



Taconite Harbor Advisory Committee

Summary Presentation for Cook County/Grand Marais Joint EDA



June 16, 2026

AGENDA

1. Introduction and Opening Comments

2. Advisory Committee Process Overview

3. Educational Sessions

- **Physical Characteristics**
- **Environmental Context**
- **Economic and Market Context**

4. Vision A & B

5. Implementation Roadmap



Stantec Project Team – Main Contacts



John Shardlow



Senior Advisor



Jacob Woelmer



Project Manager



Lauren Walburg



**Advisory Committee
Lead**

Advisory Committee – THANK YOU!

Advisory Committee:

Al Tripel
Amy Brugge
Hans Kregel
Jeanne Kegler
Krishna Woerheide
Kyle Nelson
Lucy Carlson
Mark Buckman
Mark Pedersen
Patrick McGrann
Peter Clissold
Richard Furlong
Rose Thoreson
Roxanne Lillis
Terry Hartman

Speaking Today:
Amy Brugge
Terry Hartman



Advisory Committee Process

The background image shows a coastal scene with a breakwater made of large grey rocks extending into the water. A green buoy is visible on the breakwater. The water is calm and reflects the sky. In the foreground, there are large, reddish-brown rocks. The right side of the image shows a grassy and rocky shoreline with a dense forest of green trees in the background. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

Setting Expectations

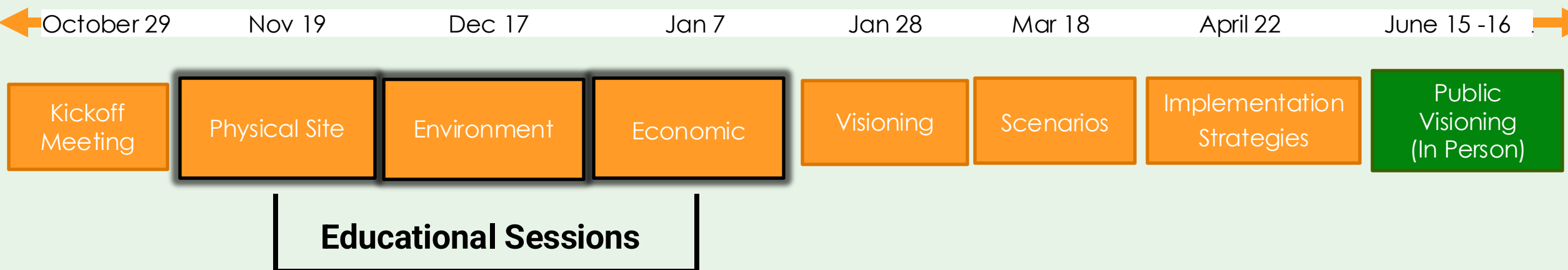
Purpose

The Taconite Harbor Advisory Committee is established to serve as a collaborative, **community-based working group** that provides informed guidance and feedback throughout the strategic planning process for the remediation and redevelopment of the Taconite Harbor site. The committee will receive and consider an abundance of **relevant information**, foster **respectful dialogue**, and help create a **shared vision** that honors its iconic location, respects its rich history and promotes **resilient and economically viable future land uses**.

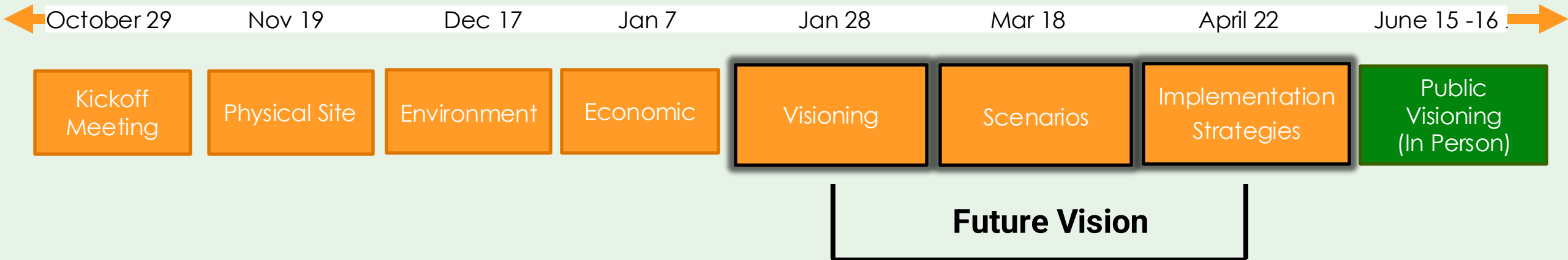
Desired Outcomes

- A transparent, inclusive and well-documented planning process.
- A shared vision for the future of Taconite Harbor that reflects community values and stakeholder input
- Two alternative redevelopment scenarios that represent different opportunities for the property
- A strategic implementation plan with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, funding sources, and regulatory pathways

Advisory Committee Process



Advisory Committee Process



Educational Sessions Recap

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, reddish-brown rocks are scattered across the bottom. A breakwater made of grey rocks extends from the left side into the water. A green buoy is visible on the breakwater. The water is calm and reflects the sky. In the background, a forested hillside rises on the right side. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

Historical Context

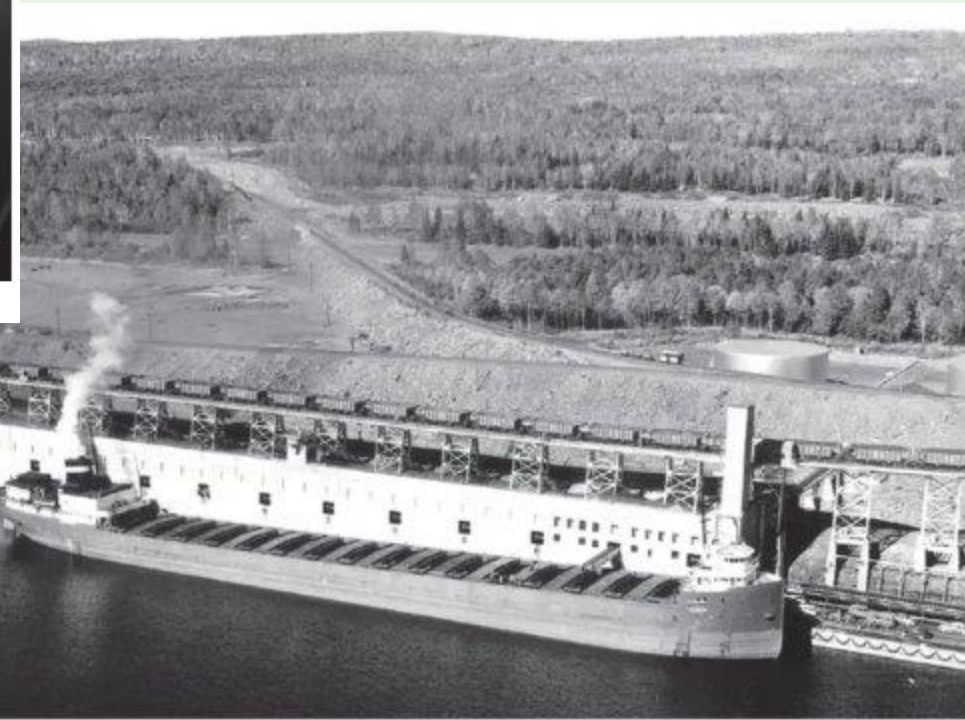
Why this matters

This site has a rich history that should be understood before envisioning its future. ***Future uses may build upon this history AND will need to be cognizant to any remnants from past uses.***

Special thanks to the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Cook County Historical Society, Schroeder Area Historical Society and Minnesota Power for providing context and information



Aerial view of construction showing temporary road to Gull Island for breakwater construction.



J. A. Campbell, first boat loaded at Taconite Harbor on September 26, 1957.

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, reddish-brown rocks are scattered across the frame. A breakwater made of grey rocks extends from the left side into the water. Several navigation buoys are visible: one with a green top and a black cross, another with a white top and a black cross, and a third with a blue top and a black cross. The water is calm and reflects the sky. In the background, a dense forest of green trees covers a hillside. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

→ Physical Context

Physical Context

Why this matters

The suitability of any property for any use, is dependent on its **intrinsic suitability** (size, shape topography, access, etc.) and the conditions associated with **human activity** (built environment, infrastructure, policy/regulations).

The Advisory Committee learned about these site conditions and associated policy to further inform their visioning for the former Taconite Harbor Energy Center site.

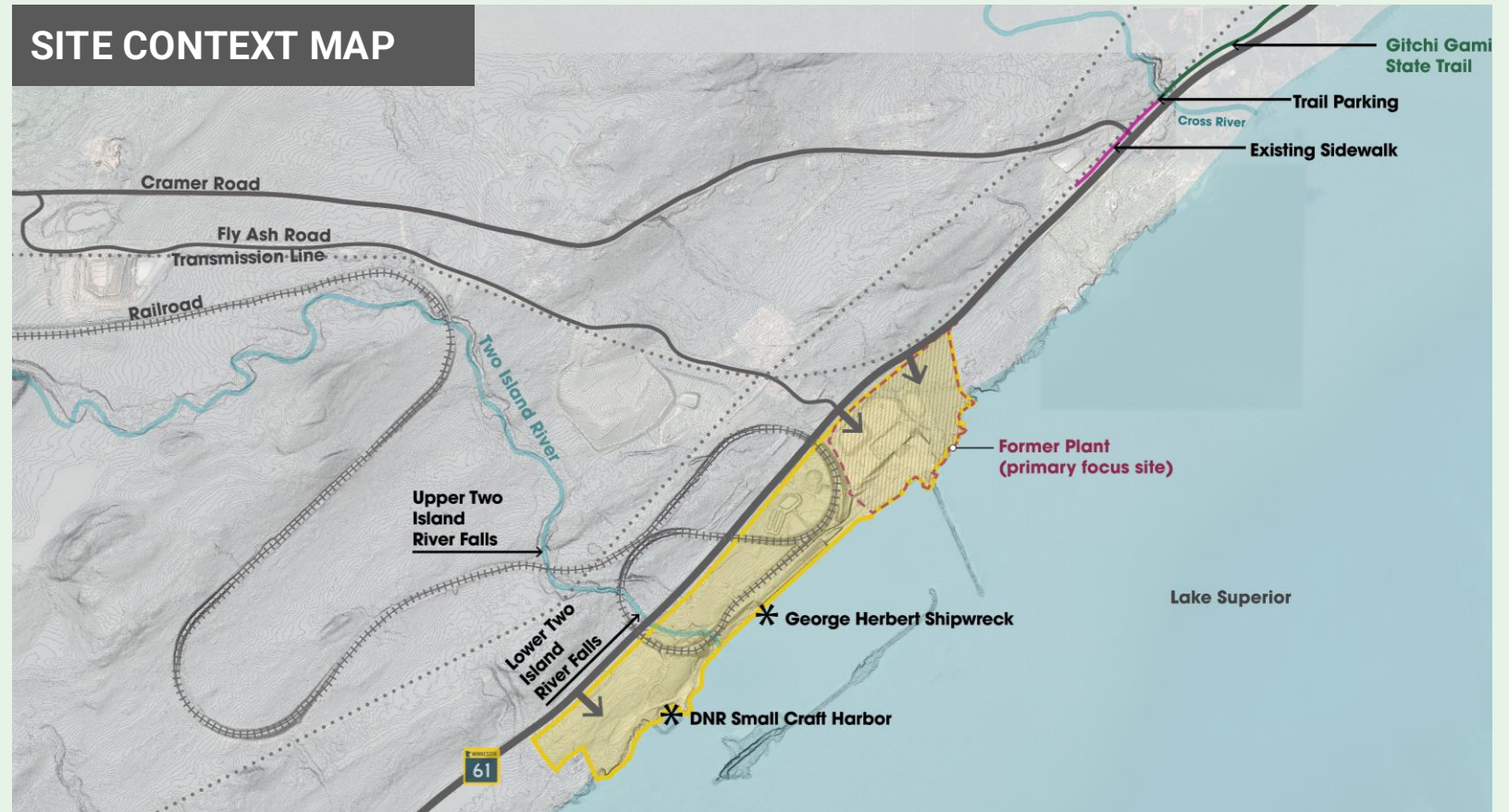


Physical Context

Scope of Work

Conduct a **desktop investigation** of physical conditions, existing infrastructure and any opportunities or constraints posed by the findings.

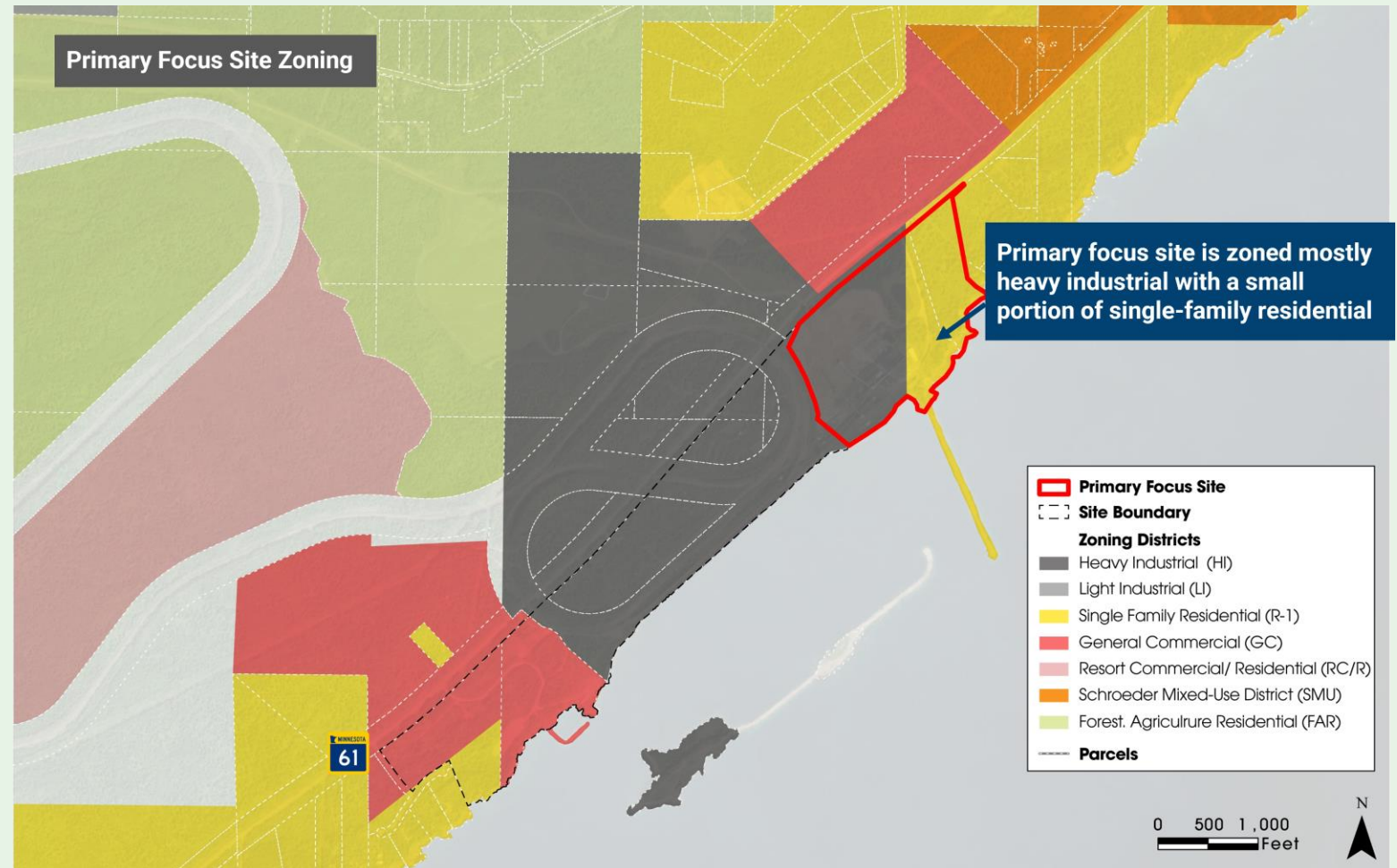
Special thanks to Minnesota Power, Cook County Planning, MnDOT and Great River Energy for providing context and information.



Physical Context – Planning & Zoning

Key Takeaway

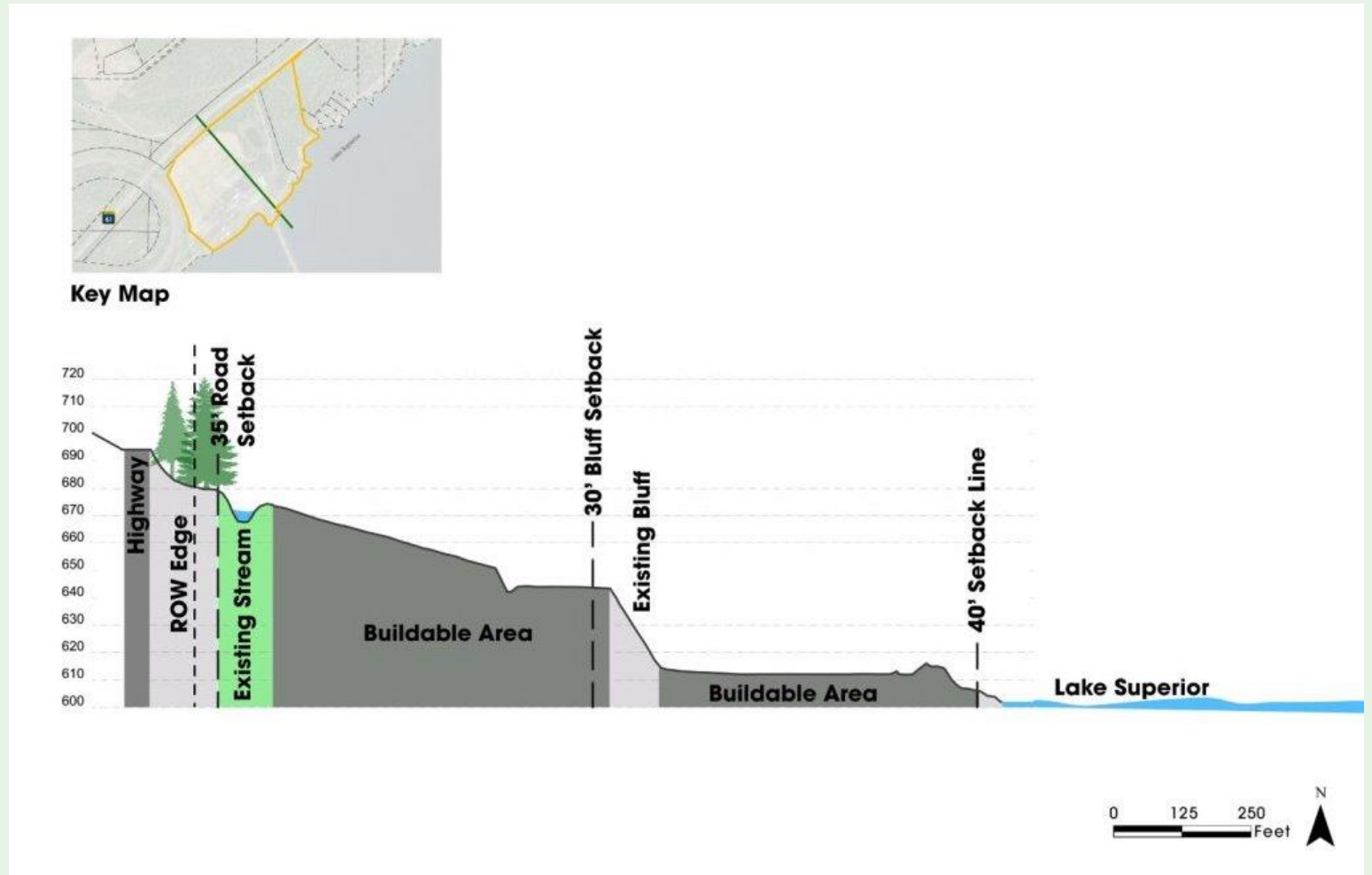
Historic use and current zoning are **Heavy Industrial**. Any reuse scenario will require a planning and permitting process with Cook County.



Physical Context – Topography & Bluff

Key Takeaway

The topography of the site slopes toward Lake Superior and includes a **Bluff**. This will have implications for the how the site is redeveloped.

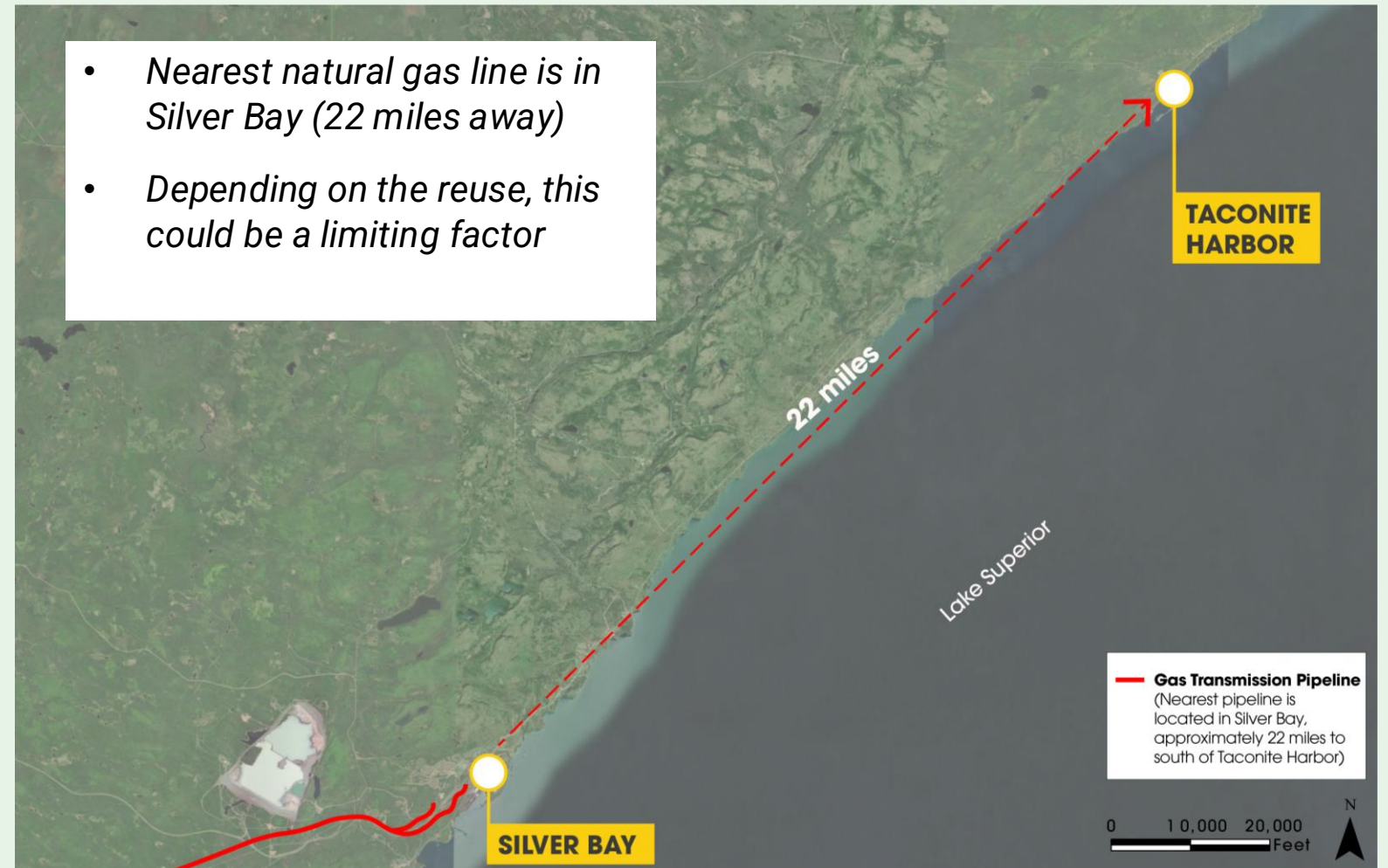


Physical Context - Infrastructure

Key Takeaway

Detailed infrastructure planning is needed to work through potential constraints including:

- **Natural gas limitations**
- Electric generation
- Water and sewer (well and septic)
- Site access updates

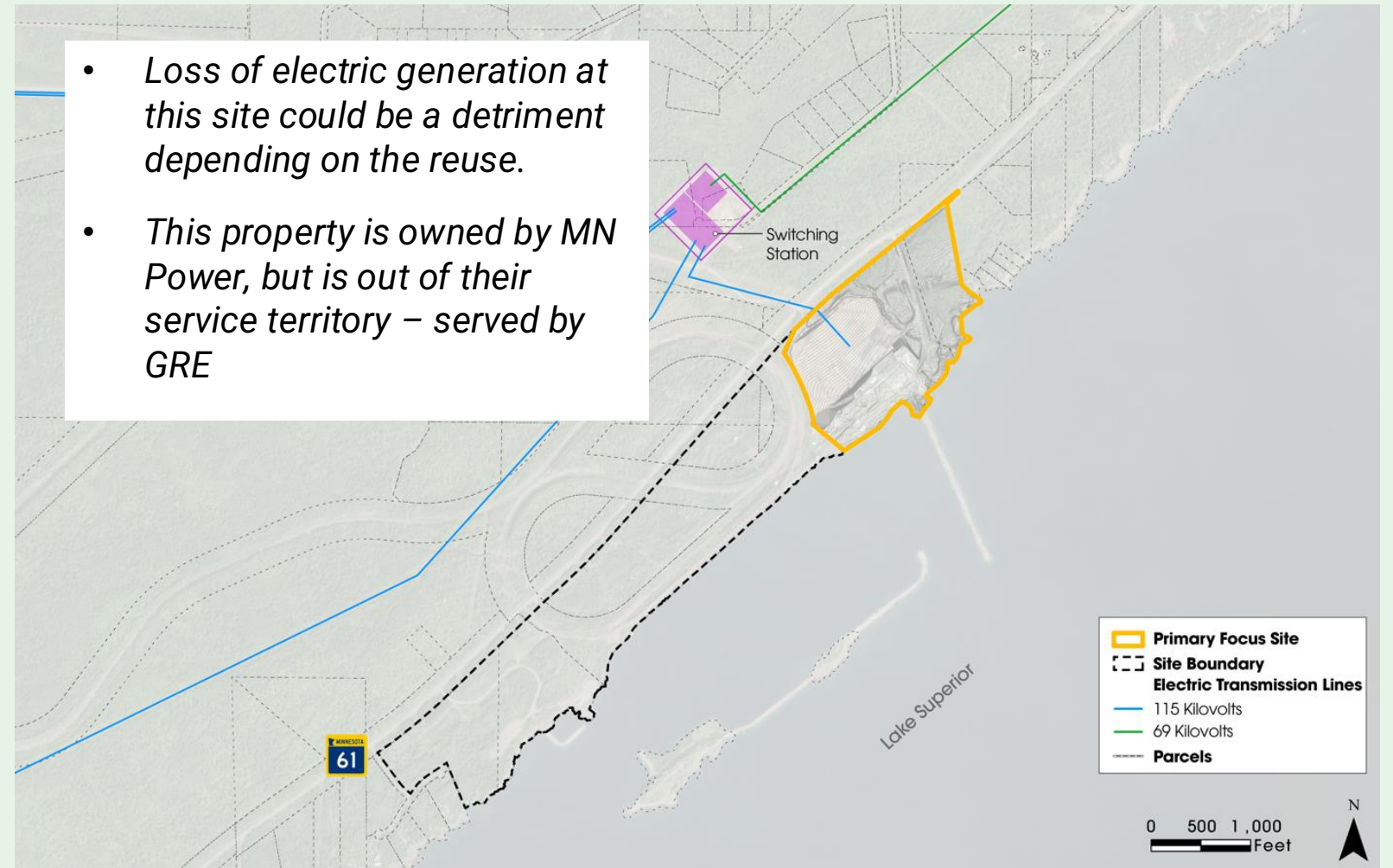


Physical Context - Infrastructure

Key Takeaway

Detailed infrastructure planning is needed to work through potential constraints including:

- Natural gas limitations
- **Electric generation**
- Water and sewer (well and septic)
- Site access updates



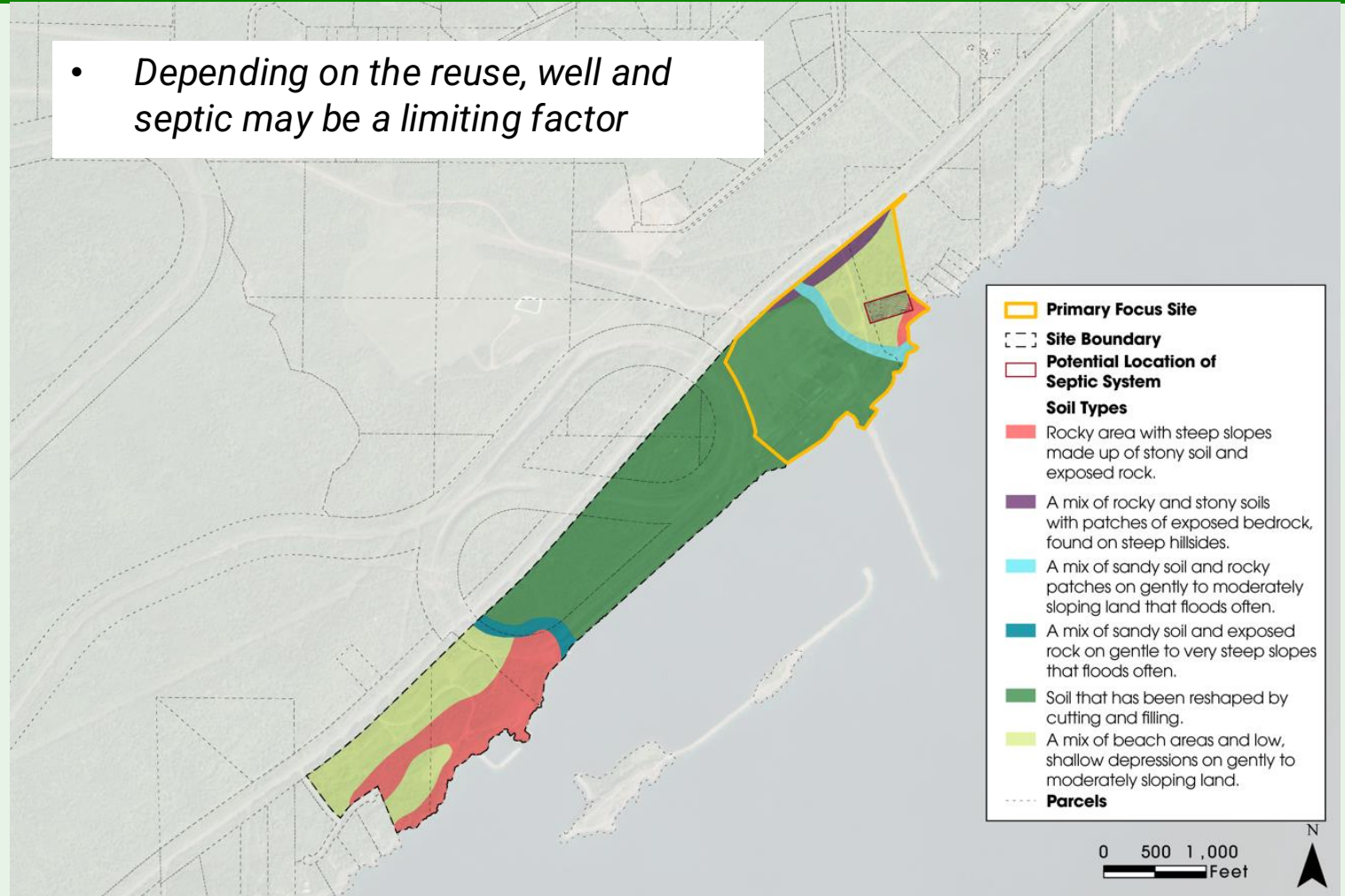
Physical Context - Infrastructure

Key Takeaway

Detailed infrastructure planning is needed to work through potential constraints including:

- Natural gas limitations
- Electric generation
- **Water and sewer (well and septic)**
- Site access updates

- *Depending on the reuse, well and septic may be a limiting factor*



Physical Context - Infrastructure

Key Takeaway

Potential infrastructure constraints exist, including:

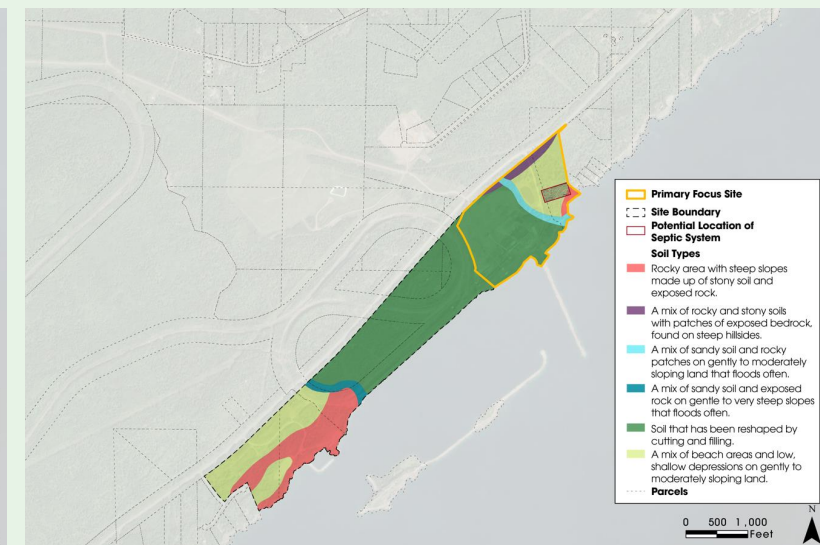
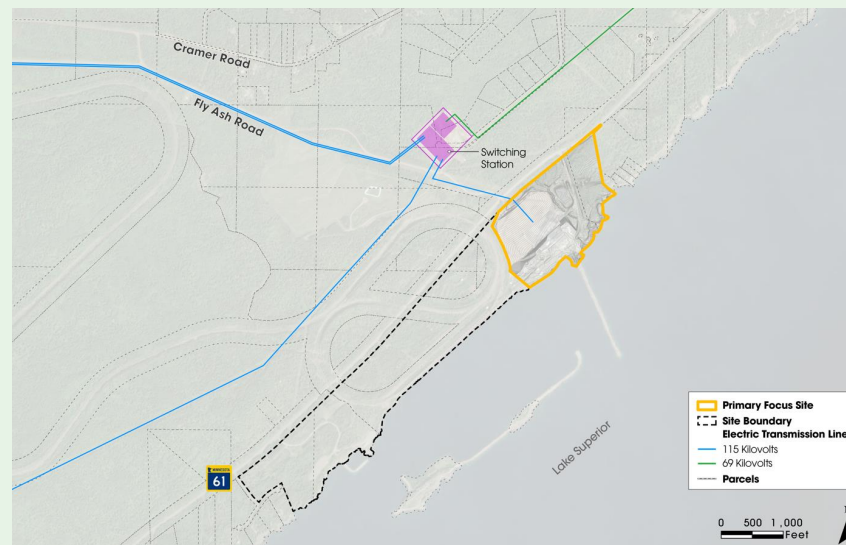
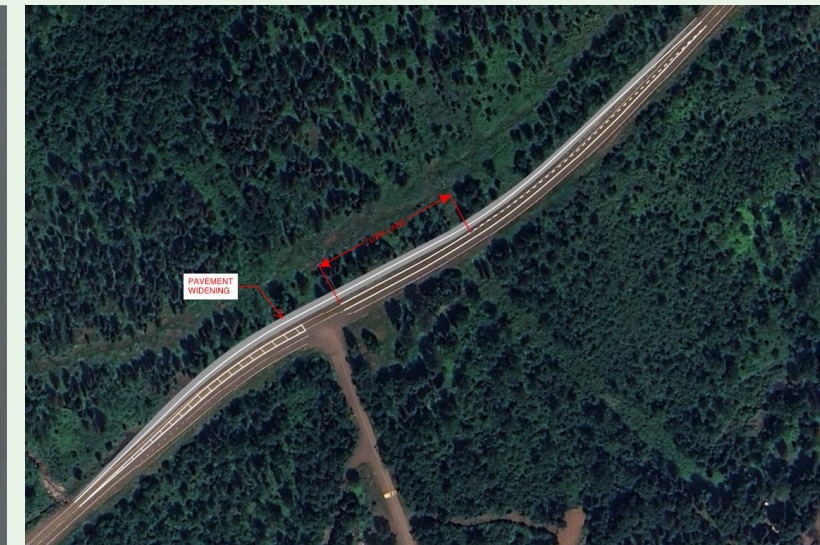
- Natural gas limitations
- Electric generation
- Water and sewer (well and septic)
- **Site access updates**



Physical Context - Infrastructure

Key Takeaway

Once a **specific reuse** is identified, **specific analyses** will be conducted to further this planning.



Physical Context – Scale

Key Takeaway

While there are site constraints to work around, the site can accommodate significant development, with additional opportunities east of the current access road.



A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, light-colored rocks are scattered across the bottom. A breakwater made of grey rocks extends from the left towards the center. The water is calm and reflects the sky. In the background, a forested hillside rises on the right. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

→ Environmental Context

Environmental Context

Why this matters

There are **environmental conditions, context and permitting** for the Taconite Harbor site that will influence next steps for reuse.

The Advisory Committee learned about these conditions and context and weighed permitting pathways for reuse.

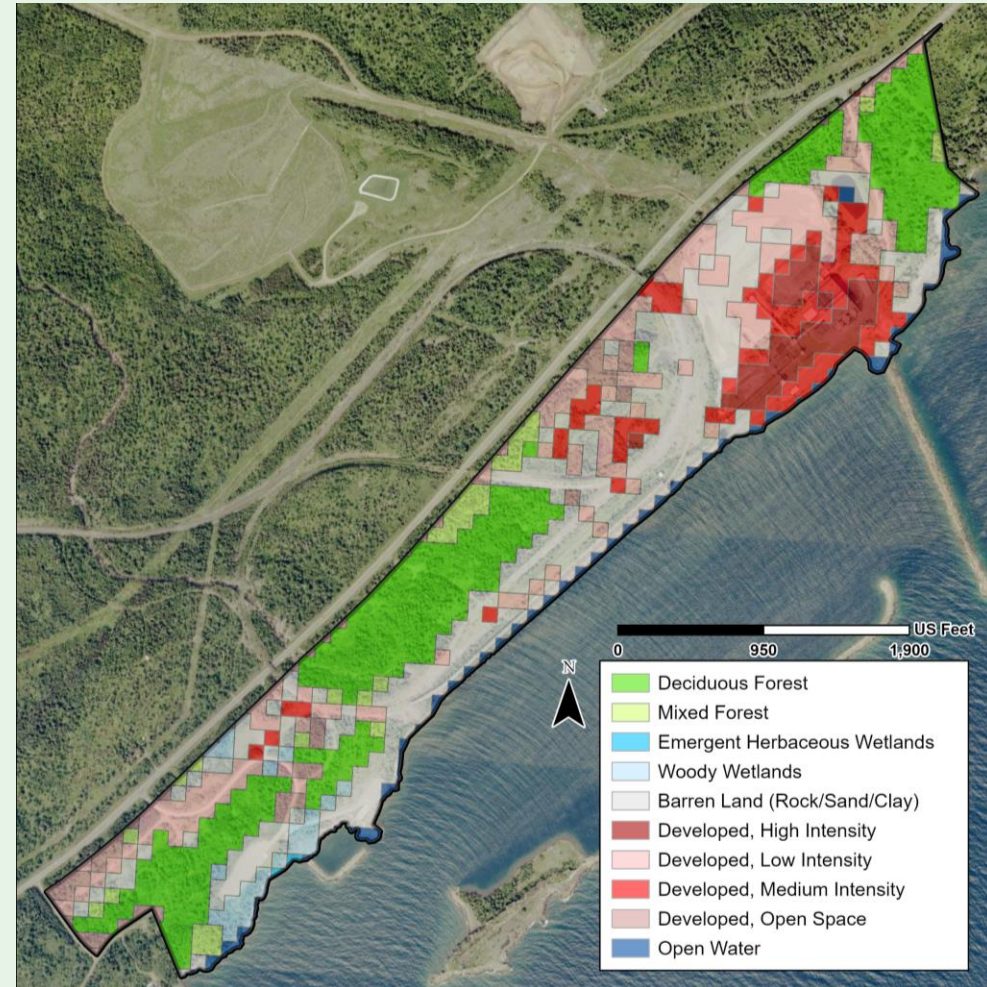


Environmental Context

Scope of Work

Conducted a desktop analysis of **natural characteristics and resources**, a desktop **Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)** and a review of expected **mandatory reviews, permits and approvals**.

Special thanks to Minnesota Power and Cook County Planning for providing context and information.



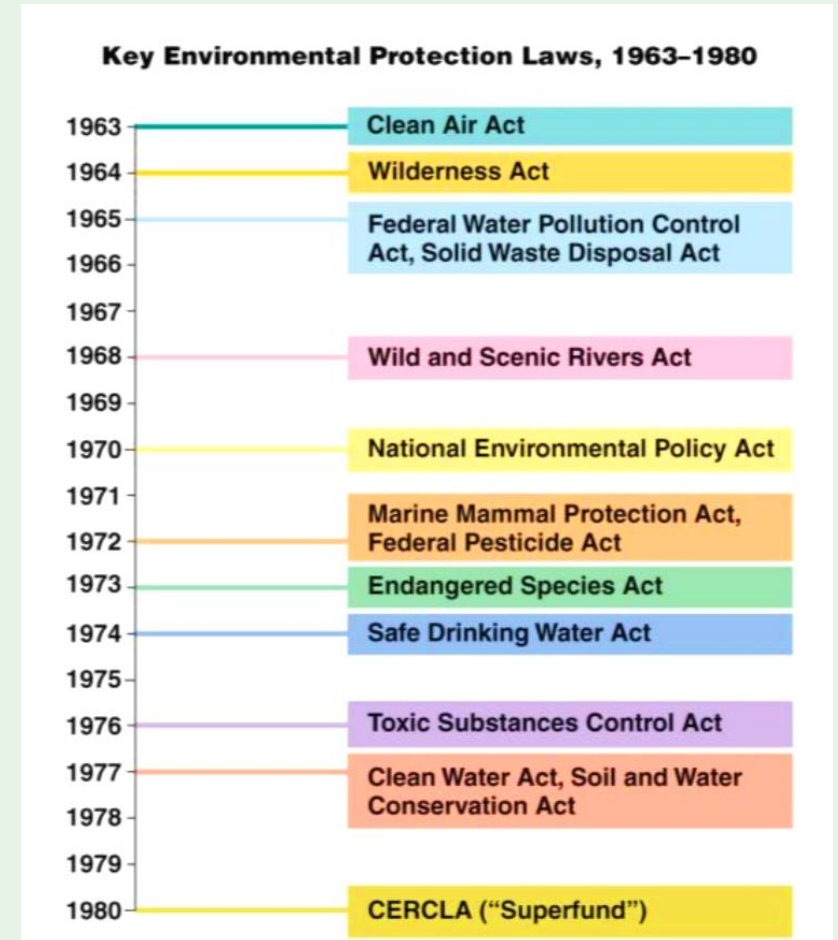
Environmental Context – Previous Use

Recognized that the Taconite Harbor site's former uses include:

- Mining
- Rail/rail loading
- Fueling
- Coal-fired power plant
- Fly ash disposal
- Housing supporting the coal plant

Key Takeaway

Former site uses predate today's state and federal environmental regulations that came about beginning in the 1960/70s. Practices once deemed routine, may now be recognized as having the potential for environmental effects.



Environmental Context – Future Use

Key Takeaway

Site is remediated to **industrial standards**.

Amount of further cleanup needed depends on how the site will be reused (e.g. , residential vs industrial).



Environmental Context – Permitting

Key Takeaway

Any redevelopment at this site will require a **complex** state and local (and potentially federal) **environmental review and permitting process**.

The scope of this process depends on the redevelopment uses.

	Residential/ Commercial*	Industrial*	Open Space*
Minnesota Environmental Review (Minnesota Environmental Policy Act, MEPA). Ex, EAW, EIS or AUAR	Likely	Likely	Unlikely
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)	Likely	Likely	Unlikely
MPCA State Disposal System (SDS)	Possible	Likely	Unlikely
MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Floodplain	Likely	Likely	Unlikely
DNR Threatened and Endangered Species	Likely	Likely	Unlikely
MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)*	Likely	Likely	Unlikely
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) and the Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA)	Likely	Likely	Unlikely

*Note: The permitting analysis explores three distinct development scenarios to illustrate a **range of potential reuse pathways**, rather than identifying a single recommended outcome.

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, reddish-brown rocks are scattered across the bottom. A breakwater made of grey rocks extends from the left side into the calm, blue water. A green navigational buoy is visible on the breakwater. The background shows a dense line of green trees along the shore under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

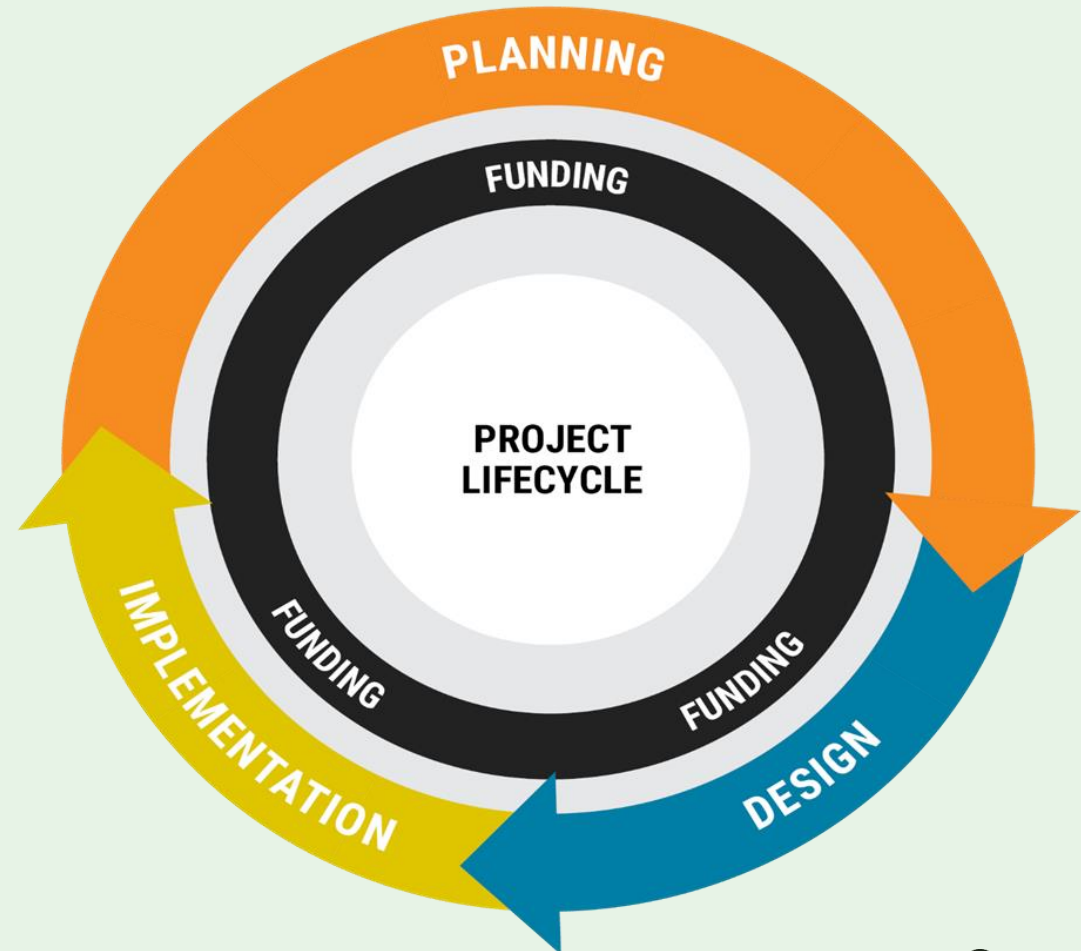
→ Economic Context

Economic Context

Why this matters

It is important to understand the **economic context** and the **demand** for different development types to conceptualize a reuse concept that is **realistic** for the Taconite Harbor site. Funding research helps understand the opportunity.

The Advisory Committee learned about the economic and demographic context, the mining economy, the market context for different types of development, and potential funding sources.



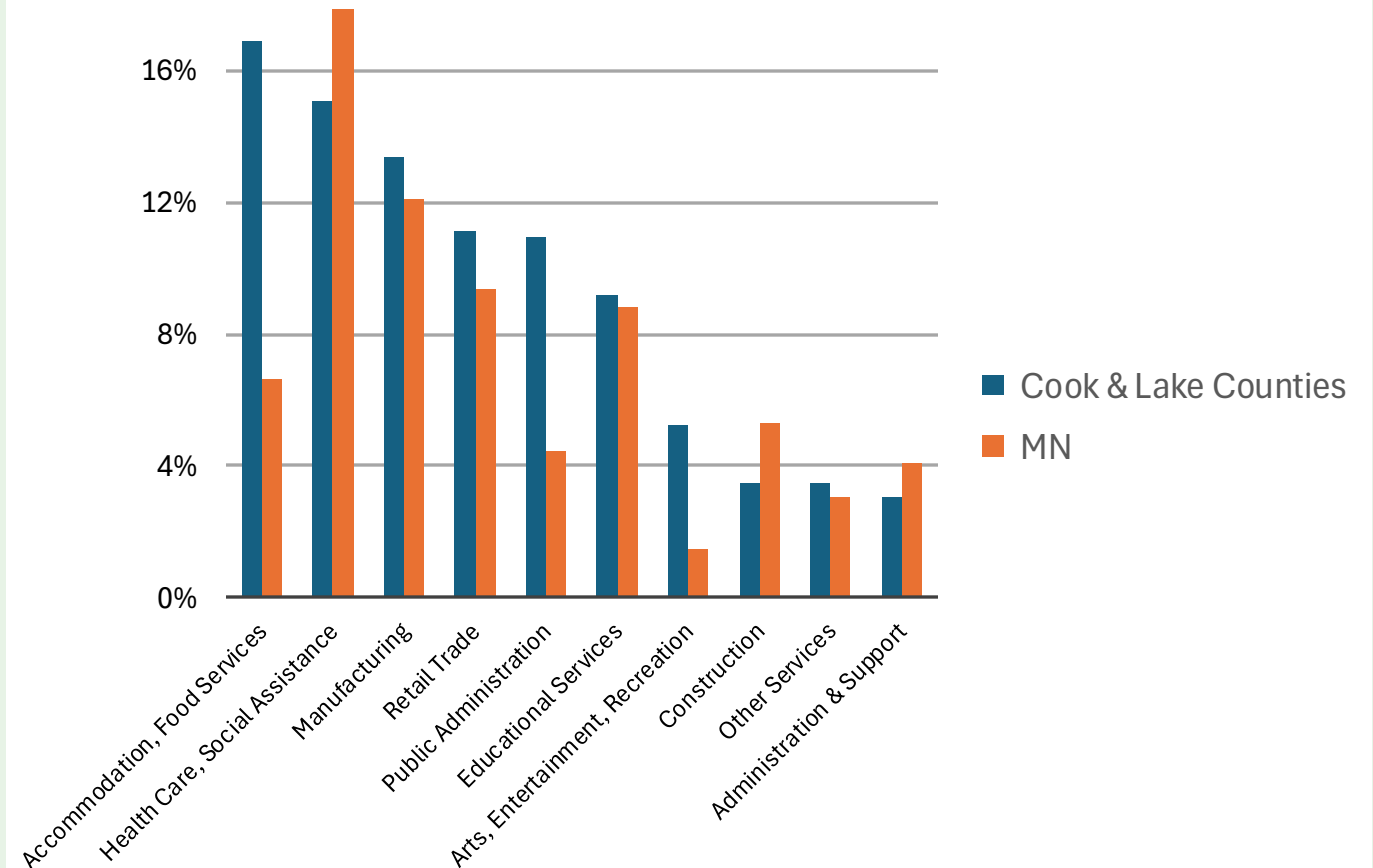
Economic Context

Scope of Work

Analyze the local and regional demand for different types of development and what makes this site and location potentially more suitable site than alternative locations.

Special thanks to Cook County HRA, Lake County HRA, IRRRB, Northshore Development Company, Visit Cook County, Mining Minnesota, DEED, Bluefin and others for providing context and information.

Jobs by Industry Sector - Top Ten Sectors



Economic Context – Mining

Key Takeaway

We can't assume that the Cleveland Cliffs facility will be decommissioned in the near future. **Any reuse at the THEC site will need to work around its neighbor.**



Economic Context – Market Demand

Key Takeaway

This site is attractive for many **different types of development** including industrial / business, resort / tourism or residential / neighborhood development.

Industrial / Business Development*

Is potentially viable.

A traditional industrial park may face more challenges than a large user or a center for small business innovation and creatives.

Tourism / Resort Development*

Is potentially viable.

A larger scale resort may have the critical mass to support needed amenities.

Residential / Neighborhood Development*

Is potentially viable.

A mix of housing types would meet a range of needs. Workforce and middle-income housing may require some form of public sector support.

*Note: The market analysis explores three distinct development scenarios to illustrate a **range of potential reuse pathways**, rather than identifying a single recommended outcome.

Economic Context – Funding

Key Takeaway

There are many ways to fund projects, but some types of development offer better opportunities.

Funding Research

- Research Potential funding sources for identified, prioritized projects
- Evaluate probability of success and return on effort
- Confirm eligibility
- Prioritize which grants and loans should be pursued
- Develop a funding strategy and schedule

“No such thing as free money”

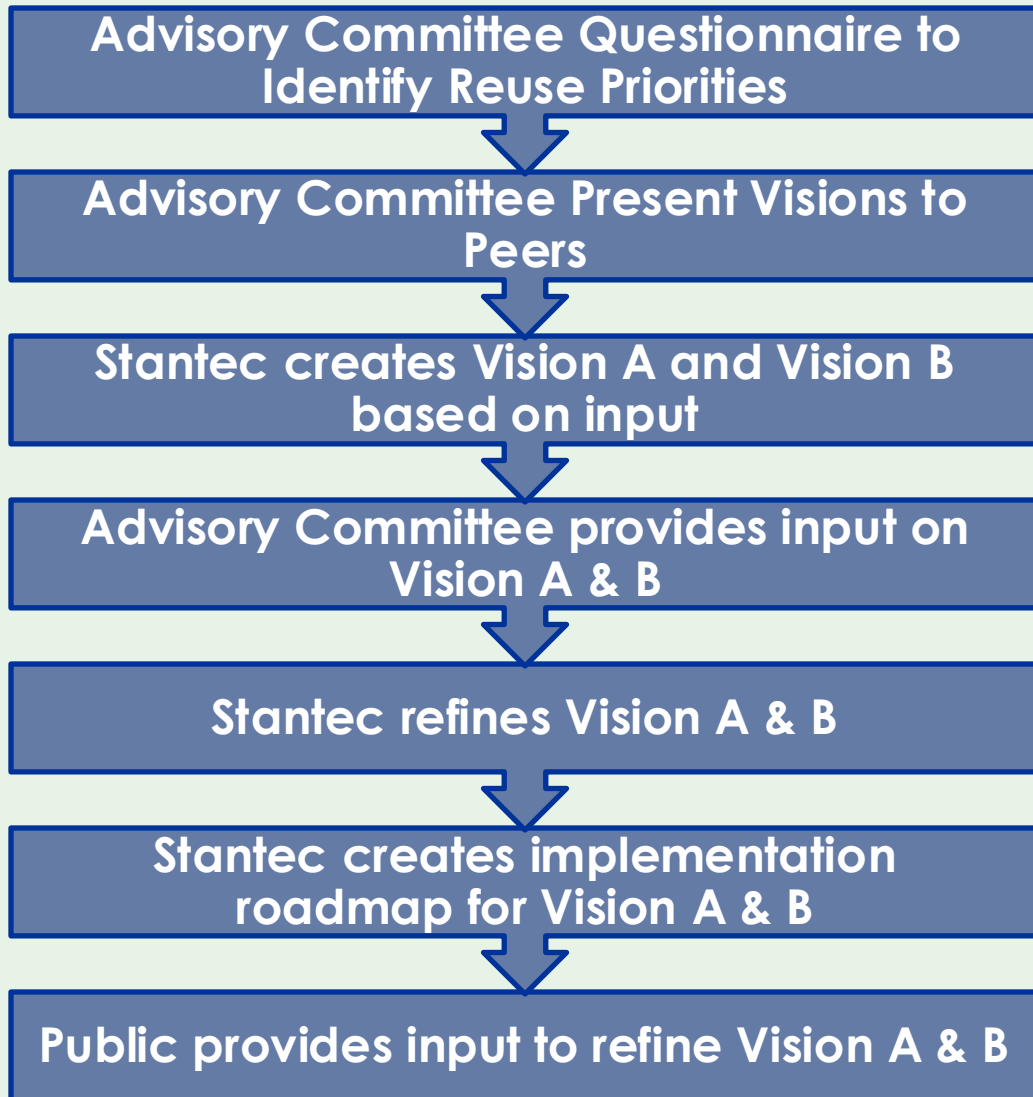


Strategic funding matches

Advisory Committee Visions

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, light-colored rocks are scattered across the bottom. A breakwater made of smaller rocks extends from the shore into the water. The water is calm and reflects the sky. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. In the background, a dense line of green trees borders the shore. A small green buoy is visible on the breakwater, and a blue buoy is visible in the water to the right.

Visioning Process



For more information reference: January 28, 2026 and March 16, 2026 Meeting Materials
[Taconite Harbor | Cook County EDA](#)

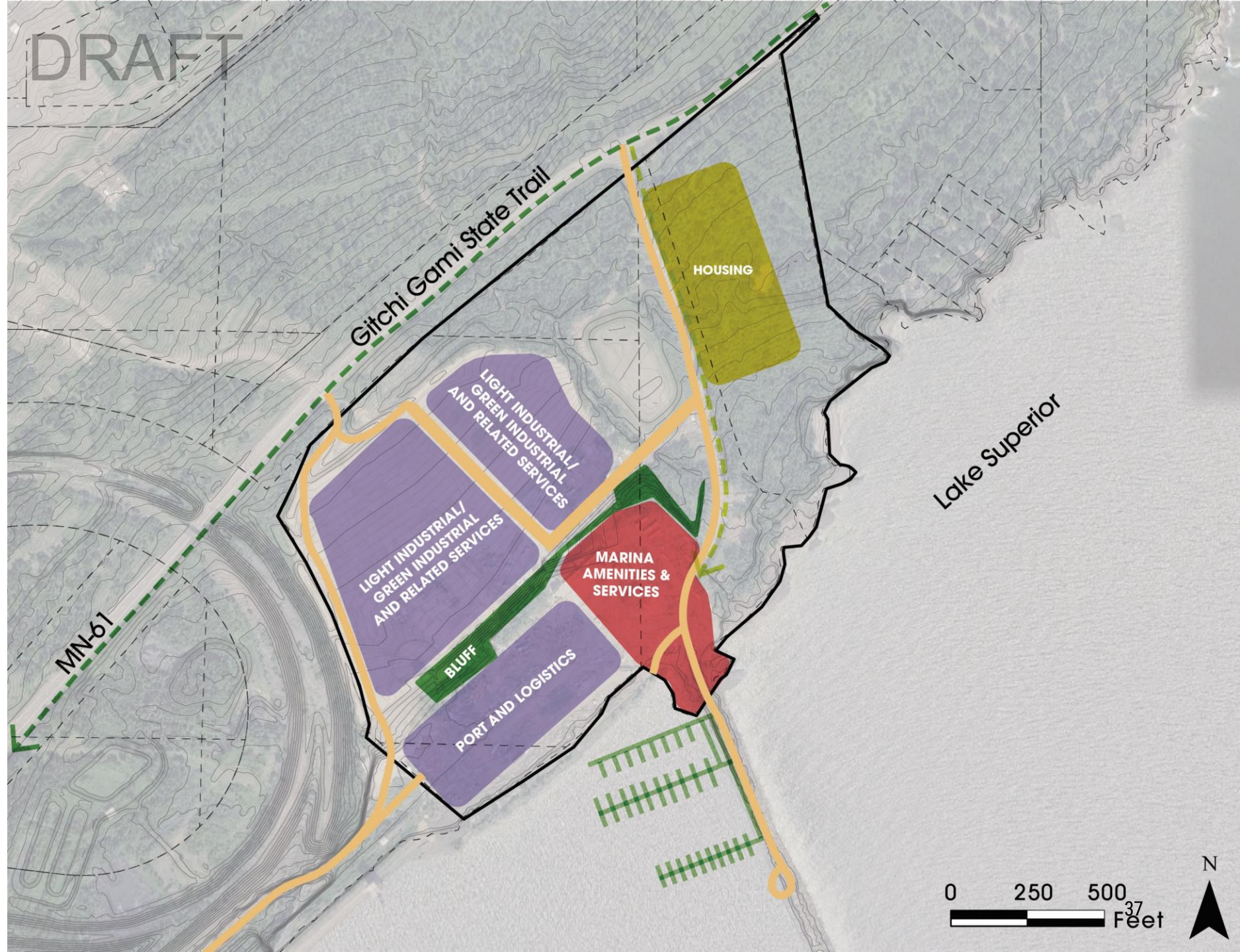
Priority Outcomes for Reuse

1. Reuse that prioritizes economic development, tax base & employment
2. Reuse that realizes the full benefits of the harbor as an asset
3. Reuse that maximizes opportunities for hospitality, lodging & special events etc.
4. Reuse that maximizes opportunities for outdoor recreation, trail head, winter sports, regional features
5. Reuse that maximizes opportunities for residential development (ownership or rental housing)
6. Reuse that prioritizes the natural & cultural heritage of the iconic location
7. Reuse that maximizes opportunities for industrial development
8. Reuse that prioritizes natural resource restoration & conservation
9. Reuse that maximizes opportunities to accommodate a unique use for the site
10. Reuse that celebrates and honors the importance of the site and the role it played in the story of the Iron Range



VISION A: CREATIVE INDUSTRIAL / BUSINESS

- Creative Industrial
- Green Industrial
- Port and Logistics
- Marina Amenities & Services
- Housing



VISION A: CREATIVE INDUSTRIAL / BUSINESS

Leverage the site's rare industrial zoning, deep-water protected working harbor, existing infrastructure, and Highway 61 visibility to establish a **creative industrial, service, and energy** hub. This development would support high-quality jobs, long-term tax base growth, and regional economic diversification on the North Shore. The redevelopment will prioritize **light and modern creative industrial uses and entrepreneurial space, port-dependent and logistics activities, green industrial, and clean energy**. The development would take advantage of the harbor's capacity for shipping and marine operations that cannot be replicated elsewhere in the region. Development may include **workforce-oriented housing or lodging** and **supportive commercial development** tied directly to employment needs, located and designed to avoid conflicts with industrial operations. By balancing working-waterfront functions with carefully selected complementary uses, the site will remain a productive industrial asset while contributing meaningfully to the economic stability, energy resilience, and quality of life for Cook County and the broader North Shore community.

MARINA / PORT IMAGES

These example images are from different places and contexts, may have a larger/smaller scale for the subject property, and are not represented as directly relevant



Marina
Commercial
Restaurant



Port and
Logistics



Boat Repair

INDUSTRIAL IMAGES

These example images are from different places and contexts, may have a larger/smaller scale for the subject property, and are not represented as directly relevant



Creative Industrial
Green Industrial



Flex Industrial
Small Business



HOUSING IMAGES

****These example images are from different places and contexts, may have a larger/smaller scale for the subject property, and are not represented as directly relevant****

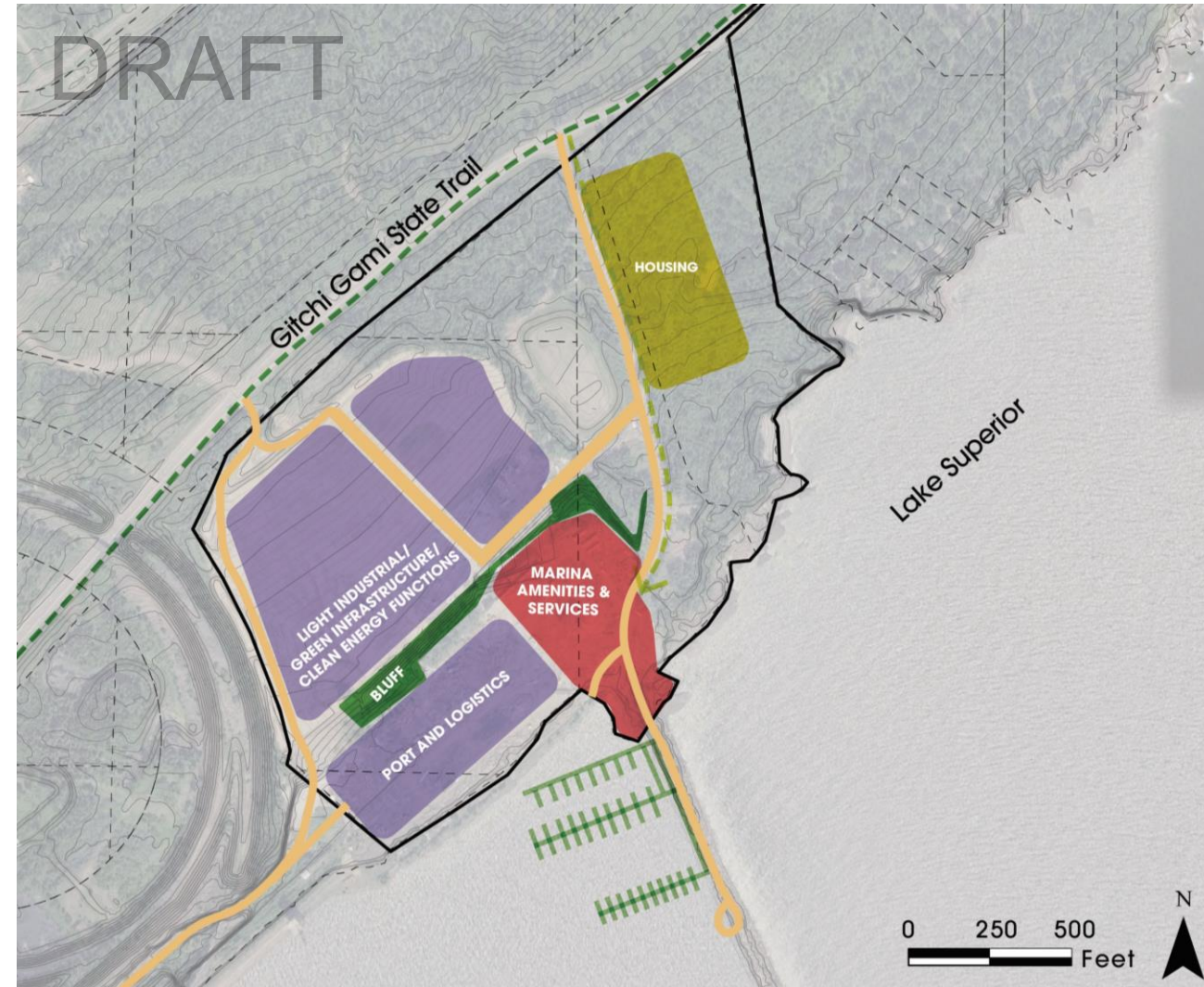


**Workforce
Housing**



VISION A – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Reminder:** The preceding images are **examples** from other locations and contexts. They are presented for discussion purposes.
- This scenario aligns with the site's industrial history, condition **and heavy industrial zoning.**
- Coexists more easily with **Cleveland Cliffs'** adjacent industrial operations.
- Any housing would require **higher remediation** and added approvals, so would likely be limited or phased.
- Most feasible for **early or interim reuse**, with flexibility for long-term evolution.

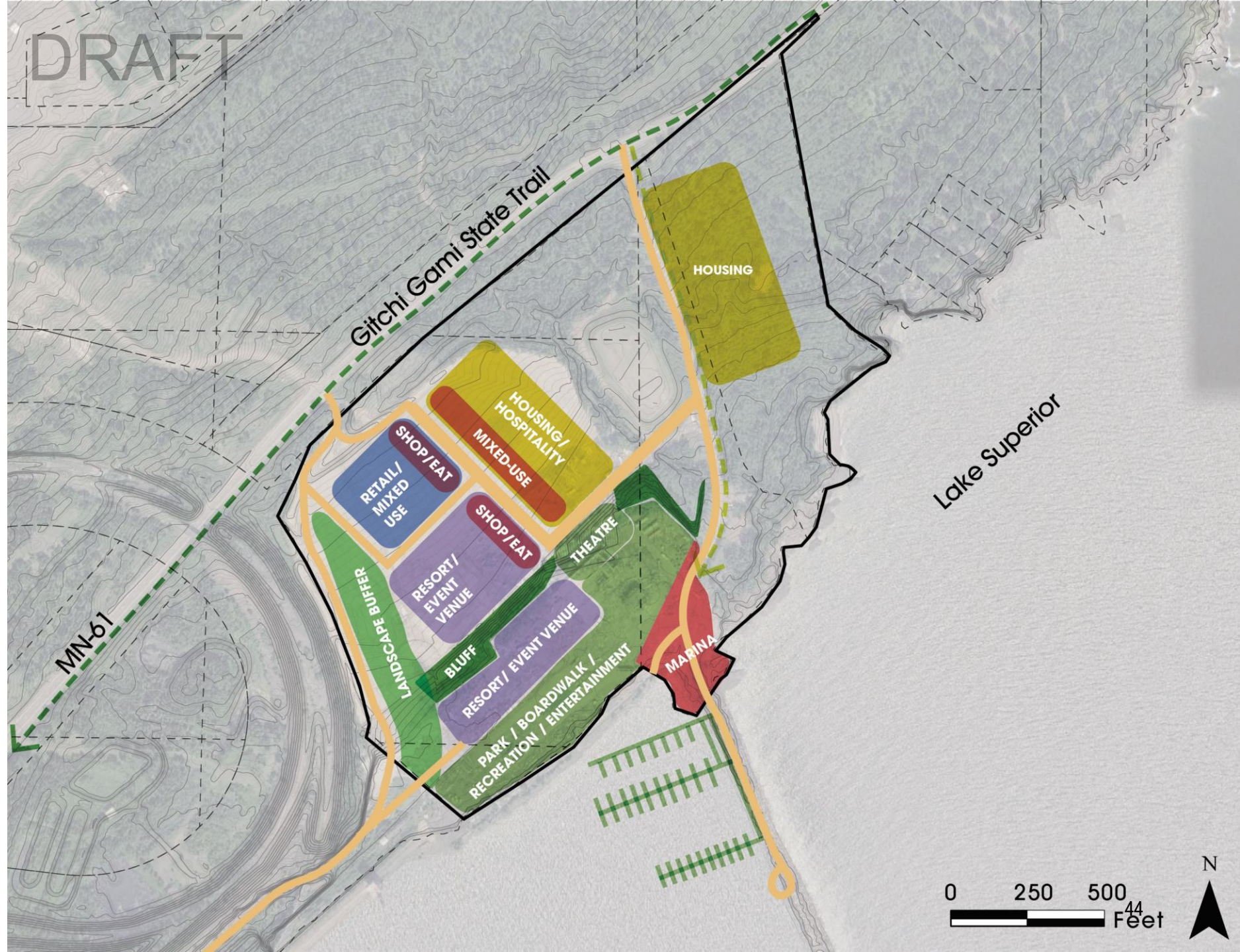


VISION B: MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Leverage the site's exceptional natural assets, deep-water protected harbor, and Highway 61 visibility to **create a compact, walkable, mixed-use development** that serves North Shore travelers and residents year-round. The redevelopment will blend a **recreational harbor and marina, destination hospitality** (resort/hotel and event center), a **mix of higher density housing** (workforce and/or senior), **coastal restaurants and retail**, and **boardwalk-oriented public shoreline access**, supported by **mixed use services** (community spaces, fuel, convenience, outfitters, art galleries) and a **pedestrian-scaled street grid**. Development will be designed to protect water quality and shoreline character, honor the site's history through interpretation and placemaking, and remain adaptable so that adjacent working waterfront and compatible industrial/shipping uses can coexist as market needs and technology evolve.

VISION B: MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

- Marina
- Park / Recreation
- Resort / Event Venue
- Retail / Mixed Use
- Housing



MARINA IMAGES

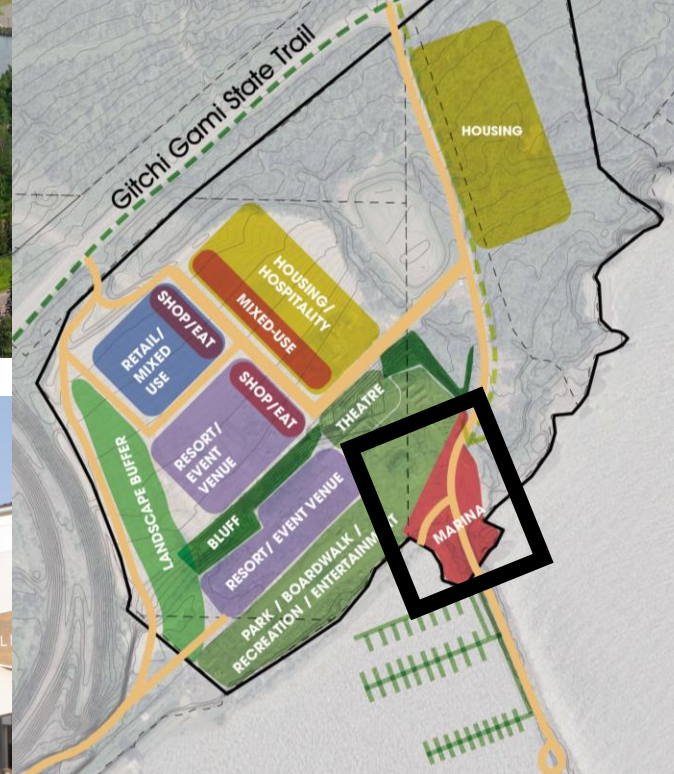
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**Marina
Commercial**



**Restaurant
Boat Storage**



PARK/ RECREATION IMAGES

These example images are from different places and contexts, may have a larger/smaller scale for the subject property, and are not represented as directly relevant



All Season
Parks

Amphitheater



Boardwalk

Recreation

Entertainment



RESORT/ HOTEL IMAGES

These example images are from different places and contexts, may have a larger/smaller scale for the subject property, and are not represented as directly relevant



Resort
Event Venue



**Vacation
Rental Units**
Recreation



RETAIL / MIXED USE IMAGES

These example images are from different places and contexts, may have a larger/smaller scale for the subject property, and are not represented as directly relevant



Outfitters
Art Galleries
Restaurant



Community Spaces
Fuel / Convenience



HOUSING IMAGES

****These example images are from different places and contexts, may have a larger/smaller scale for the subject property, and are not represented as directly relevant****



Multifamily
Workforce

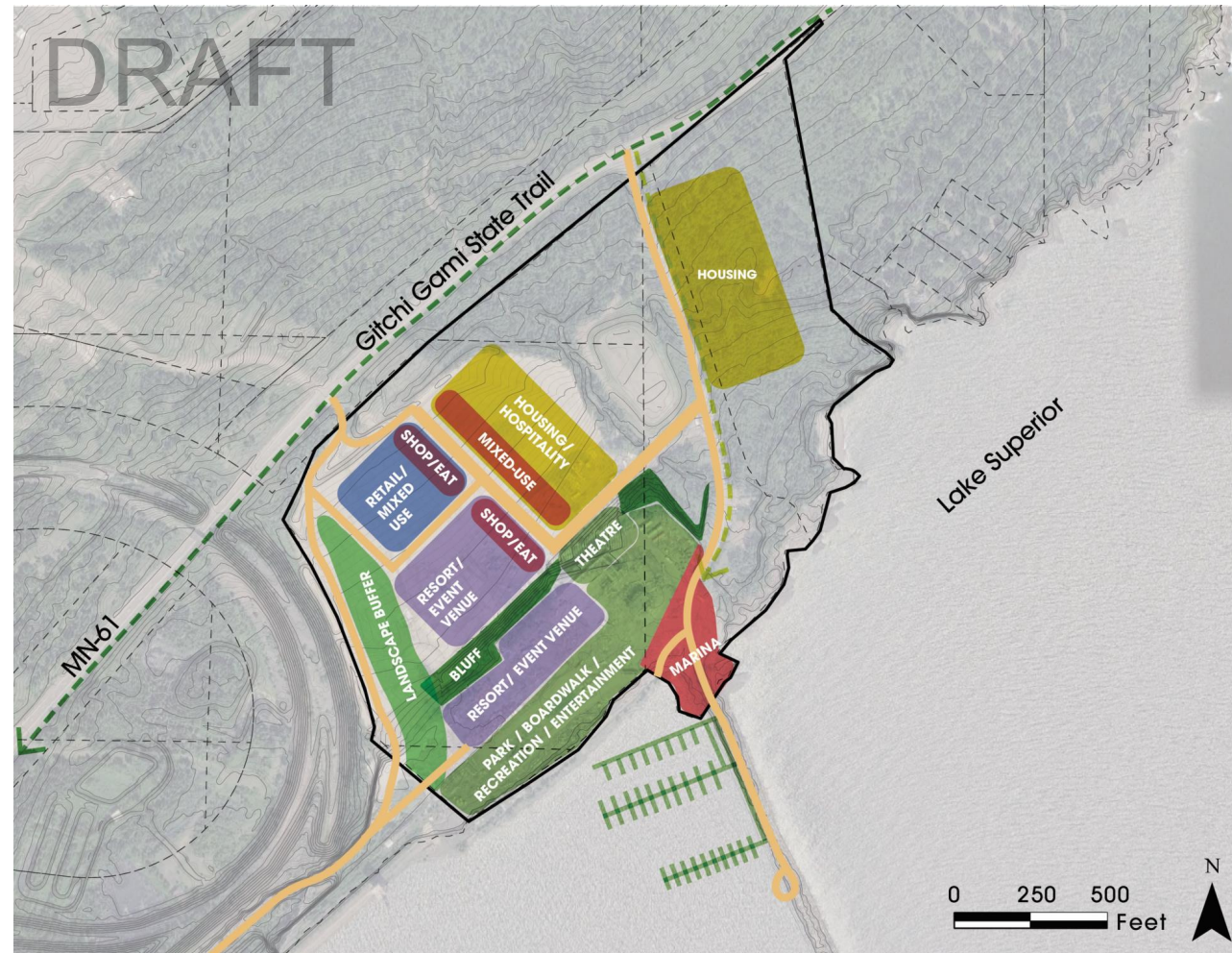


Senior Housing
Assisted Living



VISION B – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Reminder:** The preceding images are **examples** from other locations and contexts. They are presented for discussion purposes.
- This scenario introduces housing, hospitality, parks, and retail on land currently zoned heavy industrial, **requiring major regulatory and cleanup steps.**
- Dependent on **higher level remediation**, a Comprehensive Plan amendment, rezoning, environmental review, and complex financing.
- Faces potential compatibility challenges with **Cleveland Cliffs’** industrial property.
- Represents a **long term, transformational scenario**, likely achievable only through **phased redevelopment.**



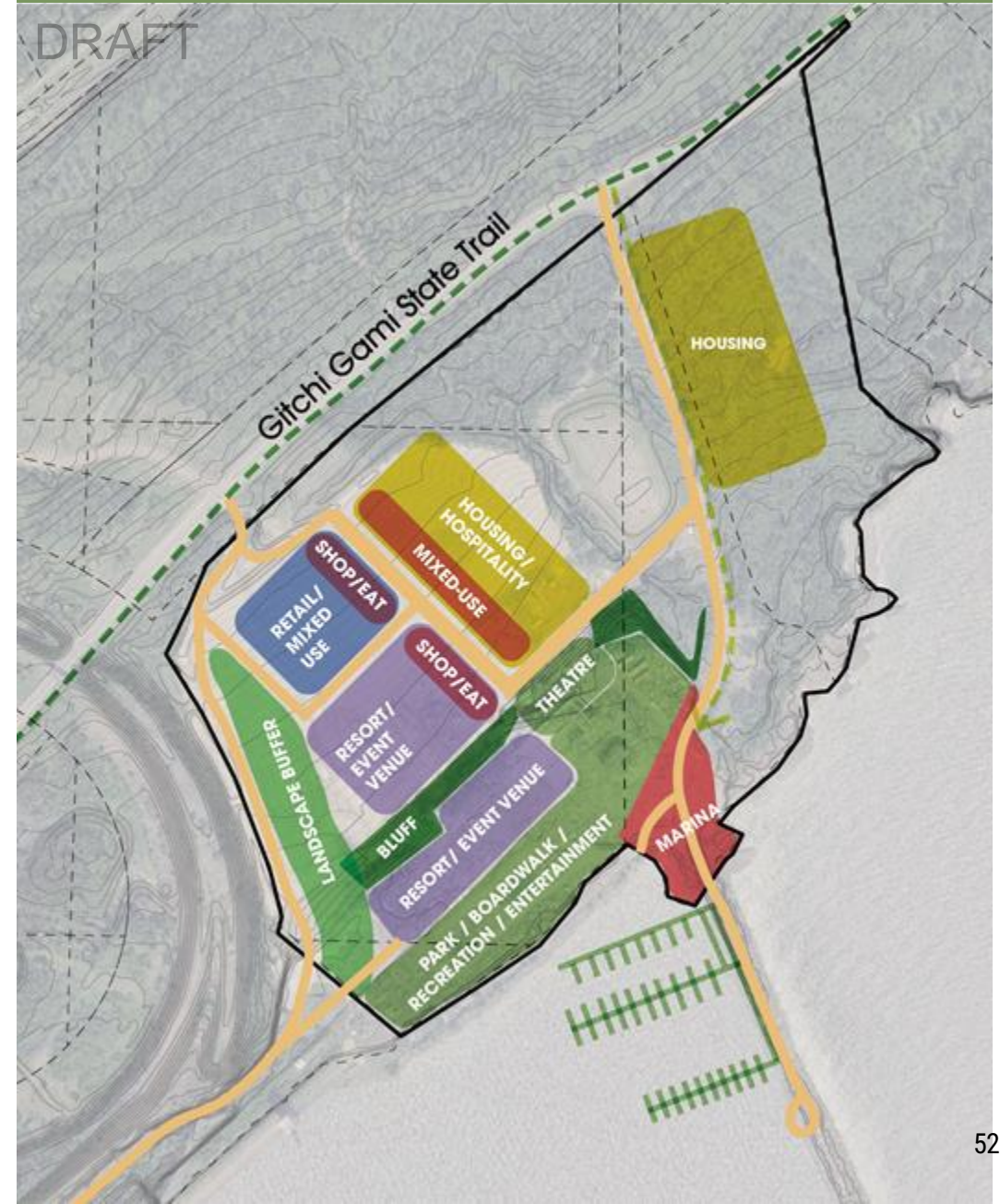
Open House – Key Themes

- Support for **mixed use** (especially Vision B) with strong interest in **marina development**, while allowing some jobs and economic activity.
- Key risks center on **uncertainty and feasibility** – environmental cleanup, permitting complexity, and unknowns around landowners (**Cliffs**, MN Power) could delay or derail progress.
- Desire for **balanced development** that includes jobs, housing, and tourism, while avoiding incompatible uses.
- Desire for **clarity and continued momentum** – the public wants continued updates and a clear project champion. There is concern that nothing will happen, but that phased development or early wins could help keep momentum.

VISION A: INDUSTRIAL/ BUSINESS



VISION B: MIXED-USE



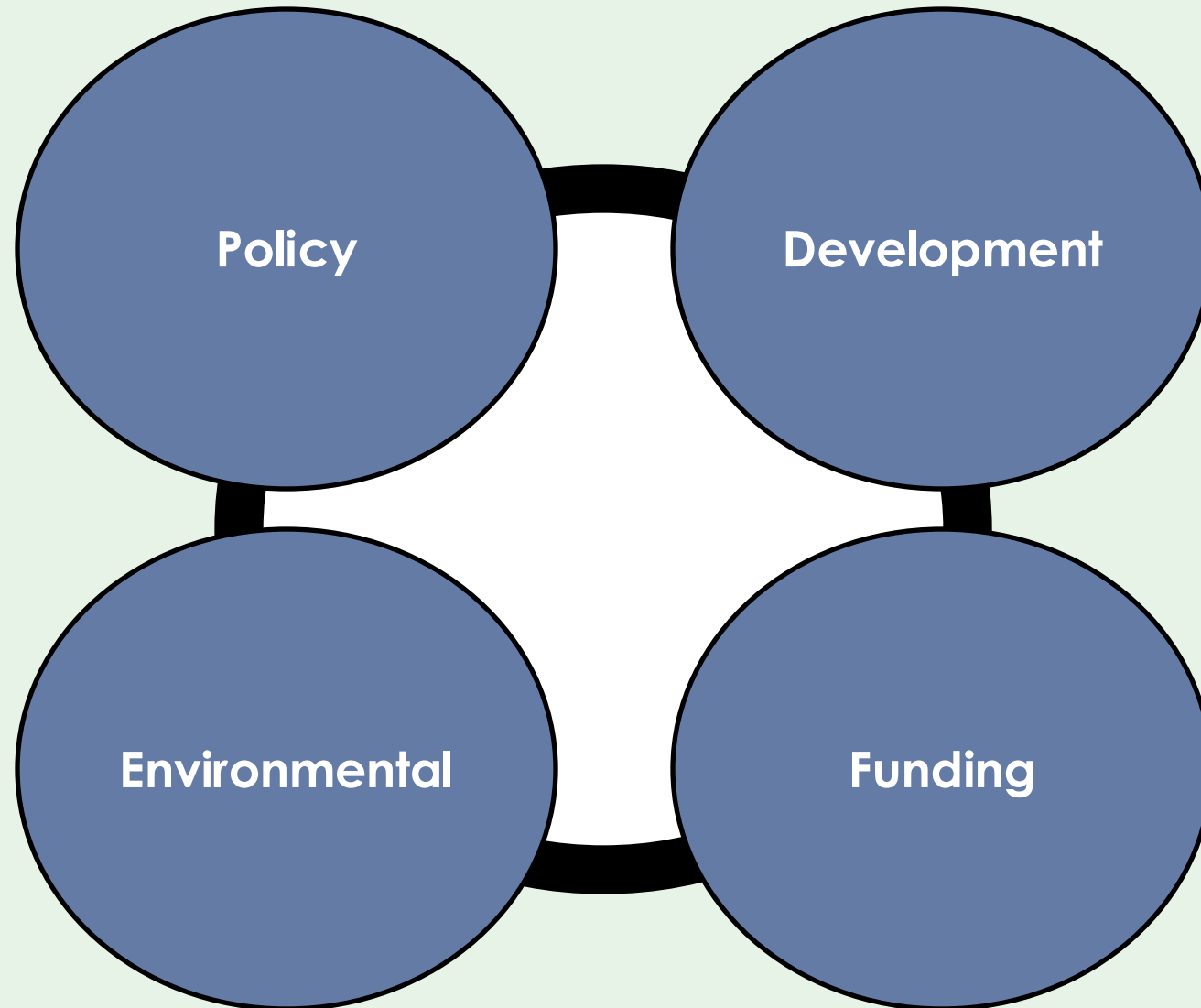
Implementation Roadmap

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, grey, angular rocks are scattered across the bottom. The middle ground shows a calm body of water with a long, narrow breakwater made of similar rocks extending from the left towards the center. A small green buoy is visible on the breakwater. To the right, a rocky shore is covered with green grass and small trees. The background features a dense forest of green trees under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Implementation Roadmap

- **Minnesota Power** owns this land. Nothing will happen here without their participation.
- These vision scenarios are very general. It is not possible to do a full implementation roadmap until a **specific plan and specific design** has been completed.
- **Cleveland Cliffs** owns the adjoining land. They chose not to participate in this process, and they retain the zoning and permits for their property, and rights and responsibilities related to the harbor.
- Both Vision A and B have a **long path to implementation**. This implementation roadmap provides a moment-in-time snapshot of next steps.
- The ultimate reuse of this land may be **phased, and interim uses** may be part of that overall strategy.
- Implementation of either Vision A or B will require a **project champion** to drive next steps.
- **This implementation roadmap is intended to identify intermediate steps to spur new development. This is not an exhaustive list of next steps. As a more specific plan and design are identified, this roadmap will need to be updated.**

Implementation Buckets



Future Opportunity: Reduce Ambiguity and Build Trust

Uncertainties & Risks

- ? Unclear access and boundaries
- ? Unknown or misunderstood risks
- ? Shifting stories and expectations
- ? Decisions feel sudden or opaque

When the site doesn't explain itself, people guess.



What We Focus on First Reduce Uncertainties & Risks

- ☞ Clarity: What's open, restricted, or undecided
- 🗺️ Plain-language maps
- 👤 Predictable process
- 🗣️ Honest messaging

Feasible & Trustworthy Site

- ✓ Clear access and limits
- ✓ Known risks explained plainly
- ✓ Consistent messaging over time
- ✓ No false promises

People like certainty — they need consistency.

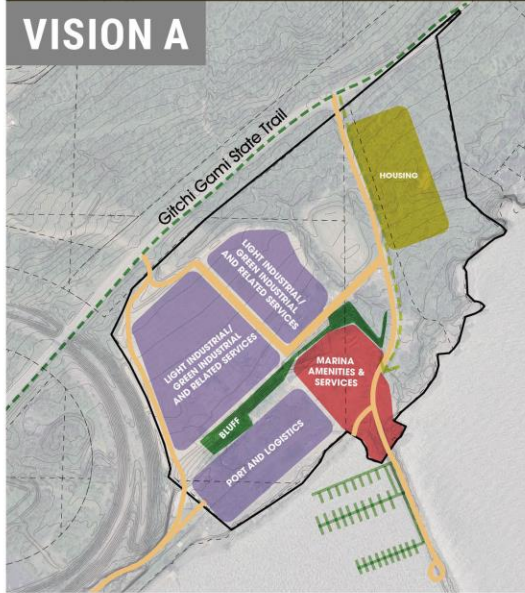
Clarity eliminates guessing. Trustworthy eliminates fear.



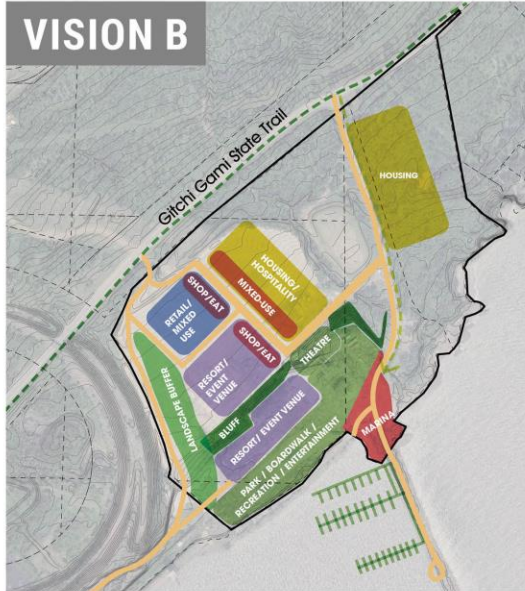
POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES APPLICABLE TO BOTH VISION A AND VISION B

Funding

VISION A



VISION B



Planning

7 Grants
\$10,000,000+ available in Funding

- Port Infrastructure Development Grants
- Economic Adjustment Assistance Program
- Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program
- Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)
- Brownfield Investigation*
- Brownfields Assessment Grant Program*
- Contamination Cleanup & Investigation Grant*

Water/ Sewer

3 Grants
No Maximum Grant Amount

- Clean Water Revolving Fund (CWRP)
- Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)
- Water and Waste Disposal Loans and Grants

Trails

8 Grants
\$8,000,000+ available in Funding

- Active Transportation
- Parks & Trails Legacy Grant Program
- Regional Trail Grant Program
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
- Congressionally Directed Spending (Senate)/ Community Project Funding (House)
- Federal Recreational Trails Program
- Local Trail Connections Program
- Community Challenge

All Uses

3 Grants
\$20,000,000+ available in Funding

- Congressionally Directed Spending (Senate)/ Community Project Funding (House)
- Minnesota Capital Bonding Bill
- Public Works Grant Program

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES APPLICABLE TO VISION A

Funding

Infrastructure** for Light Industrial/ Green Industrial Port

4 Grants
\$20,000,000+ available in Funding

- Greater Minnesota Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI)
- Public Works Program
- Redevelopment Grant Program
- Transportation Economic Development Infrastructure

** Infrastructure: Roads, Sewer, Water, Storm

Roads

5 Grants
\$30,000,000+ available in Funding

- Rural Surface Transportation Grant
- Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)
- Local Road Improvement Program
- Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program
- Transportation Economic Development Program



Port

1 Grant
Upto 80% of eligible costs

- Port Infrastructure Development Grants

Housing

3 Grants
\$1,000,000+ available in Funding

- Housing Grant Program
- Workforce Housing Development Program (WHDP)
- Multifamily Consolidated Request for Proposals (RFP)

Environmental

3 Grants
\$5,000,000+ available in Funding

- Brownfield Investigation
- Brownfields Assessment Grant Program
- Contamination Cleanup & Investigation Grant

Marina

2 Grants
\$300,000+ available in Funding

- Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program
- Public Water Access Sites - Partnership Funding

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES APPLICABLE TO VISION B

Funding

Infrastructure** for Resort, Park, et al

1 Grant
\$10,000,000+ available in Funding

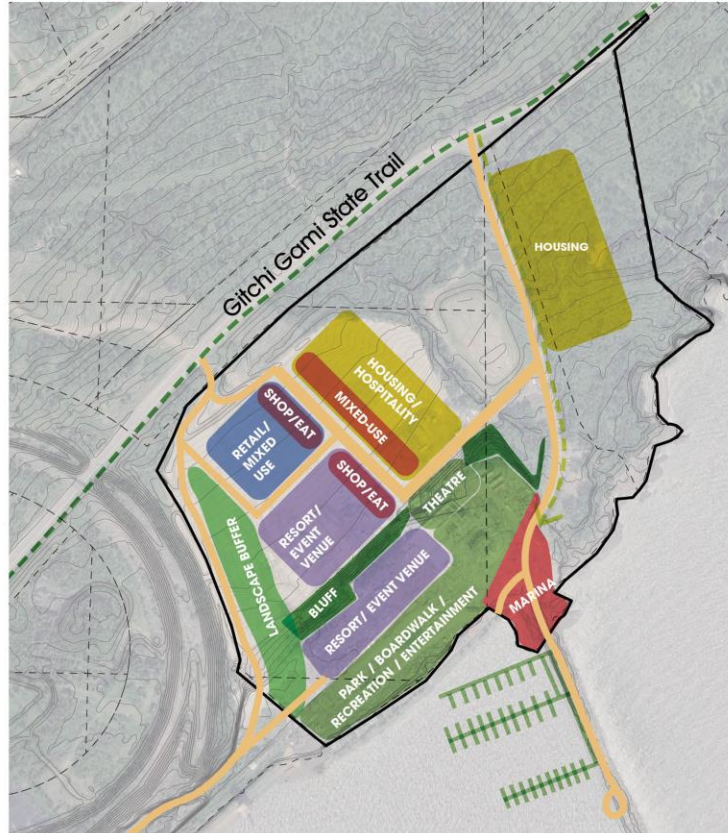
- Public Works Program

** Infrastructure: Roads, Sewer, Water, Storm - only if US EDA considers tourism as economic development for this region.

Roads

5 Grants
\$30,000,000+ available in Funding

- Rural Surface Transportation Grant
- Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)
- Local Road Improvement Program
- Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program
- Transportation Economic Development Program



Park and Recreation

2 Grants
\$350,000 available in Funding

- Outdoor Recreation Grant
- Parks & Trails Legacy Grant Program

Housing

3 Grants
\$1,000,000+ available in Funding

- Housing Grant Program
- Workforce Housing Development Program (WHDP)
- Multifamily Consolidated Request for Proposals (RFP)

Environmental

3 Grants
\$5,000,000 available in Funding

- Brownfield Investigation
- Brownfields Assessment Grant Program
- Contamination Cleanup & Investigation Grant

Marina

3 Grants
\$300,000+ available in Funding

- Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program
- Public Water Access Sites - Partnership Funding

Key Takeaways

Rich history with importance to celebrate

Former Energy Community, strong **grant eligibility**

Lack of **public site control** is a constraint. Start with what you have and try to create phases of public development and lake access where possible.

Harbor infrastructure is an asset, but **investment and public access** are essential; DNR has small public access at small boat harbor

Environmental cleanup continues and may have constraints and/or controls needed to manage residual contamination

Limited utilities and remote location shape what's possible; opportunities for pilot projects.

Policy clarity needed on community and decisionmaker desires for site reuse. What will be allowed and what is the process if "Company X" wants to build.



Taconite Harbor 1969 - Basgen Photography

Questions/Discussion