

ST. CLOUD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

2026-2029 Strategic Plan

June 2, 2026

ST.CLOUD
BE PART OF SOMETHING GREATER



Mission: The St. Cloud EDA leads as the City's principal development authority to support private investment and drive St. Cloud's long-term economic vitality.

Vision: St. Cloud will be central Minnesota's most competitive environment anchored by thriving businesses, a full range of housing options, a revitalized downtown and riverfront, and infrastructure positioned to sustain long term private investment

Values: Investment-driven actions utilizing the EDA's unique attributes. Collaborative partnerships grounded in defined roles. Stewardship that earns lasting public trust.

ST. CLOUD EDA'S UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES



Deploy capital



Acquire and prepare sites



Structure assistance



Lead and manage development projects and applications



Support projects that advance St. Cloud's long-term economic vitality.

Short-Term Strategic Priorities (1–3 Years)

High-impact, near-term actions aligned with existing strengths, tools, and opportunities

Comprehensive EDA Organizational & Structural Recommendations

EDA Facilitation of RFQs & City Property Development

Remove Blight & Activate Key Corridors

Improve Downtown Vitality & Perception

Accelerate Workforce & Infill Housing Initiatives

Target Business Retention & Expansion (BRE)

Long-Term Strategic Priorities (4–10 Years)

Multi-year efforts that build on short term strategic priorities, which may shift due to external or internal circumstances not currently envisioned

Invest in Infrastructure & Site Readiness

Revitalize Downtown & Riverfront as Regional Destinations

Expand and Modernize Workforce Housing Supply

Develop New Business Park Capacity

Strategic Direction: Organizational Effectiveness

Enabling Priority

Comprehensive EDA Organizational & Structural Recommendations

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Economic Development Director as direct report to the City Administrator
- Expand the EDA's HRA powers via an Enabling Resolution Change
- Phase increase the EDA Levy to maximum levels to be competitive and fund strategic priorities
- Amend City Charter to allow the EDA to be the recipient of land sale proceeds
- Determine mechanism for the City to transfer ownership of City owned land to the EDA
- Establish a Development Fund that is funded annually through land sales and administrative fees

Maximizes EDA Powers & Role

- Deploy capital
- Acquire and prepare sites
- Structure assistance
- Lead and manage development projects and applications
- Support projects that advance St. Cloud's long-term economic vitality.

Success Metrics (2026–2029)

Milestones

- ☐ Econ. Dev. Director organizational change
- ☐ HRA powers obtained via Enabling Resolution
- ☐ City Charter amended for land proceeds
- ☐ EDA Development Fund established

Key Performance Indicators

- Annual Development Fund balance growth
- Private investment leveraged per \$1 EDA funds

Strategic Direction: Site Activation & Investment

Administration Priority

EDA Facilitation of RFQs & City Property Development

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Serve as single point of contact for developers on City-owned property transactions
- Develop City Land Sale Policy
- Draft, issue, and market RFP/RFQ/RFI documents for development opportunities
- Conduct due diligence, negotiate terms, and finalize development contracts
- Determine level of EDA assistance needed and structure deal terms
- Generate revenue through strategic land sales and fees/commissions to fund future EDA initiatives

EDA Tools & Powers

- Buy & Sell Properties
- Deploy Capital
- Structure Assistance & Deal Terms
- Lead & Manage Development Projects
- Revenue Generation via Land Sales

Success Metrics (2026–2029)

Milestones

- ☐ Land sale/RFQ/RFP process standardized
- ☐ First City-owned property transacted via EDA

Key Performance Indicators

- # of development agreements executed
- # of letter of intent purchase agreements executed
- Total private investment from EDA-facilitated projects

Strategic Direction: Site Activation & Investment

Short Term Priority

Remove Blight & Activate Key Corridors

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Inventory blighted and vacant properties in key corridors identified in Comprehensive Plan
- Issue RFPs/RFQs for redevelopment of catalyst sites identified in Comprehensive Plan
- Fund facade and tenant improvement loans and/or grants in aging commercial corridors
- Prioritize small-scale redevelopment for adaptive reuse of vacant properties
- Promote rehabilitation program to multi/ single-family housing owners in collaborative with St. Cloud HRA
- Establish an infill redevelopment program

Maximizes EDA Powers & Role

- **TIF (Tax Increment Financing)**
- **Land Acquisition & Assembly**
- **Buy & Sell Properties**
- **Facade/Tenant Improvement Grants**
- **Deploy Capital to Support Projects**

Success Metrics (2026–2029)

Milestones

- ☐ Blight inventory completed for key corridors
- ☐ First catalyst site RFP issued
- ☐ Facade grant program launched

Key Performance Indicators

- # of catalyst sites engaged for redevelopment
- Private investment leveraged per \$1 EDA funds
- Assessed value growth in key corridors

Long Term Priority

Invest in Infrastructure & Site Readiness

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Explore partnership with City to extend utilities, roads, and broadband to priority development corridors, as demand and corridor activation warrant
- Pending demand, consider partnering with utility providers to encourage investment in grid reliability and electrical capacity
- Where feasible, leverage DEED funding for site preparation to create shovel-ready parcels for industrial and commercial use
- If growth supports it, modernize transportation connections with MetroBus route expansion to employment centers
- Leverage existing fiber optic network for technology company attraction, as market conditions allow
- Pursue state and federal infrastructure grants to maximize local investment, contingent on funding availability

EDA Tools & Powers

- **TIF for Infrastructure**
- **Deploy Capital for Site Prep**
- **Land Acquisition & Assembly**
- **Coordinate State & Federal Resources**
- **Structure Public-Private Partnerships**

Success Metrics (2029–2036)

Milestones

- ☐ Shovel-ready parcel inventory established
- ☐ Application submitted for Federal/state infrastructure grants

Key Performance Indicators

- State & federal grants secured (\$)
- Private investment attracted to shovel ready sites (\$)

Strategic Direction: Downtown

Short Term Priority

Improve Downtown Vitality & Perception

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Assist mixed-use anchor development downtown (professional services, hospitality)
- Fund annual facade improvement program for east and west downtown corridors
- Guide redevelopment of key vacancies: Herberger's site, County Campus, Press & Lady Slipper lots
- Support adaptive reuse of historic and underutilized downtown buildings
- Facilitate downtown housing density and infill

EDA Tools & Powers

- TIF Districts
- Revolving Loan Fund
- Tax Abatement
- Facade/Tenant Improvement Grants
- Structure Incentives for Development

Success Metrics (2026–2029)

Milestones

- ☐ Downtown facade program funded
- ☐ Catalyst Sites RFQs issues & Developments

Key Performance Indicators

- Private investment leveraged
- Assessed value growth in downtown district (%)

Long Term Priority

Downtown & Riverfront Revitalization

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Where momentum and market demand support it, lead large-scale riverfront activation and mixed-use development projects
- Assist anchor tenant attraction for downtown (hospitality, professional services), as opportunities arise
- Address remaining key vacancies as they become viable for redevelopment
- Continue to support adaptive reuse of historic and underutilized downtown buildings
- Explore advocacy for convention center enhancements to drive spin-off hospitality and restaurant development, contingent on demonstrated visitor demand

EDA Tools & Powers

- TIF Districts
- Revolving Loan Fund
- Tax Abatement
- Facade/Tenant Improvement Grants/Loans
- Deploy Capital & Structure assistance

Success Metrics (2029–2036)

Milestones

- ☐ Participate in development of Riverfront activation plan
- ☐ Anchor tenant recruited for downtown

Key Performance Indicators

- Development agreements secured
- Assessed value growth in downtown/riverfront (%)
- Private investment leveraged

Strategic Direction: Housing

Short Term Priority

Accelerate Workforce & Infill Housing Initiatives

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Collaborate with St. Cloud HRA in developing resources for Housing Development, including Housing Incentives Policy and Ordinance
- Evaluate workforce housing needs and establish priorities
- Support mixed-use and multi-family catalyst site projects in targeted areas
- Pursue 5th Ave to SCSU campus infill redevelopment and neighborhood connection
- Explore Housing and Workforce Housing TIF districts around SCSU to revitalize aging housing stock

EDA Tools & Powers

- TIF Districts
- Land Assembly for Housing Sites
- Deploy Capital for Gap Financing
- Structure Developer Housing Assistance

Success Metrics (2026–2029)

Milestones

- ☐ Housing Assistance Policy adopted

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of units built/rehabilitated from EDA facilitated projects
- Private housing investment leveraged (\$)

Long Term Priority

Expand & Modernize Workforce Housing Supply

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- As demand warrants, develop large-scale workforce housing at price points aligned with local wages
- Consider modernizing aging multi-family housing stock through rehab programs, pending evaluation of short-term outcomes
- If TIF exploration proves viable, create Housing and Workforce Housing TIF districts in targeted neighborhoods including around SCSU
- Explore partnerships with developers and nonprofits on gap financing for workforce-friendly projects, contingent on funding availability

EDA Tools & Powers

- TIF Districts
- Land Assembly for Housing Sites
- Deploy Capital for Gap Financing
- Structure Developer Assistance Tools

Success Metrics (2029–2036)

Milestones

- ☐ Large-scale workforce housing project launched
- ☐ Housing/Workforce TIF districts established

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of units built/rehabilitated from EDA facilitated projects
- Private housing investment leveraged (\$)

Strategic Direction: Business Development

Short Term Priority

Target Business Retention & Expansion

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Conduct structured BR&E visits to identify workforce gaps and expansion needs
- Connect existing businesses with state resources for technology and automation investment
- Facilitate employer-education partnerships with SCSU, SCTCC, and training providers
- Support manufacturing retention and advanced manufacturing cluster development
- Target healthcare supply chain and med-tech business attraction through EDA tools

EDA Tools & Powers

- **Revolving Loan Fund**
- **Tax Abatement**
- **TIF for Expansion Projects**
- **Structure Assistance**
- **Coordinate State & Partner Resources**

Success Metrics (2026–2029)

Milestones

- ☐ BR&E visit program launched
- ☐ Industrial RLF established
- ☐ Employer-education partnership initiated

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of business expansions resulting from BR&E visits
- State resources (\$) leveraged for business development
- Jobs retained/created through EDA participation

Long Term Priority

Develop New Business Park Capacity

Key Initiatives & Tasks

- Evaluate partnership structures for ownership and development of next phase business park, pending results of short-term retention efforts
- As conditions warrant, identify and acquire land for next-generation business park development
- Phase, as needed, the design infrastructure-ready sites with fiber, utilities, and I-94 access
- Target health IT, med-tech, and advanced manufacturing tenants, contingent on industry demand
- Consider partnering with SCSU/SCTCC for workforce pipeline alignment to business park tenants, as tenant needs emerge
- Pursue state grants and federal EDA infrastructure funding, contingent on program availability and alignment with evolving priorities

EDA Tools & Powers

- **TIF (Economic Development Districts)**
- **Land Acquisition & Assembly**
- **Tax Abatement**
- **Deploy Capital for Infrastructure**
- **Buy & Sell Properties**

Success Metrics (2029–2036)

Milestones

- ☐ Partnership structure for business park finalized
- ☐ Land acquisition for next-gen park completed

Key Performance Indicators

- Acres acquired/under contract for business park development
- Number of Infrastructure-ready sites prepared

APPENDICES

Highlights from EDA Presentations February- May 2026

ST.CLOUD
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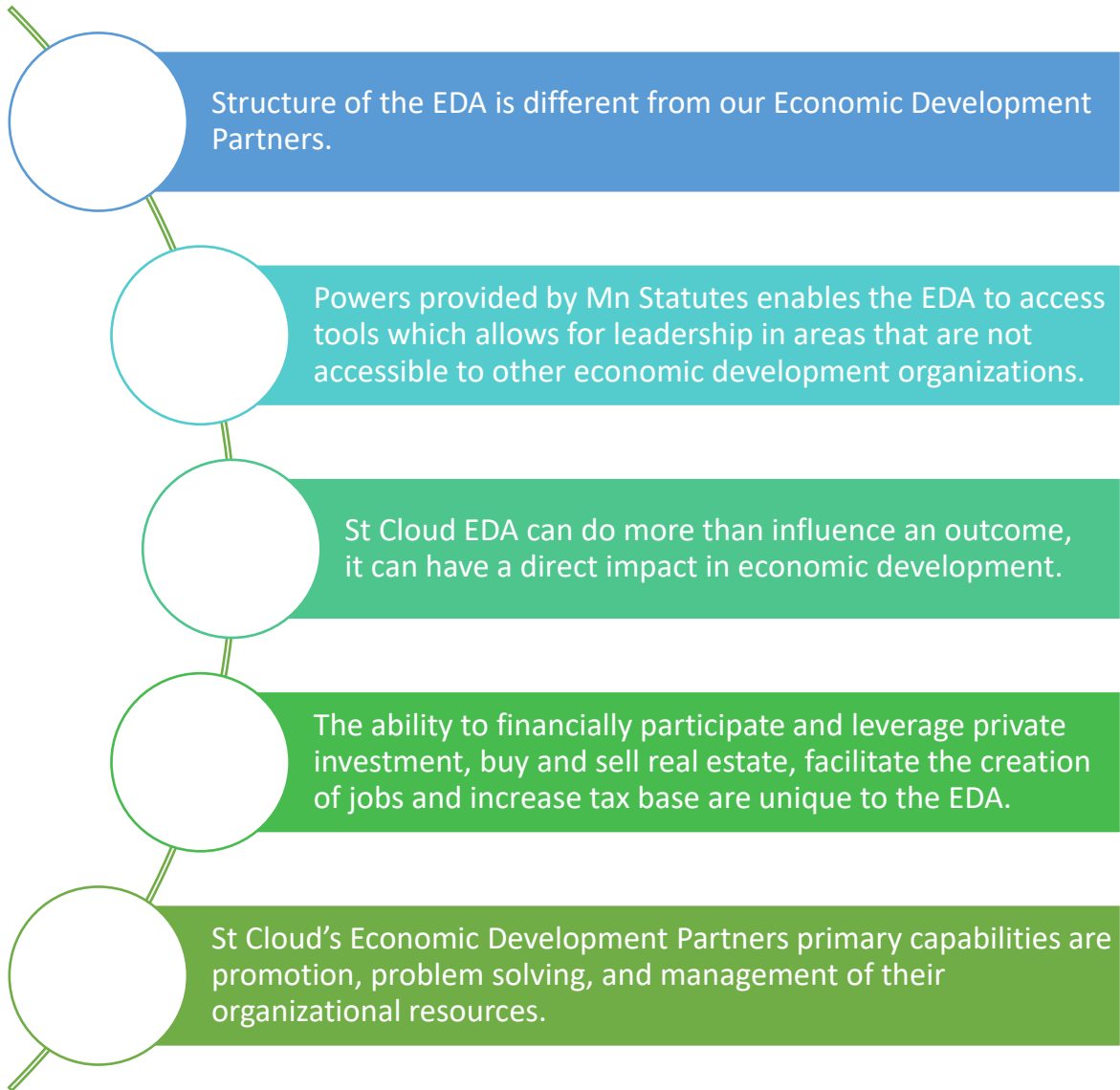
St Cloud ED Partners

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES 2026

 LEAD
 PARTNER
 ADVOCATE

	BENTON COUNTY	SHERBURNE COUNTY	GSDC	CHAMBER	STEARNS CO HRA	ST CLOUD HRA	DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE	ST CLOUD ED 2024	ST CLOUD ED 2026
BRE	 	 	  	 					
Housing Initiatives			 						
Manage Local RLF									
Workforce Int.			 						
Broadband									
Childcare									
Transportation			 						
Marketing			 						
Entrepreneurism									
Downtown			  						
Tourism									
Redevelopment			 						
Industrial Dev.									
Project Finance									

Value of an EDA



EDA Powers, Tools, and Financing

Specific Powers and Tools

Acquisition of Property	Option Property	Eminent Domain	Contracts
Construction Contracts	Limited Partnerships	Rights and Easements	Supplies and Materials
Acceptance of Public Land and Property	Foreign Trade Zone	Public Facilities	Government Agent
Studies, Analysis, Research	Public Relations	Joint Powers	Tax Increment Financing

Financing Powers and Tools

Issuing General Obligation Bonds	Issuing Revenue Bonds	Advances (Loans)	Secondary Market
	Borrowing in Anticipation of Funds	Revolving Loan Funds	

Economic (Re)Development Tools

Traditional Economic Development [2011-2025]

Planning & Promoting

Marketing Materials, Advertising, Summits

Prospect Management

Collaboration with Partners

Responses to RFI/RFP's

TIF and RLF Management

Business Retention Visits

Action Based Economic Development [2026 Future]

Property Acquisition

City's Real Estate Development Arm

Project Lead for all Development

Housing TIF Districts

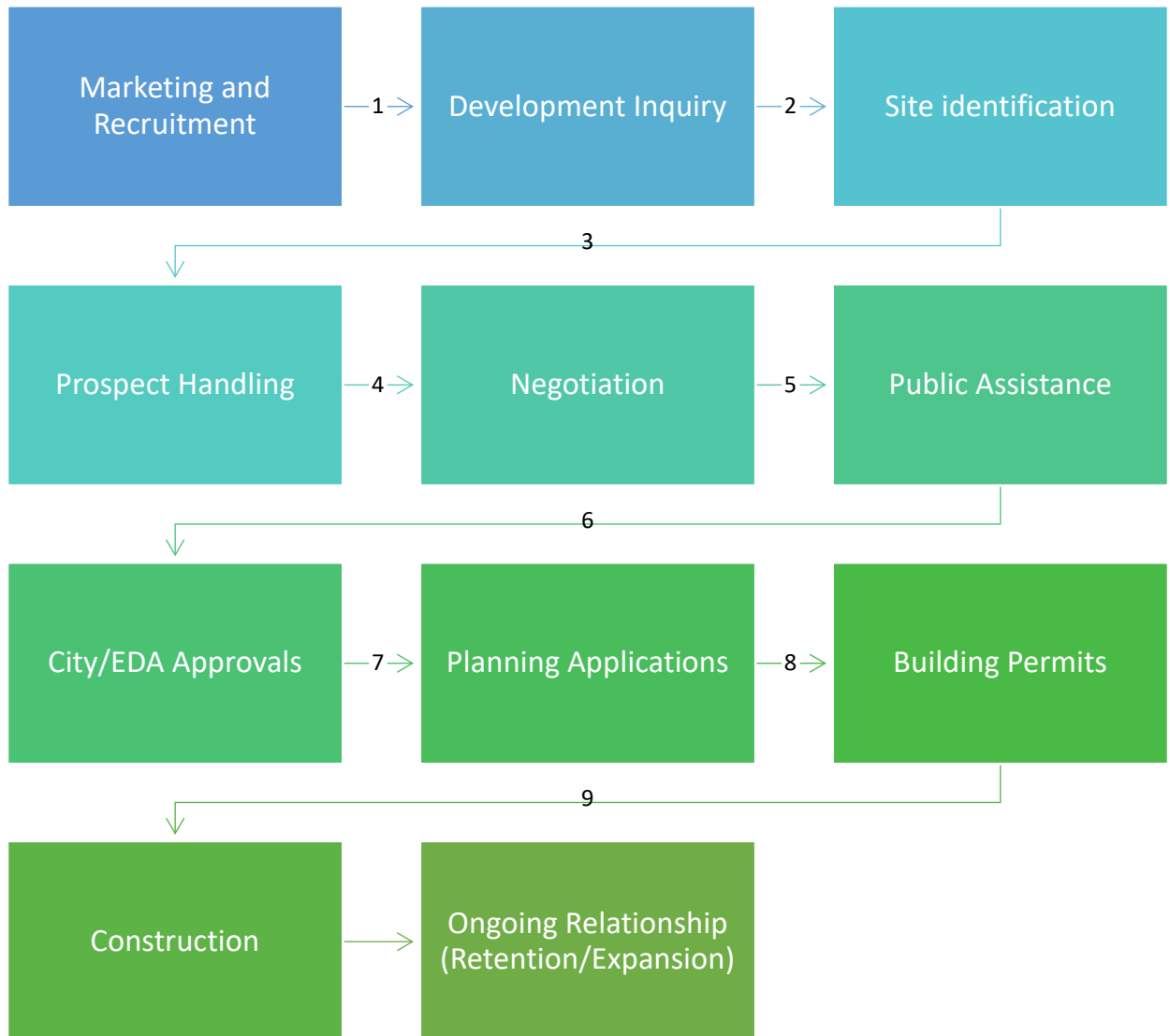
Commissions for Sales

EDA facilitation of City owned development sites

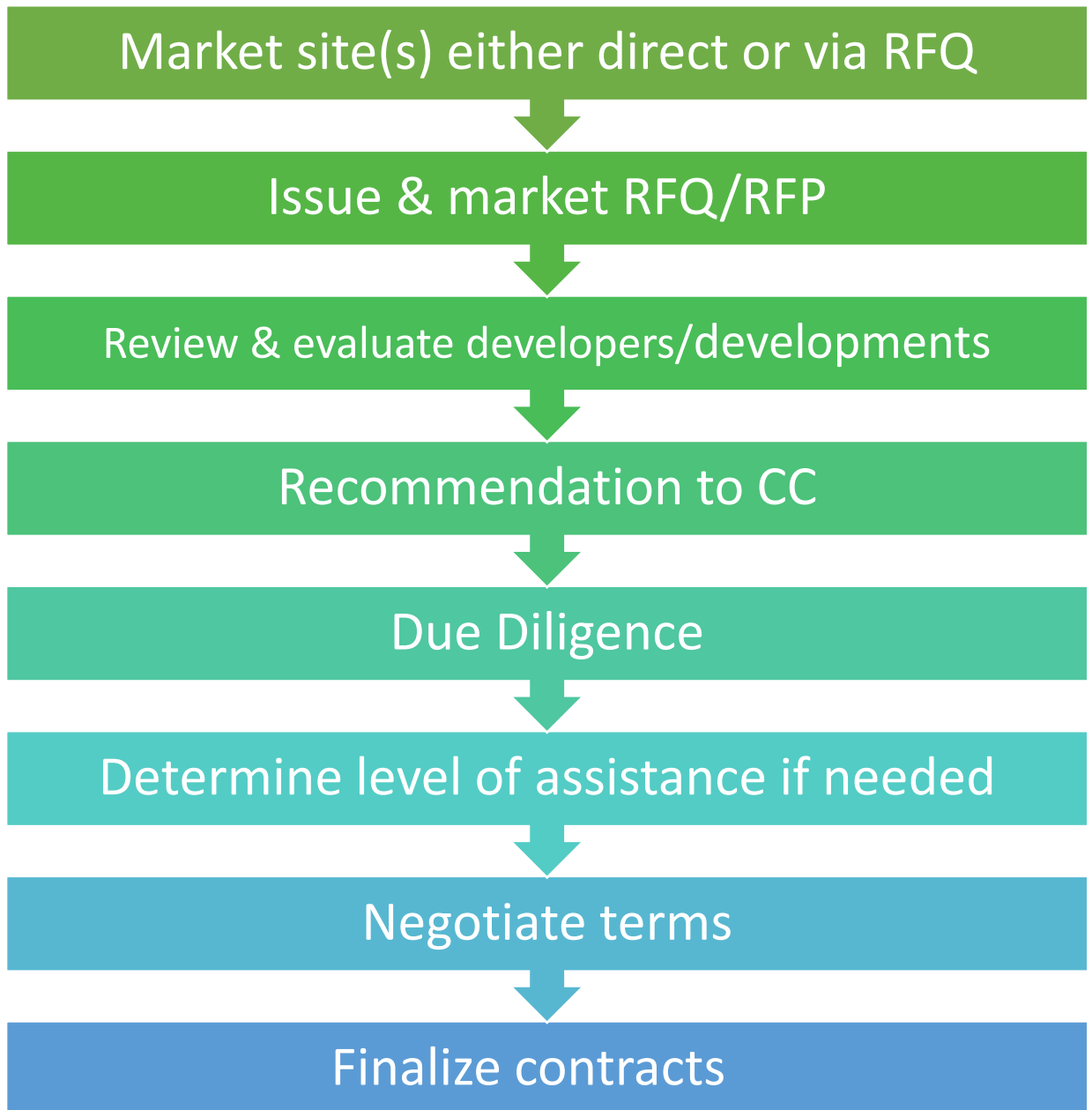
EDA Levy

RFPs for Catalyst Sites

St. Cloud Development Process



St. Cloud Land Sale Process



ST. CLOUD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Economic Context for Strategic Planning

Prepared by King Banaian, Director, Center for Policy Research and Community Engagement

CURRENT ECONOMIC POSITION (Q4 2024/Q1 2025)

St. Cloud MSA Employment: ~115,000 (stable post-pandemic recovery); Unemployment: 3.2%; Labor Force Participation: Recovery lagging state trends. Workforce availability remains the primary constraint for growth. Population growing modestly (0.3-0.5% annually), younger than state average. Housing production below 2019 levels creates affordability pressures.

COMPARATIVE POSITION: ST. CLOUD VS. MINNESOTA PEERS

Metric	St. Cloud	Rochester	Mankato	Duluth
Median Home Value	\$287,600	\$308,900	\$279,600	\$232,800
Bachelor's Degree+	29.5%	42.8%	34.3%	31.9%
Median HH Income	\$73,963	\$85,213	\$69,016	\$70,208
Avg Weekly Wage (Q1 2024)	\$1,192	\$1,468	\$1,077	\$1,167

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2023 (via Census Reporter); BLS QCEW

Key findings: Housing cost at level with peers (10% below Rochester but higher than Duluth); educational attainment gap (lowest among four MSAs—13 pts below Rochester); wage growth leadership (Stearns County +5.5% Q1 2024-Q1 2025, highest in state, data not shown).

STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

Near-Term (2025-2027)

- Federal infrastructure funding (water/wastewater, transportation)
- Healthcare sector expansion ripple effects
- Housing development potential (large parcels)
- Remote work migration (MSP overflow)

Medium-Term (2028-2030)

- Regional logistics hub potential (I-94 corridor)
- Advanced manufacturing reshoring trends
- Climate migration patterns favoring MN metros
- Care economy growth (demographic demand)

FRAMEWORK FOR SWOT DISCUSSION

Strengths/Opportunities: Our competitive advantages give us options. Which options: (1) Have highest expected value but require acting soon? (2) Give us upside exposure with limited downside? (3) Remain valuable across multiple futures?

Weaknesses/Threats: Where are we fragile? (1) What could break us? (2) Where are we betting everything on one scenario? (3) What are we doing that only makes sense if current conditions persist?

Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau (ACS 2023); BLS QCEW; St. Cloud Area Quarterly Business Report

STRATEGIC HEADWINDS

Immediate Pressures

- Elevated construction costs
- Interest rate environment (improving)
- Policy uncertainty affecting business planning
- Workforce housing shortage constraining recruitment

Structural Challenges

- Infrastructure investment needs
- Competition from exurban development
- Need for higher-wage job creation
- Transit limitations affecting labor market access

SWOT Survey Questions

Strengths

- What are St. Cloud's most significant economic assets and competitive advantages?
- Which business sectors are thriving and why?
- What is the reputation of the area for investment and business growth?
- What are our successful programs or community partnerships?

Weaknesses

- What are the main internal barriers to economic growth?
- What negative perceptions exist about St. Cloud?
- What lack of assets limit economic development?
- Where are the problematic properties detracting from vitality?
- Which business sectors are declining, and why?
- What common complaints or bureaucratic obstacles do businesses face?

Opportunities

- Where should St. Cloud invest its economic development resources?
- What regional, national, or global trends can the community capitalize on?
- What new investment or policy changes could benefit the region?
- How do we build on current strengths to support emerging industries?
- How can we better support small businesses and entrepreneurs?
- What workforce attraction strategies can be developed to attract and retain workers?

Threats

- What external economic trends or policies could negatively impact the community?
- What business sectors are at risk due to automation, offshoring, or market shifts?
- What economic shifts pose risks?
- Who are our regional competitors, and what are they doing differently?

SWOT Analysis Results

Strengths

- Strategic Central Location & Transportation Access
- Skilled and Educated Workforce Anchored by Higher Education
- Healthcare as a Regional Economic Engine
- Diverse and Resilient Industry Base
- Strong Economic Development Ecosystem & Partnerships

Weaknesses

- Workforce Shortages and Mismatch
- Housing Availability and Affordability
- Cumbersome City Processes and Cost of Doing Business
- Negative Perceptions and Quality-of-Life Concerns
- Downtown Vacancies, Blight, and Declining Sectors

Opportunities

- Workforce Housing & Infill Development
- Downtown, Riverfront & Corridor Revitalization
- Workforce Development & Talent Pipeline Alignment
- Industry Growth: Manufacturing, Healthcare & Health IT
- Small Business, Entrepreneurship & Process Reform

Threats

- Labor Force Shortages & Demographic Decline
- Economic Downturns: Recession & Inflation
- High Interest Rates, Housing & Development Constraints
- Industry Disruption from Automation, AI & Market Shifts
- Competitive & Policy-Related External Pressures

Peer Cities Survey Results

Mankato | Winona | Rochester | Coon Rapids | Monticello | Sauk Rapids | Elk River | Rogers

► Type of EDO

EDA (4)

Both EDA & HRA (3)

Port Authority (1)

► Budget Sources

EDA/HRA Levy (5)

Operational Income (3)

General Fund (2)

Grants (1)

Sales Tax (1)

► Department

Administration (5)

Community Development (3)

► Number of Staff

Varies from 1 to 3 FTE

Median: 2 FTE | Average: 2 FTE

*Mankato, Winona and Rochester
all have 2.5+*

► Programs

Redevelopment (8)

Housing Development (8)

Business Development (7)

BR&E (4) | Entrepreneurship (3)

Workforce Development (2)

► Funding Sources

Revolving Loan Funds (6)

Grants (5)

Business Improvement District (2)

► Tools Used

TIF (8) | Loans (8) | Grants (8)

Buy and Sell Properties (8)

Tax Abatement (5)

► Most Effective Tool

Tax Increment Financing

Peer Cities Survey Results

Mankato | Winona | Rochester | Coon Rapids | Monticello | Sauk Rapids | Elk River | Rogers

► Role in Housing

- Centralized housing role within EDA or Community Development (Mankato, Winona, Rogers)
- Financial tools: TIF, SAHA, loans, subsidies, land assembly (Coon Rapids, Monticello)
- Affordable & workforce housing focus via TIF districts and rehab programs (Monticello, Sauk Rapids)
- Strong collaboration with counties, HRAs, nonprofits, and employers (Rochester)
- Flexible, case-by-case support rather than formal programs (Elk River)

► Measuring Success

- Business attraction and developer/broker feedback (Rogers)
- Program participation, tax base growth, jobs created (Elk River, Winona)
- Property tax growth and redevelopment impacts; periodic housing studies (Rochester)
- Scorecards and comparative metrics for tax base, jobs, and wages (Monticello)
- Qualitative storytelling when outcomes are hard to quantify (Coon Rapids)
- Strategic planning and demographic studies to identify needs (Mankato)

► Partnerships

- Regional and nonprofit partnerships for BR&E, entrepreneurship, arts, and housing (Mankato)
- Land acquisition and Habitat collaboration for affordable housing (Winona)
- Chambers, local development corps, and county technical assistance (Coon Rapids)
- County partnerships enabling funding, grants, and creative project concepts (Monticello)
- State and federal agencies leveraged with nonprofits for small business and redevelopment (Rochester)
- Multi-party collaborations: banks, SBA, foundations, counties, school districts (Sauk Rapids)
- Public-private partnerships with chambers for business engagement (Rogers)

► Notable Projects

- Mixed-use, commercial, industrial, and residential redevelopment via TIF, MIF, land reuse (Rogers)
- Industrial expansions, business relocations, and small-site redevelopment (Elk River)
- Workforce and single-family housing via ARPA funds and housing TIF (Sauk Rapids)
- Major infrastructure and transit investments with large-scale downtown housing (Rochester)
- Downtown redevelopment, hotel, and business expansions via TIF, MIF, JCF, tax abatement (Monticello)
- Gap financing, placemaking, and district promotion (Coon Rapids)
- Affordable, senior, supportive housing and housing trust fund initiatives (Mankato, Winona)