

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2024-2028



Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Page 3-4

Introduction

Page 5

Demographic &
Socioeconomic Data

Page 6

Process Summary

Page 10

The Way Forward:
Strategic Direction

Page 11

Evaluation Framework

Page 22

Appendices

Page 24



Executive Summary

Every five years the region develops a comprehensive economic development strategy as a guide to understanding the regional economy and crafting goals, strategies, and actions.

What is a CEDS?

Souris Basin Planning Council (SBPC) is a designated Economic Development District (EDD) through the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). As the regional EDD, we are responsible for developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a community-driven plan for regional economic development. The Souris Basin CEDS was developed with input from a diverse group of local representatives from private, public, and nonprofit sectors. It has been designed to strategically build capacity and guide economic prosperity and resiliency for North Dakota Region 2, consisting of Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville, and Ward counties. It is a key component to establishing and maintaining a robust economic ecosystem by helping to build regional capacity.

The CEDS process provides an opportunity for stakeholders to engage in meaningful conversations and determine efforts to elevate communities through smart and strategic economic and community development. This CEDS is a tool for the region, however, should not be used as a stand-alone document. Building on local planning efforts and project implementation, this document incorporates the following components: characteristics of the region, summary of economic development conditions and identified trends, goals and strategies, and an evaluation framework.

SBPC supports communities, leaders, and entrepreneurs to advance economic progress for North Dakota Region 2.

Demographic & Socioeconomic Data

Elevating communities through connections. people. ideas. knowledge. resources.



Population

Recent estimates show the population has increased by 10 percent to 99,808, since 2010. Although the region overall has experienced an increase, population trends vary among the seven counties. Of note is the difference between Mountrail and Pierce counties. Contrary to the region, Mountrail County's population has increased by more than 26 percent since 2010. On the other hand, Pierce County has experienced a seven percent population decline over the same period.¹



Age

As of 2021, 14 percent of the population is 65 and older with this figure projected to grow in the coming years.² Still, 24 percent of the population is under 18 years of age and 38 percent are in the 25-to-54-year age group – typically considered the “prime working years.”³



Race & Ethnicity

Since 2000, the percentage of people who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) increased by 10 percent, with the highest percentage in Mountrail County. From 2010 to 2020, our region experienced a 74 percent increase. As of 2021, 84 percent of the region's population identify their race as white-alone. Nearly six percent identify as Hispanic or Latino and 4.8 percent as American Indian or Alaska Native.⁴

Demographic & Socioeconomic Data



Veteran Status

Of the estimated 45,020 veterans in North Dakota, our region is home to approximately 17 percent of the state's population of veterans.⁵



Income

Since 2010, the region has seen a 52 percent increase in per capita personal income, bringing it up to \$37,198. At an average of \$73,897, the median household income is slightly higher than the state average.⁶



Poverty Rate

Despite growth in income, there has been little change to the region's poverty rate, currently at 9.75 percent. Poverty rates vary across different areas, with Mountrail and Pierce counties being the hardest hit at 12.9 percent and 11 percent, respectively.⁷



Workforce

North Dakota communities are currently facing a significant workforce shortage. With only a 1.4 percent unemployment rate and a one percent increase in the labor force, there are 1,278 job vacancies in the region as of September 2023. Of these vacancies, 29 percent require a bachelor's degree, 34 percent require a high school diploma or equivalent, and 18 percent do not require any formal educational credential.⁸

Demographic & Socioeconomic Data



Education

The percentage of individuals in the region holding a bachelor's degree or higher has increased by approximately two percent since 2010. In addition, the percentage of individuals possessing a high school degree or higher is at 92.5 percent, slightly lower than the state average.⁹



Housing

The region continues to struggle with accessing funding to upgrade aging housing infrastructure. Housing challenges faced include aged housing that demands major rehabilitation, inadequate funding for affordable housing, limited availability of quality, affordable housing options, scarcity of housing for senior citizens, and unfulfilled needs of the homeless population and individuals transitioning from the justice system. According to the 2022 North Dakota Statewide Housing Needs Assessment, to meet anticipated demand, the state must add 9,285 additional housing units by 2025. Furthermore, there is a growing need for more affordable housing for lower-income households and housing that caters to an aging population.¹⁰



Childcare

The region is experiencing a significant shortage of childcare providers, with a vast majority of centers unable to offer competitive wages to attract and retain qualified employees. In fact, only 30 percent of potential daycare demand is being met statewide. Bottineau and Pierce counties have higher rates, while Mountrail County has the lowest rate, at only five percent.¹¹

Demographic & Socioeconomic Data



Infrastructure

Approximately 86 percent of households have a broadband internet subscription, as opposed to 91 percent in the United States and 89 percent in North Dakota.¹²

The region benefits from a robust transportation infrastructure, with highways, rail, and air travel. Minot International Airport has the newest and largest commercial terminal in the state.



Business & Industry

With 42,322 jobs, Retail Trade and Health Care and Social Assistance remain the largest employment industries in the region, accounting for 28 percent of total jobs (14 percent each). Additionally, Educational Services (10 percent), Accommodation and Food Services (10 percent), and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (7 percent) are among the top five industries, employing over half (55 percent) of the region's workforce.¹³



COVID-19 Impact

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SBPC conducted a Resiliency Strategy to assess its impact on organizations, cities, and partners. The plan outlines local priorities and opportunities for future collaboration. By concentrating on regional strengths, SBPC aims to build capacity and take on the role of "regionwide capacity-building, information sharing, and collaborative facilitation."



Additional data can be found at sourisbasin.org/data.

Process Summary

The CEDS was created by analyzing existing data, examining local, regional, and state plans, and engaging in a community-driven participation process involving community members, business owners, local units of government, and partners.



SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis was conducted through the following means:

- A public survey conducted in 2021-2022
- CEDS Committee meeting in August 2023
- Regional planning meetings with area stakeholders, business owners, food producers, elected officials, and community members in September-October 2023
- A community roundtable meeting with regional economic developers in November 2023
- A CEDS Committee meeting in October 2023
- One-on-one meetings with subject-matter experts throughout 2022 -2023

Issues and key insights identified were divided into four strategic priority areas which guided goals and strategies of each one. The full SWOT results can be found under appendices.

The Way Forward: Strategic Direction

Our region's work moving forward fits into four priority areas:



Economy

Promote equitable economic development that fosters entrepreneurship, supports new and existing businesses, and sustains and expands the economic value of our region's natural capital.



Workforce

Prepare and attract a more diverse, robust, and resilient workforce to meet employment needs while providing essential infrastructure supports for workforce participation throughout the region.



Community Vitality

Cultivate inclusive and diverse communities that foster the wellbeing of all residents while advocating for equitable distribution of services to rural communities.



Leadership and Capacity-Building

Link and leverage people and resources to make decisions and get things done.

Economy



Promote equitable economic development that fosters entrepreneurship, supports new and existing businesses, and sustains and expands the economic value of our region's natural capital.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Access to capital
Technical assistance programs
Logistics Park of North Dakota
Agricultural base
Natural resources

Opportunities

Tourism
Local foods
Value-added agriculture
Support for entrepreneurs

Weaknesses

Available and attractive commercial space
Limited capital for underserved businesses/entrepreneurs
Succession planning

Threats

Changing regulations
Reliance on few industry sectors
Infrastructure
Decision making - prioritizing certain sectors

Key Insights

- Small locally-owned businesses are critical but are sometimes overlooked.
- Growing and starting new businesses is a core economic development priority.
- Leadership and communities are aware of the risks of having our economy be so dependent and reliant on a few industry sectors.
- Opportunities exist to leverage the region's natural capital/resources.
- Local foods is increasingly important to our region and state.
- There are signs of a return to localism [somewhat accelerated by the pandemic].
- The region's racial diversity is evolving.



Action Plan

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 1: Support entrepreneurship efforts, and the creation, retention, and expansion of businesses in the region.

- Maintain a regional resource and data clearinghouse.
- Increase awareness of existing business resources through coordinated marketing efforts.
- Increase access to capital in the region.
- Increase the amount of resources that can help improve main street businesses, especially businesses that provide essential services in rural communities.
- Develop and promote a succession planning toolkit and a network of local professional service firms skilled in business succession.
- Cooperate with local development corporations and job development authorities in their efforts to support businesses.
- Support and expand entrepreneurship efforts.
- Explore cooperative ownership models for existing and emerging businesses.
- Facilitate connections between educational institutions (both K-12 and higher education) and the business community to foster a culture of entrepreneurship.
- Amplify the work of technical assistance providers including the Small Business Development Center.



SBPC launched the [Resource Directory](#) to connect businesses, entrepreneurs, nonprofits, and communities with local, regional, state, and national resources.

Objective 2: Foster inclusivity and support for underrepresented business owners and entrepreneurs.

- Assess the demographic distribution of business owners and entrepreneurs who are accessing services.
- Develop or support programs that are tailored to underrepresented groups.
- Address barriers to accessing capital and technical assistance.



Action Plan

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 3: Support targeted growth opportunities.

- Target private recreation business opportunities.
- Coordinate regional tourism business assistance.
- Support the growth of the local and regional food sector.
- Promote the assets of the Logistics Park of North Dakota across the region.
- Identify opportunities to support technology and automation activity.
- Assess the potential to grow the agribusiness technology sector.
- Identify opportunities to support energy startup activity.

Assets & Efforts

Situated in Minot, the [Logistics Park of North Dakota](#) offers a range of properties in varying sizes – both rail-served and non-rail served. Boasting over 800 acres of shovel-ready land with ample utility, this intermodal port makes it easier for local agriculture, energy, and other industries to move goods in and out of the region, improving access to world markets.

The [North Central USDA Regional Food Business Center](#) (RFBC) is one of 12 centers in the United States with 35 unique partners serving three states. The food center focuses on expanding small and mid-sized agricultural value chains in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The goal is to transform a region that primarily focuses on commodity and large-scale agriculture into an area that also supports smaller, more resilient farm and food practices.

[Start Up Minot](#) is designed to invigorate, encourage and entice entrepreneurs in Minot and throughout the region. Start Up Minot is two-pronged, with a cohort-based 10-week class called Start Up Minot Academy powered by CO.STARTERS, and a monthly business showcase/networking event under the name Start Up Minot.

The [North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance](#) is a nonprofit that works across the five tribal nations of North Dakota to implement a strategy for North Dakota Indian Country to build tourism capacity, advocate for infrastructure, conduct collective marketing and facilitate the development of cultural tourism enterprises.

Workforce



Prepare and attract a more diverse, robust, and resilient workforce to meet employment needs while providing essential infrastructure supports for workforce participation throughout the region.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths Available talent with diverse ideas Hard working people Access to education and training opportunities	Weaknesses Lack of childcare Insufficient housing options Aging population
Opportunities Regional workforce attraction strategies Career and Technical Education Remote work	Threats Rural outmigration Population loss Aging population- lack of skilled workforce to replace retirees

Key Insights

- Deploy a people-focused strategy. The region has assets and a strong sense of pride, but there is a need to attract people to communities across the entire region.
- Community growth is still an important motivator for rural areas but filling open jobs is a stronger priority [in the Minot area].
- The region's racial diversity is evolving.
- The region's 65 and older population is projected to grow in the coming years.



Action Plan

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 1: Identify gaps, and develop opportunities and mechanisms to increase labor force participation in the region.

- Broaden the availability of vocational training across a range of disciplines.
- Increase participation in re-skilling and up-skilling programs.
- Promote and expand remote and hybrid work opportunities.
- Increase training opportunities to connect residents with job openings.
- Support training and services that serve bilingual and indigenous workforce needs.
- Improve the path to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Support Veterans' transition into the civilian workforce.
- Strengthen and expand Career and Technical Education programs.
- Support robust pre-K to 12 programs throughout the region.
- Develop a regional approach to addressing childcare needs.

Objective 2: Attract and retain younger talent.

- Convene workforce roundtables to determine regionwide attraction strategies.
- Define a regional identity and messaging to attract new residents to the region. Target new residents and boomerang migrants.
- Start a regional talent attraction initiative.
- Develop a welcoming initiative targeting new residents who are living in the region.

Assets & Efforts

Minot State University offers a vast range of undergraduate and graduate programs, with over 100 areas of study. Dakota College at Bottineau provides options for both Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and transfer programs. Additionally, Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College offers a variety of in-demand associate degrees and certificate programs, along with three four-year bachelor's degree programs.

Find the Good Life in North Dakota is a marketing campaign and talent attraction initiative that promotes North Dakota's job opportunities and quality of life to people outside the state.

Minot Area Workforce Academy offers commercial driver's license and early childhood education training in a newly remodeled facility.

Community Vitality



Cultivate inclusive and diverse communities that foster the wellbeing of all residents while advocating for equitable distribution of services to rural communities.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Transportation
Healthcare
Broadband
Rural lifestyle
Environment

Opportunities

Regional coordination
Investment in broadband
accessibility
Embracing new ideas

Weaknesses

Availability of affordable childcare
and housing
(Indoor) recreation opportunities
Aging infrastructure
Access to foods
Resistance to change and risk-taking

Threats

Perceived tax burdens
Redistricting
Losing access to local grocery
stores
Rural outmigration

Key Insights

- Rural communities and organizations are increasingly motivated to work together to increase access to basic services and cultivate promising new economic sectors.
- Investing in critical infrastructure that contributes to a high quality of life is widely supported by communities.
- The region's racial diversity is evolving.
- The region's 65 and older population is projected to grow in the coming years.



Action Plan

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 1: Support and facilitate policies and initiatives that enhance equitable access to reliable and resilient infrastructure.

- Support efforts aimed at increasing housing throughout the region and develop a regional approach to addressing housing needs.
- Facilitate and support initiatives that prioritize accessibility to fresh and healthy foods in rural communities.
- Coordinate regional efforts to improve broadband availability in rural communities.
- Increase the capacity and resources available to support infrastructure projects.
- Encourage the importance of land use planning that protects the natural resources and integrity of the region's quality of life.
- Support the redevelopment of underutilized properties.

Objective 2: Identify and prioritize projects of regional importance that will cultivate inclusive and diverse communities and improve quality of place for all residents

- Utilize 2024-28 CEDS to work with counties and communities to identify projects.
- Develop innovative programming when resource gaps exist.
- Support place-based planning needs.
- Prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in programming and initiatives

Assets & Efforts

The [City of Minot](#) is currently undergoing a housing study to analyze its housing supply and how well it is meeting the needs of residents.

In 2014, SBPC was awarded funding assistance from the Department of Defense (DoD), Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), to conduct a [Joint Land Use Study](#). SBPC worked with a consulting firm to create a [Do-It-Yourself Comprehensive Plan Guide](#) for cities, townships and counties.

The [North Dakota Rural Electric Cooperative Foundation](#) is leading a feasibility study to explore the benefits of a nonprofit warehousing system, which would serve up to a 75-mile radius around Minot.

Leadership & Capacity-Building



Link and leverage people and resources to make decisions and get things done.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Available talent with diverse ideas
Hard working people
Local leadership
Volunteers
Youth organizations

Weaknesses

Resistance to change and risk-taking
Relationship with state legislators and other decision makers
Lack of youth engagement
Volunteer engagement outside of usual groups

Opportunities

Youth engagement initiatives
Next generation of leaders and volunteers
Regional coordination and capacity

Threats

Losing experienced leaders
Aging population- lack of volunteers to replace retirees
Volunteer/leadership burnout

Key Insights

- People are “spent” and drained [coming out of the pandemic].
- Volunteers are critical for accomplishing community initiatives but small groups are carrying heavy loads.
- There is a stronger desire for rural communities and organizations to work together to increase access to basic services and cultivate promising new economic sectors.
- Through an economic development strategy, SBPC is viewed as a leading entity that can help align efforts and build consensus among stakeholders.



Action Plan

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 1: Build organizational and community capacity to increase impact.

- Support strategic planning to prioritize community needs and foster collaboration.
- Develop a community capacity checklist and toolkit.
- Identify and pursue external capacity-building funding for local government entities and economic development organizations.
- Expand and promote the Souris Basin Community Builder Program.
- Encourage shared services for efficiency and cost savings.



SBPC launched the Community Builder Program to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations and communities.

Objective 2: Build consensus and foster regional collaboration and partnerships.

- Integrate CEDS priorities into local, regional, and state initiatives.
- Ramp up periodic sharing among economic and city staff across the region.
- Identify peer regions and promote the idea that our communities in our region are not competing with one another, but that our region is competing with other regions across the country.
- Create an explicit effort to routinely inform local economic development boards and city/county commissions about regional initiatives and what is working in other places.
- Increase capacity for a regional advocacy role.
- Build on existing collaborative groups.



In partnership with MHA Nation, Visit Minot launched “Your ND Road Trip,” offering a comprehensive guide from the International Peace Garden to the Badlands.



Action Plan

Objectives & Strategies

Objective 3: Support existing leadership and cultivate the next generation of volunteers and community leaders.

- Connect leaders with training and regional networking opportunities.
- Promote participation in research, training, and education in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Promote the Souris Basin Community Builder Program as an avenue for engaging volunteers and fostering future leaders.
- Facilitate a regional leadership program to provide a framework for residents to engage with civic and nonprofit organizations, and to connect emerging leaders to one another.

Assets & Efforts

In 2020, SBPC began providing capacity building and technical assistance to the Mountrail County Job Development Authority to assist the organization meet its goals and strategies.

The Souris Basin Community Builder Program engages local individuals ages 17 and up in community service. The program provides participants the opportunity to gain new skills and develop professionally.

The NDSU Extension Building Tomorrow's Leaders program empowers students to get involved in school and civic organizations; builds confidence and strengthens the skills students need to lead others; and assists students in developing their personal and professional networks.

NDSU Extension Lead Local is a training opportunity for aspiring, elected and appointed leaders serving on boards, councils and committees.

The Alliance of Nonprofits is a collaborative group of local and regional nonprofit leaders.

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework serves as a mechanism to gauge progress on the implementation of the overall CEDS. The regional evaluation will be completed as relevant data is available and will allow us to evaluate change and needs over time.

Economy

- Business establishments
- Business establishments in Agriculture, Recreation, and Tourism industries
- BIPOC-owned business establishments
- Median household income
- Per capita income
- Poverty rate

Workforce

- Available/accessible childcare
- Total population
- Labor force participation rate
- 25-to-54-year age group
- Employment rate
- Educational attainment

Community (Rural) Vitality

- Grant investments in infrastructure projects
- Economic impacts of infrastructure investments
- Broadband access
- Available/accessible housing
- Food accessibility

Leadership and Capacity-Building

- New partnerships
- Regional projects/efforts
- Representation of diverse populations in leadership roles
- Volunteer engagement
- Youth engagement

SBPC sets objectives and key results (OKR) annually to measure organizational performance. Our OKR report can be found at sourisbasin.org/documents.



1. United State Census Bureau: 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
2. North Dakota Housing Finance Agency: 2022 North Dakota Statewide Housing Needs Assessment
3. United State Census Bureau: 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
4. United State Census Bureau: 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
5. United State Census Bureau: 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
6. United State Census Bureau: 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
7. United State Census Bureau: 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
8. Labor Market Information Center, Job Service North Dakota, LAUS Unit: Labor Force and Unemployment
9. United State Census Bureau: 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
10. North Dakota Housing Finance Agency: 2022 North Dakota Statewide Housing Needs Assessment
11. North Dakota Health & Human Services: Child Care Profile
12. United State Census Bureau: 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates
13. Labor Market Information Center, Job Service North Dakota, LAUS Unit: 2022 Employment Wages by Industry