

# PILLAR 4: BUILDING FUTURE-ORIENTATED REGIONAL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE



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.

# BUILDING FUTURE-ORIENTATED REGIONAL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

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## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Stimulate innovative housing solutions
- Drive evolution of transportation systems
- Build future-orientated community amenities

## IMPORTANCE OF 'FUTURE-ORIENTATED REGIONAL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE'

Throughout the stakeholder engagement and planning process, the topic of regional infrastructure and amenities was often highlighted. There is an overall sense of a disconnect between current urban design and amenities, and emerging generation trends and desires. While the region has many great facilities, and there has been significant progress on downtown and main street redevelopments, there is much more to do. There is a society wide trend to build more public recreation spaces, trails and connectivity, and walkable and bikeable infrastructure. This was reflected in stakeholder discussions and focus groups. In addition, there are the emerging challenges of climate mitigation and more energy and environmentally efficient sustainable practices. However, infrastructure is a big and expensive issue, and in some cases requires significant funding, planning and construction lead times.

Community infrastructure helps shape the livability and quality of life of residents by providing amenities and lifestyle options. This is an area of potential innovation that could enhance the character and appeal of the Greater Mankato region.



RegionalValue

- The region has already seen the benefits of significant investments in areas like downtown redevelopment and recreation facilities. Now is the time to take this to the next phase, with greater walkability and range of experiences in these key community connection places.
- There are macro trends to incorporate, including the trends multi-model transportation networks, outdoor recreation and community spaces.
- Housing availability and affordability is a key issue for many regions, including the Greater Mankato region. There are creative solutions and development approaches that are being explored, and these ideas should be drawn into the local thinking and approaches.

## PROPOSED STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

This Strategic Pillar covers the grand challenges of regional infrastructure. There is an appetite to re-think and re-frame the approach to community infrastructure, and exploring sustainable approaches, and absorbing emerging urban and city design trends.

Proposed strategic action areas to support this pillar include:



### INVEST IN UNDERSTANDING AND ABSORBING FUTURE URBAN DESIGN TRENDS

There is potential for the region to learn about urban design trends, and aggressively incorporate these into future plans. This is underway in some communities and could be a key focus of a future regional study and learning tour that would explore best practices in comparable regions in the country. This has an important connection to livability and the region's positioning as a talent hub.



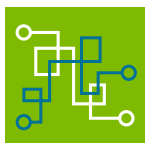
### BUILD CONSORTIUMS TO ACCELERATE INNOVATION

There is huge potential to convene novel consortiums that could help create unique local solutions to grand challenges such as housing and transportation. This could bring forth a 'commons approach' of shared investment and problem solving, that was discussed at the Think-Tank and create more local synergy.



### CONNECT LOCAL RESEARCH CAPACITY TO SOLVE REAL LIFE PROBLEMS

There is an enticing opportunity to connect the community to help envision and create solutions for some of the infrastructure concerns, such as housing, transportation, and community design. This connects some of the pillars and builds interesting and useful linkages, especially with Pillars 1 and 2.



FutureInsight

- Community infrastructure is an area of some significant innovation. It will take time and intentional planning to adapt and transform infrastructure, so promoting the vision and trajectory is an important interim step.
- There is a macro trend to more walkable and connected communities, and less emphasis on car dominated transportation. This is a major shift, with multiple implications for urban design, infrastructure investment and amenities.

# IDEAS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

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- More facilities to support the activities for youth and adults.
- More gym spaces.
- More schools with smaller class sizes.
- Build parks and plant trees.

**"I envision a city with solar panels on all homes and businesses and a city that plants a grass in lawns that do not need watering as energy and water will be critical as city grows."**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

- Build a Mankato Performing Arts Center.
- Focus on sustainable quality of life issues.
- More dedicated and interconnected trails.
- Improve roadway corridors.
- Make the community more walkable.

**"We have a great mix of businesses - agriculture, manufacturing, etc. We could be leaders in showing those in neighboring states what it means to attract new people to the region with affordable housing, childcare, and other incentives."**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

- Find creative solutions to affordable housing/home ownership (ex: Community Land Trust).
- Plan for affordable and regional transportation infrastructure; road amenities, personal, commuting, business transit, AI/autonomous vehicles.
- Create high livability with parks, recreational facilities, entertainment and walkability.
- Strategic infrastructure - roads, water and wastewater locations for long term planning.
- Determine the community assets needed to fulfill the vision (demographics, education, recreation)
- Address infrastructure to live within our vision (roads, water, sewer, housing)
- Plan for the built environment
- Prepare our regional community for enormous change; embrace change.
- Regional collaboration with integration (housing, communication, planning and development)
- Develop amenities of the region (wellness, family support, healthful food)

- Great idea to create future-orientated downtowns and main streets that will be attractive to young professionals, families.
- Be bold on downtown redevelopment - think big in terms of funding and take downtowns to next level.
- Expand the community event program, to create more networking and use of existing infrastructure.

**"We have the resources to show a better model of life at every scale - agriculture, industry, business, and residential buildings."**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

- How do we manage regional growth, in a way that does not just lead to sprawl but embraces emerging urban design ideas, like walkable neighborhoods.
- Big opportunity to explore ways to make buildings more sustainable and energy efficient, with retro fitting, local energy production, and new materials.
- Housing is a big challenge, and we need to think about how to fit all the pieces together. Need different types of housing to appeal to younger people and active retirees.
- Should explore assisting the relocation of 'old industries' out of downtowns and create more community amenities in these areas.

**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:



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'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/](http://lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/)

