

News from NE North Dakota



Five-year regional plan under development

Three years of outreach, public engagement and conversations, several surveys and interviews are informing key focus areas for community and economic improvement. In-depth data and trend analysis coupled with input from advisory groups in each of these focus areas is leading the plan development with transformative goals. The draft plan will be available for public comment early August. Each of the state's eight regional councils are currently undergoing similar regional planning efforts.

This wheel summarizes the Focus Areas that the plan is being built around. The plan will include:

- Demographic/Economic Summary background on the region
- SWOT analysis
- Strategic Direction and Action Plan
- Evaluation Framework

A draft plan will be available for public comment approximately August 15 with submission to the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.



Gearing up for housing development

The Red River Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) is a 501c3 nonprofit aimed at housing development. After more than a decade of dormancy, it is being resurrected to spark new housing construction in the region.

The CHDO is being led by Lisa Rotvold. Lisa has 25 years of housing experience leading to more than 1,000 new housing units across the state. The new Board of Directors will include representation from each of the four counties with a first meeting in July. The MN Housing Partnership will be providing start up support and planning assistance. The RRRC has been awarded a \$43,000 grant from the Enterprise Community Partners Capacity Building Grant Program to support staff time aimed at housing development.

RRRC designated a regional food business center in three-state project

The RRRC is part of a three-state initiative awarded a \$15 million grant from USDA over five years to establish regional food business centers and supporting networks in ND, SD, and MN. Through this program, the RRRC aims to increase access to local foods by supporting producers to access markets and linking producers to wholesalers and distributors; new marketings; access to resources; and overcoming barriers to market access. The project planning period is July to December 2023.

This program will couple with the RRRC's regional food business incubator proposed at 532 Hill in Grafton. The 532 Hill project is currently in a value-engineering stage with a goal of construction beginning in January 2024.



Nelson, Walsh and Pembina Counties link arms on workforce attraction initiative

Forecasts for the need of new employees in our rural counties exceed 1,000 people over the next five years. This is our opportunity to grow small towns and reverse a decades' long trend of population loss. A group of regional company leaders have come together to be the Advisory Group to lead a workforce/people attraction initiative.

This initiative includes discovery, branding/logo development, marketing, video, photography and copy services; and a marketing strategic plan, and marketing. This \$250,000 launch has been supported by the ND Dept of Commerce and Nelson, Walsh, and Pembina County JDAs. AE2S Communications and RoleCall are the consultant team on this project. There will be a soft launch of this effort on July 11 and full launch in August. This brand will be used also in tourism/destination development and marketing in the region.

Grand Forks County is covered by the [Grand Forks is Cooler](#) initiative. Both initiatives work with the state's [Find the Good Life](#) program.

Arts Across the Prairie: Introducing the installation artist James Peterson

The Region 4 Selection Committee for Arts Across the Prairie: Placemaking in Rural North Dakota announces large-scale sculptor and designer James Peterson as the artist for their project titled "Endless Sky - Dynamic Layers." Peterson was selected from a pool of more than 35 national artists.

While the design has not been finalized, the committee was drawn to images inspired by the vast North Dakota sky and the eskers that snake through the region. (ESKER = glacial deposit or long narrow ridge of sand, gravel, and boulders deposited by a stream that melted away. Peterson's concepts of sky and esker are tall aluminum pipes arranged in layers that create multiple winding pathways to move through while compelling viewers to gaze up towards the endless sky.



FROST FIRE
PARK

Summer play. Winter play. Just play.

Frost Fire Park Regional Master Plan getting underway

Aimed at creating a long-term development vision and plan for Frost Fire Park and the surrounding communities of Walhalla, Langdon and Cavalier, Roger Brooks has been hired to lead the feasibility analysis and master plan development.

Roger will be in the region the first two weeks of July meeting with community groups and leaders, landowners, donors, support services, ND Parks and Recreation, and others as part of the feasibility analysis on the potential further development of Frost Fire Park as a key attractor for visitors to the region as well as a quality of life amenity.

Upcoming public discussions:

- Monday, July 10 @ 6 p.m.: Langdon City Commission
- Tuesday, July 11 @ 1:30 p.m.: Cavalier City Hall
- Thursday, July 13 - Walhalla
 - 11:30 a.m. Chamber of Commerce @ city hall
 - 4:30 p.m. Public meeting @ American Legion
 - 6:30 p.m. City Council @ city hall

The planning project was awarded funds from the ND Dept of Commerce EDA Placemaking Grant as one of six projects across the state.

Roger Brooks also led the region's Destination Red River project in 2021 and 2022.

Destination Red River Project puts out the call for Destination Teams

In early summer 2022, Roger Brooks International completed a Region 4 Tourism Development Action plan for Nelson, Walsh, Pembina, and Grand Forks counties which focused on:

- Increasing visitor traffic and spending
- Attracting new residents
- Increasing economic activity

The comprehensive plan provided recommendations necessary to prepare the region for visitors. Projects that were recommended include beautification, signage, cleanup, and building an online presence for local businesses, communities and amenities. The plan calls for six full time staff for implementation which now has a goal for two full time staff and a marketing budget. The marketing initiative will share the workforce attraction brand for northeast ND.

The plan calls for engaging volunteer groups from each community to serve as Destination Teams to implement recommendations locally. For more information, an informational document can be found on our website or reach out to Lule Naas at (701) 730-2090 • lule@redriverrc.com.