

# STRATEGIC PILLARS SUMMARY APRIL 2024

**PILLAR 1:  
CREATING THE  
REGION AS A  
'HUMAN TALENT  
HUB'**

**PILLAR 2:  
POSITIONING THE  
REGION AS A  
RENOWNED FOOD  
AND  
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FOSTERING AN  
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**PILLAR 3:  
DRIVING  
INVESTMENT,  
INNOVATION,  
AND INDUSTRY  
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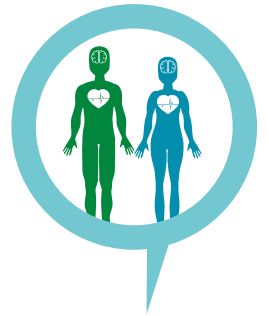
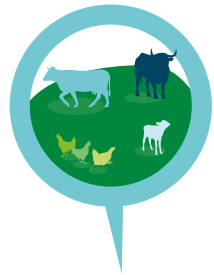
**PILLAR 4:  
BUILDING  
FUTURE-ORIENTATED  
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This Strategic Pillar summary report lays out the outcomes and direction for these topics, as determined in the engagement sessions, with over 1,000 people contributing ideas and perspectives. This process has produced lots of ideas and strategic vision, which have been condensed into this combined Strategic Pillars Summary.



# PILLAR 1: CREATING THE REGION AS A 'HUMAN TALENT HUB'





PILLAR 1:  
CREATING THE  
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# CREATING THE REGION AS A 'HUMAN TALENT HUB'

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Create the region as a renowned 'human talent-hub'
- Create the region as an entrepreneurial magnet

The concept of creating the region as a 'human talent hub' was strongly supported by stakeholders during focus group sessions.

## IMPORTANCE OF A 'HUMAN TALENT HUB'

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, the concept of the region being a 'human talent hub' has gathered significant support. The focus group discussions identified this pillar as a key part of the future strategic positioning of the region. Across the United States, and around the world, there is currently a significant competition for talent, especially in the skill areas associated with emerging technologies and biosciences, including health and medicine. For the Greater Mankato region to achieve its vision, it will be important to be at the forefront of talent creation, attraction and retention. This requires a holistic approach to skills development, local livability, career opportunities and lifestyle choices.



RegionalValue

- The ability to develop, attract and retain talent will be a key differentiator for the region's future success. It is also a fantastic approach to build the region as a specialized location with a unique proposition, which is a skilled and ready workforce.
- There are significant advantages in cultivating a reputation as being a place where talent thrives. It makes attraction easier and helps build pride in calling the region home.
- The talent hub concept also can help spur innovation and entrepreneurship in the region, with the potential for creating spin off businesses and ventures.

## PROPOSED STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

The Greater Mankato region already has a strong and effective talent development system, from K-12 schools through to College and University. This Strategic Pillar aims to build on that strong foundation.

Proposed strategic action areas to support this pillar include:



### CONTINUE TO FOSTER DEEP COLLABORATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES

The region already hosts an enviable range of quality educational institutions that are working in a coordinated manner. This collaboration should be further deepened, to continue to create a seamless regional skills and talent development system.



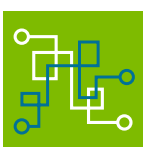
### CONNECT STUDENTS TO LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES

A key opportunity is to retain the talent in the region. Currently there is considerable turnover, especially in University students, who attend courses in the region but then leave for careers. This includes a sizable cohort of talented international students. Student focus groups highlighted the opportunity to create connections with the local business ecosystem, that may better present local career options and choices.



### BUILD COMMUNITY CULTURE THAT ENCOURAGES TALENT EXCELLENCE

A thriving talent hub will require a pervasive culture that recognizes, appreciates and celebrates talent. This will also need to translate to fostering and encouraging entrepreneurial thinking and mindset. This is a message that will need to be cultivated by many regional leaders, to help nurture this cultural focus.



FutureInsight

- Minneapolis / St Paul is emerging as one of the key US metropolises that is attracting younger people and talent. The Greater Mankato region can leverage this trend and offer a more intimate smaller regional center experience.
- Many stakeholders noted that the region is currently orientated to families and family-based experiences. This focus will need to broaden, with more amenities to attract emerging and younger generations who have different social desires and aspirations.

# IDEAS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

## PILLAR 1: CREATING THE REGION AS A 'HUMAN TALENT HUB'

“There are good career opportunities here compared to other cities in the region, along with more options in general. As the city grows, I think more people will want to move here and I can see it being important to Minnesota.”  
- Survey #1 Respondent

- Need more higher paying jobs.
- Retain students as they graduate.
- Develop infrastructure that supports an intergenerational model.

Continue to strengthen and connect health care, education and job opportunities in the more rural areas of the region.

The ‘old guard’ needs to make way for new people, new ways of thinking and doing.

Attract people to the region with jobs in technology, healthcare and bioscience.

Increase collaboration between business and higher ed to recruit and retain talent in the area.

“The region has opportunity for programs to be continued to be developed and implemented in training qualified workers for manufacturing and to address regional and national short falls for rural mental health counselors.”  
- Survey #1 Respondent

- Attract production workforce/ support services.
- Upskill and backfill.
- Reinvent education; make education more adaptable.
- Recruit people back to the region; attract youth.

“As long as we continue to grow and offer things that entrepreneurs, families, college students, etc are looking for and needing, I believe that we have great potential of becoming even more of a hub or “hot spot” in Minnesota and potentially the surrounding states.”  
- Survey #1 Respondent

- Create social fabric to attract new workforce.
- Embrace social changes; see as an enhancement to our community.
- Provide non-traditional options to attract and retain talent.

Provide flexible k-12/higher Ed opportunities (future-ready workforce & mental/health wellness).

Align skillset training to industry needs.

- Need to build the reputation of the region, as a place where young people get a chance to succeed.
- Build closer connections between the education system and the employers, to build two-way awareness and interest.
- Create more internships between local students and the larger local firms, to open career pathways.
- Work with faculty to make sure they understand the bigger vision for the region, so they can be sharing that with students to create pride and excitement about the regional future.



Promote the strength of the region in terms of the mix of experiences, from unique downtown, to access to natural resources for outdoor recreation.

Need to break down cultural barriers in the community, for example between international students and the community.

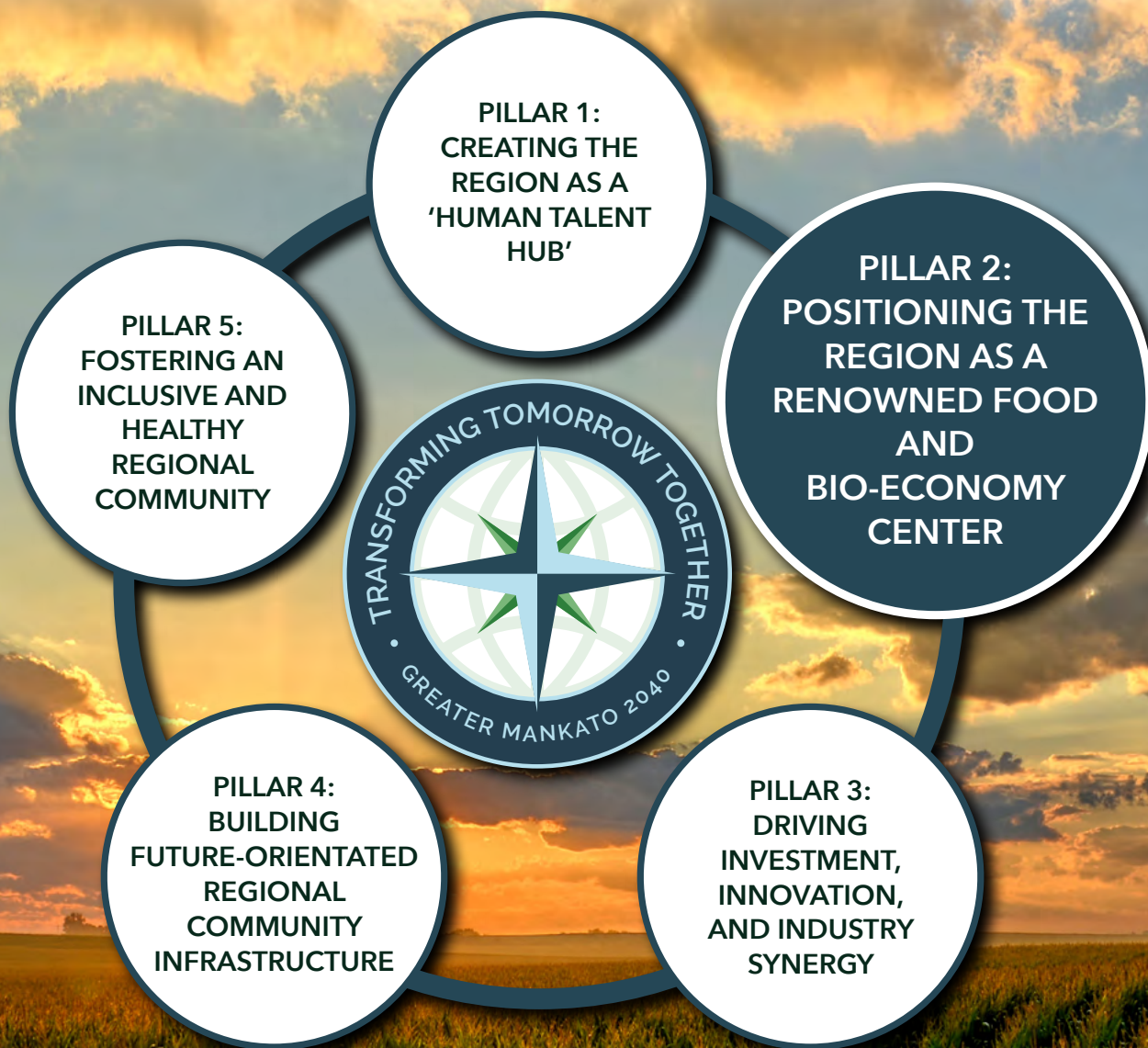
Build a strong physical connection between MSU and downtown Mankato, to create a more vibrant urban core, that offers more cultural experiences, spaces and activities.

Need to enhance the entrance corridors into Mankato and the region, to reflect the vision and reflect vitality.

Source of Stakeholder Idea:

- Community Survey
- Think-Tank Workshop
- Focus Groups

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





**PILLAR 2:  
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# 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.



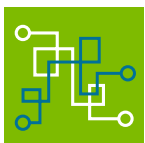
### ENHANCE STRATEGIC LEVERAGE AND INFLUENCE

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:  
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- 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



# PILLAR 3: DRIVING INVESTMENT, INNOVATION, AND INDUSTRY SYNERGY

PILLAR 1:  
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**PILLAR 3:  
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# DRIVING INVESTMENT, INNOVATION, AND INDUSTRY SYNERGY

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Build investment courage and appeal
- Build regional industry collaboration and synergy

The Greater Mankato region is driven by several strong economic sectors, including manufacturing, food and agriculture, education and healthcare. These all have upside potential.

## IMPORTANCE OF 'INVESTMENT, INNOVATION, AND INDUSTRY SYNERGY'

A key part of the preferred future vision is around industry innovation and helping expand critical industry clusters. While food and agriculture will remain mainstay economic drivers, the region also supports other strong economic concentrations, including manufacturing and healthcare clusters. A critical part of this strategic pillar is facilitating new investments and capital attraction to the region. This should be focused on expanding the existing industry and economic base, but also finding creative ways to support new sectors.



Regional Value

- The Greater Mankato region is characterized by the diversity of its economic drivers. This creates some deeper resilience in the regional economy, and the potential for sustained growth.
- The region is competing with other locations for investment capital. The stakeholder engagement has highlighted the desire to create closer connection with the investment community, to better understand how make the region appealing for capital investment.
- Industry synergy helps build on core strengths, and creates collaborative solutions to shared challenges such as workforce.

## PROPOSED STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

The planning work has identified the potential for the Greater Mankato region to position itself as a key hub in the context of Minnesota and the upper Midwest. This could include a hub for talent development, and also a supply chain hub for core industries.

Proposed strategic action areas to support this pillar include:



### ACTIVELY BUILD INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

Industry cluster models can be particularly effective at building synergy and creating new connections across existing industry ecosystems. This approach is particularly good in tackling shared challenges such as workforce, technical assistance and investment attraction. The cluster approach helps bring greater focus on what might be otherwise disparate groups of businesses. This strategic action areas connects strongly to Pillars 1 and 2.



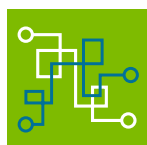
### CONNECT WITH THE INVESTMENT COMMUNITY

Building strong connections with the investment community will be critical to facilitating new capital investment to propel industry expansion and scale. This connection will also help provide critical information about the perceived performance of the region, and how it rates against other locations and regions. Conversely, it will also help build the awareness and understanding about the region, and its aspirations and future potential.



### EXPAND POLITICAL HEFT AND INFLUENCE

The Greater Mankato region has an important task to build its heft and influence with State and national policy makers. In the broader Midwest region, people are increasingly concentrating in the large metropolises, and the weight of influence can change. Making and maintaining the case for the region will help ensure government funding initiatives consider the region, and not just gravitate to the very large urban centers.



FutureInsight

- The Greater Mankato region is one of the key regional centers in Minnesota. It is well located to leverage this relationship and offer a viable location for industry and investment. The Rochester area offers a great example of how to build a clear focus, message and strategic proposition. The Greater Mankato region could benefit from a similarly high-profile message.
- Building greater synergy between industry clusters could help foster innovation and shared approaches to regional challenges.

# IDEAS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

**PILLAR 3:  
DRIVING  
INVESTMENT,  
INNOVATION,  
AND INDUSTRY  
SYNERGY**

Continued business and industry development.

Continue development and redevelopment of properties in the area.

More electric car stations.

**"We can and should be leaders on a wide array of issues here in Minnesota!"**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

Growth to expand markets and more job opportunities.

Build railroad connection between Twin Cities and Mankato to boost the population and the economy of the region.

Become more pro-business center of excellence and a tourism attraction.

Increase the size of our marine business.

**"Mankato has the potential of becoming a minor control hub. Connecting different regions."**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

Be regionally minded in business innovation, especially funding and support.

Apply global thinking to energy.

Foster collaborations between traditionalists and innovators to bridge the gap.

Be strategic with growth.

Study and invest in transportation and infrastructure.

Advocate for resources for the region and assets.

Stronger partnerships between education and industry.

Innovative investing in GreenSeam.

Need access to capital and high-risk capital.

Create a safety net for entrepreneurship and small business.

Apply courageous investment / decision-making

There is strong tourism potential, as a regional hub offering affordable and recreation orientated visitation.

Industry clusters could be developed to help share information, tackle challenges together and increase the profile of industry sectors.

Energy manufacturing is an area of growth and potential - the region should invest in supporting and connecting this sector.

**"I believe the greater Mankato area is the next major metropolitan area in the Midwest. We have the infrastructure coming into place to have a lot of industry and development."**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

Explore ways to bring more of the supply chains to the region and leverage the strength we already have in the region.

Help businesses adapt and take advantage of emerging automation, robotics and AI.

Connect the workforce and student more tightly with the big employment bases in the region.

Help key investors understand and invest in the regional approach and highlight the desire and benefits of collaboration.

Need to connect the traditional values (like safety) with the aspirational vision, to excite local developer and investors to get behind the new ideas.

**Source of Stakeholder Idea:**

- Community Survey
- Think-Tank Workshop
- Focus Groups



# PILLAR 4: BUILDING FUTURE-ORIENTATED REGIONAL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE



# BUILDING FUTURE-ORIENTATED REGIONAL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

PILLAR 4:  
BUILDING  
FUTURE-ORIENTATED  
REGIONAL  
COMMUNITY  
INFRASTRUCTURE

## 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.



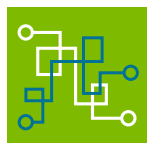
### BUILD CONSORTIUMS TO ACCELERATE INNOVATION

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

**PILLAR 4:  
BUILDING  
FUTURE-ORIENTATED  
REGIONAL  
COMMUNITY  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 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



# PILLAR 5: FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY REGIONAL COMMUNITY



# FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY REGIONAL COMMUNITY

PILLAR 5:  
FOSTERING AN  
INCLUSIVE AND  
HEALTHY  
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## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Foster an inclusive, diverse culture and population
- Encourage a healthy and happy regional community

## IMPORTANCE OF AN 'INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY REGIONAL COMMUNITY'

Throughout the stakeholder discussion sessions, an important topic was the evolution of the community culture and fabric. While some people expressed that they like the community vibe and culture just the way it is, many people also saw opportunity to continue to create more connectivity, inclusiveness and openness to new ideas. Of particular interest to many people across the workshops and focus groups was the idea of creating a healthier and happier community. Recent studies have also highlighted the need for more inclusivity, and this theme was reflected in the focus group sessions with young professionals and university students. This reflects shifting social values and is an important topic that relates to the pillar themes of human talent hub and regional positioning.

During the Think-Tank and focus group discussions, there was a keen interest expressed to elevate the 'healthy' aspect of the regional community, including aspects such as mental wellbeing, recreation opportunities and health food choices.



RegionalValue

- The region has begun the important work on inclusivity, with the recent inclusivity study undertaken by the Mankato Area Foundation. Building a region where people feel they belong and can create a successful life will be very important for regional appeal.
- Generational shifts are occurring across the county, bringing with it new values and expectations. Community values, such as being inclusive and welcoming diversity, will be important attributes that younger people will seek.
- A healthy active community culture will boost the sense of vitality and aliveness in the people and the community. The region already has a great foundation to build, especially in areas such as active sports events and recreation opportunities.

## PROPOSED STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

The proposed actions aim to elevate the quality of life and sense of belonging of residents. It also focuses on the idea of building a 'future-ready' culture, where the region is anticipating and adapting to changes in a proactive manner.

Proposed strategic action areas to support this pillar include:



### FOCUS ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

There was significant interest in the notion of the region having a focus on healthy living, wellbeing and happiness. This was discussed in multiple settings, including the issues of recreation trails, healthy food choices and community gathering locations.



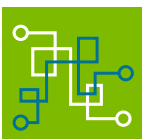
### SOCIAL INCLUSION AND BELONGING

A key aspect of the community vision was a sense of belonging, being connected and engaged. This was reflected in multiple focus groups and sessions and was highlighted by 'outsiders' such as the University students. There is an opportunity to evolve the community fabric to be more open and inclusive, especially for new arrivals, immigrants and new residents.



### FUTURE-READY CULTURE

An important part of this pillar is the notion of building a future-ready culture that is forward looking and is anticipating and adapting to important underlying trends. This requires a nimble mindset, and an ongoing investment in scanning for emerging opportunities and positioning the region to be at the forefront of important topics.



FutureInsight

- The decade ahead is likely to be one of significant social change, with new generations bringing different values and priorities. This will shape community and regional decision making.
- The issues of diversity, equity and inclusivity are complex, and can be uncomfortable to deal with in some cases. However, at a level of creating an inclusive and healthy community as a bedrock principle, this will help the community retain its appeal and attractiveness to a wide range of talent, future residents and investors.

Enhance the regional focus on reducing carbon footprint, increasing recycling and boosting cultural diversity.

**“If we can grow sustainably, with every family unit having a good foundation of home, food, water, jobs, education, and access to healthcare, we could be an example to the rest of the country that these things are possible to achieve for everyone.”**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

Places for retirees that are affordable.

Support small businesses and events to bring community together to learn about different food and cultures.

Provide a safe, inclusive environment to raise families.

Age-friendly initiatives that align with Minnesota as an age friendly state.

Embrace and support newer members of our communities so they truly feel welcomed and encouraged to bring their perspectives and experiences into our communities.

**“I believe the greater Mankato area is the next major metropolitan area in the Midwest. We have the infrastructure coming into place to have a lot of industry and development.”**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

Increase housing and diversity types along with community amenities in a diverse and equitable way.

Focus on mental health and interpersonal relationships.

Foster cultural diversity with an intentional focus on inclusivity and belonging – age, abilities, ethnicity and gender.

Focus on health, equity and diversity.



Create a sense of belonging.

Incorporate recreational wellness opportunities.

Intentional inclusion of diversity into the workforce, leadership, and social fabric of the community.

Pay attention to those who come to the region; support of diverse populations.

Examine how we care for an aging population.

Focus on the core family orientated values – ‘good families and good choices’.

Develop the local healthcare ecosystem and explore what does ‘bold’ look like in the healthcare future – could be opportunity for region.

**“[The most unique strength of the region is] the Diversity, having the college here brings in so many different cultures that have things to offer. I think keeping that diversity is a key component to making this home to anyone.”**  
- Survey #1 Respondent

How do we grow the sense of inclusivity, and make people feel comfortable

Invest in a region wide ‘blue zone’ type concept and approach, focusing on healthy living and wellbeing

Explore community-based events that bring people together and build on local assets like food and arts

We are entering a period of exponential change – and we need to be looking forward and taking advantage of the change.

There is potential for a greater array of programs for healthy living, like yoga studios, health classes, and cooking and using local foods.

**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/)

