

Central Mississippi River ~ Regional Planning Partnership

Creating a shared regional vision and goals, then working together to accomplish them

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Below are the final Framework 2030 regional vision and key strategies adopted by the Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership on April 22, 2021.



Vision

We -- the communities of the Central Mississippi River Regional Planning Partnership -- are a strong and dynamic region.

We are made prosperous through our network of assets and proactive leadership, made distinct through our vital and connected places, and made home by our welcoming people and communities.

Strategies – Land Use

L1. Leverage the region’s unique parks, trails, and natural resources

- In addition to serving as a major gateway to recreation opportunities “up North,” the region and Partner communities enjoy a wealth of their own natural assets
- These include the Mississippi River, multiple lakes, the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, and numerous community parks and trails
- These resources are unique when compared to more developed areas closer to the Twin Cities and represent a tremendous asset

L2. Promote life-cycle housing

- Fewer residents both live and work in the region and the majority of workers live outside the Partnership communities
- This suggests issues with job quality and housing affordability or availability
- This trend limits the region’s competitiveness related to the workforce and increases the potential long-term tax burden on residents

L3. Invest in placemaking

- Residents of the region love their communities and see even greater latent potential
- Investments in downtowns, neighborhoods, parks and trails, and elsewhere should focus on authentic expressions of the community and cultivate a better sense of place
- These initiatives will work best when the ideas and creativity are locally sourced

L4. Improve regional communication to support local land planning and management

- The “small town feel” is a shared and treasured value across each of the region’s diverse communities, and can be attributed to the scale and character of development (or the lack of it) in each place
- The multi-year trend of strong growth in jobs and people will continue over the coming decades
- To maintain the region’s character while also enabling the benefits of good growth, communities in the region will need to communicate their plans and policies to work in concert with one another

Strategies – Economic Growth

E1. Expand on the quality and variety of employment opportunities

- The region has the opportunity to expand employment opportunities into emerging industries while strengthening the quality of jobs in the local economy
- By investing in small business and private sector job growth, the region builds resiliency through a broader array of employment industries and increasing career opportunities with current employers

E2. Increase the pool of skilled labor in the region

- As the region continues to transition from one economic era to the next, there will be an increased need for skilled and adaptable labor
- Right now, most regional employees commute in from outside the region, while most regional residents commute out of the region for work -- and this gap will continue if unchecked
- Quality local jobs for prepared local applicants would allow people to both live and work in the region

E3. Network the response to economic disruptions

- Economic disruptions are being felt throughout the region; some are unique to this area and others are national
- Some of these were spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic and related to the economic shutdown; others were well underway, such as decommissioning the SherCo Generating Station and eventually the Xcel Nuclear Generating Station
- One of the most effective responses to economic disruptions is regional collaboration and coordination on the region's growing and emerging industries

E4. Measure impacts of action locally and regionally

- Measuring the success of any initiative requires logical measures of progress such as dashboards, which provide leaders with information necessary to mark success, adjust strategies, and extend or build on key efforts
- This region -- through this collaborative Framework 2030 effort -- is committed to marking progress across a wide range of topics, and identifying a set of key metrics to measure community progress is critical to long-term success

Strategies – Interconnections

I1. Create a clear and compelling regional identity to advance collaborative work

- With the Partnership being a relatively new organization, the region doesn't yet have a clear and distinct identity
- The Partnership's work on Framework 2030 is a crucial first step, and richer regional collaboration would further build a regional identity and unlock new opportunities for resources, action development, and successful implementation

I2. Enhance connections between our communities

- The physical and non-physical connections across the region play a key enabling role for local and regional economic activity
- These corridors are the unifying factor for the region and help to define (and in some cases protect) its character

I3. Share talent, time, and information

- The region today is a collection of small cities and smaller townships (based on population)
- One advantage of this scale is the ability to foster community connections and reinforce the "small town feel" -- but this scale also limits capacity
- Working collaboratively, communities can enhance their capabilities by sharing time, talent, and information to take advantage of larger-scale opportunities and solve complex challenges

14. Continually address regional vulnerabilities and emerging opportunities

- Framework 2030 should result in an ongoing process by the communities in the region to identify areas of weakness or vulnerability
- The project was initiated in 2020, a year of profound disruption -- and this churning is expected to continue for some time
- The region must commit to an ongoing evaluative process, fueled by curiosity and urgency