

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

*The Nelson County Job Development Authority explores new business development opportunities, supports local community development efforts, and provides financial and technical assistance to develop and implement community and economic development projects.*

## OUR REACH IN 2021



### JDA INVESTED NEARLY \$100,000 WITHIN NELSON COUNTY

Assisted in housing, recreation, infrastructure, business improvements, and tourism projects



### 7 PROJECTS AWARDED GRANTS

JDA invested more than \$75,000 in grants. *See pg. 5 for more information*



### NELSON COUNTY HOUSING REHABILITATION PROJECT

JDA is an integral part to the success of this project. *See pg. 2 for more information*

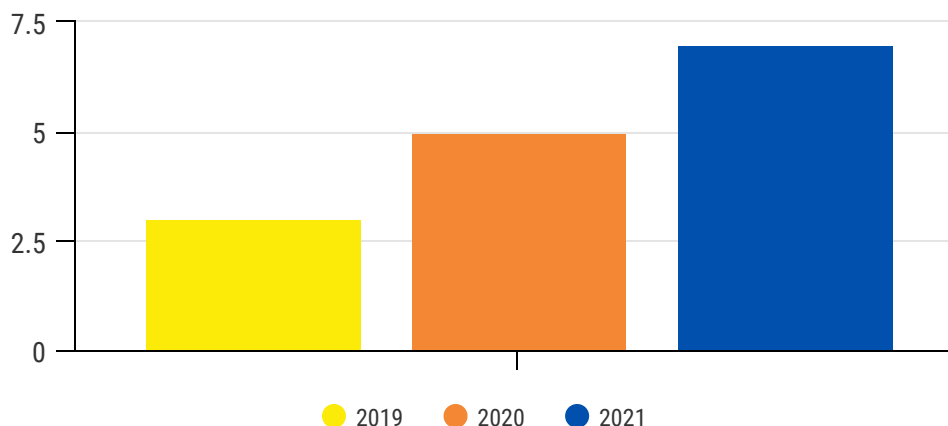
## JDA INVESTMENT CREATES \$1.4 MILLION IN IMPACTS

YEAR	JDA INVESTMENT AMOUNT	*LEVERAGED FUNDS
2021	\$91,325	\$239,487
2020	\$105,500	\$224,750
2019	\$33,648	\$1,078,056
2018	\$85,500	\$77,378
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$315,973</b>	<b>\$1,421,684</b>

\*Leveraged funds are acquired from private, local, state, and federal sources.

# 2021 NCJDA FUNDED PROJECTS

# OF FUNDED PROJECTS (2019-2021)



## HOUSING REHABILITATION PROJECT UNDER WAY



*Before*



*After: New siding, shingles, windows, and doors*

The JDA is an integral partner in a project under development in response to the countywide housing study completed in 2020.

Using federal, private, and local dollars, the program will assist qualifying low and moderate-income residents with health and safety issues in their homes at no cost to the homeowner. Common repairs include roofing, windows, doors, plumbing, heating and electrical, and other safety or accessibility items. The goal of the project is to assist homeowners in the rehabilitation of their homes they would unlikely have been able to afford otherwise.

The JDA allocated \$15,000 to the development of the project and formed the housing committee, made up of five members which will oversee the project. Staff at the Red River Regional Council are managing the project.

Development tasks include soliciting interested and qualified homeowners and contractors, writing grants and securing funding, and overall project management.

Actual rehab is expected to begin in summer 2022 with approximately \$154,000 in grant funds secured. It is estimated this will rehabilitate 6-8 homes as part of Phase 1, with multiple phases expected. Applications are still be accepted. Please call the RRRRC at 701-352-3550 or visit: [redriverrc.com](http://redriverrc.com) for more information

By focusing on the preservation, maintenance, and improvement of the existing housing stock, this project will assist in addressing an important piece of community vitality in Nelson County. The project will also increase the market value of these homes and contribute to the overall betterment of the neighborhood, community, and county.

# CATALYST FUND: BUSINESS RESOURCE FOR COVID-19 RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY



The Catalyst Fund is a business loan program offered by the Red River Regional Council (RRRC) established to support recovery and resiliency for businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Catalyst Fund was made possible in partnership with the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. The RRRC received \$1.26 million to assist with business recovery and resiliency in the four county area of Nelson, Pembina, Grand Forks and Walsh counties. The fund can be used for working capital, inventory, machinery and equipment, and fixed assets.

In November 2021, Dusty Willow Dairy of rural Lakota was allocated \$100,000 from the Catalyst Fund for working capital. Kent and Laurel Swenson and their children, Cameron Swenson and Hilary Neumann, own and operate the business. The dairy currently owns 800 milk cows and markets its milk to Land O' Lakes, with 6,000 gallons of Grade A milk shipped daily to plants in Mandan or Perham, Minn. Cows are milked three times per day in a double 12 milk parlor and individually assessed each month for milk quality and components.

The immediate COVID-19 impact was shared by the entire dairy industry when milk prices dropped 30% between February and May 2020. Additionally, the dairy suffered staffing shortages, rising costs of freight, and supply shortages, due to the pandemic.

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## CHILDCARE CONTINUES TO BE JDA PRIORITY

The NCJDA supported two childcare projects in 2021 by providing grants to the Kid Zone Child Care Center in Tolna and the Growing Tree Childcare in McVile. The center in Tolna received a \$7,600 grant to purchase equipment and supplies for an outdoor play area. The JDA provided the McVile center with a \$10,000 grant used for equipment purchases and start-up costs.



Tiffany Watkins and JDA President Paul Retzlaff. In September 2021, Chellbi Ressler became the owner/operator of the center.  
*Growing Tree Childcare, formerly McVile Munchkins*



Paul Retzlaff and Sheri Messner  
*Kid Zone, Tolna*

# BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROJECT IDENTIFIES CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES

In fall 2020, the Red River Regional Council and collaborative partners, including the NCJDA, launched a regional business retention and expansion (BR+E) program. The BR+E program included conducting 113 one-on-one interviews with regional business owners or key management to identify challenges and opportunities within the regional business community. This information is used to create public awareness and develop strategies to address topics raised. There were 21 businesses interviewed in Nelson County.



A public town hall was held on at Stump Lake on September 1, 2021, with approximately 50 attendees. Speakers included: Steve Forde, CFO of Nelson County Health System; and Ivan Berg, President of Nelson County Health System and owner of the Tolna Bay Campground.

A brief workshop was held to gather public input for methods for people attraction, ways that local businesses can incentivize local shopping, and what locals would like to see the county working toward over the next year. The event was also live-streamed and a recording can be found on the Red River Regional Council's Facebook page.

## 21 Nelson County Businesses Interviewed



- Petersburg Oil Co.
- Horseshow Saloon & Grill
- NCHS Care Center
- Nelson County Health System
- Berg Insurance
- Tolna Bay Campground
- Lakota Drug and Gift
- Leading Edge Equipment
- Larson's Drive Inn
- Michigan Munchkins
- Cenex
- The Pekin Lodge
- Good Samaritan Society
- Sunlac Inn
- Elaine's House of Dreams
- Friends & Neighbor's Café
- Dollar General
- Lakota Hardware
- Dusty Willow Dairy, LLP
- Michigan Hometown Foods
- Stump Lake Café
- Dusty Roads Bar & Grill

## BR&E Survey Insights from Nelson County businesses



**90%**

Experienced negative business impacts as a result of COVID-19



**240**

New employees are needed in the next 2 years



**57%**

Plan to expand in the next 3-5 years



**71%**

Desire more training in technology, health care, customer relations, and trades



**75%**

Spoke on the need for retention and marketing



# NELSON COUNTY TOWN HALL INSIGHTS:



County residents at the Nelson County Town Hall discuss solutions on current challenges.

## What Town Hall attendees said they would like to see in the next 12 months:

- County-wide promotions (highlight community strengths and amenities)
- Further housing development
- Incentives, amenities, and opportunities for young adults
- Community promotions with help from cities and other leaders
- Harnessing the energy to accomplish a big task
- Working together!

## 2020 Nelson County population:

The 2020 Census shows that the County's population dropped only 3.5% since 2010, which is much better than past years. Between 2010 and 2019, more people moved into the County than moved out: 411 moved in vs. 390 moved out.

## Nelson County: Strengths and Barriers

According to the 21 businesses surveyed

These are the top things that make Nelson County communities strong and a good place for businesses. **These are assets to invest in, build on:**

1. Good community: friendly, connected
2. Excellent schools
3. Outdoor recreation, living in lake country
4. Business opportunities & support
5. Overall quality of life: affordable housing, safety, great public infrastructure, proximity to urban area.

These are the top things that make living & doing business in Nelson County communities difficult. **These are barriers, things to change:**

1. Lack of variety of housing for people of different ages, stages, including seniors
2. Lack of daycare, childcare, elder care
3. Lack of positive vision, energy, involvement, support
4. Lack of grocery, indoor amenities, retail
5. Lack of investment for kids

Quality of life factors make a difference for rural places, especially community infrastructure, outdoor recreation, quality housing, schools, health care & broadband.

# NELSON COUNTY WAS 'SECRET SHOPPED'

Destination Red River Region is a regional project striving to develop a four-county Action Plan to provide a clear direction on how and what we can be doing to enhance quality of life and attract new people - both visitors and future residents. Counties included in the project are Nelson, Grand Forks, Pembina and Walsh.

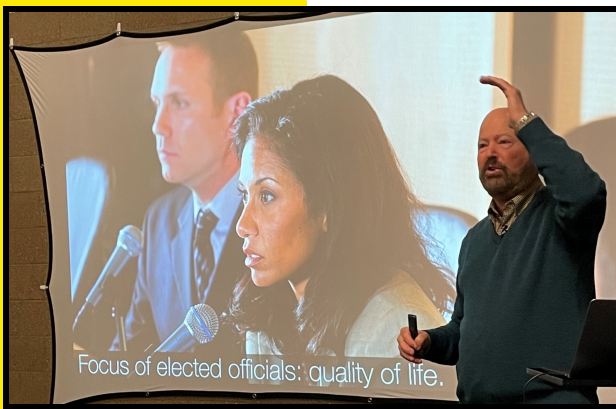
This project has been led by a Regional Team with members from each county and managed by the Red River Regional Council. Lule Naas, Amie Vasichuk, and Ranae Oxtun represent Nelson County on the Regional Team. This team interviewed three consultant teams and selected Roger Brooks, one of the nation's leaders in destination development. The Nelson County JDA contributed \$10,000 toward this \$112,000 project.

Roger spent a month in the region completing his secret shopper assessment in September and October 2021 of the 42 communities in Region 4 and the Pembina Gorge. Roger's month-long stay ended with eight public workshops/conversations including one in each county.

During the county workshops, Roger provided a pictorial assessment showcasing each community with strengths and potential improvements. His assessments included thousands of photos from each community in Region 4. Photos from Nelson County communities are available for public use and can be found on the Flickr photos site on the Destination Red River Region tab on the RRRC's website: [redriverrc.com](https://redriverrc.com)

Nelson County's workshop was held on October 18, 2021, and was attended by more than 50 people from throughout the county. The workshop was recorded and can be viewed on the Red River Regional Council's YouTube channel. A summary of Roger's assessment can be found at: [redriverrc.com](https://redriverrc.com).

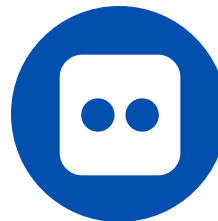
Roger returns in May 2022 with an Action Plan consisting of custom improvement recommendations for each community and county. Check out the RRRC website for more information: [redriverrc.com](https://redriverrc.com)



Roger Brooks  
*Lakota Community Center*



To watch Nelson County's Findings & Suggestions Workshop, search for the Red River Regional Council channel on YouTube.



To access thousands of regional photos, which are available for public use, please check out the Flickr photo site on the Destination Red River Region tab on the RRRC's website: [redriverrc.com](https://redriverrc.com)



Participants in the Nelson County Findings and Suggestions Workshop  
*Lakota Community Center*



# JDA SUPPORTS QUALITY OF LIFE PROJECTS

- Aneta/Queen City Café: Building code updates and purchasing needed appliances - \$16,000 grant
- Pekin Park Board: New playground equipment at the city park - \$8,069 grant
- Nelson County Historical Tour: Signage at two historical Nelson County sites, as well as other development, promotional, and maintenance costs of the project. - \$7,500 grant
- Michigan Mall Association: Sewer system relining - \$15,750 grant and \$15,750 loan.
- Pekin Rod & Gun Club: Trap house, thrower, and electrical components allocations - \$10,591 grant
- Growing Tree Childcare, McVile: Equipment purchases and startup costs - \$10,000 grant
- Kid Zone, Tolna: Outdoor sandbox and playground equipment - \$7,664 grant



Angela Jutila and Paul Retzlaff  
*Nelson County Historical Tour*



Paul Retzlaff, Silke Pierce, and Aneta Mayor Todd Whitman  
*Queen City Café, Aneta*



Pekin Park Board Members pictured from left:, Norma Ensrud, Tara Johnston, Jessica Klefstad, Steve Johnston, Sarah Haugland and JDA Board President Paul Retzlaff  
*Pekin Park Board*



## 2021 NELSON COUNTY JDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman Paul Retzlaff, Aneta, Member at Large

Vice-Chairman Rodney Fisk, Michigan, Member At Large

Elaine Brooks, Lakota, Member at Large

Steve Forde, Pekin, County Commissioner

Donald Fougner, Aneta, County Commissioner

Dennis Mattern, Lakota, Cities Over 500

Florija "Lule" Naas, McVile, Township Officer

Ranae Oxtan, McVile, Member at Large

Amie Vasichuk, Lakota, Member at Large

Jay Vasichuk, Michigan, Member at Large

Scott Sand, Pekin, Township Officer

Kevin Sundre, Petersburg, Cities Under 500



Pictured from left: Dennis Mattern, Kevin Sundre, Paul Retzlaff, Jay Vasichuk, Scott Sand and Lule Naas