



**Cloquet Economic Development Authority  
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA  
Wednesday May 6, 2026 at 8:00AM  
CITY HALL 101 14<sup>th</sup> Street Cloquet, MN 55720**

ACTION TAKEN

1. **Call Meeting to Order** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Announcements, Adjustments, Correspondence, and Other Comments** \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Please review informational updates
3. **Public Comments?** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please give your name, and address. Visitors may share concerns on any issue which is not already on the agenda. The Chair reserves the right to limit an individual's presentation if it becomes redundant, repetitive, irrelevant, or overly argumentative. All comments will be taken under advisement by the Commission. No action will be taken at this time. Public Comments will be limited to 10 minutes per topic or 30 minutes total. The Commission may request an item be placed on a future agenda for further discussion as part of the regular meeting.*
4. **Approval EDA meeting minutes** \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. April 1, 2026
5. **Monthly Financials** \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. March 2026
6. **Action Items:**
  - a. **Branding Strategy Rollouts for Feedback and facilitated discussion with the EDA on additional marketing concepts**
    - i. Shelly Peterson –Promoting Me, LLC\_\_\_\_\_
7. **Adjourn** \_\_\_\_\_



**CLOQUET ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY**

101 14<sup>th</sup> St., Cloquet, MN 55720

April 1, 2026

**MINUTES OF THE CLOQUET EDA MEETING**

**EDA Commissioners Present:** Dan Rahman, Jenny Blatchford, Aaron Peterson, Lyz Jaakola, Lara Wilkinson (EDA Commissioners)

**Ex-Officio Staff/Staff Members/Others Present:** Shelly Peterson, Promoting Me; LLC Holly Hansen (City of Cloquet), David Schafroth (Carlton County), Kelly Zink (Cloquet Area Chamber)

**EDA Commissioners / Ex-Officio / Staff Absent:**

Sue Ryan, Mark Lanigan (EDA Commissioners), Ryan Pervanaze (Carlton County), Tim Peterson, Katie Bloom (City of Cloquet)

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was conducted at Cloquet City Hall and was called to order at 8:03 a.m. Ms. Hansen thanked Dave Manderfeld for his service on the EDA and wished him well in retirement.

**2. OATH OF OFFICE DAN RAHMAN, USG INTERIORS LLC**

Dan Rahman took his Oath of Office and was welcomed and asked to introduce himself. All meeting attendees introduced themselves to Mr. Rahman.

**3. ELECT EDA POSITIONS**

Ms. Hansen highlighted with the retirement of President Manderfeld the EDA is without a President.

**Motion: Commissioner Wilkinson moved, and Commissioner Jaakola seconded, the appointment of Aaron Peteron as EDA President (Motion passed 5-0).**

Ms. Hansen noted with the promotion of Aaron Peterson from Vice President that this position is now vacant on the EDA.

**Motion: Commissioner Jaakola moved, and Commissioner Rahman seconded, the appointment of Jenny Blatchford as EDA Vice President (Motion passed 5-0).**

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, CORRESPONDENCE AND OTHER**

Ms. Hansen reminded Commissioners to market their calendars for Tuesday evening **May 5, 2026 from 4pm - 5:30pm** for a tour with City Council of Solem Lofts with C&C Holdings (915 Cloquet Avenue) and then asked members to review attached partner updates from the *Chamber, County, and EDA at their leisure*.

**5. APPROVAL EDA MEETING MINUTES**

President Peterson asked for any corrections, additions, or deletions to the March 4, 2026, Cloquet EDA Regular Meeting Minutes. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

**Motion: Commissioner Blatchford moved, and Commissioner Wilkinson seconded, that the EDA approve the February 4, 2026, Cloquet EDA Meeting Minutes. (Motion passed 5-0).**



## 6. APPROVAL OF MONTHLY FINANCIALS: February 2026

Ms. Hansen reviewed the February financials with the board. President Peterson asked for motions to approve.

**Motion: Commissioner Rahman moved, and Commissioner Jaakola seconded, that the EDA approve the January Financials. (Motion passed 5-0).**

## 7. Action Items:

### a. West Prospect Avenue RFP for Housing Development

Ms. Hansen reviewed the request for proposals for a two-acre site along Prospect Avenue West explaining that the site is long with access to utilities and can be developed into a five-lot small subdivision. The RFP would open April 2<sup>nd</sup> and close May 29<sup>th</sup>. At that time if there were no interested parties, the owner would simply list the site for sale with a realtor. President Peterson asked for motions to approve.

**Motion: Commissioner Wilkinson moved, and Commissioner Jaakola seconded, that the EDA approve the West Prospect Avenue RFP for Housing Development. (Motion passed 5-0).**

### b. Imagine Cloquet Campaign Strategy and Messaging Development

Shelly Peterson of Promoting Me, LLC began facilitating the branding strategy for the Cloquet EDA. She did a recap:

Purpose of Initiative: to develop unifying messaging to establish a clear brand statement for Cloquet and its community partners that builds awareness, pride, and engagement around community identity, unique assets, and more. The initiative will define the core message behind Imagine Cloquet as well as the emotional and economic stories around:

1. *General Economic Development Story – Cloquet is Open for Opportunity*
2. *Residential Growth – Why People Choose Cloquet*
3. *Business and Tourism Attraction – Why Businesses and Visitors Choose Cloquet*
4. *Workforce Development – Building the Future Workforce*

**The videos interviewed 37 people.**

**She shared that only 4 / 18 people that were provided the survey link responded prior to this meeting with their feedback on branding Cloquet. She shared survey input which included:**

- People did not want folks to simply pass through Cloquet but stop in Cloquet
- So why stop?

### DESTINATION DISCUSSION

- Its an experience in small town America
- Golf Course
- Cloquet Forestry Center
- Ski Trail system
- Bike map
- Expanded Library building heavily used.
- Restaurants – all fantastic. Gordy's.
- CCHS had Historic buildings map – FLW Gas Station, West End and Park Place District, so much more.
- Awesome education system – Cloquet Community Ed Foundation – Cloquet Schools second to none. Connections to FDLTCC and PSEO opportunities. Prom, the football

team, all accessible to be part of. Special Education system fantastic. Hub for all things family.

- Hospital, schools, restaurants, only tribal college in the United States, adjacency and integration as a community with the FDL Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Pinehurst Pool (long term unknown – facility loses money, they don't allow sand bottoms anymore for safety to see kids better)
- Do we need to promote things to the west that we often don't? Big Lake, Big Lake Golf Course, Black Bear, FDL Museum, Sawyer Pow Wows? All the unique FDL facilities.
- Spafford Campground / Dunlap Island Park / Riverfront Bridge / Chamber trails
- Pine Valley Recreation Area and Hockey Arenas, future Medich Pavillion will upgrade the experience
- What surrounds Cloquet – the Munger Trail, Jay Cooke State Park, Duluth and the North Shore of Lake Superior
- The skatepark is heavily used and loved

EXPERIENCE OF PLACE / IDENTIFY / PACE OF LIFE / QUALITY OF LIFE / SMALL TOWN AMERICA WITH BIG OPPORTUNITIES AND CONNECTION

- The pace of life is different here, Small Town Feel, you have more time to live your life here which leads to a high quality of life. The experience of life is everything.
- Lara Wilkinson – How do I feel here? I can breathe, people have community pride and support this community. My parnter just moved here, loves it here.
- Kids come home from the Cities and settle into a better pace, the hustle and bustle is over. Feels nice.
- Lyz Jaakola – Pierre is the new name of the Voyageur his ethnicity is half Ojibwe and half French Fur Trader – we can hire a marketing intern to develop a TikTok dance with his paddle we have “Clean Air and Pierre”
- All things are accessible here or nearby
- This is a place where families grow together – its unique in that it is not super small there are opportunities for kids to take advanced unique coursework, it's a place where parents know parents, and families know families and they grow together.
- David shared the bike pump at the Cloquet Library has a steady ongoing use by kids when he was there for a meeting last week – time has slowed and Cloquet has retained that small town experience and social order with law enforcement – Cloquet has a special thing going on here, a social contract to who they are – the All American formula is still authentically here
- Kelly Zink shared that Cloquet is large enough for big opportunities in multiple areas – you can still be on a sports team or in a play, its not so large to miss out on opportunities. Its family oriented and has opportunities to grow your business and workforce opportunities (*business, manufacturing, education, government, non-profits, and more*) to build your career here. We have a college, Raiter Clinic, small medical clinics, a hospital, manufacturing, kids can return here to big opportunities to work through the promotional ladders within large manufacturing and so much more. Parsons and Fairchild have opened offices here and need electricians and mechanical repair and automotive technicians. Now Essentia and St. Luke's clinics are establishing clinics here too.
- Recent interview with Mike Schultz – I would return here in a heartbeat, I love it there.
- Continue housing opportunities, but **RETAIN CHARACTER OF PLACE DON'T OVERRUN IT WITH GROWTH, BUT GROW INTENTIONALLY**



**CLOQUET ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY**

101 14<sup>th</sup> St., Cloquet, MN 55720

April 1, 2026

- 3 hometown parades
- Community connection is not scary.
- Relationship driven community.
- EDA LOVED ALL OF SHELLY'S TAGLINES DEvised Start your Northland experience in Cloquet and discover more than you EVER expected! People Parks Prosperity!

he then referred to prepared handouts. Tell the story of Cloquet and be aligned across partners. She asked members to define Cloquet's identity and what makes it distinct from other communities in the area? What are we proud of? What do people feel when they are here? Cloquet is a place where – finish with your input. She asked, how to bring together Economic Development, Workforce, and Tourism? She referred to an umbrella under which business, school district, chamber members, the FDL Band, the College, government and non-project partners are aligned.

- Economic Development - why businesses choose Cloquet, what opportunities exist?
- Workforce Development - Why do people build career here? What lifestyle supports that?
- Tourism / Experience -- Why people visit and return? What makes the experience unique?

COMMITTEE INPUT ON CLOQUET'S UNIQUENESS

- OPPORTUNITY
- HUB CONNECTOR. Imagine Cloquet is a hub to grow, invest in, and we will help you succeed. We are your hub for growth and investment and will help you with your success.
- REAL COMMUNITY
- We have "Clean Air and Pierre"
- HEART OF THE REGION
- BIG OPPORTUNITIES, SMALL TOWN CONNECTIONS
- YOU CAN IMAGINE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE HERE
- WE HAVE ALL YOU NEED
- AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY / INCLUSION
- LIVE, WORK, GROW, HOME FOR SUCCESS
- COME BACK TO WHERE YOU STARTED. AND BRING YOUR FRIENDS!

CONCERN

- We need to do more and better, we must be effective in efficiently connecting a skilled labor pipeline and trades opportunities and promotional opportunities in our large manufacturing business to keep them viable here and their supply chains.

Ms. Peterson shared that next month she will distill the input from today and tweak concepts under different video sections etc. and will review options with the EDA at the May meeting.

**Adjourn**

President Peterson requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 a.m.

**Motion: Commissioner Wilkinson moved, and Commissioner Jaakola seconded, that the meeting stand adjourned. (Motion passed 5-0).**

Respectfully submitted,

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Holly Hansen, Community Development Director



Community Development Department  
101 14<sup>th</sup> ST • Cloquet MN 55720  
Phone: 218-879-2507 • Fax: 218-879-6555

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To: City of Cloquet Economic Development Authority (EDA)  
From: Holly Hansen, Community Development Director  
Date: May 1, 2026

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**ITEM DESCRIPTION: EDA Review of Monthly Financial Statements (March 2026)**

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**EDA Requested Action**

The EDA is asked to approve the March 2026 EDA financials.

**Monthly Review**

Attached the EDA members will find the March 2026 cash balances and loans for economic development.

**CASH BALANCES**

The summary of March 2026 financials **which currently total \$904,959.77** are:

- **Fund 201 (LDO Loan)** there is an increase in the fund balance due to loan repayments.
- **Fund 201 (LDO-Project/Loan)** there is no change in the fund balance.
- **Fund 202 (Fed CDBG)** there is a decrease in the fund balance due to legal fees.
- **Fund 203 (ED)** there is no change in fund balance due to interest and loan repayments into the fund. FB&T offered a construction deferral to JBB Group (Collins Roofing), as a loan participation, payments will be dispersed by FB&T once construction is complete. CMW payments will be corrected to April financials.
- **Fund 206 (Revolved Phase 3 SCDP loan repayments)** Holy Smokes grant funds are being held until project work is complete.
- **Fund 207 (Housing Trust Fund)** there is no change in fund balance.

**LOAN STATUS**

The total outstanding loan balance for City funds is \$1,379,619.52 (5 business loans) with monthly repayments of \$7,516.16 with one loan deferrals (Collins Roofing). The building formerly owned by the City and sold to a developer in 2012 located at 1111 Cloquet Avenue has sold, however the City's loan payment will continue under original ownership until the term is complete in 2027 per the original terms of that deal.

**Policy Objectives**



**Community Development Department**  
101 14<sup>th</sup> ST • Cloquet MN 55720  
Phone: 218-879-2507 • Fax: 218-879-6555

As a standalone EDA, the monthly financial statements must be reviewed and approved by the EDA.

**Financial Impacts**

None at this time.

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the EDA move to approve the March 2026 EDA financial statements.

**Supporting Documentation**

- March 2026 Cash Balances; March 2026 Loan Balances

**City of Cloquet**  
**Cash Balances**  
**March 2026**

		<u>Current Month</u>	<u>Previous Month</u>
201	LDO Loan (EDA) - Loan	\$269,408.94 1	\$262,148.91
201	LDO Loan (EDA) - Project/Loan	\$2,600.00	\$2,600.00
202	Federal CDBG Loan (EDA)	\$315,407.72 2 & 3	\$315,450.61
203	Economic Development Loan (City)	\$212,544.25	\$212,544.25
206	Revolving SCDP (EDA)	\$9,073.00	\$9,073.00
207	Housing Trust Fund (City)	\$103,143.00	\$103,143.00
		<u>\$912,176.91</u>	<u>\$904,959.77</u>

206 Commercial Grant Awards:

3 - \$7,365.59 grant closing & escrow for Holy Smokes (1101 - 1103 Avenue B)

Monthly change explanations:

- 1 - Loan repayments
- 2 - Legal fees
- 3 - JBB/Collins Interest

**Community Development  
Loan Balances  
March 2026**

Loan	Loan Date	%	Loan Amount	Monthly Payment	Maturity Date	Balance	*Exp. UCC or FF
<b>Fund 201 (EDA LDO Fund)</b>							
C&C Holdings LLC	7/24/2024	2.00%	\$ 924,500.00	\$ 6,250.00	7/24/2044	\$ 917,964.39	**
			<b>Fund 201</b>	<b>\$ 6,250.00</b>		<b>\$ 917,964.39</b>	
<b>Fund 202 (EDA CDBG Fund, all loans are repaid into Fund 201 LDO to revolve restrictions once loaned, interest accrues into 202)</b>							
C&C Holdings LLC	7/24/2024	2.00%	\$ 211,500.00	\$ -	7/24/2044	\$ 229,491.10	**
GCL Development Group LLC	6/12/2020	2.25%	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 388.36	7/1/2040	\$ 56,838.98	
Hieb Properties LLC	8/19/2024	4.00%	\$ 20,434.00	\$ 279.31	8/19/2031	\$ 16,226.26	
			<b>Fund 202 into 201</b>	<b>\$ 667.67</b>		<b>\$ 302,556.34</b>	
<b>Fund 203 (City)</b>							
CMW Retail Properties	7/1/2012	1.00%	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 598.49	8/1/2027	\$ 10,098.79	*****
JBB Group LLC	4/25/2025	4.00%	\$ 149,000.00	TBD	4/25/2045	\$ 149,000.00	****
			<b>Fund 203</b>	<b>\$ 598.49</b>		<b>\$ 159,098.79</b>	
<b>Fund 206 (EDA SCDP Fund no current funds from 208 City SCDP)</b>							
			<b>Fund 208</b>	<b>\$ -</b>		<b>\$ -</b>	
<b>Total Community Development Loans Outstanding</b>				<b>\$ 7,516.16</b>		<b>\$ 1,379,619.52</b>	

**Notes:**

\* Can re-file continuation within 6 months of expiration.

\*\* 16-month loan deferral through Nov 2025

\*\*\*\* Interest only payments for 12 months through April 2026

\*\*\*\*\* Building sold but loan repayments will continue under terms with the developer through 2027

## Executive Summary

### Imagine Cloquet

#### Overview

The **Imagine Cloquet** initiative is a strategic effort to define and communicate a **clear, unified brand for the City of Cloquet**, one that supports economic development, workforce attraction, tourism, and long-term community growth.

Cloquet's strength lies not only in its assets and opportunities but in its **people, relationships, and cultural foundation**. This includes the deep and ongoing presence of the **Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa**, whose history, traditions, and community leadership are integral to Cloquet's identity today.

This initiative establishes a **shared message and campaign framework** that reflects both **economic opportunity and cultural authenticity**, positioning Cloquet as:

**A place where people experience something meaningful, and choose to stay, build, and grow.**

#### Strategic Insight

Community feedback revealed a clear and consistent theme:

- Cloquet is often perceived as a place people pass through, but it has the potential to be a **destination**
- The community offers a **distinct pace of life, strong relationships, and a sense of belonging**
- There are **real workforce and business opportunities** across multiple industries
- The partnership and proximity with the **Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa** creates a **unique and inclusive community dynamic**
- Residents value a place where **culture, community, and opportunity intersect**

The key strategic shift:

People don't choose a place based solely on information. They choose based on how it makes them feel and whether they see themselves belonging there.

This campaign is designed to move individuals from:

**Experience → Emotional Connection → Belonging → Commitment**



## COUNTY

- Carlton County **Comprehensive Planning** outreach meetings continue.
- Carlton County hired a feasibility study for the **Transfer Station** to plan for its future and had a stakeholder meeting during April
- Carlton County EDA is devising **loan policies and application requirements** for private sector and non-private sector loans placing a waivable 3 percent interest rate, 20-year term maximum and a \$750,000 cap on development loans which would be available for machinery/equipment, land/building acquisition and new construction or renovation. Policies will require private sector borrowers to either create or save one permanent full-time equivalent job as a result of the county investment.

## CHAMBER

- Chamber Leadership Program May 6<sup>th</sup> – **Leadership Graduation**
- May's **Chamber Chat** will be held at Pedro's on May 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:30
- **The Status of Cloquet Childcare – Brown Bag Business Lunch N Learn** Friday May 15<sup>th</sup> Noon – 1pm City Hall (see attached flyer)

## CITY

- **Workforce / Manufacturing updates:**
  - Sappi press release on leadership retirement
  - CareerForce – employers needed for regional job fairs
  - Made here – save the date
  - Empowering Women in manufacturing
- **Child Care updates:**
  - City of Cloquet Proclamation (attached) **May 8<sup>th</sup> Child Care Provider Appreciation Day**
  - Minnesota's responses to fraud in childcare claims: <https://dcyf.mn.gov/facts-first>
  - Erin Bates Letter to the Editor - **For our future, invest in early childhood** April 03, 2026
  - Duluth's Lakeside child care **facility closure**
- **Housing updates:**
  - There were no responses to the **14<sup>th</sup> Street – Port property request for proposals**, owners were advised to list with realtors
  - The **Prospect Avenue West** RFP is open through May 29<sup>th</sup>
  - New home construction plans have been received for **106 7<sup>th</sup> ST redevelopment**
  - National Mortgage News update - attached



**AGENDA INFORMATIONAL UPDATES**  
**5-1-26**

- **Community Construction updates:**
  - The **Cloquet Area Fire District Facility** is taking shape on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street
  - **Pine Valley Investment updates:**
    - **Northwoods Credit Arena** ice plant and piping systems will be under repair through fall.
    - **The Medich Family Pavilion** is under construction at the base of Pine Valley
  
- **Brenny Dahl RFP** is open through late May
  
- The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission is developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to guide regional priorities and investments. **Take a brief survey (5–7 minutes) to share your insights:**  
[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ARDC\\_CEDS](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ARDC_CEDS)



# The Status of Cloquet Area Child Care



## Brown Bag Business Lunch N Learn

Friday May 15, 2026

Noon – 1pm

City Hall (101 14<sup>th</sup> ST Cloquet, MN 55720)

*(doors will open at 11:45am, event will start at noon)*



**Please join us to listen to the status of local child care in the Cloquet area and share with us workforce impacts and needs from your businesses**

**Please pack your brown bag lunch from home, USG & ULF will provide drinks & treats!**

This forum is an outcome of the Cloquet Community Led Child Care Solutions project funded by the **Northland Foundation** and facilitated by the **Northspan Group, Inc.**



## A familiar Sappi face is retiring [Jana Peterson](#) | Mar 27, 2026

Former [Cloquet](#) mill manager Mike Schultz left [Carlton County](#) for the corporate offices of Sappi North America in 2019, but he still cares deeply about this historic mill on the banks of the St. Louis River.

The paper science and engineering major spent nearly three decades here, starting as a technical supervisor at Potlatch in 1990, then moving up the ladder to various roles. Highlights include becoming pulp production manager following Sappi's acquisition from Potlatch in 2002, then becoming mill manager in 2007 with a break from 2011-2013 to manage the highly successful conversion of the pulp mill to produce dissolving pulp.

Schultz was vice president of manufacturing for Sappi North America from 2019 until last summer, when he moved into a global support role.

But back to the center of the world: [Cloquet](#). Schultz left for the corporate world, he said, because he wanted more for - not more than - the [Cloquet](#) mill.

"Having spent almost 29 years of my life at the [Cloquet](#) mill, obviously I had a lot of love and passion for the mill and for the community, and always got concerned that our voice wasn't necessarily heard at the corporate level," he said.

"And I had felt that I had done as much for [Cloquet](#) as I could while I was here, so it was time for me to do something different."

Schultz and his wife, Julie, a longtime first-grade teacher in [Cloquet](#), moved in 2019, ultimately settling outside of Portland, Maine. As vice president of manufacturing, he oversaw manufacturing operations at the company's four North American mills, including [Cloquet](#).

Schultz says [Cloquet](#) is now an equal part of plans.

"The leadership of North America mostly came through the mills in Maine and there wasn't a good understanding of the mill at Cloquet," he said. "Bringing the perspective of what [Cloquet](#) can do was helpful."

And now he's retiring, "sort of."

"I am retiring officially [on March 31], but I am still going to be spending some time with Sappi, mostly supporting our South African operations, " he said. "But, I certainly am

available to support [Cloquet](#) going forward. [I have] a lot of knowledge and experience - in today's world, it's hard to hang on to that."

The Pine Knot sat down with Schultz to get his perspective on Sappi and the [Cloquet](#) mill.

**Pine Knot News: What's next for the [Cloquet](#) mill? Are we in line for another project that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars?**

**Mike Schultz:** I'm not going to tell your readers that the next big thing is going to come to the [Cloquet](#) mill. I think the big thing [here] is we've got to become a little more efficient than we are today. The other thing is we need to figure out how to make more tons of something out of that mill, to divide our costs across. It could be a number of things we've been exploring. The big thing for us is to keep [Cloquet](#) viable as it is.

**PKN: What were you most proud of here?**

**Schultz:** The safety performance of the mill was my biggest pride point. [During his tenure, the mill surpassed over one million hours without a lost-time injury five times.] And then our sustainability story. At one time, we were the best in the world in sustainability for the products that we made. I don't know if that's still true today, but I would be surprised if it's not. [The mill] definitely has a really good sustainability footprint in little old [Cloquet](#), Minnesota.

**PKN: Is everything [Cloquet](#) produces recyclable? Even the fancy boxes?**

**Schultz:** Yes, the only thing we make right now across Sappi that isn't really recyclable in terms of our paper products is the stuff that goes into making paper cups, because that's got the poly (polyethylene) coating on it. In general, that's kind of the holy grail for all the manufacturers out there. If anybody can figure out how to make a completely recyclable, compostable coffee cup, they'll make a lot of money.

**PKN: Did you have a certain philosophy at [Cloquet](#)?**

**Schultz:** The thing that I tried to instill in the employees at the mill is we need to think about the mill as bigger than ourselves. It's definitely more than the 700 employees that are there. It's also the hundreds of loggers that support the mill and their way of life. If the mill were to struggle or fold, the whole community, the whole region, would be negatively impacted.

I would joke that it's like in the "Blues Brothers," - "we're on a mission from God." But I took the responsibility of the mill in this community very seriously: its impact and its importance was definitely bigger than the mill itself. I try to get people to understand that in any job they do, that it's bigger than themselves.

**PKN: What is your biggest concern regarding the [Cloquet](#) mill?**

**Schultz:** Human resources. If I go back, say 20 years ago, in my time in [Cloquet](#), if we put out an ad that we were hiring, we'd get 1,000 applicants easily. And maybe out of those 1,000 applicants, we would be trying to build a pool of maybe 40 people. It was a pretty arduous process. If they got in, it was like they'd won the lottery and [most people] never thought about ever leaving us once they got in.

Today, if we're trying to hire for 10 positions, we're lucky to get the 10 applicants. That's an issue for us. And even out of those applicants, many of them won't stay. Some will leave in a matter of weeks, some maybe after a year or two. It's not the place people make their career anymore.

The generations coming through have a different standard of what they want to do for work, and we're struggling to figure that out. ... All of us, the refinery in Superior, Sappi, USG, Minnesota Power, are scrambling to hire the same people and it's very competitive.

**PKN: You said you plan to stay put near Portland, Maine, for at least a year in retirement. Do you think you and Julie might move back to the area someday?**

**Schultz:** We're kind of "leaving it in God's hands." We're either going to move back here or we're going to move closer to Madison, Wisconsin, one or the other. I think a house will come up and we'll just go, "that's the one, that's where we're going to go."

**PKN: Why Madison?**

**Schultz:** That's where we grew up. Both our hometowns are small farm communities northwest of Madison. I tell the story that girls in my high school wouldn't go out with me, so I had to go to the next town over to get a date. We started dating at the beginning of junior year of high school.

**PKN: Your son, Cameron, is in school there, right?**

**Schultz:** Cameron is pursuing an 8-year MD-PhD program there. He wants to go into medical research. And he's engaged. His girlfriend is also an MD-PhD student at the University of Wisconsin.

**PKN: What are your thoughts on the current [Cloquet](#) mill manager, Jeff Boulden?**

**Schultz:** I'd say we're kind of cut from the same cloth. Our upbringing was very similar - we both come from small farm communities in Wisconsin. Went to the same school; he was a year behind me. The only disadvantage he has, compared to me, is he's new to Cloquet.



# Hiring Now!

# JOB FAIR

## Employers needed for future job fairs!

First Wednesday of each month  
**NO COST** for participating employers!

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**CareerForce Duluth** | 402 West 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Duluth, MN 55802 | 218-302-8400

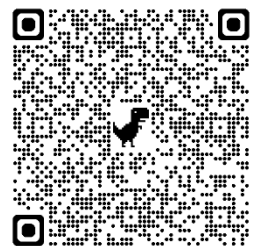
Come in and speak with job seekers about your current employment opportunities.

Application assistance available in our computer lab during the job fair to help people apply for your online postings! Interview rooms available to meet with candidates on site!

**If interested in participating, register at →**

**Limited space available**

**CareerForce staff will contact you to confirm your spot!**



*CareerForce is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.*

Individuals needing accommodations for any of our services should call us at the location phone number listed above.

**Please contact us at least 3 business days prior to the event.**

**CareerForce™**

Minnesota's Career Resource



# SAVE THE DATE

**November 9-10, 2026**

*at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center*

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Hands-On Career Exploration

Manufacturing Job Fair

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# November 9-10, 2026

at the Duluth Entertainment and  
Convention Center

## DISCOVER. EXPLORE. CONNECT.

Discover What is  
Made Locally  
Hands-On Career  
Exploration  
Manufacturing Job  
Fair

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350 Harbor Drive  
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# CITY *of* CLOQUET

## *Proclamation*

**WHEREAS**, Child Care Aware® of America and organizations nationwide are recognizing Child Care Providers on this day; and

**WHEREAS**, the child care system supports children's growth, development, and educational advancement while creating positive economic impacts for families and communities; and

**WHEREAS**, child care providers are essential to the health of our communities by fostering safe and welcoming spaces, supporting working families, and creating enriching environments where children develop lifelong skills; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Cloquet recognizes that child care has been and continues to be a lifeline for families, communities, and the economy. As such, it has provided much-needed support to providers to help sustain the viability of child care ; and

**WHEREAS**, support for affordable, accessible, high-quality child care represents a worthy commitment to help families work, support children's healthy development and learning, and keep our economy growing.

Now, therefore, I, Sheila Lamb, Acting Mayor of the City of Cloquet, hereby proclaim **May 8, 2026, as Child Care Provider Appreciation Day** in Cloquet and urge all citizens to recognize child care providers for their important work and how valuable they are to our communities.



  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Roger Maki, Mayor



## For Immediate Release

**Contact:** Spenser Bickett  
651-468-6238  
spenser.bickett@state.mn.us

February 4, 2026  
Previous Announcements

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### New DCYF webpage addresses misinformation and provides facts on programs and services

Recent statements and actions by the federal government and other online sources have created uncertainty about child care, food assistance and other public programs that families rely on every day.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families is taking steps to push back on the amount of misinformation being perpetuated against essential services. This week, DCYF launched "Fact First: The real story on services that support Minnesota," a webpage aimed at setting the record straight. The site offers factual information to combat claims currently circulating online.

Misleading information presented without data or context can create confusion about how public support programs actually operate. Moreover, these unsupported claims have been used as a pretext to deploy federal immigration agents into Minnesota, demand Minnesotans' private data in violation of state and federal law, and freeze critical federal investments that make child care and groceries more affordable for Minnesota families.

"Inflammatory and misleading claims create safety risks for families, child care providers, and businesses, and contributes to harmful discourse about Minnesota's immigrant communities," said Commissioner Tikki Brown. "We remain committed to fact-based reviews that stop fraud, protect children, support families, maintain the public trust, and minimize disruption to communities that rely on these essential services."

The unprecedented uncertainty caused by the proliferation of these claims impacts Minnesotans who rely on public programs, the child care providers who provide care to Minnesota's children, as well as the state and county workforce charged with administering and overseeing those programs. In Minnesota, fraud claims are evaluated through established audit and investigation processes that rely on verified data and documented findings — not estimates or unsubstantiated claims.

The federal government continues to cite unverified claims as reasons to withhold funding for essential programs that support hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans. The uncertainty of funding stability creates unnecessary stress and harm to families across the state. That's why accurate, fact-based information matters.

"Facts First" will continue to add claims as needed to help the public understand the truth behind what is being said about some of Minnesota's public support programs. More information is available at [dcyf.mn.gov/facts-first-real-story-services-support-minnesotans](https://dcyf.mn.gov/facts-first-real-story-services-support-minnesotans).

Learn more about the federal actions that could affect Minnesota's children, families, and communities and how the state is responding.

<https://dcyf.mn.gov/facts-first>

## **Facts First: The real story on services that support Minnesotans**

[Recent statements and actions from the federal government](#) have created uncertainty about the future of affordable child care, food assistance, and other services Minnesota families rely on every day.

### **What's being claimed and what the facts show**

Misleading information from the federal government and other unverified online sources have cited inconsistent allegations of fraud without providing valid data or supporting evidence. Numbers presented without context can be misleading and create confusion about how public support programs actually operate.

Accurate, fact-based information matters. In Minnesota, fraud claims are evaluated through established audit and investigation processes that rely on thorough investigations, verified data and documented findings — not estimates or unsubstantiated claims.

**Claim: Videos circulating online suggest that child care programs are empty or misusing CCAP funds.**

**This is misleading.**

[Brief, unannounced, and hostile visits by non-credentialed members of the public cannot determine attendance, enrollment, or the appropriate use of CCAP funds.](#)

**Claim: Minnesota is refusing to share required child care data with the federal government.**

**This is false.**

[The state of Minnesota has always provided the federal government with the data required by law.](#)

**Claim: Federal staff were in Minnesota to gather information Minnesota would not provide.**

**This is misleading.**

[Learn why this is a misleading statement.](#)

**Claim: Minnesota has refused to share private SNAP participant data, prolonging extensive federal immigration enforcement in the state.**

**This is false.**

[Minnesota already provides SNAP data reports required by federal law.](#)

<https://dcyf.mn.gov/facts-first>

**Claim: Child care programs don't need to be licensed.**

**This is false.**

**Minnesota has about 7,250 licensed child care programs.**

**Claim: It's incredibly easy to open a child care program.**

**This is false.**

**Opening a child care center in Minnesota is a complex and highly regulated process designed to protect children's safety and development.**

**Claim: Child care programs are not required to have attendance records.**

**This is false.**

**Keeping accurate daily attendance records is a condition of payment for CCAP and is required by state law.**

<https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/opinion/letters/readers-view-for-our-future-invest-in-early-childhood>

## **Opinion Letters**

### **Reader's View: For our future, invest in early childhood**

**The Week of the Young Child is April 11-17**

**By Erin Bates, Cloquet**

April 03, 2026 at 3:42 PM

Letters To The Editor

April 11-17 marks the Week of the Young Child, a time to recognize the critical importance of early childhood in shaping the future of our communities.

The earliest years of life are not simply a prelude to education; they are the foundation. In fact, the majority of brain development occurs before a child reaches age 3, making these years essential for cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

Because of this, access to high-quality child care and preschool is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Families depend on reliable care so they can work and contribute to the economy. Employers rely on a stable workforce. Communities benefit when children enter school ready to learn and succeed. When we invest in early childhood, we invest in long-term economic strength and societal well-being.

However, the child care sector is under increasing strain. Instead of supporting this essential industry, headlines too often focus on isolated instances of fraud, painting an incomplete and misleading picture. Such narratives overlook the reality that there are already multiple layers of oversight and accountability in place at the state level to ensure funds are used appropriately. Amplifying these stories without context risks undermining public trust and discouraging much-needed investment.

Child care providers are not the problem; they are part of the solution. They are educators, caregivers, and small-business owners working tirelessly to support children and families, often under challenging conditions. The industry is already facing workforce shortages, rising costs, and limited resources. Negative portrayals only deepen these challenges.

During the Week of the Young Child, let us shift the conversation. Let us recognize the value of early childhood education, support the professionals who make it possible, and advocate for policies that ensure child care remains accessible, affordable, and high-quality for all.

Our children and our future depend on it.

<https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/business/insurance-loss-puts-child-care-center-out-of-business>

**APRIL 23, 2026** [Business](#)

### **Insurance loss puts child care center out of business**

Lakeside Early Learning in Duluth will continue to offer child care through June 4 as staffing and ratios allow.



Lakeside Early Learning Center, at 4628 Pitt St. in Duluth, will close June 4.

Jed Carlson / Duluth Media Group file photo

#### **By [Staff reports](#)**

April 23, 2026 at 4:13 PM

DULUTH — Duluth's already strained child care offerings will suffer another blow when a

facility closes its doors in six weeks.

Lakeside Early Learning child care center announced Wednesday, April 22, that it will close June 4 after the facility was dropped by its insurer. Services will continue until then as staffing and ratios allow.

“We remain committed to supporting affected families and staff during this transition,” said Lakeside Early Learning board member Cameron Kruger in an email to the News Tribune.

“This outcome is the result of systemic failures affecting child care providers statewide and nationally — not a failure of the families or staff who have made our community what it is. We are immensely grateful for the trust placed in us by this community to love, support and educate their children for the past six years.”

The facility, 4628 Pitt St., was navigating challenges relating to financial pressure, capital needs and staffing, according to Kruger.

Early in the year, on Jan. 25, [a water pipe broke and the building flooded](#) — [further exacerbating the financial strain](#). At the time, the center was caring for 88 children.

<https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/business/insurance-loss-puts-child-care-center-out-of-business>



Fans dry out a rug in a preschool room at Lakeside Early Learning Center on Jan. 26 after a broken water pipe flooded the building over the weekend.

Jed Carlson / Duluth Media Group file photo

Then on April 14,

Lakeside Early Learning received notice that its liability insurance — a requirement of licensure — would not be renewed.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children found in an August 2024 study that costs of liability insurance coverage for in-home and center-based childcare [have risen rapidly](#) , causing many struggling facilities to consider closing.

“We have worked closely with our broker to explore every possible path forward, including nontraditional options such as risk pooling and high-risk coverage,” Kruger said.

“Ultimately, no viable option was identified.”

## National Mortgage News

### Some markets thawing in time for spring homebuying season

By [Brad Finkelstein](#)

While housing affordability has improved year-over year in all of the 50 markets tracked by First American, the sizes of the gains have varied across that universe. Plus, on a comparative basis, home prices remain higher than prior to the pandemic.

A recent analysis from the company quantifies these differences.

Consumers' house-buying power nationwide in February rose by 10% relative to list prices from a year ago, said Sam Williamson, a senior economist at First American.

But regional variations in this metric are largely affected by interest rates remaining higher. Those have had different impacts depending on the city.

"Improved affordability suggests the housing market is entering spring on somewhat stronger footing than a year ago, even if the recent rise in mortgage rates has tempered some of that momentum," Williamson said in a press release. "That means any pickup in sales is likely to be uneven rather than broad-based.

### The impact of March's rise in interest rates

At the end of February, the 30-year fixed rate mortgage averaged 5.98%, according to Freddie Mac. However, the Iran conflict led investors to flee the 10-year Treasury during March, pushing yields higher. This resulted in the [30-year rising 40 basis points](#) over the next four weeks.

A seamless, homeowner-first experience that ensures compliance and compassion go hand-in-hand.

This increase "could take some wind out of the spring market's sails, but not enough to knock it off course," Williamson added in a follow-up comment.

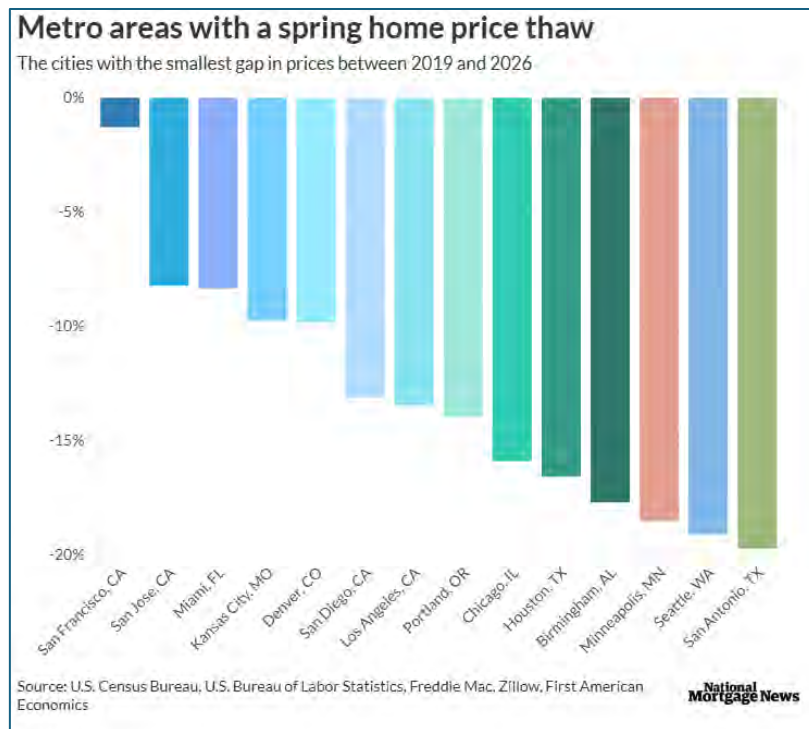
"While higher rates may trim the number of homes within buyers' budgets, buyers are still in a stronger position relative to list prices than they were a year ago," he continued. "That should help keep the spring market moving forward, particularly in markets where affordability is closer to pre-pandemic norms."

In an earlier article, Williamson noted that house buying power has topped the median list price for the first time since 2022. In December, house buying power was \$417,000, 5% over the national median list price of \$396,000.

On the other hand, price growth continues to moderate.

The Federal Housing Finance Agency House Price Index [increased 0.1% seasonally adjusted](#) in January over December, while on an annual basis it rose by 1.6%. The S&P Cotality Case-Shiller national home price index reported a similar monthly increase but a smaller 0.9% rise over January 2025.

Case-Shiller has a pair of sub-indices, the 10-city which reflects older areas, and the 20-city, which covers a broader range of newer markets. Those both increased at a higher level on an annual basis than the national index, at 1.7% and 1.2% respectively.



### Cities where the price gap has narrowed

The local market with the lowest difference in buying power-to-price ratio for the period between 2019 and 2026 is San Francisco, at -1.3%, according to First American. Its neighbor in the Bay Area, San Jose, was next, at -8.2%, followed by Miami and Denver rounded out the top five.

However, San Francisco [has not become affordable for](#)

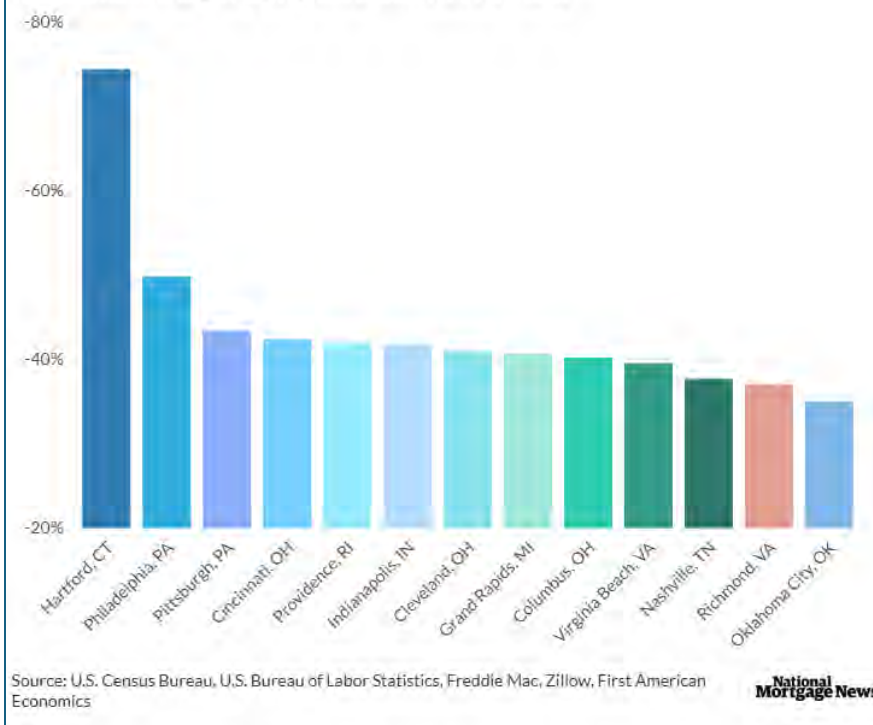
[most home purchasers](#); rather this metric is closest to its pre-pandemic norm that the other markets studied, even if the area was already price strained, Williamson said.

Those cities closest to their pre-pandemic level are [first in line for a spring rebound](#).

"In those markets, a greater share of homes has come back within buyers' budgets." Williamson said. "Elsewhere, where affordability gaps remain wider, the thaw is likely to come more slowly."

## Metro areas where home prices are keeping activity frozen

The cities with the largest gap in prices between 2019 and 2026



## Housing markets where the thaw will take some time

Where the freeze will last longer is Hartford, Connecticut. The affordability gap is -74.4%, the worst by far. It is "an outlier even among the most strained markets," Williamson said. In most markets, homebuying power has increased, at an average of 7% to 8% since 2019. In Hartford, it declined 11%. Milwaukee was down less than 1%.

Behind Hartford on the still frosty list were Philadelphia, -49.9%, and Pittsburgh, -43.4%.

At -30%, Milwaukee is in the group of markets First American described as experiencing notable thawing but in its case not enough to pull it out of its deep freeze.