

PROJECT 412

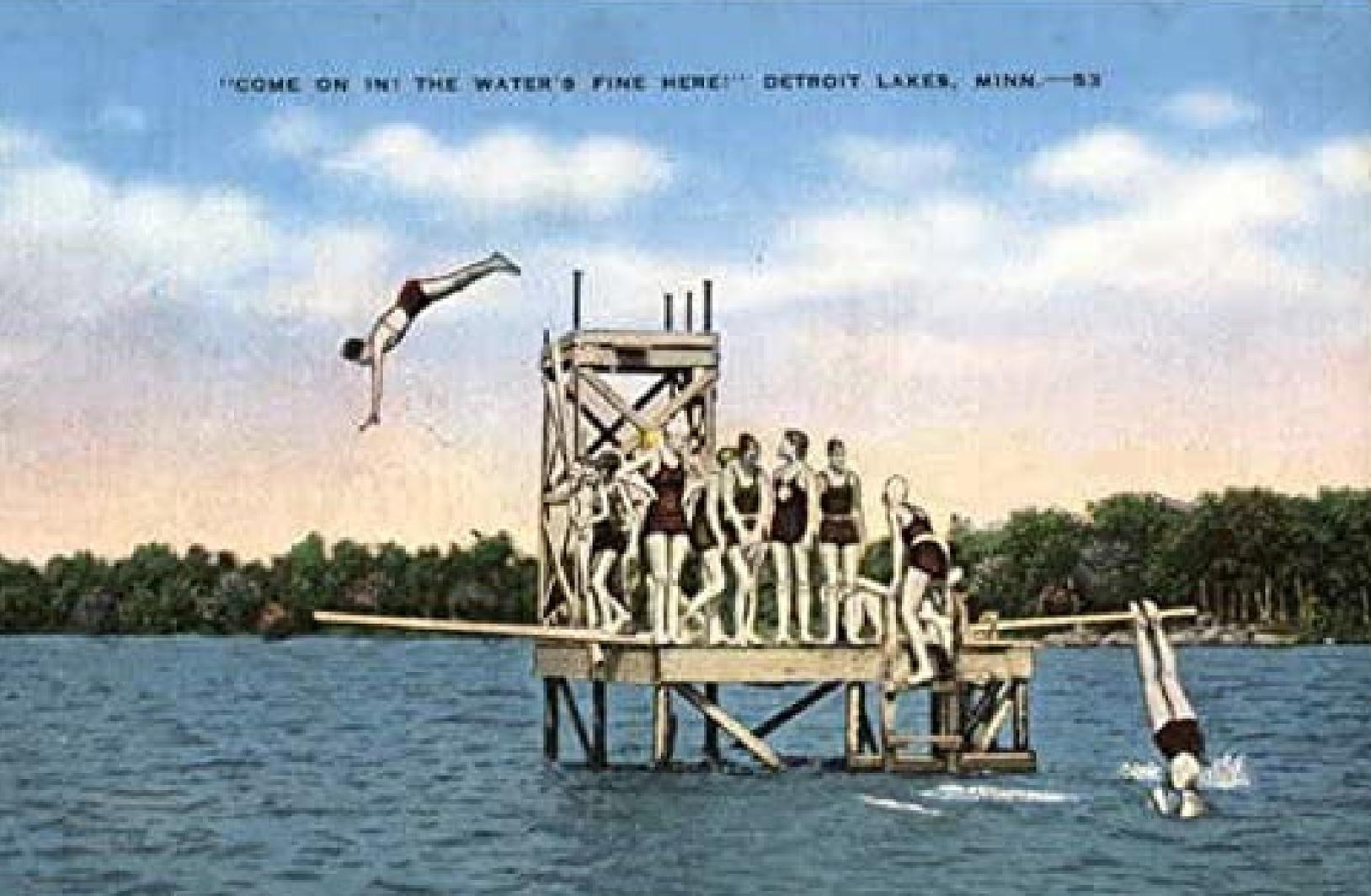
OPPORTUNITY MAP



SPARK TOWNS

Detroit Lakes has an incredible opportunity in Project 412 to position itself for the next generation of growth. The digital age has massively transformed the world we live in. Communities that have invested in that shift are thriving. Those that have resisted it are struggling. This strategy, based on a visit to Detroit Lakes in late July of 2022, offers some ideas for investment that will help Detroit Lakes become one of the most attractive small cities in the U.S.

"COME ON IN! THE WATER'S FINE HERE!" DETROIT LAKES, MINN.—53



Reclaim Adventure.



FRICTION ZONES

The same Friction Zones referenced in the report for the new Arts & Culture Commission should be valuable to planning efforts for Project 412 as well. Thinking in terms of districts within the community will help to create more opportunity and diversity, to find right-fit locations for projects, and to spread the impact of this investment out to more parts of/residents in the community. The key Friction Zones we identified are:



While we see Arts & Culture as an important tool for Project 412, we believe your work will extend beyond the arts to include other key categories of investments essential a vibrant, 21st-century small town. Our focus is always maximized adventure and our categories to achieve that include:



Millennials are sometimes called the Thomas Edison generation for the spike they initiated in entrepreneurship. The ownership class is the new middle class, with independent contracting and sole proprietorship the fastest growing categories of small businesses.

Especially after the pandemic, people want more control over their work lives. Communities that have resources to support these shifts, regardless of their sizes, are seeing in-migration of new professionals.

Project 412's smartest investments will increase support for entrepreneurs and other digital economy workers. This is the type of "adventure" drawing people to communities right now and it is the aspect of Detroit Lakes culture that is in greatest need of leadership.



Co-working spaces are essential infrastructure of the new economy. Such workspaces would help Project 412 connect to entrepreneurs and digital and remote workers spending summers in the area.

Challenges like pitch competitions, reverse pitches, empty storefront contests, etc. are a great way to bring people with ideas into your entrepreneurial ecosystem.



Fargo should be one of your best feeders for entrepreneurs. Relationships with colleges and other key partners can help you communicate the resources you are growing.

You already have a great network of business leaders supporting Project 412. Look at leveraging that network to grow mentorship and angel investing opportunities.



ONMISHOUSING

Entrepreneurs and remote workers are often looking for housing different from what their parents' generation wanted. Condos and other zero-lot-line options that require less maintenance and allow for extended travel complement many of the other lifestyle choices this generation is making. Higher density housing that is walkable to shops and restaurants makes it easier to meet other young professionals, which is key to retention.

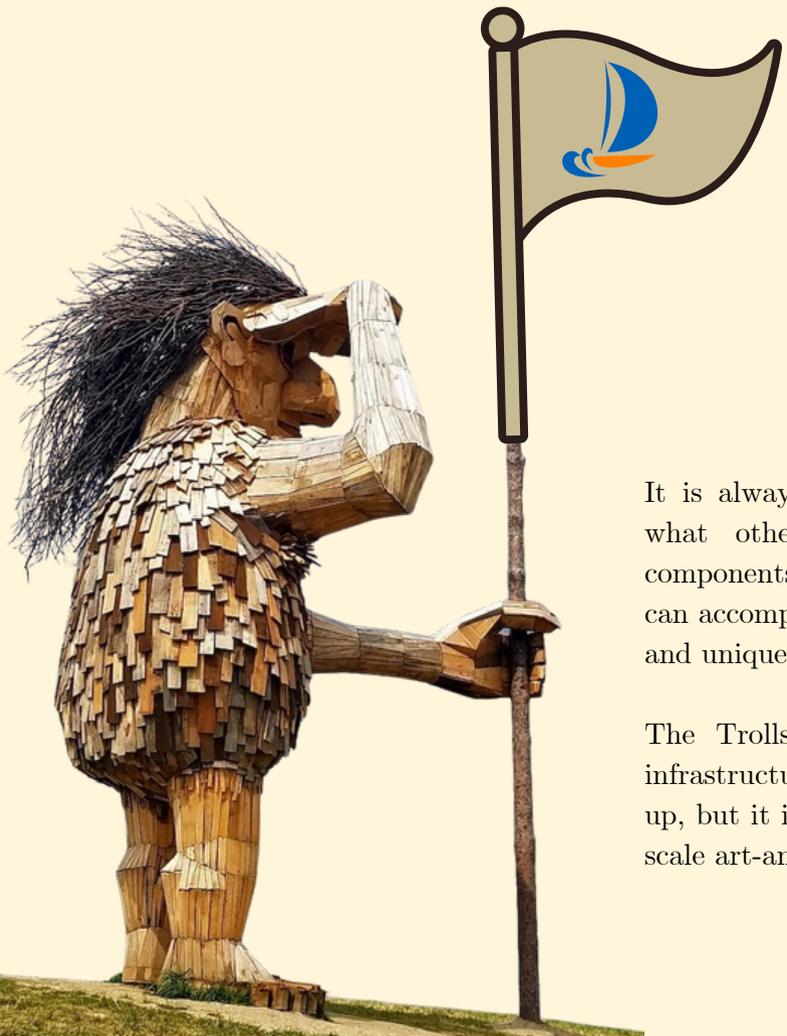
You already have some great developments that meet these goals. Other missing middle options (missingmiddlehousing.com) in the downtown or adjacent to it would do well, and Washington north of the tracks feels like a zone of the community that could support this style of living well. Development there would have significant impact on the feel of Detroit Lakes especially to people driving through on Hwy 10.

You also may want to consider an "adventurehood" -- a neighborhood of small-footprint homes that integrate outdoor recreation amenities for the people living there. The American Legion Campground is already laid out for such a development and could attract kayakers and other lake recreation that doesn't require a dock. A development near Detroit Mountain could include a pump track or other connecting trail systems to draw bikers.

Smaller footprints, zero lot lines, and higher density all help with affordability, which will increase ownership among younger professionals, increasing the likelihood that they stay.



An "Adventurehood" near Detroit Mountain that integrated its own trails would be an ideal place to live for outdoorsy young professionals.



It is easy to get caught up in all the clever projects communities are doing as public art. The new Arts & Culture Commission can take on most of those projects. For Project 412, focus on high-impact projects that elevate elements of the community brand you want to emphasize for Detroit Lakes and keep in mind that the wrong project or a project poorly executed can have the opposite effect.

It is always my recommendation to avoid direct replication of what other communities are doing. Instead, look at the components of those projects and their impact to see how you can accomplish a similar result through a variation that is specific and unique to Detroit Lakes.

The Trolls may be an exception. Those are cool and have infrastructure that moves people to new communities as they pop up, but it is still worth the exercise to think about your own big-scale art-and-nature project just to see what you come up with.

The JCPenny wall is a perfect location for a mural that welcomes people into the Downtown. Big walls facing Hwy. 10 would also have high impact. Murals need to be bold and contemporary to have the effect you are looking for.



Long Bridge is an existing location in DL that has retained the sense of adventure. An art installation that also creates a safer jumping platform would make this a destination and calm concerns.



Parking for the mall seems like a wasted space. Starting the process of reclaiming this as green or community space would expand the energy of the Downtown.



PUBLIC ART

Events are in high supply in Detroit Lakes. As such, I would be leery of putting too much time and energy into creating more. If you do, as with public art, I recommend you look at fewer events with bigger scope and impact that brings something new and distinct to the area.

Another strategy may be to leverage Project 412 to streamline and improve the existing events in Detroit Lakes. With staff with high capacity and dedicated funding, Project 412, will become a highly-sought-after partner for other organizations in the community. You may be able to craft those partnerships to influence existing events into that same place of greater distinction and impact.

This would allow your team to stay focused on new and improved investments for the community without needing to sustain those projects long term.



PARTNERSHIPS

In general, we believe Project 412 will maximize its impact and investment if it establishes itself from the beginning as a partnership-focused organization. CREATE Portage County adopted a commitment to "radical inclusivity" and sought out projects that elevated the work of partner organizations in the Stevens Point area. That allowed CREATE to stay focused on imagining and developing new projects without getting bogged down with the work of sustaining those projects year after year. A similar approach would make a lot of sense for Project 412.

SPARK TOWNS PARTNERSHIP

Spark Towns is also excited by the idea of future partnerships with Project 412. We see incredible promise in Detroit Lakes believe you are among the best positioned communities to model small-town vibrancy in this next era. We would love to see these projects come to life and have experience implementing almost all of the ideas referenced in this guide. We hope this is just the beginning!

