



Mandan Strong

An Economic and Community Development Strategy
November 2021



Mandan Strong is an economic and community development strategy for the City of Mandan. This plan identifies actions and initiatives for the City Commission, the Business Development & Communications Department, other City departments involved in development, and other collaborators and stakeholders in the community with an interest in supporting existing businesses, fostering entrepreneurship, and working to attract new businesses.

Purpose:

Identify strategic approaches to reach Mandan’s full potential as a place to live, work, and do business.

1. Focus on priorities related to:

- Economic diversification
- Talent attraction and workforce development
- Enhanced collaboration in the community around a shared vision

2. Address Three pillars of North Dakota’s Main Street Initiative:

- Smart, efficient infrastructure development
- Healthy vibrant communities
- 21st century workforce

Planning Process:

Development of the plan incorporated considerable community participation, including:

- A steering committee that offered input and ideas about priorities and action plans.
- Focus group and individual meetings with:
 - new residents,
 - young professionals,
 - youth, including high school and college/university students,
 - business and finance professionals,
 - real estate developers,
 - business and economic development leaders, and
 - city officials and planners.
- A community survey, which yielded responses from over 200 people.
- Praxis Strategy Group and Burian & Associates LLC provided research and assistance in facilitating the process.

The project was made possible with a Partners in Planning grant awarded to the City of Mandan by the N.D. Department of Commerce with a local match from the operating budget of the Mandan Business Development and Communications Department.



Research

Economic and demographic analysis of current situation and trends



Community participation

Focus groups
Online surveys



Steering committee - meets 3 to 4 times

Guide the process – the “why” and the “what”
Submit for approval by the Mandan City Commission



City staff and partners

Implementation of specific action plans – the “how”

Support and Aspirations for Development by Over 200 Respondents to the Community Survey

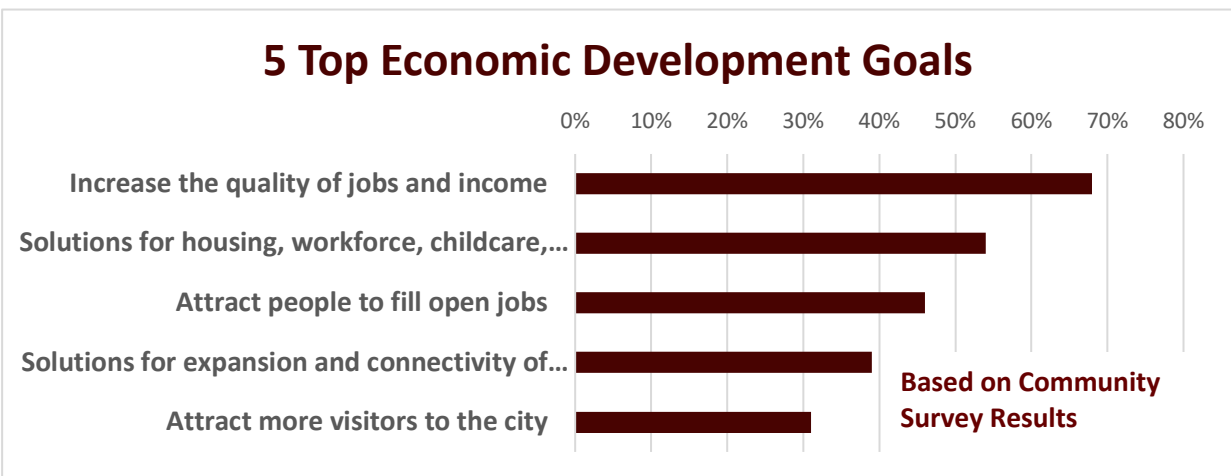
A community survey asked people to address various issues related to future development in Mandan. Over 200 people responded to the survey.

- 95% agree that we should continue to **invest in the future of Mandan**
- 88% agree that **opportunities should be created for young people in Mandan**
- 86% agree that efforts and **resources should be increased for economic development** in Mandan
- 84% agree that efforts should increase to **attract visitors** to Mandan
- 72% agree that **there is opportunity in Mandan**
- 69% see a **positive future for themselves** in Mandan
- 62% agree that the **City should be very proactive** in leading development in the next 3 to 5 years, while just 2% feel that the City should be “not very proactive.”

In general, these results suggest there is a group of Mandan residents and other stakeholders who believe in their community and support efforts by the city to pursue new opportunities for development. The chart at the bottom of the page lists prioritized economic development objectives based upon input from survey respondents.

In summary: there is a pervasive and shared feeling that Mandan is poised to capitalize on an emerging array of opportunities that bode well for the future of the city. Realizing these opportunities will be best achieved by 1) agreeing upon a clear, forward-looking direction, 2) by establishing priorities and finding balance between maintaining existing assets and those that need to be added, 3) streamlining the development process, and 4) putting the tools in place to plan, finance and build for the future.

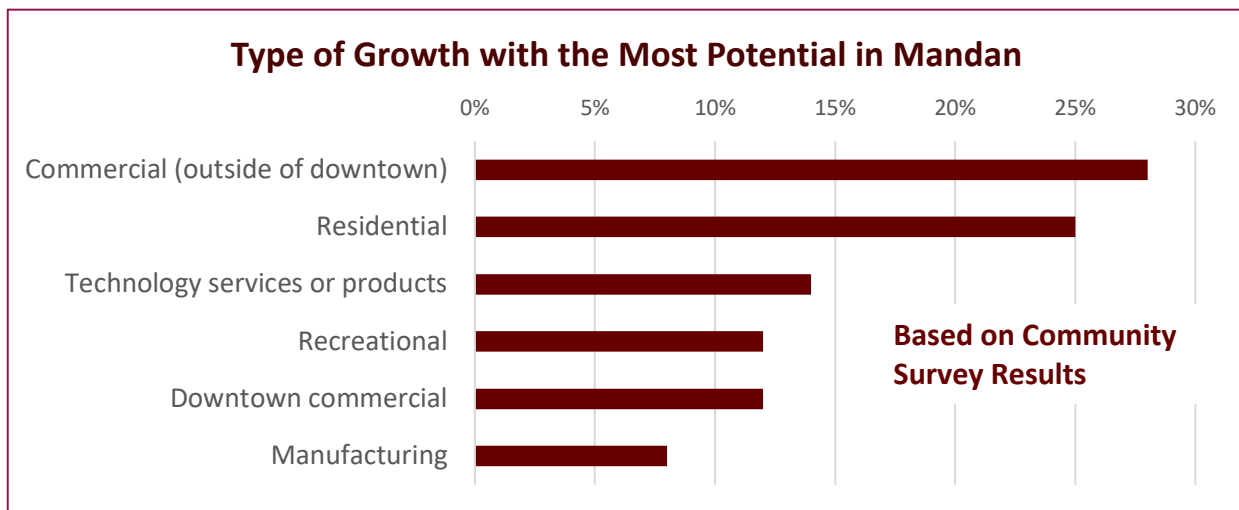
The following sections report Mandan’s advantages and recommendations for four strategic action areas that were identified as priorities during the planning process.



Mandan's Advantages

Mandan's advantages as a place for businesses and people are many according to people involved in the development of the plan. They include:

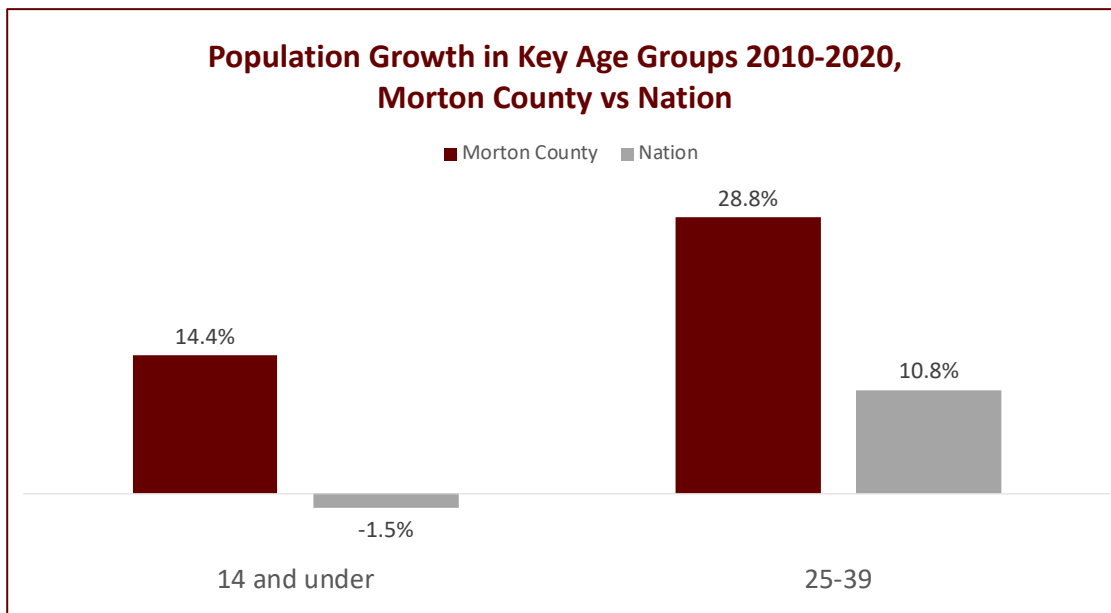
- Strong sense of community and connectedness.
- Safe community that feels like home/family.
- Opportunities exist for local entrepreneurs and small business.
- K-12 education is very good with many extracurricular options; a "one town, one school" identity unifies the community.
- Presence of three colleges in the area.
- It's beautiful here and there is room for growth.
- Located on I-94, the Missouri River, and the Heart River.
- Abundant natural gas and fresh water.
- High speed broadband available for driving growth.
- Access to rail lines.
- Majority of city is outside the 500-year flood plain.
- Good community facilities here including a sports complex and family wellness center.
- Businesses are very community minded.
- Affordable housing compared to other places – "bigger house, more value."
- Open minded leadership.
- Past incentive programs have worked successfully, for example the Renaissance Zone, Restaurant Rewards, and Business Pitch.
- Mandan and Morton County are a growing region with a relatively young population. There are strong and rising populations of young families in the area.
- Home to large prominent businesses in key sectors of the economy.



Mandan Strong: Trends in Our Favor

Analysis of economic and demographic data reveals several competitive advantages in Mandan, including:

- **Mandan is a growth region.** Population in Mandan has grown 32% since 2010, much faster than the national growth rate of 7%. Employment in Morton County is up 20% since 2010, more than double the national job growth rate of 9%.
- **Mandan residents are well-educated,** with 22.3% holding a bachelor's degree and 11.2% an associate degree, compared to 19.8% and 8.5% nationally.
- **Mandan is a young city with many young families.** The city's median age is lower than national average. Twenty-six percent of Mandan residents are age 25-39, compared to 20% nationally. Morton County has seen rapid growth new residents age 25-39 and under age 15 in the past decade. (See chart below)
- **Mandan is home to science and engineering jobs.** Morton County holds 30% more scientist jobs than the national average and 14% more architecture and engineering jobs than average.
- **Mandan's agriculture sector is strong and growing.** Agriculture in Morton County – particularly animal production – has grown steadily in the past 20 years.
- **Mandan's industrial economy is a strength.** Manufacturing employment in Morton County has grown 26% since 2017 while the sector declined nationally by 2%. Morton County is now home to one of the strongest clusters of manufacturing in western North Dakota.
- **Professional services sector is an opportunity.** Morton County's is home to roughly 950 professional and technical services jobs, equating to a concentration roughly the same size as the national average.



Mandan Strong: Four Action Areas to Build for the Future

Input from citizens, partners, and City staff defined four strategic action areas to assure continual community improvement over the next 5 to 10 years by focusing time and investment by both public and private sectors to capitalize on Mandan's strengths and opportunities.

1. Build infrastructure to drive growth
2. Facilitate business startups and expansions that grow and diversify the economy
3. Create a vibrant community to live and work
4. Create opportunities for new leadership and community engagement

Build Infrastructure to Drive Growth

Strategies and Action Steps

1. Pursue funding from the Economic Development Administration for an infrastructure development assessment and determine if American Rescue Plan funds that are targeted for infrastructure projects can be used for priority projects in Mandan, including incorporation into a capital improvements plan.
2. Develop a forward-looking "master plan" for infrastructure siting, design, development, and financing to:
 - Identify and prioritize sites for industrial development (see map of potential sites in Appendix 1).
 - Determine the best next steps for developing to the west along I94 including an additional interchange between Sunset Drive and North Dakota Highway 25. For example, an arterial road that wraps south, west, and north of Mandan like a large loop, can increase connectivity, access and growth that makes sense for commercial and housing development and avoids choke points that will be difficult or impossible to sustain long term.
3. Analyze and adapt city zoning code to clarify and ensure Mandan is hospitable to emerging types of development.
4. Complete major projects in the works and upcoming (some still subject to final funding approval) including:
 - New Raw Water Intake (2021-2022)
 - Lower Heart Levee Recertification
 - Memorial Highway Reconstruction (2022-2024)
 - North Central Trunk Sewer (2021-2022) — new gravity sewer main, new

sewer force main and lift station for areas north of I-94 and along Old Red Trail and Hwy 1806

- Hwy 1806 South (2022) — NDDOT project involving traffic signal replacement for intersection with Third St SE and concrete pavement repair from Heart River bridge to railroad underpass just south of Main Street.
 - Downtown Street & Avenue Reconstruction (2024 or beyond) — seeking NDDOT urban grant funds; splitting into two phases
 - Old Red Trail (2025) — 40th Ave NW to 56 Ave NW
5. Convene a regular bi-annual meeting of local industrial and commercial real estate development professionals to share information about opportunities and to find a way forward to create more industrial development sites in the region.
 6. Consider redirecting a portion of the sales tax from property tax reduction to investments in infrastructure or increasing sales tax with voter approval to better fund infrastructure.
 7. Support enhanced commercial passenger air service into the Bismarck-Mandan region.

Facilitate Business Startups and Expansions that Grow and Diversify the Economy

Strategies and Action Steps

1. Expand the Mandan Growth Fund from \$300,000 to \$500,000 or more to directly target businesses that create quality, well-paying jobs.
2. Coordinate with Bismarck State College, the University of Mary, and United Tribes Technical College to expand opportunities for internships, apprenticeships and job shadowing with employers in Mandan.
3. Explore the creation of a technology entrepreneurship center, which operates as a private-public partnership, to foster the creation of information and technology-intensive opportunities in energy, agriculture, logistics, advanced producer services, and manufacturing.
4. Convene a regular bi-annual meeting of manufacturing and agribusiness leaders to assess needs and opportunities in the industry, including issues related to development sites and workforce.
5. Offer incentives and leverage other resources to help start, attract, and expand businesses, including programs already used in Mandan:
 - Bank of North Dakota’s PACE and Flex PACE programs.
 - Lewis and Clark Development Group’s finance programs.
 - Small Business Administration and USDA resources.
 - Renaissance Zone.

Plus, programs that are new or have not been used often in Mandan:

- Agriculture and Diversity Development Fund.
- LIFT program,
- North Dakota Growth Fund.
- Innovate ND.
- North Dakota Development Fund.

6. Continue collaboration with key economic development and marketing partners to support and help drive regional efforts to diversify the economy and grow the manufacturing base and invest in value-added agriculture and energy innovation, including:
 - Lewis and Clark Development Group for loans to businesses.
 - Bismarck Mandan Chamber EDC on primary sector business attraction, coordination of business retention and expansion visits, workforce development, and talent attraction.
 - Mandan Progress Organization to host premier events and activities that showcase the community, attract people, and foster business collaboration.
 - Bismarck Mandan Convention & Visitors Bureau to encourage visitors to stay in area hotels as well as visit attractions and local businesses.
 - Other local, state, and federal economic and community development organizations.
7. Continue to give property tax breaks or other incentives for newly constructed or expanded buildings to eligible businesses that promote skills or good jobs. Prioritize locally owned businesses.

8. Coordinate with a locally active angel capital group to make investments in local startup companies.

Cultivate a Vibrant Community to Live and Work

Strategies and Action Steps

1. Continue to implement *MAKE YOUR MARK*, a Bismarck Mandan Chamber EDC initiative that addresses workforce challenges.
 - Create messaging to attract teleworkers by promoting small town life, technology access, affordability, and opportunities for civic engagement.
 - Include Spanish language information in workforce attraction and community events materials.
2. Develop ways to animate the Heart and Missouri Rivers in by expanding access to launch kayaks/floats, and adding biking/running trails, rental business located on the water with drop off/pickup, and refreshment kiosks. Coordinate with US Army Corps of Engineers and Lower Heart Water Resource District.
3. Develop a Green Space Ordinance to facilitate beautification of the city by adding more public space for events, concerts, public art, and trails.
4. Define and promote employer-supported childcare models, such as that promoted by Cloverdale Foods.
5. Prioritize housing that leverages Mandan's natural topography and river features. This should include a broad mix of "attainable housing" types such as townhomes and apartments for singles or retirees, many seeking accessible condos.

6. Develop more multi-purpose, indoor activity facilities throughout the city.
7. Reconceptualize development of the Strip as mixed-use core for Mandan.
8. Provide incentives to builders to construct more affordable single-family housing using tax abatements, tax increment financing (TIF), expedited permitting, or fee waivers as components of a financing package.
9. Develop residential rehab program and/or use a Tax Increment Finance district to improve the infrastructure and single-family housing stock in older or historic subdivisions.
10. Continue to support and promote Mandan's signature events including Mandan Rodeo Days, the Independence Day parade, Buggies-N-Blues, Art in the Park Festival, and Santa's Arrival.

Create Opportunities for New Leadership & Community Engagement

Strategies and Action Steps

1. Engage young adults, whether it be to encourage community volunteer/public office opportunities or in multiple facets of communications to inform and educate the public about current events/issues.
2. Increase support for the Bismarck-Mandan Young Professionals Network to help them build awareness, visibility, opportunity, and funding among the "new" young professionals as they graduate high school and college.
3. Increase funding for public access community spaces that do NOT require payments (like the library, parks, free arts performances, etc.) to continue to develop a more inclusive and participatory community, unrestricted by financial ability.

Mandan Strong Steering Committee

PUBLIC SECTOR

- Tim Helbling, Mayor
- Wade Meschke, Park Board
- Marnie Piehl, School Board
- Nathan Boehm, Morton County

PRIVATE SECTOR

Partner Organizations

- Amanda Enriquez, MPO
- Mike Remboldt, Chamber EDC
- Matt Schanadore, CVB

Youth/Mandan High School

- Nora Baumann
- Taylen Thomas
- Fabian Raygo
- Kelbi Pritchett

Major Industry/Employers

- DJ Campbell, Sanford Health
- Julie Ellingson, Agriculture
- Esther Saylor, NISC
- Scott Staudinger, Cloverdale Foods
- Cameron Thoroughman, Marathon Petroleum

Small Business/Districts

- Bill Condon, Seven Fires Business Solutions
- Dr. Eve Kostelecky, Eyes Everywhere
- Steve Pletan, Action Motor Sports
- Rod Skytland, State Farm Insurance

Higher Education

- Dan Leingang, BSC

Utilities

- Pat Darras, MDU
- Don Franklund, MGS

Development

- Art Goldhammer, Residential
- Kyle Holwagner, Commercial

STAFF LIAISONS

City

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- Ellen Huber
- Kari Schmidt
- Andrew Stromme

School District

- Dr. Mike Bitz

Park District

- Cole Higlin

Mandan Progress Organization

- Executive Director

Chamber EDC

- Brian Ritter
- Nathan Schneider

CVB

- Sheri Grossman

Facilitators/Consultants

- Dr. Delore Zimmerman, Praxis Strategy Group
- Steve Burian, Burian & Associates
- Mark Schill, Praxis Strategy Group

NOTE: All economic and demographic analyses and other reports prepared for the steering committee are posted at www.cityofmandan.com/strategicplan

