expected Impact:

- Maintain or improve quality of housing in older neighborhoods (73.9% of New Ulm's housing is single-family and 46% were built before 1960)
- Prevention of blight and dilapidation while addressing structural needs and long-term affordability
- Not to be used for aesthetics or tastes

Responsible Parties	EDA (program administration), Partners: local lenders and nonprofits (leverage matching funds or expertise).
Timing	Ongoing (already in place; expand funding within 0–2 years).
Metrics	Number of homes rehabbed per year (aim to increase this annually), dollars invested in rehab, and improvement in the city's housing condition index (e.g. fewer code violations or dilapidated units).

4. Housing Needs Monitoring: Update & Track Housing Analysis Regularly

Action steps:

- Commit to reviewing and updating the housing needs analysis at least every 5 years
- Track key indicators (housing permits issued, vacancy rates, home prices, etc.)
- Report to the EDA Board and City Council annually.

Expected Impact:

- Data-driven decision making that allows the EDA to pivot strategies as needed (for example, if the vacancy rate drops below healthy levels or a certain housing type shortage is identified, the EDA can respond quickly).

Responsible Parties	EDA, City Planning (data support).
Timing	Mid-Term (next study by ~2027) with ongoing annual monitoring.
Metrics	Completion of housing studies on schedule; metrics from the study such as vacancy rate (target ~5% rental vacancy for healthy market), housing cost trends relative to income, and progress toward the 2030-unit production target.

2. EDA Identity and Branding

Objective

Develop a strong and unified EDA brand identity that celebrates New Ulm's unique heritage while projecting a welcoming, forward-looking image for economic development efforts. This brand will be consistently used across EDA communications and will complement the broader city branding initiatives.

Current Situation

- The City has recognized the need for a formal branding strategy – New Ulm's Strategic Plan (2024) includes a KPI for "completion and implementation of a brand strategy".
  - Budget has been allocated to hire a branding consultant and gather input on what the New Ulm brand should convey.
- Currently the City and EDA might use different slogans or visuals, leading to a fragmented identity.
- The gap is the absence of a unified EDA message and look that complements the broader City brand that will be created.

Why it matters

A distinct EDA identity helps position the Economic Development Authority as a recognizable partner for businesses and developers. While the EDA is part of the city, having a separate but aligned brand identity ensures that when communications come from the EDA, stakeholders recognize it as the dedicated economic development arm. This supports business recruitment, resident attraction, and tourism efforts by providing clear, consistent messaging about New Ulm's economic opportunities and advantages.

Strategic Initiatives and Actions

1. EDA Brand Development: Create Distinct EDA Identity Under City Brand Umbrella

Action steps:

- Once the City's overall brand is established, develop a complementary EDA brand identity, including messaging guidelines, and visual elements.
- Ensure EDA branding aligns with and supports the broader City brand while maintaining distinct recognition for economic development communications.
- Create branded materials for business recruitment, including advertisements, brochures, and digital content.

Expected Impact:

- Clear recognition of the EDA as New Ulm's economic development leader, improved professional appearance in business communications, and stronger brand consistency across economic development efforts.

Responsible Parties	EDA (lead brand development), City Administration (coordinate with overall city branding), Chamber and NUBRIC (align tourism and business materials).
Timing	Short-Term (EDA brand development within 12-18 months after city brand completion).
Metrics	Completion of EDA brand guidelines; number of materials updated with new branding; improved recognition in business community surveys.

2. Coordinated Economic Development Marketing: Align Partners Under Consistent Brand Message

Action steps:

- Develop coordinated marketing materials for economic development that ensure the EDA, Chamber, and NUBRIC present consistent messaging about New Ulm's advantages.
- Create joint promotional campaigns that leverage each organization's strengths while maintaining brand consistency.

Expected Impact:

- Stronger, unified message about New Ulm's economic opportunities.

Responsible Parties	EDA - marketing efforts, Chamber - marketing staff, NUBRIC, future PIO/Communications Officer
Timing	Ongoing collaboration with formal coordination within 2 years.
Metrics	Joint campaigns executed (at least 2 multi-organization campaigns per year); increased website traffic and business inquiries.

3. Business Retention & Ecosystem Support

Objective

Proactively retain and grow New Ulm's existing businesses by creating a formal Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program grounded in "economic gardening" principles. This means focusing on nurturing homegrown companies – providing them with resources, information, and an environment to expand – rather than relying solely on recruiting outside firms.

Why it matters

Nationally, the majority of new jobs come from the expansion of existing businesses. New Ulm has a number of key employers (e.g., 3M, Kraft, AMPI, the medical center, etc.) as well as a vibrant small-business community (retail shops, restaurants, service providers). If one major employer were to leave or significantly cut back, it would be a big blow – conversely, if each adds a few jobs or a new product line, it cumulatively results in significant growth. Thus, retention is crucial.

An economic gardening approach recognizes that local small-to-mid size companies (especially those in manufacturing, technology, and scalable services) can be helped to grow their workforces with directed support. By helping local entrepreneurs solve problems and find new markets, the EDA can foster job creation organically.

Additionally, a strong BR&E program builds goodwill – businesses feel valued and are less likely to leave. The Strategic Plan emphasizes a "collaborative approach to business retention and attraction, job creation, and workforce development", noting that housing and childcare must be in place too (pointing to the integrated nature of retention). Keeping established employers thriving is crucial; losing any significant employer or stagnating growth would hurt the tax base and reduce opportunities for residents.

Current Situation

- We currently conduct business visits with major employers annually, and EDA Director has built a database of local businesses during her first year.
- We have established relationships with top employers through regular check-ins, and we reach out to new businesses to add them to our system.
- The new Strategic Plan calls to "maintain an active business retention program and provide assistance necessary for a positive local business climate", in partnership with Chamber and NUBRIC.
    - Coordinating outreach and prioritizing visits with the Chamber and NUBRIC will yield greater results. Currently, NUBRIC is focusing on startups and innovation – through its Project SPARK incubator space and even an angel investment fund– which complements retention by seeding new firms.
- Developing a systematic approach for repeat visits to smaller businesses will ensure we return to businesses every couple of years with structured follow-up.

Current EDA Business Programs - Performance and Strategic Alignment

1. Small Business Incentive Grant Program

Current Program:

- Grants up to $10,000 (recently $7,500) to help with startup costs during business's first year
  - Lowers the barriers to entry for startups (first-year costs), serves new small business owners and local entrepreneurs, works as a reimbursement safety net.

Performance up to date:

- 71 applications received
- 48 grants funded/approved (68% approval rate)
- $450,000 total capital distributed
- Average grant size: ~$9,375

- **April 2026:** Review Small Business Incentive Grant program
- **May 2026:** Adopt changes to Small Business Incentive Grant program

Strategic Assessment - Critical Issues:

- **Effectiveness questions:** Unclear whether grants increase the number of sustainable businesses or subsidize ventures that would happen anyway
- **Economic impact concerns:** Risk of subsidizing businesses that cannibalize existing businesses rather than bring new dollars to community
- **Limited impact on job creation:** Doesn't prioritize businesses with expansion or export potential

Strategic Alignment:

- **LOW-MODERATE -** Supports entrepreneurship but needs retooling to focus on high-impact businesses

2. Commercial Property Rehab Loan / Small Business Loan Program

Current Program:

- Low-interest loans with flexible terms for business equipment, inventory, real estate, etc.
  - Addresses need for capital for expansions or startups that might not qualify for full bank financing, serves local businesses (often industrial, retail, any sector), works by filling financing gaps with lower interest and flexible terms.

Performance up to date:

- 171 applications received
- 162 loans funded/approved (95% approval rate)
- 37 loans currently active
- $2,550,977 total capital deployed
- $579,536 in active outstanding loans
- Average loan size: ~$15,746

- **February 2026:** Review Commercial Property Rehab Loan / Small Business Loan program
- **March 2026:** Adopt changes to Commercial Property Rehab Loan / Small Business Loan program

Strategic Assessment - Critical Issues:

- **Strengths:** Credibility with business owners, risk reduction for private banks, flexibility for various business needs
- **Gap:** Marketing awareness could be improved; loan terms may need adjustment for current interest rate environment

Strategic Alignment:

- **HIGH -** Directly supports business expansion and job creation goals

Strategic Initiatives and Actions

1. Structured Business Visitation Program: Systematize BR&E Outreach

Action steps:

- Develop a structured business visitation strategy that organizes outreach by industry sectors (e.g., food and beverage businesses in 2026, small manufacturers the following year, retail after that).
- Implement a CRM system to manage business relationships and schedule regular follow-up visits every 2-3 years.
- Create standard interview protocols to identify each business's needs, plans, and challenges

Expected Impact:

- Improved relationships with local employers and early identification of issues (so we can intervene before a business decides to relocate or downsize). Over time, this proactive approach will result in expansions – companies will be more likely to invest further in New Ulm, knowing the community supports them.

Responsible Parties	EDA (coordinate the program and follow-ups), Chamber of Commerce (participate in visits, especially with retail/small businesses), NUBRIC (participate, focusing on industrial/innovation firms).
Timing	Short-Term (design the program and start visits within 1 year) and then ongoing.
Metrics	Number of business visits conducted (e.g. 50+ per year, covering a broad range of sectors); issues resolved or referrals made as a result of visits (track how many cases the EDA/partners helped a business solve a problem – aim for measurable assistances like helping 10 businesses access financing or workforce solutions annually); and business retention rate (monitor that major employers remain in City; also perhaps conduct an annual business satisfaction survey, targeting improved satisfaction scores regarding City support).

2. Economic Gardening Assistance: Growth Accelerator for Local Firms

Action steps:

- Shift from the traditional approach of incentivizing of any new business toward a more targeted economic gardening approach.
    - **Identify High-Growth, Export-Oriented Companies:** Rather than offering grants to any new startup, the EDA would proactively identify existing Stage 2 companies or promising early-stage firms in New Ulm that have demonstrated growth potential (strong sales, increasing customers) and crucially, serve markets beyond New Ulm. By concentrating on these companies that "bring money into the community" through external sales, the program boosts the local economy's inflow of revenue.
    - **Provide Customized Support to Scale Them Up:** Once such high-potential firms are identified, the EDA can offer tailored assistance to help them reach the next level of growth. This might involve grants or low-interest loans for expansion of facilities/equipment, technical assistance and mentoring (for marketing, product development, operational efficiency), workforce training support, or networking introductions beyond the local market. The focus is on removing hurdles that prevent these firms from scaling and on accelerating their expansion, which in turn will create new jobs that pay above the local median wage and increase exports from New Ulm.
    - **Rebrand the Support Program:** To signal this strategic shift and break from the past program's mixed reputation, the small business grant program can be renamed and relaunched. A new name will help communicate the fresh focus on growth-oriented business retention/expansion. For example, the City could introduce it as the "New Ulm Growth Accelerator" or "Enterprise Expansion Initiative". These names emphasize support for expansion, innovation, and bringing in outside revenue. The rebranded program would come with clear criteria aligning to the economic gardening philosophy (e.g. applicants must be existing local businesses with proven traction and plans to expand outside the local market, or startups in target industries that fill a gap in the regional economy).

Economic gardening focuses on providing targeted assistance to already successful local businesses – specifically those with capacity to expand beyond the local market. The philosophy is that to increase community wealth, the local "economic bathtub" needs more water flowing in through the faucet than is escaping / going down the drain.

In practical terms, that means supporting businesses in "primary" industries that sell products/services to external markets, thus importing revenue into New Ulm. These businesses (often manufacturers, tech companies, or scalable service firms) create jobs that pay living wages and diversify the economy, rather than simply adding another competing storefront on Main Street.

Source: https://economicgardening.org/why-eg-works/

Expected Impact:

- Empowerment of local second-stage businesses to expand sales beyond the region (export growth), create new product lines, or enter new markets, thereby adding jobs in New Ulm. Companies that might have plateaued could find new growth avenues, translating into higher revenues and wages locally.

Responsible Parties	EDA (program oversight and possible funding for research assistance), Minnesota DEED or Univ. of MN Extension (they have economic gardening resources to tap).
Timing	Mid-Term (2–3 years to pilot with a first cohort of companies, then expand) and ongoing if successful.
Metrics	Number of companies participating (e.g. 5 companies in pilot cohort); outcomes for those companies – such as new jobs created (target X jobs within a year of assistance), new markets entered (track if a company begins exporting or expands distribution out of state), and revenue growth. Long-term, an increase in the number of local businesses crossing from small to medium size (e.g. more firms with 50+ employees) would indicate success.

3. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center Support: Workforce Development Partnership

Action steps:

- Coordinate with NUBRIC to improve the CTE Center's operations and utilization.
- Provide EDA financial or project support as needed for CTE Center improvements and programming.
- Align CTE Center programming with local employer workforce needs identified through business visitation program.

Expected Impact:

- Improved local workforce pipeline that serves existing employers' needs and supports business retention and expansion.

Responsible Parties	NUBRIC (lead role), EDA (financial and project support), local employers (input on workforce needs).
Timing	Ongoing support as opportunities arise.
Metrics	CTE Center utilization rates; number of graduates placed in local businesses; employer satisfaction with workforce pipeline.

4. Enhanced Small Business Loan Fund:Strengthen and Scale Local Business Growth

Action steps:

- Maintain and potentially expand successful loan program
- Review interest rates and terms to remain competitive
- Improve marketing to increase business awareness of financing options

Expected Impact:

- Continued support for business expansion and equipment purchases

Responsible Parties	EDA
Timing	Ongoing with annual review
Metrics	Loan volume; repayment rates; jobs supported by financed businesses

4. Tourism and Hotel Development (Tourism 2030 Strategy)

Objective

Grow New Ulm's tourism sector into a robust, year-round economic driver by 2030. This includes expanding attractions and events, improving visitor infrastructure (notably adding lodging capacity) and executing a long-term tourism strategy to increase visitor numbers and spending.

Current Situation

- The Chamber of Commerce currently leads tourism marketing and events, and New Ulm's annual festivals (like Bavarian Blast, Oktoberfest, and Spikin' in the Street).
  - These events are tremendously impactful – both as tourism draws and in being bedrocks in the foundation of the community's culture.
- In 2024, we commissioned a Hotel Feasibility Study, which found New Ulm could support a new 60–80 room hotel, preferably in the downtown area.
  - This study showed a new hotel could achieve above-average performance (projected net income ~$1.1 million/year) given the existing demand and lack of rooms.
  - We have been networking with hotel developers, using the study to pitch New Ulm's market.
- New Ulm's tourism is somewhat concentrated around heritage and alcohol-centric events (beer, wine, brewery tours); community feedback suggests diversifying beyond "beer-centric" tourism to broaden the City's appeal during Comp Plan's community engagement.

Why it matters

A strategic bolstering of tourism is a catalyst for broader growth. It aligns with New Ulm's character, enhances what is already so appealing about the City while not turning it into something it doesn't want to be. By capturing more of the pass-through and heritage tourism that already occurs, the City can gain a major asset (a hotel) that would further benefit the local economy and produce local lodging tax revenues. This approach prioritizes sustainable, directed, organic growth in tourism that supports local businesses and generates new tax revenue, all of which improve quality of life for residents.

Strategic Initiatives and Actions

1. Year-Round Events & Attractions Initiative: Diversify and Expand Tourism Offerings

Action steps:

- Pursue opportunities to make New Ulm a year-round destination. This includes creating or boosting events in each season: for example, a winter festival (ice sculpting, Weihnachtsmarkt / Christkindlmarkt), expanded spring/summer music or sports tournaments, and cultural events that go beyond German theme (arts festivals, food fairs).
- Support existing organizers or form new committees as needed, possibly with seed funding or marketing from the EDA/Chamber.
- Enhance attractions:
  - Heritage tourism (e.g., improved exhibits at the Brown County Historical Society, or guided walking tours of historic sites)
  - Outdoor recreation (maintaining parks, trail signage for self-guided bike tours, etc.).

Expected Impact:

- Smoother seasonality in tourism creates steadier visitation throughout the year and leads to more stable revenue for hotels and businesses. It could potentially provide and could justify additional enterprises (like an outdoor equipment rental shop or expanded museum hours). As the Comp Plan notes, New Ulm should "work to diversify a mature tourism industry"; new events and attractions do just that.

Responsible Parties	Chamber/CVB (lead event marketing, coordinate volunteers), EDA (provide grants or logistical support for event startup, especially if tied to economic outcomes like downtown foot traffic), local clubs and cultural organizations (event implementation), City Parks & Rec (assist with venue support for outdoor events).
Timing	Short-Term and Ongoing – some new events can be piloted within 1–2 years (e.g. winter fest by next year), with continuous improvements each year.
Metrics	Number of events held outside traditional tourist season (increase the count of off-peak events; track attendance numbers for each); overall hotel occupancy rates in traditionally slow months (aim to lift winter/spring occupancy by a measurable percentage); and visitor satisfaction surveys indicating New Ulm has a variety of things to do year-round (target an uptick in positive feedback on this aspect).

2. Downtown Hotel Development Project: Recruit and Facilitate a New DOWNTOWN FLAGGED Hotel with >80 rooms

Action steps:

- Use the 2024 feasibility study plus the City's vision for expanding its sports tournaments, events, and outdoor recreation opportunities to court hotel developers and franchise operators by 2030.
- Package EDA incentive offers (land assistance, tax abatement, TIF) for downtown hotel development
- Work with the City to streamline approvals for the hotel site.

Note: Construction of a 'boutique' hotel, while overall beneficial to tourism and the local economy may also have the effect of satiating market demand such that a flagged hotel would not be viable.

Expected Impact:

- The project would expand the city's lodging capacity by about 50 percent, allowing more overnight stays and supporting steady tourism growth tied to festivals, sports tournaments and weekend travel. Local officials have emphasized that a downtown hotel is strategic for year-round tourism in New Ulm. The added rooms would also contribute to job creation and generate higher property and lodging tax revenues.

Responsible Parties	EDA (lead on developer recruitment. and assembling incentives), City Council & Planning (zoning/permitting and any public assistance approvals), Chamber/CVB (provide data on tourism demand to entice developers).
Timing	Mid-Term to Long-Term – initiate developer recruitment immediately (3 year), aim for development agreement within 4 years, and hotel opening by years 4-5.
Metrics	Hotel project milestones (developer secured, ground break, opening date); increase in number of hotel rooms available in New Ulm (from current baseline to target, e.g. +80 rooms by 2028); hotel occupancy rates (aim to sustain a profitable occupancy ~60%+ annually); and growth in lodging tax collections (target % increase post-opening).

5. Coordination Between Economic Partners

Objective

Achieve a high level of coordination and collaboration among New Ulm's economic development players -- chiefly the City/EDA, the Chamber of Commerce (and its Convention & Visitors Bureau), NUBRIC (New Ulm Business Resource & Innovation Center), and other entities like regional agencies or educational institutions. The aim is to ensure all partners are working toward common goals, communicating regularly, and leveraging each other's strengths rather than duplicating efforts.

Why it matters

New Ulm is fortunate to have multiple organizations devoted to economic vitality – the EDA, the Chamber and NUBRIC. When these groups operate in sync, the impact is exponential: for example, a business expansion might involve the EDA for financing, NUBRIC for private negotiations, and the Chamber for networking or ribbon-cutting – a coordinated approach makes the process seamless for the business.

Conversely, lack of coordination can lead to confusion (businesses unsure where to go for help), inefficiencies in resource use, or even contradictory messaging about the city. The Strategic Plan explicitly notes the need for partnership in economic initiatives – it calls for "staff training for business retention partners: Chamber, EDA, NUBRIC", showing that the City recognizes collaboration as key. Effective coordination will also align efforts with the Comprehensive Plan's vision, avoid siloed planning, and present a ***united front*** *when pursuing external funding or lobbying for policies.*

In short, when the EDA, Chamber, and NUBRIC (and others) speak with one voice, New Ulm's economic development initiatives will be more strategic and successful.

Current Situation

- The New Ulm Partnership already convenes key players and tackles shared issues.
- Joint efforts have occurred, such as co-promoting the small business grant program or coordinating on tourism events.
- One gap is in marketing coordination – for example, the City/EDA has its "newulmbusiness.com" site and the Chamber has "newulm.com," and while they cross-link, a fully unified marketing strategy is still in progress.
- The Strategic Plan suggests hiring a PIO who "works with EDA, Chamber and NUBRIC" on communications.
- Businesses still navigate multiple sites and entry points (e.g., newulmbusiness.com and Chamber assets). A unified front end and warm handoffs need to be standardized.

Strategic Initiatives and Actions

1. One-Stop Business Support Portal: Integrate Partner Services for Businesses

Action steps:

- Develop a "no wrong door" system so that whether a business contacts the EDA, Chamber, or NUBRIC, they get seamless access to all.
  - Create a unified online portal that aggregates information about all business services (financing, mentoring, networking, incentives, etc.) provided by each organization.
  - Cross-train staff to be knowledgeable about each other's programs. For instance, Chamber staff should know basics of EDA loans; EDA staff should know about Chamber networking or NUBRIC consulting, so referrals are warm hand-offs.

Expected Impact:

- Businesses and entrepreneurs will find it easy to get help – this convenience can lead to more business utilization of local programs (e.g., more startups approaching NUBRIC, more expansions using EDA loans). It also ensures opportunities aren't missed: if one organization hears of a company's need, that info is shared and addressed collaboratively.

Responsible Parties	EDA, Chamber, NUBRIC (collaborate on portal content and cross-training), City IT or marketing staff (for website development).
Timing	Short-Term (website integration within 1 year) and ongoing training exchanges.
Metrics	Track business satisfaction – e.g., in the annual business survey, measure improvement in the ease of finding assistance.

VII. Communications & Public Engagement

- Key Audiences
- Communications & Outreach Tactics

Key Audiences

Effective communication is vital for the EDA to succeed – we need to reach the right people with the right message. The EDA has several primary audiences:

- **Local Business Community:** This includes existing business owners (small and large) in New Ulm and potential entrepreneurs. They are a key audience for EDA communications about available programs (loans, grants, etc.), and any policy changes. Within this, we might segment further: small retail/service businesses, large manufacturers/ corporations, and emerging entrepreneurs/home-based businesses. Each might need tailored outreach (for example, busy small retailers might best be reached through Chamber channels or face-to-face visits, whereas large employers might prefer formal emails or meetings).
- **Residents and General Public:** The citizens of New Ulm are an important audience because they ultimately benefit from or provide support for economic development initiatives. This includes prospective homebuyers, renters, and the workforce in general. They should be aware of EDA housing programs, new development projects, and how economic growth efforts might affect them (jobs, tax base, community improvements). It's also crucial to reach young families and new residents, who often need info on housing assistance or childcare efforts, and seniors, who might benefit from programs like the rehab loan to downsize.
- **Prospective Businesses/Investors (External):** Companies or developers outside New Ulm who might consider investing here form another audience. This could be a Twin Cities manufacturer looking for an expansion site, a developer interested in building housing, or a remote worker considering relocating. For this group, the EDA's communications serve as marketing for New Ulm – highlighting our community's assets, available sites, and willingness to support new ventures. We coordinate with the state's marketing but also maintain our own profile (like a section on the city website for "Start or Locate Your Business in New Ulm").

- **Partner Organizations & Stakeholders:** We also communicate with partner groups – City Council, Chamber of Commerce, NUBRIC, school district, regional agencies. This audience needs to be kept in the loop on EDA plans and progress to foster collaboration. For example, the Chamber can amplify certain EDA messages if they're informed. Also, media (local newspaper, radio) are stakeholders through which we reach the public, so cultivating media as an audience is important (e.g., issuing press releases).
- **Legislators and Funders:** Occasionally, our audience includes state legislators, grant funders, or voters in the case of referenda. While not day-to-day focus, when advocating for policy changes (like a new tax credit) or applying for a grant, we tailor communications to these decision-makers, emphasizing the broader impact of EDA initiatives on regional prosperity.

In summary, our communications strategy will consider these audiences and prioritize messages to each. A common mistake is one-size-fits-all communication – we intend to avoid that by segmentation.

Communications & Outreach Tactics

Tool	Tasks
Website	Keep EDA pages current, user-friendly, and easy to find. Programs will have plain-language explanations, applications online, and quarterly reviews.
Social Media	Use Facebook (primary), LinkedIn (professional), and potentially Instagram (visual storytelling). Post program deadlines, success stories, and educational updates. Cross-share content with the Chamber to expand reach.
Newsletter & Email	Send a concise e-newsletter 1–2 times a year with project updates, spotlights, and events. Use targeted email blasts for specific groups (e.g., realtors, employers). Add short EDA updates to the City's utility bill and newsletter.
Media & Press Releases	Announce new programs, business expansions, and project milestones through The Journal, local radio, and regional TV. Always tie stories back to strategic goals.
Public Presentations & Forums	Deliver an "EDA Roadshow" presentation to Chamber luncheons, civic groups, and community events. Host topic workshops (e.g., housing incentives, starting a business) in partnership with the SBDC.
Branding & Visuals	Develop a clear visual identity and consistent message for all EDA communications, coordinated with the City's broader marketing plan.

In five years, we want the community to say, ***"The EDA really communicates well – we know what they're up to and it sounds like they have a solid plan."*** Good communication, backed by these tactics and talking points, will help make that happen.

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