

PILLAR 2: POSITIONING THE REGION AS A RENOWNED FOOD AND BIO-ECONOMY CENTER



This Strategic Pillar summary report lays out the outcomes and direction for this pillar topic, as determined in the engagement sessions, with over 1,000 people contributing ideas and perspectives. This process has produced lots of ideas and strategic vision, which have been condensed into this Strategic Pillar summary.



**PILLAR 2:
POSITIONING THE
REGION AS A
RENOWNED FOOD
AND
BIO-ECONOMY
CENTER**

POSITIONING THE REGION AS A RENOWNED FOOD AND BIO-ECONOMY CENTER

The food, agriculture and bioeconomy sectors offer a chance to uniquely identify and differentiate the region on a national and global scale.


STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Become a leading food, bioscience and bioeconomy innovation center
- Foster sustainability and regenerative practices
- Boost regional reputation and relevance on national and global scale

IMPORTANCE OF A 'RENOWNED FOOD AND BIO-ECONOMY CENTER'

The ability to produce food and biomass is a key economic driver for the upper Midwest and the Greater Mankato region. Overall, southern Minnesota has some of the highest levels of solid biomass resources per square mile in both the United States and the world. This biomass production capability is the foundation of new possibilities in the bioeconomy. The region is uniquely positioned to be a key player in the coming food and bioeconomy revolution, with its combination of food production capability, abundant fresh water, and access to renewable energy.





Regional Value

- The region is perfectly positioned to capitalize on the emerging importance of the bioeconomy. The future of biomass, and the various aspects of the bioeconomy have enormous potential.
- Society is placing greater importance on environmental sustainability. Developing and demonstrating sound environmental credentials will be important for the region and its resource based industries.

PROPOSED STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

The ability to produce food and biomass is a key economic driver for the upper Midwest. The Greater Mankato region has a great opportunity to empower GreenSeam to leverage the 'future of biomass', as a key part of region's value proposition.

Proposed strategic action areas to support this pillar include:



ELEVATE THE FOCUS ON FOOD AND BIOECONOMY

There is a clear and compelling opportunity in the food and bioeconomy space, driven by the local production capability, a high level of sophistication of the existing industry, and increasing global demand. However, this opportunity does not seem to be well understood and appreciated by many people in the region and seems to be tied to an outdated view of 'agriculture'. The important future opportunity should be promoted, and the modern scientific nature of the food system highlighted.



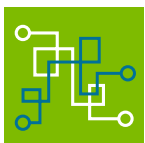
ENHANCE STRATEGIC LEVERAGE AND INFLUENCE

The bioeconomy is a key area of increasing interest and investment. The region should support GreenSeam as the 'go-to' voice for bioeconomy, food, agricultural innovation and Policy, and elevate the regional focus on this sector.



AMPLIFY THE GREENSEAM BRAND

Connected to the previous bullet point, the region should support the expansion and amplification of the GreenSeam brand and profile and recognize it as a strong local purpose-based consortium. This will help promote the role the region plays in the important global food system, and the future potential.



FutureInsight

- The bio-economy is a term used to define an economic system that focuses on the sustainable use of renewable biological resources. Instead of relying solely on finite fossil fuels, the bio-economy emphasizes utilizing resources such as plants, algae, and waste materials to produce a wide range of products, from food and feed to biofuels, biochemicals, and bioplastics.
- The bio-economy encompasses various sectors including agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and biotechnology, aiming to create value from biological materials in a way that is environmentally friendly and economically viable. It's about harnessing the power of nature to drive innovation and create sustainable solutions for a variety of industries and challenges.

IDEAS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

**PILLAR 2:
POSITIONING THE
REGION AS A
RENOWNED FOOD
AND
BIO-ECONOMY
CENTER**

- Green energy production.
- Agricultural technology, hemp farming, water resources.
- Build connections to agribusiness, sustainability and educational institutions.

“The region is already globally known for some of the best agricultural land/practices. Focus on this and other meaningful business/commerce development will keep our area strong.”
- Survey #1 Respondent

Regenerative farming practices and the importance of clean water in the lakes, streams, and watershed areas.



Vertical farming.

Increase opportunities for local food production and other ag-related nonprofit organizations.

Expand ag related economy and the jobs and economic impact of it.

“As climate change worsens in coastal regions people are going to start gravitating to the Midwest. Our location and our ability to produce food is going to be a valuable asset, and we would be foolish not to be prepared.”
- Survey #1 Respondent

- Proactively address sustainability.
- Increase GreenSeam’s role.
- Promote agriculture.
- Sustainability of environment and resources.
- Support innovation within the agricultural industry and support networks.
- Focus on regenerative systems; be better caretakers of the environment and resources, especially the river.

“The agricultural work and business that takes place in the Mankato region affects the world and as such, the work people are doing here have a lot of potential to influence the world.”
- Survey #1 Respondent

Build on the environmental credentials of the region – this is an important value to emerging generations.

Need to have a ‘future-radar’ to identify and attract businesses that might be exploring investments in the bioeconomy and biomass sectors. But we need to define and educate people on what the bioeconomy is, and what it is becoming.

Get behind the GreenSeam brand and use that to build a national profile that is about regenerative, sustainable and future-focused.

The region should be talking about its food and healthy qualities.

Must be investing in long term climate action plans and helping take advantage of transitions to more sustainable products and practices.

Connect local people to the food and agriculture industries, through ideas like farmers markets, local food in restaurants and open days.

Need to amplify the message about the region, and the big picture thinking and vision that is emerging – create a new narrative about the region.

Big opportunity to build a connection between food and health – like the ‘food as medicine’ concept.

There are more local diversification opportunities, that use local foods, and are experience-based.

Need to be thinking about marketing the region, and what our unique aspects are, and what we offer the world.

Source of Stakeholder Idea:

- Community Survey
- Think-Tank Workshop
- Focus Groups



The Greater Mankato Growth, Inc organization (GMG) has agreed to take the leadership role in helping develop the implementation plan, and will be convening other regional stakeholders to work on the Strategic Pillars and potential action areas. This work will progress through 2024.

For more information about **Transforming Tomorrow Together - Greater Mankato 2040**, please contact:



PRESIDENT & CEO

Greater Mankato Growth
507-385-6645

info@greatermankato.com

'Transforming Tomorrow Together - Greater Mankato 2040' is a planning and visioning project exploring the future of the Greater Mankato region. This regional planning process has been supported by a wide range of stakeholders and institutions in the Greater Mankato region. This project is about coming together as a region and building a vision and roadmap for 2040.

More details about the initiative and the associated data analysis are available on the project portal:

lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/

