

OUR VIEW

ENVISION 2020

NEEDS YOU

The inertia of the Envision 2020 community future plan is quite remarkable when you think about it.

About 400 community members came together about four years ago to hammer out ways our community could be better. They came up with six key areas for **growth** and 34 goals. Once a year the community comes together to review what has been accomplished and set new goals.

Several goals are accomplished every year and more are set. The group's annual report cites dozens of success stories in the six areas. In community planning, for example, projects from the Sibley Parkway housing development infrastructure to the opening of the Second Street bridge access development took place. The City Center Partnership established a long-term plan for the downtown business area, and parks in **Mankato** and North Mankato were established or completed.

In the Community Planning Key Performance Area, there are ambitious goals to encourage development of mixed-use "urban villages" and develop strategies for regional governance where cities and counties can examine the sharing of resources.

In the area of economic development, the Envision 2020 effort has helped serve 166 new and emerging businesses through the **Greater** Mankato Business Accelerator. GMG also developed a regional economic development agreement with surrounding small towns including Lake Crystal and Le Sueur. There has been a group of 21 private companies set up in a Renewable Energy Supply Chain Development aimed at discovering renewable energy capabilities and business collaboration.

If you're worried about how dependent the country has become on foreign and finite sources of energy, you might be interested in joining the Energy Conservation Task Force that is aiming to educate area residents on energy alternatives and conservation strategies. That group has made energy meters available for check out at the local library so residents can measure energy use.

If you'd like to see more acceptance of diverse cultures in the region, the education and livability task forces have a number of goals, including getting more people of diversity involved in local decision-making boards and organizations.

These are just a few of the areas and goals of Envision 2020. The annual meeting Thursday will allow area residents to see what is being accomplished in each area and talk to other community members involved in the various performance committees.

Almost any community good you can think of, there is an Envision 2020 group either designed to address that issue or there for it to be raised.

The great thing about Envision 2020 is that it is a true grass-roots group. It is not controlled by any governmental or private entity; it exists solely because community members decided it should continue to exist. It's one of those groups that enables its community members to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.