

Alex Area Stewards have defined 13 key destiny drivers that will work to strengthen economic vitality for the region. Over the coming weeks you will read about each destiny driver and its importance to the region. If you find a destiny driver that ignites your passion for the future, call the stewardship committee at 763-4545 and become a part of shaping the destiny of our region. For more about the stewardship initiative, go to www.alexareastewards.com.

“Preserving our past, building on our foundation”

Destiny Driver - The Alexandria area will establish a new industrial park by 2011

In previous releases we've overviewed and summarized some of the information from the market perception survey that was completed by you, the general public. That survey provided the Alex Area Stewards with valuable information and direction. It is this information that has enabled the Alex Area Stewards to identify a number of regional Destiny Drivers. Again, what are Destiny Drivers? These are critical components that have enabled and will continue to enable our regional area to continue to grow and prosper as a regional center. Not unlike the visionary decisions of our forefathers that enabled the regional area to grow to what it is today, we have opportunity and responsibility to again make forward thinking decisions that will benefit continued regional prosperity and growth, the underlying principle of our stewardship initiative.

This region has a solid foundation that is built on manufacturing and the entrepreneurial spirit, a foundation that is not matched throughout the State of Minnesota. This area is blessed with a diverse group of companies that make this area prosper and grow, bringing much opportunity to our region. However, many who participated in the survey felt we needed to bring more job and wage opportunities to the region. Roughly 70% of survey respondents said they would move from this region, with roughly 39% of those respondents indicating they would leave due to a better job opportunity. This was something the stewards committee was very concerned about.

In related survey questions, only 24% percent of respondents were satisfied with the availability of jobs in their fields. Many of the respondents indicated that they would need to leave the region to pursue advancement in their fields. To improve the quality of life in the region, 61% of respondents indicated the region needs more manufacturing jobs.

To address this issue, the committee felt strongly about supporting a destiny driver that would build a new Industrial Park within the region. In an inventory assessment of the region, we found a shortage of lots that were properly zoned for industrial development, infrastructure ready, and being marketed openly for development. It was apparent to further our foundation and strengthen our manufacturing sector this shortage of shovel-ready industrial development would need to be addressed.

Commercial growth is very important in sustaining good paying jobs and retaining our talented youth to the area. The area's municipalities have repeatedly encouraged the private sector to invest in industrial land development. However, due to the high risk involved in such developments, few developers have responded. Alex Area Stewards believes the best way to predict the future is to create it. It is time for the public sector to re-enter a domain historically held by the private sector. By investing in and establishing an industrial park the region will be in a better position to selectively attract high paying companies. A “shovel ready” industrial park will provide immediate benefits to companies such as rapid project development, fast-track permitting and a favorable tax climate.

We have been competitive regionally, nationally and globally up to this point and it has provided us the regional growth and prosperity we appreciate as a region today. We must continue to be competitive regionally, nationally and globally. To stay competitive we must be positioned with a state of readiness for industry growth and expansion both now and for years in to the future. It is this state of readiness that will enable the regional area to continue to appeal and attract businesses as employers and people in the workforce.

As a critical Destiny Driver, a New Industrial Park within our Region is integral to a successful regional comprehensive and transportation plan. Planning should be coordinated at both the municipal, county and state level to maximize to use of available funds along with highway, rail and infrastructure access needs.

Alex Area Stewards believe a new Industrial Park is a critical Destiny Driver which will benefit the entire region. To compete for companies both regionally and nationally that support high paying jobs, we must be prepared. The best way to predict the future is to create it.

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