

2018 InterCity Leadership Visit, Fayetteville, AR



Overlooking the Boston Mountains from the Fayetteville Public Library Terrace

What our delegates thought:

“The trip to Fayetteville was a great chance for GMG members to see how Northwest Arkansas successfully grew over the last 25 years with a “team first” approach. The collaboration we saw and studied between the different communities, businesses, education leaders, elected officials and many more was impressive. We also had a blast along the way. We are looking forward to applying a lot of the lessons we learned right here in Greater Mankato.”

Sen. Nick Frentz, Attorney, Maschka, Riedy, Ries and Frentz

“There are three words to summarize Fayetteville; **authentic southern hospitality**. Our delegation was made to feel welcome, but we heard multiple times that **Everyone** is welcome to reside in Fayetteville. They do a wonderful job promoting their diverse and all-inclusive community. Fayetteville also recognizes the students of the University of Arkansas as assets to the community and have created intentional programs and processes to encourage students to make Fayetteville home while attending school and after graduation. Northwest Arkansas entities such as the chambers of commerce, non-profits, local governments, the university, and private business work together for the greater good of the region.”

Marcia Bahr, President, Mankato Clinic Foundation

"I have been a part of four ICLV delegations, and each time, we have been given the opportunity to reflect on ways to make greater Mankato a better place. The recent trip to Fayetteville was no different. My expectations prior to leaving were to focus on affordable housing and ways to address childcare needs in our area. What I came away with was something different. As a group, it appears that greater Mankato may benefit from examining what makes up our region and considering the answer to who we are as a region.

I enjoy the trips for several reasons. It is a unique opportunity to build relationships between many different people who lead and influence our area. This is extremely valuable as we work toward a more unified region.

I enjoy looking at what other communities are doing. This helps me in my role as an elected official.

The work of GMG and the committee members who put these trips together is very much appreciated."

Tim Auringer, Mayor, City of Eagle Lake

"It was such a great opportunity to renew friendships and make new friends while pursuing goal objectives for our area."

Mark Piepho, County Commissioner, Blue Earth County

"It was important for the Mankato Area Foundation to be represented on the ICLV to Fayetteville, Arkansas. Not only did it allow me to see first-hand the significant projects and programs-supported by local philanthropic funding, that are making a difference in their community, it gave me an opportunity to participate in several thoughtful conversations regarding how we might use that knowledge to shape the future of our own region. As great as the presentations were, I found that the proximity to so many people who care about the future of our region to be inspiring and thought provoking. The relationships fostered by the shared experience are invaluable."

Nancy Zallek, President & CEO, Mankato Area Foundation

"This is my 4th ICLV trip and I am always impressed by the level of talent and leadership that exists inside of our region. It's extremely powerful to take that kind of horsepower away from their normal daily grinds and engage in an agenda that provides new perspective/ideas and provokes thought leadership. The real work starts now as we net down our take-aways, establish priorities, and start to take action. It's a proven model...we have the opportunity to really move the needle."

Todd Loosbrock, Regional President, US Bank

These quotes epitomize the conviction and energy our area leaders have to seek out new ideas and best practices to bring back home in an effort to make Greater Mankato a more vibrant place to live, work, and play.

Introduction

Fayetteville and Mankato share a number of important features, e.g., a strong sense of community safety to raise a family, quality education, vibrant economies with low unemployment and future-oriented community leaders. There are also some striking differences: Fayetteville is twice the population and the immediate region five times the size and continues to grow at a significant rate (30+ individuals move to the area each day). Several national corporate powerhouses, headquartered and committed to the vitality of Northwest Arkansas, populate the region. The University of Arkansas is an R1 research university. The ICLV delegation quickly realized that Greater Mankato can learn and grow from both the similarities and differences.

Key Take-aways from Housing and Nonprofits Sessions

A small group of philanthropists have championed the "greater good" of the region by granting significant gifts in support of key projects and initiatives like the airport, the library, and even their highway system. However, the generosity of their community does not end with 3 donors. Like

Mankato, they have a philanthropic community that supports hundreds of nonprofit organizations. Those charitable contributions have been responsible for renovating their community(s) in order to make the NW Arkansas region an attractive location to live, work and play. Their strategy has worked and consequently the region has become increasingly attractive to new residents and tourism.

As exciting as that is, it has also put a great deal of pressure on the region and the nonprofit sector that serves the area. With the growth has come a significant increase in homelessness, food insecurity, and a need for resources to support a much more diverse community. The nonprofit community has been called on to convene organizations with similar missions and collaborate in their efforts – but, they don't have all the answers.

With increased student enrollment and additional influx of residents comes increased pressure on housing. Recent student housing developments have been funded by developers from outside the region. Infill is becoming increasingly more important in Fayetteville as the community runs out of land to develop. Trails within the city have become more important. The city is beginning to think of them as “Ribbons of Commerce” and “Mobility Paths” rather than trails.

In older areas of town, developers are coming in, buying old houses to tear down and build new. City ordinances have been modified to permit building more units on a lot or to build “accessory dwellings”, e.g. mother-in-law houses or cottages. Even with these changes, the city is having problems to provide housing for the economically disadvantaged.

Key Take-aways from Breakouts

During the opening session the group heard from the director of the Fayetteville Public Library. The library, an 80,000 sq. ft. structure with an impressive addition in progress is much more than a library. It combines its core function with an array of activities and hosts a wide variety of functions. In many ways, it serves as the community centerpiece. The second speaker, the COO of the Northwest Arkansas Council gave an overview of the council along with several examples of how the organization has promoted the region that runs roughly along I-49 from Bentonville to Fayetteville.

Following these presentations, the delegation broke into four groups to process what they heard based on the following four questions: 1. What provocative/aspirational idea came to mind? 2. What local community project comes to mind that can be within reach? 3. What resources are currently available and where are the gaps for such a program/project? 4. To which of the four fundamental goals of the trip (talent attraction/retention; workforce housing; Greater Mankato as a place to work/live and regional recreation) apply.

Provocative ideas that came from the four groups included:

- Developing more fully the idea of regionalism
- Learning from each other (living in each other's houses)
- Embracing humility as we develop as a region
- Identifying and strongly supporting a community centerpiece to rally around (like Fayetteville does with their library)
- Building community assets to attract and keep talent
- The importance of technology and research to move Greater Mankato forward

- Enhancing the community and business relationship with the University

On Thursday morning, following breakfast and presentations from the University of Arkansas Director of Alumni relations and the Assistant Athletic Director, the group reflected on the previous day's discussions and distilled the following priorities:

- Purposefully engage students from the start of their college experience to invite and encourage them to become permanent residents.
- The airport is well positioned for growth and regionalism
- Think of Mankato as the "capitol" of the southern third of Minnesota
- More fully capitalize on agriculture as a driver of our region
- Further develop public/private partnerships

The high-level takeaway from Thursday morning's session focused on the need to approach key business leaders to help us define the region and sell the vision to move forward. GMG was given the authority to serve as the "convener". In addition, there needs to be a catalyst to spark the vision.

Final Wrap-up Session

Friday morning's final discussion focused on "What is our story?" Fayetteville seemed to have a very consistent "elevator speech" which we heard from a wide variety of Fayetteville residents who seemed to not only know the story, but also internalized it as well. Several thoughts came from the discussion:

- What is our story and how does that shape our brand?
- Do we need a name for the region?
- If we are going to grow and improve our community, we need everyone to drive a "sense of urgency."
- With growth come additional problems. We need to prepare for that. It puts additional stress on our non-profits. Our non-profits need to come together, acknowledge our weaknesses and look for ways to overcome/minimize them.

A broader discussion on "Our Story" linked back to the idea of a community centerpiece or crown jewel. A number of Mankato crown jewels were articulated, including: City Center, Education (the whole spectrum), trails, water, recreation, a great place to raise a family, a generous community spirit, high quality, accessible health care, Young Professionals, a "balanced" economy.

Final thoughts on things to work on focused on the changing population of the region. It continues to become more diverse. People who move here tend to bring extended families with them.

Survey Results:

Delegate Response Survey (ICLV Frequency/Location) results

1. Barring a major scheduling conflict, how likely are you to invest in a future ICLV trip?
 - Very likely 76.9%
 - Somewhat likely 23.1%

Comments:

- Wonderful opportunity to see another community and get to know others from our own community.
 - the chance to interact with other leaders in a 'no idea is wrong' out of town environment is priceless. And seeing how others do it gives us a chance to look at ourselves differently. And its good to discover we do some things very, very right!
 - I personally find great value in these trips and feel that there should be at least one follow-up session with everyone that attended - a requirement of attending the trip.
 - I certainly appreciate the need for our community to learn from successful regions/leaders similar to ours. However, I believe we missed the mark as it relates to quality of speakers (after the 1st day) along with the last day recap/marching orders. We now have all returned to our busy day to day life and it is much harder to implement or even identify those tactics necessary. These trips are always valuable
 - Great trip overall. Disappointed by the cancelled session as I think that would have been helpful
2. The last few ICLV trips have occurred every three years. Should the next ICLV trip be in:
Two years 30.8% Three years 53.8% Four years 15.4%
3. Most of the previous ICLV trips have been outside our region. Should the next trip be:
- Outside our region (reached by air) 15.4%
 - Within our region (reached by bus, 3-5 hours) 7.7%
 - Type of transportation should not dictate destination 69.2%
 - International 7.7%

Comments:

- Interesting thought to go international.....but also staying within the region is a good idea too, since that has not been done. both of those ideas would change who participates in a big way.
- Although it does cause concern, it was "easier" when we were all on the same flight or maybe just 2 flights instead of 3.
- I would like to visit a winter climate city to see what ideas we can learn from them.

Session I (Library and NWAC)

1. What inspirational or provocative idea(s) did you get from this presentation?
- My inspiration came from the fact we are moving in the right direction. Granted, that's a safe position. We will get to a goal at some point. The provocative idea is "can we push ourselves to make more happen faster?"
 - Can we do more with our libraries and Community Education to position as a gathering place, along with learning. How can we create even a greater sense of regionalism...do we need to adapt the use of a name such as South Central MN, like NW Arkansas, rather the always referring to our area as Greater Mankato?
 - We need to market Southern MN.
 - The Northwest Council. Mankato needs this.
 - I loved how proud they were of their library and how it had spurred other strategic planning and philanthropy around their crown jewel.
 - Collaboration - Multi government units and private community working together.
Regionalism - Power of a larger group.

- Regionalism Importance of shared vision among leaders Finding a "crown jewel"
 - NWA Council has a board made up of true visionaries from the private sector plus the University Chancellor. I believe there is a place for this in our region. Private sector should be setting the direction and local chamber, city council, and county boards should be getting aligned and using shared resources with those private entities to get the vision a reality.
 - The public library was a building built for the people, not the books. A community gathering place.
 - The idea that they are all "in this together." Also the fact that they work well as a region despite their differences in cities and what they do.
 - The Private Sector must lead and establish a similar "Council" to drive change in our region. GMG has become distracted by a membership with competing interests and too many independent initiatives which have had mediocre success of late. GMG remains a critical platform and operational structure. However, we must implement a new leadership group to usher in the change it will take to move our region forward.
 - An enhanced community center
 - We need to think about a being a bigger region.
 - A unified voice - regardless of who was speaking. Place each person in a different room; ask each the same question; and the same answers would be shared.
2. What project for our community comes to mind from this presentation...that might be achievable or within reach?
- We can brand a regional approach. Drop the Mankato from the name.
 - Redefining and naming our region.
 - Rebranding our region as an area. YMCA--needs to be more than a swim and gym.
 - The Northwest Council
 - Our Community Vitality Fund
 - Green Seam - growing the area we serve to be more regional
 - Shared community center
 - Developing a definition for our region so all; locals, legislators, business leaders, visitors, educators, and recruits know it.
 - We have a variety of community gathering places within our community: Vine, Children's Museum, YMCA, Historical Society. Instead of creating one central location, how can each of these buildings serve a bigger purpose? How can a re-envisioned Historical Society fill existing gaps for a gathering place?
 - We need to figure out what our region is and work to enhance the region. "South Central Minnesota"
 - As regional retail continues to change dramatically, we no longer can assume visitors will come here to shop. Our region must invest in Regional Recreational Facilities/Activities to draw people to our region. We have fallen way behind in this critical area and need both strategic leadership as well as operational/staffing changes.
 - Expand Vine
 - Maximize Mt. Kato. It has tremendous draw in winter and can be much more in the summer. Concerts, micro-brew, ziplining, retreat center, etc.
 - If the East-side YMCA comes to fruition, it, too, can be built as a community center. Position it as such right from the start for broad buy-in.

Session II (Walking tour)

1. What inspirational or provocative idea(s) did you get from this presentation?
 - I was impressed by their emphasis on entrepreneurship and the variety of resources available to their students and community to create and grow new business.
 - City and businesses working together to promote the area. Green space with plenty of trees. Wayward signage. Paintings on walkways. Farmers Market.
 - Cultural Corridor - connecting the shopping districts via art and amenities
 - I enjoyed the connectivity of the regional asset; the trail. Also, more urban housing.
 - The importance of biking and bike trails.
 - NW Arkansas Council identified the need for a central gathering area ('Library') in the heart of their city and invested and plan to expand. This has led to significant redevelopment and spurred other themes around it (Arts)
 - Expanding public art& trails
 - Signage conveys values of community. Smart for city to buy lots to be intentional with growth.
 - Plan where the tour is going. Provide a numerical list, and make a presentation to the group before heading out for the walk so everyone can hear, and assure the right info is being imparted to the entire group.
2. What project for our community comes to mind from this presentation...that might be achievable or within reach?
 - I would like to see our Young Professional group expand in scope. If we are going to promote entrepreneurship, we need to provide them with the resources and networking available through a group like the GMG/YP's. Our group right now is rather homogeneous because it is populated by those firms who can afford the membership
 - and YP fee. Perhaps we could offer a reduced rate or perhaps other firms might be willing to sponsor a start-up. (I realize we need to generate revenue.)
 - Painting Utility boxes. More murals. Adding way word signage and lighting.
 - Use art and create corridors to connect our downtown to make it more walkable
 - I think a more defined and obvious trail connecting City Center and MSU campus along with factual stops along the way; maybe highlighting MSU alum who have made a difference. In my opinion, his plan should be considered with any improvements on Val Imm, Warren, Cherry, and Front or Second Streets. Regarding the housing, I think identifying and assembling tracts of land in urban area for development would be
 - appropriate.
 - The other thing that I found interesting is that the Fayetteville Chamber has money-making ventures. They rent out space in their building, etc.
 - We need a central gathering place (maybe the old Post Office building and need to create more green space)
 - Continued trail interconnectivity & TRCA public art work
 - create a bike path from hilltop area near MSU that has a reasonable grade that ends near downtown.
3. What resources are available? Where are the gaps?
 - There source of tax dollars and availability of three business's for source of revenue.

- Shared vision is the gap
 - A little bit of MSU and City/maybe County cooperation would do well. Landscape Architecture design for this endeavor is a must. Find a local firm understanding the particulars that come from the area and blend in other regional ideas would make this a hit. Regarding the housing, I am not sure that a look at the potential availability of land tracts has been made.
 - We need a "shared vision."
 - Building available to redevelop, private/public collaboration is evident in other City Center projects and the Arts is led by a successful leader in Noelle. We must rely on BE County, City of Mankato and others to collaborate and bring dollars to a project (GAP).
 - Grants
 - We have the land, just need cooperation.
4. Which fundamental goal(s) for this trip apply to this idea/project? Mark all that apply.
- Talent recruitment, development and/or retention 77.8%
 - Workforce housing 22.2%
 - Greater Mankato as a place to work and live 100.0%
 - Regional recreation 55.6%

Session III (Breakfast Recap)

1. What inspirational or provocative idea(s) did you get from this presentation?
- We need to define our region
 - How to enhance regionalism
 - How to enhance regionalism
 - We need to find a way to bring together our "potential" donors to find out what they care about and how they would like to make a difference in our community.
 - Defining our region
 - I thought we had a great conversation about our region, how to define it, understand that it is not just how we see Mankato but just as importantly how our 'region' sees it.
 - Recap from day 1 - how do we include all different sectors, audiences, groups, etc. in the conversation of regionalism and to determine what the gaps are and how to fill them. We need to all wear our community hat when in this group and not just what's in it for me/my business/organization.
 - The Univ of Arkansas Athletic Department is completely engaged with the community in both branding, need to bring activities into the community and partner with private sector. Meet w/ major donors to identify where they are thinking we should go
 - Why not be more intentional about bringing pride to our community? Why not have purple street signs around Verizon center and MSU? Small artifacts convey the relationships.
 - Close ties with a University – important
2. What project for our community comes to mind from this presentation...that might be achievable or within reach?
- Putting the right voices at the table
 - Working to strengthen our private sector engagement in our regional approach.
 - Working to strengthen our private sector engagement in our regional approach.

- It could take a variety of directions.
 - Need to define our goal - is airport what brings the greater region together?
 - When we understand our 1) Core Economy, 2) Unique Qualities, then 3) the Needed Amenities will naturally come from the first two.
 - Community Gathering Place
 - The community should be focusing our energy on 1 common athletic brand (Mavericks) given visibility and success of their programs (Banners/logos/etc.). The community should consistently host events to celebrate these winning programs (Visit Mankato must lead this charge).
 - Initial work on Envision 2030/40 will have a review of major partner strategic plans to identify common themes that can be compared to the above for further consideration
 - We don't target retirees to come back to Mankato, even seasonally. Can we be more intentional to welcome our new students to our community each year. This year alone, we have 3,400 new students, who likely will have a bigger financial impact than the Vikings did.
 - Working with MSU/Bethany/SCC - to identify and facilitate common goals.
3. What resources are available? Where are the gaps?
- Using GMG to navigate the process to being all voices together.
 - ICVL Delegation, GMG
 - ICVL Delegation, GMG
 - GMG (& potentially MAF) could help provide the infrastructure to do this.
 - I believe a visionary group defining the area and setting our needs and opportunities is necessary. I am not sure it takes more resources than are currently being used, but some redirection.
 - The ICLV delegation to get the conversations started - and invite individuals/businesses/orgs that weren't here.
 - Successful athletic programs at MSU, engaged coaches and players. Lack collaboration between MSU Athletic office and Visit Mankato/City Center Partnership.
 - Students, public
 - We have the people and the jobs. Need to match them with energy.
 - We have excellent educational opportunities. Getting them to work together and with the community --- a must.
4. Which fundamental goal(s) for this trip apply to this idea/project? Mark all that apply.
- Talent recruitment, development and/or retention 72.7%
 - Workforce housing 27.3%
 - Greater Mankato as a place to work and live 81.8%
 - Regional recreation 18.2%
 - Other - Write In (Required) 9.1%: could be any of the above

Session IV (Group Tours)

1. What inspirational or provocative idea(s) did you get from this presentation?
- A lot of focus on student housing. In full versus sprawl
 - Philanthropy at a greater degree
 - creating cohesion among nonprofits to effectively address issues

- Philanthropy Session - Community voice for community issues - more collaboration - strategic community focus rather than individual incentives - community solutions - don't just start another nonprofit, join someone else already doing that work
 - We are already engaged
 - Housing tour showed care with infrastructure and a relationship with developers.
 - Excellent presentation. We're each different, but focusing on the community – and getting non-profits to work together - sensational. I found this session fascinating, plus comparing to Mankato.
2. What project for our community comes to mind from this presentation...that might be achievable or within reach?
 - The common theme of affordable housing.
 - Engaging additional philanthropic giving/projects - Vitality, Human and Social Services,
 - Diversity & Inclusion
 - Homelessness, food scarcity
 - Mankato Foundation
 - the examples of the housing that was purposely built in the city as a city request of developers for new families is a great idea.
 - Facilitating non-profits getting together to better utilize resources/tools --- and dollars.
 3. What resources are available? Where are the gaps?
 - Mankato Area Foundation, United Way
 - Mankato Area Foundation as the liaison, our strong nonprofit community Impact
 - Philanthropy - you can't fill the gaps if you don't know where they are - we need to hear about it and make the community aware.
 - Generous community
 - realtors association.
 - United Way is in a perfect position to help facilitate. Perhaps Mankato Area Foundation.
 4. Which fundamental goal(s) for this trip apply to this idea/project? Mark all that apply.
 - Talent recruitment, development and/or retention 42.9%
 - Workforce housing 42.9%
 - Greater Mankato as a place to work and live 85.7%
 - Regional recreation 42.9%

Session V (Why did we move here? Why do we stay?)

1. What inspirational or provocative idea(s) did you get from this presentation?
 - I think the most revealing thing is that we face the same challenges they do
 - Sense of community
 - Importance of first impressions - both physically, and how one is made to feel
 - More outreach to post-secondary students upon their arrival to engage them in the community
 - Too personal to take elements and run with it.
2. What project for our community comes to mind from this presentation...that might be achievable or within reach?
 - Maybe making some regional housing decisions to offer specialized zoning to promote

- a variety of housing
 - Some way to continue to bring the community together Enhancing our first-time interactions with people as they experience our community - "frontline" personnel training
 - Neighborhood Nite Out
 - Same
 - What resources are available? Where are the gaps?
 - We have friendly people, an organized area leadership organization
 - Visit Mankato, City Center Partnership, Greater Mankato Growth
 - Colleges
3. Which fundamental goal(s) for this trip apply to this idea/project? Mark all that apply.
- Talent recruitment, development and/or retention 100.0%
 - Workforce housing 40.0%
 - Greater Mankato as a place to work and live 60.0%
 - Regional recreation 20.0%

Session VI (Student Recruitment)

1. What inspirational or provocative idea(s) did you get from this presentation?
 - Talent recruitment is our biggest challenge, like everywhere
2. What project for our community comes to mind from this presentation...that might be achievable or within reach?
 - GMG Talent Council
3. What resources are available? Where are the gaps?
 - More Mankato, Green Seam
4. Which fundamental goal(s) for this trip apply to this idea/project? Mark all that apply
 - Talent recruitment, development and/or retention 100.0%

Session VII (Fayetteville Professionals Night Out)

1. What inspirational or provocative idea(s) did you get from this presentation?
 - Networking & teaching networking are key
 - I liked the pride they take in their community.
2. What project for our community comes to mind from this presentation...that might be achievable or within reach?
 - Business Before/After Hours
 - The painting of the silos will be a signature piece for our community.
3. What resources are available? Where are the gaps?
 - Mentors
 - No obvious gaps.
4. Which fundamental goal(s) for this trip apply to this idea/project? Mark all that apply
 - Talent recruitment, development and/or retention 100.0%
 - Greater Mankato as a place to work and live 50.0%