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## Our view: Google's new technology would be regional catalyst

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More than a century later, Duluth-Superior is vying for — and seems well-positioned to land — its next U.S. Steel.

Believe it.

The Web engine Google is scouting this year for a community — maybe even two or more — where it can build infrastructure for super-fast Internet connections to homes. The new network would use a flexible fiber rather than the far-more-limiting technology of today, which is either a telephone wire or a coaxial cable.

Internet speeds promise to be 100 times, and perhaps even

1,000 times, faster than what people have now. Speeds like that could attract technology and innovation companies the way gold reports once attracted prospectors — and the way a steel plant once attracted smokestack industries.

"Fiber is ... the technology of the future," Patrick Garmoe of the Duluth-Superior Google Initiative, the group building buzz about landing Google, said last week in a statement. "This project could bring the kind of outside economic investment and international attention to Duluth-Superior that came to the first towns that received the railroad or

electricity.

"It would serve as the economic catalyst for this generation," he said. "The experiment would likely turn Duluth-Superior into a Midwestern technology and innovation hub. Many new programs and services requiring ultra high-speed fiber would naturally be created in communities that have fiber."

"The innovation that can occur is almost limitless," initiative member Christopher Swanson, the CEO of PureDriven, a Duluth Web business, added in an interview with the News Tribune editorial board.

Possible ways to use super-fast Internet speeds, Garmoe said, include a rural health clinic near Duluth streaming three-dimensional medical images over the Web so a patient wouldn't have to drive several hours for an appointment, students joining others around the globe to watch a live lecture and downloading full-length, high-definition movies in just minutes. No more trips to the video store.

But the full potential of such Internet speeds haven't even been thought of yet. Google is eager to see how far such innovation could take a community — and the technology. That's why the company is willing to invest at least \$50 million, and perhaps more than \$100 million, to connect one

or more communities' houses to the fiber.

The potential is exciting. Which explains why 30 to 40 other communities — that, like Duluth-Superior, meet Google's criteria for size, economics and other factors — are known to be vying to land the Web giant.

So what can set us apart? What can make us stand out among the other hopefuls?

Us. Every one of us.

By getting behind this initiative, we can send a clear message to Google that we're right for them and their investment and experiment. We can do that by participating in upcoming events, by joining Facebook fan pages and by going online to nominate our community. The more nominations the better, even if each of us can nominate only once before the March 26 deadline.

The Google initiative was launched in the Twin Ports just about a week and a half ago. Already, more than 4,500 of us have "friended" the idea at Facebook, ranking us second behind Topeka, Kan., which boasts 7,856 friends. We're trailed by Peoria, Ill. (2,460 Facebook friends), Baton Rouge, La. (2,389 friends) and Greensboro, N.C. (2,294).

A buzz is building but needs volume. It needs more of us. When it comes to landing the next U.S. Steel, the participation of many is critical and can make all the difference.

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