

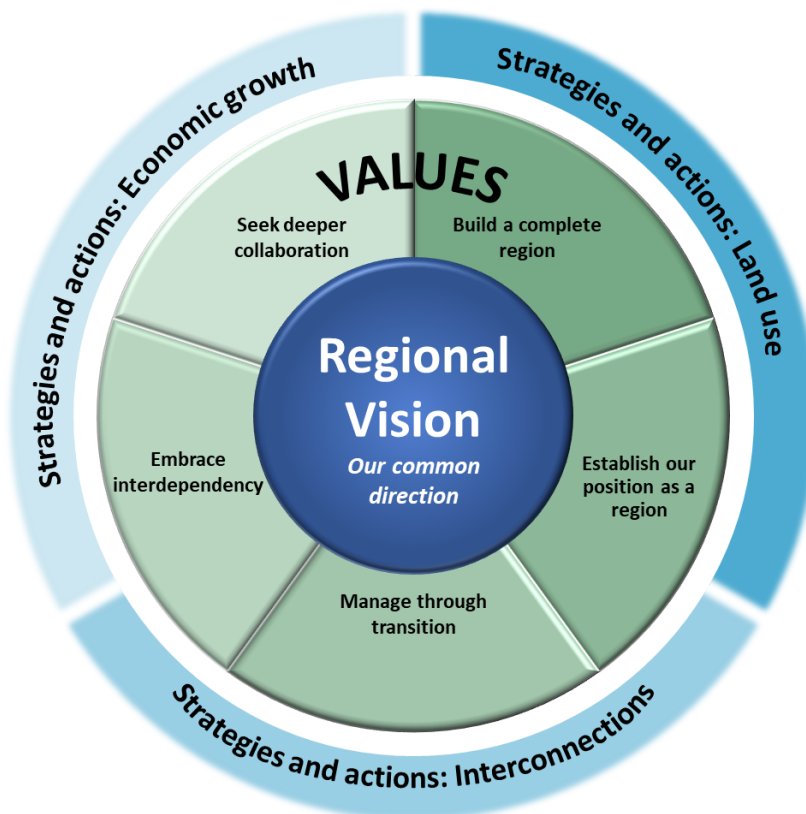
November-December 2021 Update: Vision, Strategies, Actions

The Framework 2030 regional planning framework includes a broad vision for the future of the region, 12 key strategies to move the region forward around land use, economic growth, and interconnections, and multiple actions to advance those strategies. The actions drive the Partnership's workplan, and are regularly monitored and updated. Check the [CMRP website](http://www.RegionalPlanningPartnership.org) for the most current information and progress.

Regional 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.**



Summary: Strategies

Land Use

- [L1. Leverage the region's unique parks and natural resources](#)
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Economic Growth

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- [E3. Network the response to economic disruptions](#)
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Interconnections

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Land Use: Strategies and Actions

Land Use Strategy L1. Leverage the region's unique parks 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.

Action L1-A: Promote the expansion of bicycling and walking infrastructure throughout the region

Expanded outdoor recreational facilities and infrastructure and creating connections across the region would improve mobility, increase recreation options, enhance regional identity, attract visitors, encourage small business, and help attract talent across the region. The region is rich in natural beauty and outdoor amenities, with 50+ miles of biking and walking trails and 60 miles of the 4,600-mile North Country Scenic Hiking Trail in the region; improvements and connections benefit the entire region.

2021	2022	2023	2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action L1-B: Develop a regional parks website

Sharing information about natural amenities would create a greater sense of collaboration and identity. Residents and visitors often benefit from assets outside their own communities. There are currently 61 parks in the three cities, plus the Mississippi and Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. By hosting a website with information about programming, places, events, and the natural environment, the Partnership could highlight regional outdoor recreation opportunities and support future investments.

2021	2022	2023	2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action L1-C: Commission a regional trails and greenways map and plan

A digital map of city, county, regional, and state parks, trails, and greenways would help residents and visitors, and inform future planning. Consolidating existing local maps into a comprehensive and dynamic regional greenways map on the CMRP and Partner websites could also support Partnership-hosted discussions about future trail connections and developments of particular importance to the Partners..

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Land Use Strategy L2. Promote lifecycle housing

A majority of regional employees commute into the region from outside the region and the majority of residents in the regions commute outside of the Partnership communities for work. This suggests opportunities to expand housing options and availability for incoming commuters. Unaddressed, this trend could limit the region's competitiveness related to the workforce and increase residential tax burdens.

Action L2-A: Present an annual dashboard and report on regional housing trends and development

Communities benefit from sharing information about the regional housing market, conditions, and trends. Employment, education, land use, transportation, infrastructure, and others are all influenced and affected by housing, and communities in the region are seeing higher housing costs and average sales prices. In this dynamic market, the Partnership can collect important data, share with communities to inform policies and decisions, and convene regional discussions about regional housing issues and options.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Developing the metric/dashboard that will be used for the report; both will support the Annual State of the Region forum in early 2022. Working with planners and admins on how to gather, organize, and present this info in meaningful ways.

Issues:

Action L2-B: Facilitate community conversations around strategic growth areas

Involve the community and leadership in identifying and influencing key growth corridors or nodes, with a focus on areas of particular opportunity. Development has already transformed communities to the south of the region, with housing development, commercial growth, and major investments in transportation infrastructure significantly changing the character and scale of these places. With increased work-from-home options and fewer large-tract development opportunities along I-94, development pressure in this region will intensify. Proactively engaging communities in an ongoing discussion around key development corridors and nodes will deepen understanding of development opportunities or threats, lead to a more coordinated approach to land management (especially along corridors), and help ensure growth enhances the quality of place, life, and opportunity.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action L2-C: Develop a regional housing strategy

Based on data, trends, and input from local partners, a regional strategy provides high-level guidance for accommodating housing growth while respecting the character and priorities of the region. This is a logical

outgrowth of the meetings, collaboration, and data collection facilitated by the Partnership. The strategy could reflect on changing demand, share ideas about how to respond to growth, define the market area and various housing products, address topics such as workforce housing, post-pandemic housing needs and opportunities, and housing incentive tools. Communities would share regionally and manage detailed information and decisions locally.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Land Use Strategy L3. Invest in placemaking

Residents of the region love their communities and see even greater potential for the future. Investments in downtowns, neighborhoods, parks and trails, and elsewhere should focus on authentic expressions of the community and cultivate a better sense of place and strong connections *across the region*.

Action L3-A: Host a regional placemaking committee and placemaking microgrant program

Placemaking is a creative and proactive approach to connecting people with the public places they share.

This was a major priority for respondents to the Framework 2030 community survey. This committee guides regional placemaking, manages the microgrant program, and over time may provide leadership to inventory and seek funding for placemaking projects; support or sponsor community events; create a regional placemaking map, etc.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Committee has been expanded with members from across the region, who met to flesh out criteria and process. They have resubmitted the request for 2022 quarterly cycles and funding appropriation. Previously researched placemaking initiatives and microgrants and drafted process and content framework. Actively recruiting Committee members. Initial Committee members met to start on initial process and content and finalize request for CMRP approval for 2022 multiple cycles and budget.

Issues: Will need active support from Partners to promote microgrant opportunities in 2022

Action L3-B: Commission local public art for regional gateway and wayfinding signage

Local art in regional gateways can beautify, unify, and connect communities through a common aesthetic.

Arts-based placemaking is an effective way to promote a sense of place as well as increase cultural diversity and civic engagement. Physical art projects have a tangible impact on communities and signal to residents and visitors that they are in a place with a unique identity. Funded projects should maintain a consistent visual relationship and display the regional brand. The works and the artists should be local, and decisions around placement and content left up to the individual communities.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

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

The “small town feel” is a shared and treasured value across 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 enabling the benefits of good growth, communities in the region will need to fashion plans and policies that

work in concert.

Action L4-A: Identify key regional corridors for coordinated planning

As a network of connected places, partner communities would benefit from coordinated planning of the regional corridors. Regional corridors present an opportunity for jurisdictions to collaborate on land use decisions, transportation considerations, and placemaking strategies. Although such planning is complex, it is also an effective way to build a collaborative spirit, facilitate smart growth, and promote positive economic outcomes, and lay the groundwork for significant future infrastructure and economic investments.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action L4-B: Develop a conceptual regional development strategy

Integrating the comprehensive plans and land use policies of the individual communities into a cohesive regional strategy and map would provide significant insights for future development. Aggregating relevant existing plans would help identify points of friction and areas of redundancy, unnecessary competition, or gaps in planning. The Partnership communities could then discuss how to address some of these findings in a regional strategy and routinely update the composite map.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Economic Growth: Strategies and Actions

Economic Growth Strategy E1. Expand on the quality and diversity of employment opportunities

The region is well positioned to expand employment opportunities in emerging industries while strengthening the quality of local jobs. By investing in small business and private-sector job growth, the region builds resiliency through a broader array of employment industries.

Action E1-A: Facilitate expansion of high-speed internet access across the region

Broadband internet is necessary to support business growth and will be essential to improving and increasing employment opportunities in the region. The Partnership can help the region expand broadband across the planning area.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Met with County coordinators and one provider; working on the best approach moving forward and what role the Partnership might play in regional coordination. [Presentation](#) by Diane Wells of DEED's Broadband Office lists current maps and funding sources.

Issues: Wright County Study is expected to be completed soon

Action E1-B: Maintain a regional industrial land inventory

A collaborative approach to industrial land marketing and management could mitigate vacancies and promote economic synergy among the Partnership communities. Combining current data with plans, the Partnership could develop and maintain a regional industrial land inventory and map that includes an understanding of employment sectors needs (land, transportation, and services). This could help identify strategic locations for new industrial clusters and facilitate a cooperative approach to marketing and sharing leads, protecting industrial lands, and supporting intensification efforts.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Economic Growth Strategy E2. Increase the pool of skilled labor in the region

As the region transitions from one economic era to the next, there is an increased need for skilled and adaptable labor. Most regional employees commute in from outside the region, while most regional residents commute out of the region for work; this gap will continue if unchecked.

Action E2-A: Initiate discussions with higher-education institutions to better integrate economic development with workforce development

Increasing and strengthening the workforce requires strong relationships between communities and a variety of educational institutions. The region has a higher percentage of high school graduates than the state average, but residents are less likely to complete post-secondary education than their peers. The Partnership could aggregate information and facilitate discussions with post-secondary educational institutions and training organizations to help produce a stronger, more competitive workforce, and thus support and attract new employers and generally provide better opportunities for residents.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action E2-B: Facilitate partnerships between businesses and schools

Experience is often the best teacher. Promoting and facilitating opportunities for students to gain “real life” work experience would bolster the workforce in the region. The Partnership can convene conversations between major employers and high schools to discuss regional workforce and employment issues and opportunities, build mutually beneficial relationships, and forge lasting relationships that encourage students to continue working in the region after graduation.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Economic Growth Strategy 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 two power plants. One of the most effective responses to economic disruptions is regional collaboration and coordination on the region’s growing and emerging industries.

Action E3-A: Commission a regional fiscal analysis of land use

Understanding the fiscal impacts of different types of land use clusters is essential for good decision making and future planning. The fiscal productivity -- or the net community benefit -- varies across the region based on land use. As of 2021, 84% of land is zoned agricultural / rural, 6% residential, 4% industrial, 2% riverfront, and <1% commercial. Each generates different levels of revenue based on local and property taxes, and has different costs due to infrastructure needs and school service requirements. Understanding the net impact of these revenues and costs on government finances can help decision makers identify the types of land use to encourage and those to approach with caution. Beyond a point-in-time study, regularly tracking the net fiscal effects of land use is a valuable tool for evaluating decisions with regional impacts.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Action E3-B: Create and manage a regional commercial property vacancy database

Accessible and centralized commercial vacancy information may reduce barriers to filling these holes and avoiding long-term blight and disinvestment. The accelerated use of e-commerce platforms for basic goods fulfillment and increased remote work has left communities struggling with commercial vacancies and redundancies. An aggregate of regional land use plans reveals a planned increase of 163% in commercial land across the Focused Planning Area. A centralized database of commercial vacancies would provide easy access for potential new tenants, and provide crucial information for local decision making about additional commercial land. In addition, creative and adaptive reuse of vacant commercial spaces may help address other challenges in the region, such as housing.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None

Economic Growth Strategy E4. Measure impacts of action locally and regionally

Measuring the success of any initiative requires logical measures of progress such as dashboards that provide leaders with necessary information. Through Framework 2030, the region is collaboratively advancing a range of topics and identifying metrics to measure progress critical to long-term success.

Action E4-A: Establish and update regional indicators dashboard

Measuring, tracking, and publishing economic data over time supports progress tracking and informs future strategies. A regional dashboard tracks progress on actions and strategies that advance the regional vision, using pertinent data over time and presenting the information in a clear and compelling way. This helps communities identify broader trends, and the dashboard indicators then become the benchmarks to evaluate the Partnership's progress to increase the region's competitiveness and advance the vision.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Developed a survey for Partners to prioritize indicators, which was completed and compiled in November 2021; see results [here](#). Results will guide development of the draft dashboard in early 2022. Note that local and Focused Planning Area data are harder to update because most data are available only at county level. The dashboard will be hosted on CMRP website. Discussing with Sherburne County GIS creating a link to automatically update indicators as data become available.

Issues: None

Action E4-B: Establish and monitor progress criteria for all Framework actions

Effectively implementing Framework 2030 depends on benchmarking and monitoring progress on each action. For internal and external accountability, the Partnership will track and report out progress on action items in support of the key strategies and vision.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Making these monthly written updates, presenting summaries at CMRP meetings, and updating the website; committee/task force reports begin in January 2022

Issues: Note that this action item will be eliminated following this update

Interconnections: Strategies and Actions

Interconnections Strategy I1. Use clear regional identity to advance collaborative work

Each community is unique, and at the same time they rely on one another for jobs, housing, retail, and amenities. Using the regional CMRP brand connects or associates places with one another, provides leaders with an object to reference and celebrate, and can leave a memorable impression on visitors. Regional collaboration further builds that identity and unlocks new opportunities for resources, action development, and successful implementation.

Action I1-A: Integrate branding with placemaking initiatives

Applying the regional brand to local placemaking initiatives will provide a common thread that links the efforts of each community. While every placemaking project or event will be unique, attaching the regional brand to each of them illustrates how the communities are part of something larger than themselves and builds awareness and support for the Partnership's regional efforts.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: CMRP branding will be associated with projects supported by microgrants. The new branding is being used on the website; new documents, emails, memos, etc.; and for ongoing docs such as policies, bylaws, and the JPA.

Issues: None

Interconnections Strategy I2. Enhance regional connections

The physical and non-physical connections across the region play a key enabling role for local and regional economic activity, helping unify the region and define its character.

Action I2-A: Continue conversations with MnDOT and the counties regarding special projects

Regular and ongoing communication across various agencies will be essential for understanding projects of special interest to the region. Most major transportation and infrastructure investments in the region have resulted from cross-jurisdictional collaborations. As the region grapples with growth and associated congestion, it will be essential for the Partners to speak with a more collective and unified voice as major investments are considered and prioritized.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Transportation Task Force was established at the 9/28/21 CMRP meeting. Working to move forward with aligning comprehensive and land use plans and strategies in accordance with direction provided by MnDOT and FHWA. County and community planners, engineers, and other key staff will be actively involved.

Issues: None

Interconnections Strategy I3. Share talent, time, and information

The region today is a collection of small cities and townships, which helps foster community connections and reinforce the "small town feel," but 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.

Action I3-A: Establish an annual "State of the Region" forum

An annual meeting to present findings and facilitate conversation offers a unique opportunity to showcase and share the Partnership's growing role in data collection and analysis, reporting, and convening. As the Partnership's work develops momentum and increases in impact and value, communities and non-government entities in the region will benefit from coming together to discuss and learn from each other about information, findings, results, and opportunities.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities:

Issues: None

Action I3-B: Pursue a regional lobbying effort, "Our fair share"

A primary role of the Partnership is to advocate for the communities and the region at the state and federal levels. State and Federal funding for transportation, infrastructure, housing, and other major investments is increasingly tied to regional collaboration and data-driven analysis. Sitting at the center of discussions occurring around the region, the Partnership can elevate the region's needs and highlight its potential to ensure that priority projects are considered and/or funded. Through its ongoing regional convening it can develop strong priority investment targets, and as a principal advocate, it can communicate to state and federal agencies on behalf of its communities.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: Federal infrastructure bill passed and signed 11-15-2021, providing money for broadband, roads and bridges, transit and rail, power and water systems, and more. Previously, group of Partner staff spoke with US EDA about funding under the America Rescue Plan Act and other sources; there are some potential funds for regionally significant and supportive projects.

Issues: None

Interconnections Strategy I4. Continually address regional vulnerabilities

Framework 2030 should support communities in the region to routinely 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.

Action I4-A: Study social service opportunities that may benefit from regional coordination

Services like food banks and ridesharing may better serve our communities if they operate at a regional level. A full inventory of social services in the region would provide a clearer understanding of coverages, gaps, and redundancies. Then the Partnership can convene gatherings to consider more efficient and effective ways to deliver these critical services.

2021	2022		2023		2024 or later
July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	Jan-June	July-Dec	

Activities: None

Issues: None