



LIVABILITY

Mini-Vision:

Being a vibrant regional center, Greater Mankato is an attractive & livable community, incorporating facilities and programs that provide opportunities for residents of all ages, economic levels, and cultural backgrounds to enjoy affordable, accessible, and high-quality arts & culture, recreation, sports and entertainment.

Many of these opportunities are found in community center(s) that attract visitors, spur economic growth, and encourage cross-generational experiences while enriching the lives of all residents. The community of Greater Mankato also honors and celebrates its changing multicultural make-up, while nurturing and advancing diverse thinking and artistic expression. In addition, the Greater Mankato community supports and nurtures its spiritual and non-profit organizations.

Greater Mankato emphasizes the importance of natural environments, historic preservation, communication networks, and affordable housing; and dedicates resources to develop and maintain green ways, parks, ravines, aesthetically beautiful buildings, and opportunities for home ownership.

Goal 1:

Enhance Community Aesthetics

Rationale:

To ensure that future generations have a sustainable and attractive environment, an important quality of life element.

Strategy 1:

Identify actions that each individual or neighborhood can do to beautify, clean, and preserve our community's natural environment.⁷

Action Step:

1. Create a public information campaign to get people involved in neighborhood efforts

Responsible Parties: Park departments & all municipalities and counties in our region; Master Gardeners; garden clubs; schools, colleges, and universities

Timeline: Campaign to start in January/February in order to be ready for spring

Resource Needs/Options: Campaign to start in January/February in order to be ready for spring

Strategy 2:

Encourage and motivate each individual to walk, run, or other exercise in the great outdoors – will be measured by usage of trail systems and parks.⁸

⁷ Overlap/Coordination with Community Planning and Regional Governance

⁸ Overlap/Coordination with priorities of Health & Human Services

Action Steps:

1. Identify all sidewalks or paths in the region (and where they are missing)

Responsible Parties: Mankato/North Mankato City Governments

Timeline: Completed

Resource Needs/Options: N/A

2. Conduct a public information campaign on their availability

Responsible Parties: Chamber of Commerce (lead); local government, YMCA, local sports organizations, bicycle clubs, news media, Winter sports clubs

Timeline: Immediate

Resource Needs/Options: Time and resources of parties involved

3. Conduct a public information campaign on the benefits of exercise

Responsible Parties: YMCA

Timeline: Ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: Time and resources of YMCA

Strategy 3:

Entice as many people as possible to restore the original wooded environment in all public land locations not otherwise used.⁹

Action Steps:

1. Identify and contact conservation clubs and others interested in enhancing the environment.

Responsible Parties: Lead Entity To Be Determined; local government, conservation clubs, garden clubs, service clubs, news media, environmental organizations, landscaping companies

Timeline: Immediate; as soon as resources and volunteers become available for projects identified by local governments

Resource Needs/Options: Trees provided by DNR and local governments, volunteer leaders and workers

Goal 2:

Address Affordable Housing and the preservation of housing stock.

Rationale:

A key element of livability is the availability and preservation of affordable housing in every part of the region.

Strategy:

Form an agency or stakeholder organization focused on housing affordability.

⁹Overlap/Coordination with similar ideas in Community Planning

Action Steps:

1. Create an agency/organization for the purposes of public buy-in (eventual adoption of standards by local units) and stakeholder buy-in.

Responsible Parties: Lead To Be Determined; Housing Authorities (cities, counties), elected representatives (cities, counties), property managers, homeowners, renters, Partners for Affordable Housing, Mankato Area Foundation, United Way, Southeastern Minnesota Initiative Fund (SMIF), etc., trades/unions, limited rehab specialists, realtors, Habitat for Humanity

Timeline: Two Years

Resource Needs/Options: Convener Time; planning resources

2. Develop housing standards for single-family/owner & multi-family/rental and livability/aesthetic quality standards level and type of need to be satisfied (e.g., household size, household income, household expenses—including housing, utilities, transportation [also see Transportation KPA])

Responsible Parties: Housing Authorities, planners, architects, engineers, property managers, owners/renters, MSU, government units who adopt the standards

Timeline: 2 years

Resource Needs/Options: Convener, staff time to write standards

3. Develop neighborhood strategies in the following categories: multi-generational, re-densification (redevelop existing land with new structures at higher densities), urban village (new development) [see Planning KPA] and mixed use (new development & existing redevelopment)

Responsible Parties: Lead organization/agency from Action Step #1, Housing Authorities, planners, architects, engineers, builders, property managers, owners/renters, MSU, strategies adopted by government units

Timeline: Concurrent, 2 years

Resource Needs/Options: Numerous neighborhood/community meetings (convener time and hospitality resources)

4. Determine target properties: inventory existing properties & uses; focus on downtown (older, historic) areas; include selected neighborhood areas

Responsible Parties: Planners, Housing Authorities, Partners for Affordable Housing

Timeline: 5 years

Resource Needs/Options: Technical Studies

5. Enhance, Develop and Implement assistance programs such as:
 - Loan/grant programs to assist with ownership & rehabilitation
 - Skills banks for craftspeople & contractors with experience in various types of redevelopment & rehabilitation model rental contracts

Responsible Parties: Housing Authorities, Partners for Affordable Housing, elected officials, Foundations/United Way/SMIF/etc., lenders, builders, MSU

Timeline: Concurrent five years

Resource Needs/Options: Money for loan/grant programs; money for marketing skills bank (both to craftspeople and to consumers)

Measures of Success:

Agency/organization is created across local government jurisdictions (a regional agency). Common Standards drafted and adopted; Neighborhoods identified; Neighborhood plans developed; Neighborhood plans coordinated with each other; Neighborhood plans adopted by local jurisdictions; Inventory created; Loan/grant program initiated; Skills bank developed and marketed; Model contracts in common use

Goal 3:

Improve information delivery to residents.

Rationale:

It is important to deliver information to our residents about various services and opportunities available in our community, and provide information-givers, residents and others with the ability to access places where services/activities/events, etc., may be coordinated and disseminated.

Strategy:

Create mechanisms to effectively deliver information and for residents to access information.

Action Steps:

1. Gain commitment throughout the region to develop the mechanisms for intergenerational dialogue as a way of getting input and solving problems, and as a tool to articulate the implementation of our envisioning process. Tap into each generation from old to young.

Parties to be Invited to Participate:

Private Sector: Greater Mankato Area Chamber of Commerce/CVB (Convention and Visitors Bureau), Jonathan Zierdt/GMED (Greater Mankato Economic Development Corporation), Midwest Wireless, Taylor Corporation, Region Nine Development Commission

Public Sector: Public Information Office for the City of Mankato/Mankato Area Public Schools, Blue Earth & Nicollet Counties Public Information Offices, Traverse des Sioux Library System
Non-profits: YWCA, YMCA, SMILES (Center for Independent Living), VINE (Faith in Action), local church coalition group

Education: Lauren Long from MSU SLD/SL (Student Leadership Development & Service Learning)

Radio/Television/Print: KEYC & KTOE: television station manager (Dennis Wahlstrom) & Pete Steiner or Mike Parry, CCTV, Cable Access, Home Magazine, Applauze Magazine, Mankato Free Press and The Land, Static magazine, ConnectBiz magazine

Technology: Dr. Yvonne Cariveau/VoyageurWeb, MSU Information Technology/Brian Schneider, KatoInfo.com; media

Timeline: Immediate; within 18 months

Resource Needs/Options: Expertise of different generations; government agency resources, private corporate sponsors; in-kind services

2. Use technology to connect residents and information providers to coordinate and disseminate information about the community.

Responsible Parties: Members of the list in Step 1

Timeline: 5 years

Resource Needs/Options: Expertise of different generations; government agency resources, private corporate sponsors; in-kind services

3. Utilize information providers to aid in promotion of delivery system portal by inputting information into system they sponsor/co-sponsor

Responsible Parties: Members of the list in Step 1

Timeline: 5 years concurrent

Resource Needs/Options: Expertise of different generations; government agency resources, private corporate sponsors; in-kind services

4. Index services and information providers through computer databases and various community-gathering spots around the Greater Mankato region.

Responsible Parties: Members of the list in Step 1

Timeline: 5 years concurrent

Resource Needs/Options: Expertise of different generations; government agency resources, private corporate sponsors; in-kind services

5. Connect various groups via physical & virtual information spots in the community. A possible location for an information hub could be at a future community center

Responsible Parties: Members of the list in Step 1

Timeline: 5 years concurrent

Resource Needs/Options: Expertise of different generations; government agency resources, private corporate sponsors; in-kind services

6. Develop an interactive approach between residents/community leaders/information providers.

Responsible Parties: Members of the list in Step 1

Timeline: 5 years concurrent

Resource Needs/Options: Expertise of different generations; government agency resources, private corporate sponsors; in-kind services

Measures of Success:

Observe attendance rates, survey's identifying age demographics etc., number of hits on site, number of accessibility ports available to residents throughout region, number of users actually using ports throughout region.

Goal 4:

Encourage the development of community center(s).

Rationale:

Community centers attract tourists and help spur economic development, provide a place for local residents of all ages to come together, and help create a sense of identity by focusing on our unique assets as a community. With a wide variety of organizations in our community currently seeking space, the need is timely and deserves further examination. The construction of a performing arts center was one of the only goals unfinished from the ACT 2000 community planning process.

Strategy:

Assess feasibility of creating a collaborative facility (or facilities) to serve multiple purposes within the community.¹⁰

Action Steps:

1. Form a task force to examine the Community Center issue upon the completion of Envision 2020

Parties to be Invited to Participate: Envision 2020 Implementation Committee; Health and Human Service KPA Volunteers; Cities of Mankato and North Mankato; Open Call to community organizations; architects; developers; Greater Mankato Chamber of Commerce; Convention and Visitors Bureau; Greater Mankato Economic Development; Summit Center; Blue Earth Historical Society; Twin Rivers Center for the Arts; YWCA; YMCA; Children's Museum; District 77; Minnesota State University; Bethany Lutheran College; Salvation Army; Mankato Symphony Orchestra; Carnegie Art Center; ethnic and multicultural Communities

Timeline: Within six months upon the completion of Envision 2020

Resource Needs/Options: Staff assistance from the Chamber/Envision 2020

2. Reevaluate space study from fall 2005 conducted by Paulsen Architects

Responsible Parties: List from Action Step 1

Timeline: 6-12 months

Resource Needs/Options: Staff assistance from the Chamber/Envision 2020

3. Assess needs of local organizations (to determine the possibilities for collaboration)

Responsible Parties: List from Action Step 1

Timeline: 6-12 months

Resource Needs/Options: Staff assistance from the Chamber/Envision 2020

4. Determine possibilities for collaboration among groups

Responsible Parties: List from Action Step 1

Timeline: 6-12 months concurrent

Resource Needs/Options: Staff assistance from the Chamber/Envision 2020

5. Assess available spaces in Greater Mankato – consider existing structures and land for new buildings, work with downtown revitalization efforts

Responsible Parties: List from Action Step 1; land and property owners

Timeline: 6-12 months concurrent

Resource Needs/Options: Staff assistance from the Chamber/Envision 2020

¹⁰ **Additional Rationale for this Community Center(s) Strategy:** Cooperative efforts are more likely to get grant funding, which benefits the individual groups that are part of the collaboration. Sharing of facilities and resources is cost-effective and will benefit smaller organizations. Cooperative efforts help streamline communication and coordinate efforts among organizations. Many opportunities already exist for private/public collaboration, specifically non-profit organizations working with state educational facilities, which could be explored as part of the community center effort.

6. Assess possible funding strategies, public and private – ensure funding sources for maintaining operations after buildings are paid for

Responsible Parties: List from Action Step 1; area state legislators

Timeline: 2 years concurrent

Resource Needs/Options: State bonds, local option sales tax, hospitality tax, implementation of a “Round Up” program on utility bills (similar to “Round up for the Arts” in St. Cloud), foundations, corporate sponsorship, private donations, and capital campaigns

7. Begin implementation and planning of center(s)

Responsible Parties: List from Action Step 1; construction companies

Timeline: 2 years concurrent

Resource Needs/Options: Staff assistance from the Chamber/Envision 2020; State bonds, local option sales tax, hospitality tax, implementation of a “Round Up” program on utility bills (similar to “Round up for the Arts” in St. Cloud), foundations, corporate sponsorship, private donations, capital campaigns

8. Build/renovate center(s)

Responsible Parties: List from Action Step 1

Timeline: 4-5 years

Resource Needs/Options: Staff assistance from the Chamber/Envision 2020; State bonds, local option sales tax, hospitality tax, implementation of a “Round Up” program on utility bills (similar to “Round up for the Arts” in St. Cloud), foundations, corporate sponsorship, private donations, capital campaigns

Goal 5:

Increase and raise awareness of diversity in the community.

Rationale:

A more livable community is one that celebrates and respects differences in people.

Strategy:

Develop mechanisms enhance the appreciation, inclusion and participation of the diverse communities in the region.

Key Players to be invited to participate throughout this initiative:

Greater Mankato Area Diversity Council, YWCA, YMCA, Mankato Diversity Kiwanis, MRCI, SMILES-Center for Independent Living, ARC, Harry Meyering, Summit Center, AARP, MSU Seniors, Senior Networkers, MSU Center on Aging, La-Mano, Somali and Sudanese Associations; area churches, Salvation Army, ESL Instructors, Public Safety officers, hospitals, county workers that interact with the public, POW-MIA, VFW, Legion, service clubs, Theresa House, CADA, Citizen's Voices, school guidance counselors, probation officers/court system, VINE, area higher education schools (MSU, SCC, GAC, BLC), Scholarship America, Meals on Wheels, Echo Food Shelf, MSU Kitchen project

Action Steps:

1. Develop a Diversity Leadership Grant that would provide funds for a member of a non-traditional community (immigrant, deaf/blind, physical disability, etc) to participate in recognized leadership training programs.

Responsible Parties: Selected parties from the key players list, YMCA, YWCA, ESL (English as a Second Language) Instructors, GMADC (Greater Mankato Area Diversity Council), Diversity Kiwanis Club

Timeline: Grant established within 5 yrs

Resource Needs/Options: Money, training opportunities, and publicity to get the word out to the communities

2. Increase accessibility and awareness of Diversity Opportunities by creating spaces to meet and places to eat, via Web site, community center bulletin board/newsletter, newspaper, etc.

Responsible Parties: Key players list, groceries and restaurants, area churches, Public Service Announcements (KEYC, radio, Free Press, Home), VoyageurWeb, county social workers.

Timeline: 3 years

Resource Needs/Options: Cooperation from partner organizations, cooperation from community members to share/post events; a part time student internship to go out and gather information and input it

3. Implement a Diversity in Your Workplace Program (similar to what MRCI does for their population available to the immigrant and disabled communities) and provide support for both the employer and the employee, esp. during the initial 3-6 months.

Responsible Parties: Key players list; Chamber, Greater Mankato Area Diversity Council, county, area businesses, MRCI (formerly Mankato Rehabilitation Center, Inc.)

Timeline: 3 years

Resource Needs/Options: Publicity for the program, program development working with MRCI as a resource perhaps with GMADC (Mankato Area Diversity Council) and the Chamber

4. Leverage University Resources by working with MSU faculty, students and student associations to develop programs that bring faculty and staff into the community in places they are not normally visible - nonprofit organization leadership, for profit organizations, speakers for service groups talking about their culture and language.

Responsible Parties: Members from the key players list; Students/Faculty as diversity council facilitators, teaching their first language. Community Education (run classes), MSU student associations, International Student Association, Bethany student/faculty groups, MSU faculty, NAACP - student chapter, SMILES (Center for Independent Living), retired educators, Mankato Diversity Kiwanis, service organizations

Timeline: 4-5 years

Resource Needs/Options: Coordination to find organizations wanting speakers and teachers and match them up with those resources on the various local campuses, \$ to pay someone to do this and provide office space (or an organization like GMADC housing this person)

5. Coordinate more Diversity Events throughout the region that are accessible for all people to create enhance an appreciative and welcoming environment

Responsible Parties: Members from the key players list; Greater Mankato Area Diversity Council), Convention and Visitors Bureau, Civic Center, YMCA, YWCA, Summit Center, higher ed schools (Minnesota State University, Mankato, Gustavus Adolphus College and Bethany Lutheran College Performing Arts), School District, entertainment-related businesses, area media, city (send out in water bill)

Timeline: 1 year

Resource Needs/Options: Cooperation of partner organizations, publicity

6. Develop and implement an "Invite a Neighbor Program Invite a Neighbor" program, a city-wide campaign to encourage people to introduce themselves to one neighbor on their block that they don't know and invite their family to join others for a community event (Rockin' in the Quarry, Fireworks at MSU, Solstice festival, etc)

Responsible Parties: Members from the key players list; Greater Mankato Area Diversity Council), Convention and Visitors Bureau, Civic Center, YMCA, YWCA, Summit Center, higher ed schools (Minnesota State University, Mankato, Gustavus Adolphus College and Bethany Lutheran College Performing Arts), School District, entertainment-related businesses, area media, city (send out in water bill)

Timeline: 1 year

Resource Needs/Options: Cooperation of partner organizations, publicity

7. Create safe Spaces by implementing Diversity training for organizations to incorporate culturally sensitive practices into their service delivery.

Responsible Parties: Members from the key players list; any area nonprofit organization, GMADC (Greater Mankato Area Diversity Council), AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), Summit Senior Center, Capstone Press (sponsor), United Way (to encourage this in their funding criteria)

Timeline: 10 years

Resource Needs/Options: Financial resources, larger staff for GMADC, United Way cooperation, 6th grade diversity video and perhaps one produced for adult audience

Measures of Success:

Grant exists, a center that is a resource with multiple contacts for each community (speaking different languages), an immigrant on the city council or county board, more diversity in positions of power, a thriving senior center, a vibrant arts center, an active recreation center, more ethnic groceries and restaurants, program existing, more diversity in higher level jobs, support available for diverse people and for employers to ease the initial hire and learning period, more diverse small businesses, events that are done by MSU are done more in the community, so they are accessible, "What Happens at MSU, Stays at MSU" – stops, GMADC (Mankato Area Diversity Council) with some university people as facilitators and trainers, Bring pan-African, Hispanic night, etc. events off campus, European cultural events - Norwegian, Swedish, Irish, etc. inviting diverse people there also, parades and carnivals that involve a variety of people, that people will know their neighbors, Diversity training for organizations, diversity training will be commonplace for all larger employers, minority being the majority to start in an organization...then integration happens naturally, improvements in lifestyle choices - more opportunities where people feel comfortable, more involvement by immigrant and other communities in traditionally homogeneous situations, a decline in crime and violence incidents, less discrimination happening