

Envision 2020 report highlights group's efforts

By Dan Linehan

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MANKATO — A new report is highlighting the successes of Envision 2020, a five-year- old planning effort.

"I think it's certainly still alive," said Glenn Morris, who until recently led the sub-group focused on education.

That's the message throughout the document, which focuses on the successes made in 2010 and 2011. Rather than highlight one or two achievements, the report focuses on dozens of smaller ones in six sub-groups: community planning, economic development, education, health and human services, livability and transportation.

Rather than a description of the changes made specifically by Envision 2020 members, the report lists all of the region's improvements in 2010 and 2011.

The first success noted, for example, is the sewer connection between the cities of Mankato and Madison Lake. That may have happened with or without Envision 2020, though it is often hard to make clear- cut distinctions of this sort.

Morris agrees: "It's hard to draw the lines is quite right."

In part, this is because collaboration of the Envision 2020 sort yields intangible benefits like easier cooperation.

"Envision 2020 is some additional adhesive, which keeps us all continuing to meet and work together," said Morris, the director of technology and applied academic programs at the South Central Service Cooperative.

He said the next goal of the education sub-group is to create a "continuum of learning" by compiling information about all education organizations and institutions in the Greater Mankato area.

Please see REPORT, Page **B3**

Article Continued Below

[See REPORT on Page B03](#)

REPORT: Will help GMG market area

Continued from Page B1

Other successes cited in the report include:

- Adopt a planter program for business

- Acquisition of U.S.

Bank site for possible civic center expansion

- Coordination of Complete Count committees for successful 2010 Census.

- Honorable mention for Bicycle Friendly Community Designation

- Open Door Health Clinic saw a 70 percent increase in the number of patients served

- Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota acquired space for several months to put up play lab.

Also created a plan for a new building Louis Schwartzkopf, who co- chairs an energy conservation committee spun off from the economic development sub-group, said one recent success helps regular people monitor how much electricity their appliances use.

Residents can stop by the library in Mankato or North Mankato and borrow a power meter that plugs into the appliance and an outlet. The device measures the cost of the electricity the appliance uses.

The group is also compiling data on a much larger scale. They're creating an inventory of all the greenhouse gas emissions in Mankato and North Mankato. They are seeking a final piece of data from utilities to figure out the emissions for 2008, which can then be used as a benchmark to assess progress in later years.

The report does not mention goals that haven't been accomplished or were apparently set aside as priorities.

For example, a September 2006 Envision 2020 report aims to "encourage the development of one or more community centers," a goal expected at the time to take four or five years. Also, Envision 2020 members wanted local cities to increase their parks set aside (a percentage of land set aside in developments for parks) from 5 percent to 10 percent, though that has not happened in Mankato.

The report will be used by the Greater Mankato Growth- organized delegation that visits Charlottesville, Va., from Nov. 6 - 8. Greater Mankato Growth, a chamber of commerce and economic development entity, has taken on much of the responsibility for sustaining Envision 2020.

To read a copy of the report, visit [www.envision- 2020.com](http://www.envision-2020.com)