



H2O-50 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



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Introduction

Community leaders and key organizations in Watertown, South Dakota, teamed with national consulting firms Broad Ripple Strategies (BRS) and Atlas Community Studios (Atlas) to launch a strategic planning process focused on addressing local challenges and developing a visionary plan for Watertown's future. The goal of this process was to help Watertown enhance its workforce development, quality of life, and quality of place to grow and sustain the talent base necessary to support existing and future employers.

Watertown H2O-50 followed in the footsteps of the highly successful Watertown H2O-20 plan developed in 2012. That process began as a grassroots effort of community volunteers who wanted to improve their city. The initiative grew to include thousands of volunteers and made great strides in establishing Watertown as a better place to live, work, and raise a family, including the development of the Prairie Lakes Wellness Center and Prairie Lakes Ice Arena, among other key projects.

While these high-cost amenities have made a strong impact, Watertown leaders felt that the H2O-50 plan had to focus more on capitalizing on these investments and strengthening programs and partnerships rather than new buildings and facilities, with key exceptions that will be explained later in this report.

The community must also acknowledge the need to maintain and leverage past investments. A private sector leader noted, "We've made tremendous strides in the last six years. Now we need innovative thinking about how you sustain things like the Goss, the Wellness Center, and the Ice Center... These are just startups."

As H2O-50 priorities emerged and were confirmed through the development of the Strategic Action Plan, it will be critical that all necessary voices are welcomed and acknowledged as planning now proceeds to implementation.

Overview

The Watertown H2O-50 project included three principal phases. **Phase 1** consisted of a robust visioning process that engaged diverse groups of stakeholders to gauge their perspectives on Watertown's desired future and how it can be achieved. Thousands of Watertown citizens voiced their opinions in face-to-face input, via an online survey, and through Vision Walls across the community. Specifics included:

- 23 Community Leaders Interviewed
- 7 Focus Groups facilitated (~100-110 attendees)
- 2 Community Visioning Sessions (~35 community members)
- 3,069 survey responses plus 24 Spanish-language responses

The 3,093 survey responses exceeded the high bar established by Watertown H2O-20's 2,600 participants in 2012 and represented engagement from nearly 10 percent of area residents.

The development of a Vision Framework represented **Phase 2** of the Watertown H2O-50 process. The Framework consisted of high-level targeted focus areas, goals, and strategic priorities that served as the "roadmap" for strategic action. The Strategic Action Plan is **Phase 3** and puts the H2O-50 Vision Framework's recommendations into practice through tactical activities and implementation tasks.

Strategic Challenges and Opportunities from Phase 1

The following represents the principal takeaways from H2O-50's research process. They informed the development of the H2O-50 Vision Framework and the Strategic Action Plan

H2O-20 Legacy

- Watertown H2O-20 checked several projects with pent-up demand off the wish list. These investments must now be sustained and capitalized on.
- Leaders feel H2O-50 should pursue a more holistic focus on programs and community issues rather than mostly high-dollar bricks-and-mortar projects.

Community

- Communications – both internal and external – are a concern. Internally, a lack of trusted communications outlets makes disseminating information difficult. Externally, more could be done to promote Watertown’s assets.
- Residents not originally from Watertown report challenges integrating into leadership circles. Several stakeholders pointed to a seeming divide between public and private sector leadership.

Talent

- High labor force participation rates and low unemployment reinforce employer feedback that Watertown has very little slack in its labor market. Related housing and childcare issues also contribute to talent development and attraction challenges.
- Watertown’s pre-K to 18 training pipeline is a strength, with Lake Area Technical College (LATC) named the community’s top competitive asset.
- Young professionals (YPs) rate Watertown as a “weak to average” location for their age group, citing a lack of compelling lifestyle amenities and poor YP engagement as key weaknesses.
- The percentage of Watertown adults with a Bachelor’s degree or higher was the lowest of the Competitive Assessment comparison set, severely limiting the community’s potential to diversify its economy with knowledge-based, “white collar” jobs.
- Data highlight Watertown’s large percentage of lower-income families. Social services agencies report correspondingly high caseload demands, limiting their ability to accommodate new and existing clients. Effectively communicating with rising numbers of Spanish-speaking residents has been a challenge for local agencies, employers, and schools.

Economy

- Data confirms that Watertown is a production and retail-based economy, but these sectors and key “export” categories are growing, often at rates exceeding the U.S. average.
- The local business climate is improving, though some stakeholders still have issues with the City of Watertown’s regulatory processes. “NIMBYism” and reportedly underperforming economic development activity also hamper local investment.
- Watertown has a high percentage of young (under 5 years) companies, though entrepreneurs report insufficient levels of professional support, investment capital, talent availability, and marketing assistance.

Place

- Watertown stakeholders greatly value local quality of life, especially with major new facility investments. But concerns remain over amenities for young, single professionals and recent high school and college graduates.
- Housing availability at all price points continues to be Watertown’s most significant quality-of-life challenge.
- Downtown Watertown revitalization is a great success story. But many downtown business owners feel the attention the district received through H2O-20 implementation has waned, with focus shifting to interstate-adjacent properties.
- Watertown’s recreation and park capacity is a key strength. Leaders feel that park programming should now be a priority.
- Determining the highest and best use and preferred environmental remediation strategies for the two lakes in Watertown’s city limits is challenged by conflicting perspectives of lakeside homeowners, public officials, and the community at large.
- Despite key assets bolstering Watertown’s dining, arts, and cultural capacity, most H2O-50 input respondents feel these amenities are lacking.

H2O-50 Committee

The H2O-50 Committee was critical to the success of the H2O-50 Strategic Action Plan. Representing a broad group of key local leaders, the Committee was responsible for reviewing and approving project deliverables, participating in discussions about Watertown's future direction, and responding to multiple follow-up surveys.

CHAIRS

Amanda	Culhane	Lake Area Technical College
Liam	Culhane	Turbak Law Office, P.C.

COMMITTEE

Doug	Allen	Retired
Michael	Cartney	President Emeritus, Lake Area Technical College
Kasey	Chapin	American Bank & Trust
Salena	Engels	
Josh	Hogue	Reliabank
Kari	Johnston	Human Service Agency
Morgan	Johnson	Stein Sign Display
Mike	Luken	The Realty Team
Sean	Melmer	First Premier Bank
Cammie	Mengwasser	Watertown Area Community Foundation
Jenna	Moffatt	Moffatt Products, Inc.
Mark	Moffatt	Moffatt Products, Inc.
Scott	Olson	First Premier Bank
Mike	Paulson	American Bank & Trust
Robb	Peterson	Glacial Lakes Rubber & Plastic
Don	Roby	R&R Investments, LLC
Mark	Roby	Watertown Public Opinion (retired)
Matt	Roby	Hi-Line Capital Management
Doug	Sharp	Sharp Automotive
Darren	Shelton	Lake Area Technical College & Prohibition Fashion Lounge
Shawna	Shelton	Prestige Salon & 1906 Boutique
Jordan	Wollschlager	First Premier Bank

Watertown H2O-50 Strategic Action Plan

Because a community does not have the capacity to address every competitive issue and opportunity, it is critical that its strategic plan focuses on elements that will provide the greatest return on investment. Reflecting this philosophy, the **H2O-50 Vision Framework** (seen below) established targeted focus areas, goals, and strategic priorities designed to enhance quality of life, boost economic prosperity, guide community development investments and activities, and maximize chances for local growth. It then served as the scaffolding of the Strategic Action Plan that built out the Framework through confirmation of tactics and sub-tactics for achievement of Watertown’s long-term ambitions.



The Watertown H2O-50 Strategic Action Plan built from the Vision Framework’s **People First** philosophy by applying tactical actions to the Framework’s targeted focus areas, goals, and strategic priorities. These recommendations were designed to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities to make Watertown a “stickier” place for existing and future talent. Both the Vision Framework and Strategic Action Plan reflect the thousands of local voices engaged during Phase 1 of the process and the ongoing work of the H2O-50 Committee to shepherd this

process on behalf of the community.

Strategic Action Plan implementation will require partnerships across the community and a blend of private, public, and philanthropic resources. No single entity will be looked upon as the “ATM” to activate and advance strategic recommendations; indeed, public and private partners represent the type of broad funding coalition necessary to realize ambitious visions such as Watertown H2O-50.

Why “People First”?

A representative from Lake Area Technical College explained it best when asked about Watertown’s talent challenges: “It’s a bodies problem.” The issue is not a question of insufficient training capacity (though some degree programs are space-impacted); nor is it due to poor engagement from large

employers or a lack of coordination between Watertown School District, (WSD), Lake Area Technical College (LATC), Mount Marty University-Watertown (MMU-W), and other partners. Indeed, despite strong and steady population growth, Watertown's labor force capacity has not kept pace with economic expansion, leaving local employers struggling to fill existing positions and unable to add new shifts or consider other expansions.

Growing Watertown's labor force will not be accomplished by simply keeping more high school and college students in town after graduation, improving the retention of existing workers, or attracting new talent to the city – although these are all important processes. Watertown must first address systematic and structural issues that limit the community's ability to accommodate its existing and future talent base. These include housing, childcare, social supports, and quality of life and place amenities for talent across the spectrum of age, income, education level, and family composition. Indeed, as many Watertown leaders noted in H2O-50 input, without the talent-supportive infrastructure in place to enable workers to live comfortably according to their preferences, any attempts to recruit new businesses or talent to the city will struggle to produce results.

Because of the primacy of talent needs to Watertown's successful future, the H2O-50 vision is **People First**. As Watertown becomes a more competitive and higher capacity community for talent, its ability to grow its core employment sectors, better diversify its economy through higher-skill knowledge sectors, attract and develop higher-end retail and dining establishments, improve the recruitment and retention of students at Lake Area Technical College and Mount Marty University-Watertown, reduce poverty, and be in a better position fiscally to support current and future investments in major infrastructure projects will be enhanced.

For certain strategies, **comparative examples (CE)** of similar programs from across the U.S. are included in the **Appendix A** of this document. The number of the corresponding comparative example is shown parenthetically in the strategy title.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Goal: *A sustainable supply of quality housing in a variety of desired styles and price points*

A 2023 Housing Demand Analysis was commissioned by the Watertown Development Company (WDC). The study projected housing demand through 2030 in Watertown for 1,630 new housing units, with over half expected to be accommodated by age-restricted senior housing. The study noted, “The housing market has been tight across Watertown coming out of the pandemic-led housing boom that further constricted the housing market. The for-sale market witnessed record double-digit appreciation since 2020.” The WDC has been active in efforts to study and address Watertown’s housing issues and will be a critical partner in future efforts to enhance local supplies of affordable and market-rate housing.

Limited availability of single-family detached housing, especially at entry-level prices, was the growth challenge most frequently cited in H2O-50 stakeholder input. These perceptions were backed up by data from the Competitive Assessment report, seen below.

RATIO OF THE TYPICAL HOME VALUE TO AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE PER WORKER, 2023 Q4

Geography	Typical Home Value, Dec. 2023	Average Annual Wage, 2023 Q4	Ratio
Watertown, SD (Codington)	\$317,404	\$49,230	6.45
Aberdeen, SD (Brown)	\$218,661	\$52,886	4.13
Alexandria, MN (Douglas)	\$330,870	\$54,978	6.02
Brookings, SD (Brookings)	\$281,134	\$53,971	5.21
South Dakota	\$300,389	\$55,761	5.39
United States	\$354,593	\$69,861	5.08

Note: A lower ratio indicates housing is more affordable relative to wages.

Source: Zillow; JobsEQ

In addition to general housing needs, the continued enrollment growth at LATC highlights a rising demand for student housing. With enrollment surpassing 2,300 students and no on-campus housing available, many students depend on an already-constrained local housing market. Addressing this shortage—through targeted development or designated units—will be essential to supporting the college’s expansion and maintaining Watertown’s appeal as a postsecondary education hub.

While lack of available, affordable housing of all types is a national crisis and solving these challenges locally will be extremely difficult, Watertown must advance ongoing housing solutions and pursue additional strategies to sustain the growth of its workforce.

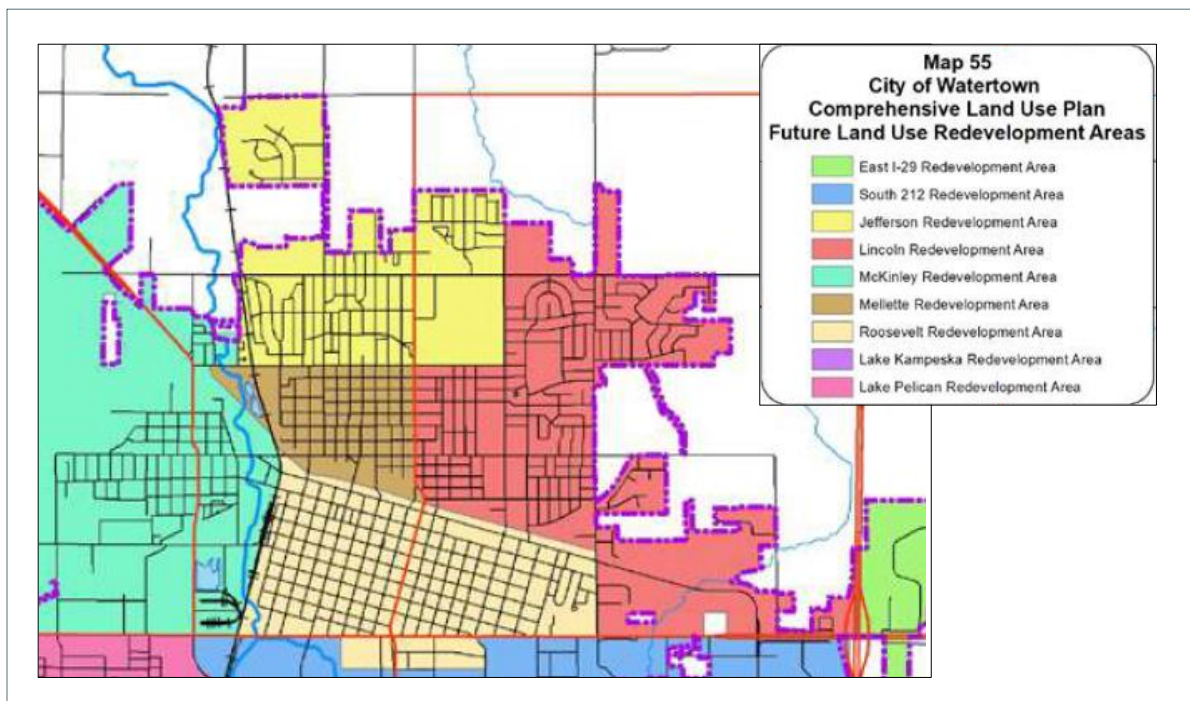
Though Watertown has previously tried to encourage large, proven housing developers to build major projects in the city, a representative of the Watertown Planning Commission said commissioners are increasingly seeing local development teams seeking approval for duplexes, quadraplexes, and other small-scale projects. This trend – an approach a local planning official called “hitting singles” instead of home runs – could make a dent in local demand as new and rehabilitated units come onto the market.

Priority 1: HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT

The Maxfield housing analysis identified eight pending developments in the City of Watertown. Six of the projects included single-family homes, two were multi-family developments, and one was a senior living project. The study also found that housing built during the 1970s accounted for the largest proportion of housing (16.5%) in Watertown, with most owner-occupied housing (22.6%) constructed prior to 1940. Data was not collected on substandard housing units that could be candidates for refurbishment or redevelopment, but local planning experts feel that current barriers to build new housing (high interest rates, material, and labor costs) and the public cost of providing infrastructure to undeveloped land warrant opportunities to redevelop existing housing in the city core. Because these districts are already served for infrastructure, there is less public investment needed.

There are typically fewer tools available to spur redevelopment of older housing as opposed to new construction. For South Dakota localities, financial support and buyer incentives are provided through **SD Housing**, a state agency that utilizes housing bonds, tax credits, and other federal and state resources to fund housing programs that provide mortgage and downpayment assistance, housing construction and rehabilitation, homelessness prevention, rental assistance, and educational opportunities.

The City of Watertown's **2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan**, adopted in April 2020, also contains detailed information on redevelopment opportunities. As the Plan notes, "Redevelopment efforts that improve upon the existing land uses in the older, established areas of the City are encouraged. These efforts may come in the form of rehabilitating existing structures through modernization or from the demolition, removal and replacement of obsolete structures." The Plan includes recommendations to guide the redevelopment of the existing urban area of the city and the infill of incorporated areas not yet developed. Prescriptions are based on the city's redevelopment needs and past implementation policies and focus on **nine identified redevelopment areas**, as shown in the following map.



Source: City of Watertown 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

In addition to recommendations specific to each redevelopment district, the Plan lists issues and development considerations common to all redevelopment areas. Those applicable to housing include:

- Encourage the redevelopment of single-family neighborhoods with new multi-family residential structures in current areas of dense single-family development, particularly west of US HWY 81.
- Encourage residential redevelopment that complies with established floodplain standards.
- Encourage infill of vacant subdivision lots and the development of lots of record before allowing development of agricultural land.

Individual developers and multi-person teams have been pursuing housing redevelopment and small-scale infill projects in growing numbers, according to a member of the Watertown Planning Commission. These opportunities should be encouraged and promoted to complement efforts to attract and incentivize new housing developments with dozens or hundreds of units.

STRATEGY 1: Consider the design and implementation of a residential redevelopment overlay zone in core Watertown neighborhoods. (CE1)

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Confirm levels of support for the residential redevelopment overlay zone through discussions with elected leadership and public outreach.
- Determine the preferred boundaries of the overlay zone and proposed regulations and development supports to be included in policy language.
 - Explore models from other communities to inform the most impactful policy and incentive framework.
 - Work with existing local housing developers to incorporate user-friendly regulations into the new zoning category.
- Upon passage, promote opportunities for residential redevelopment to existing homeowners and local and non-local investors and developers.

STRATEGY 2: Leverage and promote existing tools and supports to encourage core city housing redevelopment in Watertown.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Consider developing a customized tab on the proposed **Watertown Housing** website (see page 15) to serve as a “toolkit” for residents and outside investors looking to redevelop core city housing for resale.
 - Designate an existing city employee to serve as Watertown’s recommended contact for housing redevelopment inquiries.
- Ensure that available programs through SD Housing are posted on the Watertown Housing website and eligible applicants are supported through the process by the city’s housing redevelopment contact person.
- Host regular **Housing Redevelopment Information Days** where residents and development professionals can hear from city officials on how best to access and utilize the new zoning tool
- Determine the feasibility of the Watertown Development Company providing funding support for quality, affordable infill single-family housing projects in central Watertown.
- Identify underutilized or vacant properties near LATC for redevelopment into dedicated student housing in collaboration with local developers and the college.

STRATEGY 3: Create a City of Watertown single-family housing rehabilitation loan program. (CE2)

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Provide financial assistance to low- and moderate-income homeowners to maintain their properties in a decent, safe, and sanitary condition.
 - Consider offering interest-free loans with payments deferred upon sale or discontinuance of occupancy.
 - Determine eligibility requirements such as gross household income, residency term, outstanding debt and payments, rehabilitation needs, and assessed home value.

- Pursue state and federal grants to fund the program.
- Offer technical assistance as needed to property owners who request financial assistance for rehabilitation work.

Priority 2: NEW-CONSTRUCTION HOUSING

In their Housing Demand Analysis, Maxfield reported on Watertown’s tight for-sale housing market and apartment vacancies of 1.5 percent, well below market equilibrium of 5 percent. At the time of the report (May 2023), one-story homes accounted for the largest proportion (79.6%) of units on the market, with an average list price of \$450,551 and an average size of 2,185 square feet.

The breakdown by housing type of the 1,205 to 1,414 residential units demanded in Watertown by 2030 was as follows: single-family (260-320), townhomes (80-100), market rate rental (295-315), affordable rental (125-145), and senior housing (445-534). Maxwell feels that “lot supply is sufficient” in the near term, with about 300 vacant lots within newer subdivisions and another 200+ lots in the planning phases, resulting in over 500 single-family lots either platted or approved.

Despite this activity, Watertown leaders say the “numbers often do not work out” for local and outside developers looking to construct new entry-level housing in the city. Challenges include high labor and material costs that compromise project profitability; so-called “NIMBYism”¹ from established residents; inflexible zoning regulations for different housing types, including so-called “missing middle”² projects; and flooding/topographical issues that disqualify numerous potential building sites. An incentive tool called Tax Increment Financing (TIF), has been used multiple times by the City of Watertown to subsidize new housing development, but the City Council is reconsidering its use considering the city’s current fiscal liabilities.

While the Maxwell study purposefully did not recommend strategies for meeting projected demand, the **City of Watertown 2020 Comprehensive Plan** suggested several ways new housing can be built in established areas and newer parts of the city. These included new regulatory tools allowing for land uses and densities not supported by current regulations; enabling developers under special circumstances to

¹ NIMBY refers to a resident who does not want new development adjacent to their property; it stands for “not in my backyard.”

² Missing Middle Housing is a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes—located in a walkable neighborhood. (source: <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/>)

replat properties or receive building permits in undeveloped but subdivided areas; determining on a case-by-case basis whether to expand, decrease, or eliminate streets for proposed new developments; and creating a specific “Office” zoning district allowing for mixed-use projects (residential and commercial uses in the same building).

Many tools offered by **SD Housing** provide financing for new housing development. According to the agency, developers will typically utilize the HOME, Housing Tax Credit, Housing Trust Fund, and Tax-Exempt Bond Financing, Bond Financing Programs for affordable housing development. Workforce housing can be developed utilizing the Community Housing Development and Housing Opportunity Fund programs. Developers can combine the previously mentioned financing programs with conventional financing to construct mixed-income housing. The programs can be utilized to acquire and rehabilitate or construct new multifamily or single-family housing units. Funding for the development of single-family lots is also an option through the HOME Program and Construction Loan Guarantee Program.³

For housing developments with a limited number of units, developers could take advantage of a lending tool from the **First District Development Company** (FDDC), a certified development company originating SBA 504 loans and other funding options for small businesses in Brookings, Clark, Codington, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Lake, Miner, Moody, and Roberts Counties. FDDC’s revolving loan fund (RLF⁴) provides flexible term financing options at interest rates of 6.25 to 7.25 percent. Any new or expanding for-profit or non-profit business in South Dakota is eligible, and RLF financing can be used for fixed assets, equipment, inventory, or working capital. Each project can be financed up to \$250,000, so the tool is not viable for larger-scale residential projects.

STRATEGY 1: Maximize the use of regulatory and funding tools for new housing.

³ <https://www.sdhousing.org/develop-housing/development-resources#gsc.tab=0>

⁴ <https://fddc.1stdistrict.org/programs/revolving-loan-funds-rlf/>

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Implement recommendations in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan to improve regulations to better support new housing development.
 - Utilize new zoning overlay codes to allow appropriate land uses and densities not supported under current regulations.
 - Allow trusted developers to replat properties or receive building permits in undeveloped but subdivided properties prior to funding infrastructure for worthy projects.
 - Facilitate new housing development through selective enhancement of road and utility infrastructure.
 - Create a new “Office” zoning district allowing for mixed-use projects in key districts.
- Consider offering “fast-track” development approval for projects meeting minimum criteria for the provision of affordable and market-rate housing.
- Continue the appropriate use of TIF funding for approved housing projects that satisfy critical needs for high-demand product types.
- Create a guide available online and in printed form detailing development finance programs available from SD Housing.
 - Commit staff resources to helping trusted developers access these programs, navigate application processes, and apply awarded funds to quality projects.
- Position and promote the First District Development Company’s revolving loan fund as an opportunity for small-scale housing developers to profitably defray certain costs for infill housing projects.

STRATEGY 2: Develop a Watertown Housing website as a multi-functional tool to encourage, promote, and advocate for local housing development.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Position the website as a central hub for all information on housing development and redevelopment in the City of Watertown.
- Build an interactive GIS-based mapping tool highlighting available residentially zoned parcels available for sale or development.
 - Embed data on land costs, ownership, utilities, residential zoning category, flood control regulations, and other information.
- Reference the 2023 Maxwell study and other research demonstrating housing demand in Watertown to promote residential development in the city.
- Communicate the steps the city is taking to make Watertown more business-friendly for new and redeveloped housing projects.
- Build a tab highlighting recent Watertown housing developments, including details about project type, sales figures, rental rates, and approved projects in the pipeline.
- Consider promoting the Watertown Housing website on a billboard adjacent to Interstate-29.
- Utilize the website to improve citizen awareness of the need for and benefits from construction of different housing types.
 - Include economic impact data, employer testimonials on workforce housing challenges, and case studies from peer communities to strengthen the campaign's message.
 - Create an interactive feature where residents can get information and updates on proposed and approved housing projects.
 - Consider the potential to promote the Watertown Housing website in utility bills and other high-exposure formats.

ACTIVITIES & RECREATION

Goal: *New and enhanced destinations that make Watertown's quality of life even more attractive for individuals and families*

With issues of talent retention and attraction paramount in Watertown, the attractiveness of the community as a place to live is a critical factor influencing labor force capacity. Watertown has made significant investments in quality-of-life amenities through the development of the Prairie Lakes Wellness Center, Prairie Lakes Ice Arena, and Foundation Plaza. Renewed downtown dynamism and residential options have also contributed to new place-based vitality.

Current residents overwhelmingly believe Watertown has a competitive quality of life/place, which could be further enhanced through strategic investments in certain key amenities. Many added, however, that Watertown has less to offer single young professionals and recent college graduates. Sentiments – both positive and negative – were reflected in the H2O-50 online survey in response to the following question:

PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING FEATURES OF WATERTOWN'S QUALITY OF LIFE & QUALITY OF PLACE

	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Arts and cultural amenities	6.5%	24.4%	38.7%	17.4%	7.0%
Restaurant and dining opportunities	7.5%	23.6%	39.2%	19.8%	8.9%
Recreation opportunities (parks, trails, pools, etc.)	2.3%	11.6%	37.3%	31.6%	15.4%
Family-friendly amenities	5.8%	23.2%	36.0%	20.8%	9.6%
Unique shopping opportunities	17.7%	32.5%	31.1%	12.8%	4.5%
Entertainment and nightlife opportunities	13.2%	33.8%	30.7%	11.6%	4.7%

Source: Watertown H2O-50 Online Survey

Current recreation opportunities were rated strongly, but many categories saw responses concentrated in the “Weak” to “Average” range, with shopping, entertainment, and nightlife faring most poorly.

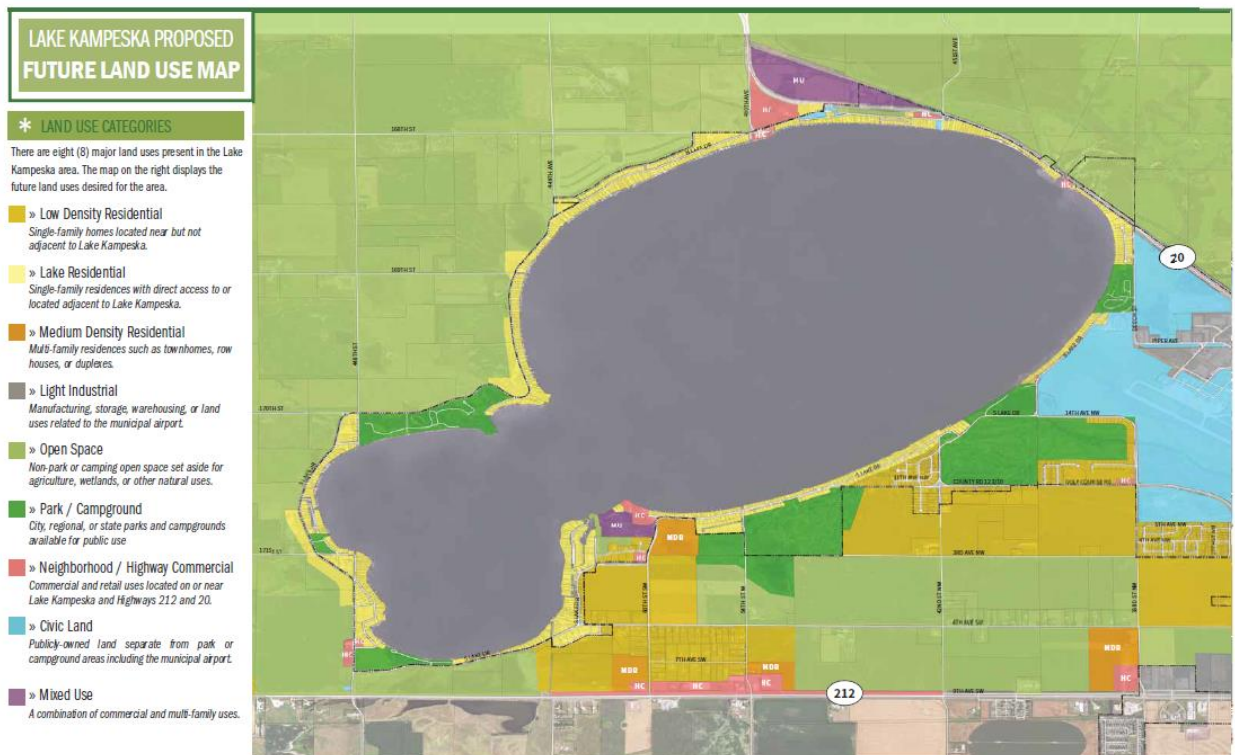
The impact of quality of life and quality of place on Watertown's talent capacity was evident in feedback from key business and institutional leaders. When asked how H2O-50 could best support the retention and attraction of physicians, LATC students, corporate executives, young professionals, and other talent, leaders said a priority should be to make Watertown a more dynamic destination to live and work.

There are no one-size-fits-all solutions to enhance quality of life and place, but Watertown has a strong track record of investing in lifestyle amenities that make it a better location for talent. Fully leveraging these investments and identifying short-and-longer-term opportunities for new assets will demonstrate that Watertown is not resting on its laurels as a desirable location.

Priority 1: LAKE KAMPESKA AND LAKE PELICAN

The availability of plentiful outdoor recreation amenities is a key competitive advantage for Watertown. Stakeholders lauded outdoor destinations like Lake Kameska, Lake Pelican, nearby hunting, fishing, and camping areas, local parks, and bike trails as particular strengths. Of these amenities, the two lakes were frequently said to be underutilized. When asked on the online survey whether Watertown does enough to capitalize on its two lakes, only 54 percent said yes. Most comments involved how to take better advantage of Lake Kameska; recommendations included a new public marina, watersport rentals, better access, more events and activities, dredging/clean-up, and increased commercial development like new restaurants and retail.

A **Master Plan** approved in 2019 for Lake Kameska sought to define lake management priorities and guide immediate and long-term land use and public investment decisions. The Master Plan's stakeholder input phase revealed public preferences for improved recreation and commercial amenities similar to the H2O-50 feedback. Because most of the approximately 13 miles of Lake Kameska shoreline is privately owned, the Master Plan recommended enhancing fish habitats on public shoreline and better connecting wetlands to the lake through "fish-friendly" structures. Two in-lake amenities – fishing piers and marinas – were proposed to be located along public access points and near an existing bike trail. In a **Future Land Use Map** (see below), consultants also recommended priority zones for commercial development. A **C-L Lake Commercial District** zoning designation was subsequently approved by the Watertown City Council for property on the lake's south shore. Based on the initial response, the city is working to adjust the new district based on stakeholder feedback.



Source: 2019 Lake Kampeska Master Plan

Final Master Plan implementation recommendations, cost estimates, and phasing principally included strategies to improve water quality, establish wetlands connections, restore fish habitats, and restock fish species.

As H2O-50 stakeholders noted, any changes at Lake Kampeska are complicated by the fact that 85 percent of lake-adjacent land is privately owned. Resistance from lakeside residents to more intensive development, visitation, and encroachment on their homes and properties must be resolved before the public's vision for enhanced utilization of the lake can be realized. There have also been disagreements between the City of Watertown and the **Lake Kampeska Water Project District**, a local agency tasked with protecting the lake's water resources by implementing projects to improve water quality and flood protection.

Some stakeholders feel that enhancing watersports amenities and other upgrades could be more viable at Lake Pelican because there are fewer lakeside residents. Because its boundaries touch the City of Watertown and Codington County, most Lake Pelican-adjacent development is regulated by a City of Watertown and Codington County Joint Jurisdiction Zoning Ordinance. Water quality and other

environmental concerns are overseen by the **Lake Pelican Water Project District** which was formed in 1988. The district subsequently became a taxing entity in 1991.

According to local leaders, the two Water Project Districts, the City of Watertown, and Codington County are often at cross purposes as it relates to the lakes and initiatives to leverage and/or sustain them for future generations. They feel that more cohesive communications and alignment between these partners could enable the community to better capitalize on these assets in ways suggested Lake Kampeska Master Plan feedback in 2019 and H2O-50 input in 2024.

Stakeholders also believe Watertown must be cognizant of water-related efforts to the city's north that might affect local watersheds and lakes. For example, any projects on the Big Sioux River near its headwaters would subsequently impact the Watertown area.

STRATEGY 1: Create a non-governmental Watertown Lakes Coalition as a tool for enhanced collaboration on lake-related issues and opportunities. (CE3/CE4)

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Bring together top representatives from the City of Watertown, Codington County, Lake Kampeska Water Project District, and Lake Pelican Water Project District along with property owners, lakeside residents, and businesspeople to form a coalition of influential leaders with interests in Watertown's lakes.
- Prepare for the Coalition's initial meeting by developing a brief overview of existing lake-related studies, plans, zoning, and other documents and status reviews of current projects and initiatives.
- Identify a representative from LATC or an outside entity to serve as a facilitator for Coalition discussions.
- Work with Coalition members to develop non-binding bylaws for the group, including goals, meeting procedures and frequencies, representation protocols, and guidelines for discussions and public statements.

- Capitalize on Coalition discussions to identify shared priorities to support and advance through the efforts of member entities.
- Explore long-term considerations of staffing the Coalition.

STRATEGY 2: Implement Lake Kampeska Phase 1 water-quality and fish habitat improvements recommended in the 2019 Master Plan.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Proceed with work to create fish/canoe passages and wetland connections to Lake Kampeska.
- Analyze and construct modifications to the Lake Kampeska weir.
- Improve fish habitats on the Nearshore and Offshore and construct the proposed fishing pier.
- Complete water column and sediment alum treatments.
- Conduct a study characterizing the phosphorous content of lake sediment.
- Foster effective collaboration between the Lake Kampeska Water Project District and City of Watertown officials to build consensus on preferred flood-control measures.
- Leverage the proposed Watertown Lakes Coalition (see above) as a potential catalyst for moving Master Plan implementation forward.

STRATEGY 3: Leverage the C-L Lake Commercial District zoning at Lake Kampeska to attract new lakeside development.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Ensure the zoning language is optimized based on stakeholder feedback.

- Include profiles of available parcels and buildings on the Watertown Development Company website to stimulate interest in lakeside commercial investment.
- Pursue the use of eligible incentives for projects meeting criteria specified in the C-L Lake Commercial District code.
- Consider advertising in targeted lifestyle and recreational publications and websites about Lake Kampeska commercial development opportunities.
- Determine the potential to designate additional properties C-L Lake Commercial District as per the Lake Kampeska Master Plan's Future Land Use recommendations.

STRATEGY 4: Partner on the development and implementation of a Lake Pelican Master Plan.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Engage the proposed Watertown Lakes Coalition (see above) as a tool to assess support for creation of a Lake Pelican Master Plan.
 - Determine the willingness of partners to jointly fund Master Plan development.
- Pursue all potential state, federal, and philanthropic grants to reduce or eliminate the need for public monies for the Master Plan contract.
- Conduct a comprehensive, inclusive public process to create a consensus vision and action plan for Lake Pelican's future use.

Priority 2: KEY RECREATION ASSETS

When asked about the signature victories of H2O-20 implementation, many stakeholders pointed to the development of the new indoor activity spaces Prairie Lakes Wellness Center and Prairie Lakes Ice Arena; both have notably enhanced local recreation opportunities during colder months. However, others cautioned that getting them built was only the first step. This was said to be true of other recreation

assets in Watertown as well, including Foundation Plaza, city parks, Bramble Park Zoo, and bike/pedestrian trails. These sentiments are consistent with the intent of the H2O-50 process that the new strategic plan includes a more balanced mix of programs and projects. A “brick-and-mortar” project that received more support than any other concept was the development of an **indoor recreation space for children** still too young to enjoy the Wellness Center or Ice Arena. Surveyed parents appreciated the new indoor recreation options, but felt they were not geared towards their children’s age group. Many said they would love to see an indoor play space, trampoline park, ballfields, or some other establishment that provides recreation opportunities during the winter months.

Leaders feel that a logical location for a new indoor play space in Watertown is the **Bramble Park Zoo**. This would provide a new in-demand amenity while also supporting the sustainability of a cherished local asset. The zoo was recently denied accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) stemming from facility issues and some animal enclosures no longer meeting updated AZA standards.

SECRET JUNGLE, LINCOLN (NE) CHILDREN'S ZOO

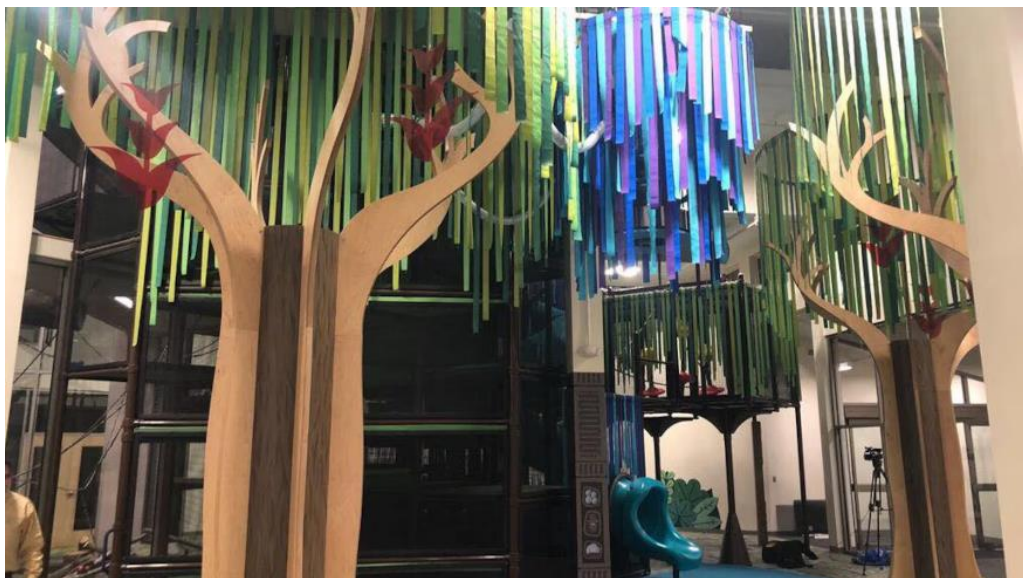


Image source: www.1011now.com

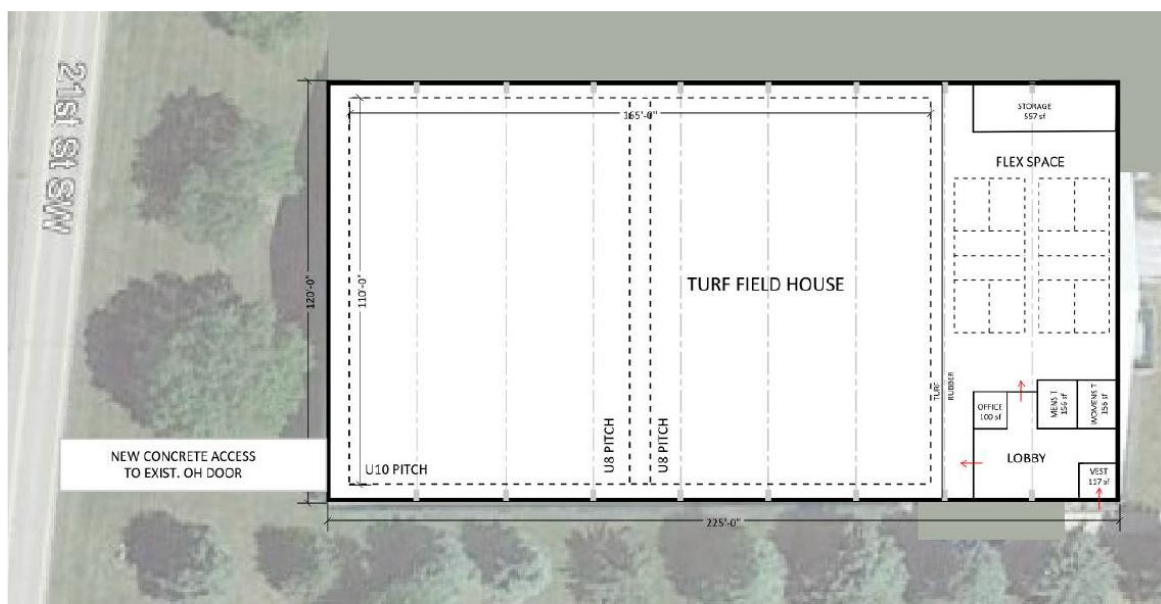
A potential model for Bramble Park Zoo’s indoor play area is the **Secret Jungle** exhibit at the Lincoln Children’s Zoo in Nebraska. As with Watertown, families in Lincoln had long wanted the zoo to remain open year-round. An interactive kids’ jungle experience with live monkeys, the Secret Jungle includes a new indoor animal and play area for animal encounters and educational activities. The exhibit also

features a climbing structure consisting of 15,000 square feet of elevated platforms and the longest tornado slide in Lincoln.⁵

Another idea suggested by interviewees and focus group participants was considering reuse options for **George E. Maas Indoor Ice Arena**, potentially as a location for indoor ballfields for all-weather play. This usage is consistent with recommendations from the City of Watertown's recently completed **2024 Parks System Master Plan**. According to the Plan:

With the overall observed condition of the arena in generally good shape, this build (sic) is a great opportunity to extend its service life for the community... The results of the community survey in consideration of the use of the facility are staggeringly in favor of re-purposing the space for indoor recreation purposes not associated with the current ice function.

MAAS ARENA – PROPOSED CONCEPT



Source: 2024 City of Watertown Parks System Master Plan

The Parks System Master Plan also included short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations to maintain and improve existing parks, trails, and facilities and develop new infrastructure. Among them were:

- Completion of the Lake Kampeska Trail, development of a trail at north Lions Park, and multiple trail system restorations.

⁵ Source: <https://www.1011now.com/content/news/Lincoln-Zoos-Secret-Jungle-exhibit-opens-to-the-public-next-week-509369021.html>

- Development of new parks at River Ridge and Stony Park Development.
- Creation of a destination ADA playground at McKinley Park.
- Evaluation of the need and potential location for a downtown dog park.

One element that was not a component of the Parks System Master Plan was **activity programming** for existing facilities. This was cited by many H2O-50 input participants as a key need to maximize investments made in Foundation Plaza, the Wellness Center, Ice Arena, and the city's other recreation spaces and facilities.

***STRATEGY 1: Consistently implement priorities of the 2024 City of Watertown
Parks System Master Plan***

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Ensure that the H2O-50 Strategic Action Plan consistently aligns with consensus priorities of Parks System Master Plan implementation.
- Charge H2O-50 public and private volunteer leaders and partnering organizations with incorporating planning, resourcing, and development processes associated with Parks System Master Plan implementation into discussions around how the H2O-50 process can support complementary quality of life investments.

***STRATEGY 2: Leverage and create programs and activities for high-profile
indoor and outdoor recreation spaces in Watertown***

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Create a **Recreation Activities Committee** – potentially aligned with H2O-50 implementation – tasked with promoting and enhancing current activity programming in existing indoor and outdoor parks and recreation facilities.

- Working with city staff, recreation facility directors, and Downtown Watertown stakeholders, identify opportunities to develop new programming and events to further activate these spaces for the benefit of Watertown residents.
- Fully realize the stated goal of leveraging the Prairie Lakes Wellness Center as a key community gathering spot for the full diversity of the city's population.

STRATEGY 3: Pursue the development of a dynamic new indoor play space at Bramble Park Zoo in Watertown. (CE5)

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Conduct outreach to determine public support for the funding and construction of the facility.
- Consider taking local public and private leadership to visit a facility like the Secret Jungle exhibit at the Lincoln Children's Zoo or some other best-in-class indoor play space.
- Contingent on levels of support, proceed with contracting for a master plan for development of the Bramble Park Zoo indoor play facility.
- Model the facility's funding and implementation process on successful efforts to build the Prairie Lakes Wellness Center and Prairie Lakes Ice Arena.

STRATEGY 4: Prioritize implementation of the Parks System Master Plan's recommendation to redevelop Maas Indoor Ice Arena as athletic fields.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Through H2O-50 implementation, determine the relative priority of the Maas Arena redevelopment in the broader context of H2O-50 recreation projects.
- As support dictates, model the Maas athletic fields project on similar facility-development processes pursued through H2O-20 implementation.

- Ensure that city government, business and institutional leaders, and Watertown residents are aligned on the need for public-private solutions to funding and construction of the Maas athletic fields.

Priority 3: DOWNTOWN WATERTOWN

Downtown revitalization has injected life into Watertown's commercial and residential sectors and made the city a more dynamic destination for visitors and talent looking for urban-style environments and amenities. While the COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench into the engine of downtown's growth, stakeholders report that the district is slowly improving again. Even so, several downtown business owners believe the attention given to the district after the H2O-20 process has waned, with the focus now shifting to interstate-adjacent properties. Stakeholders would like to see the return of a downtown advisory board concept that was successful in the past or the creation of a full-time position overseeing downtown development and programming at the city level or through a Main Street-type program.

Currently, there is no entity or individual working full-time to support Downtown Watertown's growth, development, and vitality. However, groundwork for more intensive downtown revitalization was laid in 2019 with the adoption of a **Downtown Overlay District (DT)** with the goal of promoting the development of a compact, pedestrian-oriented downtown with employment, mixed-use areas, offices, and residential living environments with a broad range of housing types.

Very often, cities will take advantage of state legislation allowing the creation of taxing districts to fund an entity specifically dedicated to downtown development. Chapter 9-55 of the State of South Dakota Code of Ordinances enables municipalities to create **Business Improvement Districts (BID)** for just this purpose. The Watertown City Council used this tool to create a noncontiguous citywide BID inclusive only of hotel and motel properties with over 25 rooms to fund promotion of visitor facilities, events, attractions, and other tourism-serving activities. State law allows municipalities to create multiple BIDs or alter the boundaries and/or functions of existing BIDs, so if a decision is made to propose a taxing district for Downtown Watertown, these options are available.

Rather than create a new master plan for downtown Watertown or some other strategic blueprint for the district, H2O-50 leaders recommended leveraging previous planning initiatives that remain applicable to current downtown opportunities. Chief among them is a **2016 planning charette** that participants said

resulted in multiple viable and exciting recommendations for enhancing downtown development and dynamism. Focusing on taking the next step on current downtown opportunities would also entail completing construction of The Ruins apartment project that was suspended when the developer defaulted on bank loans.

Even though stakeholder input indicated a desire for additional higher-end restaurant, retail, and entertainment destinations, the consensus among the H2O-50 Committee was that Watertown would struggle to support these businesses. According to a Committee member, “There isn’t currently a culture of dining out to support restaurants turning tables... No matter what incentives we offer, if we don’t have the population or the culture in place, the businesses won’t thrive.” The Committee agreed and believed that successful implementation of H2O-50 will build a critical mass that will eventually make higher-end non-chain restaurants, retail, and entertainment venues more viable.

***STRATEGY 1: Create an Action Plan to implement existing recommendations
for Downtown Watertown development.***

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

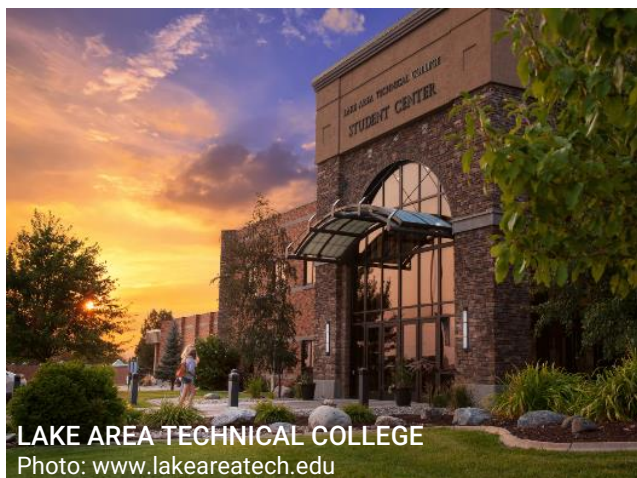
- Collect all existing plans and studies related to Downtown Watertown development, including the 2016 planning charrette, into a master report comprising potential Action Plan components.
- Empanel a representative committee of top public and private leaders to oversee the process of assessing and prioritizing Action Plan projects.
- Develop a tactical Action Plan for the chosen initiatives, including analysis of lead and support implementation entities, potential funding sources, and key activities necessary to achieve success for each project.
- As a component of the Action Plan, determine the best option for creating a **staffed entity** to direct project implementation and serve as a long-term downtown development and programming organization or department.

WORKFORCE CAPACITY

Goal: *A sustainable base of trained workers to support the growth of Watertown businesses*

A shortage of available workers is Watertown's top competitive challenge. This reality is widely known, with multiple efforts underway to address this issue. While institutions and systems in Watertown's Pre-K to 18 training system are key assets, workforce shortages are impacted by many factors, including population growth trends, childcare, housing, lifestyle amenities, and worker attitudes. Because several of these issues are addressed in other H2O-50 focus areas, it reinforces that implementation of the Strategic Action Plan must be a coordinated effort, with different interrelated pieces combining to make Watertown more competitive for talent, investment, and job creation.

Performance data and public input feedback reinforced that, though they face challenges, Watertown's education and training system remains competitive. This includes **Watertown Public Schools**, which, despite controversy over the closure of Roosevelt Elementary School, remains above the state average for graduation rates and several other statistics. District representatives pointed to technology upgrades for students, the development of an early childhood center, and the construction of a new athletic complex as evidence that the system continues to invest in student welfare.



WPS and Lake Area Technical College are overseen by the same board, a critical factor for their strong alignment. LATC was widely praised by Watertown stakeholders as the community's most important competitive asset. A college official said it is purely "a bodies game" as to why there are so many local job openings; LATC could produce "dozens more" graduates and still not put a dent in local demand. That is one reason that an LATC interviewee noted

that one of the most impactful outcomes from H2O-50 would be to make Watertown a more exciting destination and attractor of students and talent.

Many stakeholders identified **Watertown's Mount Marty University (MMU)** program as an underutilized asset. Down from a high of 300 students, MMU's enrollment is now at 100. Ultimately, university representatives would like to see that number grow to 150. A local MMU representative believes the campus' delivery model is a "good fit" for non-traditional students looking for in-person education but said the Watertown program's limited marketing budget is a challenge for driving increased enrollment.

With Watertown's labor market so tight, any issue that affects workers' ability to access employment compounds talent availability challenges. A May 2024 **Watertown Childcare Landscape Analysis** report confirmed that nearly three-quarters of surveyed parents believe there are not enough childcare options in Coddington County. Almost 30 percent of parents use unregistered home-based providers for their childcare. Over one-third of employers also said some employees had quit or reduced their hours due to childcare challenges. Although there has been recent progress made on this issue, expanding Watertown's capacity of licensed childcare programs will ensure that parents of small children can join the workforce in greater numbers.

In addition to licensed childcare centers, the **Boys & Girls Club of Watertown (BGC)** plays an important role in supporting working families by offering affordable, accessible after-school care for children ages 5 to 18. With an annual membership fee of \$125, the Club provides a safe and engaging environment where children can participate in enrichment activities such as arts, sports, academic support, and character-building programs. This resource benefits youth and strengthens workforce participation by giving parents a reliable care option beyond standard school hours.

Priority 1: PROGRAM GROWTH

Fortunately for Watertown, the local public school district and higher education institutions are deeply embedded with local businesses and offer multiple pathways to quality employment, either directly after high school through job-specific training collaborations or once they have received a two- or four-year college degree. Nevertheless, local leaders identified opportunities for short- and longer-term expansion of Watertown's total number of graduates available for local occupations in demand. In the short term, improving the understanding and awareness among parents, clergy, advisors, and other influencers in the orbit of middle and high-school students of the value and modern realities of **production-based careers** can renew interest among local youth in these pathways. Currently, LATC officials and employers

report that parents remain reluctant to see their children enter what they perceive as a “dirty” industry of the past.

With this sentiment echoed in communities across the country, the **Manufacturing Institute** – the workforce and education partner of the National Association of Manufacturers – has created multiple student engagement initiatives to introduce students to career pathways in modern manufacturing and clarify misperceptions about these careers by providing educational tools and experiences to youth, parents, and educators. This is achieved through several programs, including Creators Wanted, MFG Day, the STEM Careers Coalition, youth-facing content focused on manufacturing careers, and other activities and programs.⁶

Longer term, developing additional program slots for existing and future students in key local career clusters through expansion at **Northeast Technical High School (NE Tech)** could conceivably double the number of students in these training tracks. With over 2,000 requests for classes and only 1,200 students, Northeast Tech could accommodate significant additional demand, but officials say expanding capacity would be costly due to the requirements of high-tech training facilities and equipment. Because of constraints on Watertown Public School’s bonding capacity, raising the necessary resources to construct a new facility at Northeast Tech would require alternative solutions.

Enrollment growth at Mount Marty University-Watertown would likely result from a combination of attracting more students for existing programs and adding new degrees. Currently, about half of the campus’ students are in the elementary education program. A representative of the Watertown campus said that a four-year nursing degree is a local need, with MMU potentially serving as a “natural bridge” from the two-year LPN and RN degrees offered at LATC. Another potential good fit could be a master’s program in school administration. There are 500 educators in a 60-minute radius of the campus who are interested in getting their master’s degrees.

STRATEGY 1: Increase student participation in manufacturing credential and degree programs. (CE6)

⁶ Source: <https://themanufacturinginstitute.org/students/>

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Continue efforts to enroll Watertown high school students in apprenticeships and internships with local manufacturing firms.
- Work with academic counselors at area high schools and LATC to ensure their messaging is consistent with narratives produced in collaboration with local manufacturers on the benefits of these careers.
- Connect with the Manufacturing Institute to explore implementation of their student engagement programs in Watertown.

STRATEGY 2: Expand program capacity at Northeast Technical High School.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Collaborate with the Watertown School District School Board and the leadership of partner high schools in the Glacial Lakes Region to identify and confirm opportunities for NE Tech expansion.
- Leverage a coalition of key public, private, and institutional partners to pursue resource options to fund campus expansion based on assessed needs and implementation costs.
- Develop data-driven resource campaign materials to present to local manufacturers and other employers that benefit from the output of NE Tech programming.

STRATEGY 3: Support enrollment growth at Mount Marty University-Watertown.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Identify potential collaborative approaches to help MMU-W meet its targeted part-time and full-time equivalent (FTE) student population goals.

- Consider opportunities to provide in-kind data services to help the Watertown campus demonstrate demand for a new bachelor's degree in nursing and master's degree in school administration.

Priority 2: TALENT ENGAGEMENT

Attracting talent in America to individual communities is extremely challenging. People are moving less frequently than ever before, and typically will only consider changing locations to be closer to family or for a long-term career opportunity. Prospects are even less likely for smaller communities without the concentration of amenities or higher-wage white-collar jobs to compete with larger cities for talent, especially younger workers. Because of this, it is imperative that Watertown does everything in its power to retain the talent that is already here, either in school or in the workforce.

LATC students represent an obvious market for talent retention. Indeed, if they are enrolled at LATC it is likely to receive training for a locally available job. However, with limited pools of skilled talent in many communities across the Midwest, there will doubtless be plenty of opportunities for graduates with degrees in high-demand fields to locate elsewhere for work.

As with young professionals and managerial-level talent, LATC student retention is also hampered by a lack of key lifestyle amenities in Watertown. In response to the question of how H2O-50 could best support the college, a LATC executive said, "The piece (city leaders) need to chip away at is the experience (students) have in town. They kick the tires and need to like it." Therefore, it is critical that efforts are undertaken to root LATC students in the community by helping them build or strengthen social and professional networks and offering more compelling cultural and entertainment experiences.

The principal tool for embedding young professionals in the city is the **EXC!TE Watertown** program run by the Watertown Chamber. EXC!TE's goal is to engage young professionals in Watertown life through relationship-building with other YPS and leaders across the community. Unfortunately, H2O-50 feedback noted that the program is more of a social outlet than career-building opportunity. While YPs were said to be included in the group overseeing the redevelopment of the Goss and selected other efforts, interviewees explained that local leadership still feels closed off and insular to young professionals looking to network with Watertown's most influential residents.

STRATEGY 1: Partner with LATC to strengthen the engagement of the college's students with the Watertown community.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Work with LATC's Student Activities/Organizations Coordinator and directors of the Goss, Redlin Art Center, Prairie Lakes Wellness Center, Prairie Lakes Ice Arena, City of Watertown Parks, Recreation and Forestry department, and other entities to target shows, events, and activities specifically for LATC students.
- Connect the Student Activities/Organizations Coordinator with downtown retailers and businesses in other commercial districts to determine support for creating a discount card for LATC students and/or designating certain hours for students to receive discounted services and merchandise.
- Consider whether to reserve slots on public and non-profit boards and commissions for LATC student representatives.
- Continue robust current efforts to place LATC graduates in internships and employment at Watertown area businesses.
- Assess opportunities to promote membership in EXC!TE Watertown – potentially via discounts or scholarships – to LATC students and recent graduates.

STRATEGY 2: Do more to demonstrate Watertown's appreciation for LATC students. (CE7)

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Install streetlight banners, yard signs, window stickers, and other displays welcoming LATC students at the start of each academic year.

- Host an annual “Celebrating Students” event in downtown Watertown with live music, student organization booths, family-friendly games, sidewalk retail, food trucks, and other activities.

STRATEGY 3: Reinvigorate EXC!TE Watertown as a tool for young professional networking and talent retention.

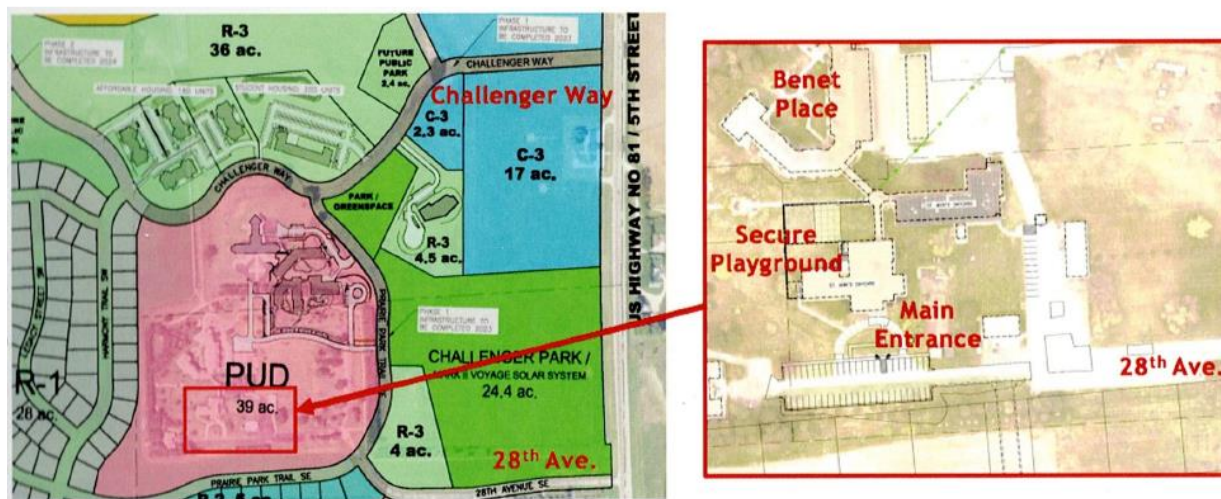
POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Research comparative YP programs at peer chambers of commerce to identify strategies to expand member participation into more community-focused and public-facing activities.
- Incorporate a mentorship aspect into EXC!TE membership with YPs paired with established Watertown leaders for monthly coffee meetings or other engagements.
- Program regular learning sessions where members of community organizations, boards, and human resource professionals from local companies update EXC!TE members on recent news and answer questions from attendees.
- Create an annual community “project” (similar to “class of” reunion gifts to their institutions) for EXC!TE members to spearhead and implement.

Priority 3: CHILDCARE SERVICES

Though it had been an ongoing workforce challenge in Watertown, the closure of the Little Blessings program and the elimination of 150 much needed childcare slots brought the issue into the spotlight and quickly got the attention of elected officials. Responding to citizens’ urgent demands for action, the Watertown City Council and Codington County Board of Supervisors agreed to contribute public money to help relocate the Little Blessings program to the Harmony Hill project at the Mother of God Monastery. Funds helped partially cover the renovation costs of St. Ann’s and Harmony Hill Halls as childcare facilities. With the project budget estimated at \$2.5 million, the remainder of the conversion costs would need to be covered through philanthropic donations. Local leaders are confident that sufficient funds will be raised to enable the project to move forward.

THE VILLAGE AT HARMONY HILL CHILDCARE FACILITY SITE



Source: Watertown Childcare: Crisis or Opportunity?

Despite the recovery of the Little Blessings slots, stakeholders believe that additional physical capacity will be needed to accommodate current and future demand for childcare. Governmental and non-profit social services agencies should work with community leaders and organizations to continually look for opportunities to repurpose obsolete or underused buildings that could house new or expanded childcare programs. This could also include determining how best to support partner efforts like LATC's Children's Educare Center, which offers before and after-school programming for LATC students and local parents. LATC was able to secure resources to expand Educare's capacity in August 2024 from 45 to 135 children; further expansions could provide more access to families affiliated with the college as well as the general public.

Another community asset supporting families with school-aged children is the Boys & Girls Club of Watertown. The Club offers consistent, affordable after-school programming that helps meet the needs of working parents. In 2024, the Club served 1,583 youth, with an average daily attendance of 430 children. Its reach also extends to the broader community, supporting over 450 local employers by providing families with a reliable care option.

To address the nearly 30 percent of local parents who place their children with unlicensed home-based childcare, Watertown has the opportunity to elevate this care to a higher standard and support the needs of providers through the development of a **home-based childcare network**. Often managed by paid staff, formal networks offer a menu of services to a targeted group of home-based providers, including access

to a network of peers, enhanced business practices that improve sustainability, assistance on improving care and gaining licensure, and connections to critical resources for themselves and their clients.

To complement private facilities and home-based care, employers have been increasingly providing childcare programming at the workplace. A 2023 survey of employers by Care.com found that 46 percent have prioritized the provision of childcare benefits, while 80 percent said childcare benefits boost their company's productivity and talent recruitment and retention. Key Watertown employers surveyed for the H2O-50 process said they were either looking into providing onsite childcare or would be interested in the approach if fiscally sustainable. Slots would be available for employees first but could be offered to the public if supplies were sufficient.

***STRATEGY 1: Consistently assess and pursue opportunities to enhance
Watertown's childcare capacity.***

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Leverage the social services coordination entity (see page 43) as the organization in charge of leading efforts to identify potential facilities for use as childcare centers.
- Engage partners like LATC, Watertown Public Schools, neighborhood organizations, and others looking to establish or expand childcare programmatic capacity.
- Coordinate with the Boys & Girls Club to ensure families, schools, and employers are aware of available after-school care options for school-aged children.
- Establish protocols and tactical approaches to pursue opportunities for new childcare facilities as they arise.
- Consistently work to review and apply for available governmental and non-profit grant programs to support the development of new and expanded childcare facilities in Watertown.

***STRATEGY 2: Develop a network of home-based childcare providers in
Codington County.⁷ (CE8)***

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Form a work team to facilitate the stage-based implementation of a staffed home-based childcare network.
- Charge the work team with determining if there are sufficient resources and capacity to sustain the network.
- Develop a funding, services, support, and marketing model to promote to home-care providers for network membership.
- Establish rigid standards for staff qualifications and staff training
- Hire a staff person to manage the network.
- Create a “team charter” describing how the network will function, make decisions, and advance its mission and objectives.
- Detail the personal and business support resources that will be available to network members.
- Create protocols for troubleshooting problems and continuous improvement.
- Provide network members with access to training visits or coaching, peer support opportunities, administrative support, materials and equipment, business and quality assistance, and navigation for system participation.
- Support LATC’s efforts to launch a childcare provider credential to supplement the home-based and facility-based talent pool.

⁷ Recommendations informed by the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance’s February 2024 report, *Developing a Home-Based Childcare Network: A Technical Assistance Manual*.

***STRATEGY 3: Provide information and support to Watertown employers
interested in offering childcare benefits to their workers.***

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Research and compile a menu of options for employer-sponsored childcare based on example programs from companies in peer communities or national best-practices.
- Work with local providers, including the proposed home-based childcare network, to determine ways they could partner with local companies and assess service costs.
- Establish a formal system for replying to employers interested in offering childcare benefits to their workers.
- Explore ways to create a funding pool to offer stipends for small to medium-sized companies unable to pay the full cost of childcare benefits.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Goal: *A welcoming, forward-thinking, collaborative city where all residents can thrive and contribute to bettering Watertown's future*

A local executive who relocated to Watertown explained that other offers were on the table for more money in warmer communities, but Watertown's "community feel" won the day. An "undercover" pre-hire scouting trip to Watertown convinced the executive that taking the offer was the right choice. Another relocated leader echoed these sentiments, noting, "What I love about this community is that people really do care about growth and development... It's fun to be in a place where people are willing to band together and find clarity on what to work on and who to work with."

Watertown's sense of community, can-do attitude, and neighbor-helping-neighbor spirit were cited often during H2O-50 the stakeholder input process as insurance that whatever the future may hold, Watertown will come together to meet it successfully. But statistical trends and feedback from the city's non-profit and community support agencies told of a different side of Watertown – a place where demographics are changing and social services needs are increasing. A participant in a focus group of non-profit and community services representatives said, "We're in a big learning curve as a community; we're getting introduced to these issues... How do we adapt to that and open up people's opinions and awareness so we can create working relationships?"

Responses to the H2O-50 online survey, regardless of the race and ethnicity of the participant, were consistent on residents' vision for Watertown's future. BRS and Atlas broke out the response rates to the following question by race and ethnicity and found that attitudes were very similar. The below graphic represents all 3,000+ survey participants.

WHAT ARE THREE WORDS OR PHRASES YOU'D LIKE TO SEE USED TO DESCRIBE
WATERTOWN IN THE YEAR 2050?



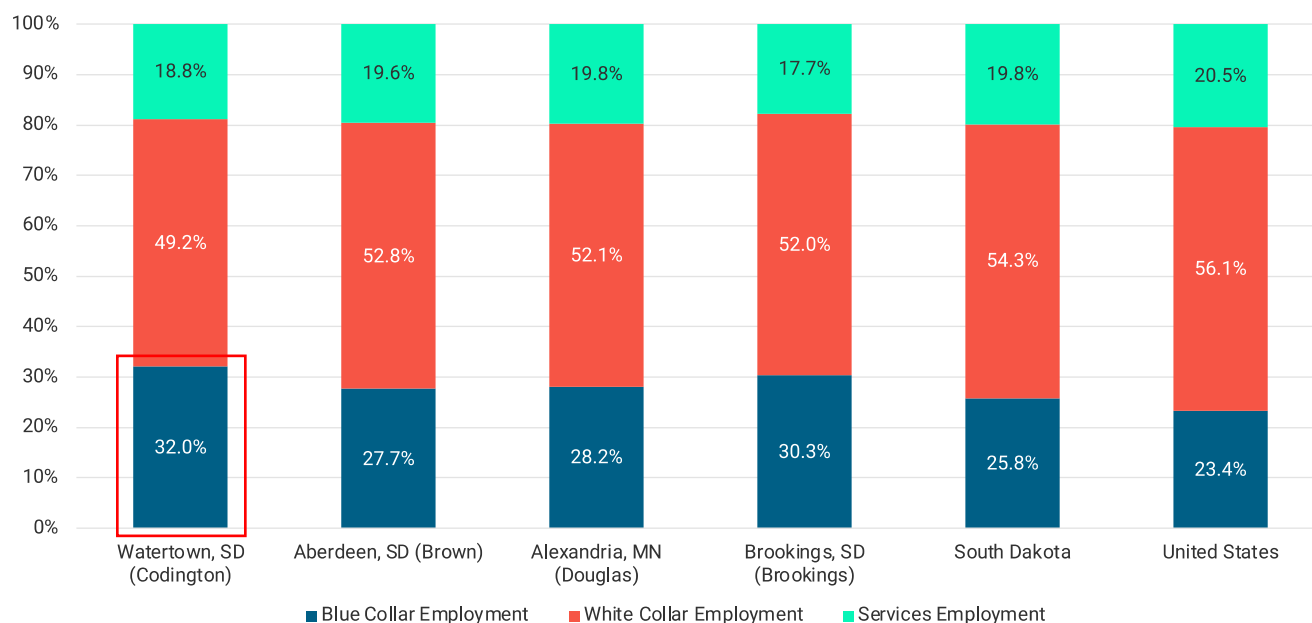
To achieve a future where Watertown is a safe, growing, friendly, beautiful, progressive, affordable, family-oriented community with great opportunities for development, shopping, entertainment, and other benefits, the city must ensure that residents have the support needed to live healthy, happy, productive lives where they can be engaged in collaborative efforts to make the community better.

This outcome will require the government, the private sector, and citizens to communicate and collaborate more effectively and for avenues to leadership to be available to residents regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, or income.

Priority 1: COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Federal data corroborated stakeholder feedback that, in many ways, Watertown is a “blue collar” community. Its employment mix, labor skills, education levels, family incomes, and utilization rates of social support systems and programs all reinforce that Watertown has many “working poor” families that do not meet federal poverty limits but nevertheless struggle to make ends meet.

PERCENTAGE OF OCCUPATIONS BY “COLLAR TYPE,” 2023 Q4



Source: JobsEQ

Because of its high number of working poor families that do not qualify for federal assistance, Watertown has built up a strong network of social services departments, organizations, agencies, and volunteer entities working to ensure residents in need receive assistance.

A coalition of these social services partners has come together as **Codington Connects**, a “collective impact⁸” network hoping to improve the coordination, collaboration, and impact of the area’s social support programs and systems. Launched in April 2023 through a one-time grant award, Codington Connects has been housed in Codington County government and run by existing county staff.

Codington Connects is a potential entity to act as the “backbone” organization for the implementation of the **2022-2027 Codington County Social Services Strategic Plan**. Other options include the Watertown Area United Way, a city or county department, the Human Service Agency, or some other partner. The Social Services Strategic Plan is a five-year blueprint that includes four priority areas, seen below.

⁸ Collective impact is a network of community members, organizations, and institutions advancing equity through shared learning, aligning, and integrating actions to achieve population and systems level change. (source: <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/what-is-collective-impact/>)

GOAL PRIORITY AREAS

1 HOUSING

Develop safe, affordable housing that meets community needs including emergency & transitional housing.

2 MENTAL HEALTH

Create an environment that informs, encourages, and supports mental health wellness.

3 COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION & CHILDCARE

Build a support network for all residents that builds life skills and relationships across the community.

4 CENTRALIZED SERVICES & EDUCATION

Establish a centralized system of care that supports residents in need with services provided in a cohesive manner before, during, and after a crisis.

Source: Codington County

The backbone entity overseeing the plan's implementation should seek to build a system of continuing care through collaboration across agencies, families, and individuals.

STRATEGY 1: Identify and support an entity to serve as the backbone for the implementation of coordinated local social services strategies. (CE9)

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Bring a group of key partner representatives together to determine the entity that could most effectively serve as the strategic backbone for social services strategy implementation.
- Designate the chosen partner as the principal coordination entity for the implementation of strategic plans for childcare, supportive housing, workforce accessibility, and other priorities.
- Pursue resources to enable staffing at the chosen entity wholly dedicated to managing the network of partners implementing the social services plan.
 - Conduct information-driven outreach to Watertown employers to discuss the “bottom line” advantages of investing in the backbone entity.
- Leverage partnerships and coordination facilitated by the backbone entity to identify service overlaps and other redundancies that can generate programmatic cost savings.
- Charge the backbone entity with developing data-driven performance goals and regularly reporting process towards attainment to demonstrate return on investment to funders.

- Secure resources to hire or contract with a full-time **grant writer** managed by the backbone entity to source government and philanthropic grants to help fund local social services efforts.

Priority 2: COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

Just as greater coordination and collaboration would benefit Watertown and Codington County's social services systems, H2O-50 stakeholders believe the broader community must also focus more directly on improving how its top organizations, leaders, and citizens at large work together to address local challenges, opportunities, and key issues affecting businesses and residents' futures.

At times, H2O-50 stakeholders said, there seems to be a "push-pull" between those in the community who prefer to maintain the status quo and others who feel change is necessary. And even among those who desire change there is sometimes a lack of clarity on priorities. As one business leader said, "We know what we're against in Watertown, but we don't really know what we're for."

In the listening sessions for the **City of Watertown's 2022-2027 Strategic Planning** exercise, the Strategic Planning Core Team comprised of the Mayor, City Council, City Manager, Department Heads, and Division Managers engaged in listening sessions with citizens to inform the process. Among the key themes that emerged from these meetings was a desire from the public to have a better sense of what is going on in city government, establishing and communicating priorities and a "big vision," shared traditions to rally around, and proactive work to make Watertown a community of choice.

A current challenge that H2O-50 stakeholders felt was hampering Watertown's ability to collaborate around a shared vision is a poor communications climate in the city. Many believed a lack of trusted communications outlets made it difficult to share information and build consensus. A Watertown Public Schools official explained, "The daily paper's demise has plagued us. We used to count on multiple stories per week. It's difficult to get the same information out to everybody."

In the absence of consistent, reliable, and trusted channels of communication, it is difficult for leaders to effectively engage and inform local citizens and build support for worthwhile projects and programs. H2O-50 Committee members report that a new local newspaper has launched in Watertown and are cautiously optimistic that this publication will become a trusted information source for the future.

STRATEGY 1: Leverage H2O-50 Strategic Action Plan implementation as a tool for enhanced local coordination and collaboration.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Model H2O-50 operations on successful H2O-20 efforts with leadership and practitioner teams overseeing strategy-wide implementation and separate pursuit of tactical priorities.
- Establish clear expectations at H2O-50's launch for implementation teams to serve as "neutral ground" for discussions on Watertown strategic priorities and how to achieve them.
- Ensure implementation teams are reflective of public sector officials, business leadership, organizational and institutional representatives, and a diverse set of citizen perspectives.
- Annually assess implementation team membership, meeting minutes, progress on goal attainment, and other factors to determine ongoing needs to improve stakeholder collaboration and coordination.

STRATEGY 2: Foster community dialogues and trusted information sources to enhance stakeholder awareness of efforts to improve Watertown. (CE10)

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Create tools for effective communication and information-sharing across the H2O-50 initiative, perhaps including an **online hub** with publicly available content and password-protected access for internal communications among H2O-50 volunteers.
- Consider reviving and renaming the **Pandemic Response Team** brought together during COVID-19 to hold regular meetings of city departments, non-profit organizations, education and training entities, and other partners as an opportunity for greater communications and collaboration.
- Work with the City of Watertown to hold quarterly **Public Information Breakfasts** to fill citizens in on recent activities in city government and allow for a question-and-answer session.

- Utilize one of the breakfasts to serve as an annual **State of the City Address** from the sitting mayor.
- Support local media outlets that strive to produce quality content and provide supervised forums for readers and viewers to interact.
- Utilize social media accounts, e-newsletters, printed inserts in utility bills, community bulletin boards, and other outlets to effectively communicate important information to the public.
- Partner with organizations, institutions, large employers, and citizen groups across Watertown to leverage their communications tools to distribute informational content to their networks.

Priority 3: LEADERSHIP NETWORKS

Watertown has long benefitted from leadership with the foresight to understand that competitiveness in today's economy comes from making significant investments in assets, amenities, and infrastructure that address the needs of companies and talent. As the city cultivated its 2025 vision through this strategic process, an accomplished generation desired to step back and empower a new group of leaders to claim the mantle of Watertown's champions for change. There are hopeful signs that H2O-50 represents the emergence of a new group of aspiring local leaders.

As Watertown becomes increasingly diverse from the steady in-migration of new residents from the U.S. and abroad, it is more important than ever that the city's leadership represents the voices and perspectives of those who call the city home.

Ensuring that the city's leadership reflects the composition of its citizenry will enable all residents to have a say in how their community progresses and improves the likelihood that city investments are consistent with residents' priorities. This includes not only the City Council and publicly appointed boards and commissions, but also formal and informal leadership networks in the private sector.

In the Consultant Team's experience, communities with inclusive leadership are excelling in the marketplace for talent as they can leverage a greater diversity of opinions to identify and address key competitive challenges and opportunities.

STRATEGY 1: Create a Watertown Leadership Forum to hold regular informal dialogues on key community issues and opportunities.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Identify an entity to oversee the management of the Forum and coordination of meeting schedules, agendas, locations, communications, and other responsibilities.
- Establish a transparent, inclusive process for confirming participation in the Forum to ensure that its membership reflects a diversity of ages, genders, races and ethnicities, incomes, organizational affiliations, and lengths of residency in Watertown.
- Set parameters for Forum governance, terms and transitions, roles and responsibilities, codes of conduct, and other aspects of membership.
- Coordinate discussion agendas with primary topics of interest in H2O-50 implementation, public policy, issue-specific priorities, economic development activities, and citizen concerns.

STRATEGY 2: Renew Leadership Watertown to serve a more impactful role in developing and leveraging next-generation local leaders.

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Revisit program dynamics, curriculum, participation criteria and selection, and other elements based on a review of best-practice comparison leadership programs.
- Work with partners across Watertown and Codington County to ensure participant rosters reflect a broad mix of local constituencies.
- Formalize processes for engaging program graduates and leveraging their talents to positively impact current local strategic efforts.

- Create an online presence for Leadership Watertown to provide information on current and past classes and how graduates are positively impacting the community.

STRATEGY 3: Work to diversify representation on public and private councils, boards, and commissions. (CE11)

POTENTIAL TACTICAL APPROACHES:

- Develop a non-binding pledge for signatory organizations committing them to pursuing more diverse membership on their governance boards.
- Consistently monitor board and commission membership to encourage governments, organizations, and institutions to maintain rosters consistent with Watertown's demographic composition.
- Review board and commission bylaws to ensure effective volunteer transition and service limits.
- Offer a "candidate boot camp" program to guide residents interested in running for office on how to file, prepare, campaign, and serve in locally elected positions

Appendix A: Comparative Examples

The following projects, programs, and initiatives are profiled to enable H2O-50 implementation partners to explore example efforts similar to certain of the plan's key strategies. The comparison examples are not intended to represent the best practices in these spheres (although some may be considered as such) but rather opportunities to highlight processes and outcomes that can inform Watertown's implementation activities.

CE1: Affordable Housing Overlay Zone (Princeton, NJ)

<https://www.princetonnj.gov/Archive/ViewFile/Item/1585>

Facing housing affordability issues, the municipality of Princeton in New Jersey created an overlay zone for affordable housing supplemental to the underlying zoning district. The Purpose of the Affordable Housing Overlay Zone is to provide a realistic opportunity for the construction of affordable housing per the guidelines of the New Jersey Fair Housing Act. The zone seeks to incentivize redevelopment consisting of upper-story multi-family residential uses, with an affordable housing set-aside clause, along with ground-level retail, service, commercial, and office uses. Development within the zone must include a minimum of 20 percent of all dwellings restricted for occupancy by low- and moderate-income households. A new position, the Municipal Housing Liaison, is responsible for affirmatively marketing, administering, and certifying the occupant of each affordable unit.

CE2: Single-Family Rehabilitation Program (Sioux Falls, SD)

<https://www.siouxfalls.gov/resident-services/housing-neighborhoods/housing/single-family>

The City of Sioux Falls' Single-Family Rehabilitation Program provides financial assistance to low- and moderate-income homeowners to maintain their properties in a decent, safe, and sanitary condition. Eligible homeowners must live within the city limits of Sioux Falls and have household incomes not exceeding 80 percent of the median local family income. A qualifying household must own the property and have occupied it for a minimum of one year.

The maximum loan amount is based on housing rehabilitation needs, income, assessed value of the property, and equity. Assistance is provided as a deferred payment loan due upon sale or discontinuance of occupancy. The deferred loan is without interest.

Applicants must allow a complete inspection of the property by a Housing specialist prior to any work being started. Property owners who request financial assistance for rehabilitation work will be provided with technical assistance as needed.

CE3: Thompson Chain of Lakes Stewardship Coalition (Lincoln County, MT)

<https://www.thompsonchainoflakesstewardshipcoalition.com/>

The Thompson Chain of Lakes Stewardship Coalition is a nonpolitical neighborhood organization founded as a nonprofit in 2022. Its mission is to protect and conserve the land and clean water of the Thompson Chain of Lakes by holding local governments accountable to the vision and land use prescriptions identified in the Thompson Chain of Lakes Neighborhood Plan, which established a future vision for how the lake area should grow and develop.

Coalition members came together to contribute to the public debate on new development in the Thompson Chain of Lakes, and believe in thoughtful and deliberate land use planning to best leverage and sustain the lakes.

Among the Coalition's mission is to:

- Advocate for thoughtful lake management to balance the multiple uses of lakes, ponds, and wetlands, while protecting their health;
- Promote education, communication, and coordinated action between the many stakeholders who use the Thompson Chain of Lakes and
- Provide input related to lakes, ponds, and wetlands to State Legislators and County Officials in support of healthy watersheds.

CE4: Save Our Lakes Alliance 3 (Rehoboth Beach, DE)

<https://www.sola3.org/>

Founded in 2004, Save Our Lakes Alliance 3 (SOLA3) is the only non-profit, all-volunteer organization dedicated to protecting, preserving and maintaining three freshwater lakes – Silver Lake, Lake Comegys and Lake Gerar – located in the Rehoboth Beach, Delaware area.

Since its founding, SOLA3 has worked to improve the natural environment of Silver Lake, Lake Comegys, and Lake Gerar by promoting good practices and initiatives, supporting programs that improve water quality while opposing projects or proposals that degrade water quality and wildlife, and providing programs to educate the public on how to be good stewards of the lakes.

CE5: Secret Jungle, Lincoln (NE) Children's Zoo

<https://www.1011now.com/content/news/Lincoln-Zoos-Secret-Jungle-exhibit-opens-to-the-public-next-week-509369021.html>

<https://www.lincolnzoo.org/>

Opening to the public in May 2019, the Secret Jungle at the Lincoln Children's Zoo was part of a multi-million-dollar renovation of the attraction. The exhibit is an interactive kids jungle experience with live monkeys. According to local officials, families for years had wanted the Lincoln Children's Zoo to remain open year-round and the renovation allowed this to occur.

A new indoor animal and play area is home to animal encounters and educational activities. It also features a climbing structure that shares space with spider monkeys. The climbing structure includes lookout points to the ground for younger kids and higher ones for older ones to explore. It also features 15,000 square feet of elevated platforms and the longest tornado slide in Lincoln. The interactive exhibit was designed to simulate a jungle like environment

Funding was provided by Crete Carrier Cooperation along with a significant anonymous donation.

CE6: Student Engagement Initiatives (Manufacturing Institute)

<https://themanufacturinginstitute.org/students/>

The Manufacturing Institute's student engagement initiatives aim to hone STEM skills, introduce students to career pathways in modern manufacturing, and clarify misperceptions about these careers by providing educational tools and experiences to youth, parents, and educators. Programs highlight opportunities about the industry through exposure to hands-on experiences and special content.

The work is achieved through key initiatives, including:

- Creators Wanted is a national effort to build the modern manufacturing workforce of tomorrow.

- MFG Day aims to showcase the reality of modern manufacturing careers and address its skills gap by encouraging companies and educational institutions around the nation to host events for students, parents, educators, and community leaders to get an inside look at modern manufacturing and the career opportunities that the industry offers.

In addition to hands-on experiences, the Manufacturing Institute produces and promotes content that empowers America's youth to get a closer look at modern manufacturing careers and companies and encourages development of STEM skills.

CE7: Welcome Back Weeks/Events

Welcome Back Bash!, St. Michals College (Vermont): The Fall '24 bash included a club fair, live music, food trucks, henna, balloon art, mini golf, bubble soccer, lawn games, and other events. The day included a welcome message from the president and opportunities to engage with community organizations.

Week of Welcome, Valencia College (Florida): The Week of Welcome consists of events and activities to kick off the academic year and occurs the week before classes start in the fall term. Events for the week include New Faculty Orientation, Academic Assembly, Campus Welcome Back Bashes, and an All-College Academic Year Fall Kick Off.

CE8: SAL's Home Childcare Network (Quad Cities/Peoria, IL/IA)

<https://www.salcommunityservices.org/child-care/home-child-care-network>

SAL Community Services (SAL) provides "Support, Advocacy, and Learning" for communities in its bi-state, 17-county regional footprint from the Quad Cities to the Peoria area. Its mission is to strengthen children, families, and individuals to build and enhance thriving communities. SAL's Home Childcare Network (HCCN) was started in 1996 to support families needing non-traditional hours of childcare (1st, 2nd, 3rd shifts, weekends, holidays). HCCN works with licensed family childcare providers to offer free support, supplies, and training resources so children in a home setting receive the same high quality care as children in center-based programs. HCCN offers free consultation and support to licensed family childcare homes serving families in its region. HCCN Coordinators provide curriculum, CPR/First Aid training, professional development opportunities, assistance with the ExceleRate Illinois quality rating system application process, and one-on-one coaching on a variety of early childhood development topics. HCCN Coordinators also work with parents/guardians needing childcare on Childcare Assistance

Program application processes and make referrals to the high quality licensed homes in the Network to best meet families' needs.

CE9: Bold Goals Coalition (United Way of Central Alabama)

<https://boldgoals.org/>

Serving the United Way of Central Alabama's six-county Birmingham area region, the Bold Goals Coalition takes on large, systemic issues by building community partnerships and accelerating lasting change to improve health, education, and quality of life. Created in 2014, the Coalition is made up of over 200 local organizations and individuals working together to secure a better future for the region. Using the power of collective impact, the Coalition convenes partners and aligns resources to put ideas into action and improve long-term outcomes. Currently, the United Way Bold Goals Coalition focuses on early learning, student success, hunger relief and mental health. These are foundational issues that have both immediate and long-term implications and can benefit greatly from the Coalition's collective expertise and action.

CE10: Mobile (AL) 311

<https://www.cityofmobile.org/311>

Mobile 311 is dedicated to serving the citizens of Mobile by helping to solve problems, obtain information, and submit requests for service. It offers two means of submitting a request: online and via phone. Mobile 311 enables residents to:

- Electronically route service requests to the appropriate city government departments
- Provide a neutral forum for citizens to make suggestions about city services and departments
- Provide a way to track the progress of service request orders (SRO)
- Answer questions citizens have concerning city organizations and services
- Assist citizens in obtaining city services in a fair and efficient manner