

Envision meeting reviews, renews

By Tim Krohn

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MANKATO — Going into the fourth year of the Envision 2020 project, civic leaders are trying to keep momentum and focus on goals for improving the city. “ There is always a fear — we have 10 years of this plan left — how do we keep people involved and make it rewarding for people,” said Kristi Schuck, outgoing chair of the group.

Still, she and others say, the implementation of goals has gone well and shows no sign of slowing. Community leaders and residents met Thursday evening at the Verizon Wireless Center to review what’s been achieved in the past year and to get input on new ideas that should be pursued.

“It’s events like this that brings Envision 2020 back into the spotlight for our community,” said Schuck, who will turn over chair duties to Tony Filipovitch.

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Envision 2020 began over three years ago when more than 400 area residents developed a plan with six broad key performance areas and identified a total of 34 goals.

Mankato Community Development Director Paul Vogel said the blueprint has paid benefits.

“ The City Center renaissance was created and the City Center Partnership grew out of it. The historic preservation, the green space efforts done by Blue Earth County. There are a lot of things,” Vogel said. “It still has a lot of momentum.”

Schuck said the annual meeting and expo is a chance to showcase successes, “ but also to re- energize the community in the projects we have moving forward.

“It’s a long-term project and these things don’t happen overnight. A lot of coordination and planning is happening that makes sure we are doing things right.”

Annual reports were given on the six key performance areas: transportation, health and human services, community planning, education, livability and economic development.

Some accomplishments highlighted: opening of Riverfront Park and the planning for Benson Park; energy research begun at the International Renewable Energy Technology Institute; electric meter lending program in local libraries; the Kitchen Table initiative through the Greater Mankato Early Learning Initiative; the Colorful Dialogue program through the YWCA; the Exercise is Medicine awareness campaign by the Health Improvement Partners; the new Greater Mankato Visitor & Community Information Center; and the establishment of Second Street as a main artery through the City Center and other oneway street conversions.

An Envision 2020 implementation team meets monthly to check on progress and to add initiatives proposed by community members.