

MANKATO

PLANNING THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE



City of Mankato Strategic Plan 2025–2029



October
2024

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Strategic Planning

Why is strategic planning important?

The purpose of a strategic plan is threefold:

- **Focus:** Provides a framework with directions, goals, and strategies to accomplish the vision.
- **Prioritization:** Enables the City of Mankato to prioritize resources to achieve the goals of the community.
- **Accountability:** Drives regular progress reports and refining of the goals.

The Strategic Plan serves as the blueprint for enhancing lives in the community. By engaging in a highly collaborative process with input from residents, business community, nonprofit organizations, City staff, religious leaders, and students, this five-year strategic plan includes measurable goals that reflect the needs of the community, while maintaining consideration of resources, capacity, and City Council priorities.

Whether it is increasing accessible housing, fostering economic development, improving infrastructure, or preserving spaces for recreation, this plan provides a clear roadmap. Through ongoing evaluation to adjust as needed, the City is committed to accountability and being responsive to challenges and opportunities to ensure that Mankato is leading the way as a vibrant and diverse regional community.

The City's last strategic plan was developed in 2018. Since then, Mankato has seen significant changes in population, leadership, community development, technology, and diversity. In May 2023, the City of Mankato began the process of reimagining the organization's strategic plan to align the City's existing initiatives, department work, City Council goals, and budget.

Public Service Philosophy, **Vision, Values, + Goals**

PUBLIC SERVICE PHILOSOPHY

THE FOUNDATION FOR
SERVING MANKATO

Our organization is dedicated to serving Mankato and creating a community where everyone belongs. We care about making a positive difference in the lives of others through responsive and efficient City services. We embrace innovation to address community and organizational challenges. We listen and engage with each other and our community. We are empowered and trusted to make decisions that align with our vision and values and serve the greater good of the Mankato community.

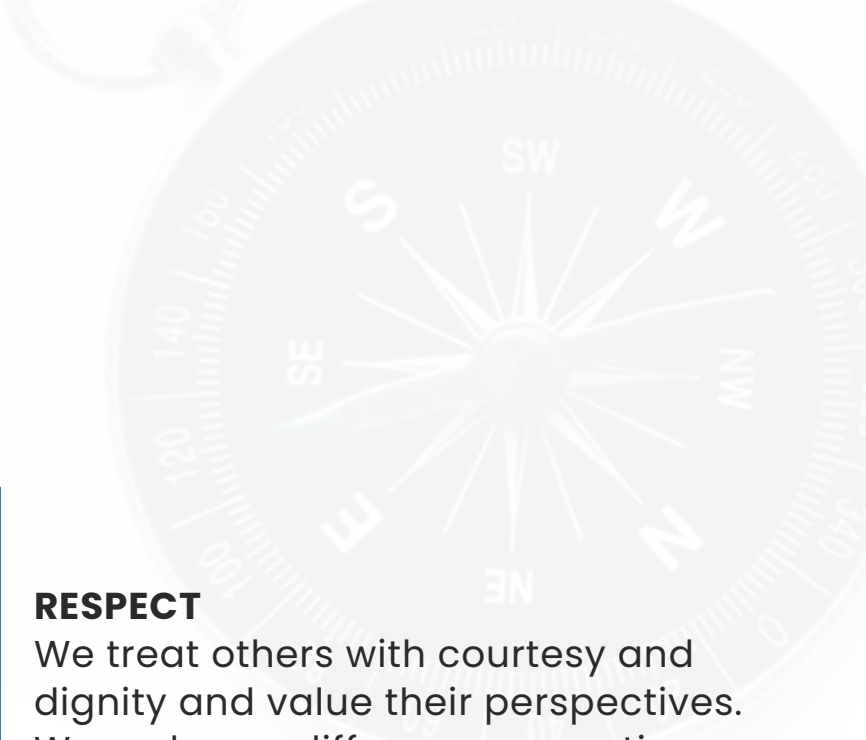
VISION

OUR DESIRED FUTURE STATE

Leading the way as a vibrant, diverse, regional community.

VALUES

WHAT GUIDES US



RESPECT

We treat others with courtesy and dignity and value their perspectives. We embrace differences, creating a place where you belong.

INTEGRITY

We lead by example by being trustworthy, honest, and doing the right thing. Our actions reflect our words.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

We use a positive approach, take initiative, are motivated to perform a good job, take pride in the work we do, and recognize individual and team contributions.

TEAMWORK

Together, we collaborate on ideas and share information, resources, and responsibility for the best possible outcomes.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our actions and the completion of our work.

2025 – 2029 GOALS

1. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

2. HOUSING

3. COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND LIVABILITY

4. COMMUNITY SAFETY

5. ECONOMY

6. ADAPTIVE ORGANIZATION

Goal 1:

Sustainable Infrastructure

Goal Outcomes

Actions

Well-maintained transportation assets

1. Continuous investments in preventative maintenance
2. Strategic city investments in neighborhood enhancements
3. Better, safer multi-modal opportunities for all users
4. Improve connectivity across community

Increase ridership of the transit system

5. Improve access by providing more bus stops
6. Review frequency of schedules
7. Broaden span of service
8. Educate the community on how to use the transit system, communicate improvement, and show the value proposition

Mankato's infrastructure investment and community enhancements are solid

9. Develop and make strategic investments in a program to create attractive streetscapes
10. Continued investment in public art
11. Continue to make strategic investments in infrastructure preservation and expansion
12. Connect and educate the community on infrastructure resources and programs

Goal Outcomes	Actions
Clear vision on the city’s work to protect the climate	13. Develop a climate action plan and prioritize the initiatives 14. Create education program to help people understand how to support environmental initiatives
Better and safer multi-modal systems for all users to improve connectivity across the community	15. Continue to work with MNDOT and partners on I69 + HWY 14 16. Continue to work with MNDOT and N. Mankato on Veteran’s Bridge 17. Update the Complete Streets Plan 18. Update Metropolitan Transportation Plan 19. Develop education and awareness campaigns for driver, pedestrian, bikes, and e-bike safety

Goal 2:

Housing

Goal Outcomes

Actions

Preserve the existing affordable housing stock

1. Identify and monitor Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)
2. Education, awareness, and engagement for property owners on programs and available resources
3. Address barriers to accessing housing programs and resources
4. Make strategic City investments in neighborhood enhancements
5. Code updates, training, and alignment of city resources for improved code enforcement

End homelessness in Mankato

6. Create a full-time (year-round 24/7) shelter with support services
7. Reduce and address barriers to housing and create low barrier housing opportunities
8. Develop an education and awareness campaign that addresses community perceptions of homelessness
9. Engage with the homeless population to identify challenges and solutions
10. Strengthen and continue building street outreach and case conferencing systems
11. Create a housing trust fund

Goal Outcomes

Actions

Provide better and safer rental housing options

- 12. Update City code to provide staff with tools for enforcement
- 13. Partner and engage with landlords and tenants to provide education on city/county programs
- 14. Create funding programs for rental housing rehab

Create diverse types of housing

- 15. Engage and expand partnerships with developers
- 16. Create development incentives (monetary and regulatory) to stimulate housing development
- 17. Continue to evaluate the Community Land Trust and create the Housing Land Trust
- 18. Review and update the development code to reduce barriers to housing development
- 19. Facilitate housing opportunities for federally defined affordable housing, seniors, people with disabilities, workforce, and first-time homebuyers
- 20. Educate and engage the community on affordable housing types

Goal 3:

Community Connection and Livability

Goal Outcomes	Actions
A community where all people are connected, heard, and informed	1. Conduct education and awareness campaigns on City services 2. Meet the community where they're at in active and intentional engagement around City services 3. Develop and implement a toolkit for staff to improve community engagement 4. Continue to use and evaluate new engagement platforms
Access to safe, well-maintained park and recreation assets for all	5. Develop an updated park and recreation system plan that inventories assets and conditions and identifies investments and policies based on community input, needs, and trends 6. Leverage partnerships to facilitate access to parks and recreation programs, services, and facilities 7. Conduct education and engagement campaign to build awareness of existing park and recreation amenities and opportunities

Goal Outcomes	Actions
Comprehensive parks and recreation services for all	8. Create a Parks and Recreation department 9. Leverage partnerships to support services and facilities identified through the Parks and Open Spaces Operations and Capital Projects plan 10. Develop an education plan and engage internal/external stakeholders on the services and programs we want to create 11. Create a Parks and Recreation Commission

Goal 4:

Community Safety

Goal Outcomes

Actions

Decrease fire injury, death, and property loss

1. Increase staffing 24/7 at both stations to improve response times and prevention efforts
2. Evaluate and improve commercial and rental property inspection process

Increase community safety and security using data and community engagement

3. Continue to foster and grow neighborhood relationships and engagement opportunities
4. Data-driven engagement and community outreach to address violent crime
5. Evidence based enforcement and investigation of violent crime and gun violence

Reduce crashes and injuries

6. More targeted enforcement based on crash data
7. Continual engagement to inform data-based traffic safety improvements and necessary educational outreach
8. Review and prioritize infrastructure and design improvements for high crash areas

Goal 5:

Economy

Goal Outcomes

Actions

Mankato’s business community is thriving and can grow

- 1. Continue to streamline the development process
- 2. Connect and educate the community on available business resources and programs
- 3. Analyze available land for business development and redevelopment opportunities

Shared goals with community partners to advance economic development for Mankato

- 4. Align partnerships around the City’s goals for economic development
- 5. Engage and support the City’s partners addressing: childcare availability and affordability, small business support, workforce development, and retention and growth of existing businesses
- 6. Connect and educate the community on partnerships, resources, and programs for economic development

Goal 6:

Adaptive Organization

Goal Outcomes

Actions

Mankato staff are supported in serving the community with opportunities for training and career development

1. Provide more training opportunities and address barriers to participation in training for all staff
2. Develop a leadership training program that provides ongoing opportunities throughout the year
3. Develop a Mankato mentorship program
4. Develop a cross-training program that will support sustainability and process continuity in the organization
5. Leverage regional partnerships to provide training opportunities for staff

Employees are recognized, appreciated, and retained

6. Provide organizational team building experiences and opportunities to connect
7. Develop an employee recognition program that structures time to pause, celebrate, and recognize individual employee and team contributions throughout the year
8. Update employee orientation practices to provide employee connection opportunities

Mankato has a culture that supports a diverse workforce

9. Evaluate, update, and communicate Mankato's comprehensive benefit package
10. Educate and engage employees on Mankato's culture and the resources offered to employees

Goal Outcomes

Actions

Continuous innovation of city processes to deliver efficient and effective city services

- 11. Conduct regular and routine review of city processes and be flexible and willing to try new methods of business
- 12. Allocate resources dedicated to process improvement
- 13. Invest in and leverage technology to support improved city processes

Strategic Plan Process

Strategic Planning Goals

The strategic planning effort began in May 2023 and set out to achieve the following goals:

- Develop an updated strategic plan to guide the City of Mankato over the next five years.
- Conduct intentional and inclusive engagement of all diverse segments of the Mankato community.
- Design a process and plan that identifies and/or confirms Mankato's mission, vision, values, goals, and strategic initiatives.
- Engage the organization in the development of the plan, strengthening alignment and connection to the plan and reinforcing a culture of strategic management.

Strategic Planning Process

The development of the strategic plan was organized into four phases:

1. Community Profile
2. Outreach + Engagement
3. Strategic Plan Development
4. Strategic Plan Implementation

Community Profile

In preparation for a successful process, research was conducted to develop a community profile of Mankato. This is a current snapshot of the community and the organization, exploring trends and factors such as population growth demographics, housing, local economy, education, recreation and governing structure. The profile provides a broad understanding of the current state and valuable insights into ways the community has grown and evolved over the years. Results give a sense of where Mankato is going in the next five years by understanding where the community is now and has been.

Outreach + Engagement

The City of Mankato was very intentional in engagement with diverse stakeholder groups in the community and with staff in the development of the strategic plan. The process provided an opportunity to check in with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure the information gathered in the outreach reflected all needs and perspectives in Mankato.

The strategic planning process included a strategic planning workshop in October 2023 with City Council and department directors to begin aligning around a shared vision, clear mission, and actionable, measurable goals. In preparation for the workshop, the consultant team conducted one-on-one interviews with Council and staff to gather input on the strategic planning process and potential goal focus areas. The workshop provided the opportunity to get acquainted with the strategic planning process, explore the background and current context to inform the strategic plan, clarify roles and expectations of the team to forge a partnership to achieve the vision and goals, and gather final input for the communications and engagement strategy.

To support inclusive engagement of the diverse experiences and perspectives in the strategic planning process, the project team assembled the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) comprised of 23 representatives from across Mankato, including the local businesses, public schools, higher education institutions, recreation, housing, transportation, medical, environmental sustainability, and the City of Mankato. Throughout the strategic planning process, the Strategic Planning Committee met three times to provide perspective, guidance, and feedback on the process. Specifically, the SPC informed the communication and engagement strategy and methods to ensure broad participation from community members. Additionally, the SPC provided feedback and guidance on the development of the mission, vision, values, and goal focus areas.

Over the course of the strategic planning process, the project team conducted inclusive engagement with the community and organization to gather input from the public and employees to develop the mission, vision, values, goals, and supporting strategies to achieve the goals. The engagement tools included one-on-one interviews, an online survey, fourteen community engagement sessions, and seven action labs.

900+	Survey Responses
9	Focus Groups
3	Town Halls
7	Action Labs
2	City Council + Leadership Team Workshops
3	Leadership Team Meetings

Strategic Plan Development

Between January–March 2024, 907 community members and City staff shared their perspectives, experiences, and ideas for the future of Mankato through the online survey. The project team reviewed and categorized thousands of comments and ideas to search for common themes and priorities for the community and organization, such as what people love most about Mankato, what should be preserved into the future, where the City should focus efforts and resources over the next five years, and how to support a resilient and high-performing organization.

In early April 2024, Mankato hosted six strategic planning town hall and engagement workshops with City staff, community members, and regional chamber of commerce and economic development organization Greater Mankato Growth. The events engaged about 500 City employees and community members to explore in more detail the themes that emerged from the community survey. Following the engagement sessions, the project team developed the draft strategic plan framework, including the vision and values, as well as clear strategic plan goal outcomes and supporting actions to advance the strategic plan goals.

The results of the strategic plan engagement was presented to City Council and they discussed the draft vision, values, and goal focus areas. Following the work session, the project team refined the Strategic Plan framework and prepared for a series of action planning labs with City staff.

In May 2024, the project team hosted seven action planning labs with hundreds of employees from all City departments. The action labs serve as a collaborative environment for the team to develop the outcomes for each goal focus area and identify specific and actionable strategies to achieve those outcomes. Employees worked with the project team to review hundreds of ideas and suggestions gathered throughout the community outreach process. Following the action labs, the project team reviewed the results of the action labs with the leadership team to discuss the implementation and alignment of the proposed strategies with the City's existing initiatives, master plans, and other guiding documents. The project team incorporated additional refinements, resulting in 78 actions for the six goal focus areas.

The final Strategic Plan represents the inclusion of hundreds of individuals within the organization and community coming together to develop a comprehensive, forward-thinking shared vision and road map for the City of Mankato over the next five years.

Strategic Plan Implementation

Following the Council's adoption of the strategic plan, Mankato City staff will use input and direction from the Council to prioritize the actions for implementation based on staff capacity and available resources. Staff will identify leads for each action. These leads will be responsible for the following:

- Overseeing the implementation of the action
- Developing a project charter (will identify the project team, stakeholders, timeline, key performance indicators, etc.)
- Identifying resources for implementation
- Engaging and updating the Council, Boards/Commissions, Organization, and the Community as needed
- Reporting progress, challenges, and opportunities to consider during implementation
- Recommending updates to the action if needed

Once the action leads have been assigned and the work has been prioritized, the actions prioritized for implementation will be considered in the budget development process. This will help in identifying resources for the action implementation if needed.

At the end of the first year of implementation, an annual progress report will be prepared for the strategic plan. The progress report will document progress, challenges, opportunities, and potential updates to the actions as needed. This report will serve as a communication tool back to the Council, organization and the community to maintain accountability in implementing the vision and goals.

STRATEGIC PLAN ROAD MAP



This road map shows how the Strategic Plan is developed and updated on an annual basis. It also highlights how the plan development and updates align with Mankato’s budget process to ensure alignment of resources to achieve the goals. The process repeats with the destination being continuous community and organizational improvement.



Strategic Management

This plan is intended to foster a culture of strategic management and guide the organization in developing a more efficient, effective, and transparent system of providing public services. The process below describes the recommended system for implementing the plan and making regular annual updates to it to ensure it remains relevant in meeting current community and organizational needs.

Regular engagement from the community, the Council, and the organization are essential to fostering a system that is responsive and accountable. The graphic below illustrates what the annual process will look like going forward to maintain alignment between the strategic plan, the budget, and the departments' work plans. It also highlights where the engagement will take place, so the community, elected officials, and staff understand when and how to participate and get involved in this process.

It is recommended the strategic plan undergo a complete update every five years to conduct more comprehensive engagement, review the vision and values, and examine the broader community context. These major updates will ensure the five-year vision continues to serve as a North Star in guiding the community and organization. These community engagement efforts also help to foster strong relationships with Mankato's community and its partners and build support for implementing the goals.

Acknowledgments

The City Council and Strategic Planning Team are grateful to the hundreds of community members and City employees who participated in the strategic planning process to share their perspectives, experiences, and ideas. Whether it was organizing and hosting numerous strategic plan events, completing the community survey, presenting at a local community group, or conducting an interview, the project team aimed to reach as many voices as possible in the process, and the resulting goals and strategies reflect this engagement.

The Strategic Planning team, in partnership with the consulting team, led the engagement efforts and created accessible opportunities to develop the plan. The members of these teams are acknowledged below.



City Council

Najwa Massad, Mayor
Mike Laven, Councilor, At Large
Michael McLaughlin, Councilor, Ward 1
Dennis Dieken, Councilor, Ward 2
Kevin Mettler, Councilor, Ward 3
Jenn Melby-Kelley, Councilor, Ward 4
Jessica Hatanpa, Councilor, Ward 5

Strategic Planning Project Team

Susan Arntz, City Manager
Parker Skophammer, Director of Administrative Services
Paul David, Engagement and Communications Director
Nicholas Peterson, Senior Management Analyst

Strategic Plan Steering Committee

Jessica Hatanpa, City Councilor
Kevin Mettler, City Councilor
Andrew Burk, YMCA
Dan Bastian, Angie's Artisan Treats, LLC
Angie Bersaw, Bolton & Menk, Inc.
Jessica Beyer, Greater Mankato Growth
Trisha Anderson, Partners for Affordable Housing
Mike Drummer, Drummer Companies
Rob Else, El Microcircuits
Sabri Fair, Region Nine Development Commission
David Jones, Minnesota State University
Bob Meyer, Blue Earth County
Akram Osman, New East High School
Annette Parker, South Central College
Travis Paul, Mayo Clinic Health Systems
Carter Person, Mankato Independent Originals
Melinda Wedzina, VINE Faith in Action
Matt DuRose, Deputy Director of Public Safety
Mark Konz, Associate Director of Planning and Development Services
Rick Baird, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator
Claudia Hicks, Facilities Recreation Coordinator
Jeff Johnson, Director of Public Works

SSW Consulting Team

Sara Singer Wilson, Principal/Owner
Ashley Sonoff, Associate
Sasha Konell, Communications + Engagement Strategist

