

What's Happening in Spring Grove?!



Any exciting events coming up?

What's happening with the hardware store site?

What are the next steps in the school referendum project?

What's the latest with the performing arts center?

Who wants to play pickleball?

UFF DA there's *still* a lot going on!

Our July 19th event was so successful that we thought it was time to bring the community back together. Join us to hear updates from the school, the City and EDA, Spring Grove Area Chamber of Commerce, and Spring Grove 2030. All are welcome; complimentary soda and popcorn!

Monday, Nov. 27
7:00pm at
Spring Grove Cinema

If you have questions or topics you'd like to see covered at the event, please email them to courtney.bergey@cedausa.com in advance. Thank you!

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VIDEO RECORDING LINK

<https://youtu.be/21bhanrXP1M>

What's Happening in Spring Grove?!

UFF DA there's still a lot going on!

Our fall 1998-2000 was so successful that we thought it was time to bring the community back together. Issues to be addressed have developed in the City and EPA Spring Grove Area Chapter of Community and Spring Grove 2010. More welcome! Community and school projects!

Monday, Nov. 27
7:00pm at
Spring Grove Cinema

If you have questions or topics you'd like to be covered at the meeting, please email them to community@springgrove.org or call 410-326-1234. Thank you!

SPRING GROVE
Community Association

What's happening with the hardware store now?
What are the next steps in the school referendum project?
Who wants to play pickleball?
What's the latest with the playground at the center?
Are exciting events coming up?

Tonight's Goals

1. Share updates about our community!

- July event was a hit!
- Give status updates on current projects

2. Collect your questions!

- Please use the worksheet provided to submit your thoughts & questions
- We'll gather the worksheets at the end of the presentations, answer what we can tonight, and publish answers to all questions on the website

3. Celebrate Spring Grove!

- Demonstrate the local investments being made, the exciting opportunities ahead, and how you can get involved

Full house
in July!



Tonight's Schedule

7:00 Presentations **Please write down your questions as you listen!**

7:40 Collect + answer questions

8:00 Goodnight! **Or head down to The Lions' Pub with your neighbors if you're thirsty! \$2 beers with Viking gear on.**



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City of Spring Grove

Who is on
City
Council?

- Sandra Solum, Mayor
- Karen Folstad, Council Member
- Trent Turner, Council Member
- Heather Edgington, Council Member
- Michael Hagen, new Council Member



City of Spring Grove

Where can I
walk this
winter?



- Walk or snowshoe on the Norwegian Ridge Birding & Nature Trails
- Inside walking at the Fest Building
 - November 1 - March 28
 - Monday-Thursday 7am-12pm

City of Spring Grove

Have you seen
the Houston
County Sheriff
Deputies in
town?

- Contract with Houston County Sheriff's department
- Visibility around town
- Checking all areas around town
- To date in 2023: Deputies have responded to **793** incidents. **79** of those, our Deputies were not on duty but Houston County Deputies still responded. TOTAL of **872** incidents.

Deputy
Duane Brownlee



Deputy
Storm Davis



City of Spring Grove

We need
housing!
What's the
latest?

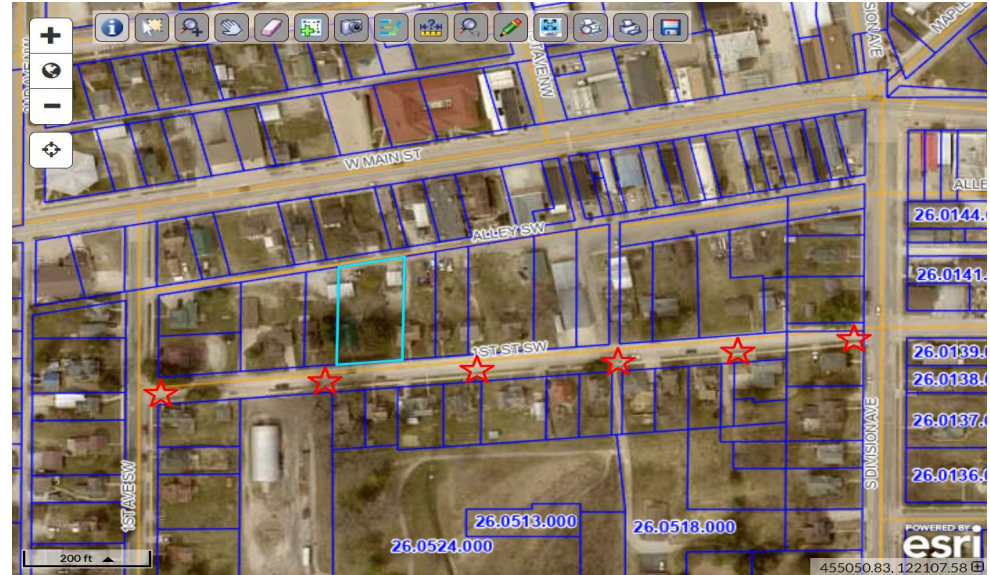
- Always seeking ideas and partners! The City wants to work with developers and land owners. Talk to Jana, our City Administrator!
- There are landowners who are interested in working with a developer. If you or someone you know is interested please contact us!



City of Spring Grove

1st Street
SW project

- Underground utilities have been completed this year
- Roadway will remain as aggregate throughout the winter
- It is anticipated all the concrete, asphalt, and sod work will be finished by next July.
- Reduce traffic flow for this winter



City of Spring Grove

Viking
Memorial
Park

- Lights will remain on through February 1st
- Thank you to the Christmas in the Village volunteers who helped decorate the park and New Age Tree Service for hanging all the lights.

Everything looks beautiful!



Spring Grove Economic Development Authority



- Been working hard to attract a tenant for many years!
 - Real estate listings
 - Facebook Marketplace
 - Craigslist
 - Regional publications
 - EDA Restaurant Challenge Grant program
 - Personal letters sent out to regional restaurateurs
- Through the above, we talked with 25+ interested parties, gave tours to eight (8) of them, worked with five (5) on business planning and financing, and developed potential lease agreements for two (2) of them.

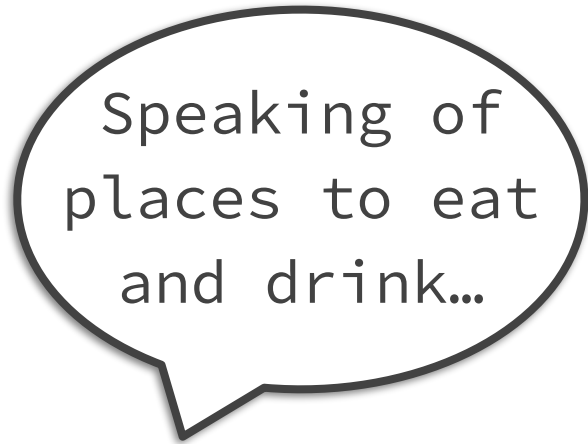
Spring Grove Economic Development Authority

Welcome,
Fiesta
Rosita!



- Rose and Francisco were looking at a building in Caledonia, found out another Mexican restaurant would be opening there, and were referred to Spring Grove by the building owner. A few weeks later they were making updates to the space and opened on Nov 4th!
 - Come with decades of restaurant experience
 - Had a viable business plan, a trained workforce, and startup capital ready to go.
 - Will be opening the bar side for events in December (if you're looking for a place for a Christmas party!)

Spring Grove Economic Development Authority



- The Lions' Pub now open!
 - Meat raffle every other Thursday to benefit SG Charitable Gambling
- Fat Pat's Brewery and BBQ aiming for early 2024 opening

Spring Grove Economic Development Authority



- WARN Act notice was sent to Mayor Solum on October 6, 2023
 - 80 jobs will be lost in Spring Grove
 - Layoffs happening in phases starting in December
 - Ceasing production by Dec 29, 2023
 - Northern Engraving will continue to use the space as a warehouse and distribution facility (4-5 jobs)
- Spring Grove EDA, County, WDI, and State of MN all working to support employees as they transition to new jobs, get further training, etc. **If you know of anyone affected by this layoff that needs help, please contact Courtney.**

Spring Grove Economic Development Authority

What's
happening with
the downtown
redevelopment?

- Site cleanup was temporarily halted while we waited on grant funding decision from MN Dept of Economic Development. **Just received word that we were awarded a \$313,000 grant to help with remaining cleanup and infrastructure!**
 - Remaining demolition and site cleanup will be resuming before the end of year, pending weather.
- The plan is still to build a **three-story, mixed-use structure with commercial space on the main floor and 14 residential apartment units on the upper two stories.**
 - Developers purchased 117 W Main building from Megan Jones in September. This **site will be incorporated into the redevelopment plan.**
 - Currently seeking commercial tenant partners. **If you can help identify someone, please contact Courtney!**
- New building construction will hopefully start next year, but it's contingent on a successful capital raise and securing commercial tenant(s).

Spring Grove Economic Development Authority



- Unfortunately, we don't know. Multiple meetings with True Value, NAPA, DoItBest, and Ace Hardware chains:
 - Most require \$9-10/sf lease with 10k sf. This number is too low for new construction; **would need an existing building** to meet these standards.
 - All require local ownership and **no potential owner has come forward to date.**
 - Spoken with several local entrepreneurs, investors, and former Mulqueen employees
 - Reached out to area hardware stores about Spring Grove as a satellite location (Fisk, Kingsley Mercantile, etc)
- **This is a private business endeavor**, so while the EDA has been working on a number of different initiatives to attract one, there is only so much we can do without a local owner.
 - **We welcome any new leads on who that owner could be**
 - **Looking into potential cooperative model. Contact me if you want to attend a meeting to discuss this more.**

Spring Grove Economic Development Authority

Was Spring Grove actually on the front page of the Star Tribune?!

SMALL TOWN DREAMS BIG, HAS BLUEPRINT FOR GROWTH

Story by TREV MEWEE • Photo by ANTHONY SOUFFLE • Star Tribune staff

SPRING GROVE, MINN. — Jenn Gulbranson took a chance on this city population 1,300, when she and her husband decided to buy the building they live and work in.

The Spring Grove native, 38, so their house near town during the runs downtown, just a stone's throw from the remains of a

They wanted to stay, "I roots" when

Minnesota, Spring Grove is like many small towns throughout the state, vacant buildings on Main Street, lower-than-average household income and a slightly declining population, according to U.S. Census Bureau counts. "The city has had its share of setbacks from a devastating December storm that raised its only hardware



BUILDING UP HER BUSINESS
Jenn Gulbranson, owner of Starford Salon, bought the building in Spring Grove, Minn., where she has her shop.

Despite setbacks, Spring Grove finds funds to move forward

That blueprint is paying off as regional economic development specialists say Spring Grove is poised to expand while offering lessons to other rural communities.

Building 'people power'
"What we've been trying to do is build the culture and the kind of wherewithal to be able to start some of these local investments ourselves," said Courtney Bergey Swanson, one of two specialists working with Spring Grove.

CEDA (Community and Economic Development Association) a nonprofit that provides economic development expertise to small towns in southeast Minnesota.

Spring Grove contracts with CEDA to work on business issues every week. That level of economic development work is rare in small towns, but it does pay off. "Every community



ANTHONY SOUFFLE • anthony.souffle@startribune.com
Courtney Bergey Swanson, center, who works with a nonprofit organization, led a tour for staff members from small towns and other groups across Minnesota to talk about plans and show them the recent steps taken by Spring Grove.

stantly build the people power to make things happen," said Pam Bishop, vice president of entrepreneurship at the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation.

CEDA helped Spring Grove start its first Chamber of Commerce a few years ago, as well as a community real estate fund that funnels private money from area residents. And the nonprofit has been key to Spring Grove 2030, an ongoing community planning initiative.

Bishop said Spring Grove is noteworthy for being proactive despite its distance from major



ANTHONY SOUFFLE • anthony.souffle@startribune.com
Anthony Souffle, left, leads a tour for staff members from small towns and other groups across Minnesota to talk about plans and show them the recent steps taken by Spring Grove.

High-speed Internet helped businesses like Top Dog Custom Apparel & Printmaking survive the pandemic at owner Robin



ANTHONY SOUFFLE • anthony.souffle@startribune.com
Mayor Sandra Solum, right, talks with community members during a meeting in Spring Grove.

ester and 40 minutes from La Crosse, Wis.

Ripple effects
Telicom company Spring Grove Communications got ahead of most of Minnesota in the early 2000s when it installed broadband. It remains one of the community's largest employers and philanthropic organizations.

High-speed Internet helped businesses like Top Dog Custom Apparel & Printmaking survive the pandemic at owner Robin



ANTHONY SOUFFLE • anthony.souffle@startribune.com
Mayor Sandra Solum, right, talks with community members during a meeting in Spring Grove.

They're working for so much groundwork has been done over the past few years, community funds in start-up jobs and the way for future initiatives.

For Gulbranson, the community push only solidified her decision to stay in her hometown and watch it

"I talk to everyone and they're like, 'Well, we're from southern Iowa or we're from Omaha and we really wanted to come and try your product.'" Myrah said. "A lot of people in town probably don't realize what's coming to Spring Grove and how much traffic we're bringing here."

The city offered startup money in a restaurant challenge. The challenge paid off — a Mexican restaurant opened over the weekend after its owner moved his family from Sparta, Wis. Another restaurant after it outgrew space in Spring Grove's local grocery store.

Keep moving
Bergey Swanson admits none of Spring Grove's ideas for success in groundbreaking community real estate funds for decades, while the promotional tactics were taken from larger communities.

Spring Grove is part because of so much groundwork has been done over the past few years, community funds in start-up jobs and the way for future initiatives.

For Gulbranson, the community push only solidified her decision to stay in her hometown and watch it

The hardware store's closure has forced most people to drive to Caladonia or Harney to pick up supplies. Mayor Sandra Solum said the bigger problem is what will happen to the 80 people losing their jobs at Northern Ingotting by the end of the year.

Local and state officials have organized job fairs and services for workers, but "we don't know yet how that will affect us," Solum said.

Spring Grove Economic Development Authority

Any update on efforts for a new local newspaper?

- Many ideas have been gathered:
 - Volunteers have contacted regional papers about a partnership or special “Spring Grove” section. Argus is investing in more Spring Grove reporting.
 - Volunteers have shown interest in creating a local nonprofit news source. Unfortunately there isn’t an organized body to provide leadership at this time.
 - **EDA and Chamber started a news blog on the springgrovemn.com website**

Spring Grove Economic Development Authority

Is there
funding for
businesses?

- Currently open:
 - Retail Startup Incentive Program
- Reopen in 2024:
 - Fix Up Fund
- Always open:
 - Low interest financing from the EDA



Spring Grove Economic Development Authority

Are there any commercial spaces available downtown?

- ~~Former Ya Sure You Betcha Shoppe (now owned by Patrick Longmire)~~ New salon coming soon!
- ~~Former Dokken Appraisal building (now owned by Robin Bartell)~~ Pop up shop thru year end!
- Myhre building
- Spring Grove Communications Room 102 & 103



Spring Grove Economic Development Authority

Is there a place
for coworking in
Spring Grove?



- Spring Grove EDA and Spring Grove Area Chamber are working on a new program to offer FREE coworking space one day a month
- Join us for the first event:
 - Tuesday, December 12
 - 9am - 4pm
 - Bring your own work, or just pop in to chat with fellow business owners!
- Do you need a more regular coworking space or a permanent space for your business? Contact Courtney!

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Spring Grove Area Chamber of Commerce



Do I have to
have a business
to be a Chamber
member?



- Individuals can be members too, and we appreciate those folks so much!
- Currently have 56 members who support our work
 - Large business (5+ employees)
 - Small business (<5 employees)
 - Individual membership
- Now is a great time to become a member for 2024!
- More info:
www.springgrovemn.com/chamber-of-commerce

Spring Grove Area Chamber of Commerce

So what's
the Chamber
actually
doing?

- Visitors Center - Activate this Space!
- Activities and events that help our businesses grow and learn:
 - November's Lunch & Learn was about helping businesses understand new laws in Minnesota about legalized marijuana and paid sick leave
- Activities and events that encourage tourism and promote shopping local
 - Brunch & Be Merry
 - Uffda Fest
 - Music & Market
 - Ribbon Cuttings
 - Welcome bags
 - Shop local events
- Market the community
 - Visitors Guides
 - Special events that bring attention to our town, like the upcoming BAM event.
 - Billboards



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Spring Grove Public Schools



The
Referendum
passed! Now
What?



**Thank
YOU!**

Question 1 – Projects Approved



Update Old and Failing Building Systems	\$7,800,000
Replace Windows and Roof Sections	\$1,195,000
Expand the Kitchen and Cafeteria	\$770,000
Expand the Art Room	\$490,000
Renovate Bathrooms and Locker Rooms	\$350,000
Update the Wood Shop	\$1,400,000

Next Steps



- Work with architects to finalize plans

Tech Education Visioning Committee to look at options within our existing space.
Interested? Please contact our office.

- Bid out project

- Estimated completion: Fall 2025

Spring Grove Public Schools

What's
happening with
the Village
Motel?

- Went into tax forfeiture earlier this year
- City declined
- **Parking lot** is one of the limited uses for the parcel
- The School District submitted a conditional use deed to Houston County, which has been approved by County Commissioners. We are currently waiting for state approval.

Substitutes Needed and Welcomed!

I've heard
that you need
subs! How can
I help?

- **Teachers** (A.A. degree or H.S. Diploma and one year of work experience as a paraprofessional)
- **Paraprofessionals**
- **Bus Drivers**
- **Kitchen**
- **Maintenance**

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Spring Grove 2030

What is Spring
Grove 2030
anyway?!?

PRESENT

- A group of volunteers representing partners in the community
 - **Subcommittee of the EDA**, with representation from the school, City, and community
 - Hosted community engagement processes that has led to some of these ideas
- Exec team: Jessi Strinmoen, Sandra Solum, Jacqui Van Minsel, Gina Meinertz, Rachel Udstuen, Courtney Bergey Swanson, Jana Elton

FUTURE

- Community foundation?
- 501c3 nonprofit?
- Dissolve the group after goals have been met?

Spring Grove 2030

What's the latest on the performing arts center?

- ISG Architects have determined that updating the Cinema to accommodate a stage and scene shop, while keeping the ability to show films, is possible.
 - May also have the ability to provide amenities like meeting rooms, gathering space, etc. Stay tuned for more info as we further explore this idea!
- This is being considered because the Spring Grove Cinema is currently underutilized
 - Average 13% capacity per show; not financially sustainable
 - Great location downtown, near the school, on Hwy 44/Main Street
 - Much more affordable to renovate an existing building than to build new
 - Build new: \$12-16million
 - Renovation: \$5-7million
- Next steps:
 - Create a potential financial plan and capital campaign strategy. This would be funded by grants and donations (not taxpayer dollars).
 - Work with local groups who may be interested in tenant agreements.
 - Continue to hold events here and gather feedback from the community (watch for more info soon!)

Spring Grove 2030

Okay last
thing! Tell us
more about
Activate
Rural...



- We received a \$25,000 grant from the Activate Rural program to do creative programming at the Cinema
 - Did a “test run” with the free Halloween movie
 - Design Lab course in partnership with Spring Grove Schools starting in January
 - Other fun programming set to launch after Christmas—cult classic films, comedy performances, and more! Stay tuned!
- Have ideas? Want to help? Get in touch with Courtney!

Thank you!
Please pass your questions to the end!



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Contacts



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School Questions and Answers 11.27.23

What is the power mechanics building being used for? The power mechanics building is used for courses in welding, engines, set design, and landscape design. It is also used for storage for the theater department, school truck, and lawnmower.

Is there a possibility of renovating the power mechanics building to save tax dollars? Yes, there is definitely a possibility of renovating this building. This option will be studied by the Technical Education Visioning Committee in the next few months.

When will school referendum be on our taxes? How many years in effect? The school referendum will be on our taxes beginning in 2024. It will be in effect for 22 years.

EDA Questions and Answers 11.27.23

How will parking in the alley be addressed? What parking will be available for prospective residents on the upper floors of a proposed building to be built on former Mulqueens site? There will likely be a parking lot built on the south side of the alley to replace the former Mulqueen's shed. There is also grant funding available to help the city create more parking in the alley. Those exact plans will be addressed as the construction plans materialize.

Will section 8 housing be in new apartments? No, currently the plan is for the apartments to be market rate, not subsidized.

What rent range will be proposed? These numbers are still being determined, though with new construction they will likely be on the upper end of the current rental market (\$900-\$1,200+).

Is the City buying back the SG Herald building? No, the owners were not willing to sell it back.

Are EDA lots full? No, there is one remaining lot for sale. The eastern, front lot is still available.

When will TIF districts end for Bender addition? Nerstad addition? Second Bender addition? There is only one TIF district in the area of town known as the Bender addition, and that will decertify in 2024.

With closure of Northern Engraving will city have to retrofit sewer plant since water usage cut in half? No changes will need to be made to the sewer plant.

Any chance that part of Northern Engraving building could become a hardware store? If Northern Engraving is willing to lease out the property, that could definitely be an option. We are trying to learn more about the specific plans for the site.

City Questions and Answers 11.27.23

Pickleball?

Pickleball is allowed currently at the Fest Building between the hours of 7 a.m. and noon Monday–Thursday through March 28th, 2024. Painters tape may be used. Court should be located towards the back of the Fest Building (West side of building). Pickleball players will need to mark their own court. If a wedding or event is scheduled where it needs to be removed, it's up to the pickleball group to remove the tape and apply again after the event. We are looking for better alternatives and are open to any ideas that may be a better solution.

Hiking trail? The Bird Trail located by Tweeten Lutheran is available for hiking or the Saw Mill Horse Trail with the entrance located by the Bird Trail.

Comments 11.27.23

The Caledonia Argus welcomes story ideas and photo submissions! Rose Korabek: rose.korabek@apgsomn.com

The City website needs attention and someone needs to be assigned to ensure all information is included (ie lighting of the park wasn't on the calendar).