

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ORONOCO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

2024 Year in Review

In 2024, the Oronoco Economic Development Authority (EDA) was able to make substantial progress on a number of project and initiatives. The Oronoco EDA began its year preparing for a large-scale community engagement project to learn the needs, wants and desires of residents when it comes to all aspects of their daily lives in the city. This included everything from resident demographics & housing, to parks, utilities and community facilities. The resulting report can now be found on the Oronoco EDA's website and has offered many insights into potential project for moving into the new year.

Other notable projects that took place in Oronoco in 2024 include potential residential and commercial developments, the launch of the new water/sewer services throughout the city and planning for future projects. The EDA has begun to explore new tools for making Oronoco an even more attractive place to live, work, and start a business. The 2025 work plan included at the conclusion of this document, is designed to prioritize projects that will increase both livability and civic pride in the community. We look forward to more progress and innovation in the new year, and we thank you for your continued dedication to the Oronoco Economic Development Authority.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Charles', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca Charles, City of Oronoco Economic Development Authority Director
Business & Community Development Specialist for Community and Economic Development Associates

ORONOCO EDA COMMISSIONER OVERVIEW

The City of Oronoco Economic Development Authority (EDA) was established with all of the powers, duties and responsibilities set forth in Sections 469.090 to 469.1081 of Minnesota State Statutes to promote and provide incentives for economic development and redevelopment; and assist with the preservation and creation of jobs, the enhancement of the tax base and to promote the general welfare of the people of the city. The Oronoco EDA was established upon the signing of its Establishing Resolution on February 21, 2023.

The EDA board contracts with Community & Economic Development Associates (CEDA) to provide an Economic Development Authority Director and work to assist with projects benefiting the development and overall quality of life of Oronoco residents. The current Director, Rebecca Charles has been serving in Hayfield since November 2023 and her 2024 contract was for one day every week. This typically provides four days each month or an average of 32 hours each month and a total of 416 hours each year.

Board Leadership is selected at the second board meeting of each year. The 2024 board President and Vice President were selected by a motion and vote of the board on March 26th of 2024. Commissioners and their titles are listed below:

2024 Economic Development Authority

- 2024 EDA Board President: Mayor Ryland Eichhorst – Current Term up December 2024
- 2024 EDA Board Vice President: Jamie Rothe – Current Term up December 2028
- Council Appointed: Paul Pendergrass – Current Term up December 2024
- Adam Beadling – Current Term up December 2025
- Kathy Gabel – Current Term up December 2026
- Jeff Schuppe – Current Term up December 2027
- Jan Thronson – Current Term up December 2030

- Rebecca Charles, EDA Executive Director and Secretary

		Jan 23	Feb 27	Mar 26	Apr 23	May 28	Jun 25	Jul 23	Aug 27	Sep 24	Oct 22	Nov 21	Dec 19	Total Absences
BOARD MEMBERS														
Ryland	Eichhorst												A	1
Jamie	Rothe				A	A					A			3
Adam	Beadling	A					A				A			3
Jeff	Schuppe			A		A							A	3
Jan	Thronson	A												1
Paul	Pendergrass												A	1
Kathy	Gabel						A			A				2
STAFF														
Rebecca	Charles													0
Jason	Baker												A	1

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

ENHANCEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

EDA Board Member Training

In February, CEDA Staff attended the EDA Meeting for the purpose of providing board member training for the Oronoco Economic Development Authority. As a new authority, with all new board members, training was provided to ensure all board members were aware of state statutes, what Economic Development is and ways that an EDA can work to achieve its goals.

Establishment of Oronoco EDA Bylaws

Bylaws are a set of rules and regulations that guide the day-to-day operations and decision-making process of the Authority. Bylaws are typically created upon the establishment and outline the rights, responsibilities and procedures for its members, directors, officers and committees. Bylaws may be amended or revised as needed by a majority of its members. Bylaws for the Oronoco EDA were drafted and presented to the EDA in January of 2024. Bylaws were approved and finalized on March 26th, 2024.

EDA Training

At the January meeting, CEDA Vice President Chris Giesen attended the EDA's monthly meeting to provide a formal training to commissioners as to how an EDA functions, its powers and some examples of the ways that the EDA can leverage its abilities to assist the community with development. This provided an opportunity for commissioners to ask questions and gain clarification on any topic associated with the authority and its functions.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Training

As potential residential and commercial projects were brought up throughout the year, a discussion on Tax Increment Financing, or TIF, took place and it was determined that the board and other community leaders could use some refreshing or initial training on what TIF is and how it can be used to assist in development. EDA staff worked with the city financial advisor to set up training for all members of the EDA, Planning & Zoning Committee and City Council.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Engagement

The city of Oronoco instructed the EDA to conduct a community engagement process to gain the thoughts, ideas, opinions and perspectives of residents related to the city, its needs, and the desires of residents related to development and the future. This process was overseen by the EDA Director and was intended to include all residents of the community who were willing to participate. The following is a summary of the process.

- 1. Project Funding:** Prior to beginning the engagement process a budget was for the full project, including staff time to oversee the process and write the final report, came out to an estimate of \$8,768.87. A grant was secured from Compeer Financials' Rural Feasibility Grant Program in the amount of \$5,000 to help pay for the engagement process. More than \$6,000 of the expenses were

staff hours and therefore were already providing a match for the project as it is covered under the CEDA contract. This means that only grant funds, and no taxpayer dollars, were used on the engagement process. Once the final report was completed for this project, a copy was provided to Compeer Financial to close out the grant process with the organization. At the conclusion of the project, the EDA came in \$1,297.37 under budget.

2. Project Marketing:

- QR Codes: A QR code was developed and was included in all marketing materials to provide a way for residents to gain instant access to the online version of the community survey.
- Posters: Posters were designed and distributed at businesses and public spaces throughout the community to share information about the Community Engagement process, the surveys and the in-person community engagement meeting.
- Print Advertising: Advertisements were designed with the assistance of the Zumbrota News Record and printed in the News Record and Shopper editions on January 24th and 31st, and February 7th, 14th, and 21st.
- Save the Date Cards: 4” x 5.5” cards were created and printed on bright colored cardstock with a magnet installed on the back side. These cards had the details for the in-person community engagement event and served as a save the date notice that could be placed on a resident’s home refrigerator. Cards were included in the mailing sent to all residents and property owners.



3. Surveys: Packets were mailed out in January to the addresses of each resident living within Oronoco City limits or those who own property within city limits. A total of 610 packets were assembled and mailed out via United States Postal Service. Each packet included several items related to the community engagement process that included:

- A personalized letter to each resident explaining the project, the contents of their packets and how to participate in the community engagement process. This letter also included a copy of a QR code that would take them directly to the online version of the survey.
- A copy of the paper survey
- A postage Paid envelope to return the paper survey
- A Safe the Date Card (magnet) with details on the in-person event.

4. In Person Engagement Meeting: The in-person community engagement meeting took place on

Tuesday, February 27th at 6:30 pm. This meeting was intended to get people engaged face to face to interact when discussing challenges and opportunities that face the community. This type of engagement is helpful in involving residents and finding solutions to common problems through discourse and activities. There was a range of activities that took place at this event that ranged from table discussions about pre-determined topics, to walking around the room independently to participate in a SWOT Analysis



over topics such as Transportation, Housing, Community Amenities and Healthcare. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool that stands for “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats”, where residents identify potential areas of growth and improvement. Residents were then asked to revisit the SWOT analysis stations, and identify topics or ideas that they find are most important or would offer the most benefit to the community.

- 5. Final Report:** Once all of the engagement activities had come to an end, all data was compiled into a spreadsheet to be analyzed. The final report was presented to the EDA at the regular July meeting and was then published on the city website and is available in the EDA section of the site. A press release for the project was sent out to the Rochester and Zumbrota newspapers for publishing.

Residential Development

Worked along with city staff to learn more about the potential Hamilton Real Estate housing development that was being proposed for property on the SE part of the city, just off of the Highway 52 exit. This process included meetings with Hamilton Real Estate Staff, research on Oronoco properties, utility maps, etc. This project has since been on hold due to complications with the City Council. Discussions are continuing to take place and the project has hopes of moving forward in 2025.

Commercial Development

Worked with area developers regarding a potential new King Commercial Development that would be located on the SE portion of Oronoco. This project would actually be across the street (Minnesota Ave) from one another. The commercial district already has several businesses committed to moving into the commercial development once it has been completed. This project has since been placed on hold due to complications with the City Council. The project hopes to move forward in 2025.

ORONOCO EDA FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Incoming Funds for 2024

Funding Source	Uses	Amount
Compeer Financial Rural Feasibility Study Grant Program	Community Engagement Project Printing, Mailing, In Person Event Expenses, Staff Hours	\$5,000
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation Small Town Grant Program	Community Branding Process	\$10,000

Outgoing Funds for 2024

Program/Project	Summary of Expenses	Amount
Community Engagement	The EDA paid out a total of \$1,474.5 for the survey mailing and \$1,100.89 to host the in-person engagement event. The remaining \$2,424.61 of the Compeer Financial grant was put towards the CEDA staffing contract.	\$2,575.39
CEDA Contract	In 2024 the city contracted with Community & Economic Development Associates to provide staff one day each week to serve as the acting Executive Director and Secretary for the city's Economic Development Authority.	\$30,607.00

The EDA does not have its own budget within the city at this time and current funds are directly provided by the City Council for any needs of the Authority. As the EDA works to establish funding sources, it is expected that a future account will be created, to be overseen and monitored by the Authority. The EDA did make a request to the City Council this year for operating funds for the 2025 fiscal year. This request was ultimately declined and the existing budget was cut in half.

2025 EDA ACTION PLAN

The Oronoco EDA has reviewed its current goals and program opportunities determining that the following items are the main priorities for the Authority in 2025. This document will be use as a point of reference for seeking funding opportunities and project goals. Goals may be added or removed throughout the year as the Authority sees fit.

HOUSING & RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

I. Develop Vacant Residential Property List

Identify vacant residential lots and structures that could be rehabilitated for updated housing or rental units and compile the data into a residential land inventory. The inventory should be placed on the city's website. Once identified, property owners can be contacted to determine potential interest in redevelopment and work to identify potential funding sources to provide some financial assistance.

A. Upon completion of the pending update of the city Zoning Ordinances;

EDA should work with area developers to recruit suitable residential developments. If needed, the EDA should explore the potential use of tax abatement or TIF to assist with infrastructure costs of new developments and make appropriate recommendations to City Council and Planning & Zoning to assist with decision making.

II. Commission a Housing Study

Work with City Council to have a housing study completed to provide guidance on housing types that would most benefit the community & provide affordability for residents at a range of income levels.

III. Rental Property Assistance

A. Explore local properties and work with property owners to rehabilitate existing structures for rental purposes as well as develop new structures. Could be useful reuse of existing structures offering mixed use buildings.

IV. Recruit Senior Facilities

- A. Explore senior facility types and feasibility and benefits of each for oronoco.
- B. Begin Recruitment of facility.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & COMMERCIAL GROWTH

V. Develop Vacant Commercial Property List

A. Cast Inquiries: Create the list of properties and reach out to property owners to determine potential for redevelopment and if any interest in selling or rehabbing the property.

B. List developable properties on state sites: List potential commercial buildings and properties on statewide databases such as LOIS, DEEDs Statewide Selection Tool, Location-One and LASSO.

VI. Small Business Outreach, Retention and Development (HIGH)

A. Business Visits: Hold one-on-one visits with all local businesses to determine individual business histories, wants, needs, plans, and concerns. This type of activity helps the city and its businesses to stay connected.

- B. Business Database: Develop an online database of all local businesses and their details. All interactions with the business can also be logged in this way. This database should be shared on the city's website.
- C. Small Business Survey/Inventory: Develop an introductory survey to collect historic data, property owner details, business structure, goals and other relevant data. This data will be loaded into the business database.
 - i. Any locations good for coworking space?
- D. Small Business Programming: Develop small business programming and learning opportunities for topics such as marketing, succession planning, expansion and others. Topics should be decided through feedback from business surveys and discussions.

VII. Business Subsidy Programming

- A. Minnesota Investment Fund: Work to identify a qualifying project with which to pursue financing through the MIF program.

VIII. Business Recruitment

- A. Marketing Package: Work to establish a packet of information for potential businesses and/or new residents that provide necessary data to draw developers to select Oronoco as a place for them to grow.
- B. Childcare Needs: Explore the local needs for childcare providers

TRANSPORTATION

IX. Pedestrian Trail Planning and Expansion

- A. Safe Routes to School Planning Assistance Grant: Apply for the Safe Routes to School Planning Assistance Grant to determine feasibility of trail expansion in the city. If the process goes well, then should do the Design Assistance Grant before applying for the infrastructure funding. Work to connect city amenities with residential neighborhoods.
- B. Highway 52 Pedestrian Crossing: Explore potential of adding pedestrian crossing to the North bridge.

X. Bussing and/or Shuttle Service to Rochester

- A. Engage with Mayo Clinic to explore a potential partnership for a route between the two cities.
- B. Research: Explore other potential solutions for establishing service for residents.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & AMENITIES

XI. Recreational Trail Planning & Expansion (Medium)

- A. Connect to Douglas Trail: Reach out to State of Minnesota to explore connection to state trail.
- B. Connect River Amenities: Develop trails to connect recreational amenities along the Zumbro River.
- C. Explore Recreational Planning: Programs with area Universities exist where students design trails based on public input and guidance. (ex: University of Wisconsin, La Crosse)

XII. Parks & Recreation

- A. Dog Park: Identify a good location and establish a fenced in off-leash dog park.

B. Identify Recreation Needs:

- i. Work with Parks and Rec to determine recreational needs and assist with locating grant or other program funding.
- ii. Work with the Age Friendly Oronoco group to determine specific recreational needs for seniors and those with physical and/or mental handicaps.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SERVICE

XIII. Increase Public Perception & Transparency

- A. Normalize Public Input: Provide easy and convenient ways for residents to express concerns or gratitude in manners both anonymous and distinctive. This could include, but is not limited to, surveys, drop boxes, & online private comments.
- B. Increase Civic Participation: Providing regular opportunities for residents to participate openly and privately with the local government will inevitably increase civic participation. Host events like city bike rodeos, parade of lights, decorating contests, etc.
- C. Publish and Share Information: Continue to update minutes and reports on public forums in a timely manner.
- D. Strict Adherence to State and Federal Statutes: Ensure all activities and decisions are made ethically, publicly and legally.

HEALTH & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

XIV. Explore Feasibility of Facilities for Residents in Need of Part or Full-Time Care.

- A. Determine Feasibility: find out how successful each type of facility could be if operating within Oronoco. If feasible, facility recruitment should be explored.
- B. Explore Partnerships: Explore potential partnerships with Mayo Clinic or other medical providers to operate a satellite location in the city.

XV. Work to Accomplish Development Goals of Age Friendly Oronoco Action Plan.

- A. Continuous Reference: Keep the Action Plan in mind when working on any new building or development.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

XVI. Community Branding

- A. Branding Process: Hire a branding firm to perform a study. Input will come from all boards and committees, as well as other community engagement opportunities for the city and public to provide input.
- B. Marketing Campaign: Develop marketing materials and strategies to market the city for new businesses, visitors and residents.
- C. Website Update: Update the website with all new branding to include but not limited to: mottos, logos, colors, images, values, goals, etc. Website will need to be kept up to date once updated.