



Comments on the Draft Becks Road Land Use Study

July 31, 2026

Re: Comments on the Draft Becks Road Land Use Study

Ulland Brothers appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Becks Road Land Use Study.

As a Duluth-area company that has operated in northeastern Minnesota since 1934, we recognize the importance of thoughtful long-range planning. We share the City's interest in responsible stewardship of natural resources, orderly growth, safe transportation corridors, and the long-term prosperity of western Duluth.

The Becks Road corridor is a unique area with significant environmental, recreational, industrial, and economic value. We believe those interests can coexist through careful planning that recognizes both future opportunities and the importance of preserving existing community assets.

Aggregate Resources are Essential Public Infrastructure

The Becks Road Quarry is not simply another industrial land use. It is a strategically located aggregate resource that supplies materials essential to the construction and maintenance of highways, bridges, airports, municipal utilities, schools, commercial development, and countless public infrastructure projects throughout the Duluth region.

Unlike many other land uses, aggregate resources are location dependent. High-quality deposits cannot simply be relocated once they are no longer accessible. When access to a significant aggregate resource is lost, the community permanently loses that resource.

While the draft study thoroughly evaluates future residential growth, recreation, transportation, environmental resources, and public infrastructure, it provides comparatively little discussion of the long-term value of preserving locally available aggregate resources.

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Given the essential role these materials play in constructing and maintaining the very infrastructure envisioned by the study, we respectfully believe the preservation of significant aggregate resources should be recognized as a planning objective in the final document.

Protection of Mineral Resources

Unlike many other land uses, high-quality aggregate resources cannot be relocated once they become inaccessible due to incompatible development. Once a strategically located aggregate resource is lost to incompatible development, it cannot be recreated elsewhere, and future public infrastructure projects must rely on more distant sources at increased cost to taxpayers.

Every highway, bridge, school, utility, airport, and public works project constructed in the Duluth region depends upon a reliable supply of locally available aggregate. Preserving access to these resources benefits taxpayers by reducing transportation costs, limiting truck traffic over longer distances, reducing fuel consumption and emissions associated with hauling materials, and maintaining a competitive local construction market.

For these reasons, we respectfully encourage the City to expressly recognize the long-term importance of preserving significant aggregate resources as part of its comprehensive land use planning. Doing so does not preclude future growth or redevelopment. Rather, it acknowledges that thoughtful planning should seek to balance competing land uses while ensuring that irreplaceable mineral resources remain available to serve future generations.

Existing Industrial Uses are Longstanding Community Assets

The study appropriately recognizes the presence of existing industrial and extractive operations within the corridor. We encourage the City to view these uses not simply as existing conditions, but as longstanding contributors to the regional economy and public infrastructure.

For decades, the Becks Road Quarry has supplied materials for public highways, municipal improvements, private development, and other critical construction projects while providing stable employment and supporting the local economy.

Responsible aggregate production and thoughtful community planning are not mutually exclusive objectives.



Infrastructure Realities Should Guide Planning

The study correctly recognizes that significant future development will depend upon major investments in sanitary sewer, water service, transportation improvements, and other public infrastructure. Until those improvements are funded and constructed, many of the development concepts identified in the study remain long-term possibilities rather than near-term realities.

We encourage the City to ensure that future land use recommendations remain aligned with realistic infrastructure planning, implementation timelines, and fiscal considerations.

Existing Property Rights Should Be Respected

The draft study recommends evaluating future zoning changes affecting nonconforming industrial and extractive uses.

We recognize the City's responsibility to periodically review its zoning regulations. However, any future policy decisions should carefully recognize and respect the longstanding property rights associated with existing lawful operations.

The Becks Road Quarry, although classified as a legal nonconforming use, has operated successfully for decades and represents a substantial private investment that continues to provide essential aggregate materials for public infrastructure and private development throughout the region. Long-range planning should recognize the quarry's established presence, its continued ability to operate and serve the region, and the associated property rights while pursuing balanced, collaborative solutions that benefit both the community and private property owners.

The Study Would Benefit from Additional Analysis

We respectfully recommend that the final study include additional evaluation of:

- The long-term regional demand for aggregate resources.
- The economic value of maintaining local aggregate production.



- The public costs, transportation impacts, and environmental consequences of importing aggregate from more distant sources.
- The importance of preserving industrial lands that support public infrastructure.
- The economic contribution of existing industrial operations within the Becks Road corridor.

Including these considerations would create a more balanced planning document that recognizes both future development opportunities and the community's continuing need for construction materials.

A History of Collaboration

Throughout its ownership of the Becks Road property, Ulland Brothers has consistently sought to work collaboratively with the City of Duluth to identify practical, long-term solutions that balance community interests with the continued availability of an important local aggregate resource.

Over the years, Ulland Brothers has repeatedly sought to work collaboratively with the City, including proposing a significant land exchange that would have advanced public recreation and long-term planning objectives while allowing continued aggregate production on adjacent lands. Although those efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, they reflect a consistent willingness to commit valuable company property, explore innovative solutions, and work toward outcomes that balance the interests of the City, the community, and private property owners.

We remain committed to that collaborative approach. We respectfully encourage the City to ensure that this land use study remains sufficiently flexible to allow future opportunities for cooperative, mutually beneficial solutions as community needs and circumstances evolve.

Conclusion

Ulland Brothers appreciates the significant effort that has gone into preparing this study and welcomes the opportunity to participate in the continuing planning process.

We believe the Becks Road area presents an opportunity to demonstrate that responsible resource development, environmental stewardship, recreation, and thoughtful long-term planning are not competing objectives, but complementary ones. A balanced planning



approach can preserve valuable natural resources, support continued economic vitality, respect established property rights and maintain access to the construction materials necessary to build and maintain the public infrastructure upon which our communities depend.

We respectfully request that the City revise the final Becks Road Land Use Study to more fully evaluate the long-term importance of aggregate resources and the role existing industrial operations play in supporting the region's economy and public infrastructure. A comprehensive planning document should recognize these considerations alongside environmental protection, recreation, housing, and future development.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments and look forward to continuing a productive dialogue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff Carlson", is written over a horizontal line.

Jeff Carlson
President
Ulland Brothers, Inc.