

Iron Range Brownfields Lunch & Learn May 21, 2026

Ely City Hall | 209 E Chapman St, Ely • Minn

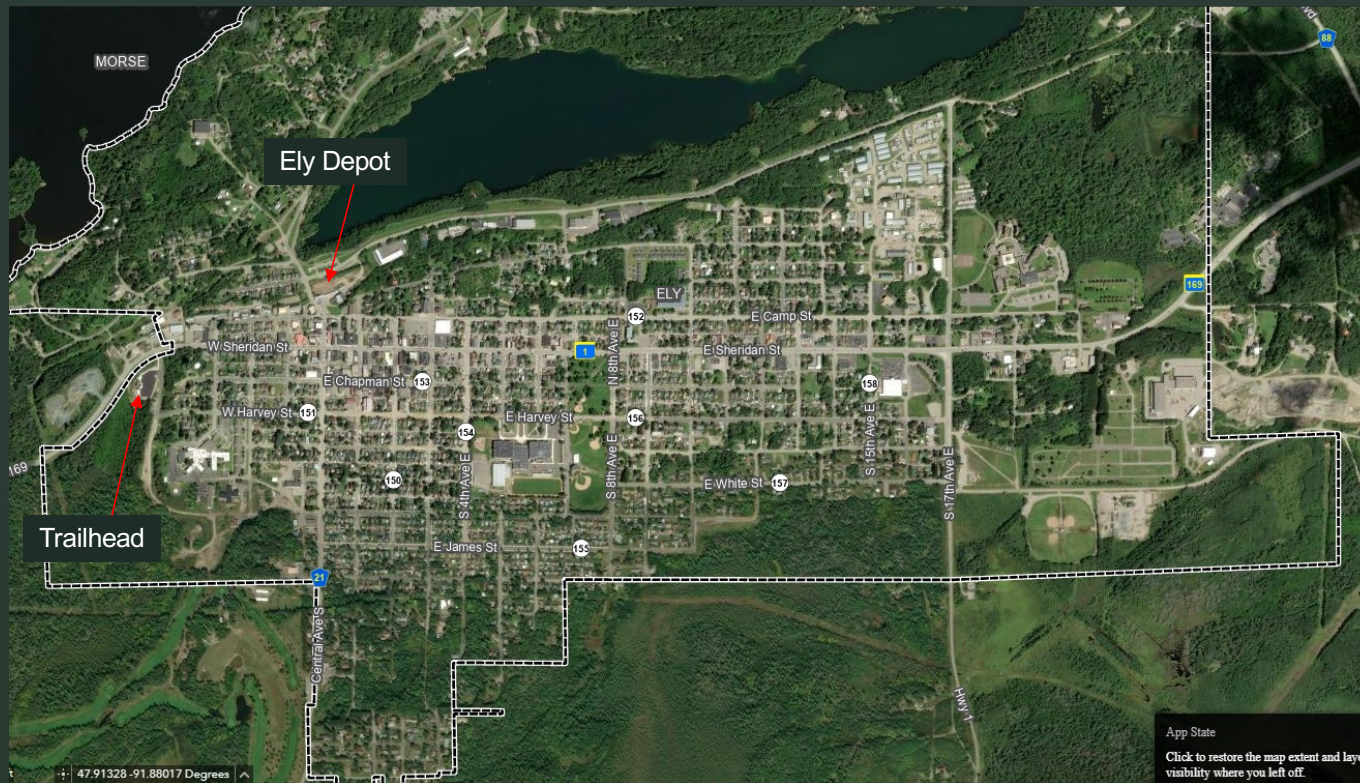
Harold Langowski, City of Ely Clerk-Treasurer
elyod@ely.mn.us | 218.365.3224




City of Ely

www.ely.mn.us

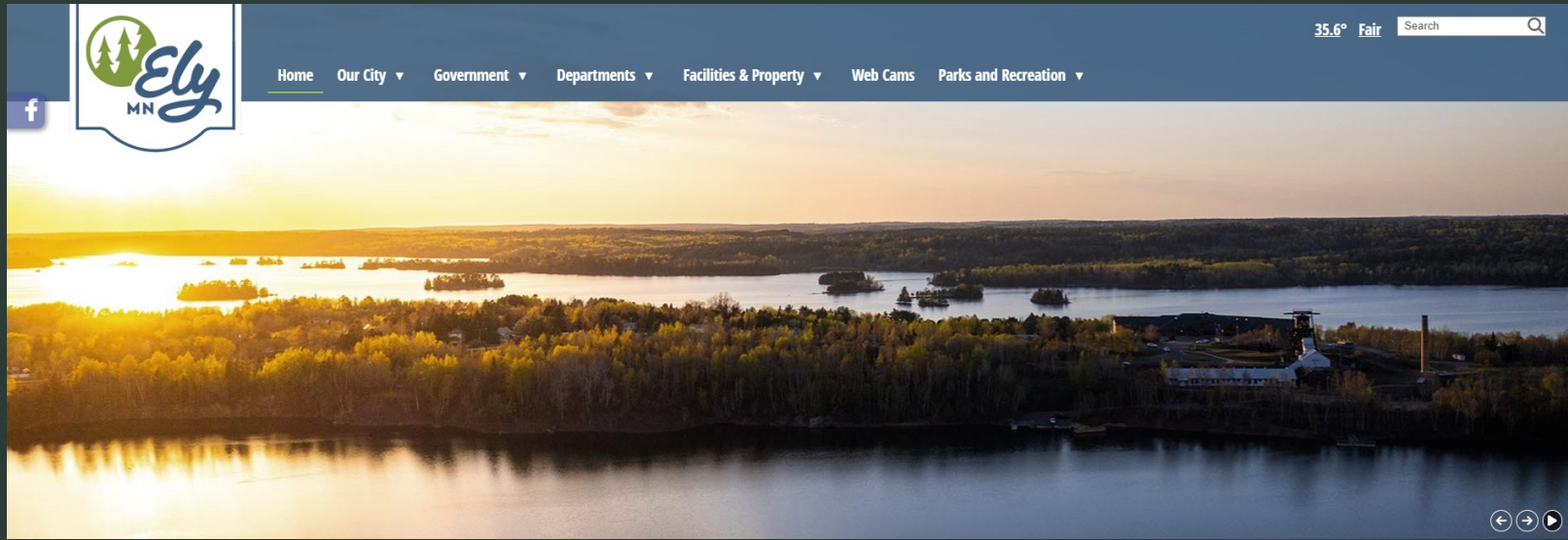
population: 3,203





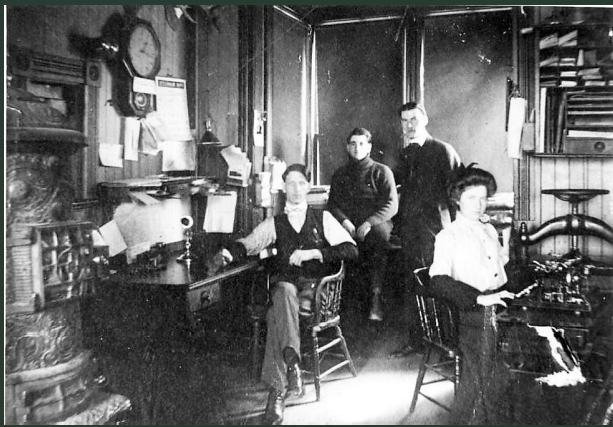
How did we get here? What did we discover?

- • **Project Proposer**
- • **City Staff**
- • **Technical Expert(s)**
- • **Funding Sources**
- • **Regulators/Agencies**



- Underground shafts from the Chandler, Pioneer, Zenith, Sibley, and Savoy collapsed in the 1980s to form Miners Lake.
- Recreational use of Miners Lake brings tourist and local enjoyment with hiking and biking trails, boating, fishing and swimming. The Lake is used year around as a trout fishing destination.
- Ely is the gateway to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). Ely was also the Coolest Small Town in the USA in 2010! It has only gotten cooler since.

Ely Train Depot



The last passenger train to ever visit Ely heads out of town on Sept. 19, 1981. The railroad came to Ely in 1888, and the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range served the iron ore mines in that area until 1967.
Courtesy of Steve Gilschinski

Ely Depot and Railyard Revitalization

- Historic preservation of the original train depot area & the freight room.
- Revitalize the 130-year old train depot into a brewery; and add outdoor seating and stage, beer garden, and outdoor game space.
- Property value increase from \$245,000 to \$619,800 after development with 10 full-time jobs & 24 part-time jobs.
- Benefit to our economy, community, and the environment. High visibility location with many adjacent shops. Property was becoming blight.

Timeline

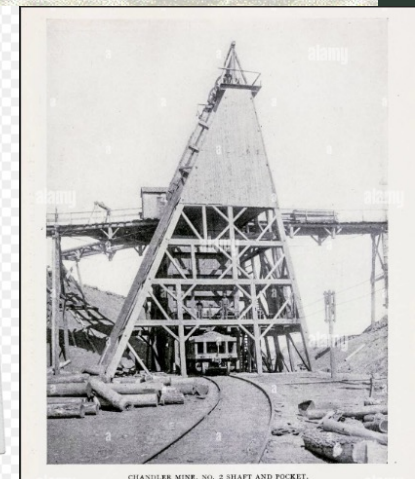
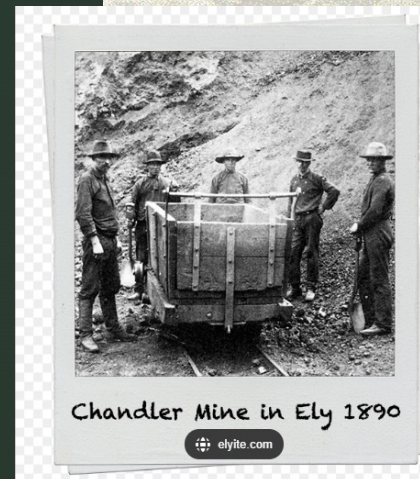
- Phase I & II + land acquisition occurred 2018 to 2024. Due diligence was completed prior to purchase to determine what needed to be dealt with.
- Depot expansion & soil management - Fall of 2024- Removal of contaminated soils for building foundation replacement (IRRR Funds)
Summer 2025 clean up of contaminated soil in green space. \$488,000 total project cost, \$312,257 in DEED Grant Funds.
- Fall 2025 and Summer 2026 – Additional funds applied for from DEED for Phase 2 greenspace/parking clean up. Awarded \$257,817 in DEED Funds.
- Currently finalizing plan for phase 2 clean up for DEED and MPCA Review

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment

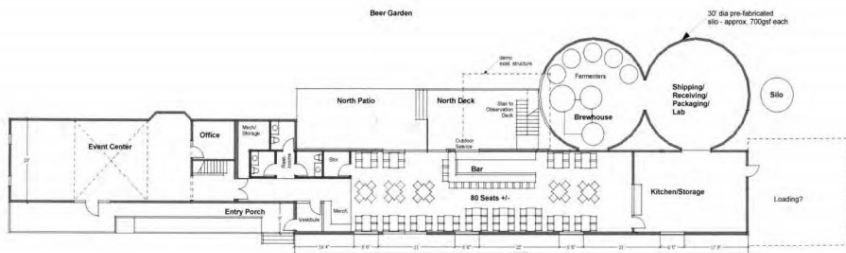
Mine-scarred lands was utilized by the Chandler Iron Company's Engine House No. 1 (not the actual area mined).

In the early 1870s the Burlington, Cedar Rapids, and Northern Railroad constructed a rail line in Ely.

The train depot, railroad siding & engine house; & coal storage utilized the property from late 1890s to late 1970s



End Use



Floor Plan - Opt. C

1 inch = 10 feet @ 18"x24" Sheet



Ely Brewery

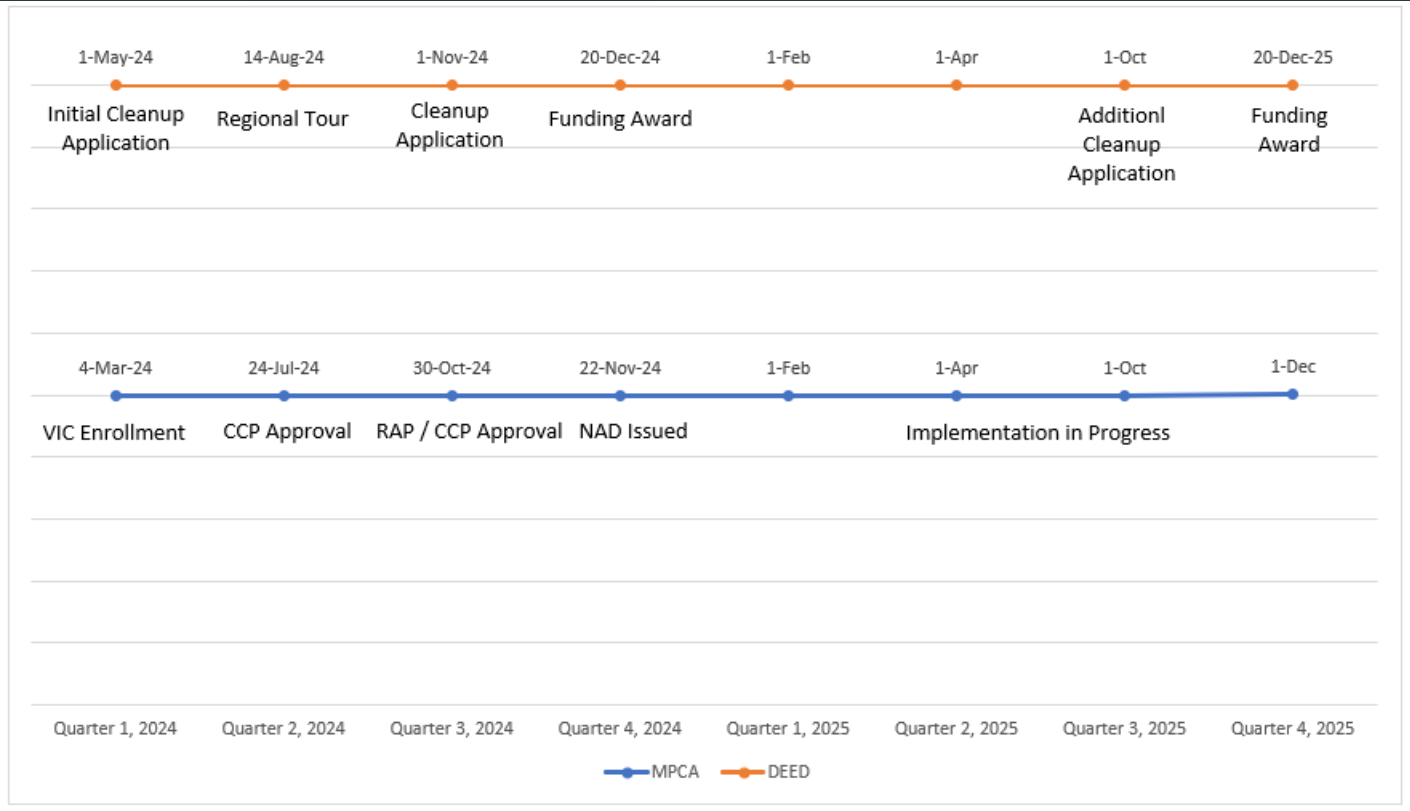
Ely MN UHS402381



CONCEPT DESIGN **A1**

06-28-2022

Milestones



Advocating for Funding

- August 14, 2024 – Regional Economic Development Tour
 - Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation, Commissioner Ida Rukavina
 - Department of Employment and Economic Development, Commissioner Matt Varilek
 - Northland Foundation, Executive Director Tony Sertich

Aug. 20, 2024

NEWS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Jordan Metsa, Communications Director

218-735-3061, Jordan.Metsa@state.mn.us

Regional economic development tour highlights business successes and opportunities on the Iron Range



Total Investment

- Total investment - \$3.3 Million
- The purchaser has a long list of successful rehabilitation and restoration projects in Ely and collaboration with the City.
- Purchaser has experience restoring historic buildings & honoring history & architecture of the depot.
- Beautiful commercial space with a positive effect on the community.
- Prominent greenspace between the main thoroughfare and Veteran's Memorial / Miners Lake and Mesabi Trail
- Hub of economic activity & will add to the richness to Ely's history and culture



Purchaser Perspective

Challenges

- Frustratingly slow process.
- Advocating for funding was highly dependent on City staff time and its consultant.
- Unclear why a developer pays for a reduction of risk to public health.

Things to consider

- Helpful to have an advocate for the Iron Range and its projects. (RAMS)
- State funding constraints limit your grant award.
- 25% match required, most environmental work completed for Ph1, Ph2 and RAP was eligible as match.



City Perspective

Challenges

- Frustratingly slow process.
- Small city staff with little to no budget for this type of process.
- Legacy issues that we inherited.
- Costs continue to escalate

Things to consider

Helpful to have an advocate for the Iron Range and its projects.

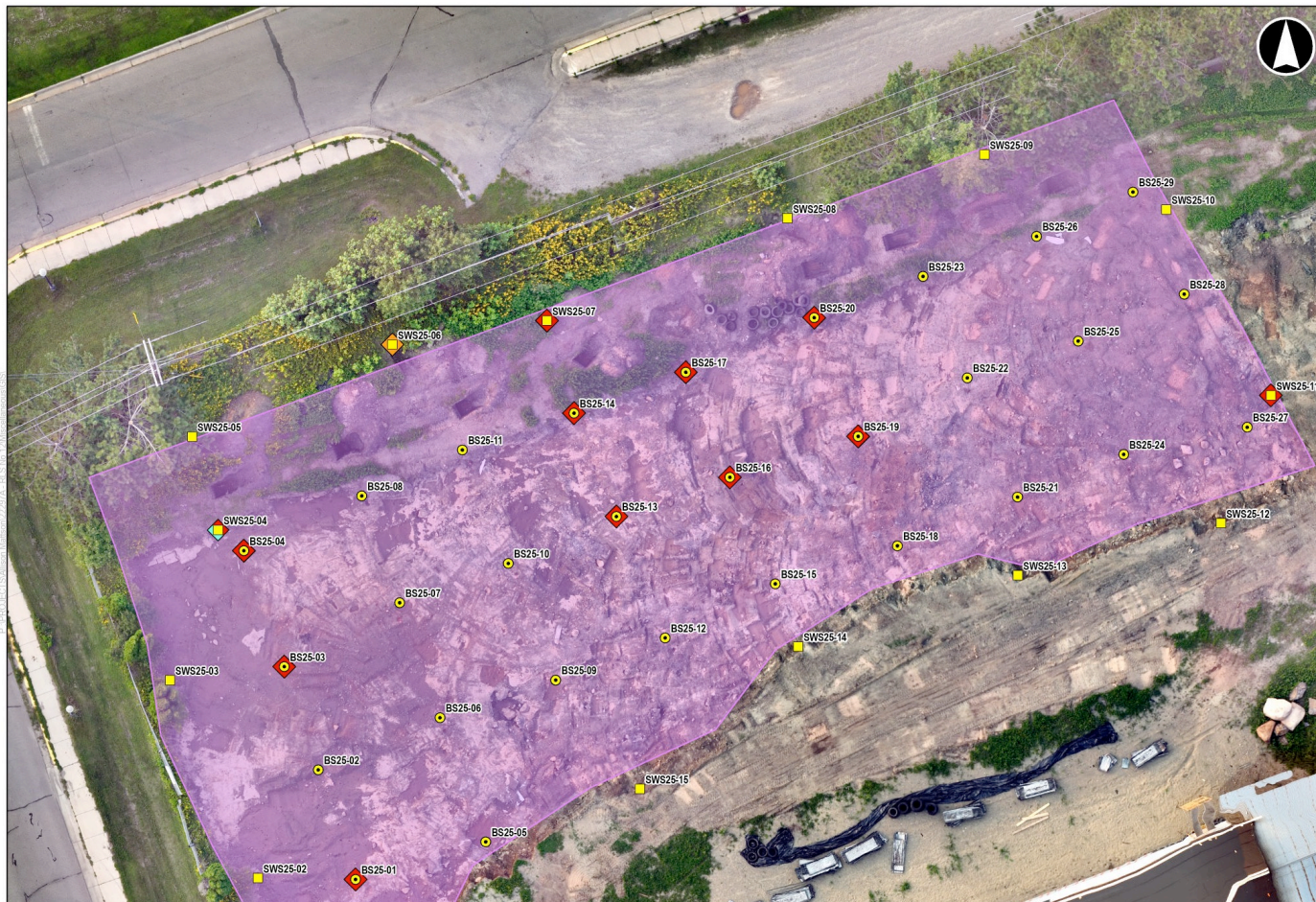
Streamline process between MPCA and DEED.

Don't expect the IRRR to pay for everything. The other state programs need to be tapped on redevelopment projects like this to expand the leverage for IRRR funds.

Electronic grant application submittal would be appreciated. Old archaic process with DEED.

Most times luck and pure determination is the reason for success.

Completed Work



0 10 20 30 40 Feet
 Scale 1:240
 1 inch equals 20 feet on 11 x 17 paper

Legend
 Approximately 4 FT of Clean Fill Between Bottom Sample and Top of Grade

Sample Locations
 Bottom Samples
 Sidewall Samples

Locations above Soil Reference Values

Contamination Type
 Arsenic
 Arsenic, Barium
 Arsenic, DRO > 100 ppm
 Lead

Note
 Arsenic > Both Residential & Commercial/Industrial SRVs
 Barium > Residential SRV
 Lead > Commercial/Industrial SRV

Sample and Filled Area Thickness Map
 Ely Depot Brewery
 Depot on Central, LLC
 212 Central Avenue North, Ely
 St. Louis County, MN

Figure 1

Map Center Coordinates 15T 584679 5306684	
Spatial Reference NAD 1983 HARN Adj MN St Louis	
Project Number 22297A	Date Created 2/6/2026
Author K Berry, GIS Analyst, NTS	
Data Source	
2025 Aerial Imagery - NTS Drone	
Survey Map Overlay - Bear Island Surveying, LLC (Chris Mattia) - 09/20/2023	

Phased Work





Ely Trailhead



Ely Trailhead

- Converted a former County public works site into a multi-use trailhead and visitor center . Parcel was part of a trade with St. Louis County for the new garage location at the East end of Ely.
- Features a 3,400-square foot, four season building designed to serve residents, visitors, and trail users across all modes of recreation. The Ely chamber of Commerce operates the visitor Center from the facility.
- Connects Ely to the northeastern Minnesota's most significant trail systems
 - Prospector Loop ATV- Over 250 Miles and expanding
 - Mesabi Trail- 165 mile multi use Bike trail
 - Snowmobile Trails- David Dill Taconite Trail/Tomahawk Snowmobile Trail- 275 miles
 - Hidden Valley Mountain Bike and Ski Trails
- Serves as a cornerstone project within Ely's West End Redevelopment

Timeline

- Conceptual Drawings and Planning started in 2006
- Land acquisition occurred by 2008
- Phase I & II occurred 2018 to 2023
- Construction & soil management - 2024
- Summer 2025 – open for public use

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment and Limited Phase II Investigation

Historical use of the property as a laydown area for a County public works facility, including storage of asphalt and abandoned barrels.

Also served as the regional recycle center for ten years. Brush and Mulch site, recycling bins. Wood ash was also deposited at site.

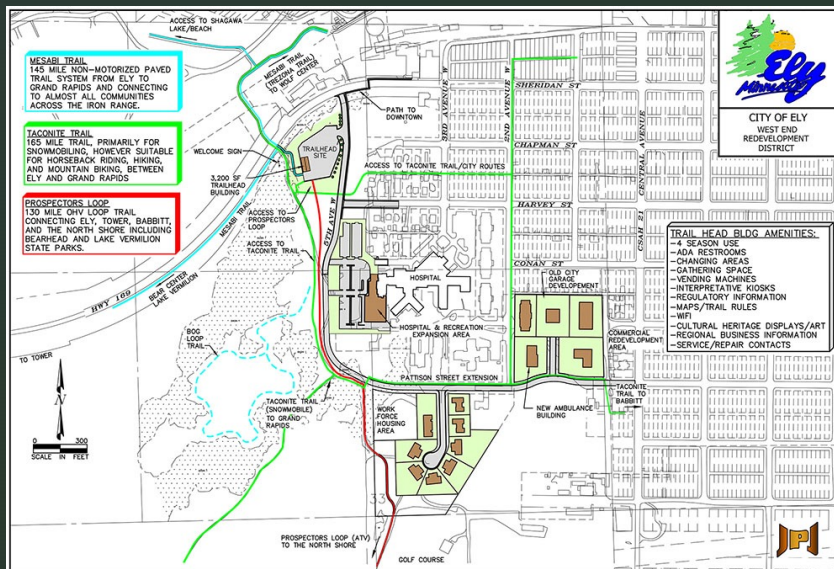
Identified non-tank related diesel range organics (DRO), phenanthrene, volatile organic compounds (VOC), and mercury release with respect soil.



Response Action Planning



Planning for soil removal for risk to human health & the environment; resulting in about 200 cubic yards of heavy industrial waste that was excavated, loaded, and hauled to a subtitle D landfill.



Redeveloped with a 3,200-square foot trailhead building and associated parking.



Funding and Investment

- Services Utilized

- Commercial Redevelopment Grant Program
- Ely Economic Authority
- Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation (IRRR)

- Investment

- City of Ely and Ely Economic Development Authority secured \$2.8 million in State of MN bonding funds, \$1.5 million in Federal EDA funds and \$280k in IRRR funds to support planning, engineering, and site development

End Use





Consulting Services provided by



Environmental, Civil, and Geotechnical Engineering



#NTSKnows #OurRangeYourRange

The sole Iron Range-based firm providing environmental science and engineering services for sustainable communities and economic prosperity.

(218) 741-4290 | Virginia, MN | www.netechnical.com

What Now?

Questions?