



COMMUNITY PLANNING AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

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COMMUNITY PLANNING AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Mini-vision:

The Greater Mankato and North Mankato region should continue to develop naturally vegetated corridors connecting to a network of green space, havens, creeks and rivers. Woven within this network of green spaces would be the development of walkable urban villages and the revitalization and redefinitions of our historic downtowns, thus creating a cultural, civic, governmental, residential and entertainment heartbeat for these communities. We should embrace the knowledge of our citizens for their understanding of the many relationships between our natural resources, social needs and economic growth. It is vitally important to plan for and manage green infrastructure in our built environments. This can be accomplished through intergovernmental cooperation and sharing of our collective resources.

Community Planning and Regional Governance Sub-Category: Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure Mini-Vision:

The Mankato/North Mankato area is a vibrant region with numerous naturally vegetated corridors connecting a network of green, open spaces (includes parks of various sizes and types, environmentally sensitive areas, recreational trails, natural water courses, rain gardens, farm land, natural areas, etc.) which are planned and managed for their natural ecosystem values and functions and for the benefits they confers to human populations. The citizens of the region understand the many relationships between natural resources, social needs and economic growth and that it is as vitally important to plan for and manage green infrastructure as for our built (grey) infrastructure.

Goal 1:

Protect, preserve and revitalize green spaces sufficient to support long term social, economic, and environmental vitality.

Rationale:

Protecting, preserving and revitalizing green spaces improves property values of adjacent lands and increases the desirability of the area for businesses to locate, people to live and raise families. Protection of scenic areas encourages tourism. Green space improves the health of residents and provides for wildlife habitat. It maintains adequate prime farmland and keeps a rural landscape feel even as growth occurs. Protecting environmentally sensitive areas helps improve water and air quality and minimizes storm water runoff. Management of native and invasive species populations within city limits will help sustain the green spaces over time. The green spaces will serve as meeting and gathering places for community groups and activities and as retreat opportunities for refuge and spiritual renewal.

Strategy 1:

Build a broad based coalition of stakeholders to plan for a regional green infrastructure network.

Action Steps:

1. Set up a regular structure (broad-based regional coalition) for research, education and action that will carry out the subsequent action steps of this goal.

Responsible Parties: Green Infrastructure Sub-Committee starts the process; Minnesota State University – Mankato (MSU), local government units (LGU's), extension, RC &D, Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance, MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR, conservation groups, local environmental assessment and engineering firms, developers, interested citizens, other KPA's, other state agencies

Timeline: Operational by July 1, 2007

Resource Needs/Options: From cooperating groups Legislative and Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources grant, MN Department of Natural Resources – Conservation Partner Grants, DNR data deli

2. Establish a set of principles which are part of the Green Infrastructure development framework that guides the work of coalition.

Responsible Parties: Minnesota State University - Mankato, local government units (LGU's), extension, RC &D, Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance, MN Department of Natural Resources, conservation groups, local environmental assessment and engineering firms, developers, interested citizens, other KPA's, other state agencies

Timeline: Immediate; this is first piece of business upon formation of the coalition

Resource Needs/Options: Other Green Infrastructure plans from around the country, green infrastructure websites, metro greenways publications from the Twin Cities

3. Map and inventory green infrastructure – natural areas and environmental corridors.

Responsible Parties: Local government units such as counties governments, watershed districts, Mankato, North Mankato, New Ulm, Fairmont and Waseca: state agencies: MN Department of Natural Resources, MN Pollution Control Agency, MN Department of Agriculture, MN Department of Health, MN Board of Soil and Water Resources; and volunteers such as college students in the appropriate fields of study

Timeline: Complete by July 1, 2008 (20-24 months)

Resource Needs/Options: Other Green Infrastructure plans from around the country, green infrastructure websites, metro greenways publications from the Twin Cities

4. Ensure that future acquisitions and zoning by Local Government Unit's move toward the goal of maintaining and supporting Green Infrastructure plan.

Responsible Parties: City, county, and township: which cities, counties and which townships will be included will depend on the region of coverage for the plan that is determined by the coalition

Timeline: Immediate

Resources: None

5. Build a wildlife species protection and control plan into Green Infrastructure plan

Responsible Parties: Green Infrastructure sub committee will find persons within local government to lead; Cities of Mankato and North Mankato, county, state, residents, Master Gardeners, local conservation groups

Timeline: Immediate

Resource Needs/Options: State grants, publications and data deli

Measures of Success:

Broad-based coalition built and operational; Set of principles established for green infrastructure planning; Resource Inventory completed for region; Green Infrastructure Plan established by 2010.

Strategy 2:

Enlist public support through education and action plans.

Action Steps:

1. Define "Green Infrastructure" and what it brings to our communities
 - a. Develop a presentation that helps explain what natural resource based (green infrastructure) planning is and how it benefits local citizens and governing units.
 - b. Involve Envision 2020 Implementation Committee to view and comment
 - c. Give presentations to civic, youth, conservation and business groups.

Responsible Parties: Green Infrastructure Sub-Committee, Implementation Committee, interested Envision 2020 members, Coalition members from Strategy 1

Timeline: August 2007

Resource Needs/Options: Organizations and websites

2. Encourage broad-based participation through a public input and analysis process to strengthen the public understanding of and support for green infrastructure planning.

Responsible Parties: Coalition, Citizens of the Region, Chamber of Commerce

Timeline: July 2008

Resource Needs/Options: County, city and state planners, MSU staff and students

3. Create a Media Plan (such as GIFT= Green Infrastructure For Tomorrow).

Responsible Parties: Initiated by the KPA sub committee and available coalition members, print, radio, television and Internet.

Timeline: Complete by January 2007

Resource Needs/Options: MSU, radio stations, CCTV, Papers, call-in programs

4. Foster the appreciation of nature by families and neighborhoods and in the process, promote community pride.

Responsible Parties: Community Education - Sponsored through the Mankato School District; MSU Urban Planning, experiential education departments, school children

Timeline: Ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: County, city and state planners; MSU staff and students

Measures of Success:

PowerPoint presentation created and presented to 40 civic and conservation groups; Public input process implemented; Media plan drafted.

Strategy 3:

Recommend that regional and city part set-asides be increased 5% to 10%.

Action Steps:

1. Contact city and county park offices to discuss this process.

Responsible Parties: Community Planning KPA members

Timeline: Complete by December 2006

Resource Needs/Options: None

2. Build local support for this concept thru public information and education.

Responsible Parties: KPA Sub-Committee Members, interested citizens and non-profits

Timeline: Complete by July 2007

Resource Needs/Options: Media, non-profits, DNR

Measures of Success:

Park set aside is increased to at least 10% of city and county area by July 2007.

Strategy 4:

Re-tree areas of the community.

Action Steps:

1. Determine areas to be re-treed and the ownership of the land. Contact the owners and discuss project.

Responsible Parties: Department of Transportation (DOT), city, and county, civic and youth groups, KPA members

Timeline: Start January 2007 and continue each year there after

Resource Needs/Options: MN Department Of Transportation, Blue Earth & Nicollet Counties, volunteers and civic organizations

1. Promote to neighborhood groups the ideas of beautifying and keeping neighborhoods clean and attractive. Enlist them as volunteers to plant and maintain plantings.¹

Responsible Parties: Local government units, neighborhood groups, Livability KPA

Timeline: Start Spring 2007 and continue each year there after

Resource Needs/Options: Livability KPA

Measures of Success:

A pilot project area is planted in Spring 2007; At least one additional area is planted each year for 10 years.

Strategy 5:

Protect natural scenic values of River valley bluffs and rural landscape.

Action Steps:

1. Recommend that ordinances be developed that limit the height of building / towers in the valley with the purpose of maintaining the beauty of the valley.

Responsible Parties: Cities: Mankato & North Mankato Planning & Zoning, Counties: Blue Earth, Nicollet, townships adjacent to the river

Timeline: Immediate

Resource Needs/Options: Sample ordinances

¹ Overlap and Coordination with Livability Key Performance Area

2. Work with Local Governmental units, landowners and others to reduce the negative impacts of signage on the natural scenic values of rural areas.

Responsible Parties: Cities: Mankato & North Mankato Planning & Zoning, Counties: Blue Earth, Nicollet, townships adjacent to the river; landowners

Timeline: Immediate

Resource Needs/Options: Sample ordinances

Measures of Success:

Cities and Counties adopt measures that protect the scenic value of the River Bluff and rural landscape; Future signage blends into the landscape.

Goal 2:

Optimize the availability and accessibility of a variety of recreational resources (land and water) in our area for recreational and community uses.

Rationale:

By optimizing the availability and accessibility of a variety of recreational resources, community visitors and residents will have access to a variety of quality open spaces for multiple experiences. Open spaces promote cultural understanding and identify community's values. Well-designed and planned open spaces showcase the community's commitment to environmental, historical, and cultural ideals; and foster community pride.

Strategy 1:

Increase access points to water and other recreational resources

Action Steps:

1. Create a Regional Recreation Plan (possible region - Brown County to west, Iowa border, Nicollet County on North and Waseca County on East)

Responsible Parties: Local government units, citizens, MN Department of Natural Resources, non-profit organizations

Timeline: November 2006 – July 2008

Resource Needs/Options: Office of Tourism, Tatonka Bluffs group in Redwood and Renville counties, DNR grants, local businesses

2. Ensure open park development along the Minnesota River

Responsible Parties: County/ city/ state planning staff, park professionals, community organizers, public officials

Timeline: Ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: City and county parks offices, planning and zoning offices

3. Increase walking and biking paths

Responsible Parties: City and County Departments of Health, local health firms, County Public Health

Timeline: Ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: November 2006 - February 2007

4. Study Greenways Open Space Programs in Metro area to use as potential model in our area.

Responsible Parties: Green Infrastructure Task Force Members, interested citizens, local government units, non-profits

Timeline: Ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: Grants thru state, local revenues

5. Encourage the Education for Health program.

Responsible Parties: Department of Health, local health firms, County Public Health

Timeline: Ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: Insurance companies

Community Planning and Regional Governance Sub-Category:

Downtown Renaissance and Historic Preservation

Mini-Vision:

Redefine and revitalize the downtowns of Mankato and lower North Mankato as the Valley, a center for the region that is the cultural, civic, governmental, residential, entertainment heartbeat of the area. The new Valley would extend from Madison Avenue to West Mankato East and West in Mankato and from 6th Street in Mankato through lower North Mankato, North to South.

Goal 1:

Redefine and revitalize the city center by creating a cohesive identity.

Rationale:

Revitalizing helps to define the city center, a community needs to have an identity to become a “destination”.

Strategy 1:

Ask local government entities to form the following community committees using the Mankato City Center Task Force as the umbrella organization in collaboration with a newly created Downtown Business Association.²

Action Steps:

1. Form a City Center Task Force that represents the revitalization and redevelopment interests of downtown businesses, design standards, historic preservation, housing and old town.

Responsible Parties: Mankato and North Mankato city governments; Chamber of Commerce; Potential participants from: local government entities, artisan community, Old Town Association, North Mankato Commerce Club, architects, downtown business owners, residents in the area, Blue Earth County and Nicollet County Historical Societies, Minnesota River interest groups and citizen volunteers.

Timeline: 6 months – 1 year after Envision 2020. Continue on an ongoing basis.

Resource Needs/Options: Grants, GMED, Downtown business owners/Downtown Business Association, other communities with strong downtowns, Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, Minnesota Historical Society

² The purpose of these committees is to provide a formalized setting for local governments to engage each other and volunteer citizens in dialogue, and to develop plans and opportunities, to implement the goals of this KPA

2. Form the following committees to work with local government on revitalization and redevelopment efforts in the city center: Downtown Business Association, Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation Committee, and the “Hot Spot” Committee.³

Responsible Parties: City Center Task Force

Timeline: Committees in place within 6 months after the formation of the City Center Task Force

Resource Needs/Options: Grants, GMED, Downtown business owners/Downtown Business Association, other communities with strong downtowns, Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, Minnesota Historical Society

Goal 2:

Encourage public, private and non-profit investment and/or reinvestment into the city center and establish economic incentives for projects.

Rationale:

Investment and reinvestment will keep the city center viable for businesses and future development and thus, keeps revenue within the area.

Strategy 1:

Educate and communicate with downtown business owners about incentives, area projects and opportunities to discourage absentee landlords in the city center.

Action Steps:

1. Encourage more local investment of developers, and business and property owner in the city center to keep the area active and viable. In turn, the DBA could also establish incentives to city center businesses.

Responsible Parties: City Center Task Force, Partnering with other local, regional, and national government entities to secure and implement economic incentives. Such programs include the Incubator Space Agreements through GMED. Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation Commission, Downtown Business Association and North Mankato Commerce Club, area developers, downtown business owners

Timeline: Committees should be in place 6 months – 1 year after Envision 2020.

Resource Needs/Options: City Center Task Force; local government entities, granting agencies, DBA and NMCC membership, GMED and citizen volunteers.

2. Extend and increase City investment and interaction with qualified private entities through programs such as Tax Increment Financing, Revolving Loan Funds, and Downtown Redevelopment Grants.

Responsible Parties: City Center Task Force, Partnering with other local, regional, and national government entities to secure and implement economic incentives. Such programs include the Incubator Space Agreements through GMED. Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation

³ The **Downtown Business Association** is a non-profit with membership in Mankato and North Mankato business owners. They would also have liaison memberships with the Greater Mankato Chamber of Commerce and the Convention and Visitors Bureau. The **Design Review Committee** would review the aesthetics planning for the city center and serve an advisory role on city center issues for planning commissions and the city councils of Mankato and North Mankato. The **Historic Preservation Commission** would oversee and monitor the revitalization efforts of historic structures in the downtowns. The **Hot Spot Committee** would identify and solve problems on troubled or threatened areas for revitalization and preservation.

Potential topics to be addressed include: **Gateways and Streetscapes** – Creating gateways to city center via signage, unique lighting and plantings, etc.; **Housing** – Encouraging affordable modern housing options in the defined city center such as housing on upper floors of downtown businesses; and **Old Town Revitalization** – entryways, pedestrian friendly environment, accessible parking and making Old Town a destination.

Commission, Downtown Business Association and North Mankato Commerce Club, area developers, downtown business owners

Timeline: Committees should be in place 6 months – 1 year after Envision 2020.

Resource Needs/Options: City Center Task Force; Local government entities, granting agencies, DBA and NMCC membership, GMED and citizen volunteers.

3. Establish a fund, organization or source for purchasing, remodeling and/or restoring property in the city center to keep area active.

Responsible Parties: City Center Task Force, Partnering with other local, regional, and national government entities to secure and implement economic incentives. Such programs include the Incubator Space Agreements through GMED. Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation Commission, Downtown Business Association and North Mankato Commerce Club, area developers, downtown business owners

Timeline: Committees should be in place 6 months – 1 year after Envision 2020.

Resource Needs/Options: City Center Task Force; local government entities, granting agencies, DBA and NMCC membership, GMED and citizen volunteers.

Goal 3:

Create a gathering space within the city center with pedestrian friendly amenities such as walkways, green space, fountains, etc.

Rationale:

Having such amenities would attract people to the city center and help the area thrive.

Strategy 1:

Promote the gathering space through a demonstration project by local artists by asking for artist renderings of gateways, murals, fountains, etc. The purpose would be to create a brand for the city center by using living treasures in the arts and cultural community.

Action Steps:

1. Encourage fairs and/or festivals in the city center with proceeds going toward the preservation of the city center, Old Town and the new Riverside Park.⁴

Responsible Parties: City Center Task Force; local government entities, Downtown Business Association, North Mankato Commerce Club, Old Town Association, Twin Rivers Center for the Arts, Blue Earth and Nicollet County Historical Societies, Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Timeline: Committees should be in place 6 months – 1 year after Envision 2020. Continue on an ongoing basis ensure future growth in the city centers.

Resource Needs/Options: Local government entities, granting agencies, National Endowment for the Arts, local art community “living treasurers like Marian Anderson and Tom Miller, TRCA, downtown business owners, citizen volunteers.

2. Create a space for the arts community by developing a program to encourage living treasures in community and utilize public arts in the city center.

Responsible Parties: City Center Task Force; local government entities, Downtown Business Association, North Mankato Commerce Club, Old Town Association, Twin Rivers Center for the Arts,

⁴ Example: Old Town Festival, RibFest, Brew Fest, Winter carnival etc.

Blue Earth and Nicollet County Historical Societies, Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Timeline: Committees should be in place 6 months – 1 year after Envision 2020. Continue on an ongoing basis ensure future growth in the city centers.

Resource Needs/Options: Local government entities, granting agencies, National Endowment for the Arts, local art community “living treasurers like Marian Anderson and Tom Miller, TRCA, downtown business owners, citizen volunteers.

3. Create an outdoor space for the music community by coordinating with the Riverside Park and an amphitheater or band shell.

Responsible Parties: City Center Task Force; local government entities, Downtown Business Association, North Mankato Commerce Club, Old Town Association, Twin Rivers Center for the Arts, Blue Earth and Nicollet County Historical Societies, Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Timeline: Committees should be in place 6 months – 1 year after Envision 2020. Continue on an ongoing basis ensure future growth in the city centers.

Resource Needs/Options: Local government entities, granting agencies, National Endowment for the Arts, local art community “living treasurers like Marian Anderson and Tom Miller, TRCA, downtown business owners, citizen volunteers.

Community Planning and Regional Governance Sub-Category:

Regional Governance

Goal 1:

Develop an emergency management system for the region.

Rationale:

A need exists for sharing among local units of government all existing and developing emergency management plans to ensure coordinated efforts in times of crisis.

Strategy:

Develop a regional emergency management plan.

Action Steps:

1. Convene a meeting of local government representatives to create the framework for the sharing process.

Responsible Parties: Local units of government of cities and counties

Timeline: 24 months for entire process

Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants; Communication costs from annual budgets of local governments; capital improvements required will come from long term capital improvement plans of local governments and may required increased tax levels; additional resource needs and options will emerge within the process

2. Develop a joint communication plan to ensure that all members of the public have the opportunity to become aware of any and all emergency planning efforts.

Responsible Parties: Local units of government

Timeline: 24 months for entire process

Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants, additional resource needs and options will emerge within the process

3. Develop and share area-wide evacuation plans for natural and manmade disasters.

Responsible Parties: Local units of government

Timeline: 24 months for entire process

Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants, additional resource needs and options will emerge within the process

4. Create a public education campaign to ensure that area property owners know and understand the rules governing property insurance for the restoration of their property after catastrophic events.

Responsible Parties: Local units of government

Timeline: 24 months for entire process

Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants, additional resource needs and options will emerge within the process

5. Identify public and private facilities that have standby electric generation capability for use in emergency situations. Secondly, identify public facilities where it would be advisable to add standby generation in the future.

Responsible Parties: Local units of government

Timeline: 24 months for entire process

Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants, additional resource needs and options will emerge within the process

Goal 2:

Address regional energy needs.

Rationale:

Energy needs is one of many issues that cross municipal boundaries. Regional collaboration on the issue would benefit every locale and save resources for every participant.

Strategy:

Collaboratively address the energy needs of the region through the development and implementation of innovative strategies.

Action Steps:

1. Convene a stakeholders meeting to discuss regional energy needs for the future.

Responsible Parties: Economic Development KPA, utilities, regulators, legislators, media

Timeline: Ongoing through 2020

Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants

2. Identify key stakeholders including public and private utilities, legislative representatives and state and federal regulators involved in the energy policy decision-making process.
Responsible Parties: Economic Development KPA, utilities, regulators, legislators, media
Timeline: Ongoing through 2020
Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants;
3. Inform the public of projected energy needs and availability for the future and the importance of major project development and siting as needed to provide basic energy supplies.

Responsible Parties: Economic Development KPA, utilities, regulators, legislators, media
Timeline: Ongoing through 2020
Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants

Goal 3:

Develop a regional identity.

Rationale:

There is currently a need for a regional identity. Developing an identity for the region will articulate the unique qualities and environment that will assist the region in marketing itself to those outside the area.

Strategy:

Develop a shared regional identity of the Mankato/North Mankato region.

Action Step:

1. Convene a stakeholders meeting to develop a regional identity that appropriately recognizes all of the entities involved. Seek the involvement of the arts community in identifying design and development.

Responsible Parties: Cities, counties, and Chamber of Commerce, media
Timeline: 24 months
Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants

Goal 4:

Develop region-wide resource sharing.

Rationale:

Sharing resources will provide opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness of local governments region-wide.

Action Step:

1. Research and implement opportunities for increased shared services, process efficiencies and economies of scale.

Responsible Parties: Cities and counties, intergovernmental committees
Timeline: Ongoing
Resource Needs/Options: Time of participants

Community Planning and Regional Planning Sub-Category:

Urban Planning/Urban Villages

Mini-vision:

Mixed use, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods or villages are common with businesses, services, cultural amenities and green space existing in close proximity and reducing the need to drive. This concept applies to new and existing neighborhoods.

Goal 1:

Encourage the development/redevelopment of urban villages

Rationale:

The development/redevelopment of urban villages promotes livability, reduces energy consumption and sprawl and saves agricultural and environmentally sensitive land.

Strategy 1:

Encourage mixed-use zoning.

Action Steps:

1. Review and amend existing land use plans and policies.

Responsible Parties: Cities, townships, counties, neighborhood groups, regional affordable housing group

Timeline: 6 months – 1 year

Resource Needs/Options: Consider reallocation of a portion of city budget or grants to neighborhood organizations for organizing and planning.

Strategy 2:

Increase allowable housing densities.

Action Steps:

1. Review and amend existing land use plans and policies

Responsible Parties: Cities, townships, counties, neighborhood groups, regional affordable housing group

Timeline: 6 months to 1 year

Resource Needs/Options: Consider reallocation of a portion of city budget or grants to neighborhood organizations for organizing and planning.

2. Identify neighborhoods where mixed use would be beneficial

Responsible Parties: Cities, townships, counties, neighborhood groups, regional affordable housing group, developers

Timeline: Immediate to ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: Consider reallocation of a portion of city budget or grants to neighborhood organizations for organizing and planning.

Strategy 3:

Provide incentives to developers for urban villages.

Action Step:

1. Study incentives in other cities and develop incentives for new and existing neighborhoods

Responsible Parties: Cities, townships, counties, neighborhood groups, regional affordable housing group, developers

Timeline: Immediate to ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: Consider reallocation of a portion of City budget or grants to neighborhood organizations for organizing and planning. Enlist assistance from appropriate departments, students, and faculty at MSU.

Strategy 4:

Promote neighborhood identity.

Action Steps:

1. Delineate neighborhoods based on commonalities

Responsible Parties: Cities, townships, counties, neighborhood groups, regional affordable housing group, developers

Timeline: Immediate; ongoing for new developments, 2 years for existing neighborhoods

Resource Needs/Options: Consider reallocation of a portion of City budget or grants to neighborhood organizations for organizing and planning. Enlist assistance from appropriate departments, students, and faculty at MSU.

2. Develop neighborhood organizations.

Responsible Parties: Cities, townships, counties, neighborhood groups, regional affordable housing group, developers

Timeline: Immediate to ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: Consider reallocation of a portion of city budget or grants to neighborhood organizations for organizing and planning.

3. Identify neighborhoods where mixed use would be beneficial.

Responsible Parties: Cities, townships, counties, neighborhood groups, regional affordable housing group, developers

Timeline: Immediate to ongoing

Resource Needs/Options: Consider reallocation of a portion of city budget or grants to neighborhood organizations for organizing and planning.

Measures of Success:

Number of urban villages (new or redevelopments) that have been developed.