



TRANSFORMING TOMORROW TOGETHER  
GREATER MANKATO 2040  
**THINK-TANK REPORT**

MINNESOTA, USA

JULY 2023





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This report summarizes the outcomes of the Transforming Tomorrow Together - Greater Mankato 2040 Future Think-Tank workshops which were held on April 14 & 28, 2023, followed by a Community Round-table day on May 19, 2023.

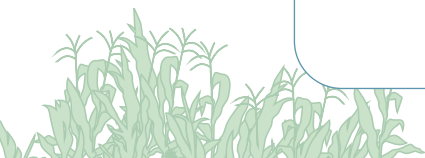
Approximately 140 stakeholders participated in each of the Think-Tank workshops and developed the scenarios presented in this report. This report has been produced as part of the Greater Mankato 2040 regional planning project which aims to provide comprehensive direction that will guide decision-making for regional leadership through 2040.

This report and the associated data analysis are available at:  
[lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/](https://lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/)

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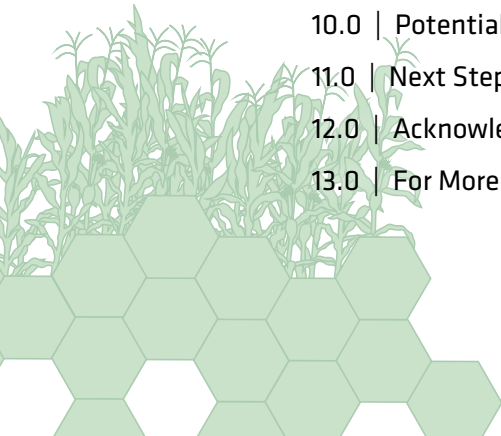
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# OVERVIEW OF THE GM2040 PLANNING PROCESS

'Transforming Tomorrow Together - Greater Mankato 2040' is a robust, inclusive, and forward-looking regional community planning process. It aims to explore the future strategic positioning of the Greater Mankato region, and to create an enduring, collaborative vision and roadmap to the future. A fundamental premise is that the world is changing fast, and the region needs bold thinking to help envision how it will thrive over the coming decades. We are exploring how we need to evolve and transform as a region, and what is our unique proposition in a Midwest and global context.

## What are we doing?

- This initiative is focused on Strategic Foresight and Strategic Positioning for the future of the region. It will explore where and how we can fit into a rapidly changing world.
- We are looking to the future – taking a 'future view' and building a vision out to 2040 and beyond. We want to understand how we need to evolve as a collaborative regional community.
- We want to create a shared regional plan, that will contain an implementation road-map with actions designed to move us toward the shared vision we create for the region.

## What is our approach?

- We are designing a connected, collaborative approach and want to include voices from across the region. There will be various opportunities to participate, including surveys, focus groups and community workshops.
- We are taking a bold and ambitious long-term view and thinking about how the Greater Mankato Region can thrive in a changing world.
- We want to connect to other strategic planning efforts and learn from our internal and external stakeholders.

## Who is included in this initiative?

- The 'Transforming Tomorrow Together - Greater Mankato 2040' initiative is being guided by an initial working group, including cities, commercial organizations, educational institutions, economic development organizations, and non-profits.
- The planning work will run into early 2024, and we will be engaging with people and communities across the region, including residents, students, industry groups and sectors, organizations, and external stakeholders. We plan for this to be an open, connected and inviting planning process and community conversation.

## Building on the success of Envision 2020

The Mankato region has a history of successful long-term regional planning. The previous Envision 2020 planning process helped guide the region over the last 10-15 years, and has produced numerous positive outcomes, built on an approach of collaboration and revitalization. Now it is time to recast our future plans and identify where the region fits into a rapidly changing world and identify what is our future 'sweet-spot'. Our focus is now building on this past work and looking out to 2040.

# 1.0 | HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The importance of collaboration, equity, inclusion, and planning for the future have been highlighted as critically important to building resiliency across the region as we look to the grand challenges ahead.

This report lays out the findings from the Think-Tank workshops, and each key step in the process. More details about the overall visioning process may be viewed on the 'Transforming Tomorrow Together – Greater Mankato 2040' project portal at [lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/](https://future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/).

The 'Transforming Tomorrow Together – Greater Mankato 2040' visioning process began with background exploration and analysis, through to building a range of future possible directions for the Greater Mankato Region. This work represents robust 'future gazing' where regional stakeholders considered possible directions and the impacts and consequences of those directions. The process, and the report, then drill down deeper into what people saw as the optimal or preferred future. This understanding helps lay the groundwork for figuring out 'how we get there.' The final vision and regional plan for Greater Mankato will be delivered in Fall 2023, after a series of in-depth industry and community roundtables, a second regional stakeholder survey, and a Future Summit.

## Steps in the process

Information gathering on regional stakeholder concerns and aspirations for the future of the Greater Mankato Region.

Introduce the Think-Tank process and the goals for the process.

Identify macro trends shaping the future of the Greater Mankato Region.

Identify key drivers and clusters of drivers shaping the future of the Greater Mankato Region.

Create plausible future scenarios for the Greater Mankato Region.

Identify Expected, Least Desired, and Preferred Futures for the Greater Mankato Region.

Identify potential high-level strategic actions and next steps in the regional planning process.

## Sections of the report

Regional Stakeholder Survey and Project Launch (Chapters 3 & 4)

Think-Tank Workshops (Chapter 5)

Forces Shaping the Future – Macro Trends (Chapter 6)

Key Drivers Identification and Identifying Scenario Shaping Clusters of Drivers; Cluster Map Development (Chapter 7)

Creating the Scenario Framework (Chapter 8)

Expected, Least Desired, and Preferred Futures (Chapter 9)

Potential High-Level Strategic Actions and Next Steps (Chapters 10 & 11)





The Greater Mankato region is an area of collaboration that extends around Mankato for approximately 60-70 miles, or a one-hour radius.

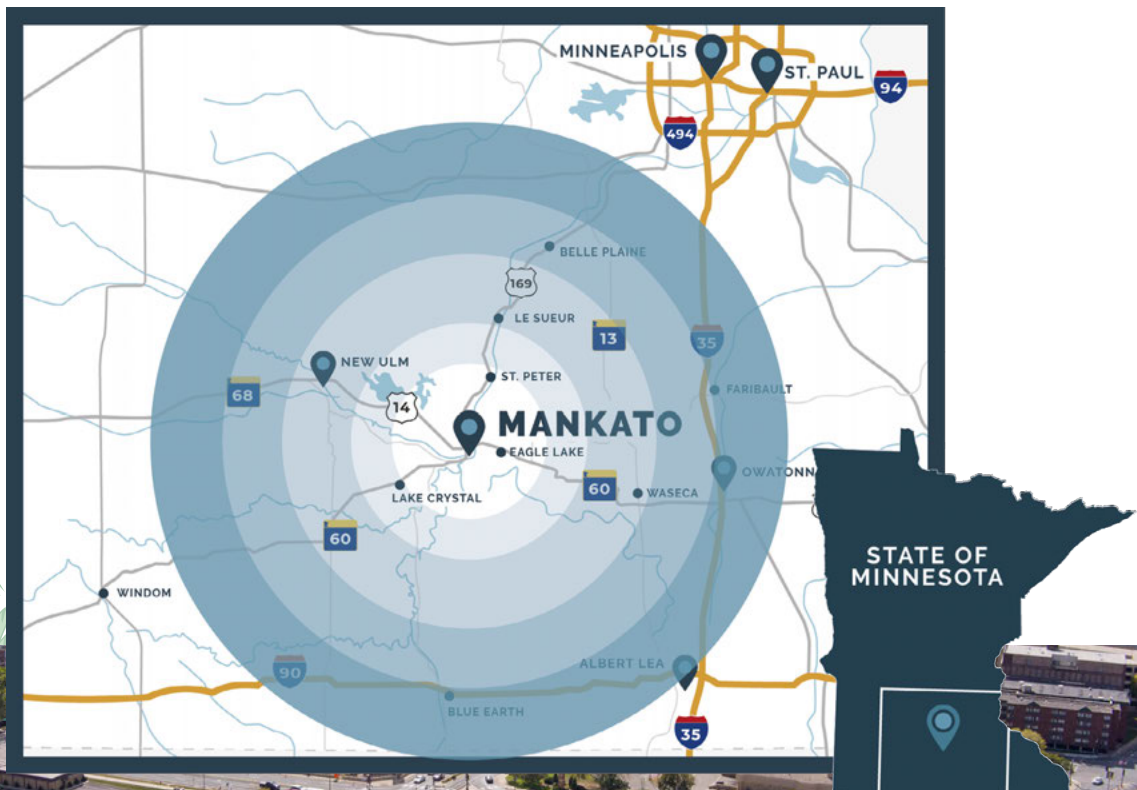
## 2.0 | INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 | THE GREATER MANKATO REGION

The Greater Mankato Region is centered on Mankato, with an area of influence that radiates outward across south central/west of Minnesota and the upper Midwest.

Together, the cities of Mankato and North Mankato create a regional center of over 100,000 people. With this critical size and location, Greater Mankato is a viable and attractive alternative to the megacity concentration of Minneapolis / St Paul.

Greater Mankato is an impressive and globally significant food producing region. Radiating out into southern Minnesota and beyond, the Greater Mankato Region is the gateway to a large agricultural production zone. This zone is home to an abundance of farming and agricultural industries, built on unbelievably fertile soils and abundant water supplies. Food and bio-based industries offer great promise for the future – and Greater Mankato will increasingly play a critical role in the future of the global food industry. This region is the perfect launching-pad for people and industries wanting to be at the forefront of innovation.



## 2.2 | REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

The 'Transforming Tomorrow Together - Greater Mankato 2040' Think-Tank workshops allowed regional stakeholders to take a 'deep-dive' into strategic visioning and future-thinking through a scenario-planning process.

This scenario-based Think-Tank report summarizes the visioning and planning workshops that took place on April 14 & 28, 2023. The Think-Tank workshops were conducted as an initial step in the project to develop an executable regional plan that will guide the Greater Mankato Region over the coming decades. The components of the planning work to date have been comprised of:



### FORMATION OF THE STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

This important group of regional leaders have taken on the responsibility of guiding this regional planning process. Led by Greater Mankato Growth, the group consists of representatives from education, businesses, nonprofits, agriculture, and city leadership.



### PROJECT LAUNCH

The planning process launched to the public in September 2022, where local stakeholders gathered to learn about the initiative and to contribute to initial discussions about the future of the region.



### REGIONAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

An extensive survey has been completed to date by over 740 regional stakeholders. The survey aimed to understand stakeholder perspectives on current conditions in the region, as well as their aspirations for the future.



### THINK-TANK WORKSHOP #1

The first part of the Think-Tank was held on April 14, 2023. At this workshop, participants learned about macro trends impacting the region, and assessed key drivers of the region.



### THINK-TANK WORKSHOP #2

The second part of the Think-Tank was held on April 28, 2023. At this scenario-planning workshop, participants produced four plausible potential futures for the region.



### THINK-TANK PARTICIPANT HEATMAPS

Think-Tank participants completed heatmaps at the end of the second Think-Tank to express their Least Desired, Expected, and Preferred future scenarios for the region, looking out to 2040. The results are examined in this report.

*"I'm excited about the energy I see in the area. There are people of all ages living in the region and people who are very engaged and dedicated to collaborating on making this a great place to live. I think there is more we can do to conserve green space for outdoor recreation, which is growing in popularity. There is also growing cultural diversity, which means there is more opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other."*

- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent





The 'Transforming Tomorrow Together - Greater Mankato 2040' initiative is a regional planning and visioning project that is exploring a shared future vision for the Greater Mankato Region and will result in the creation of a shared regional plan.

## 3.0 | PUBLIC PROJECT LAUNCH

The 'Transforming Tomorrow Together - Greater Mankato 2040' collaborative regional planning initiative launched on September 12, 2022. Approximately 100 key regional stakeholders gathered to kick off the initiative. The primary purpose of the Launch was to explain what the initiative is all about and to encourage regional stakeholders to participate in upcoming visioning and planning events. These 'Fast Facts' can be found on the project portal at: [lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/project-launch/](http://lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/project-launch/).

Participants at the Launch convened in small working groups to explore two key questions that would help guide the visioning and regional planning initiative. Below is a synthesis of the responses as described by participants:

### What is the future Sweet Spot for the region in the context of the upper Midwest, nationally, and globally?

- Strong agriculture and food sectors - especially as leader in innovation and technology
- Wellness - particularly as a healthcare destination, quality of life, and cultural amenities
- Manufacturing - as a distribution center and the opportunity to be the Silicon Valley of green technology
- Diverse economy and livability - accessibility to MSP/larger metro, affordability, and recreation hub
- Ethos of the Region - philanthropic orientation, welcoming, and united philosophy
- Inclusivity and Diversity - history of welcoming refugees and future opportunity to construct a regional plan for migration and integration
- Environmental aspects - water abundance

### How does the Region need to evolve and transform, over the coming decades, to ensure it can adapt and thrive?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on where the Region is succeeding:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food &amp; Ag</li> <li>• Livability</li> <li>• Inclusivity and Diversity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Build what the Region needs to improve:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More youth voices</li> <li>• Attraction and amenities</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable regional growth</li> <li>• Retention of talent - build on all the conditions that support workers</li> <li>• Environmental awareness - consider sustainability going forward</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Social issues - become more equitable</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Livability - keep improving</li> <li>• Transform ideas into reality - positioning the region</li> <li>• Transportation - autonomous and electrification</li> <li>• Technology - automation and adapt to buying on the internet</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|



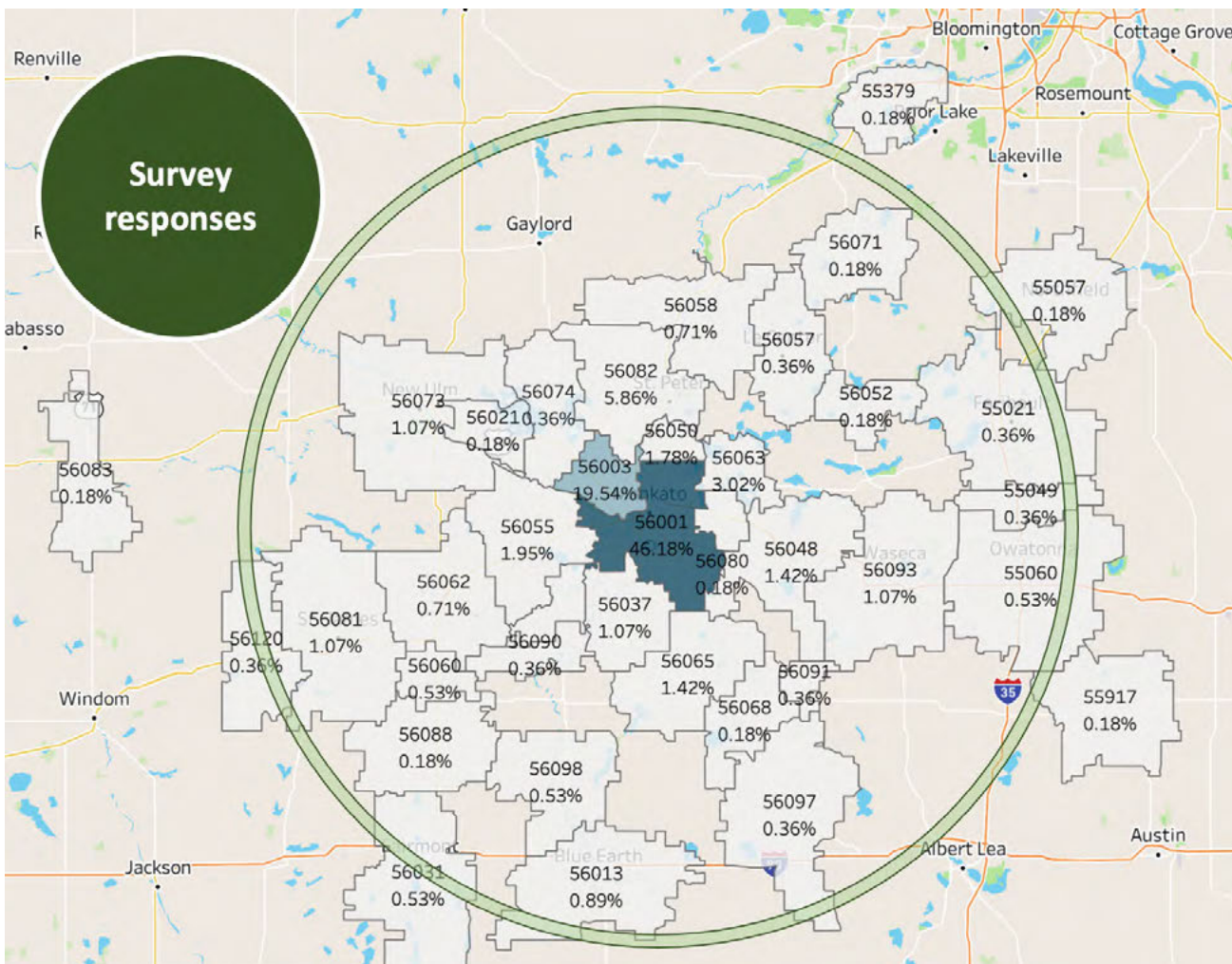
# 4.0 | SURVEY RESULTS


For the purposes of this report, a selection of results will be presented. However, all interactive results can be viewed in real time on the project portal.

Prior to the Think-Tank workshop, an extensive regional community survey was conducted to gather insight into the regional community's perceptions of trends influencing the region's future, including the most significant opportunities and challenges facing the region. At the time of the Think-Tank, approximately 740 people responded to the survey, which was promoted on the portal, the social media platforms and in the local press.

Respondent profile information is available on the project portal, and includes information such as age, race, zip code, county lived in, and how long they have lived or worked in the Greater Mankato area. Below are the compiled results of the survey as of the April Think-Tank. The regional community survey results are posted on the project portal at: [lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/](http://lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/).

Below is the compilation of which zip code respondents live in the Greater Mankato area.





DataInsight

- The majority of survey respondents lived in the Mankato-North Mankato areas (66%) with the remaining of the respondents (34%) living in the surrounding areas.
- When asked if defining the broad regional area of Greater Mankato makes sense, 75.5% of respondents said 'Yes', 16.3% said 'Maybe', and 8.2% said 'No'.

# 4.1 | IMPORTANCE OF SHARED REGIONAL VISION, VALUES, AND PLAN

Survey respondents were asked how important it is to have a shared regional vision and shared regional values for the future of the Greater Mankato region. Respondents were asked the three questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

How important is it to have a SHARED REGIONAL VISION for the future of this Greater Mankato region?

Scale: 1 = Not important;

10 = Highly important

How important do you think it is to identify SHARED REGIONAL VALUES for this Greater Mankato region?

Scale: 1 = Not important;

10 = Highly important

How important do you think it is to have a SHARED REGIONAL PLAN that maps out a future for this Greater Mankato region?

Scale: 1 = Not important;

10 = Highly important

## Shared regional vision, values and plan

Importance of shared regional plan



Not important

Very Important



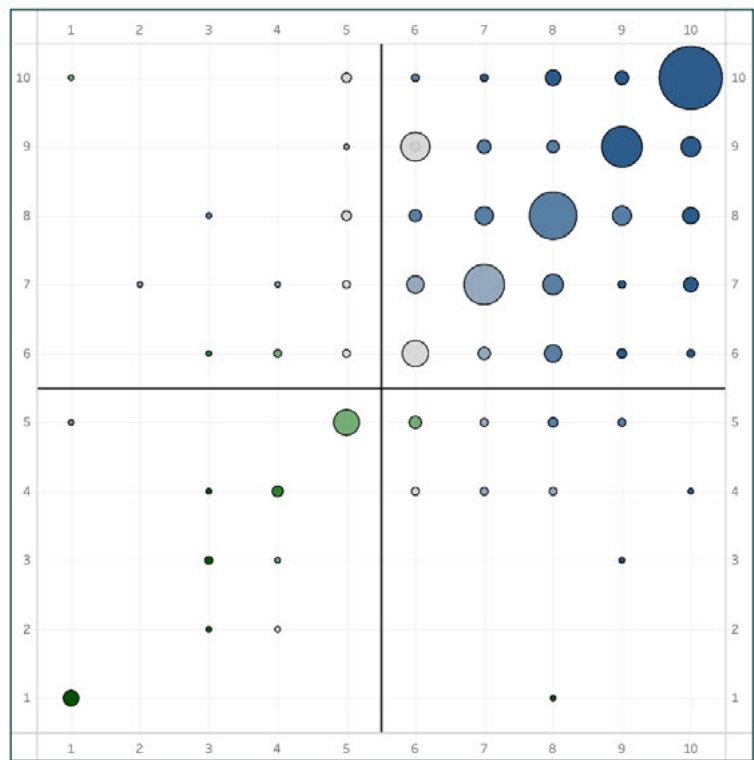
Very important



Importance of shared regional values



Not important



Importance of shared regional vision

Very Important



DataInsight

- The size and color of the circle denotes the popularity of the response.
- This chart shows that respondents felt that a shared vision, values, and regional plan were all important to the future of the Greater Mankato Region. This is excellent validation of the timing of the Greater Mankato 2040 regional planning initiative.

*"We are all connected. A plan, vision are more successful if a larger group is pulling/pushing in the same general direction. The importance of building values together (and in a very inclusive way) is so critical. It brings us into conversation with each other to build relationship and understanding."*

- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent

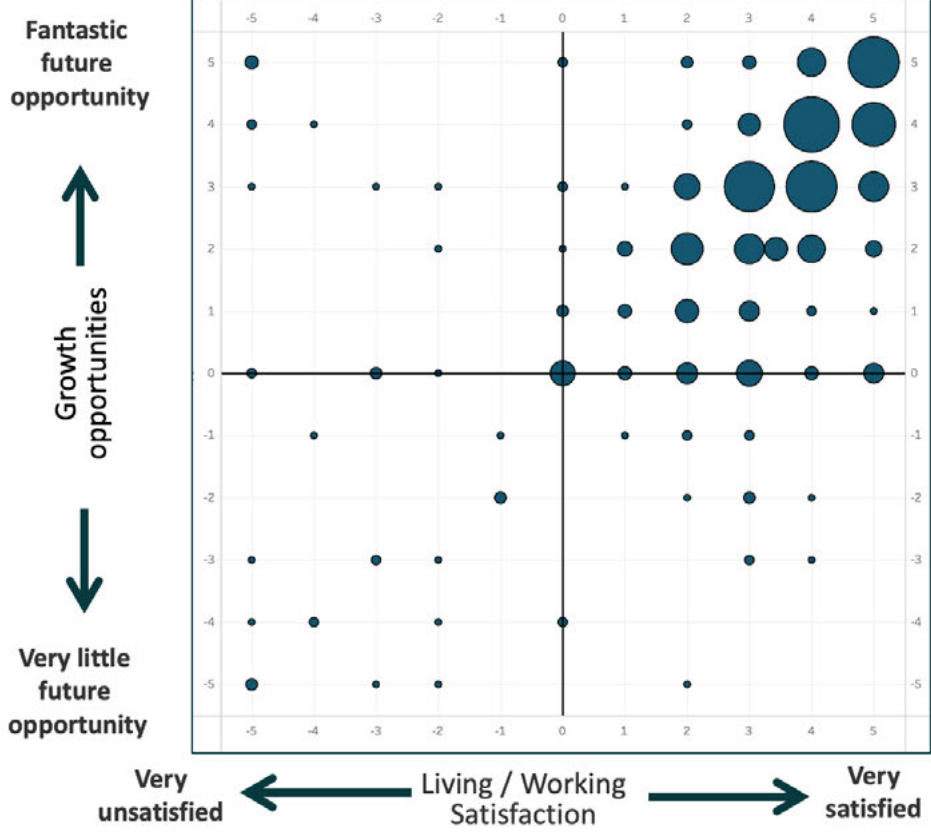
# 4.2 | LIVING AND WORKING IN THE GREATER MANKATO REGION

Survey respondents were asked how satisfied they are living and/or working in the Greater Mankato region and if they thought the region offers them future opportunities to grow and thrive. Respondents were asked the questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

How satisfied are you about living and/or working in the Greater Mankato region?  
 Scale: -5 = Very unsatisfied; 0 = Neutral; +5 = Very satisfied

Do you think this region offers you future opportunities to grow and thrive, in your life, interests, career and/or business?  
 Scale -5 = Very little future opportunity; 0 = Neutral; +5 = Fantastic future opportunity

## Living and Working in the Greater Mankato Region



- This chart shows that respondents felt mostly satisfied about living in the Greater Mankato Region, and that the region offers future opportunities to grow and thrive.
- This is encouraging data for the value proposition and appeal of the region.

*"I like the "medium" size of the city and easy access to smaller communities and their unique attractions. I like the diversity of age groups and cultures. I appreciate the benefits of having world-class health care infrastructure at my doorstep. The colleges and university keep the emerging workforce strong."*

- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent

# 4.3 | CURRENT DIRECTION AND PERFORMANCE

Survey respondents were asked about the current direction and relative performance of the Greater Mankato region compared to other regional areas. Respondents were asked the questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

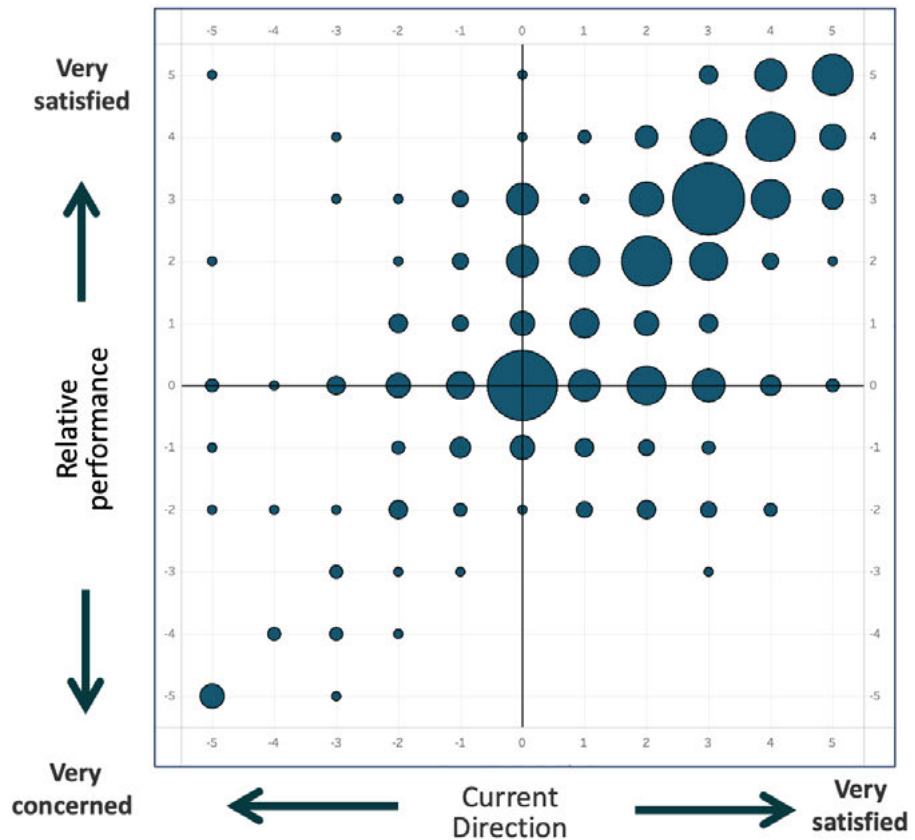
How satisfied or concerned are you about the way the region is changing and the overall current direction of the Greater Mankato region?

Scale: -5 = Very concerned; 0 = Neutral; +5 = Very satisfied

How satisfied or concerned are you about the current relative performance of the Greater Mankato region, compared to other regional areas?

Scale: -5 = Very concerned (we are falling behind); 0 = Neutral; +5 = Very satisfied (we are doing great and better than everyone else)

## Current Direction and Performance



DatInsight

- Overall, a good number of responses showed people were satisfied with the direction and performance of the region.
- However, the larger circles in the middle of the graph indicates there is some concern about the direction and performance of the region. This highlights the need for this regional planning work, to help refine the regional value proposition and performance.

*“The aging infrastructure of the community and the sprawl that is burdening the municipal budgets (is of most concern). We should be concentrating on infilling the community rather than expanding the community. Cities aren’t able to maintain the infrastructure that developers initially pay for. The tax dollars collected from the residents aren’t enough to cover the cost of long term maintenance and reconstruction of the city infrastructure.”*

- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent

# 4.4 | FUTURE RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE REGION

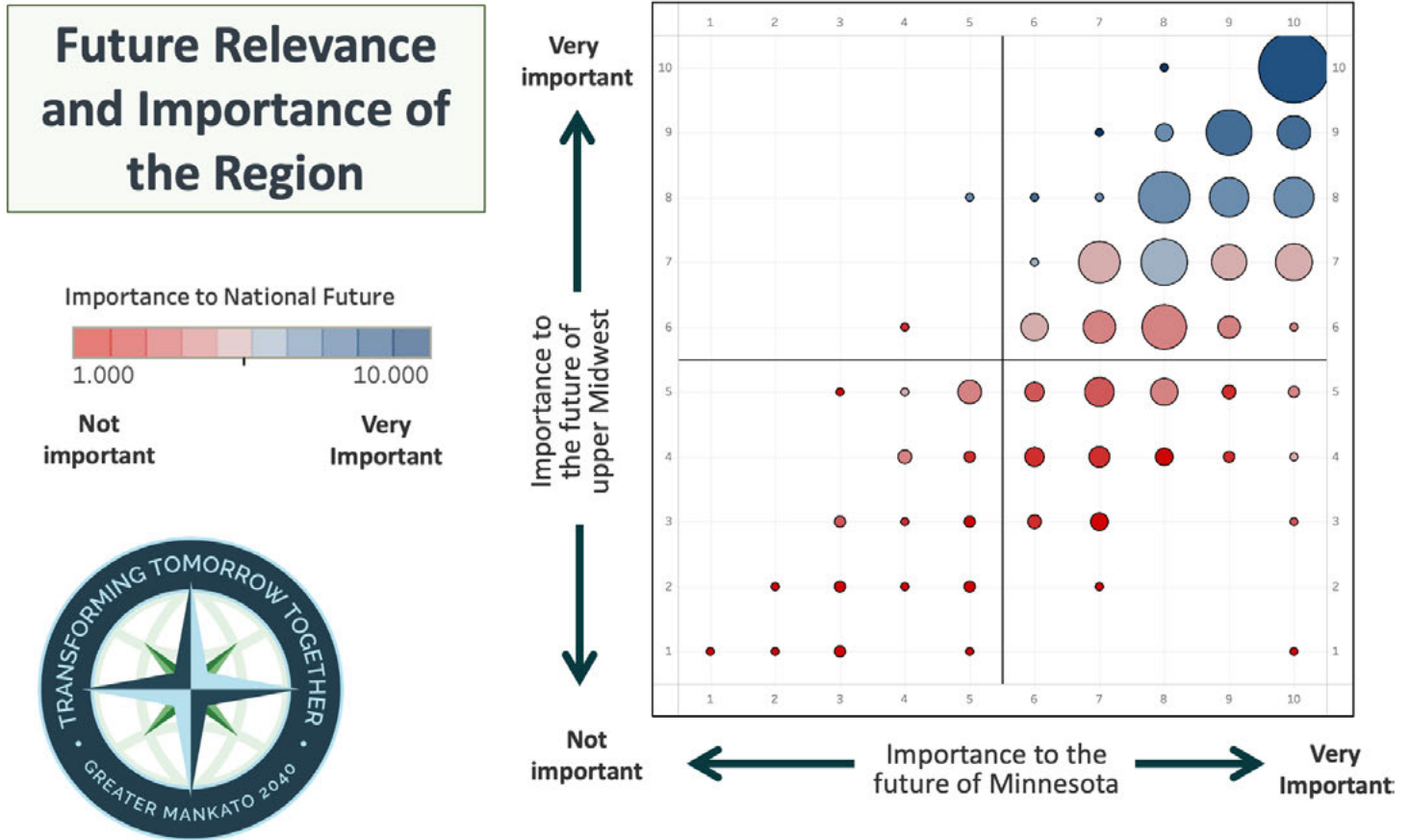
Survey respondents were asked how important and relevant they think the region could be to the future of Minnesota and the Upper-Midwest. Respondents were asked the questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

Over the next 10 – 20 years, how important and relevant do you think this region could be to the future of MINNESOTA?

Scale: 1 = Not important; 10 = Highly important

Over the next 10 – 20 years, how important and relevant do you think this region could be to the future of the UPPER-MIDWEST?

Scale: 1 = Not important; 10 = Highly important



DataInsight

- The size of the circle denotes the popularity of the response. The color of the response denotes the importance of the Greater Mankato Region to the future of Minnesota and the Upper Midwest.
- This chart shows that a significant number of people do not see a strong importance and relevance of the region at a State or national level. This is somewhat countered by a large group of people who see the region having a highly important and relevant role at all scales.

*“Our region continues to get larger and larger conventions, events, concerts, restaurant chains, etc. that shows that we are making the map as a large community. I think our community will continue to grow by showing that each city within the region has its own offerings and can create great opportunities regardless of what someone is looking for.”*

- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent



## 5.0 | SCENARIO-BASED THINK-TANK WORKSHOP

The ‘Transforming Tomorrow Together – Greater Mankato 2040’ Think-Tank workshops were conducted on April 14 and 28, 2023, at the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel & Event Center in Mankato, Minnesota. The workshops explored how the Greater Mankato Region could evolve by 2040 and consisted of:

- A review of global trends and the impact of these trends on the Greater Mankato Region
- Assessment of the region’s strengths and weaknesses
- Formulation of the different plausible scenario ‘spaces’ and development of detailed narratives and descriptions of each scenario
- Examination of the impact and consequences of each scenario on various aspects of community and economic development in the Greater Mankato region
- Identification of the preferred future and critical action steps to achieve the preferred future

**Scenario planning provides a way to explore various plausible futures and consider the implications and consequences of different future pathways. This adds a richness and depth to the discussions about preferred future, and a consideration of the intended and unintended consequences.**

The Think-Tank began with an in-depth presentation on future trends and global conditions before moving on to conduct scenario planning for the Greater Mankato Region. Future iQ’s scenario planning process provides a methodology from which to explore plausible futures and takes into consideration the implications of various future scenarios. The process aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape the Greater Mankato Region looking out to 2040
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for the region
- Begin exploring alignment around a shared future vision for the region



The scenarios developed during this Future Think-Tank workshop and outlined in this report are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for the Greater Mankato Region. Workshop deliberations can assist in identifying key actions for the region and how various groups might best contribute to future developments.





## 6.0 | FORCES SHAPING THE FUTURE – MACRO TRENDS

Think-Tank participants explored the forces of change shaping the future of the Greater Mankato Region, including three key areas of emerging macro trends and forces of change. Perceptions around the nature of impact of these trends, both in terms of size and timing of impact, were explored to gauge how important participants consider the trends. Participants discussed the emerging trends on global, regional, and local scales, and related them directly to the Greater Mankato Region in terms of how well prepared they considered the region.

Specifically, the key trend areas included:

- Demographics, population and mass urbanization
- Energy, food, water and climate change
- Technology and the speed of change

Of relevance to the discussion on trends is the speed and scale of change occurring. Newly developed innovations are being implemented globally and locally at all scales, thereby changing the face of industries and society in a rapid and profound way. A concern expressed at the Think-Tank was the perceived ability of the region to adapt and respond to these changes. Velocity and trajectory are key elements that often create resistance to change and require clear communication and outreach to promote trust around the purpose of change. Think-Tank participants emphasized the need for continued regional collaboration and consistent communication and messaging as the region pursues its preferred future.

In the face of accelerating speed of change, the key to long-term resiliency for the Greater Mankato Region is the ability to anticipate change, adapt, and remain agile in response to emerging trends. This includes collaboration and a regional approach to change.





Drivers are events, trends, developments, catalysts, or forces that actively influence or cause change. The top 20 drivers for Greater Mankato are seen to shape the region's future.

## 7.0 | KEY DRIVERS IDENTIFICATION

### 7.1 | DRIVER DESCRIPTIONS

With the background of external trends, Think-Tank participants produced drivers that they considered most likely to shape the future of the region. The drivers had been discussed at a group level and then at the wider workshop level. The scope of each driver was clarified, and any similar drivers were grouped, and new drivers added, until a list of twenty unique key drivers were identified.

#### KEY DRIVERS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE REGION, AS IDENTIFIED AND DEVELOPED IN SMALL WORKING GROUPS BY THE THINK-TANK PARTICIPANTS:

(Please note that these drivers are not in any particular order.)

**FUTURE-SPLITTING QUESTIONS™**

Are we going to see bigger farms or niche/smaller operations? Where are local farms going?

#### 1. International Agricultural Opportunity

This driver is about how global trends in Agriculture impact the Greater Mankato Region. Key trends associated with this driver are changing consumer demands and increased world hunger associated with climate change and global population increases. These trends provide a tremendous opportunity for the Greater Mankato region to leverage this increased agricultural demand to attract new businesses and to promote the next generation of farmers in the region. The Greater Mankato region could increase its contribution to Minnesota's leadership in becoming the Midwest breadbasket of the world.

**FUTURE-SPLITTING QUESTIONS™**

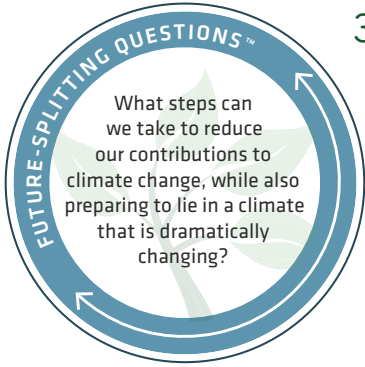
What are we going to do to increase inclusivity and accessibility across all demographics to provide an environment of belonging?

#### 2. Changing Demographics

This driver is about the need for the Greater Mankato Region to become an inclusive, inviting regional hub that is attractive to all demographics. Key trends associated with this driver include the region's increasing numbers of people from diverse cultures and the departure of youth from the area. It is predicted that nationally by 2034, the number of people over 65 will be greater than the number of people aged 18 and under. The effects of an aging population in the region will cause workforce shortages and an increased demand for affordable and adequate housing. The region needs to focus on inclusivity and accessibility to support its workforce needs.







### 3. Impacts of Climate Change

This driver is about the region and its ability to become more climate resilient in the face of climate change. Key trends associated with this driver include instability and variability of temperatures and precipitation impacting human health. Warmer temperatures will require a wider variety of crops and the taxing of traditional crops. Climate change will directly impact agricultural production and potentially water quality, and storm/sewer systems. The region will most likely see 'climate refugees' as people migrate from warmer areas of the country.



### 4. Intensified Land Use Pressures

This driver is about the need to become advocates for the region's natural resources as land use pressures intensify. Key trends associated with this driver include the use of prime agricultural land developed for urban uses (housing, renewables, business), and land preservation, conservation, and greater density. Potential impacts on the Greater Mankato region include an emerging heat island effect, unaffordable farmland and cost of development, greater innovation for food and housing, increased PUDs (Planned Unit Development) and increased outside investment.



### 5. Political Power Shift

This driver is about the need to become better advocates for the region's political power. A key trend associated with this driver is the shift from rural to urban population growth which means less representation for rural communities such as Greater Mankato / Greater Minneapolis and less populous states. Another trend is toward the absence of moderate thought and political ideation in the two-party system. The effects of these trends could potentially mean fewer allies in Greater Minnesota to advocate for appropriated resources, and less central representation for utilizing resources within the region.



### 6. Current and Future Resource Demands

This driver is about current and future demands on the region's natural resources. As the region grows, there will be increased demands for water, food, energy, and shelter. Current suburban sprawl and a car-culture will need to shift to more sustainable practices to preserve the region's valuable resources. These practices would include increased density, fewer large lots, electrification, water conservation, becoming better stewards of the environment - especially the river. Agriculture could become regenerative instead of extractive.



## 7. Talent Creation and Retention



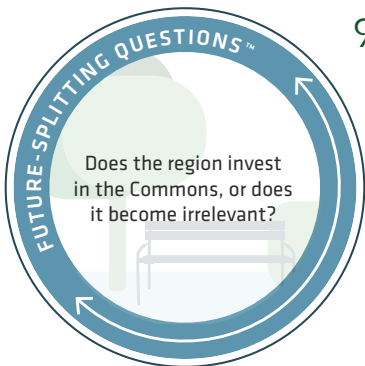
This driver is about how the Greater Mankato Region will create and retain the talent it needs to support businesses / employers in the region. Since COVID, there have been significant shifts in employee and employer priorities as well as employee demographics. The trends towards online education and work from home allows for more non-traditional and nonresidential students and workers. This means less workforce in the region. To attract and retain talent, the region will need to prioritize community amenities, including housing, school district quality, and childcare.

## 8. Investment Courage



This driver is about the region's appetite for development and investment in much needed shared resources such as the airport, community buildings, innovation centers, day care centers, and housing variety (low market to luxury). This would involve public and private partnerships with a shared vision, and the collaboration of major investors such as Mayo, Taylor, MSU and Agriculture. The impacts of such investment could create transformational change in the region.

## 9. Investment in the Commons



This driver is about investment in shared (common) amenities and resources to create greater livability in the region. A prevalent trend among families and younger generations is their desire to relocate for recreational amenities and community investment. This will require more regional collaboration on common amenities that may be utilized by regional residents – not just those in immediate locales. If this investment and collaboration does not occur, the region risks losing population and workforce.

## 10. Shift to Cleaner, Renewable Energy

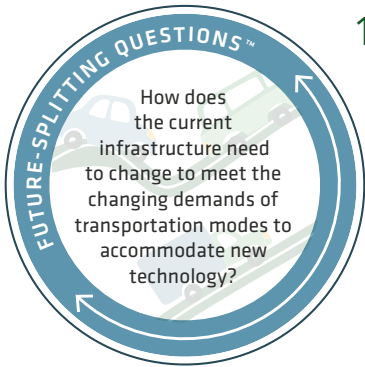


This driver is about the need to shift to cleaner renewable energy in all areas to be a sustainable region. Policy changes are needed to address global climate change, and transportation infrastructure needs to transition to support electric vehicles. Education and messaging play a significant role in helping regional stakeholders to understand why this transition is critical to the region's future. Agriculture is a large part of this transition, as competition for development of land resources will increase.



## 11. Impact of Technology Use

This driver is about increasing technology use in all aspects of life in the Greater Mankato Region. Automation and AI are the key trends associated with this driver that impacts education, work life, workforce, shopping, and every aspect of our lives. Repurposing of manufacturing spaces with a shift to more equipment and robotics will require a different type of worker and education will need to adjust. The educational component must be supported by technology and access at home and the region will need to collaborate on the funding and infrastructure to support these changes to stay ahead of the curve.



## 12. Transportation Infrastructure Development

This driver is about the need for the Greater Mankato Region to modernize its transportation infrastructure development to keep up with the changing demands of its users and to decrease energy consumption harmful to the planet. This involves railways, waterways, roads, and all associated transportation infrastructure to support electrification, autonomous driving, new modes of transit, and inter-community transit.



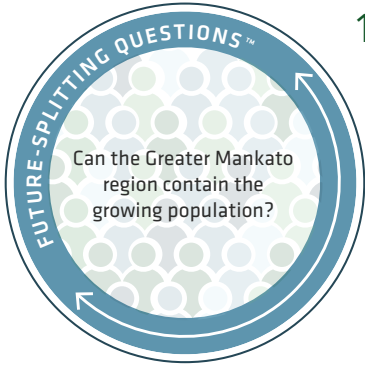
## 13. Shifting Priorities of the Workforce

This driver is about the changing philosophical perspectives around the meaning of work to people and the corresponding corporate and employer response to this change. People are leaving corporate America and there is a dramatic increase in entrepreneurship. The Greater Mankato needs to invest and amplify the livability of the region to attract, retain, and grow its workforce base. Adapting to this change has the potential to impact whether the region prospers or not.



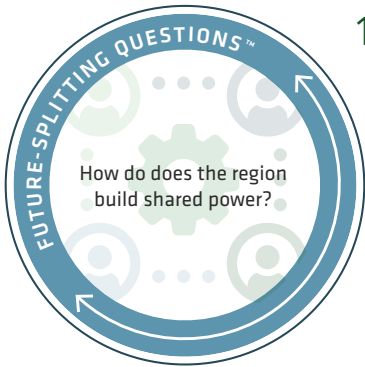
## 14. Next Generation Livability

This driver is about determining the needs that create the best livability for the next generation and then working to support those needs. Providing this culture or 'secret sauce' will be influential in attracting and retaining the next generation in the region. Key trends to consider are the importance of climate/environment, live/work balance, civic and social space, and housing. Openness and flexibility (e.g., in urban design and influence in planning and strategic long-term planning) is important.



### 15. Competitive Density

This driver is about maintaining a critical mass of population to be competitive in the State of Minnesota and nationally. It was noted that the population of the region increases and decreases frequently with the arrival and departure of college students. This trend directly impacts the housing market and has a financial impact on the region. The new culture of livability for the next generation plays a critical role for this driver.



### 16. Leadership and 'Co-Opetition'

This driver is about the ability of regional leadership to work together to produce bigger outcomes for the Greater Mankato Region. 'Co-Opetition' was a word created by Think-Tank participants. It reflects the need for regional leaders to collaborate and cooperate in decision-making for the region. Increased and more diverse ideas on transformational change will increase better outcomes for the region (instead of competing with each other). Demographic and generational shifting values will impact this driver.



### 17. Increased Demand for Societal Innovation

This driver is about increased demand for societal innovation and change in the Greater Mankato Region. This is due not only to the influence of new generational values, but also an overall awareness that the status quo over time will not attract people, especially diverse populations, to the area. This increased demand, along with the appetite for change provides regional leadership the opportunity to seize this moment in time to create transformational changes to the Greater Mankato Region.



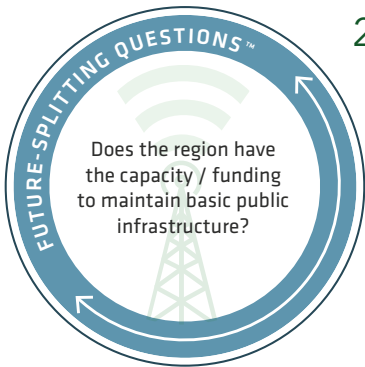
### 18. Global Demand for Quality Food and Health

This driver is about the increasing global population requiring more food, the importance of health and wellbeing (especially since COVID), and the impact of climate change on food production. The global demand for quality food and health is increasing at the same time that malnutrition and obesity is increasing. This will require 'breadbaskets of the world' to produce quality food via agriculture as a form of medicine to increase global health and wellbeing. Agriculture is the sweet spot for the Greater Mankato Region, and this is an opportunity for leadership to forge new global partnerships and take on the role as a major player in food production.



## 19. Housing Availability

This driver is about the critical issue of how housing demands will be met in the Greater Mankato Region. Currently, the demands/needs for housing is far greater than what is available, especially for single-family homes, and the cost barrier to build new is high. If this situation is not resolved, the region runs the risk of turning away and losing potential population growth. This in turn will intensify the lack of available workforce and employers could look elsewhere to locate.



## 20. Basic Public Infrastructure

This driver is about whether the Greater Mankato Region will be able to provide the needed water, sewer, and fiber (broadband) resources necessary to sustain the population of the region. Increased regulatory standards have raised expectations and have cost implications for residents and stakeholders. If the region cannot keep up with providing basic public infrastructure, this will challenge growth and redevelopment in the region.



# 7.2 | IDENTIFYING SCENARIO SHAPING CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

After agreement on the drivers, Think-Tank participants rated each of the twenty key drivers in terms of the size of impact on the future of the Greater Mankato region. The scale used was 1 - 10 (1 = low relative future impact; 10 = very high relative future impact). The size of impact refers to how significant the participant considers the driver will be in shaping the future of the Greater Mankato region. The individual ratings by each participant were pooled and averaged, providing an overall rating for each driver by the entire group of participants. Then, two scatter diagrams of the drivers, based on size of impact were developed. The two diagrams represent the driver assessment in terms of economic approach and community adaptation.

## 7.2.1 | ECONOMIC APPROACH

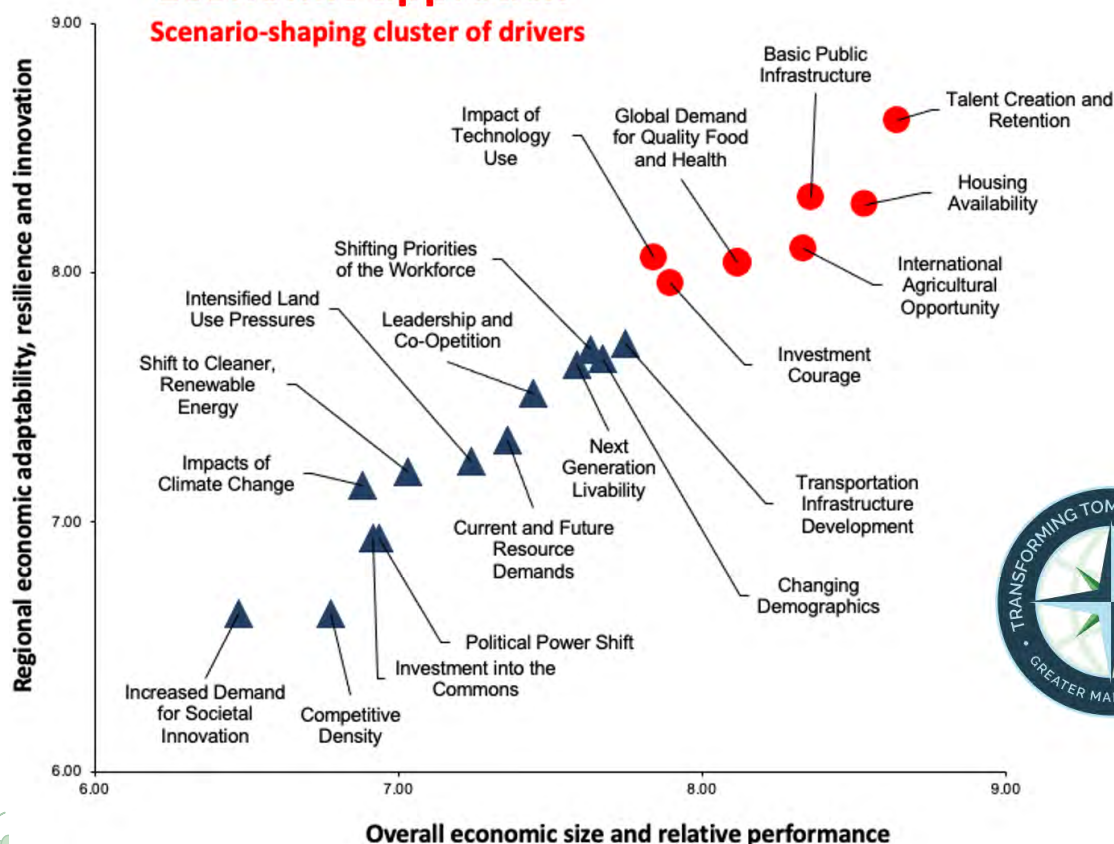
The scatter diagram allows the identification of clusters which are relatively high in impact.

The process illustrated below show the clusters of drivers that were seen as most critical in shaping the future from an economic approach – these clusters are termed ‘Scenario-Shaping Clusters of Drivers.’

This scatter diagram identifies the clusters of drivers considered most critical in shaping the economic development future of the Greater Mankato region looking out to 2040.

### Economic approach

#### Scenario-shaping cluster of drivers



DataInsight

- The identified drivers for the economic approach analysis were clustered around the dimensions of regional economic adaptability, resilience and innovation, and overall economic size and relative performance of the region.
- The drivers identified as having the greatest impact on both the regional economic adaptability, resilience and innovation and overall economic size and relative performance were Talent Creation and Retention, Housing Availability, Basic Public Infrastructure, International Agricultural Opportunity, Global Demand for Quality Food and Health, Investment Courage, and Impact of Technology Use.



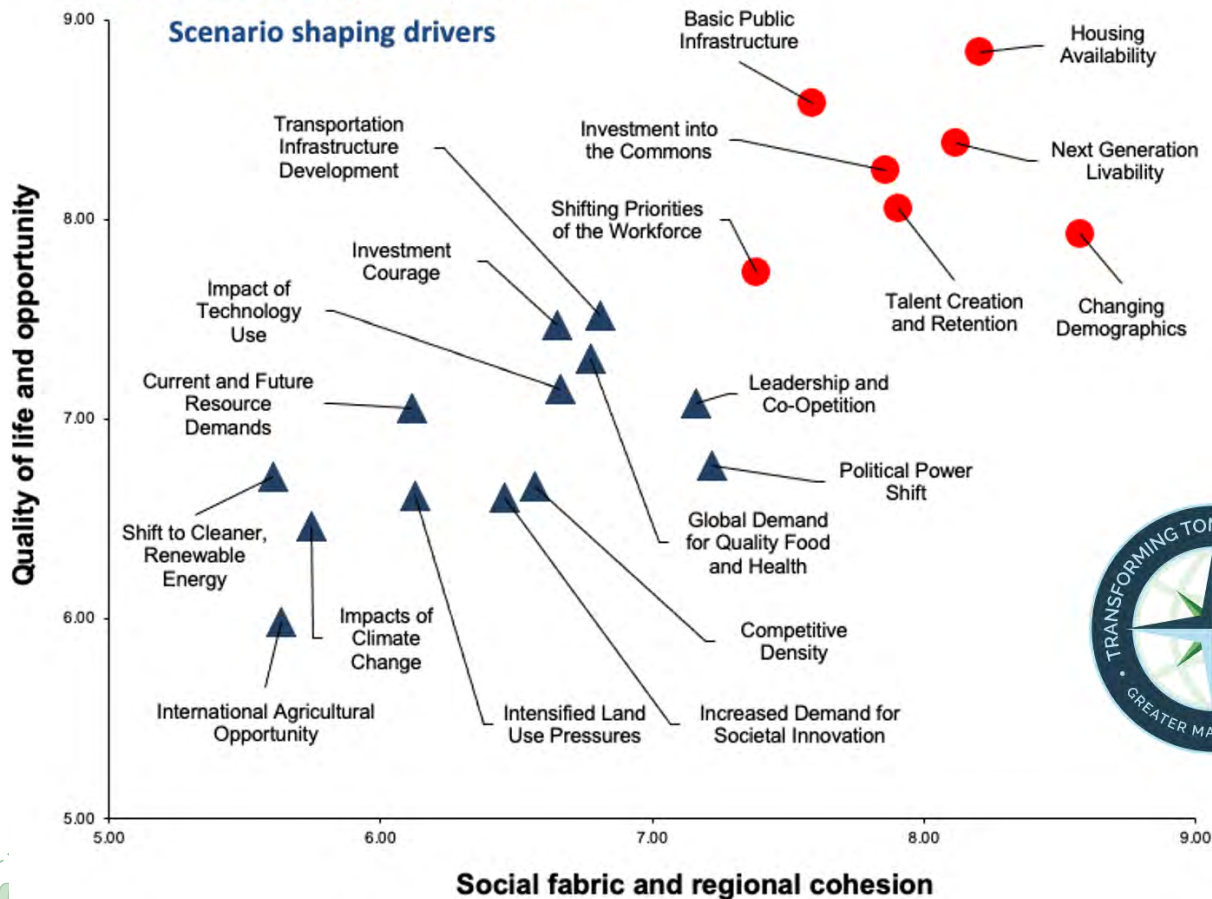
## 7.2.2 | COMMUNITY ADAPTATION


This scatter diagram identifies the clusters of drivers considered most critical in shaping the future community of the Greater Mankato region looking out to 2040.

The scatter diagram allows the identification of clusters which are relatively high in impact.

The process illustrated below show the clusters of drivers that were seen as most critical in shaping the future for community adaptation – these clusters are termed ‘Scenario-Shaping Clusters of Drivers.’

### Community adaptation





- The identified drivers for community adaptation were clustered around the dimensions of quality of life and opportunity and social fabric and regional cohesion.
- The drivers identified as having the greatest impact on both the were quality of life and opportunity and social fabric and regional cohesion Changing Demographics, Housing Availability, Next Generation Livability, Talent Creation and Retention, Investment into the Commons, Basic Public Infrastructure, and Shifting priorities of the Workforce.



## 7.3 | CLUSTER MAP DEVELOPMENT AND SCENARIO AXIS

Grouping similar drivers into two categories, clusters of drivers were identified by adding a thematic name linking the drivers in the clusters. These themes became the basis for the two axes on the scenario matrix that define the four scenario 'spaces', with quadrants either towards or away for each driver cluster. These quadrants were used to formulate four plausible scenarios. The two axes were defined as 'Economic Approach' and 'Community Adaptation'.

### FUTURE-SPLITTING THEMES BASED ON CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

#### Economic Approach

- Talent creation and attraction
- Housing availability
- Basic public infrastructure
- Global demand for quality food and health
- International agricultural opportunity
- Impact of technology use
- Investment courage

#### Community Adaptation

- Housing availability
- Next generation livability
- Changing demographics
- Basic public infrastructure
- Investment into commons
- Talent creation and retention
- Shifting priorities of the workforce



The two axes of the scenario matrix were developed through the thematic clustering of the key drivers identified by Think-Tank participants.



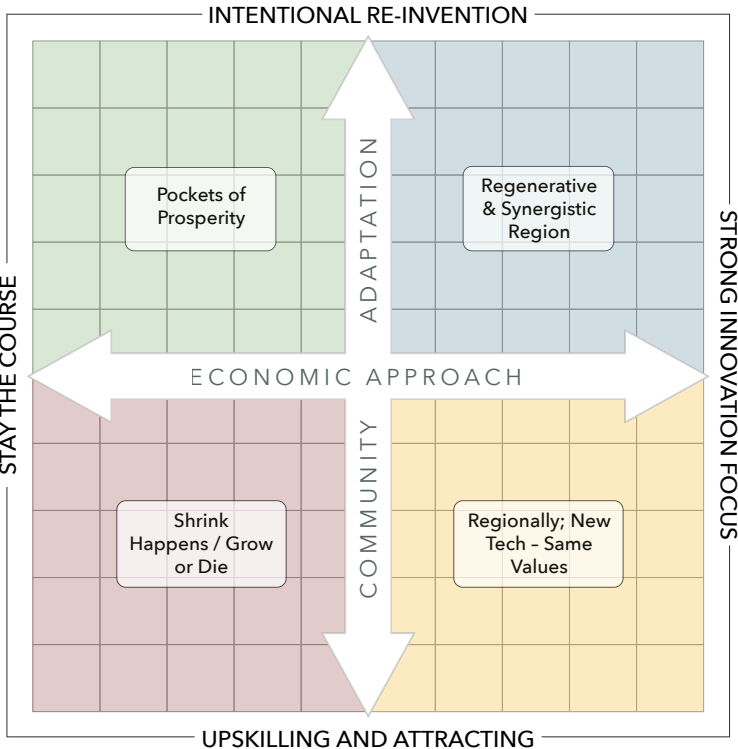


# 8.0 | CREATING THE SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

Workshop participants were presented with the scenario matrix, defined by the two major axes, 'Economic Approach' and 'Community Adaptation'. Brief descriptions were also attached to the end points of each driver axes. Participants were divided into four groups to develop a narrative for each scenario. Each group was asked to describe the characteristics of the Greater Mankato Region in 2040 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given. After the characteristics were established, Think-Tank participants were asked to devise major events or headlines of how the scenario occurred using the years 2025, 2030 and 2040, and to give their scenario a descriptive name. The name is intended to represent the description of the scenario in the form of a short title. Narratives, descriptions, and names of each scenario as developed by the workshop participants are included in the following sections.

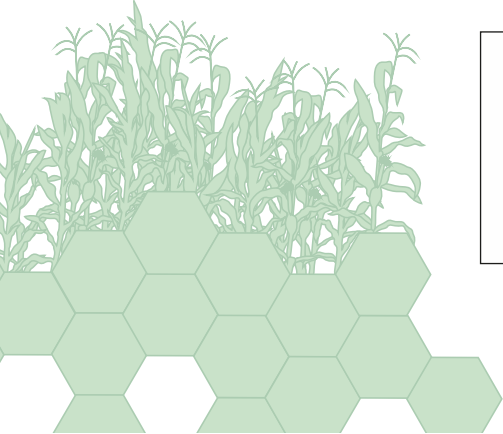
Focus on workforce and workplace transformation, with a holistic approach to work and employees, including emphasis on quality of jobs and broader metrics of success (wellness/happiness). Workplaces deliberately become more fluid with new work patterns. Education is more flexible and constantly available, amplifying a lifelong learning approach. The region evolves to deliberately foster new ideas, cultures and experiences, and invest in shared community amenities. There is a broad approach to attracting people, with appeal as an inclusive regional community that values health, equity and diversity.

Focus on pursuing well tried and tested approaches to economic and infrastructure development; with an emphasis on established industries and sectors. Investment is targeted towards traditional major economic drivers, with a business first orientation. Community infrastructure focuses on more traditional or 'suburban style growth model' - with single family homes and commercial development in greenfield development areas. Transit is predominately car oriented.



Strong focus on innovation and new sectors; including building on existing industries in creative ways. There is also innovative investing in emerging economies and human health, such as biosciences, tech, and 'food as medicine'. Public infrastructure focus is on re-development and repurposing aimed to maximize existing public infrastructure. Focus is on more diverse housing types, green building, new modes of transportation, and sectors that spur broad innovation.

The regional workforce and talent creation approach has a strong focus on 're-tool and re-train'; doubling down on the existing regional workforce talent pool. Attraction efforts focus on promoting well paying jobs in local businesses and industries. Approaches are institutionally driven; with a focus on existing traditional values, and workplace-based models. Communities are service driven, aiming to support traditional family structure; with an emphasis on fairness, safety and education, and quality of life.





The 'Pockets of Prosperity' scenario conveys a future where the region transforms its workplaces to support workforce needs and doubles down on its key strengths with a suburban style growth model.

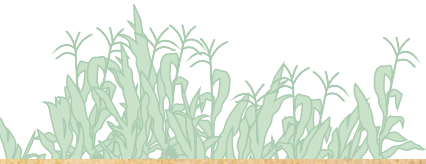
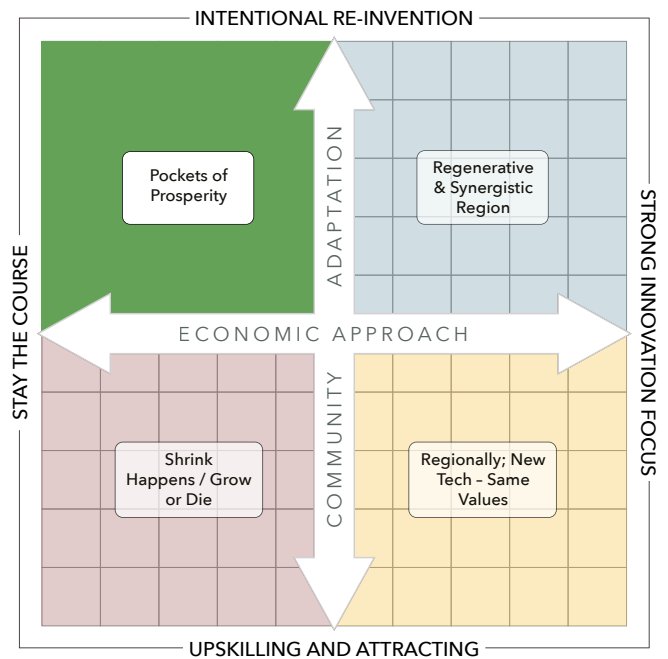
## 8.1 | SCENARIO A: POCKETS OF PROSPERITY

This scenario forecasts a future where the Greater Mankato Region maintains its strong traditional connection to the landscape and farming, and there is intentional reinvention of workplace settings to attract and retain workers.

Targeted investment in traditional economic drivers require expanded educational options to support business and industry. A focus on workforce development opens avenues for newcomers and the region becomes increasingly diverse. Community infrastructure is focused on supporting families with single-family homes and suburban sprawl continues to replace farmland. Transit remains primarily car-oriented and electric vehicles become more common to mitigate emission effects on climate change. Over time, the lack of investment in innovation, new technologies, and housing options impact the livability of the region. The population ages and graduating students are not inclined to stay.

### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT

- Industry is Ag and manufacturing oriented
- Educational options are expanded to support workforce needs
- New cultures are welcomed
- Single-family homes and suburban sprawl
- Innovation is stymied
- Population ages and students leave the area



# SCENARIO A CHARACTERISTICS: 'POCKETS OF PROSPERITY' - 2040

In the 'Pockets of Prosperity' scenario, workers are drawn to the region's suburban style growth. Lack of creative economic development and innovation over time allows some areas in the region to stagnate and are left behind.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future that recognizes the importance of quality of life for the workforce and there is intentional investment in supporting workforce development. The community is welcoming and values health, equity, and diversity. Over time, the suburban sprawl draws resources and population into pockets of prosperity and downtown areas suffer.



## REGIONAL ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

**The region focuses on its key strengths in Ag and manufacturing.**

- Manufacturing is reinvented with AI and electric vehicle production.
- Lack of labor places a strain on workforce development and new work patterns and educational pathways develops.
- The region focuses on expanding infrastructure and transportation network.
- There is an increased need for rural healthcare.



## REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

**Regional population ages, students leave, and growth is stagnated.**

- Region becomes a community of dreamers and value conflicts emerge.
- Emphasis on traditional values discourages diversity and there is less draw to the community.
- Stay the course economic approach stymies automation and AI.
- Intentional bridging of cultures occurs.



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

**Technology is used to reduce the impact of sprawl on how we live and work.**

- Community sprawl impacts suburban growth and Agriculture in the region
- Heavy dependence on single occupancy vehicles necessitates transportation transition to electrification and innovative mobility solutions.
- Concerns rise for climate change and weather impacts on farming.
- Baby Boomers affect future housing construction.

**2025  
Headline News**

"STUDENT ONLINE ENROLLMENT HIGH / STUDENT IN-PERSON LEARNING LOW."



**2030  
Headline News**

"FARMERS REPORT RECORD PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH; CENSUS SHOWS POPULATION."



**2040  
Headline News**  
"ELECTRIC VEHICLE SALES SOAR."





The 'Regenerative and Synergistic Region' scenario conveys a future where the Greater Mankato region collectively transforms itself into a human and environmental hub that is inclusive, cohesive, and sustainable.

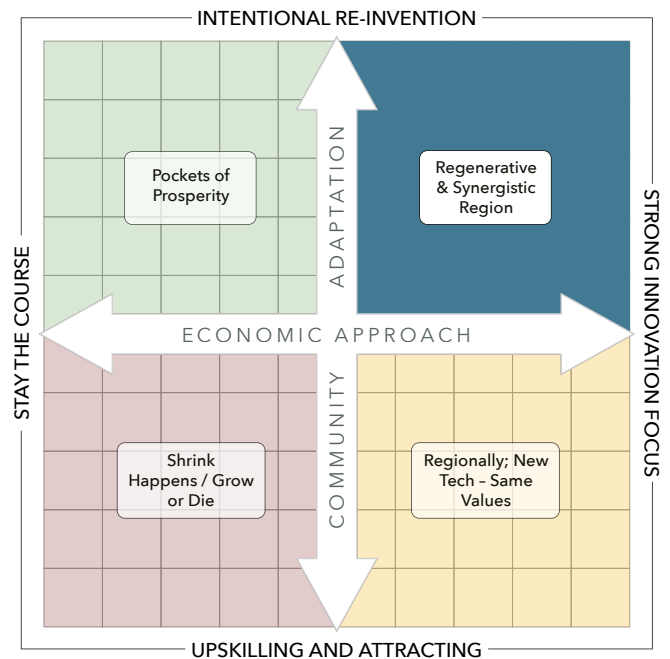
## 8.2 | SCENARIO B: REGENERATIVE AND SYNERGISTIC REGION

This scenario forecasts a future where the Greater Mankato Region adopts a strong focus on innovation and transforming the livability of the region.

There is investment in the Commons – the notion of shared amenities and resources that create much desired livability conditions. Intentional re-invention of education and the workplace are the key themes. Housing density increases to minimize sprawl and provide options for both youth and an aging population. Educational options expand to keep up with workforce demands, and broadband access makes work from home more prevalent. Connectivity is key to inclusivity and public transit becomes regional with high-speed rail and EV technologies. There is a focus on community vitality for all communities in the region; green spaces are preserved, and the river becomes a regional focal point. Water is recognized as a key regional asset that is critical to the world. Water conservation and environmental sustainability measures are enacted. Anticipating the growing role of the region in global agricultural output, agriculture reforms are made to become regenerative not extractive.

### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT

- New technologies enable more inclusion and connectivity
- Workplaces transform allowing new work patterns and work from home
- Educational opportunities expand into lifelong learning
- Regional communities are more diverse and welcoming
- Ag becomes regenerative and more diverse and productive
- Region becomes a model for community vitality



# SCENARIO B CHARACTERISTICS: 'REGENERATIVE AND SYNERGISTIC REGION' - 2040

In the 'Regenerative and Synergistic' scenario, communities in the region collaborate and share innovation. Human and environmental wellbeing are the drivers of the regional transformation.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future where the Greater Mankato Region becomes renowned for its collaborative and inclusive regional communities. The region is on the cutting edge of technological advancements that connect communities and support its workforce. Green technologies together with expanded educational and housing options increase livability of the region.



## REGIONAL ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

**Innovation in all industry areas is turbo charged and enabled by automation and technology.**

- Healthcare is revolutionized by telehealth (more inclusive) and food as medicine.
- Trajectory of education expands to more remote, flexible, and tied to workforce demands.
- Public transit becomes regional.
- Agriculture becomes sustainable and protects land and water; exports turn global.



## REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

**There is a focus on community vitality and diversity as Greater Mankato grows as a human hub.**

- There is growing access to and connectedness of communities in the region.
- The region embraces and promotes every asset that communities have to offer to attract people.
- Networking is important to bring people together for support.
- Community borders evolve; more work from home and innovative amenities and ideas are generated.



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

**Housing is denser and diversifies; green building and new modes of transportation emerge.**

- High-speed internet to everyone in a 60-mile radius of Greater Mankato.
- Agriculture becomes regenerative and water quality and biodiversity is protected, esp. the river.
- External communities share Greater Mankato's public infrastructure.
- Lake Crystal and Waseca become dormitory communities with high-speed rail to Greater Mankato.

### 2025 Headline News

"SOUTH CENTRAL MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES ANNOUNCE MOVE TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TIES."



### 2030 Headline News

"MSU GRAD LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE AG STARTUP WITH KEY PRIVATE/PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP FUNDING."



### 2040 Headline News

"GREENSEAM HOSTS GLOBAL FAIR SHOWCASING INNOVATION IN AG, FOOD, AND NATURAL RESOURCES."





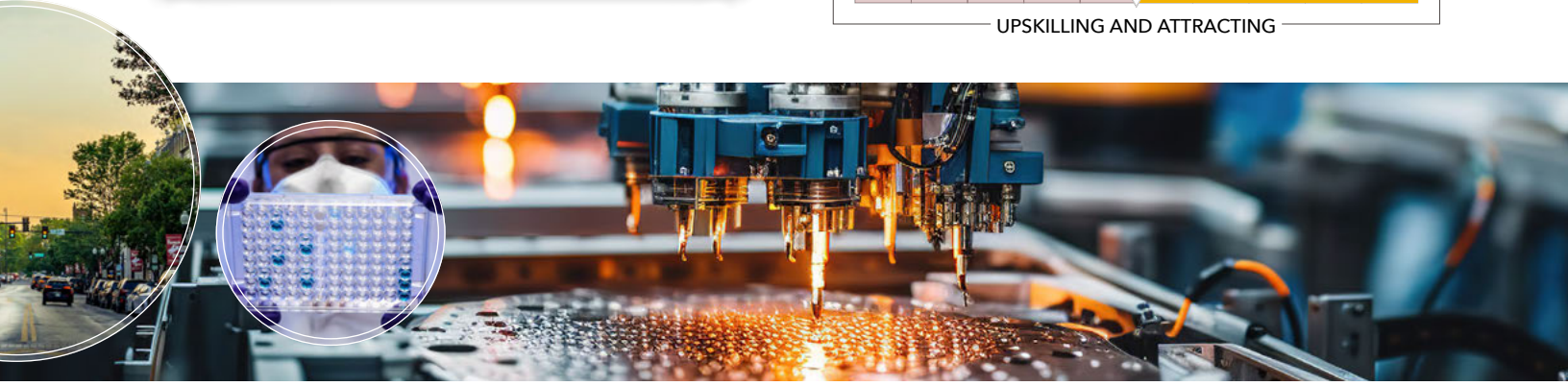
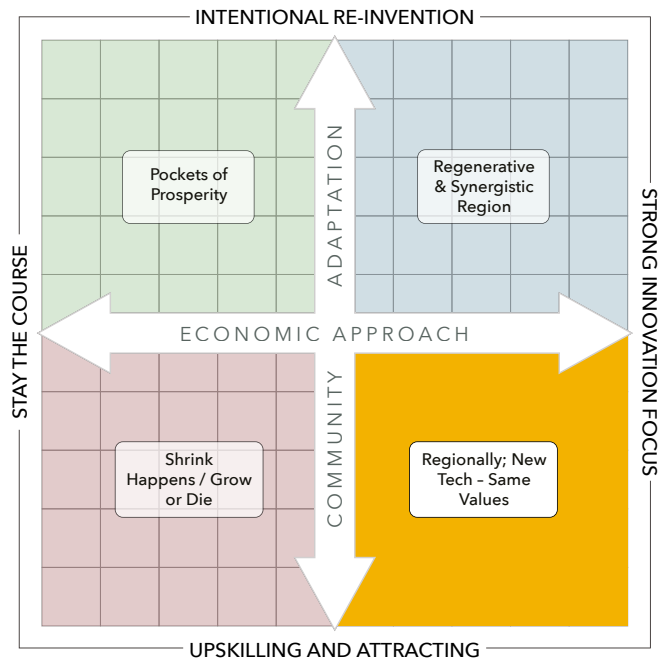
The 'New Tech/ Same Values' scenario conveys a future where there is a growing tension between traditional community values and practices and the increased regional investment in new technologies and creative approaches to regional development.

## 8.3 | SCENARIO C: REGIONALLY: NEW TECH/SAME VALUES

This scenario forecasts a future where the Greater Mankato Region invests heavily in technology and innovation to build public infrastructure that connects the region.

Housing affordability and availability is addressed and building codes are modified to accommodate multiple generations. Access to healthcare and medicine improves with telehealth and the regional population grows, especially in urban areas. New modes of transportation provide greater connectivity. Mankato State University and South Central College are very good at supporting workplace needs that require traditional talent pools including some upskilling of workers. Over time, this traditional approach to workforce development does not keep up with the demands of newer technologies and greater workforce demands and companies look elsewhere for workers. The community is not welcoming to newcomers and diverse populations are not attracted to the region.

- ### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT
- The region is challenged to find new people and talent
  - Regional cohesion is difficult to sustain
  - Energy systems are upgraded and new technologies focus on reducing carbon footprint
  - Microgrids are created and region supports itself
  - Agriculture becomes regenerative
  - Start-ups and entrepreneurs are supported



# SCENARIO C CHARACTERISTICS: 'REGIONALLY - NEW TECH/NEW VALUES' - 2040

In the 'Regionally - New Tech/New Values' scenario, the region surges ahead with new technologies but cannot support its workforce demands and does not adapt quickly enough with workplace-based employment models.

The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where the region invests in innovation and technologies that build industrial capacity and public infrastructure. Educational programs and workplace settings modeled after traditional talent pools and organization do not keep up with new needed skillsets and this restricts the region's capacity to grow. Over time, high tech businesses and industry look elsewhere to locate.



## REGIONAL ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

**Strong industry focus on innovation and technology use.**

- Increased access to healthcare in rural areas with telehealth/technology.
- Education is slow to innovate or provide alternative pathways.
- Transportation shifts to electrification and large vehicle hydrogen power.
- Significant shift in agriculture systems including crop diversity.



## REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

**Population makeup remains the same and education focuses on 're-tool', 'retrain'.**

- Focus on existing college students/industries does not attract diverse population.
- Urban areas gain population with those looking for 'small town' feel.
- Biosciences growing but restrained by doubling down on existing regional workforce talent pool.
- Regional workforce is pulled to urban areas from smaller towns in the region.



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

**Focus is on adaptability, innovation and movement towards a green economy.**

- Focus on natural resource preservation and climate change resiliency.
- More planning goes into streetscaping and new modes of transportation.
- New housing options emerge including multigenerational, modular, ADUs and energy efficient.
- Agriculture uses fewer pesticides, insecticides and chemicals.

### 2025 Headline News

"EXISTING BUSINESS GROWTH IS STRANGLERED BY LACK OF SKILLED WORKERS IN THE AREA."



### 2030 Headline News

"REGION ANTICIPATES INFLUX OF CLIMATE REFUGEES."



### 2040 Headline News

"40% OF REGIONAL POPULATION IS 1ST GENERATION MINNESOTANS."





The 'Shrink Happens / Grow or Die' scenario conveys a future where suburban growth gradually drains the vitality of urban areas and agricultural land is consumed by a sea of single-family homes.

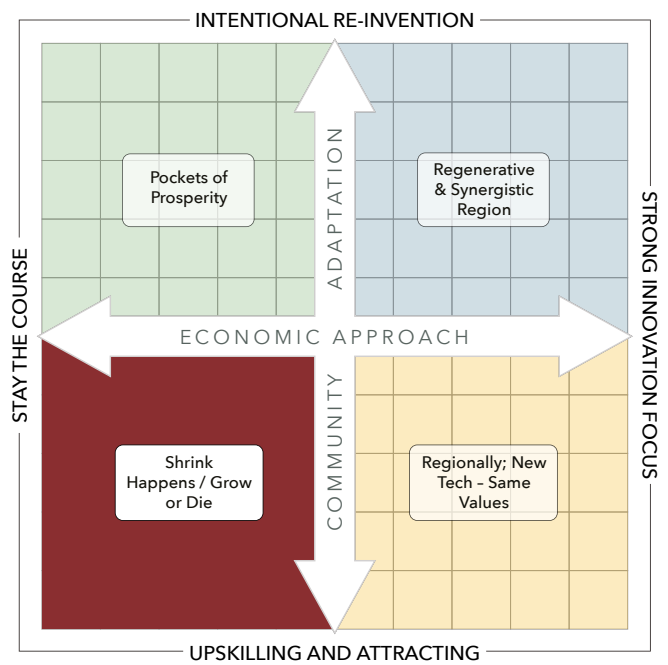
## 8.4 | SCENARIO D: SHRINK HAPPENS/GROW OR DIE

This scenario forecasts a future where the Greater Mankato Region stays the course with its approach to economic and infrastructural development, and growth continues to sprawl into the countryside.

Young families are drawn to the region for its safety, education, jobs, and available land for single-family homes. Traditional workplace-based models prevail and work from home options are not prevalent. Sprawling growth drains urban areas of their populations and inner-city decay occurs. Businesses leave the downtown areas of the region. Uncontrolled growth and car-centric transportation places tremendous pressure on hard infrastructure, and roads deteriorate. Lack of innovative solutions to counteract the effects of sprawl cause environmental degradation. Agriculture and existing industry continue to be the dominant industries of the region, but agricultural land shrinks with suburban growth. Over time, lack of investment in the Commons causes young people to leave the region. There are definite winners and losers in this scenario; the region survives with its abundance of natural resources, but it becomes irrelevant.

### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT

- Traditional values attract some young families to the region
- Suburban sprawl dominates development
- Public infrastructure is not able to support demand
- Greater Mankato region loses its competitiveness
- High tech workforce is not attracted to the region





# SCENARIO D CHARACTERISTICS: 'SHRINK HAPPENS - GROW OR DIE' - 2040

In the 'Shrink Happens - Grow or Die' scenario, regional adherence to the status quo slowly degrades quality of life and opportunity in the Greater Mankato Region.

The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where the future looks grim. Continuing with traditional approaches to community, infrastructure, and economic development will isolate the Greater Mankato Region and cause increasing hardship for residents and stakeholders.



## REGIONAL ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

**Region employs traditional economic development strategies.**

- Car-centric transportation system continues.
- Innovation lags and the region has difficulty attracting workers and new businesses.
- The region experiences challenges to growth due to low wages and high cost of living.
- Traditional industries do not allow 'work from home'.
- Automation replaces low-paying jobs.



## REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

**The Greater Mankato region promotes its 'Big City Feel with Small Town Vibes'.**

- Families seeking suburban lifestyle flock to the region.
- Community is service driven with strong philanthropic resources.
- Community safety is a priority; community watches and officer outreach initiatives increase.
- Diverse populations are not attracted to the region.
- Senior care and housing affordability are critical issues.



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

**Suburban sprawl represents primary built environment and landscape.**

- The river and downtown Mankato continue to degrade.
- Single family homes consume agricultural land with suburban growth.
- Infrastructure development can not keep up with continued sprawl on the edges of town.
- Increasing pressure on recreation spaces to develop.
- Housing options are cookie cutter single family homes.

### 2025 Headline News

"MANKATO CONTINUES TO INVEST IN FAMILY FOCUSED FUTURE."



### 2030 Headline News

"MANKATO WATER PLANT FAILS WITH PRESSURE FROM NEW DEVELOPMENT."



### 2040 Headline News

"MINNESOTA STATE CLOSES 75% OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES/SCHOOLS IN MINNESOTA.."



# 9.0 | LEAST DESIRED, EXPECTED, AND PREFERRED FUTURES

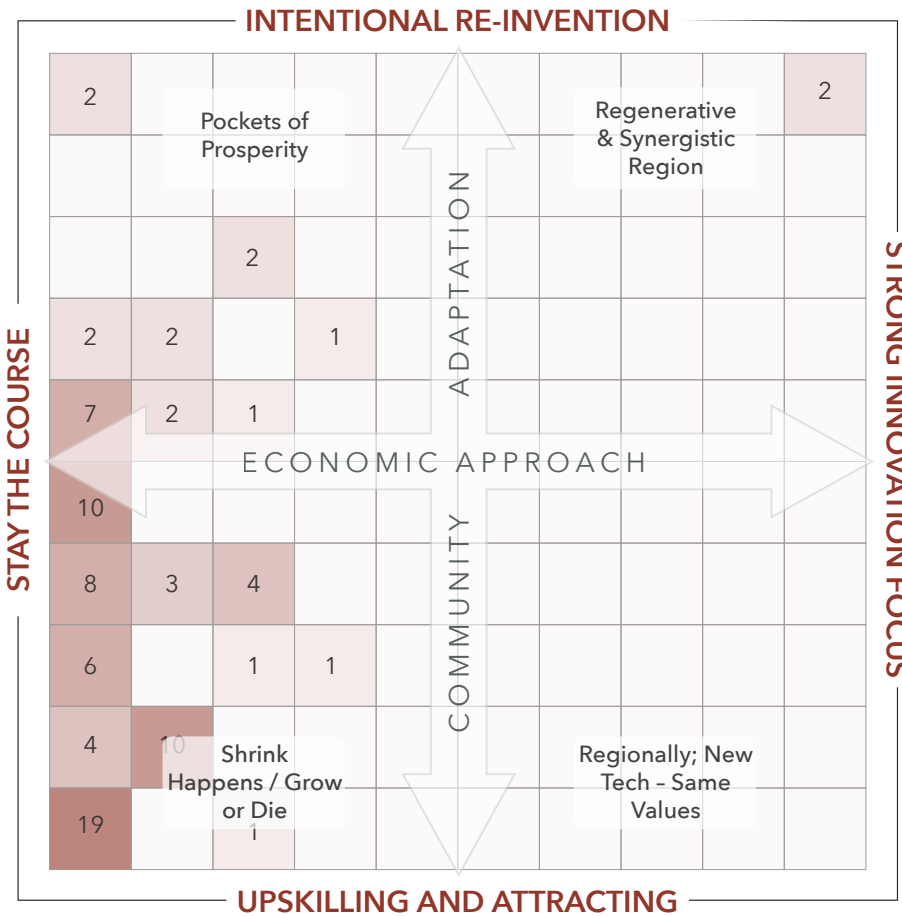
## 9.1 | LEAST DESIRED FUTURE

The Least Desired Future is defined as 'the future that you think will be the most undesirable (or least optimal or least desired) for the future of the Greater Mankato Region. Think-Tank participants most definitely considered Scenario D, 'Shrink Happens - Grow or Die' to be the Least Desired scenario for the Greater Mankato Region.

The least desired future is one where community stakeholders have said, 'We don't want that.' This provides leadership a mandate to change the trajectory of the community or region to avoid this scenario.

### GREATER MANKATO 2040

LEAST DESIRED FUTURE



LEAST DESIRED FUTURE PLAUSIBILITY MATRIX

This grid displays the plausibility level assigned by the workshop participants.

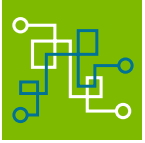
The darker the color, the greater the aggregate weighted plausibility score.



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"The cost of housing and lack of regional transportation coordination is huge concern because these deficits will lead to population exodus unless addressed in a timely manner."  
- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent



FutureInsight

- The intensity of color along the extreme left of the scenario matrix indicates that Think-Tank participants have a shared view of the least desirable future.
- The corners of the scenario matrix quadrants indicate the extreme versions of the scenarios.

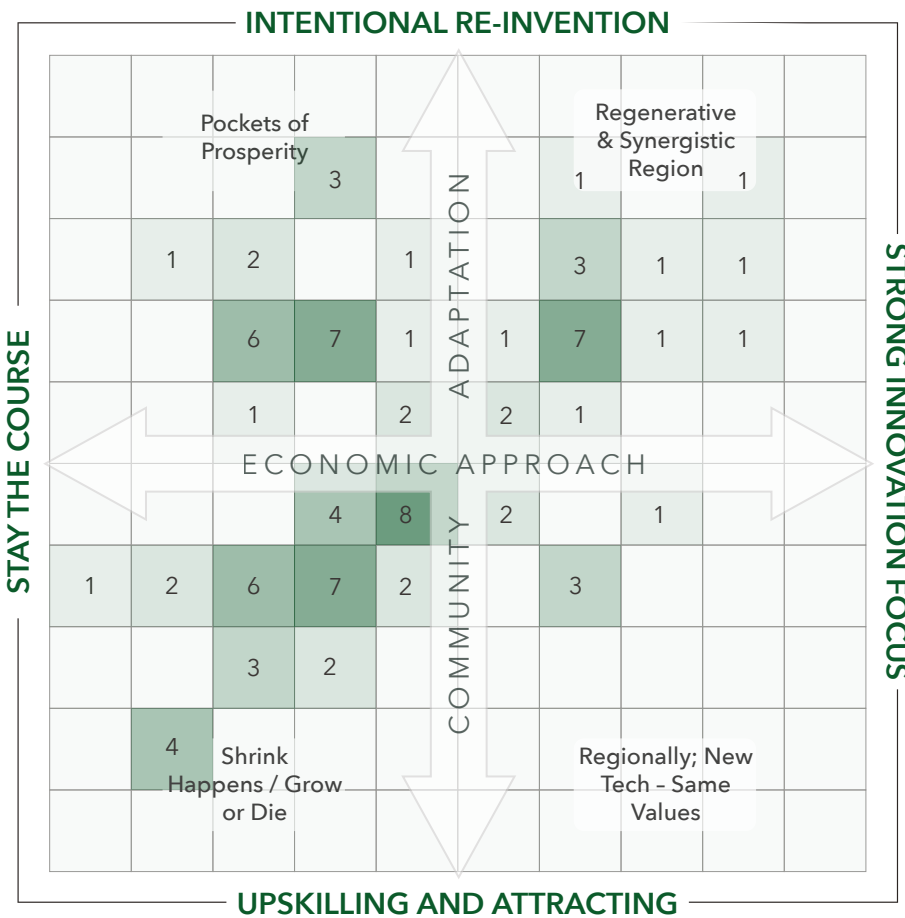
# 9.2 | EXPECTED FUTURE

The expected future is one deemed most likely to happen if there is no change in the current trajectory of the Greater Mankato region. Most Think-Tank participants indicated the expected future is somewhat in the middle of the scenario matrix. A number believed that scenario D, "Shrink Happens - Grow or Die", is the scenario that represented the expected future of the Greater Mankato Region. A number of participants also thought scenario A, "Pockets of Prosperity", and to a lesser extent scenario B, "Regenerative and Synergistic Region", could also be possible expected futures.

The Expected Future represents the future that is most likely to happen if the community does nothing to change direction or trajectory.

## GREATER MANKATO 2040

EXPECTED FUTURE



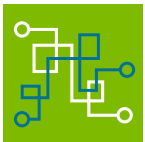
### EXPECTED FUTURE PLAUSIBILITY MATRIX

This grid displays the plausibility level assigned by the workshop participants.

The darker the color, the greater the aggregate weighted plausibility score.



"Holding onto the past and refusing to grow and change will have negative consequences like reduced workforce and amenities."  
- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent



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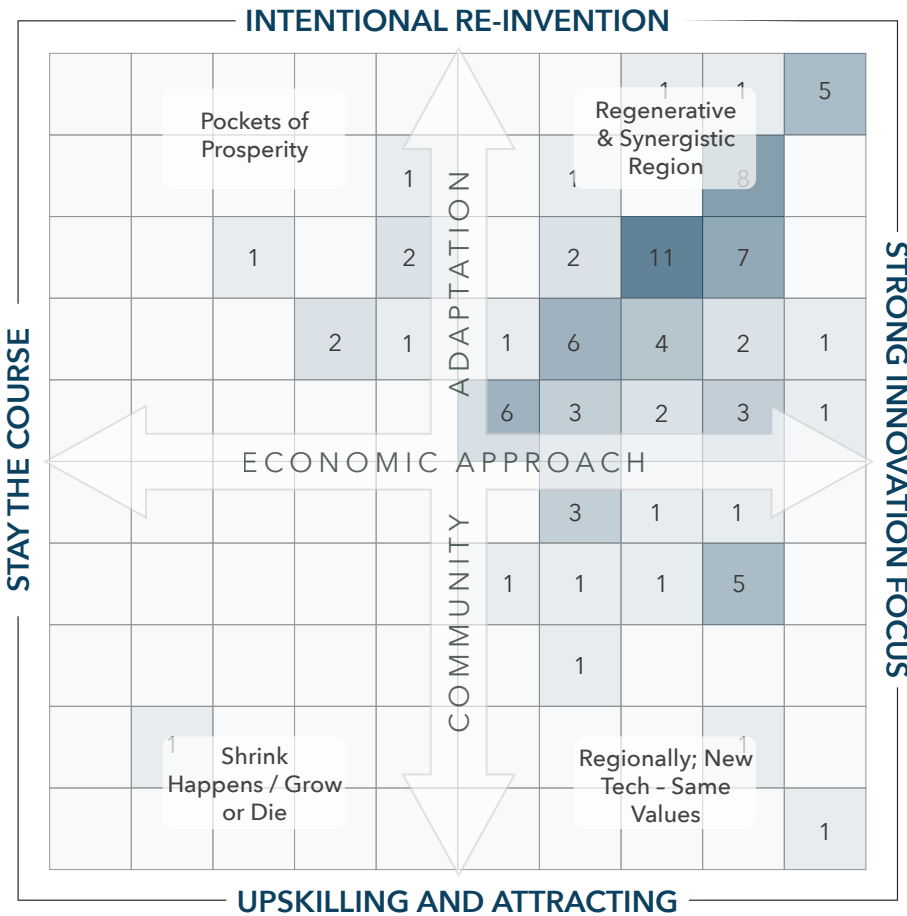
- The responses are clustered around the center and left if center point.
- The expected future represents a middle ground future. This outcome would be adequate for the region, with moderate progress and not too much change.

# 9.3 | PREFERRED FUTURE

Think-Tank participants expressed an overwhelming preference for Scenario B, 'Regenerative and Synergistic Region' as the Preferred Future for the Greater Mankato Region in 2040. Think-Tank participants discussed the consequences of inaction and the need to take decisive action NOW to redirect the region's trajectory over the next 10 years. This sense of urgency has been a recurring theme throughout the visioning process and indicates an appetite for change and action.

The concentration of color in Scenario B, "Regenerative and Synergistic Region" indicates a significant appetite for change in the region.

## GREATER MANKATO 2040 PREFERRED FUTURE



**PREFERRED FUTURE PLausIBILITY MATRIX**

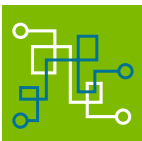
This grid displays the plausibility level assigned by the workshop participants.

The darker the color, the greater the aggregate weighted plausibility score.



"I am excited about the direction Greater Mankato is heading, there are amazing people in leadership roles and stepping up to create fun opportunities here. We have so many people with a larger vision that are willing to put themselves out there."

- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent



FutureInsight

- The concentration of color in Scenario B, 'Regenerative and Synergistic Region', indicates a close alignment of thinking among Think-Tank participants, and a significant appetite for change.
- Arriving at a point of consensus among stakeholders about the preferred future is very important to the visioning process as it provides a sense of cohesion, agreement, and balanced solutions going forward.

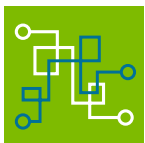
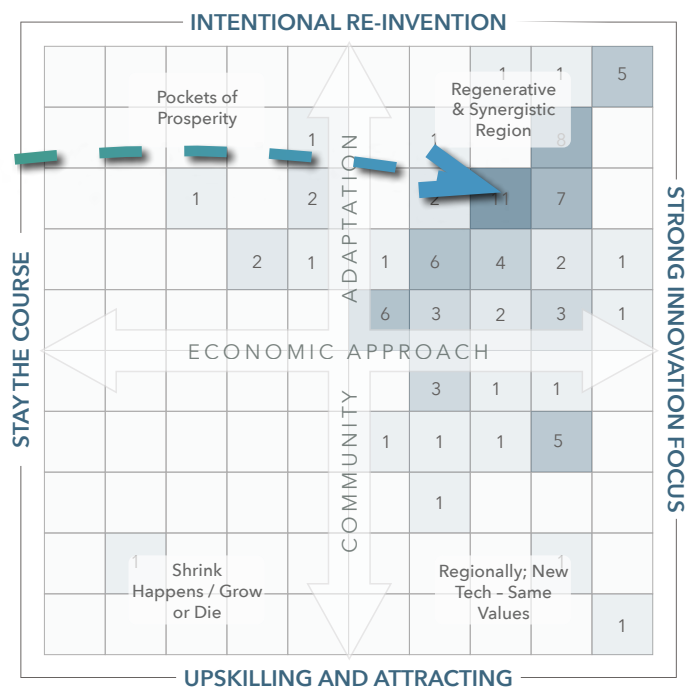
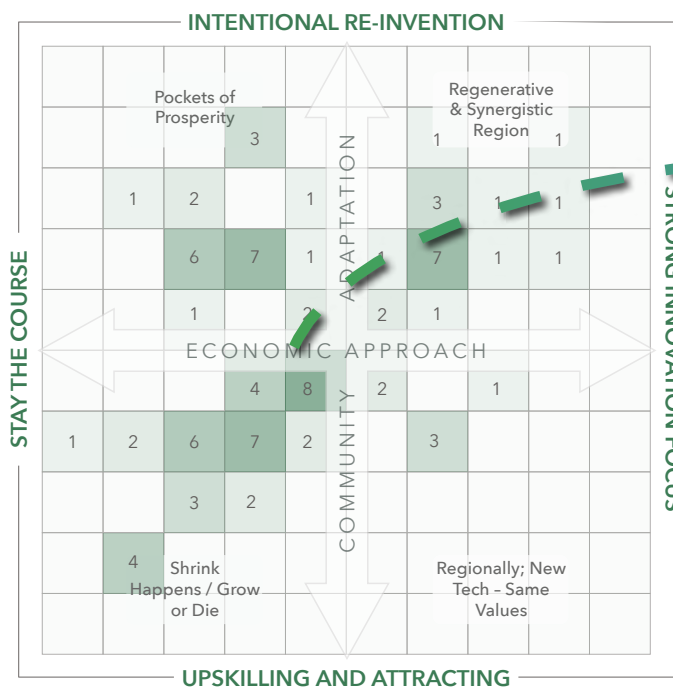
# 9.4 | GETTING TO THE PREFERRED FUTURE

Because of the long-term nature of the Scenario Planning methodology, stakeholders often see the 'distant future vision (2024)' as unattainable and unrealistic. However, this underestimates the progress that can be made during the intervening years, and the cumulative positive impacts of change.

Think-Tank participants discussed the ramifications and implications of failing to achieve the preferred future. While there was strong alignment among Think-Tank participants that Scenario B, 'Regenerative and Synergistic Region,' represented the preferred scenario, it was also recognized that reorienting the current trajectory will require significant collaboration, communication, and leadership among the communities of the Greater Mankato Region.

**GREATER MANKATO 2040**  
EXPECTED FUTURE

**GREATER MANKATO 2040**  
PREFERRED FUTURE



FutureInsight

- The Think-Tank scenario planning is a significant step in the region's planning process to define collectively how the Greater Mankato Region will strategically plan to achieve its preferred future.
- There will need to be a significant pivot in moving to a strong innovative focus, and more intentional re-invention of the community fabric and adaptation.
- Telling the story of why the Greater Mankato Region needs to pivot in its trajectory will be an important part of how change will be made. Consistent, aligned, and transparent communications will be required to the region's community members and stakeholders.



# 10.0 | POTENTIAL HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIC THEMES AND ACTIONS

Following the scenario development, Think-Tank participants in Regional and Community Roundtables on May 19 to discuss potential high-level strategic themes and actions that could propel the Greater Mankato Region to its preferred future. Below is a summary of participant input grouped into potential action areas.

The strategic themes and action areas are the building blocks of the Strategic Pillars that will create the foundation of the Vision and Strategic Action Plan for the Greater Mankato Region.

- ✦ Strengthen regional community collaboration and synergy
- ✦ Stimulate innovative housing solutions
- ✦ Create an inclusive, diverse culture and population
- ✦ Create the region as a 'human talent-hub'
- ✦ Build future-orientated community amenities
- ✦ Create a healthy and happy regional community
- ✦ Build a future ready regional culture
- ✦ Boost regional reputation and relevance
- ✦ Foster sustainability and regenerative practices
- ✦ Drive evolution of transportation system
- ✦ Create the region as an entrepreneurial magnet
- ✦ Build investment courage and appeal
- ✦ Build regional industry collaboration and synergy
- ✦ Become a leading biosciences and bioeconomy innovation center



*"I'm excited about the energy I see in the area. There are people of all ages living in the region and people who are very engaged and dedicated to collaborating on making this a great place to live."*

- Regional Stakeholder Survey Respondent





Please stay connected to the regional planning project at [lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/](http://lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/).

# 11.0 | NEXT STEPS IN THE REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

Following the Think-Tank, this Think-Tank Report was written and published for distribution. The project will then move into the 'Strategic Positioning and Validating' phase of the regional planning process.

## Transforming Tomorrow Together | Greater Mankato 2040 Stages & Engagement Opportunities





## 12.0 | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A Strategy Working Group consisting of regional leaders was formed to help guide this project. The planning initiative will run through 2023, and there will be numerous opportunities to participate.

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Mankato Area  
Foundation

**Sam Ziegler**  
Director,  
GreenSeam

Community members and stakeholders have engaged in this regional planning process with great enthusiasm. Their passion and interest have ensured discussions are open, thoughtful, and reflective of the myriad of perspectives that exist within the Greater Mankato region. This dedication is also reflective of the deep commitment participants have to the future of the region.

Additionally, appreciation is extended Jessica Beyer and the team at Greater Mankato Growth who provide the local expertise that helps guide this project. Their time and dedication are greatly appreciated.







## »»»» 13.0 | FOR MORE INFORMATION

This initiative is focused on Strategic Foresight and Strategic Positioning for the future of the Greater Mankato region. It is exploring where and how we can fit into a rapidly changing world, looking out to 2040, and even beyond. We want to understand how we need to evolve as a regional community. The result will be a shared regional plan, that will contain an initial implementation road-map out to 2030 – with actions – to move us toward the shared vision we create for the region.

For more information on the Transforming Tomorrow Together – Greater Mankato 2040 project, please contact:

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Please stay connected to the collaborative regional planning initiative at:  
[lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/](http://lab2.future-iq.com/greater-mankato-2040/)





TRANSFORMING TOMORROW TOGETHER  
GREATER MANKATO 2040  
**THINK-TANK REPORT**

MINNESOTA, USA

JULY 2023