

# 2026 CONSOLIDATED ACTION PLAN

NOVEMBER 19, 2025





Walsh County  
Childcare Center  
Ribbon Cutting  
April 30, 2025

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# BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

## Red River Regional Council

- Amy Suda, Walsh County, President
- Barry Wilfahrt, The Chamber, VP
- Amie Vasichek, Treasurer
- Dawn Mandt, Secretary
- Lizzie Crowston, Education
- Kimberly Hagen, Grand Forks County
- Cameron Swenson, Nelson County
- Scot Becker, Pembina County
- Mary Houdek, Job Service ND
- Lacey Hinkle, Cavalier
- JoLynn Dickson, Gilby

## Red River CHDO

- Marcy Douglas, Minnkota Power, Chair
- Mike Helt, First Care Health Center
- Amie Vasichek, Lakota
- Shelley Popiel, Walsh County Housing Authority
- Paul Houdek, Walsh County
- Dawn Mandt, Ex Officio

## Nelson County JDA

- Amie Vasichek, Lakota, Chair
- Paul Retzlaff, At Large
- Nancy Charles, Townships
- Scott Sand, Townships
- Nathan Flom, At Large
- Kevin Sundre, Petersburg
- Dennis Fahey, Lakota
- Mike Haugland, Nelson County
- Elaine Brooks, At Large
- Cody Johnson, Nelson County
- Lindsay Maresh Engen, At Large
- Jay Vasichek, At Large

Each organization has an independent Board of Directors and budget and has contracted with the RRRC for professional staff and fiscal management.



## Pembina County JDA

- Julie Kemnitz, At Large, Chair
- Mayor Lacey Hinkle, RRRC, Vice Chair
- Danielle Blair, Cavalier, Treas./Sec.
- Teri Stoiber, Pembina
- Sonia Misialek, Drayton
- Mike Cook, Walhalla
- Darin Otto, Pembina County Commission
- Pat Hardy, Pembina County Commission
- Mary Houdek, Job Service ND
- Rep. David Monson, Legislature
- Nathan Green, School Board

## Walsh County JDA

- Julie Gemmill, At Large, Chair
- Dennis Markusen, Townships, Vice Chair
- Greg Young, Grafton
- Lucas Kelley, Minto
- Kyle Halvorson, Park River
- Amy Suda, Walsh County Commission
- Mary Houdek, Job Service ND
- Jeane Flaten, At Large
- Joe Torgerson, Townships
- Julie Byron, At Large
- Terri Gorder, At Large
- Peyton Cole-Markel, Cities Under 500
- Paul Houdek, Walsh County Commission

# FIVE ORGANIZATIONS - ONE TEAM



**Dawn Mandt**  
Executive Director



**Lori Estad**  
Office & Fiscal Manager



**Kristi Kasprik**  
Real. Good. Project Manager



**Dr. Kendra Rosencrans**  
Economic and Community  
Development Analyst



**Brenda Baumann**  
Incubator Project Manager



**Lisa Rotvold**  
Red River Community Housing  
Development Organization



**Stacie Sevigny**  
Walsh County  
Job Development Authority



**Anna Halvorson**  
Nelson County  
Job Development Authority



**Angelle French**  
Pembina County  
Job Development Authority



## POWERING PROGRESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

The Red River Regional Council has formed strategic partnerships with four independent organizations to lead economic and community development in northeastern North Dakota. These collaborations bring together a skilled and diverse team of professionals whose combined expertise enables greater impact than working alone.

While each organization maintains its own governance and budget, they share a unified professional staff contracted through the Council. This team operates with a collaborative mindset — leveraging individual strengths and specialized knowledge — while remaining accountable to their respective focus areas.

Through these collaborations, we are also able to strengthen our systems and have been doing so in 2025 and continuing into 2026. This includes our operating systems as well as leveraging technology subscriptions that are very useful to informing our work and assisting our clients.

We are also implementing a client/project management software system, routine business retention and expansion program, and a communications plan.

We have also gained the State of North Dakota as a new financial partner in strengthening regional and rural development capacity to create a higher level of equity for rural and urban areas.



*Unity is strength...when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.*

*- Mattie Stepanek*

**Let's rise, unite, and make a difference - together.**

# TURNING STRATEGY INTO RESULTS: 2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

We're excited to share a few highlights of the impacts and successes achieved in 2025 as we advanced the 2024–2028 CEDS. These results reflect the strength of collaboration among our five partner organizations, turning plans into action and delivering meaningful outcomes for our region. A full 2025 Annual Report will be released soon with more details and opportunities ahead.



# 1

## Economic Growth

- Lent \$400,104 and leveraged additional investment of \$2.9 million into 8 businesses including three new business starts. These projects included: Byrdies, Xtreme Health and Fitness, Dahl Motorsports, Gilbertson Veterinary Services, Bordertown Retail, Goneyay, Associated Potato Growers, and Harvest Fuels.
- Secured project manager, construction advisor, and construction manager and completed redesign of regional business incubator; hosted partnership event; selected name; construction to launch winter 2025/2026
- Launched Region 4 Animal Ag and Economic Development site mapping



# 2

## Housing

- Sold two single-family houses
- Secured funding for 15 new homes in six communities
- Broke ground on 9 homes in three communities
- Secured \$50,000 grant to research construction innovations to create affordable housing
- Advocated for rural housing and infrastructure funding during legislative session. Housing Incentive Fund funded at \$25 million
- Assisted development partners with funding applications for 220 units in Grand Forks with total total development estimated at \$88 million



# 3

## Workforce

- Completed Phase 2 of Real. Good.
  - 12,000+ visits to RealGoodND.com (Jan-Oct)
  - 434,000+ impressions of digital content and advertisements delivered to people (Jan-Oct)
  - Published Relocation Guide
- Developed Phase 3 plan for Real. Good.
- Hosted Region 4 Healthcare Listening Session
- Hosted three Workforce Lunch N Learns
- Convened Region 4 around strategy for Regional Workforce Impact Program (\$620,727 allocation)
- Assisted in coordination of the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Marketplace for Kids in Cavalier with 659 attendees; and 7<sup>th</sup> annual Pembina-Walsh MFG Day for 215 students
- Completed Region 4 Manufacturing and Uncrewed Aerial Systems Workforce Study
- Accepted eight new applicants into the Walsh County Career Builders scholarship and student loan repayment program. Total number of participants by the end of 2025 is 47.



# 4

## Community Vitality

- Completed Nelson/Pembina County Food Access Study
- Assisted 7 grocery stores with Rural Grocery Sustainability Grant requests; 3 awarded for \$255,622
- Completion of the Walsh County Childcare Center leased to Rocking Horse Child Care
  - Renovation of 5,000 sq. ft. building into a turn-key center, total cost: \$1.38 million
  - Fully funded! 26 sources of funding including cash and in-kind donations, grants, and local public funds
  - Licensed for 65 childcare slots
- Rendezvous Region Tourism Council: completed Talking Trail with more than 80 sites, secured funding for murals in Fordville and Hoople

# TURNING STRATEGY INTO RESULTS: 2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

We drive impact through bold, collaborative strategies. By championing rural voices in regional policy, strengthening communication to share stories of success, and fostering regional partnerships that help small towns thrive, we create lasting change. Behind it all, we're building strong management systems to ensure every effort is sustainable and scalable — because when rural communities succeed, we all succeed.



## Rural Advocacy

- Supported the region through active engagement in the 2025 legislative session focused on rural economic, community, housing, housing infrastructure, and food access
- Supported the launch of the legislative Rural Caucus
- Championed new ND Rural Catalyst Grant Program \$2.5MM; advocated for rural grocery sustainability funding \$1 MM
- Secured state biennial appropriation of \$2 million for regional capacity at regional councils
- Spoke at four conferences/webinars on doable rural housing development with approx. 300 attendees



## Communications

- Initiated monthly e-newsletter in Nov 2025 with a target of 1,400 people. Joined statewide monthly e-newsletter with ND Assoc. of Regional Councils with list of 1,200 recipients
- Regularly issue press releases on major accomplishments with an estimated 10 press releases in 2025 appearing in regional and statewide outlets
- Regularly post social media updates with over 2,500 interactions
- Regularly attended county commission, city council, and local development group meetings sharing updates, impacts, data, and events



## Support Small Towns Regionally

- Supported regional wellness center concept development
- Completed Nelson/Pembina County Food Access Study
- Participated in four quarterly Northeast Developers Group meetings
- Set up LOIS for the region to market available properties and businesses for sale via Real. Good.
- Secured Placer.ai and provided 32 market study reports to private and public clients
- Initiated a Region 4 EPA Brownfields assessment grant application to identify contaminated sites



## Management

- Transitioned electronic file management and internal communications system
- Adopted Monday.com as project and client management system
- Sought defederalization of two loan programs totaling \$1.2 million to repurpose with economic development goals
- Regional study on medical insurance benefits; adjusted RRRC's policy

# OUR 2026 GOALS



Our 2026 goals are rooted in the 2024-2028 Region 4 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy which can be found on our website. The CEDS guides our collective work in the region and supported with several other in-depth studies and a high level of input from our people, our businesses, and our communities.

## 1

### Economic Growth

- Complete construction on regional business incubator, refresh operational plan, formalize partnerships, establish initial cohort, secure total funding for project construction, FF&E, and staff leadership
- Support 15 businesses in growth
- Support redevelopment of a significant portion of the ND Life Skills and Transition Center campus (est. 13 buildings)

## 2

### Housing

- Sell 9 single family homes
- Break ground on 9 new single family homes in five communities
- Secure funding for 10 additional homes
- Pilot development of two modular or manufactured homes on permanent foundations
- Complete rehabilitation of 10 owner occupied homes
- Continue to seek substantial investment in housing development systems and staff

## 3

### Workforce

- Continue to promote ND Career Builders, RWIP, ROOT, Technical Skills Training Grant and other resources to support workforce retention, recruitment and training
- Enhance Real. Good. efforts to strengthen career pathways, market to external markets creatively, align with industry needs.
- Work collaboratively to implement the 2024 Mfg and UAS Plan

## 4

### Community Vitality

- Complete regional \$1.5 million EPA Coalition Assessment grant application
- Develop and implement funding strategies to retain rural grocery/food access
- Assist community groups in preparing grant applications to enhance aesthetics, recreation and improve quality of life
- Identify a pathway to implement the Region 4 Destination Development Plan


 Dawn Mandt  
 Executive Director

# 2026 ACTION PLAN

The Regional Council's focus is on the creation and implementation of programs that have a region-wide impact. This includes new program development, expanding networks to attract resources and talent in partnership development, and policy advocacy. The Regional Council also provides ongoing support to its partner organizations.

Strategies	Actions	Outcomes
<b>ECONOMY</b>  Build a strong, flexible, and fair economy that benefits everyone	1. Complete construction of The Reyleck business incubator: Renovate 10,000 SF historic building at 532 Hill Avenue, Grafton, on schedule and budget. 2. Finalize Region 4 site identification and livestock development plan; share with governing bodies and partners. 3. Participate in Minnkota's business attraction initiative. 4. Provide Catalyst Fund loans and financial packaging expertise to support business growth. 5. Defederalize and repurpose two EDA-funded revolving loan funds.	1. Complete construction by Q4 2026. Secure funding for FF&E and any additional construction needs. Recruit leadership to launch and manage the incubator in alignment with vision and mission. 2. Identify and develop sites for animal agriculture and complementary industries. 3. Attract two new businesses to Region 4. 4. Close 2–4 Catalyst Fund loans to drive business growth. 5. Collaborate on fund optimization; explore creating a regional PACE buydown pool.
<b>COMMUNITY VITALITY</b>  Create vibrant and inclusive communities through improved spaces, leadership, and engagement	1. Complete and submit \$1.5M Region 4 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant with consultant to assess up to 25 properties for contamination. 2. Advocate, educate, and support grant applications through research, analysis, writing, and management.	1. Launch multi-year program (if funded) starting with assessments, remediation, and redevelopment plans; anticipate future grant requests. 2. Support at least 10 new grant applications.
<b>WORKFORCE</b>  Attract, retain, and develop skilled workers and entrepreneurs to drive a resilient and growing local workforce	1. Provide regional leadership to secure Region 4's \$620,000 Workforce Impact Program allocation and ensure project completion by June 2027. 2. Convene stakeholders to strategize and coordinate efforts. 3. Continue strengthening regionwide collaborations.	1. Identify and support projects utilizing full RWIP fund allocation. 2. Ensure projects are completed to address workforce growth and support needs. 3. Include initiatives such as Real. Good. in workforce development efforts.
<b>HOUSING</b>  Provide more and better housing options for everyone, regardless of their situation	1. Close out Nelson County Housing Rehab project with 14 houses rehabbed and investing \$301,201 over four years 2. Initiate rehabilitation of 10 houses in Region 4 rehab project investing approximately \$400,000. 3. Continue to support the Red River CHDO in housing development efforts, identifying and securing funds, and	1. Meet all grant requirements and provide updates to partners. 2. Complete rehab on 10 homes.



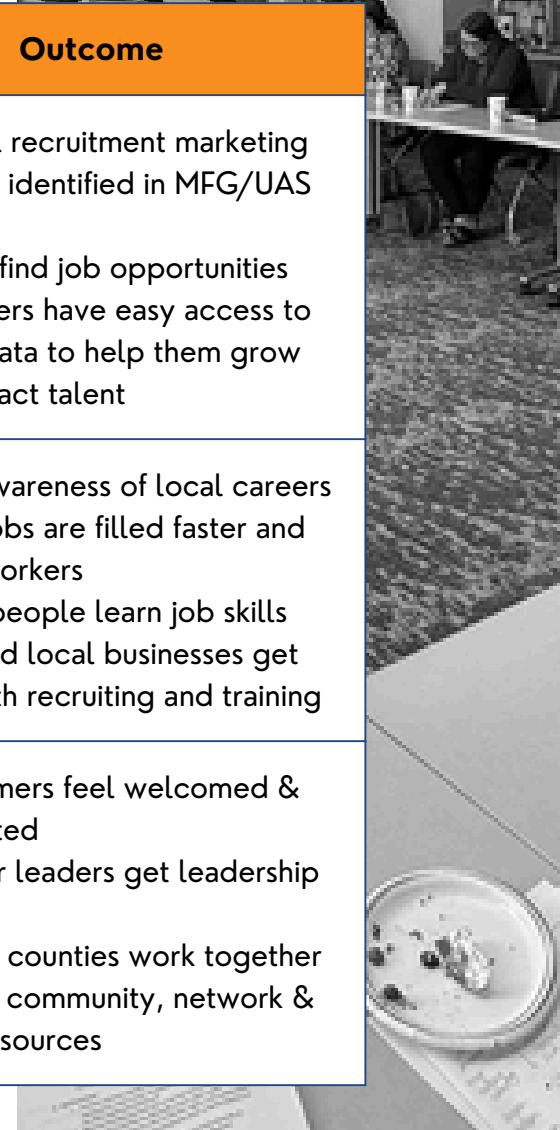
# 2026 ACTION PLAN

This action plan outlines our commitment to strengthening regional workforce and community vitality. We will support businesses in filling jobs and keeping workers by improving access to job opportunities, resources, and data. We aim to expand career pathways by connecting students and job seekers with work-based learning opportunities, and career guidance while fostering stronger ties between schools and employers. Additionally, we will promote rural community integration by welcoming newcomers with support programs, growing leadership among local residents, and enhancing collaboration across cities and counties.

Together, these efforts will build a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient regional economy and community.



Goals	Actions	Outcome
Business Engagement	Enhance employers' capabilities and attractiveness and foster industry collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>External recruitment marketing to areas identified in MFG/UAS study</li><li>Easy-to-find job opportunities</li><li>Employers have easy access to useful data to help them grow and attract talent</li></ul>
Career Pathways Expansion	Strengthen the relationships between students, businesses, CTEs and post-secondary institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>More awareness of local careers</li><li>Open jobs are filled faster and retain workers</li><li>Young people learn job skills early and local businesses get help with recruiting and training</li></ul>
Rural Community Integration	Create systems to ensure newcomers feel welcomed and create the next generation of leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Newcomers feel welcomed &amp; connected</li><li>Younger leaders get leadership training</li><li>Cities &amp; counties work together to build community, network &amp; share resources</li></ul>





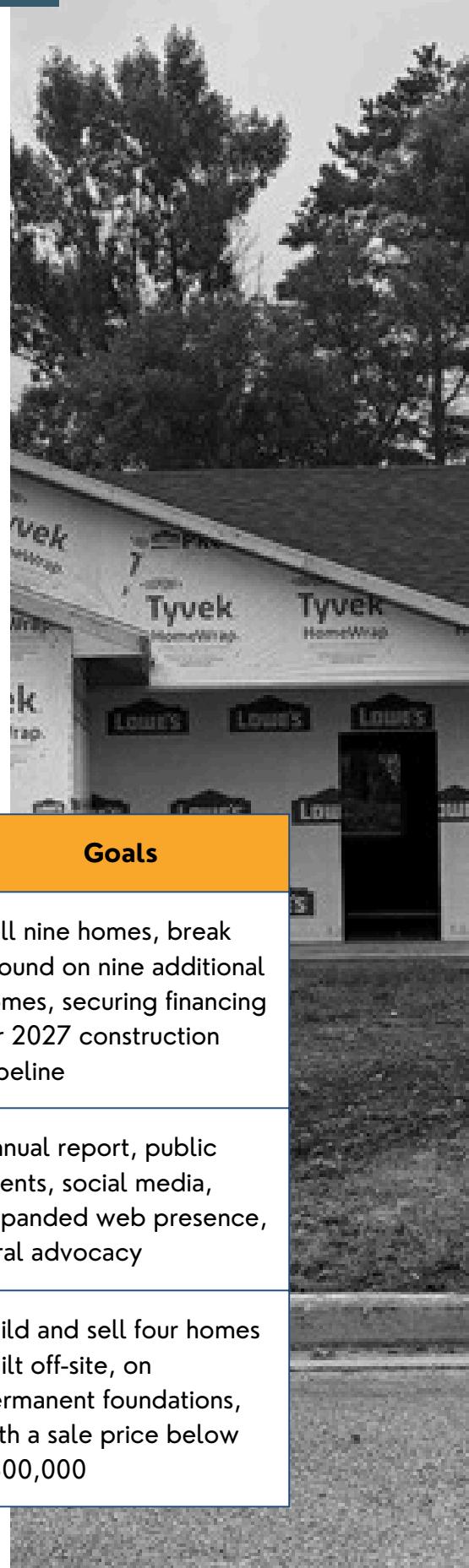
**Lisa Rotvold**  
Executive Director

Red River CHDO's mission is to grow opportunity for low and moderate income people and underserved rural communities, by developing attainable housing and supporting community development in the places they call home

## 2026 ACTION PLAN

1. Expand Spark Building Initiative to at least three additional communities. Based on previous work we expect to see appraisal gaps shrink. Having proven the market in small towns, we also expect to see private sector contractors building more homes on their own.
2. Secure operating funding to strengthen organizational capacity, stabilize production, and grow more partnerships around the region.
3. Build portfolio of three to five house plans at various price points to expand pool of buyers. This will include exploring various plans and construction types, getting cost estimates, and testing out what the market values most.

Projects	Details	Goals
SPARK Building Initiative	Build and sell single family homes in small towns to jumpstart new home construction	Sell nine homes, break ground on nine additional homes, securing financing for 2027 construction pipeline
Expand communications capacity	Grow general public awareness of the organization and what we are doing	Annual report, public events, social media, expanded web presence, rural advocacy
Explore manufactured and modular homes as lower cost options	Identify two home plans, development costs and market value to test the market for these construction types	Build and sell four homes built off-site, on permanent foundations, with a sale price below \$300,000





Anna Halvorson  
Executive Director  
(50% position)

# 2026 ACTION PLAN

## A RENEWING YEAR

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

With new vigor and strategic planning, 2026 could be the best yet for Nelson County.

STRATEGY	GOALS
<b>ECONOMY</b> Build a strong, flexible, and fair economy that benefits everyone in Nelson County	<p><b>Expand awareness and utilization of NCJDA and RRRC programs</b>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storefront Improvement Program – engage at least <b>5 businesses</b></li> <li>• BND Flex PACE Loans – assist at least <b>3 businesses</b></li> <li>• Spark Build Homes – support the RRRC CHDO in identifying <b>2 more communities</b> that may be interested</li> </ul> <p>Increase participation in the <b>Flex PACE</b> program through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted outreach and marketing efforts</li> <li>• Direct business visits and engagement</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY VITALITY</b> Create vibrant and inclusive communities through improved spaces, leadership, and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage funding resources such as the <b>Rural Catalyst Grant</b> to fill project gaps, with a focus on supporting at least <b>3 grocery stores</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Promote community beautification projects</b> that strengthen community pride, identity, and engagement, reaching at least <b>2 communities</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>WORKFORCE</b> Attract, retain, and develop skilled workers and entrepreneurs to drive a resilient and growing local workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce outmigration by developing a <b>countywide apprenticeship program</b> and participating in the <b>Region 4 RWIP initiative</b>, focusing on workforce development in key sectors, including trades, manufacturing, and healthcare – assist at least <b>2 businesses</b> with apprenticeships.</li> <li>• Retain local talent and support long-term regional growth through targeted training and employment opportunities – host at least <b>1 additional career-focused events</b> in the county.</li> </ul>
<b>HOUSING</b> Provide more and better housing options for everyone, regardless of their situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden the use of <b>housing rehabilitation</b> funding sources to improve existing housing stock and community livability – assist at least <b>10 homes in the county</b>.</li> <li>• Support new construction initiatives, such as <b>Spark Build</b>, which is managed by RR CHDO, to expand access to safe and affordable housing – support CHDO in identifying <b>2 additional communities</b>.</li> </ul>


 Angelle French  
Executive Director (100%)

# 2026 ACTION PLAN

The Pembina County Job Development Authority (PCJDA) supports the economic and community growth of Pembina County by focusing on business retention and expansion, community vitality, workforce development, and housing.

The PCJDA continues to promote a strong, resilient economy through collaboration, innovation, and investment in people and communities.

STRATEGY	GOALS
<b>ECONOMY</b> <b>Goal:</b> Foster a resilient, generative local economy through business retention, expansion, and recruitment	<p><b>Focus Area:</b> Agriculture and manufacturing sectors, small business growth, and cross-border business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and support the <b>BND Flex PACE Loan</b> program that provides low-interest loans for business start-ups and expansions.</li> <li>Conduct regular business visits to identify opportunities, needs, and workforce challenges through Pembina County's <b>Business Retention &amp; Expansion (BR&amp;E)</b> Program.</li> <li>Collaborate with partners (mainly Minnkota Power) to <b>recruit businesses</b>, including cross-border recruitment from Canada.</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY VITALITY</b> <b>Goal:</b> Foster vibrant, revitalized, and inclusive communities through destination development, placemaking, and leadership growth	<p><b>Focus Areas:</b> Storefront improvement, regional tourism, and redevelopment initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide matching grants for businesses to improve façades and downtown aesthetics through the Pembina County JDA <b>Storefront Improvement Grant</b> program.</li> <li>Continue partnership with the Rendezvous Region Tourism Council (RRTC) to promote <b>tourism</b> through the Talking Trail, murals, and destination marketing.</li> <li>Assist the RRRC in launching a regional EDA <b>Brownfields Program</b> to address dilapidated or underused buildings, beginning with Neche.</li> </ul>
<b>WORKFORCE</b> <b>Goal:</b> Grow, attract, and retain people and entrepreneurs to fuel a prosperous and resilient economy	<p><b>Focus Areas:</b> Youth engagement, workforce attraction, and workforce development programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate <b>MFG Day</b> which is career exploration for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students through tours of local manufacturers.</li> <li>Sponsor and assist with the annual <b>Marketplace for Kids</b>, a youth entrepreneurship and career exploration event.</li> <li>Continue supporting <b>Real. Good.</b>, a regional workforce attraction campaign to promote Pembina County and the greater region, as a great place to live and work.</li> <li>Assess feasibility of a <b>childcare</b> grant program to support working families.</li> <li>Explore creation of a local <b>Career Builders</b> program to provide tuition assistance and workforce incentives.</li> </ul>
<b>HOUSING</b> <b>Goal:</b> Increase the supply and diversity of housing options in Pembina County through collaboration and regional support	<p><b>Focus Areas:</b> Partnership with the Red River CHDO, Spark Build Program, and mobile home park redevelopment opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with <b>CHDO</b> on housing initiatives including <b>Spark Build</b> and future workforce housing developments.</li> <li>Continue discussions on potential <b>redevelopment of underused</b> mobile home park properties in the City of Pembina.</li> <li>Support and advocate for <b>rural housing initiatives</b> aligned with regional housing study findings.</li> </ul>



Stacie Sevigny  
Executive Director (100%)

## VISION:

To be leaders in strengthening businesses and communities while fostering economic growth, vitality and relationships.



## MISSION:

To enrich Walsh County by striving for economic growth, maximizing resources, and creating solutions that strengthen businesses and connect our communities to enhance quality of life.



# 2026 ACTION PLAN

## Economic Growth

Support new and expanding businesses; increase communication with local banks/lenders regarding programs; encourage participation in and support of the NE MFG Group

### LOOKING AHEAD AT 2026:

Broaden awareness and utilization of WCJDA, Bank of ND, and Red River Regional Council programs via:

- Targeted outreach and marketing
- One-on-one business visits



## Workforce

Real. Good. Northeast ND; Walsh County Career Builders program; Pembina-Walsh MFG Day; North Valley Career and Technology Center programming; Marketplace for Kids

### LOOKING AHEAD AT 2026:

Expand awareness in programs and resources aimed at talent attraction and retention including:

- Update and share Walsh County Career Builders impact and program brochures/documents
- Extend personal invitations to employers to participate in Real. Good. informational sessions and utilize R.G. resources
- Support and/or lead student workforce events



## Housing

Support communities in utilizing the CHDO's Spark Build program for single-family and future manufactured and/or modular home models

### LOOKING AHEAD AT 2026:

- Continue serving as the link between Walsh County communities and the CHDO director/board and its programming
- One on one visits to ensure all communities interested in housing growth are aware of available opportunities

## Community Vibrancy

Provide support for amenity development and sustainability projects including rural grocery, childcare, parks, pathways, and art and vibrancy

### LOOKING AHEAD AT 2026:

- Leverage Rural Catalyst Grant and/or other programs to assist rural grocers, park districts, and other community groups





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our deepest gratitude to our Boards of Directors for their visionary leadership and sound governance, and to our dedicated staff for their tireless efforts in achieving the successes of 2025 and preparing for the ambitious action plans ahead in 2026. Most importantly, we celebrate the business owners, budding entrepreneurs, passionate community volunteers, and courageous community leaders who lead boldly — thinking, strategizing, and implementing countless projects year after year. We exist to support you in these efforts.



We are equally grateful for the many private and public partners who come together with trust, commitment, and a shared focus on action. Our work is strengthened by educators, career and technology centers, higher education institutions, funding partners of all kinds, and lending institutions that help turn ideas into reality.

We also recognize the vital role of media in amplifying these efforts — sharing stories that inform the public and inspire communities to engage and lead.

Together, this network of partners makes progress possible, and we are honored to support and celebrate these collaborations.

## CONTACT

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