

Lakes Area Development Goals

The **stated goals** of the Lakes Area Development Association are to:

- ✓ Stimulate business investment, growth and job creation
- ✓ Diversify the lakes area economy
- ✓ Capitalize on city, township, and school district integration
- ✓ Utilize the array of retired professional capability
- ✓ Assist local businesses to expand profitably
- ✓ Attract new business entities and sole proprietors
- ✓ Influence local infrastructure to support expansion
- ✓ Enhance business and property values
- ✓ Spearhead community building initiatives
- ✓ Maintain a desirable quality of life amid expansion
- ✓ Promote the lakes area economic proposition
- ✓ Assemble relevant partnerships, resources, and incentives

Lakes Area Shared Vision

Visioning Background

Although “vision” has become standard fare in the corporate realm, the Lakes Area Development Association does not relegate vision to a mere one-time exercise or a stale vision statement. We believe in the power of thorough, articulated, and shared vision among our community of stakeholders. This type of vision is conveyed by Peter Senge – author of the best selling book, The Fifth Discipline.

“A shared vision is not an idea...it is, rather, a force in people’s hearts, a force of impressive power. It may be inspired by an idea, but once it goes further – if it is compelling enough to acquire the support of more than one person – then it is no longer an abstraction. It is palpable. People begin to see it as if it exists. Few, if any, forces in human affairs are as powerful as shared vision.

At its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question, “What do we want to create?” A shared vision is a vision that many people are truly committed to, because it reflects their own personal vision.

At the outset of LADA’s formulation, a group of community and business professionals spent considerable time discussing, drafting, and refining a vision of what economic development would look like in the lakes area over the next five to ten years. We attempted to articulate in a fair amount of detail a vision of **“what we are seeking to create”**. The result is a shared vision. It’s not a vision statement. It’s more than that. It’s a word picture of a preferred future that we can visualize in our minds-eye. It’s talked about in meetings and over coffee. It’s debated during tough decisions. And it’s tempered and refined as we learn through experience. Things of greatness are created twice; and the first time is in the imagination.

The shared vision that follows will serve as the backdrop as we develop our goals, measures of success, target markets, and key strategies and marketing to drive economic expansion in the region.

The Business Vision for the Lakes Area

Our vision contains business expansion that happens with intention and focus, and a discrete regard for quality of life in the area. The primary, and unique asset, that will drive our economic expansion is the inherent fact that the lakes area is a place **“where people love to live”**. We envision that when this powerful fact is harnessed effectively, it will be the cornerstone of an integrated strategy to bring many professional firms and families into the area during the next decade.

The economic climate of lakes area will be strengthened with diversity in our financial underpinnings. Diversity will be achieved primarily by **deriving a greater contribution from “outside dollars”** flowing into the lakes area without a linear correlation to population increases.

To elaborate further, much of our current economic production in the lakes area today is driven by the disposable income of the population that happens to be present in the area. In the summer tourism season, there is a significant up-surge in spending, directly correlated to the tourism population traffic. Our vision for the future is to see more **diversity in the business mix**, such that products and services are exported from the area year-round, with “outside dollars” flowing back into the area without a dependency on seasonal residents being present to generate them. This will occur as we target and select business expansion that aligns with the lakes area being a place “where people love to live”. The expected outcome is that business entrepreneurs will bring jobs, families, and students, tied to an affinity for the natural environment and quality of life in the lakes area.

We foresee a nearly **invisible professional industry** growing by intention in the lakes area. Telecommuters already embrace our community, and we will intentionally attract many new professionals who have the liberty to “work in the place they love to live”. Telecommuters by definition are employed by firms or are independent business owners that will provide services outside of the lakes area, enabled by high-speed telecommunication and computing technologies. We foresee professional workers in graphics design, consulting, software engineering, and other professional vocations becoming avid members of our community and school system.

We envision **professional office parks** of shared office and administrative space to augment our “industrial parks”. Ironically, this vision component will not require sophisticated land purchases, real estate development, city services, or tax abatements. It is an incredibly simple vision that brings highly paid professionals, and is fueled by the inherent value in our surrounding natural environment, rich with its aesthetic, recreational, academic, and social attractions.

Our vision simply requires a focus on **attractive community amenities** rather than “industrial structures”. As such, our vision is conducive to rapid packaging, marketing, and results.

Similarly, we see growth in commuters that reside in the lakes area, yet travel to work in larger regional centers such as Fergus Falls, Perham, and Alexandria. Again, we foresee accommodating this natural reality by building incentives, community amenities, and services that are conducive to this target market so that commuters are drawn with intention and frequency. And like the telecommuter segment, the outcome will be **families drawn to our area and school district**, and services that are exported from our area with associated economic infusion that will return.

We also envision a slower, but intentional and selective **expansion of commercial industry**. Because environmental conservation and quality of life are central to the lakes area lifestyle, we will be forthright in the types of business that will be targeted for expansion. Some of this trade will logically evolve as

retirees and families continue to move to the lakes area and construction, retail and services naturally will follow. Additionally, we will intentionally create incentives and marketing to **reach out to successful entrepreneurs and CEOs** that are seasonal residents and maintain successful businesses in other communities. We expect some of them to expand their operations in the area with appropriate incentives and our marketing.

Similarly, we will encourage corporations to consider **satellite operation centers** in the lakes area. Given the work ethic, low cost of living and employment, and the great quality of life amenities; major corporations will consider the lakes area for satellite operational offices in response to our targeted efforts and promotions. This will yield professional employment, green industry, and young families.

Our vision includes a logical **healthcare and services expansion tied to an aging population**. Between now and 2010, the number of Americans reaching the age of 65 will grow from 34 million to 54 million. The lakes area is a great place to mature and retire. We believe many seniors intend to retire and age in their rural homes or retreats at the lake. This motivation to **“age in place”** is a well-documented trend in the United States, and we foresee new healthcare services emerging in the area to provide personal, transportation, companion, and medical services to support independent aging. This will augment the growth of physical facilities such as independent living and veteran’s homes.

As our vision is realized, our **existing retailers and infrastructure businesses will expand** with a growing population requiring various construction and consumer services. We will welcome new retail and service entities as by-products of such expansion, but will not actively target entities in those sectors ahead of realizing the growth.

During the process of affecting and realizing our vision, our Lakes Area Development Association will be **assistive to our existing businesses** as well. Education, training, and services will be provided to solidify and expand the market reach of our existing manufacturers, and LADA will also work to increase the population flow – both organically with full-time residents and through seasonal tourism – to drive a stronger retail trade. Additionally, we envision a **face-lift to existing buildings and businesses** on main street Battle Lake that reflects a vibrant community that is not entirely subjected to the seasonality of tourism trade, but is supported by a diversified economy.

Our business vision also embodies **increased and sustained visitor traffic** into the area. Simple traffic enablers like an area RV park, recreational rentals, and a community connected bike trail to Glendalough State Park will amplify population for our retailers. More sophisticated concepts like summer academic workshops tied to a Glendalough Academy are envisioned, but with less certainty at this point.

The Community Vision in the Lakes Area

Our vision for an “invisible professional industry” certainly embodies a changed community to serve the growing number of professional tenants of our area. Our vision will necessitate more shared spaces as many telecommuters will work out of their home offices and will seek **community spaces to foster social connections** that others would typically find fulfilled in a physical work place or working in family businesses.

Over time we envision a **prominent community center** that becomes a focal point for commuters, telecommuters, and the growing population of retirees in Clitherall and Everts Townships. The community center would contain meeting spaces, fitness facilities, etc. We consider this as an

important “hub” to connect many people and age groups across the area as we build community, and it will be viewed as a differentiated value point for those selecting the lakes area to live.

Because we will attract younger and middle age families to the area, and provide up-scale, off-the-lake housing options, we are already in the process of upgrading our community beach amenities, rest rooms, and shower facilities in an **attractive public beach complex**. This vision component would also serve to attract RV and day-visitor traffic to our area.

Our stakeholders envision a tighter **link between the community and Glendalough State Park**. One of the most obvious and often discussed vision components is a **bike and trail system** – similar to, but on a smaller scale to Itasca State Park – but with a unique attribute of a direct connection to retail center in downtown Battle Lake. Such a trail system would be paved, connected to the City bike route, and would run along the south side of the airport to the park entrance. It would follow the Wilderness Trail in Glendalough – perhaps traversing along the west side of Lake Emma – connecting again with Wilderness Trail to make its way through the woods and along the Southeast shore of Molly Stark and closing the loop again along Highway #16 at the Park entrance, and following back to the City of Battle Lake, and uniting with the national bike trail system that weaves through Otter Tail County.

Such environmental additions would quickly spawn sporting goods rentals and increased traffic for our retailers. We can also foresee the development of an “AmericInn” type of short-stay hotel to augment our vast array of resorts, and would **accommodate the growth in regular visitor traffic**.

The vision also contains a rich schedule of fine arts and events at the Royal Auditorium, again consistent with contemporary life-style amenities of the professional profiles that we’ll attract to the area.

A central piece of the community vision is a **seamless cooperation between the City of Battle Lake and the townships** in the lakes area. Our vision holds a strong sense of community, with nearly invisible boundaries between municipalities and townships given the myriad of waterways spanning our area. Although, there may be occasions to address sensitive topics like annexation and land purchases, the vision of the area is to establish a **unified joint powers concept** between the City of Battle Lake, surrounding townships, and the School District to ensure collaboration and diffuse otherwise natural points of contention as we pursue our vision of a preferred future.

The unity of the area will be grounded in a thorough acknowledgement that our innovative ideas, complex initiatives, and envisioned results cannot happen with islands of thought, resources or resistance. The “area” in the Lakes Area Development Association is very intentional and profoundly important to our collective success.

The Infrastructure Vision in the Lakes Area

Several variations of a similar housing concept are envisioned to support economic expansion. We see **up-scale, multi-dwelling housing units** that capitalize on natural environmental beauty, but will not be on the lake. We foresee beautiful condominium complexes off from Highway 78 that overlook Silver Lake to the West, yet provide easy access to Battle Lake, the swimming complex, and the Glendalough bike trail system. Similarly, we foresee such a complex located south of town in Clitherall Township overlooking a beautiful wetland or woodland area. A related vision considers up-scale flats that replace dated buildings just off Main Street in Battle Lake, not unlike housing redevelopments that have taken place in downtown Fargo or St. Paul that cater to young professionals.

We also foresee **affordable, multi-unit housing for many seniors** who will be aging out of their lake homes and the related up-keep. This will be a needed stepping stone for the Good Samaritan aging facilities, and also needed to make more lake homes available during economic expansion as telecommuters and commuters relocate to the area.

The infrastructure development also includes a new **commercial park**, complete with incentives to facilitate relocation of traditional industrial firms. Our vision also includes a **new RV park** to drive considerable seasonal traffic to our area. Such an infrastructure addition will be considered with great care to **preserve the aesthetic and natural qualities** of our area.

To support the business expansion related to telecommuting, satellite corporate offices, and new industry, our vision calls for a strong **integration with state, national and global transportation networks**. Over time, the municipal airstrip will be enhanced to support chartered flights into the lakes area. However, short of commercial air service, LADA will be involved with State of Minnesota initiatives to deliver light-rail systems across the state, and work to provide connection services to the lakes area. Additionally, the same cooperation and integration is envisioned for commuter airline services to the international airports.

Likewise, we will support the professional business expansion by harnessing the excellent **information processing bandwidth and services** provided by our local and regional providers. These services will be leveraged to serve the professional business community with **shared office spaces equipped with video-conferencing** and various other media and data services to transcend global proximity as these businesses locate in the lakes area.

This complete vision is supported by a very detailed tactical plan. More information about the tactics, programs and initiatives currently underway may be obtained by contacting LADA.