

envision|2020

A Long Range Community Visioning Plan

By: Andrew Langholz, *Envision 2020* Graduate Assistant

Grassroots community visioning efforts are an ever-evolving process and are not new to Greater Mankato. The successes of ACT 2000, the predecessor to Envision 2020, had a long and fruitful history dating back to 1965. Following the completion of ACT 2000, a new visioning plan was needed that would represent the future desired state of community stakeholders.

In 2005, Citizens Voices and Greater Mankato Growth (the Greater Mankato Chamber of Commerce and Greater Mankato Economic Development (GMED) at the time) were each exploring the possibilities for a community-based visioning effort. The leaders of Citizen Voices convened a meeting with the Chamber and GMED to discuss the possibility of collaborating on a shared community strategic planning process. These key organizations agreed to work together on the process and with the inclusion of key governmental perspectives and a plethora of community stakeholders, Envision 2020 was born.

The strategic planning approach chosen for Envision 2020 had two stages: pre-planning and planning. A third stage, which we are currently in, is the implementation of the plan itself. The Initiating Stage, or pre-planning stage, focused on project logistics, design of the actual community planning process and identification of stakeholders. The Stakeholder Planning Stage, involved activation of the community planning process and the development of the community action plan by the stakeholders of the region.

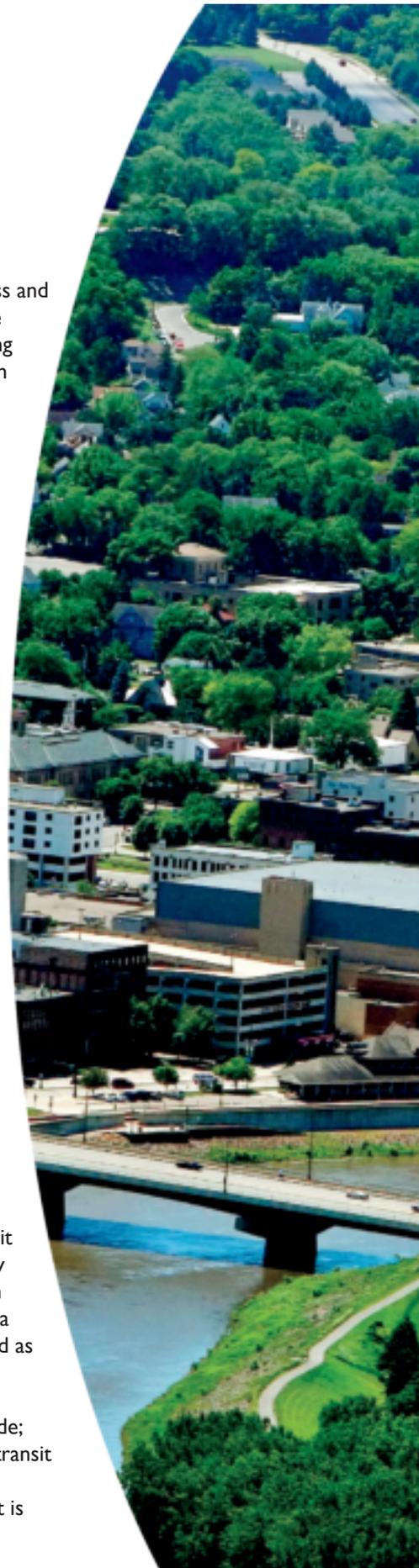
The Initiating Process identified more than 400 community stakeholders. Through recruitment strategies implemented by the volunteer committee, more than 200 stakeholders committed to participate in the process. Other passionate residents also stepped forward and the project leadership welcomed their participation. This process helped to identify the key performance areas and the goals that correspond to each.

Key Performance Areas:

From these visioning and planning efforts Envision 2020 was formed, and it currently consists of six key performance areas which include; community planning & regional governance, economic development, education, health & human services, livability and transportation. Each key performance area focuses on the goals and priorities that community stakeholders identified as being important to achieve by the year 2020.

An example of goals from the Transportation key performance area include;

1. Develop an accessible, efficient, cost effective and cooperative mass transit system
2. Develop a comprehensive non-motorized transportation system that is accessible, safe and region-wide.





3. Maintain, improve and coordinate an efficient and safe system of streets, roads and trails throughout Greater Mankato.
4. Enhance and develop a multi-modal transportation system that includes pedestrians, bicycles, motor vehicles, transit rail and air.

If you would like to review more materials about the key performance areas please visit our website at envision-2020.com.

Review, Revise and Renew:

With only five years remaining in the Envision 2020 initiative, community stakeholders decided it would be beneficial for Greater Mankato to re-evaluate the goals and priorities that were set at its inception. By doing this stakeholders ensured that they would be working towards the objectives the community deemed as important to accomplish by the year 2020.

In October 2014, a large community gathering was hosted at the Verizon Wireless Center. At this meeting; accomplishments from each key performance area were shared, small group discussions were held to help identify areas where Greater Mankato could improve and an explanation of the next steps in the re-evaluation process were discussed. In conjunction with the meeting a community survey was conducted. The results from the survey identified goals and priorities that were most important to community stakeholders. It also encouraged individuals to contribute their efforts and expertise to Envision 2020 in a variety of ways including; joining one or more key performance areas, attending focus groups or by volunteering their time.

Since that time each key performance area has analyzed the survey results and created specific questions for their focus groups which were held in early February. The feedback received from these focus groups has played an integral part in shaping each key performance area and Envision 2020 as a whole moving forward.

Throughout the month of March, each key performance area hosted meetings with community stakeholders to make final revisions to the plan. These revisions include; creating a new mini-vision, mapping out goals to accomplish by the year 2020 and the rationale for setting each goal.

Building a Better Future, Today:

What is next for Envision 2020? The rollout of the of the renewed Envision 2020 community report will be made available in late April through a news release and social media venues. The purpose and desire for the community report is to invigorate community stakeholders and encourage all members of the community to work towards a stronger and more vibrant region.

If you would like further information or would like to become involved with Envision 2020, and shaping the future of Greater Mankato, please contact Andrew Langholz at alangholz@greatermankato.com or visit the Envision 2020's website at envision-2020.com.