



**LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACTION TEAM**

**Livable Communities Action Team Meeting**  
 December 7, 2016  
 5:00 – 7:00 PM

**Minnesota Discovery Center**  
 Mineland Reclamation Classroom  
 1005 Discovery Drive | Chisholm

**MEETING OBJECTIVE:**

To share updates on the Recharge the Range Initiative and specifically work underway by our three Initiative sub-groups that have all convened since our last meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup>. We will also discuss and begin planning for an Iron Range Housing Event to assess housing needs and challenges and determine the interest and support for another sub-group on Housing as part of the Livable Communities Action Team efforts.

**PROPOSED AGENDA:**

5:00 PM	Group Networking – Grab Pizza	
5:00 PM	Business Meeting Welcome and Introductions	Randy Lasky, Facilitator
5:10 PM	Review Proposed Agenda and Expected Outcomes of the Meeting	Facilitator
5:15 PM	Recharge the Range – Brief Update on Other Action Teams and Coordination and Communication of Activities	Mary Finnegan Deputy Commissioner
5:25 PM	Brief Update on Pilot Grant Program - Downtown and Business Corridor	Whitney Ridlon, Community Development Specialist
5:30 PM	Livable Communities Sub-Group Meeting Updates, Outcomes and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vibrant Downtowns</li> <li>• Creative Communities</li> <li>• Healthy Active Communities</li> </ul>	Vicki Hagberg Mary McReynolds Ray Jobe
6:00 PM	Approach to Ongoing Communication – Survey Results and Recommendation	Mary McReynolds
6:10 PM	General Brainstorming on Ideas, Actions, Connections and Projects Moving Forward	Facilitator and Co-Chairs Vicki Hagberg & Mary McReynolds
6:25 PM	Iron Range Housing Event	Facilitator and Co-Chairs
6:50 PM	Plan Next Meeting of Livable Communities Action Team	Facilitator and Co-Chairs
7:00 PM	Critique and Adjourn	Facilitator

**OUR MISSION: To encourage positive change on the Iron Range by working collaboratively towards more livable and vibrant communities**



## LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACTION TEAM

### Livable Communities Action Team Meeting

October 10, 2016  
5:00 – 8:00 PM

### Minnesota Discovery Center

Mineland Reclamation Classroom  
1005 Discovery Drive | Chisholm

#### MEETING OBJECTIVE:

To clarify our purpose and mission, review input and direction from the second session and agree on our goals, an organizational approach, how we will communicate and coordinate, and expectations for this effort together.

#### MEETING NOTES:

##### RECHARGE THE RANGE UPDATE

IRRRB Deputy Commissioner Mary Finnegan provided an update on the activities of the other Recharge the Range Action Teams. All of the teams, except for Tourism, will have had at least one meeting and are moving forward similar to the Livable Action Team. Questions were addressed about sharing information and the organization of several other interest groups focused on Health Care and Ag. A newsletter is planned and other ways to communicate are being talked about. More information will follow on this.

Whitney Ridlon, IRRRB Community Development Specialist, and a member of our team, shared an overview and answered questions about the new pilot grant program – Downtown and Business Corridor. This matching grant program is flexible and can be used for a variety of projects and initiatives to improve conditions in our downtowns. Whitney addressed questions on eligible items, number of projects that could be applied for and the timing. Applications will be accepted beginning on November 1, 2016. There is more information online at IRRRB's web site or give her a call. All applications will be received online using the new IRRRB system.

Jim Plummer, IRRRB staff, shared a ten minute video on Strong Towns – a discussion at Almanac North last summer by Chuck Marhon. He also shared that funding remained in the contract with Strong Towns and we may want to use those funds for a Livable Communities tie. We can talk more later on this.

## OUR MISSION:

*To encourage positive change on the Iron Range by working collaboratively towards more livable communities.*

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### MISSION AND GOALS

The following mission statement, goals and responsibilities were finalized and approved to guide the work of the Livable Communities Action Team and its working Initiative Groups.

#### MISSION

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To encourage positive change on the Iron Range by working collaboratively towards more livable and vibrant communities

#### GOALS

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1. Network – Generate social capital and connections. Work together across communities and initiatives to bring change to the Range.
2. Share Best Practices – Build on the successes of existing initiatives. Livable Initiative Groups share successes and challenges to help move projects forward.
3. Plan – Connect RAMS, IRRRB, ReGen and other key public, non-profit and private stakeholders to support new initiatives and funding for vibrant communities priorities.
4. Action – Facilitate Initiative Groups efforts to achieve measurable successes in our communities.

#### LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ACTION TEAM:

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Collaborative group that will facilitate initiative successes by providing a forum for sharing best practices, experiences, and tools to move projects forward

#### LIVABLE INITIATIVE GROUPS:

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Local action teams working on specific, measurable initiatives within their communities and across the Iron Range.

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### INITIATIVES:

The following are initiatives or ideas members would like to see succeed in the region:

- Lyric Art Center
- Downtown revitalization/use of new grant program (3 members)
- Androy Hotel, Hibbing
- Housing for disabled people
- Local food access program in Virginia
- Food access

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- Increase use of vacant buildings in downtowns and “pop-ups” (2 members)
- Downtown street enhancements in Virginia
- Downtowns more presentable (cleaned-up) and fun
- Kids activity centers (ages 8-15 years)
- Performance center connects river to downtown Grand Rapids and arts
- Attract 25-40 year olds and young families

**INITIATIVE GROUPS:**

Three sub groups (Initiative Groups) were created and there was agreement on conducting a regional housing forum to assess interest and the scope of a possible Housing Initiative Group.

- Downtown Revitalization
- Healthy Active Communities
- Creative Communities (aesthetics, arts, culture, entrepreneurs)
- Housing Forum – assess interest to organize and move on housing needs and challenges

<b>DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVES GROUP</b>	
<b>Leader:</b>	Vicki Hagberg
<b>Major Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Androy sign, Hibbing</li> <li>• Pop-Up parks/vacant store fronts (Chisholm)</li> <li>• Speculative development in Virginia (Revive Virginia)</li> </ul>
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	Tuesday, October 25 – 5:30pm Minnesota Discovery Center, Mineland Reclamation Classroom
<b>HEALTHY ACTIVE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVES GROUP</b>	
<b>Leader:</b>	Ray Jobe
<b>Major Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Healthy food</li> <li>• Active living / disease prevention</li> </ul>
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	Thursday, November 17 – 4:00pm Essentia Hospital, Virginia
<b>CREATIVE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVES GROUP</b>	
<b>Leader:</b>	Mary McReynolds
<b>Major Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform Cool &amp; Creative attendees about this</li> <li>• Resources reference for arts funding</li> <li>• Educate are on economic value of arts and significance to a community</li> <li>• Forum on arts - regional</li> </ul>
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	Wednesday , December 7 – 4:00pm Minnesota Discovery Center, Mineland Reclamation Classroom

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**RECONVENE THE LIVABLE COMMUNITIES GROUP:**

**December 7, 2016 (Wednesday)**

**5:00 – 7:00 PM**

Minnesota Discovery Center, Mineland Reclamation Classroom, Chisholm

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**NEXT STEPS:**

- Randy will prepare the notes from this meeting and share with the entire email list and invite them to join an initiative group (self-select) and attend
- Mary will conduct a poll on email communication tool of choice for Livable Communities
- Address organizing a Housing Forum for next meeting

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**CRITIQUE OF MEETING AND PROCESS:**

- Like the work groups
- Good mix of people
- Respect of each other is appreciated
- Good pizza
- Like the accountability
- Energy and good attitude
- Wound up after three hours
- Good motivation

Respectively submitted,

Randy Lasky | Facilitator | The Northspan Group, Inc.  
Direct: 218.529.7561 | rlasky@northspan.org

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**MEETING PARTICIPANTS:**

Name		Organization	Email	Phone
Anderson	Kelsie	USDA Rural Development	Kelsie.anderson@mn.usda.gov	(218) 741-3929
Bergstad	Josh	ARDC	jbergstad@ardc.org	(218) 529-7516
Ferkul	Sara	IRRRB	sara.ferkul@state.mn.us	(218) 735-3043
Finnegan	Mary	IRRRB	Mary.finnegan@state.mn.us	
Fulton	Chris	Grand Rapids Area Community Fdn	Chris.fulton@gracf.org	
Guertin	Joe	Revive Virginia (Downtown Revitalization)		
Jobe	Raymond	St. Louis County	jober@stlouiscountymn.gov	
Killien	Cheryl		Cheryl@quiltinbuddies.com	(218) 966-2969
Killien	Larry		48overland@gmail.com	(218) 966-2969
Larson	Jean	Essentia Health	Jean.larson2@essentiahealth.org	
Lasky	Randy	Northspan Group	rlasky@northspan.org	(218) 529-7561
Marinucci	Julie	S E H	jmarinucci@sehinc.com	(218) 341-1429
Mattonen	Tammy	MN Discovery Center	Tammy.mattonen@gmail.com	
McReynolds-Pellinen	Mary	St. Louis County	mcreynoldsm@stlouiscountymn.gov	(218) 749-0648
Merrild	Sonja	Blandin Foundation	smmerild@blandinfoundation.org	
Ongaro	John	St. Louis County	ongaroj@stlouiscounty.mn.gov	(218) 343-1161
Plummer	Jim	IRRRB	jplummer@state.mn.us	(218) 735-3032
Ridlon	Whitney	ReGen	whitney.m.ridlon@gmail.com	(612) 751-4443
Rodvold	Jean	Essentia Health	Jean.rodvold@essentiahealth.org	

## RECHARGE THE RANGE: February 29, 2016

### ► Housing

Table Host: Randy Lasky, Northspan Group

Recorder: Julie Brownell, IRRRB

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**What is a new idea, initiative, or solution that could contribute to new business opportunities related to housing?**

**TOP 3:**

#### **Current condition #1**

Lack of modern and affordable housing options to meet needs and desires of young families, young professionals/professional recruitment initiatives, and existing residents (lower/middle/upper income) exploring housing options through life transitions (modern and affordable variety of single-family, multi-family, condos/townhouses, and seasonal rental housing).

#### **Solution discussion**

1. Redevelopment/refurbishment of existing housing stock (including main street and building reuse/conversion).
2. Demolish obsolete homes and combine lots to create larger lots for new construction/infill.
3. Create region-wide registry with current regional resources on housing and program options available.
4. Market initiative for seasonal (recreational) rental housing (*i.e., retired homeowner wants to travel 6 months/year and rent home the other 6 months/year*).

#### **Current condition #2**

Communities are experiencing increased problems associated with rental properties, including: purchase of multiple properties for the purpose of short-term gain (*i.e., absentee landlords with no community investment, no way to contact landlords to resolve issues, and lack of property upkeep resulting in community blight, tenant unaccountability, unpaid utilities, and increased crime*).

#### **Solution discussion**

1. Convene a range-wide discussion to specifically address increasing problems with rental properties, unaccountable landlords and tenants.
2. Determine what representatives within each community, are best able to establish minimum standards and actions necessary to create habitable and safe neighborhoods for all Iron Range communities and rental property tenants.
3. Community collaboration and agreement of minimum standards for regulations, code, ordinances, inspections, enforcement, and registry for rental properties throughout Iron Range communities.

### **Current condition #3**

Lack of criteria alignment of government and other funding resources (i.e., demolition grants, DEED=greenspace/IRRRB=new construction), and increased need for additional tax reforms and incentive programs to improve current housing conditions.

### **Solution discussion**

1. Identify, coordinate, and align funding resources for demolition programs, home improvement, energy conservation, structure refurbishments/conversion, other?
2. Create registry of all incentive programs and funding resources for prospective homeowners, current homeowners, builders and developers—educate all
- 3.

Brand the Iron Range	Small Business Strategies: Start-up, Innovation & Growth	Large Business Expansion & Attraction	Natural Resources	Education/Talent Development: Promote education and talent development to innovate and support business	Infrastructure: Improve infrastructure (i.e. broadband, transportation, energy, water, sewer)	Livable Communities: Strengthen communities by making them distinctive and livable	Tourism/Recreation: Embrace and improve tourism and recreation coordination	No Name/Other: Any other focus areas not identified
Form branding team with representation from business, community, tourism, mining and marketing sectors	Form regional team to discuss strategies and challenges and ideas to diversify the region and collaboration	Form regional business recruitment team to discuss strategies and challenges and ideas to diversify the region	Support natural resource teams (DRI coalition) and form timber team to address strategies and challenges	Form a team aligning educational institutions, business industries and non-profits	Form regional transportation team to discuss strategies, challenges, improvements and action steps	Form regional livable communities team to discuss strategies, challenges and collaboration	Form regional tourism team to discuss strategies, challenges and collaboration	
1. SWOT analysis of the region	1. Help to organically create and grow Iron Range businesses to evolve and deploy	1. Develop targeted industry profile	1. Help natural resource industries evolve (ferrous and non-ferrous, timber, water, etc.)	1. More 4 year degrees offered on the Iron Range	1. Address the captive rail issue	1. Reinvest, revitalize, renovate and rehab downtowns	1. Expand Iron Range Trails Council	
2. Develop unified message, mission or elevator speech across the region	2. Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) - assess business needs for growth	2. Develop business recruitment plan (sales process, identify and qualify prospects, promote incentives)	2. Advance technology of existing taconite and value-added industries	2. Identify and offer additional certificate programs on the Iron Range	2. Develop and/or enhance public transportation (rail, bus, etc.)	2. Develop a strategic plan for regional arts and culture to include funding	2. Transform the Mesabi Trail into a world-class regional asset	
3. Develop a marketing & communication plan for the entire region	3. Update and promote financial incentive programs	3. Identify and promote shovel-ready sites	3. Facilitate development of non-ferrous products (Mining Minnesota)	3. Develop new programs (STEM, agriculture education, hospitality, process automation, IT, mining engineering programs, healthcare residency, interships)	3. Expand air transportation - reliable and affordable	3. Convene a rangewide discussion to address rental property problems (establish minimal standards)	3. Promote Highest bridge in Minnesota	
	4. Promote R&D assistance	4. Industries to explore and assist: health-related manufacturing, cold weather product testing, etc.	4. Mining industry communication plan "social license to mine" (collaboration of IMA and Mining Minnesota)	4. Develop K-12 soft skills program (work ethic, customer service, interpersonal communication)	4. Define existing broadband inventory, create regional broadband vision and expand infrastructure to unserved/underserved areas through public/private partnerships	4. Identify and create housing plan with current regional resources on housing programs	4. Invest in ALL trails as a multi-modal, connected and regional asset	
	5. Develop incubator for R&D/makerspaces	5. Develop the Metro/Ranger connection	5. Facilitate development of other mineral products		5. Develop low cost energy sources (geothermal, nuclear, solar, biomass, hydro pump, gasification)	5. Form regional healthcare teams to discuss strategies and challenges and collaboration (physician recruitment plan)	5. Large regional convention and/or sports center	
	6. Revive Minnesota marketplace program		6. Define and streamline timber availability		6. Provide pockets of high speed broadband to downtowns to drive traffic to main streets and spur downtown reinvestment	6. Encourage collaboration between communities on fire, EMS and ambulance	6. Encourage community ambassador program and volunteerism throughout the region	
	7. Industries to explore and assist: USDA certified meat processor, specialty grain/truffle production and processing, local dairy processing capability, hemp pilot project, regional farmers markets, etc.		7. Develop a comprehensive strategy for forest product development to include identification of new industries and markets (biofuels and biochemicals)		7. Develop regional energy policy to promote best practices and incentivize new business development	7. RAMS to facilitate conversations on community issues and collaborations	7. Coordinate community events across the region (hire facilitator to foster collaboration, coordination and support of arts, entertainment and recreation)	
					8. Expand regional rail authority to boost tourism	8. Regional farmers markets (locally grown foods) and farm to table restaurants	8. Promote and market Giants Ridge	
						9. Regional daycare expansions		

**Livable Communities Member Specific Input on Housing Related Needs – June 6, 2016 Recharge the Range Event**

Recruiting and good Safe, Healthy Homes for all towns.	CI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Dilapidated building in Virginia are being removed	CI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Workforce/affordable Safe, Healthy Homes in Cook County	CI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Safe, Healthy Homes and Rentals	CI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Safe, Healthy Homes and rentals. Incentive funds available? Do we need houses or modern rentals for millennials?	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Community cooperatively owned and operated ventures. Cooperatively owned Safe, Healthy Homes.	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Safe, Healthy Homes choices – Apartments, Condos and single family homes	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Rehabilitation of rental properties.	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Safe, Healthy Homes renovation for senior sellers and new buyers	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Good Quality, affordable Safe, Healthy Homes	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Be welcoming to all community members by using a non-judgmental approach. Raise taxes (if only it's a little) to help put money back into the community for Safe, Healthy Homes.	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Massive rehabilitation of houses, especially exteriors. Our towns are going to seed. IRRRB should offer matching money to anyone willing to improve exterior of homes, buildings, lots with AEOA with MN HFA	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Safe, Healthy Homes – make every person on social services a county employee with the same benefits and pay	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Revitalization increase usage of neighborhood – Fix up contest	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes
Rehab of rental properties	NI	Safe, Healthy Homes

**Livable Communities**  
**December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016**  
**Mineland Reclamation**  
**5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

**In Attendance:** Randy Lasky, Larry Killien, Russell Habermann, Mary McReynolds, Tammy Mattonen, Whitney Ridlon, Sara Ferkul, Raymond Jobe, Vicki Hagberg, Bill Whiteside, Maggie Holmes and Roger Weber

**Update of the other Recharge the Range Groups by Sara.**

**Update about the Downtown Business Corridor Pilot Grant Program by Whitney.** Received 9 applications, the total requested amount was \$369,000.00. IRRRB has \$200,000.00 to fund this program. They will be scoring these grants and funding. Bringing the living communities groups in to see their thoughts about the projects.

**Update from Sub-Groups:**

**Recharge Downtowns:** The downtown group has met twice since the last livable communities meeting. Had participation from Nashwauk to Biwabik. Discussed what each community, that was represented, have been doing and what they are planning on doing. Set goals and priorities for the group. Created a spreadsheet to track and support projects across the Iron Range. One of the main goals of the group is to educate the group members on downtown revitalization. How to complete grant applications or best practices from around the country. Members can discuss about what projects are going on in their towns and what road blocks there are. Group members might be able to help or provide information to other group members about road blocks they may be encountering with their projects. Networking is also a goal, connecting with people that are committed and invested in helping downtowns. Encouraging other community members that may be working on projects to attend these meetings, so they can utilize this group as a resource. Whitney suggested asking the groups that receive the Downtown Business Corridor grants to come and present their projects to the group. If anyone comes across any best practices or resources, send to Vicki Hagberg.

**Creative Communities:** This group has only met one time. Because of the weather the participation was low. Supporting the arts community is important to this group. Connecting people in the arts community to generate ideas. Encouraging people in the arts community to put their events on community calendars. Mapping of resources, and where will they be available? Also, what funding sources are available? What is available in Minnesota and what is working with areas around the country that are similar to our area? Economic impact study of arts in the community – possibly co-sponsoring that study. Discussing how we can encourage towns and cities to develop arts. Is there a way to combine arts with engineering, maybe collaborating with Makerspace?

**Healthy Active Communities:** This group has met one time and the participation was great, with approximately 15 people that attended. Three main focuses of the group are mental

health, food access and healthy communities. Made lists for each focus area of what foundations/businesses are available for each focus. At the next meeting, narrowing down the list to what kind of care they provide, what they do specifically and who would be the contact person. By creating this list they are hoping to see where the gaps are and then they can figure out how to combat those gaps. The next meeting is scheduled for January 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Communication Results:** Mary provided the results from the survey about communication results. It was decided within the group to utilize LinkedIn as a way to communicate. Mary started the group and began inviting people.

#### **General Discussion:**

The lack organizations that can work as a fiscal agent for groups that are receiving grant funds.

How can we learn from projects that have failed in the past? What were the road blocks? Encouraging entities that have worked on failed projects to speak with the group and they may be to provide resources.

**Housing Forum:** Randy provided a handout with notes from the Recharge the Range event on February 29<sup>th</sup>. He was the table host for the Housing table at that event. There were three problems that came out of that meeting. The first, lack of modern and affordable housing options to meet needs and desires of young families, young professionals, professional recruitment initiatives and existing residents. The second, communities are experiencing increased problems associated with rental properties. And finally, lack of criteria alignment of government and other funding resources, and increased need for additional tax reforms and incentive programs to improve current housing conditions. Possible solutions were discussed. There was discussion of possibly creating a housing subgroup that would similar to the other Livable Communities subgroups. It was then decided that we would come back to this topic at a later time.

#### **Next Meeting:**

*No specific date is set, it will take place in February 2017*