



Last Friday, May 10, SCALE Chair Joe Thill (Jordan) welcomed members and guests to a morning focused on economic development and trends in the real estate market. First, Chair Thill welcomed Stacy Crakes, business development manager for the First Stop Shop (FSS), who provided a summary overview of the FSS's first six months in operation. The FSS – an economic development resource created by SCALE to assist Scott County and its cities and townships in fostering a business-friendly environment – was founded with three key goals in mind: first, to create and retain good, high quality jobs; second, to narrow the emerging skills gap in the labor force; and third, to promote business retention and expansion. “Nearly 80 percent of new jobs come from existing businesses,” Crakes explained.

Through developing positive relationships, establishing a comprehensive database of commonly requested information, facilitating and tracking current commercial pursuits, and creating a culture of customer service, FSS intends to play a pivotal role in the SCALE goal to have 50 percent of the local workforce employed within Scott County by 2050.

Similarly, through its affiliation with the Community Development Agency, the FSS announced the recipients and uses of several “Technical Planning Grants” (TAP grants), awarded last month. The grant-assisted projects range from developing a city-wide marketing campaign (Belle Plaine) to help in funding a Hwy. 101 corridor study (Shakopee), from helping to defray costs associated with demolishing a blighted building (Elko New Market) to allowing for a multi-year 2040 transportation and land use scenario analysis (Scott County).

After Savage City Administrator Barry Stock gave a brief update on SCALE's economic development training sessions (an initiative formerly known as LEGOS), Julia Parenteau – government and public affairs director for the Minneapolis Area Realtors Association, which represents over 7,000 realtors in a multi-county region – provided a kind of “state of the Twin Cities” as it pertains to real estate. Each January, the Realtors Association makes predictions on several key measures in the market: seller activity, buyer activity, inventory, prices, supply and demand, affordability, new construction, and interest rates. Last Friday, Parenteau was pleased to discuss elements of an “organic recovery” (i.e., one that isn't belied by short sales and foreclosures): new listings are up, closed sales are up, and prices are moderately up – and new construction rates were up sharply (31 percent over last year).

The Scott County real estate picture was even rosier than the region as a whole, with the local figures out-pacing the region in new listings (up almost 18 percent), closed sales (24 percent), prices (22 percent), and sellers receiving the highest percentage of original list prices (97 percent). As for foreclosure and short sale activity, “...these numbers are coming down fast. They're still above the historical norm, but the amount of ‘distressed properties’ is trending in the right direction,” she stated. [View her entire presentation here.](#)

Finally, after Scott County Legislative Coordinator Claire Robling summarized recent and expected developments at the Legislature, Scott County Deputy Director Lezlie Vermillion encouraged all members of SCALE as well as the general public to attend an upcoming roundtable discussion with the

Metropolitan Council on its Thrive MSP 2040 initiative. The meeting will be held on May 30, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., at the SCALE Regional Training Facility in Jordan.

The next SCALE meeting will be held on Friday, June 14 from 7:30—9 a.m. at Prior Lake City Hall. Mark your calendars.

“The mission of SCALE is to forge new and innovative ways in which government entities can collaborate to provide superior services while making the most of limited resources.”