

PART 1 DRAFT 5/16/22

Red River Regional Council
Destination Development & Marketing Action Plan

June 2022



Bathgate

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<input type="checkbox"/> 23. Contract with signage vendor to add hashtags to place identifier signage and gateways	
<input type="checkbox"/> 24. Begin developing the Top 3 and Top 5 “must do” lists for RVers, fishing, hunting, paddling, geocaching, historical sites	
<input type="checkbox"/> 25. Work with historical attractions on common operating months, days and hours	
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<input type="checkbox"/> 32. Develop a Homesteading Act: The ability to grant properties for new development	
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<input type="checkbox"/> 35. Make sure the URL, on the home page, will direct website visitors to the Best Of lists	
<input type="checkbox"/> 36. Issue an RFP for the purchase of brick and “barnwood” from buildings being removed	
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<input type="checkbox"/> 38. Work with waterway authorities on highest and best recreational use of each waterway	
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- 42. Begin working with ND DOT on a comprehensive region-wide wayfinding system including TOD signage
- 43. Apply for federal transportation grants to help offset the cost of the wayfinding system
- 44. Hire two full time staff members with urban planning, landscape architecture, land-use expertise
- 45. Create “The Very Best of North Dakota’s Rendezvous Region” rack brochure, including due-diligence selection process
- 46. Reach out to selected participants for funding and content for the Best Of brochure
- 47. Add the Best Of brochure to the distribution program.....
- 48. Mail the Best Of brochure to every household & business in the region.....
- 49. Contract for weekly distribution of all rack brochures
- 50. Work with cities and counties on redeveloping websites
- 51. Work with local businesses and organizations on how to claim their Google, TripAdvisor listings
- 52. Create the “Waterways Guide to the Rendezvous Region” rack brochure
- 53. Add the Waterways Guide to the distribution program

2024 - Tourism promotion, economic development

- 54. Develop a “2024 Community Profile” for each county
- 55. Develop a 2024 “Opportunities Guide to the Rendezvous Region”
- 56. Cavalier, Grafton, Park River to begin development of programmed downtown plazas
- 57. Begin aggressive Rendezvous Region SEO program to boost searches by activity
- 58. Distribute the Community Profile/Opportunities brochures to real estate offices, economic development organizations, etc.....
- 59. Develop the sixth rack brochure: “The Fishing & Hunting Guide to the Rendezvous Region.”
- 60. Contract or begin the development of the next Three Year Action Plan
- 61. Begin working on renewed funding sources for Rendezvous Region marketing initiative
- 62. Reach out to hunting and fishing influencers, YouTube channels, and publications
- 63. Begin a full-fledged PR effort with a focus on RVers, fishing and hunting, recreational enthusiasts
- 64. Work with local museums, farms, businesses in joining the Harvest Host, Boondockers Welcome programs
- 65. Create video content on how to find local jobs geared to seasonal, harvest, and digital nomads
- 66. Create a small travel book: “The Hidden Gems of North Dakota’s Rendezvous Region”

- 67. Work with historical sites and attractions on social media and cross-selling initiatives
- 68. Integrate the Arts Across the Prairie program into the region and into the marketing program.....



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McVille



INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

In June of 2021 the Red River Regional Council contracted with Roger Brooks International to develop a Region 4 Tourism/Destination/Community Development Action Plan that will increase visitor traffic and spending (tourism), attract new residents, and increase economic activity in the four most Northeastern counties of North Dakota: Pembina, Walsh, Nelson and Grand Forks counties.

This is the result of this year-long effort, the Destination Development & Marketing Action Plan.



Drayton

FIVE DRIVING FACTORS OF THE NEW ECONOMY

1. QUALITY OF LIFE. For the first time in U.S. history, quality of life is leading economic development. Jobs are going where the talent is – or wants to be. This means that community development (quality of life) is leading both economic and tourism development.

In other words, critical to this effort, is making the 42 incorporated communities in these four counties more desirable places to live, work, invest in, and visit. Doing so will require both physical changes in most of these communities (product development) as well as a top-notch marketing effort.

2. TOURISM is the front door to your non-tourism economic development efforts. Nothing showcases the quality of life better than tourism, which focuses on your primary attractions, activities, and supporting amenities. This includes the dozens of lakes in the region: fishing, boating, kayaking, canoeing, stand-up-paddle boarding, etc.

Tourism also showcases your state and local parks, campgrounds, trail systems, golf courses, downtown shops and eateries, festivals and events, and other community assets.

Anyone looking to invest in a community will come first as a visitor. Is this a place a site selector's client would want to be? Their employees? Does it include the priorities (item #5 on this list) demanded by young families? What are the first impressions when they come into town? Does it seem welcoming? Proactive in making the community a better place to live?

3. THE RISE OF RURAL. The COVID pandemic, unprecedented inflation, and the degradation of urban core areas have created a major shift in where Americans are deciding to live.

The rural areas are perceived, and rightly so, as having cleaner air and water, less social distancing demands, lower costs of housing, abundant recreation, fewer social issues, and a stronger sense of community and belonging.

4. WORK FROM ANYWHERE. Additionally, we are now in the “work from anywhere” movement, another major shift taking place during the pandemic. Remote workers have learned how to effectively work from virtually anywhere that has strong Internet access. Workers now realize that where they

live does NOT mean their primary residence needs to be near their place of employment. And employers are seeing improved productivity from their remote workers – no matter where they are located.

5. THE MILLENNIAL PRIORITY LIST. Since the early days of American history, people relocated to where the jobs were, which of course was necessary in an industrial-based economy. As we've entered a global economy, many of those jobs were sent overseas, leaving shrinking populations in much of rural America.

Millennials, the largest generation in American history, now in their late 20s, and 30s, have totally redefined the priorities they look for when relocating to a new area or town. Job availability is no longer the highest priority.

According to Forbes, USA Today, the U.S. Census Bureau, research organizations, and others, the following is the priority-list for Millennials, most of whom are just now starting to raise families:

1. A great place to raise a family: Good schools, safety, child care, and healthy environment and good health-care options
2. An engaged community, a sense of belonging (with cultural depth)
3. Recreation: Sports facilities, playgrounds, trail systems, waterways, etc.
4. Affordability
5. Jobs or entrepreneurial opportunities

This major shift, alone, is good news for rural areas and medium-sized cities, such as Grand Forks, and proves why the other four driving factors are shifting the way we live, where we live, and how.

HOW THESE FACTORS DRIVE THIS PLAN

This plan includes a first-rate tourism marketing plan that will pull people into the “Rendezvous Region,” the tourism marketing effort for Northeastern North Dakota.

Once implementation of the marketing effort is underway, it's critically important that the communities present a good first impression, feel safe, and are welcoming. It's critical that businesses are inviting and have good curb appeal, and be open with consistent hours and operating days.

Marketing will bring people to you just once. The ONLY thing that brings them back is your product:

- The primary activity that attracted them to you
- Complimentary activities, such as local shops, eateries, parks, historical sites, etc.
- Your amenities: parking, public restrooms, visitor information
- The people they interact with

If hundreds of thousands of dollars are secured and spent marketing the Rendezvous Region, the primary and secondary tourism activities, local businesses (spending opportunities), and the people they meet MUST be good enough to close the sale. Otherwise this entire effort will be for naught.

In the end, you will be defined by your product – not your marketing.

Implementation of this plan will begin in mid-2022 and the first year and a half (through 2023) will be the “getting ready” period. This means this effort includes 18 months to get the communities ready for the major push that will attract new residents, business investment, and visitors.

There is a lot to do in just 18 short months.



Pekin

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES, FIXES & RESULTS

The following chapter outlines significant challenges facing the region along with major strategies that can be implemented to help alleviate those challenges.



IMAGE

North Dakota has an image problem. Other than long harsh winters, which can also be found in every Midwest state, it isn't that people have a negative image of North Dakota – they have little or no perception of North Dakota.

When you mention Alaska, people immediately imagine and are awed by its mountains and glaciers, grizzly bears and wildlife, the untamed wilderness, legendary fishing and hunting – all of which overshadow its long harsh winters.

The western side of South Dakota is known for Mt. Rushmore, Custer State Park, the Badlands, the Black Hills, Deadwood and Sturgis – and this focus puts the entire state “on the map” as a storied must-visit destination.

Sarah Otte-Coleman, North Dakota's Tourism Director, does an amazing job with one of the smallest tourism marketing budgets in the nation. But when the states around you are spending as much as ten times more to promote tourism, the state is simply overshadowed by them.

Generally speaking, the only time the American public hears about North Dakota is when a natural disaster, such as major flooding, puts the state on the national news.

THE FIX: A better-funded tourism marketing program, more investment in product development (the experiences visitors come to expect or make a special trip to do).

The state, and its legislative body, needs to understand that tourism marketing is NOT only about attracting visitors into the state. It's also the best way to showcase your quality of life, your history, your cultural offerings, your communities, your festivals and events.

Tourism is the fastest, cheapest, easiest way to get an economy moving again. AND it's an easy, affordable way to get outsiders singing your praises – selling the state for you. Finally, it's the best way to introduce North Dakota to first-time visitors. Many may realize that North Dakota is a fantastic state to

live and raise a family in, start or move a business to, or to come back to visit time and again.

There are several recommendations in this plan geared to improving the perceptions of North Dakota, beyond just better funding of your tourism marketing efforts.

Much has to start locally. In several communities, we were photographing the town, walking or driving while checking out neighborhoods, parks, schools, or local businesses only to have local residents asking us “What the heck are you doing here?” Or staring at us when we’re trying to have lunch in a local eatery.

And finally, the western side of North Dakota is clearly part of “The West,” where the eastern side of the state is clearly in the Midwest, leaving the state in a quandry as to where it fits in. Your neighbors to the south are so strong as part of the west, with its western culture (Deadwood, Custer State Park, etc.) that the entire state is easily seen as part of the west.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

As noted earlier, in the end you will be judged by your product, not your marketing. In what we’ve researched, North Dakota is near the bottom of all 50 states in percentage of public recreational lands. Recently, we read an article that noted that 90% of North Dakota’s total lands are used for agriculture. This leaves just 10% for residential, commercial, urban and suburban development, and recreation. And most of the state’s recreational lands are in the western side of the state, home to your national park and national grasslands.

Product development might include developing public-private partnerships for sharing some lands for public use: trails, wildlife viewing, hunting, etc.

THE FIX: There are numerous recommendations in this plan dedicated to product development. In fact, the majority of the implementation costs are focused solely on product development. An easy fix is to start marketing your lakes – not dams. Your dams are not like Grand Coulee or Hoover Dam, where the dam itself is the primary attraction. Locally your dams are not a primary benefit to attracting visitors. In driving nearly 2,000 miles in these

four counties, we encountered Larimore Dam, Homme Dam, Fordville and a couple dozen “dams.”

Water-based activities are the top tourism draw in the world, be it on lakes, rivers, or oceans. Renaming these waterways “lakes” (even reservoirs are commonly referred to as lakes) will greatly enhance the Rendezvous Region’s tourism efforts.

The primary benefit of tourism is getting people to spend money in your four counties. A big part of the marketing effort will be to promote eateries, local museums and historical sites, and local shops. If you can’t monetize your tourism effort, then there’s no local benefit to attracting people to your lakes and recreational offerings.

Here’s an example: The marketing effort might include promoting Lake Larimore (rather than Larimore Dam) for its kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddle-boarding, but also encouraging lake visitors to stop in for lunch at DB’s The Station, a great restaurant that is themed for its first-responder fire departments. Or perhaps encouraging visitors to rent and try a stand-up-paddle board, perhaps a small business opportunity locally. Or to stop in a shop for fishing tackle and bait.

This means the businesses, which will be promoted specifically, must be enticing to visitors. Probably 19 out of every 20 businesses we saw in the rural communities (outside of the City of Grand Forks) did little or nothing to pull us, as visitors, in their doors. In most cases we weren’t even sure if the businesses were even still operating.

APATHY

It was disappointing to hear a local elected official tell me that the weather in North Dakota is horrible ten months of the year, and another telling me “We don’t want damn tourists in our town.” We got a LOT of comments by front-line workers along the line “Why North Dakota?” when we told them we were checking out the area. The “there’s nothing here” attitude has festered for generations, leading the state’s youth to commonly state that “I’m blowing this state the second I graduate.” Exporting your educated youth is not a good way to grow the population.

There are recommendations in this plan that address this issue. Over a two-month period, we ate and shopped in dozens of local establishments, and while the workers were friendly, they could not imagine why anyone would be looking at their community or even visiting the area. When asking “what is there to do around here?” the universal answer was typically “nothing.”

THE FIX: Kids, in grade schools, need to be taught what’s great about North Dakota and why it’s a great place to live. There are recommendations in this plan that will help stem the tide of self-deprecation towards North Dakota.

Nearly a dozen of the communities in the region need to be unincorporated. They simply do not have the tax base to invest in making their communities more desirable places to live. Nearly all are supported, already, by county services. And those that would like to be unincorporated do not have the funding to do so. This is a service the state could provide to them.

When showcasing the communities during the Assessment process, we took time to show photography of each town: the fall color, playgrounds, homes decorated for fall, well-manicured landscapes, nice churches, etc. After each presentation locals would come up to us and say, “Wow! Our town isn’t so bad after all.”

And, of course, it’s not all roses. In the online questionnaire nearly 600 local residents weighed in and a common thread was begging someone, somewhere, to help eliminate boarded up commercial buildings, falling down shacks, abandoned homes and vehicles. A lot of local residents are embarrassed to admit they live in a town that seems to be dying or where the eyesores bring the perception of the community down to a substandard level.

This is where the state’s Accelerate North Dakota program is so important to this effort.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

As you read through these challenges, keep in mind that none of them are insurmountable. But they start with marketing: the ability to pull people from other areas into the region to “check it out.” And then comes product development: delivering on the promise of a great experience once these folks

arrive – and being able to monetize the marketing by pulling visitors into towns, eateries, campgrounds, hotels, and local shops.

As you’ve heard a thousand times before, first impressions are lasting impressions. And new residents want to locate in communities where they see positive change. In visiting nearly half of the 42 communities in the region, our first impressions were positive: lots of trees, local parks in good condition, home owners that do a good job to look inviting with well-manicured landscapes, etc. But then on a closer look they might see a few, or in many cases, dozens of abandoned, boarded up or collapsing commercial buildings, homes and churches.

THE FIX: Funding the Accelerate ND program, which provides funding to purchase uninhabitable buildings and have them either removed or redeveloped. The outcome of this would open up these properties for homesteading – attracting new residents or small businesses.

In the midst of assessing the towns, we came into one small town where three formerly dilapidated homes had been used as practice burns for the local fire department. Our first reaction to this was “Wow! This town is working to clean up its mess. They are proactive, and this would be a great place to live. To be a part of this ‘change.’”

JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES

So, in this process, marketing brings people in to see what you have to offer. If you deliver on the promise (a good experience), many may decide that the area they are visiting would be a great place to live. Next on their list is to make sure they can make a living in or near the community. So the search for jobs or entrepreneurial opportunities begins.

Like much of the country, there is a shortage of workers in the region. In fact, recent statistics (March 2022) state that more than 11 million jobs are still open across the country.

When providing the keynote address at North Dakota’s Main Street conference in 2019, Roger Brooks was told that the state has more than 60,000 job openings, with a good share of those paying \$100,000 or more a year.



The state's major employers don't seem to be using traditional job search websites like Indeed.com or Monster.com. So where do people go about finding jobs – AND entrepreneurial opportunities in North Dakota? We looked at the Job Services North Dakota website (jobsnd.com), which is a very comprehensive website with a lot of great detail. However, if I decided to move to Pembina County, and I search for any job openings in that area, the site tells me there are 5,100 openings. But searching through them NONE are in Pembina County and are, in fact, scattered all over the state of North Dakota.

The challenge is that if we find a community we really would like to live in, and then search for jobs or business opportunities in the area, we're not sure where a person would start looking. This website, unfortunately, doesn't help.

THE FIX: The fix would be to help job-seekers find jobs using specific geographic criteria – a particular zip code, or county, or community and then look within a certain commute radius. AND secondly, to post job or business opportunities in that area.

HOMESTEADING

This is where you “close the sale.” Implementation of this plan will provide an effective marketing program bringing new visitors into the state and into the Rendezvous Region. Then as the communities better develop ways to pull visitors into their towns, shops and restaurants, and create an inviting atmosphere, they will tell their friends and families about the great experience they are having, and that will dramatically improve the image and perceptions of the state – and the region.

The goal is to have a portion of these visitors wanting to relocate to the area. They will look for earning capabilities and then a place to call home or to establish a business.

Earlier we talked about the fact that 90% of all lands in the state are established for agriculture, leaving little available land for new residential development. But the focus should not be on new undeveloped land, but on



revitalization or redevelopment of existing properties – both residential and commercial.

Through the Accelerate ND program, the state, and its regional partners, would purchase properties, remove blight and public safety concerns, and then many of these now vacant lots can be given away as homesteading opportunities to new residents. In some cases, building can still be re-purposed and revitalized, and then sold to private sector businesses, putting them (in both cases) back on the tax rolls.

Cities all around the country have been incentivizing people to move to their communities. Tulsa, Oklahoma is offering \$15,000 and a plethora of incentives to get people to work remotely for two years from Tulsa. Dozens of other cities and towns have followed suit.

But this plan includes a better idea: What if you were to grant new residents (from out of state or out of the urban areas) a piece of property – with strings attached. For instance, they would be required to build a home on the site: no mobile homes or RVs. It would need to be a “stick-built” home or a modular home.

Construction would need to begin within 18 months of acquiring the property, or it will revert back to the “Redevelopment Agency.” And once construction begins, it would need to be completed within 18 months. Perhaps the home would need to be at least 1,100 square feet (sorry, no tiny homes).

The Homesteading Act would provide access to private-sector lenders, approved builders, with incentives to “buy local,” with perhaps Marvin Windows providing wholesale discounts to new home owners in the area.

And if the new homeowner decided to then sell the house and build on another homesteading site, that would be great. The Homesteading Act would encourage this, creating more housing inventory, creating construction and supplier jobs, while revitalizing a town.

The same could apply to commercial districts. In the smaller towns, there’s little chance – in this Amazon.com age – that retail will revive, meaning

the commercial buildings in their downtowns could be removed to make for room for residential, or could be converted to live/work space. Homesteading would work for both commercially and residentially zoned or designated properties.

We have heard of young families who, as a group of friends, will come into a town, homestead three or four lots, and then work very hard to make the town an even better place to live and invest in.

MILLENNIALS

The largest generation in American history, this group of young families (for the most part) have a lot going for them:

- They are the most civically-minded generation in U.S. history. In fact, there are more mayors in their 20s and 30s today than at any other time in American history. They want to be involved. This means that the communities run by the “good ‘ole boys” network needs to make way for future generations. Without change, communities are dying.
- Millennial fathers spend twice as much time with their kids as Boomers did.
- They are incredibly diverse – and embrace it.
- They are the most educated generation in U.S. history
- They are extremely proactive – rather than reactive

They are experts at attracting like-minded people. They have known a time without the Internet, smart phones, and social media. They are your best means by which to attract young families back into a state with an aging population.

SUMMARY

This plan is geared to creating a North Dakota Pilot Program that we know, from first-hand experience in working with and studying other locations, will succeed and provide great results – the entire purpose of this plan.

North Dakota is home to eight regions, and we fully believe that each Regional Council could provide the vehicle for this effort. With a total population of less than a million people, working with regions is much more cost

effective than working with 53 individual counties, or more than 400 cities and towns.

This program brings numerous state agencies, departments, and programs together – especially those under the wings of the Department of Commerce: Tourism, Economic Development, Finance, Main Street, Community Services, workforce development. And then add Recreation, State Parks, Dept. of Transportation, and programs such as Arts Across the Prairie.

This program brings all of these partners together, with a common goal and a tremendous amount of expertise, to repopulate the four counties of NE North Dakota, revitalize their communities, increase the tax base dramatically through commercial and residential redevelopment, increase job creation and retention, foster new investment, increase visitor spending, and increase the perceptions of North Dakota as the amazing state it really is.



Lakota

THE PROCESS

It was extremely important that this be a boots-on-the-ground type of project with time spent in all 42 communities in the four counties to really obtain first-hand knowledge and a true reality-check as to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to any of the recommendations in this plan.

COUNTY TEAMS

To start the process, the Red River Regional Council assembled four County Teams that would represent the communities in each of the four counties.

INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP

Then Roger Brooks was introduced and provided a remote (during COVID) presentation “Shift Happens,” which showcased the changes taking place across America and how those could affect the futures of NE North Dakota.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

At that presentation Roger introduced an online questionnaire allowing local residents and stakeholders an opportunity to weigh in on their community’s future. It began with several demographic questions followed by open-ended questions including the following:

1. What do you think the top three assets of your community are (besides its people)? Put them in order of priority.
2. What do you see as the three greatest challenges your community faces?
3. When friends and family visit, where do you take them (the top activities)?
4. What are your feelings regarding growth of your community?
5. If there are one, two or three things you’d like to see done locally, let us know what they are and why?
6. What else could, or should, be done locally to make your community even better?
7. Are you open to increasing tourism spending in your community?

Nearly 600 people weighed in, and the responses were very enlightening and helped shape much of this plan.

DESTINATION ASSESSMENTS

Then, over a five-week period, the Roger Brooks team performed a Destination Assessment of each community. They secretly-shopped each

community wearing three hats: That of a potential resident, business interest or investor, and as a leisure visitor.

These photographic looks at each of the communities were presented in county-wide public “Assessment Findings & Suggestions Workshops,” which were well attended in each of the four counties.

Each workshop showcased first impressions, overall appeal, neighborhoods, public facilities (parks, schools, medical facilities), downtown commercial buildings, and local businesses. For each shortcoming or challenge, a “suggestion” was included on how it could be addressed or corrected.

These were not recommendations, but ideas that locals could embrace to make their communities more welcoming and to build community pride.

This effort also included a Marketing Assessment – looking at local websites, social media channels, Internet searches pertaining to each community, Google Images, etc. as any potential resident or business interest would do. And it included reviewing state-wide marketing efforts as well.

REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS AND STUDIES

The Brooks team then reviewed current plans and studies to see what efforts are already under way and to see how those could be dovetailed into this plan.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Over a two-day period Roger Brooks then met with numerous stakeholder groups, letting them offer ideas, opinions, plans they were working on, and challenges they face. This was very insightful.

RESEARCH AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT

From months of meeting residents, business interests, local governments, and residents, this plan was developed and presented in May of 2022.



INPUT FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

Over a six-week period during the summer of 2021, an online questionnaire was developed and promoted to people in the four counties (Grand Forks, Walsh, Pembina and Nelson). More than 600 people provided input answering ten questions. The following is a summary of the key themes brought up by residents of the region.

The first questions focused on where people live, the age group they are in and other demographic information. If you'd like to see or review the full responses, contact the Red River Regional Council.

The following questions are of particular importance and would be a great resource, locally, to see what residents and business interests are thinking and have to say about the counties they live in.

Grand Forks County Online Questionnaire Response Summary

What do you think the three greatest assets are of the area you live in (besides local residents, friends, and neighbors)?

1. Good schools
2. Grand Forks downtown with its shops, restaurants, and the Greenway
3. Proximity to parks and nature
4. Feeling safe in the community

Comments include that there are strong inter-organizational partnerships, and there is low crime in the area.

What do you think the three greatest challenges are of the area you live in (besides residents, neighbors, or the weather)?

1. Lack of workforce
2. Lack of affordable housing
3. Lack of shopping and restaurants
4. Lack of things to do for all ages

Comments include:

- Rents are high, and affordable housing is hard to find. During the 1997 flood, much of the entry-level home supply was destroyed, and the housing market never recovered.

Northwood

- There are plenty of bars in Grand Forks, but for those who want a different type of nightlife, it's hard to find.

- People don't know how to find out about events being held, so marketing of events could be improved.

When friends and family visit you, where do you take them?

1. Restaurants in Grand Forks
2. Shopping
3. Parks (including the Greenway, local parks, Icelandic, Turtle River, Devils Lake)
4. UND sporting events

What are your feelings for growth of the town or area you call home?

The majority (87.8%) say they would love to see it grow. 12.2% like it just the way it is now, and hope they maintain the current population.

Comments include:

- We need more people to meet the employment opportunities. People want more restaurants and to see the small, local businesses thrive.

- We don't have the community support to allow school growth and infrastructure to support more homes.

- Would love to see more small town businesses thrive.

If there are one, two, or three things you'd like to see happen locally, what would they be?

1. More activities and attractions for every age, including: an aquarium, children's museum, new park development, a water park, arts activities, community garden
2. More shopping and restaurants, including resurrecting Columbia Mall and expanding the farmers market
3. More affordable housing
4. More events, including historical
5. More childcare

What else could be done locally to make the area you call home an even better place to live and work in?

1. More activities and attractions for every age, including: a free community center, basketball court and pool tables at the mall, concerts, public library, a zoo, a Red River Valley museum, mini golf course
2. Promotions to help change attitudes to embrace the area and make it become more welcoming
3. High paying jobs
4. Fix the roads

Are you open to increasing tourism spending in your community?

The majority of respondents indicate that they are open to increasing tourism in the community – 87.8%. 9.8% are unsure.

Walsh County Online Questionnaire Response Summary

What do you think the three greatest assets are of the area you live in (besides local residents, friends, and neighbors)?

1. Small town atmosphere
2. Schools
3. Medical
4. Parks and outdoor recreation (especially the Grafton Parks Dept)
5. Safe community
6. Grocery store

What do you think the three greatest challenges are of the area you live in (besides residents, neighbors, or the weather)?

1. Lack of shopping and restaurants
2. Lack of activities for families, teens, children, and seniors
3. Lack of workforce
4. Lack of affordable housing
5. Lack of childcare

Comments include:

- There's not much for young people to do, and it's hard to meet others when you're new to the community, so why would young families move here?

- Leaders and many people are closed-minded to any change.

- Many buildings are run down and look bad.

- Need more shops and restaurants.

When friends and family visit you, where do you take them?

1. Out to a restaurant
2. City or local park (especially Leistikow Park)
3. Drive in the country or through the towns
4. Homme Dam
5. Events
6. Grand Forks

7. Theater/movies
8. Pembina Gorge

What are your feelings for growth of the town or area you call home?

89.6% of respondents would love to see their town or area grow. 10% say they would like it to stay the same.

Comments include: If it's not growing, it's dying.

- Would love to see downtown Grafton come alive and get cleaned up.

- We need more entertainment, restaurants, stores.

- We need more homes.

If there are one, two, or three things you'd like to see happen locally, what would they be?

1. More stores, including clothing, shoes, personal items, grocery
2. More restaurants
3. More community activities/events that are family friendly
4. Clean up downtown/make it vibrant/build a plaza downtown for activities, splash park
5. See more young families move into the community
6. More affordable housing
7. More activities/amenities for kids, such as a community center, arcade, indoor swimming pool, roller skating rink

What else could be done locally to make the area you call home an even better place to live and work in?

1. More community involvement, including young people, to create a stronger sense of unity. More coordination between private and public to get things done.
2. Clean up the downtown area and make it beautiful and welcoming.
3. More community activities and events, such as group kayak trips, pickleball lessons, band or choir, art classes, outdoor movie nights, etc.
4. More childcare
5. More affordable housing
6. More community leaders who are open to change

7. More marketing of events and activities

Are you open to increasing tourism spending in your community?

88.4% are open to increasing tourism spending in the community. 11.2% are unsure.

Comments included:

- We rely on visitors to keep our businesses, including eateries and bars, open.

- Bring more money to the area.

- There is already a shortage of employees for businesses; increased tourism may cause increased stress and staffing issues.

- We have a lot to offer and a vacation for someone might even result in people moving to this area.

Pembina County Online Questionnaire Response Summary

What do you think the three greatest assets are of the area you live in (besides local residents, friends, and neighbors)?

1. Pembina Gorge
2. Outdoor recreation (besides Pembina Gorge)
3. Quiet, safe, rural living
4. Frost Fire
5. Icelandic State Park
6. Schools

Comments include:

- Beautiful area with tremendous potential.
- We have good internet service, which is essential since we're so remote.
- Proximity to Canadian border is good—many Canadian visitors (when no COVID).

What do you think the three greatest challenges are of the area you live in (besides residents, neighbors, or the weather)?

1. Lack of shopping/too many businesses closing
2. Lack of restaurants
3. Lack of housing
4. Opposition to change
5. Lack of activities
6. Lack of workforce
7. Population loss
8. Lack of high paying jobs

Comments include:

- COVID has had a huge impact on the county because Canadians haven't been able to visit.
- Too many empty buildings. Too much negativity. Need childcare.

When friends and family visit you, where do you take them?

1. Restaurant or bar
2. Pembina Gorge
3. Icelandic State Park
4. Frost Fire
5. Scenic drives
6. Golf
7. Swimming pool
8. Museums and historical attractions

What are your feelings for growth of the town or area you call home?

93.9% of respondents say they would love to see their town or area grow.
6.1% just like it the way it is now.

Comments include:

- We need to grow; we need to bring young families into the community.
- Local businesses can't survive on just the local traffic. We need something to attract people back.

If there are one, two, or three things you'd like to see happen locally, what would they be?

1. More restaurants and shopping
2. More affordable housing
3. More community involvement and working together with a positive attitude
4. More community events and festivals
5. Clean up downtowns, storefronts, and people's homes so that the community looks good
6. Community center with fitness center
7. More young families moving here

What else could be done locally to make the area you call home an even better place to live and work in?

1. Improve the appearance of our towns with clean-up, demolishing old buildings, give buildings a face-lift

2. Bring in more shops, grocery stores
3. Stores need to be open on weekends and after 5:00
4. Improve people's attitudes—become welcoming and positive
5. More activities and events, such as farmers markets with music
6. Attract more young families to live in the area and become involved
7. Increase marketing to bring more tourists

Are you open to increasing tourism spending in your community?

94.9% of respondents are open to increasing tourism. 5.1% are unsure.

Comments include: Yes! Yes! Yes! Increasing tourism is very important to Pembina County. Tourism is essential.

Nelson County Online Questionnaire Response Summary

What do you think the three greatest assets are of the area you live in (besides local residents, friends, and neighbors)?

1. Small town, friendly atmosphere
2. Medical, hospital
3. Outdoor recreation, including McVilleville Dam, Stump Lake, parks, golf
4. Good schools
5. Grocery store

What do you think the three greatest challenges are of the area you live in (besides residents, neighbors, or the weather)?

1. Lack of basic shopping options and restaurants
2. Lack of jobs
3. Lack of housing
4. Distance to medical facilities and shopping
5. Lack of activities for all ages
6. Lack of workforce
7. Decreasing population
8. Road maintenance and public water problems

Comments include:

- One of the major concerns is housing.
- Many buildings are dilapidated, empty, and need to be torn down.
- Limited job opportunities.

When friends and family visit you, where do you take them?

1. Local restaurants or bars
2. Stump Lake Park
3. McVilleville Dam
4. Local park
5. Golf
6. Devils Lake
7. Grand Forks
8. Community events

What are your feelings for growth of the town or area you call home?

85.9% of respondents would love to see their community grow. 14.1% like it the way it is now and want to just maintain the current population.

Comments include:

- I would love to see the town grow and remodel parts of the town. But, I would also like to keep it a small town.

- I would like to see some growth especially a real grocery store.

- Need growth, but don't bring in the rif-raf.

If there are one, two, or three things you'd like to see happen locally, what would they be?

1. More housing
2. Grocery store
3. More shopping, businesses, restaurants
4. Indoor recreation
5. More social activities
6. Expand golf course
7. Indoor recreation/community center
8. More kids' activities
9. Small manufacturers for more jobs

What else could be done locally to make the area you call home an even better place to live and work in?

1. More community events and activities/entertainment
2. Clean up Main Street/get rid of falling-down buildings/increase curb appeal
3. More job opportunities
4. Fitness/recreation centers
5. More restaurants

Are you open to increasing tourism spending in your community?

90.2% of respondents are open to increasing tourism spending in the community. 6.5% are unsure, and 3.3% do not want to increase tourism spending in the community.

Comments include:

- I would love to see tourism increase but I feel the existing businesses already struggle finding workers so that issue would also need to be addressed.

- Would love more local shops.

- Currently there is no reason for anyone who lives outside of McVille to come here.

- We have amazing nature here.

- Safety concerns.

- Yes, I think a few people would have a hard time with any change, but anyone with common sense would know that without bringing in more people to spend money in the area, nothing is going to get any better.



Fordville Lake

IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOME

The ultimate goal of this plan is to begin increasing the population in these four counties, particularly in the rural areas that have seen population declines for the past several decades.

Tourism is the fastest, easiest way to convince consumers to visit the State of North Dakota. And once visitors are in the state, it will be key to convince them to visit the Northeastern most counties in the state. This is the first step.

But to succeed, the Rendezvous Region will need significant marketing dollars. To be successful, this will require an annual budget of at least \$250,000 a year. What would these funds be used for?

1. STAFFING. Three full-time marketing professionals would be hired to implement the marketing recommendations made in this plan. One would concentrate on public relations and social media - getting attention for this area. The second person would be charged with content development: this would include four seasons of photography, videography and B-roll footage, working with a “spokesperson” who would be the face of the campaign: on camera in a series of two to seven-minute videos, which would be developed for a YouTube channel and other media and social media outlets.

The third staff member would manage the program as the Executive Director. This person would manage the budget, work with media influencers, work with the North Dakota Tourism office, and work with local attractions, activities and communities so that they are ready to welcome visitors into their cities and towns.



Larimore

2. TOMA. About \$100,000 a year would be dedicated to advertising and public relations efforts. Often influencers require a stipend, or outright fee, in order to help promote the area.

Initially, a billboard program would be implemented so that local residents know what and where the Rendezvous Region is. While performing the Destination Assessment, we asked dozens of local front-line workers if they knew where the Rendezvous Region was. Other than local stakeholders (state parks, elected officials, chambers of commerce, tourism-based businesses) not a single person was aware of the Rendezvous Region.

This is certainly not the fault of the Rendezvous Region, but is due to lack of financial resources to make sure everyone IS, in fact, aware of the Region.

Leasing billboards along Interstate-29 and Highways 2, 17 and 5 (where and when available) that would include messaging along the lines of “Welcome to the Rendezvous Region” and a secondary message such as “Top 3 Must Do’s: RendezvousRegion.com”

Other messages would include “Top 3 SUP lakes,” or “Top 3 golf destinations,” or “Top 5 camping spots” and other teasers designed to create a call to action.

This campaign is designed to accomplish several things:

- Let local commuters AND visitors know they are IN the Rendezvous Region
- To tease both locals and visitors to go to the website to satisfy their curiosity, “What are these top three or top five activities?”
- To create Top of Mind Awareness, or TOMA. When people see these messages at least seven times, they will know what, and where, the Rendezvous Region is, and they won’t forget it.
- This will also create community pride. After all, we’re promoting the very best of what the area has to offer.

This campaign would utilize billboards between leasing periods to save costs. These are typically vinyl wraps, meaning they can be re-used and re-positioned around the region.

While 2022 will be the “getting ready” year, the “Outdoor” or billboard campaign would run from April of 2023 through at least October (during harvest) - and then beyond, based on available funding.

3. CONTENT. The third key ingredient is making sure the Rendezvous Region website, social media pages, and YouTube channel include the content necessary to “close the sale.”

This includes top-notch professional photography, videography, and an on-camera spokesperson “selling” the “Very Best of North Dakota’s Rendezvous Region.”

This includes creating “Top 3” and “Top 5” things to do in various categories such as fishing, boating, hunting, hiking, biking, ATVing, wildlife viewing and others.

This would also include working with online influencers in these various categories so they are also spreading the word of what this area has to offer.

Any print or online advertising would be placed in niche markets such as Hunting and Fishing News, Bicycling Magazine and in various niche market publications that reach target audiences in the Midwest and West.

4. SPENDING. The fourth, and primary goal of this effort, is to pull visitors into the towns for groceries, gas, supplies, restaurants, and retail shops. The best of these would be promoted in a brochure “The Very Best of the Rendezvous Region.” This would be available as a download, and would also be included in visitor information kiosks placed in each of the towns at key locations.

In the latter sections of this plan are the Assessment Findings and Suggestions, which each town should begin implementing. Addressing items such as curb appeal (beautification), blade signs, paint, operating days and hours is not so much for the locals (although it will help build community pride) but for visitors. The old saying “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make them drink” applies here. The tourism effort will bring visitors into the region’s towns, but curb appeal is what will “close the sale,” convincing visitors to head on in to the various shops and eateries.

As visitors discover these Rendezvous Region towns, the goal is to get some of them to decide the town would be a great place to live, raise a family, or retire in. And perhaps many will open new businesses or relocate businesses into these towns.



Grand Forks

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

First of all, this is not a study nor a strategic plan, but is an Action Plan – a To Do List of specific actions to take. Instead of general strategies, goals and objectives, this is a plan in which every recommendation includes the following:

- A brief description or title of the recommendation
- When it would be implemented
- Who would take the lead
- Approximate cost
- Options for funding it (where the money would come from)
- The rationale for making the recommendation
- Detailed instructions and links to resources

If you noticed, the table of contents is the to-do list. Next to each recommendation is a check box. All recommendations are put in chronological order of implementation and can be checked off once those assignments have been completed or are under way.

Every partner in this effort would have a copy of the plan, and they can highlight the recommendations that fall under their responsibility. They should meet once a month to compare notes and to update other partners on progress. This plan is all about getting everyone on the same page, singing out of the same hymnal.

This is a plan that sits on your desk, not on a shelf gathering dust. It is a living, working document.

Finally, this is a three-year plan. There are numerous initiatives that will extend beyond just the three years of this plan, but times change as do personnel, organizations, and funding sources, and so typical plans can quickly become out of date or out of touch with current happenings.

In Month 30, or so, the Red River Regional Council will begin working on the following three-year action plan. This is where incomplete items in this plan can be readdressed, new recommendations added, and new stakeholders introduced into the effort.

In reality, this is an effort that will take approximately ten to 15 years to fully achieve: Seeing increasing populations in most of the 42 communities, dramatically increased tourism spending, improved community assets, activities, and facilities, and substantially increased economic activity in the Red River Region (Region #4).

This plan should be reviewed once a month at the Team meeting to keep people on track and pointed in the right direction.



Niagara

THE PLAN

This plan is like a puzzle. You can't implement some of the recommendations and not others. Like a jigsaw puzzle, if you toss some of the pieces away, you end up with a worthless puzzle.

They are put in chronological order so that the implementation partners can simply work down the list.

Please remember that 2022 is the "getting ready" year - getting things in place so that the local communities, attractions, activities, and supporting businesses are in place and ready to showcase what each has to offer.

The following plan is broken into three primary sections:

- Red River Regional Council
- Rendezvous Region Tourism
- And then the action items for each community, in each of the four counties

NOTE: The scope of work for this plan does not include Cavalier County outside of the Pembina Gorge. For this we're truly sorry, but since we didn't spend time in the county, it would be inappropriate for us to make recommendations to increase tourism within the county, but we believe it is important for Cavalier County to be involved.

By going through the "Assessment Findings & Suggestions" portion of this plan, we're quite sure initiatives will surface that the communities in Cavalier County can include in their community and tourism development efforts.



Park River

RED RIVER REGIONAL COUNCIL • RENDEZVOUS REGION TOURISM

The two primary partners in this effort include the Red River Regional Council and the Rendezvous Region Tourism Council. You might think of it this way:

The Rendezvous Region is the advertising and public relations agency for the region. It is their charge to convince local residents to keep their visitors local, and to encourage visitors from outside the region - and in neighboring states - to spend time and money within the region.

It's the charge of the Red River Regional Council to concentrate on product development. This would include working with the counties, the communities, the waterway boards, local businesses, North Dakota Dept. of Transportation (wayfinding), state and federal agencies, and other partners on making sure the “product” and experiences will deliver on the marketing promise.

And, once again, keep in mind that marketing will only bring people into the region once. The only thing that brings them back are:

- The people they interact with (front-line employees)
- The primary activity that pulls them into the region
- The complementary activities (“What else do you have for us?”)
- Your amenities: parking, restrooms, visitor information, wayfinding, etc.

Recommendation #1: Define the regional boundaries

Description: This is where we get the two primary organizations on the same page, working in and for the same geographic area of the state.

Implementation timeline: June 2022

Leadership: Red River Regional Council, Rendezvous Region

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: The two key organizations in this effort represent different geographic boundaries, and before you can really get started in a strong partnership you need to work together in identifying the area you serve.

It is the recommendation of this plan that both organizations represent Grand Forks County outside of Grand Forks, Walsh, Pembina, Nelson and Cavalier Counties.

Here's the rationale:

1. The city of Grand Forks already has a top-notch tourism development and marketing program that concentrates on Grand Forks, East Grand Forks and its bedroom communities. It only makes sense that they would concentrate their efforts on this urban area, which accounts for virtually all of their funding.

Additionally, they have very little in common with the rural areas of Grand Forks County and the other counties in this program.

While Julie Rygg and her staff have no issues helping to promote the rural areas, including sending their visitors out of Grand Forks for day trips, the Rendezvous Region's primary market is to pull residents (and their visitors) that live in the Grand Forks urban area into the outlying areas of these five counties. AND for overnight stays. After all, overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors.

2. The primary reason for including the remainder of Grand Forks County and Nelson Counties is two-fold.

First, access to the Highway 2 corridor is of vital importance, especially due to the high traffic counts, the fact that it's a primary route to Devil's Lake - already a major tourism draw - and the fact that you can promote the region easily with the billboard campaign.

Also, Larimore Dam and the town itself are home to spending opportunities, additional recreation, and campgrounds.

Lakota is situated as perhaps the first "stopping point" for people heading to or from the Devil's Lake region - providing an opportunity to capture additional tourism spending, and a chance to provide visitor information services and marketing materials showcasing Pembina, Walsh, and Cavalier Counties.

The Highway 2 corridor is a VERY important area in which to promote the region. It's also home to one of, if not the only, stand-alone visitor information centers and rest stops in the region.

Nelson County features beautiful terrain and a number of lakes (or dams) that can add to an enhanced tourism experience. In fact, Stump Lake and the historic village are one of the best and biggest tourism draws in this region of North Dakota.

The more you have to offer, collectively, the further people will travel to you, the longer they will stay, and the higher chance you have of getting them to come back time and again.

Also, you are far more powerful as one loud voice as opposed to numerous separate smaller voices.

By adding the rural areas of Grand Forks County and Nelson County could also open up additional funding opportunities. If each of these five counties pitched in \$60,000 a year, the Region would have a \$300,000 a year marketing budget.

Being able to define the region as the Highway 2 corridor and west of Interstate 29 makes the region easily identifiable.

Recommendation #2: Begin an outreach effort

Description: Spend time in each community and with each waterway authority to determine their needs and desires in participating in this program.

Implementation timeline: June 2022

Leadership: Red River Regional Council staff

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: Once the boundaries have been set for both the Rendezvous Region and the Regional Council, the very next step is to visit every single community to find out what their primary challenges are, the assets they'd like to share with visitors, and to see if they want to be a part of this program.

During the Assessment process and in public meetings several local elected officials voiced their disdain for tourism and others had no idea why we were there and really didn't seem to want to engage with "outside interference."

The Regional Council should meet with each city's elected officials either in a council meeting or council retreat, where this plan and the Assessment Findings & Suggestions can be shown and discussed. Then the community can let the Regional Council know whether or not they'd like to be a part of this effort.

- Do they want to see population increases in their community?
- Do they mind "sharing" local lakes and waterways with visitors?
- The same with local campgrounds?
- Are they willing to disseminate visitor information at various points in town?
- Are there local businesses that would like to tap into tourism?
- If so, they should have a "specialty" to help pull customers in the door. That might include bait, fishing license or supplies, or a special dish at a local eatery, or live entertainment on weekends.
- Would the city be willing to add directional signage to key attractions and amenities (where needed)?

- Would they like assistance, where appropriate, in implementing suggestions made in the Assessment process?

Included in this effort is also meeting with the various waterway boards or commissions, who control and manage all four county's best tourism-based assets, the lakes (or dams).

Questions to ask might include:

- What are your goals for the waterway?
- Do you mind sharing them with visitors?
- Do you stock the waterway? If so, with what kind of fish?
- Is it catch and eat or catch and release?
- Is a fishing license required? If so, where can it be purchased locally?
- What about seasonal considerations?
- Ice fishing?
- How best would you like to market the lake: For what types of activities? Perhaps for non-motorized boats such as stand-up paddle boards, canoes and kayaks. Or for any type of boat or watercraft.

Some lakes may be better suited for sailing small boats like HobieCats. Some for bird hunting, or wildlife viewing. It would be very beneficial to have an activity-based focused for each waterway.

After all, you need to promote activities, not just the waterways. People are looking for things to do, not lakes to merely look at.

- Do you have plans for the lake? If so, what do they include?
- How about public access? Restrooms? Trash barrels? Boat launches? Picnic areas? Parking? Anything else we should know?
- What can the Red River Regional Council do to help you with your efforts?

This last question should be asked of all the communities and waterway boards. These retreats or meetings are extremely important. Without this information it will be difficult to figure out what the Rendezvous Region will be marketing, and how to best market each of the waterways - the region's best assets.

It will also be important to meet with local historical sites and attractions, to see what role they play: operating days and hours, key "sales points" that tell a great story, photography, etc.

Recommendation #3: Create the Destination [our town] teams.

Description: Have each community create a Destination [Grafton] Team.

Implementation timeline: June 2022

Leadership: Red River Regional Council

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: For the cities that decide to become a part of this program and are looking to increase their population base, commercial tax base, and tourism spending, next up is to help them assemble the Destination [our town] Team.

This is the team of local residents, elected officials, waterway board members, and local businesses that whose charge is to attract new residents, businesses and visitor spending.

The word “Destination” is not solely for tourism, but each community should want to become a destination for new residents, a destination for increased or new investment, and a destination for leisure visitors.

This team would champion the implementation of the suggestions made and included in this plan, working with community leaders and businesses so you can maximize local spending.

This team is also charged with clean-up efforts, where needed, improved signage, and better curb appeal that will ultimately let visitors know that this is a great town to live, work and play in.

The Destination [our town] team can also become the selection committee for projects that might include outside architectural, urban planning, signage, and other expertise.

This “Team” is generally made up of local community boosters - doers, not directors. This is the group of local citizens that give time and effort, beyond meetings, to improve their communities.

It should be loaded with those who represent the local tax base: local retail shops and eateries, major employer(s), chamber of commerce, lodging properties, and other private-sector stakeholders.

The team would also include representation from local auxiliary organizations such as Kiwanis, Rotary, Elks, Eagles, etc., school district staff or superintendent, medical facility representatives, parks board or city parks department chairs, and/or county officials.

Each team would be given access to the Destination Development Association’s “Video Vault,” which includes videos on just about every topic having to do with improving the quality of life for your residents.

They would, typically, meet once a month, and would tackle three to five projects every few months. This creates an effective grassroots effort that will make their communities better places to live - and to love.

The Regional Council should attend a Destination [our town] meeting once a quarter offering advice, possible funding sources, and also keeping them enthused and excited about the future.

Recommendation #4: Establish funding sources for this program

Description: Without funding, this program and others cannot succeed. This is an investment, not just an overhead item.

Implementation timeline: June | July 2022

Leadership: Red River Regional Council, Rendezvous Region

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: There is simply no way to increase the population of the region without a significant product development and marketing effort. North Dakota, as a state, has one of the smallest tourism marketing budgets in the country and it's nearly impossible to out-compete your surrounding states when they have three to twenty times the marketing budgets.

Roger Dow, the long time CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, based out of Washington, D.C. when about to retire, reached out to the folks in North Dakota because it was the only state in the country he had not yet visited.

And where North Dakota does show up on the radar of visitors is on the western side: home to national park and grasslands, fascinating terrain, and a myriad of outdoor adventures and great towns.

Even Medora, with a population of just 135 people, gets far more attention and publicity than all five counties making up the Rendezvous Region. Once again, this is not the fault of the Rendezvous Region's marketing efforts, but purely from lack of funding to put the region "on the map" as a desirable destination.

To effectively market ten percent of the state's counties will require a minimum budget of \$300,000 a year: half for salaries and overhead, and half to implement the strategies outlined in this plan.

If each county would contribute just \$40,000 a year (just \$3,300 a month), this would provide \$200,000 a year, which then could be leveraged to obtain the remaining \$100,000 a year from state and/or federal funding, from foundations and other funding sources.

No destination marketing organization should have paid memberships, including the Rendezvous Region. This brings us to a key point: the Rendezvous Region represents the visitors, not counties, cities or towns. It's sole purpose is to attract visitors to the region, spread them out, help them spend money, and encourage them to repeat the process.

Less than five percent of all DMO websites are ever used by visitors when planning a trip into the area. Why? Because typical DMO websites provide lists of things to do and places to stay, but what the visitor wants is help.

You cannot promote your Top 3 or Top 5 activities when you're a membership organization. This is often referred to as the "Chamber Conundrum." Chambers of Commerce can never be successful promoting your anchor tenants (best restaurants, retail shops, golf courses, etc.) because members would complain if they were not chosen to be on the list.

And for cities that have the ability, perhaps they would pitch in as well. If Grafton, Cavalier, Park River and a couple other able communities (with tourism assets) would each pitch in just \$20,000 a year, then the Rendezvous Region would be able to reach its minimum goal of \$300,000 a year. This would enable the staff to spend 90% of its time and effort bringing people into the region rather than the other conundrum where they spend nearly half their time raising money and only half promoting the region - once again, the Chamber conundrum.

Likewise, the Red River Regional Council, under this plan, would also need to hire two to three full-time people in order to fully implement the product development side of this plan. And, once again, remember that your success will be built on product, not marketing.

Their job is to make sure the product (the experiences and amenities) are in place and that visitors will have an outstanding experience and will share that with friends and family, thus spreading the word that North Dakota, especially the Rendezvous Region, delivers a top-notch experience and is, in fact, a great place to actually live, invest in, and visit time and again.

For the cities and counties, this team of the Rendezvous Region and the Red River Regional Council are the economic development and marketing arm of their economic development efforts. It's this team that will increase the tax

base locally so there are local funds to improve the quality of life for local citizens. This is an investment, not an overhead cost. The counties and cities MUST invest in their future and this is the vehicle to do just that.

An important point to remember in this effort is that outside of Grand Forks, you have no privately-held and marketed key attractions. No National Parks, Six Flags, water parks, Disney Parks, wineries, big-time breweries, Universities, Bass Pro Shop or Cabela's, or even major hotels that have their own marketing and sales budgets. In fact, this region of the country is light on tourism assets compared to other areas of the country (including neighboring states) so it will require an all-out, no holds barred, marketing effort to pull people into the region. Will the effort be effective given that? Of course - this region has an amazing quality of life and four distinct seasons to promote. But the bottom line: If the Rendezvous Region doesn't market the area, no one does.

And if you don't market the area, you will miss a golden opportunity to tap into the post-COVID "Work from anywhere" movement. Many cities are actually paying people between \$10,000 and \$15,000 - per person - to move to their cities for just two years, bringing remote work with them. And, of course, during those two years they are spending tens of thousands of dollars on groceries, pet care, home care, gas, professional services, and recreational pursuits.

In this program we're casting a wider net. And paired with an upcoming recommendation - offering homesteading sites - this can be extremely effective in attracting new residents and a Zoom Town economy.

For more on this movement, watch the video in the Destination Development Association's Vault: Zoom Towns are Boom Towns.

Finally, the Rendezvous Region's primary charge is marketing tourism, but this effort will also market the homesteading and Zoom Town initiatives.

Recommendation #5: Create a Brand Style Guide

Description: This is the "bible" in terms of continuity and the proper use of the Rendezvous Region's graphics standards.

Implementation timeline: July 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region Tourism Council

Approximate cost to implement: \$15,000, a one-time expense

Funding source options: Current tourism marketing funds

Rationale and to-do steps: Once you convince a prospective visitor (or local for that matter) to login to a regional website, be it tourism or economic development, it MUST be good enough to close the sale.

And there must be continuity between marketing efforts and subsequent marketing materials. To do this, the first priority is the development of a brand style guide or "Brand Standards and Practices Manual."

The Style Guide will be the "bible" that the Rendezvous Region will use to create continuity in its marketing efforts.

Right now you have a general look and feel of the brand, but it's time to get down to specifics and particulars. That's what a Brand Style Guide does.

The Brand Style Guide, or standards and practices manual, will contain graphic design standards for logo and tagline use, guidelines for website development, social media platforms, guidelines for the production of printed sales and marketing materials, as well as the proper use of key marketing, advertising and promotion messages. It will also identify photography styles and images needed to evoke emotion: a key marketing element.

Continuity and consistency are critical when developing a strong branding program that creates top of mind awareness of the brand. The logo and brand design should give the region an easily recognizable identity – a symbol and message that represents the region and the experiences it has to offer. Whenever the logo is used, it should bring to mind images of enjoying that area.

Repetition helps reinforce the viewer's perception, but consistency is the only way to ensure logo and brand recognition. That is why the Brand Style Guide is a highly detailed document, providing specific instructions on how to use the graphics – font sizes, colors, guidelines for reproduction, guidelines for web design, PowerPoint presentations, and advertisements. Examples of logo use should be provided for the region and local organizations that will utilize the marketing efforts, as well as for signage and wayfinding.

The Rendezvous Region Tourism Council will be responsible for overseeing proper use of the graphic identity and the look and feel of the brand. This Style Guide will provide the official direction on how to use the region's graphic identity.

As part of this scope of work, the DDA team created a new identity for the Rendezvous Region as well as sample brochure covers, showing how important continuity is to the branding and marketing efforts.

We mean no disrespect to the creation of the current Rendezvous Region logo, but it is important for the logo to convey a “feeling” more than a corporate identity. Rather than go through an arduous logo creation headache, our professionals went ahead and designed a logo for the Rendezvous Region that we firmly believe will help sell the brand of “Rendezvous” (the background compass) and with a rotating center image promoting one of the key activities found in the region. The text itself exudes a feeling of the outdoors and history - the two key attributes and activities found in the region.

We also created sample brochure covers - using stock photos until they can be replaced with locally shot cover photos, showing the importance of continuity in your marketing efforts.

The Brand Style Guide would be used by the Rendezvous Region, local museums and historical attractions, outdoor activities, and other tourism partners (public sector and non-profits) to build continuity and familiarity in your marketing efforts.

A note about logos or brand identities: This should NOT be a point of contention, nor does it even warrant a long conversation. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had a great logo? Have you ever said “I'm not going there because I think their logo sucks”?

On the other hand, it does need to convey a feeling, should look good in full color, in one color, reversed, and in two colors. It should be easy to read and make out when on a billboard, or shrunk to a 1/2” use, as on a label, or a little larger on a business card or letterhead.

Logos only make up 2% of a brand, yet they tend to get 98% of the attention locally, and can be very, very divisive. The logo designed as part of this process tested very well with our professional peers and fits the bill in terms of the marketing programs outlined in this plan.

Finally, in all forms of advertising, the logo should always be placed in the bottom right corner of all print ads. You ALWAYS sell the experience first and then where they will find the experience last.

Effective advertising works this way: 1) Get my attention. This is typically done (in print media) using a signature photograph and header (headline). You have less than two seconds to pull people into the ad. 2) Then, depending on the size of the ad, you can add up to 50 words of text with a call to action. Then, 3) you let them know who you are and where you're at: North Dakota's Rendezvous Region.

An advantage of this logo is that it includes a center graphic showcasing the key activities found in the Rendezvous Region: Camping & RVing, hunting and fishing, golf, and historical attractions.

The logo can be refined, a color palette created, along with other elements of the brand when you develop the Rendezvous Region Brand Style Guide.

Recommendation #6: Trademark the brand mark

Description: As part of the branding process, logos (brand identities), tag lines and other marketing materials are developed. This recommendation makes sure these become Trademarked through the U.S. Trademark Office.

Implementation timeline: July 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region Tourism Council

Approximate cost to implement: \$6,000

Funding source options: Current funds - a one-time expense

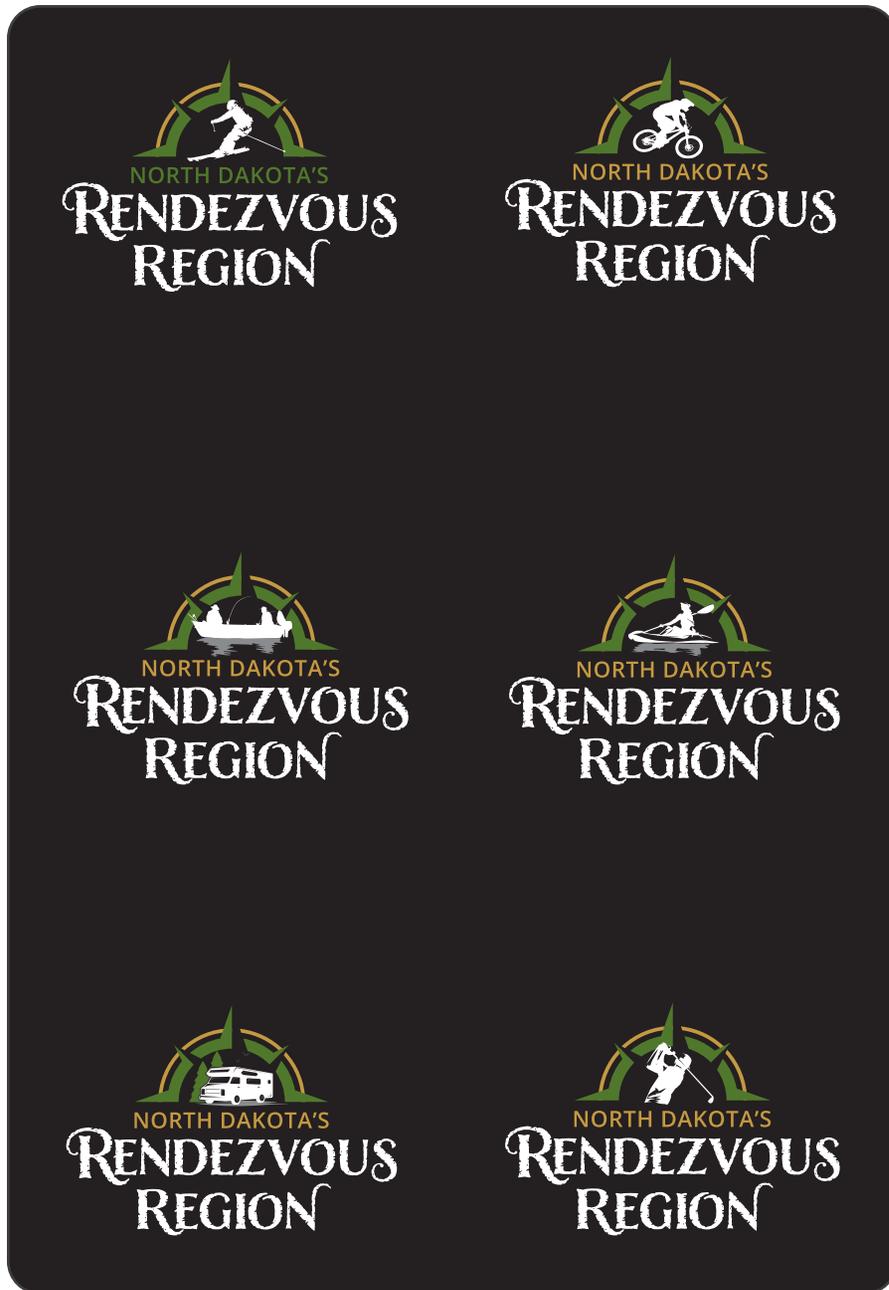
Rationale and to-do steps: As part of this plan's development the logo was created, along with variations that include history, fishing, kayaking, golf, and camping - the five primary reasons people will come to discover the Rendezvous Region. Each of these should be trademarked.

Once the application has been submitted, each logo can add the "Registered" symbol, which would be replaced with the Trademark symbol once the trademark has been accepted and recorded. Trademarks, copyrights and patents require special expertise, so contract with an attorney that specializes in this type of work.

If you need a lead, we recommend attorney Thomas W. Galvani, who the DDA team has worked with many times. He is located in Phoenix, Arizona and the last time we used his services, his cost for applying for each trademark is just over \$1,000 including the federal filing fees. He is located at 3519 E Shea Boulevard, Suite 129 in Phoenix, AZ 85028. His contact phone number is 602.281.6481. He goes by Tom, and he is a registered U.S. Patent Attorney. His e-mail address is: Tom@GalvaniLegal.com. His website address is www.galvanilegal.com.

The \$6,000 budgeted for this allows for trademarking of five identities, shown to the right.





A note about logos or brand identities: This should NOT be a point of contention. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had a great logo? Have you ever said “I’m not going there because I think their logo sucks”?

The logo does need to convey a feeling, should look good in full color, in one color, reversed, and in two colors. It should be easy to read and make out when on a billboard, or shrunk to a 1/2” use, as on a label, or a little larger on a business card or letterhead.

Logos only make up 2% of a brand, yet they tend to get 98% of the attention locally, and can be very divisive. The logo designed as part of this process tested very well with our professional peers and fits the bill in terms of the marketing programs outlined in this plan.

Finally, in all forms of advertising, the logo should always be placed in the bottom right corner of all print ads. You ALWAYS sell the experience first and then where they will find the experience last.

Your logo is simply an explanation point on your key marketing message. In print advertising, for instance, your logo will always be in the bottom right corner of the ad. You start with a signature photo or graphic that gets the reader's attention and showcases your primary activity - the reason they will visit the region. That coupled with a headline is meant to pull the reader into the ad. And that should get them to read your key marketing message. And finally, you let them know they will find it - and more - in North Dakota's Rendezvous Region.

The logo should exude a feeling without looking too corporate. Rather than get into a debate on the logo, with 40+ years of experience, we took the liberty of creating a brand identity for the region. We tested it among staff and other professionals and of the four logos we tested, this one tested the best.

It's important that the identity be easy to read when tiny, as in the corner of an ad or on a business card, and large as when placed on a billboard.

An advantage of this logo is that it includes a center graphic showcasing the key activities found in the Rendezvous Region: Camping & RVing, hunting and fishing, golf, and historical attractions.

Recommendation #7: Secure an office location for the Rendezvous Region staff

Implementation timeline: August 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region Tourism

Approximate cost to implement: To be determined

Funding source options: Current funds

Rationale and to-do steps: In a perfect world, we'd recommend that the Red River Regional Council and the Rendezvous Region Tourism be co-located in the same office complex, which will save money on overhead with shared resources such as copy machine, laser printer, postage scale, phone system, Internet access, etc.

In this first three-year plan, there are more than 65 recommendations, fairly evenly split between the Regional Council and Rendezvous Region. While the Rendezvous Region is, in essence, the advertising and PR agency for these five counties, the Regional Council would be charged with product development.

Both are critically important to the success of this plan. But in the end, you will be judged by your product, not your marketing. As Roger Brooks has often repeated, "Marketing will bring people to you just once. The ONLY thing that brings them back was the primary activity that drew them in the first place, complementary activities ("What else do you have while we're here?"), your amenities such as public restrooms, visitor information or parking, and the people they interact with.

Rendezvous Region's mission is to bring people into the Region from other areas of the country and from Canada, and to entice them to spend more time (and money) while in the area.

The Regional Council's mission, in this regard, is to create such a good experience that your visitors will tell their friends and they will come back time and again. It's a lot less expensive to get people to come back, than to always get one-time visitors.

Because of this very tight relationship, it would be fantastic if the two organizations could co-share an office space.

Short of that, it would be good if both were in the same community so that they can easily meet (probably at least every other week) and can work together on implementing this plan.

This plan calls for hiring three full-time, year round marketing professionals, so the space would need three separate offices, and if in a retail location, could include a visitor information center staffed with volunteers or part-time worker or interns.

And it would be important to have a meeting room and high-speed broadband Internet access.

Typically, for an operation of this type, the office should be right around 1,100 square feet including the meeting room and common-area space, with access to a restroom or restroom facilities.

If the Rendezvous Region staff is separate from the Regional Council, then an additional \$30,000 should be allocated for office furnishings and equipment:

- VOIP phone system with two or three lines
- Modem, router and networking gear
- Laser printer/copier
- Laptop computers with dual 27" 4k monitors for video production, web design and social media work, production of e-newsletters, etc.
- File cabinets and storage for printed collateral materials, office supplies
- Desks | working spaces for each person | seating
- Meeting table and chairs, screen and in-room projector
- Networked backup system
- Lunchroom including small 4-place table, refrigerator, microwave, coffee maker, etc.
- Lobby or common area furnishings

This office space should be on a one-year lease unless commitments for extended funding are secured in advance. Most landlords will look for a three to five-year lease, which isn't really possible to commit to without extended funding commitments.

Recommendation #8: Begin the hiring process: Three full-time staff members

Implementation timeline: September 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region Tourism

Approximate cost to implement: \$150,000 a year

Funding source options: Operational funds

Rationale and to-do steps: The three people that will run the Rendezvous Region tourism effort are key to the success of this entire program.

As you begin to hire the staff, here are the areas of expertise they should have between them:

- Heavy and demonstrated video editing experience (Final Cut Pro). The success of this program relies heavily on video content. This includes pre-production, script writing, directing photo/video shoots, editing both audio and video, post production and distribution of video assets.

- Public relations expertise. In fact, hiring someone from a PR firm would be ideal. This program is built on PR, which includes social media. Very little of the marketing budget, after billboards, is used on traditional or even online advertising. Studies have shown that for every dollar spent on PR, you will see a \$3 return in terms of earned media - what you would pay to purchase that space.

This person would craft, write, and submit stories to traditional print media, broadcast (television, streaming services, and radio), and digital media.

They will be charged with creating an online press room as part of the Rendezvous Region website, including numerous press releases and “quick facts” about the area.

They will manage all of the social media channels, including securing content, sharing content, managing conversations (posts), and dealing with crisis management (when a flood hits the area or other unforeseen challenges that will crop up from time to time).

This person could also be your “on-camera” face of the region. Because this effort is designed to attract young families to the region (if you are successful attracting Millennials, you’ll also get the Boomers) this person should be young, full of contagious enthusiasm, alive with humor and fun.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson once stated, “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” If this PR person chooses NOT to be the on-camera face representing the region, then one of the jobs of this position is to find and contract with that person for the creation of on-camera content.

- The third person of this trio is the Director, an experienced marketer more than someone with “executive director” experience. This person will fill in the gaps where needed between the other two, offering marketing advice and the direction of any marketing campaigns. In fact, one of the responsibilities of the Director is to develop campaigns for various niche markets.

There is no general tourism marketing in the program. One hundred percent of the marketing will be targeting niche markets: RVers, hikers, hunters, fishing enthusiasts, history buffs, and golfers - the primary niche groups where the Rendezvous Region can provide an excellent experience.

The Director will be the conduit between the Rendezvous Region board, and the Regional Council, and will be the voice of the Rendezvous Region when working with the counties and cities as part of this program.

The biggest challenge, and top priority, will be to secure ongoing funding for the program. This first three years of this program, as outlined in this plan, are geared to beefing up marketing assets (photography, b-roll video, video assets, content, specific information so the website is helpful, not just full of lists, and the development of printed collateral materials and their distribution.)

This person will manage all of these marketing assets, including the development of cooperative brochure creation.

Also, this person should be a top-notch writer, which will be needed in all aspects of this program from applying for grants, to writing copy for print and online publications, working with influencers, editing captions for social media posts, etc.

Of the \$360,000 annual budget allocated for this program (\$300,000 of new funding, plus the current \$60,000 budget), about \$175,000 a year would be dedicated to hiring this critical expertise.

The Director would probably be in the \$70,000 annual salary range, while each of the other positions would be in the \$55,000 range - to start. With taxes and benefits, the total cost of personnel will be right around \$200,000 a year.

Then on top of this expense, hopefully, the overhead can be held to about \$25,000 a year, leaving \$135,000 a year for direct marketing: the first year a vast portion would be used for creative services and content generation and initial one-time expenses. The second year this would be used to develop a brand awareness campaign using outdoor advertising (billboards) over a seven month period, with ongoing posts at reduced prices when billboards are not under contract.

The third, and following years, the marketing will still be geared to PR, social media and niche market promotion - primarily through media influencers in targeted markets, such as fishing and hunting, RVing, or golf.

While this accounts for two thirds of the total budget, this crew will generate well over a million dollars a year in “earned media” - the cost of purchasing the kind of publicity they will generate.

If you can recruit talent from the primary markets you’re hoping to attract, that would be an added benefit. A person who lives in Fargo, Minneapolis, Grand Forks, Winnipeg or other urban areas will know, instinctively, what it will take to attract visitors from these markets. This is especially true of the PR portion of this effort.

And do NOT be afraid to hire someone who has decades of experience, is looking to escape the urban nightmare for the rural areas, and is willing to work for less than they currently make because in a year, or two, or three, they might be looking to retire.

Perhaps one of these three people will fit the bill. But other than that, keep in mind that the Millennial generation can have the instincts to attract those in your target market.



Recommendation #9: Create the RV & Camping Guide rack brochure to the Rendezvous Region

Implementation timeline: September 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region

Approximate cost to implement: \$5,000 - a co-op program

Funding source options: Current marketing funds

Rationale and to-do steps: There are three areas where the Rendezvous Region can out-compete its neighbors across the Red River in Minnesota, in other counties in Eastern North Dakota, and south into Eastern South Dakota.

Those areas include:

- RVing and camping
- Historical attractions
- Golf

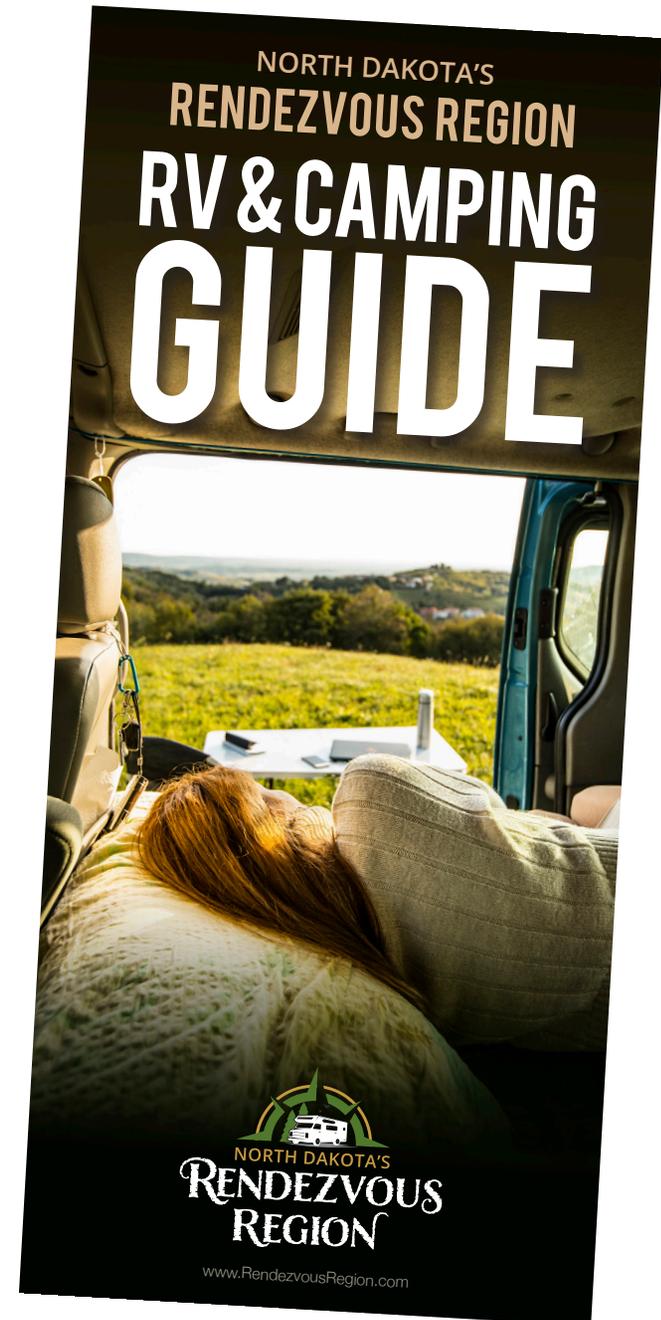
RVing is the fastest-growing segment in tourism with more than 500,000 new RV units (travel trailers, campers, camper-vans, fifth-wheel and Class A rigs or motorcoach RVs) being sold each year.

In fact, the pandemic has created an entirely different class of workers, of which two million (in the U.S. alone) are “Full-timers” working from their RVs in this “work from anywhere” economy. This has given rise to “Zoom Towns” and “Digital Nomads.”

What perhaps is most surprising is that the average age of a person purchasing an RV is just 38 - not just Boomers as you might expect.

They are actively looking for rural areas with good cell coverage (LTE) and/or open skies. In May of 2022 Space X's Starlink (low orbiting satellites) was just approved for mobile use, really opening up rural areas for digital nomads, who can work from anywhere.

This is a fantastic market to secure, especially since the Rendezvous Region is short on quality overnight lodging outside of Grand Forks.



Additionally, one thing the Rendezvous Region seems to have a lot of, are RV parks and campgrounds. While most need some work, better signage, contact information, and on-site amenities, they are, for the most part, of very good quality.

And beyond the digital nomads who are still working, there are another growing class of RVers - young families and active retirees that leave the urban areas, driving typically two to three hours to camp in the rural areas.

These would be nearby Canadians from the Winnipeg market, Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck and visitors already coming into Western North Dakota for the National Park and National Grasslands areas.

Part of the PR and social media effort will be to convince RVers and campers visiting the western side of the state to trek across the state to Devil's Lake, Pembina Gorge, and the wide open, uncrowded, yet scenic areas the Rendezvous Region has to offer.

Many of these travelers are active YouTubers, active on all social media platforms, and they DO spend money. The difference between RVers and hotel overnight stays is where they spend money. While hotel guests fill local restaurants and retail shops, RVers shop where the locals shop: Grocery stores, hardware stores, gas and service stations, medical services, pharmacies, etc.

But they also will frequent local restaurants and signature retail shops. They purchase hunting and fishing supplies, pet food and related services (nearly 70% of RVers travel with at least one pet).

While they tend to "follow the sun," as do most leisure travelers, this is an excellent market to pursue from April through October (a seven month season).

While RV parks, across the country, are in short supply and often over-booked, this creates both business opportunities for creating additional campgrounds AND an easy opportunity to attract RVers looking for uncrowded yet serene camping locations.

This recommendation is to create a multi-panel rack brochure that markets campgrounds, primary activities, and supplies. The Rendezvous Region would reach out to campgrounds, grocery stores, propane suppliers, RV

repair services, hardware stores, etc., with each "purchasing" a panel in the Guide.

The authors of this plan are, in fact, RVers and often run into the challenge of finding campgrounds and/or information about them (most of the camping destinations in the region are not even listed on the most basic of RV websites), and then trying to find where the locals go to eat, shop, where to fill propane tanks, or where to buy hardware and RV supplies.

The RV and Camping Guide would showcase a map of the region, with each of the counties identified, and then would showcase the campgrounds and services available in that county.

Included would be:

- One panel per campground with a photo, description and details
- Suppliers that fill propane tanks
- Grocery stores
- Hardware stores with RV supplies
- RV retailers, repair services
- Mobile RV repair services
- Amazon drop-box locations
- Dump services (where RVers can dump wastewater tanks)
- Dog parks and pet supply retailers
- Veterinary services
- Pharmacies and medical services (urgent care)
- Top five activities in the county (RVers love walking, hiking, biking, fishing and paddling)
- Where they can buy or rent gear (bikes, fishing licenses and supplies, etc.)
- Top five restaurants or eateries in the county
- Farmers markets
- Post office or UPS store locations
- Gas and diesel stations

This may end up being a 30-panel guide, which should be dated and updated every year with current information, It should also be downloadable in an 8.5"x11" printable format.

Plan on printing 10,000 for the 2022 summer and fall seasons, or 20,000 for the 2023 season.

This is a co-op brochure. To determine costs, work with a printer that prints high-quantity materials, such as this to determine the printing and shipping cost of the brochure once you can “guesstimate” how many panels the guide will include, plus a front page panel, a welcome panel, and a panel (or two) with a map of the region, and a back panel,

Also determine the cost to have the rack brochure designed, proofed and edited.

Then determine the number of panels that will be sold (so you don't include public hiking trails where there's no revenue source) to determine the per panel cost, which you'll need when “selling” space to your RV and Campground partners.

Make sure to include about 10% for non-payment partners or for cost overruns.

One way to determine the quantity to print, is to take the number of available RV sites, and determine annual occupancy levels during the season. For instance, if a campground had 100 sites with the average stay of three nights, times a 180 day season, they would need 6,000 brochures if the campground has a 100% occupancy rate. (100 spaces x 180 nights, divided by three - the average length of stay then times the annual occupancy rate.) Most campgrounds will not be full every night of the season. In fact, in this example, if the annual occupancy rate is 50%, then they'd only need 3,000 brochures.

Many campgrounds in the region have seasonal, or even year round campers, thus reducing the need for as many brochures, giving them one each season.

This should be a brochure that can be developed at no cost to the Rendezvous Region, other than time marketing it to partners throughout the region.

In many cases, the region will contract with a person to actually go out and secure the marketing partners. Rather than pass this additional cost on to the partner, we've budgeted \$5,000 for commissions and/or other costs. This should NOT be used as a fund-raising mechanism.

Each partner would include a photograph, their logo, a brief description of their offerings and/or services, address and location information, operating hours, and a URL or way to contact them.

IMPORTANT: As you select vendors (marketing partners) make sure they have at least 80% positive reviews on Google, Yelp and other review sites. And make sure their hours and services are consistent. One bad apple can spoil the whole bunch.

Don't try to market everyone: Market those that will create an excellent experience for the RVer to keep them coming back, and so they spread the word - a MUST for the success of this program.

Recommendation #10: Distribute the RV & Camping Guide throughout the region and place a printable copy on the Rendezvous Region website and on the state's tourism website.

Implementation timeline: September 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region Tourism

Approximate cost to implement: \$1,500 for counter-top brochure holders and repayment of mileage for restocking the brochures weekly or bi-weekly

Funding source options: Marketing funds

Rationale and to-do steps: Since this is the first of six rack brochures, distribution will be very important and will begin the distribution “network” of where these guides can be found.

Every camper, at every destination (including the State Parks) should be handed an RV & Camping Guide when they check in or register. This, alone, could use up two-thirds of all the brochures you have printed. This includes providing a brochure to each seasonal or year round camper, either by mail, or at the campground.

Additionally, purchase counter-top brochure holders (right) and provide every partner 100 brochures plus the holder so they can distribute the brochures at their place of business.

Please note that the brochure holder, right, holds four brochures. Temporarily, you'd place perhaps 20 or so brochures in each of the four slots. But as other brochures are developed (on every couple of months), the combination of brochures would each take up one of the slots.

The RV & Camping Guide should be available at:

- Chambers of commerce offices
- Offices for each campground
- Brochure distribution wall-mounted holders and stand-alone kiosks (coming up in another recommendation)
- Grocery stores | hardware stores | any place that supports RVers
- Rendezvous Region office
- City halls and other public venues

Develop a “route” so that a volunteer or staff member can replenish supplies once every two weeks, perhaps once a week during the peak summer months and during harvest. Do NOT expect calls from businesses letting you know they ran out of RV & Camping Guides.

clear multi-brochure countertop holder

Amazon Basics Coupons Health & Household Pharmacy Shopper Toolkit Find a Gift Handmade Pet Supplies Home Improvement Gift Cards Beauty & Pe

Discover Shop by Style Home Décor Furniture Kitchen & Dining

NIUBEE 8.5x11 Clear Acrylic Plexi Sign Holders with 3M Tape, Wall Sign Memo Document Menu Holder for Office, Home, ... 4.5 stars 84 ratings \$27.99 prime

2 results

MaxGear Acrylic Brochure Holder, 4-Inch Wide 4 Tier Clear Literature Holder Premium Acrylic Pamphlet Holder Multi Pocket Brochure Display Stand, Wall Mount or Counter Top Use(3 Pack)

Visit the MaxGear Store

4.5 stars 129 ratings | 6 answered questions

Amazon's Choice for "clear multi-brochure countertop holder"

Price: **\$33.99** ✓prime One-Day & FREE Returns

Save up to 5% with business pricing. Sign up for free Amazon Business account. May be available at a lower price from other sellers, potentially without free Prime shipping.

Number of Items: **3**

Color	Clear
Material	Acrylic
Brand	MaxGear

About this item

- **PREMIUM ACRYLIC MATERIAL** -- This brochure holder is made of premium-quality clear acrylic plastic. Acrylic is as clear as real glass, it has more advantages than glass like impact, scratch and weather resistant. So that it is more sturdy and durable.
- **SELF-STANDING DESIGN** -- This acrylic pamphlet holder is self-standing, it allows you to maximize display space and keep a large number of materials accessible.
- **SLANTED BACK SUPPORT** -- The multi-compartment docuholder features a practical slanted back support that you don't have to worry about toppling over. All your marketing materials are visible, neat and accessible, rather than strewn around in baskets, on tables, etc.
- **MULTIPURPOSE** -- Our 4 tier brochure organizer fits up to 4 inches wide regular size materials. You can place your pamphlets, company brochures, newsletters, publications in this 4-tier rack for people to see and take.
- **AFTER-SALES SERVICE** -- 12-Months After-Sales Service, Full Refund in case of any quality issues. Replacement service for damaged/ defected items. Any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Recommendation #11: Work with local communities with RV parks and campgrounds re: signage, contact info, amenities, etc.

Implementation timeline: September 2022

Leadership: Red River Regional Council

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: One of the biggest challenges RVers and camping guests have when visiting the region is knowing who, or where any campgrounds are even located. This we'll cover in the following recommendation.

But when we do locate these parks, in almost every case there is no signage or information of any kind. While these may be primarily used to house seasonal harvest workers, where the employers will let them know about local campgrounds, these should be leveraged for spring, summer and fall months.

This would provide additional revenues to the owners - be it private-sector or publicly owned, and would increase local spending.

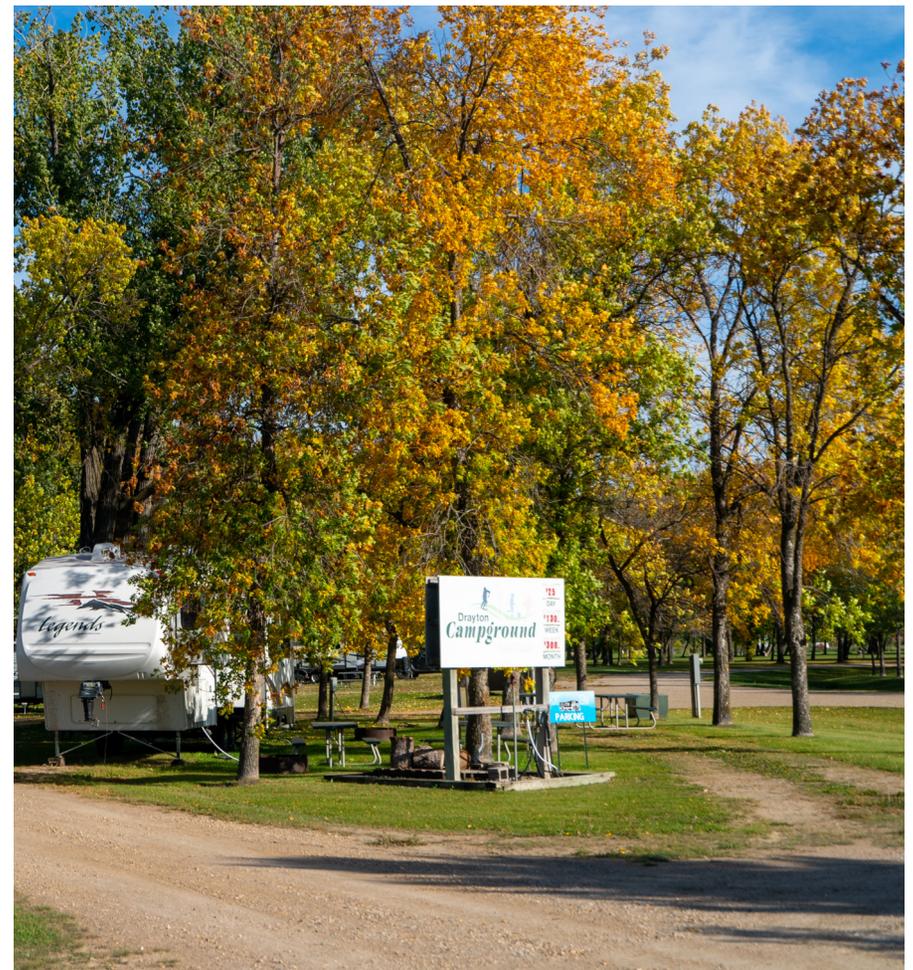
This program concentrates heavily on making the Rendezvous Region one of North Dakota's premier "Zoom Town," "Digital Nomad," "Work from anywhere" and RV leisure travel destination.

This is the fastest, easiest way to start really tapping into the tourism industry, using assets that already exist, and will result in increased local and regional spending, and will make the region a three-season destination.

This recommendation includes adding two outdoor, large signs at every campground. One would be a Welcome sign to the name of the campground. Then instructions: If you have a reservation, or if not, what to do first. It might be to call a number, check in with a camp host, or head to your pre-assigned site if you already have a reservation.

Some campgrounds may be first come, first served. If so, let the campers know this on the welcome sign. As they come into the campground there would be a second sign with more details that should include the following:

- Who owns and operates the campground
- Contact information
- When it's open (if seasonal)
- On-site amenities: Water, power (30A, 50A), sewer or dump station, etc.
- A campground map showing the campsites
- And a brochure holder (like a real estate brochure holder) with the Camping & RV Guide brochure in it.
- Encourage guests to post reviews on Google, Campendium, AllStays, GoodSam, TheDyrt and others.



Recommendation #12: Help RV parks and campgrounds get listed on AllStays, Campendium and other review sites. Include photography of each site.

Implementation timeline: September 2022

Leadership: Red River Regional Council

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: Throughout the Rendezvous Region there are dozens of campgrounds yet very, very few are even listed on RVing and Campground websites, where campers look for camping accommodations. There is no cost to be added to these sites, so the Regional Council, working with each campground, should spend some time with them listing their campground, adding photography and specific on-site amenities, fees, seasonal considerations, cell-signal strengths, etc.

The images you see in this and the following pages show the campgrounds in the region that are actually listed on Campendium, one of the most-used RV websites. More than half the campgrounds in the region are not even listed, and nearly all that are listed have no reviews and no information.

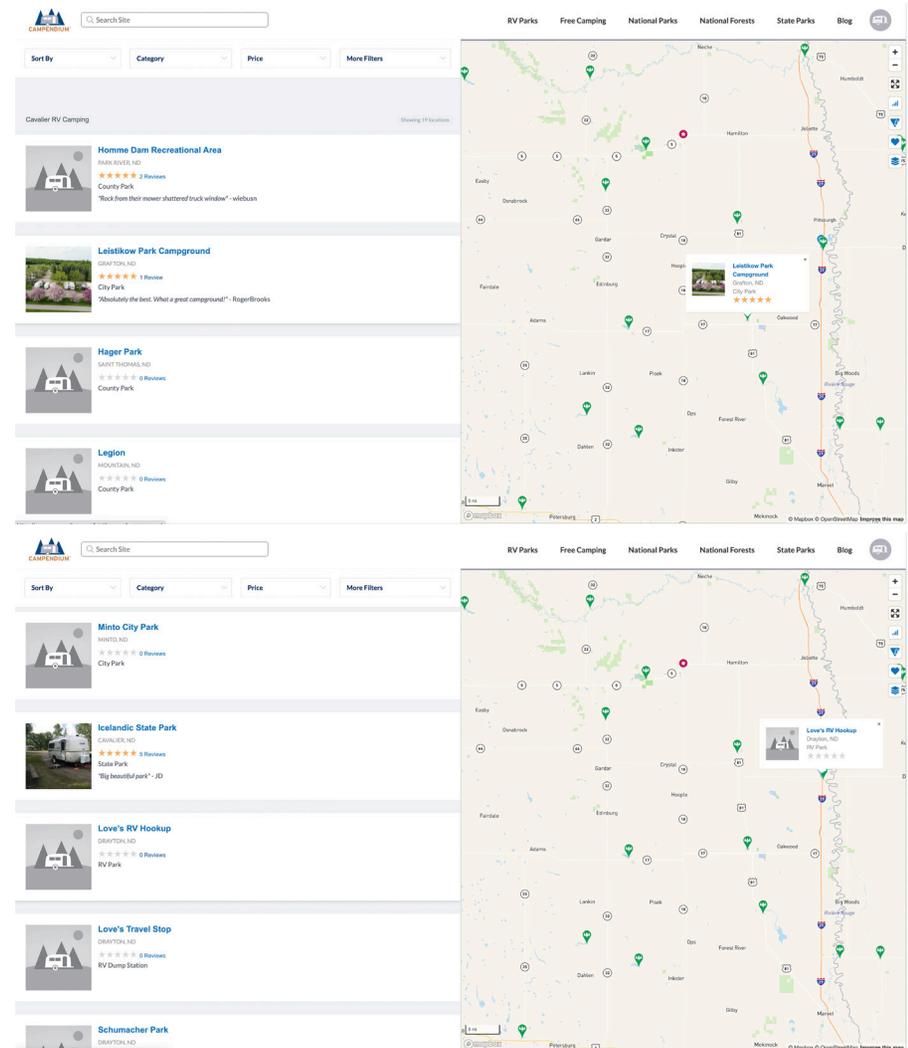
The first priority is to photograph each site so guests can see what they are getting. Also a couple of drone shots offer a great view of the overall campground. For an example, head to Campendium.com and click on the listing for Leistikow Campground in Grafton and look at the photography, which does a great job of “selling” the campground.

Next, each campground needs to make sure they claim their Google listing. This is the top priority since Google commands nearly 90% of all Internet searches - and accounts for the majority of user reviews.

Make sure you include the following information on your listings:

- Street address
- Cell signals by carrier (often campers can add to this)
- Number of sites you have
- Pull-through or back-in sites, or both
- On-site amenities (trails, pool, laundry facilities, clubhouse, dump station)

- Campsite amenities: water, power (30A, 50A), sewer, cable...
- Seasonal considerations (open months)
- Access notes getting to and into the campground
- Selling points (why we should chose this particular campground)
- Costs
- Time limits (how long a camper can stay)
- Reservations? First come first served?



- How and where make reservations
- Community amenities (Groceries, gas, propane, etc.)

Once you've got the information and photography secured, then begin population various websites. Here's a great beginner list:

- Google (claim your listing)
- Campendium.com

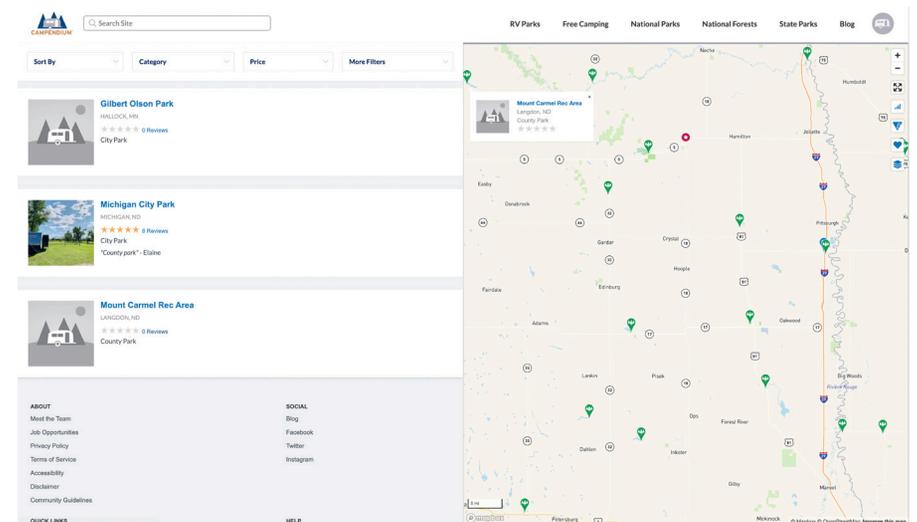
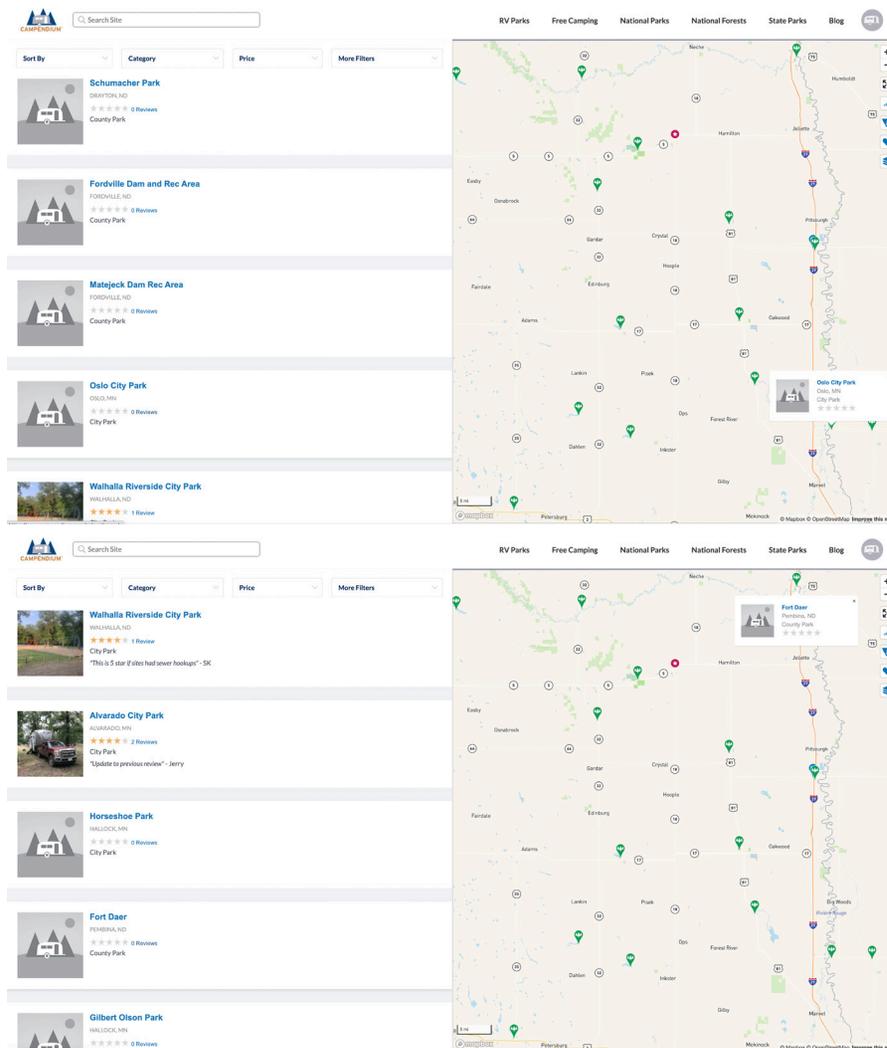
- TheDyrt.com
- AllStays.com
- GoodSam.com
- RVParky.com
- campgrounds.rvlife.com
- TripAdvisor.com (yes, they include RV parks)
- CampgroundReviews.com
- RVBuddy.com

There is also the up and coming HipCamp - known as the Airbnb for camping.

Every RV park and campground could be listed in every one of these sites if a person would take just one-full day, and provide the information for each of these sites.

When Roger Brooks was coming into the region, via RV, he could find very little information on whether or not there even was any camping available - especially since a good portion of the stay was after Labor Day weekend.

There was very little information to be found, anywhere, regarding camping in the area. And this could be easily remedied. We recommend that the Regional Council work with each campground to help them get listed on these sites. And then encourage them to seek camper reviews.



Recommendation #13: Contract with a local shop to design, build, and install wall mounted visitor information boxes or stand-alone kiosks throughout the region.

Implementation timeline: October 2022

Leadership: Red River Regional Council

Approximate cost to implement: \$20,000

Funding source options: To be determined | Rendezvous Region funding?

Rationale and to-do steps: Butler University recently conducted a study regarding the use of printed tourism brochures (collateral materials). What they found was eye-opening.

Before heading out on a trip, for work or leisure, word of mouth from friends and family and Internet searches accounted for nearly 90% of all planning research efforts. Brochures and printed guides were used in less than 25% of the planning effort.

BUT once the visitor arrives at the destinations, printed guides jump to the top position, used by 81% of all travelers. Mobile devices were second, and conversing with locals was number three on the list.

The average visitor is active 14 hours a day. They spend four to six hours with the primary activity that drew them: playing a full 18-holes of golf, downhill skiing at Frost Fire, fishing, hunting, paddling, etc.

Then they spend eight to ten hours with “complementary” activities - “What else is there to do locally?”

Even visitors coming to work will typically spend nine hours (including lunchtime) at work, and then five hours with secondary activities.

So why brochures? First of all, brochures work when you don’t have strong cell signals. You can look at them in the car, in a hotel room or RV, at a restaurant, without being as intrusive as a mobile device.

Brochures are easier to read, generally include photography, and specific information - they are much better at closing the sale than a website or social media channel.

This plan includes the creation of six separate “rack brochures,” which are 4” wide by 8.5” tall and can contain anywhere from three to 30 panels (or more):

- RV & Camping Guide to the Rendezvous Region
- The Rendezvous Region History Trail
- The Rendezvous Region Golf Guide
- The Very Best of North Dakota’s Rendezvous Region
- Waterways Guide to the Rendezvous Region
- The Fishing & Hunting Guide to the Rendezvous Region

These promote the top activities where the Rendezvous Region can easily compete with rural areas in Minnesota, South Dakota, the rest of North Dakota, Wisconsin and other states.

They will include useful, helpful information and would be updated and printed each year.

The trick is getting them into the hands of visitors when they arrive in the region. And visitors don’t just travel from 8:00 to 5:00 each day. Visitor information should always be available 24/7, 365 days of the year.

This recommendation calls for the design, fabrication, and installation of both wall-mounted, weather resistant brochure holders and stand-alone kiosks.

When it comes to wall-mounted brochure holders, there are several options available. Displays2Go.com is a leading provider of these types of brochure holders (see photos next page), but perhaps this can become a local small-business opportunity.

North Platte, Nebraska had a local craftsman make up several wall-mounted kiosks (see photos, opposite) that would accommodate the state Visitors Guide, the local Activities Guide and a rack brochure promoting their restaurants and retailers.

It would be ideal to have one fabricated that could accommodate the six brochures as part of this plan, plus a state map, a North Dakota Visitors Guide, and with space for a local brochure, perhaps promoting local events.

In this case, it would include 8 spaces for rack brochures and map, and one space for the 8.5” x 11” North Dakota Visitors Guide.

The plan is to have these in 100 locations throughout the region. This would include chambers of commerce, libraries, public venues such as civic centers, sports fields and indoor facilities (such as hockey rinks), fairgrounds, the state parks, at each historical site and attraction, RV parks and campgrounds, at each waterway, city hall, and in one or two locations in downtown areas.

Connecting People And Brands With The World US Artwork

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Displays2go Stands With Ukraine | Hear the powerful stories of our teammates & learn what you can do to h

5-Pocket Outdoor Acrylic Brochure Wall Rack, 4"w, Hinged Lid - Clear

Home > Literature Displays > Wall Mount > Exterior-Rated > OPD5



Hover over the image to zoom in.

Email Pin it Share Tweet

★★★★★ 5 out of 5 | (6 Ratings)

Number of Pockets: 5

1 3 5

- Transparent front enables clear view
- Overlapping hinge lid maintains dry inserts
- (5) pocket design holds multiple brochures
- (4) built-in holes allows for easy wall mounting

workshop by DISPLAYS2GO

CUSTOMIZE IT

Product Videos

Description

Outdoor Literature Holders with 5 Pockets

These outdoor literature holders are perfect for displaying 4" wide brochures or standard sized bank deposit envelopes. The outdoor literature holder's hinged cover snaps shut to keep elements away. The literature pockets are 2" deep. Constructed of durable black textured .125" ABS plastic backboard with strong, high-impact .125" clear plastic pockets & lid.

Specifications

SKU	OPD5	Placement Type	Wall Mounted
GTIN	810R7A075063	Features	Outdoor



These would typically cost anywhere from \$125 to \$450 each. At \$300 each, the total would be \$30,000 plus the cost of installing them. They are typically made of painted anodized aluminum and are mounted using masonry screws, depending on the surface they are being mounted to.

They can also be mounted on information panels at historic sites, local, county and regional parks, waterways, and at trail heads.

In this example, a distribution display could be placed on one of the read-erboards, or on a new free-standing two-post panel, like the one to the right located in Icelandic State Park, which would be inexpensive and relatively easy to build.

On the opposite page are two locations where a wall-mounted rack would be ideal: At the library in Cavalier and at the concession stand in Icelandic State Park (bottom, opposite page).

The first order of business would be to identify locations that visitors to the area might frequent. At locations like Homme Dam, you might have two



locations. At state parks you'd also likely have two or three locations for these.

This will allow you to issue an RFP (request for proposal) for the design, fabrication, and installation of these wall-mounted racks in a specific number of locations, and likewise, where a two-post panel would be constructed to accommodate the brochure holder.



Another, although substantially more expensive, option would be to produce perhaps two-dozen stand-alone kiosks throughout the region at key attractions and stopping points. These were developed for the New Hampshire Grand area of the state.

Recommendation #14: Find and contract with your on-camera personality: The “Face of Rendezvous Region” tourism

Implementation timeline: October 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region Tourism

Approximate cost to implement: \$40,000 including talent, pre-production, filming, post production, mixing, etc.

Funding source options: Marketing funds

Rationale and to-do steps: Because of funding constraints, the marketing effort detailed in this plan is geared to building brand recognition so that everyone in and visiting the region will know that it’s called “The Rendezvous Region” and where to find information (RendezvousRegion.com).

Second to that is selling visitors on actually coming TO the Rendezvous Region. And, once again, due to funding constraints, this will rely on word of mouth, social media, and a professional public relations effort.

Key to that will be a focus on video content. To that end, there needs to be a person who can become “the face of the Rendezvous Region” - the on-camera personality that is young, attractive, and full of life with abundant enthusiasm. This person’s entire focus is on convincing people to spend some time in the region.

The Rendezvous Region has very little in the way of tourist attractions that can out-compete most of Minnesota, the other areas of North Dakota, South Dakota and other mid-western and western states. Every surrounding state has hundreds (if not thousands) of lakes and waterways, all include far-more developed trail systems, far more public lands to be explored, and far larger budgets than the Rendezvous Region - or North Dakota tourism, for that matter.

The one area where the Rendezvous Region can out-compete neighboring states is with its historical sites and attractions which, for the most part, are outstanding. Yet historical attractions, generally speaking, are secondary activities to the primary draw. Eighty-five percent of the people who visit any of the Smithsonian Museums in Washington, DC are there for other reasons,

but while they’re in Washington, these outstanding museums are a “must-do” activity. Without a national park or major tourist attraction, it will be paramount to spotlight each lake as a “specialty lake” for a certain sport or activity, be it stand-up paddle boarding, or walleye fishing.

In essence, we must position the activities in the Rendezvous Region as either different or better than what visitors can get closer to home.

To do this, the on-camera personality will need to be enthusiastic, fun-loving, and with expert video and editing skills, will make various activities in the Rendezvous Region worth a special trip and an extended stay.

This could be one of the Rendezvous Region staff, or could be contracted on a per-day or per-video project. Since the target market is the Millennial generation (in their late 20s, 30s and early 40s) this person should be in that age-range. And remember, if you cater to the Millennial generation, you’ll also get the boomers.

This person needs to shine when on-camera and be able to ad-lib where needed so no video seems to be overly scripted or staged.

To support this person, there would also need to be a good camera operator (these can be shot with an iPhone, but with expert attention paid to lighting, sound capture, and movement) and an expert way to capture audio.

In the first year, the goal would be to produce between 30 and 70 two- to five-minute videos (the average would be about three minutes), each showcasing an activity that makes that particular spot worth a special trip.

This person also needs to be a good story-teller. Some of the historical attractions and sites have an amazing story to tell, and having this person be able to capture that as a teaser so that viewers take note and decide to make a trip to the region to see and hear the story in person.

Your on-camera personality would perhaps also speak at local, regional and state-wide events, such as the annual North Dakota’s Governor’s Conference on Tourism, to sell the rest of the state on visiting the Rendezvous Region.

After all, nearly 50% of all tourism spending in nearly every state comes from local residents discovering new areas of the state they call home.

This plan also calls for the creation of an outreach program and your on-camera personality will play a role in this as well.

The outreach program is designed to teach kids in elementary, middle, and high school that North Dakota is a fantastic place to live, grow up in, and to come back to after college.

In essence, it's to build community pride in all that North Dakota, and the Rendezvous Region in particular, has to offer.

This would be done by showcasing "Did you know" facts (also on film) and great places to play in their own front and back yards. This will also help combat the perception that there's "nothing to do here" as these young people become front-line employees that future visitors will interface with.

We're quite certain that this person already exists in the region, but finding them will be of critical importance.

To start, they would focus on why this is a great place to camp or RV in spring, summer and fall: no crowds, serene, a fantastic place to learn how to stand up paddle board, or fly fish - and these are the top three places to do each of these.

Additionally, it's important to promote the Rendezvous Region for team-building events, family reunions, and other gatherings, playing off the fact that this is The Rendezvous Region - the place to "Come Together."

We cannot overstate the importance of this on-camera personality in helping this program be successful.



Recommendation #15: The Rendezvous Region “brand” - your unique selling proposition

Implementation timeline: October 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region, all regional and local organizations

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: There are thousands of locations, quite literally, that have nothing totally unique to their location. And in those instances, it's important to still find a way to make you the destination of choice. So rather than concentrate on a specific location or activity, it can be WHO you attract.

And coming back to the words “Rendezvous Region,” Rendezvous literally means “a meeting at an arranged time and place, typically between two people.” It also means “a place used for a rendezvous i.e. “you're welcome to use this place for your rendezvous,” or “a popular meeting place.”

What if the Rendezvous Region became THE destination for get-togethers? This can include fishing tournaments, sporting tournaments, family reunions, camping trips with friends, fishing trips with friends, business retreats (you have great locations for this), or any type of gathering.

After all, the Rendezvous Region is safe, there are LOTS of places for get-togethers from small uncrowded lakes to campgrounds, to community halls, to historic sites. It's easy to access the region, and inexpensive to boot.

Imagine three or four close-knit friends that could come into one of the towns, secure three or four residential lots (think homesteading) and then work together to build a home on each, and then work to bring the town to life, perhaps opening a business or two and really playing a major revitalization role.

This is where a brand like this can work for more than just tourism - as a gathering place for families and friends.

Imagine attracting bike clubs, fishing clubs, photography clubs, co-workers, digital nomads, each making the Rendezvous Region the place to do exactly that - rendezvous.

This could also include ATV groups, archery enthusiasts, horseback riding clubs, dragon boat teams, classic car and motorcycle clubs, artisans in action, quilters, etc.

And this type of “brand” would be easy to promote and would offer something different than other destinations - particularly regions - are not using as a hook to differentiate themselves.

And it can be done using a simple tagline, “Come together.” As a couple, with family, or friends, as co-workers, enthusiasts; a great place where people gather without all the noise of the urban environment and local distractions.

Where you can really come together - again - especially after two years of lock-downs and isolation. Can you think of a better place to “come together” than Icelandic State park with a group of friends or family? This is a brand you can “own” and brands are all about ownership - and then delivering on the promise.



Recommendation #16: Contract for professional photography and video content - all four seasons

Implementation timeline: October 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region

Approximate cost to implement: \$40,000 first year, \$10,000 subsequent years

Funding source options: Marketing funds

Rationale and to-do steps: In the modern marketing world, content is everything: Content will drive people to your website, your social media channels, is key to search engine optimization, and, ultimately, it's what closes the sale.

The four primary components of this include:

- The actual experience (making sure it was worth the special trip)
- Video and on-camera (helpful expertise with the sales pitch)
- Photography (evoking emotion - worth at least a thousand words)
- Key marketing messages (the details that will close the sale)

The old adage that a photograph is worth a thousand words is just as true today as it's always been. This recommendation is the beginning of the creation of both video footage and a professional still-photography library of images - showcasing all four seasons.

Every photograph should evoke emotion. It should make the viewer take notice with a "Whoa!" or "Wow" or "Look at this!" thought or exclamation.

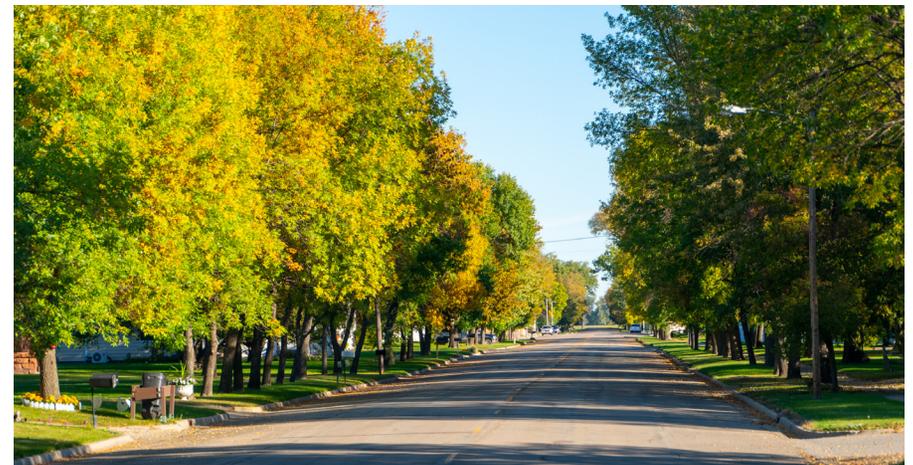
Every photo needs to include a person involved in a specific activity and look unposed. When a person sees someone smiling, it makes them smile as well. So people in photos is absolutely critical to the success of this program.

And each photo should be specific to that one location. While the photo of the cute little girl getting face-painted at the local fair is darling (opposite), it won't set you apart since that can be done at any fair just about anywhere.

The Rendezvous Region is chock full of quaint and beautiful towns that can easily expel misperceptions of the area in just one photograph. For instance, in the photo, bottom left, just adding a couple holding hands, walking away



from the camera would say a lot about St. Thomas, making it look like a safe, beautiful town with tree-lined streets. A welcoming place to live or raise a family. This is the power of professional photography. Without people in this photo, it's just a snapshot of a tree-lined street. We always imagine ourselves in others shoes. So including people is the key to your successful photo library.



A lake all to yourselves



Safe. Serene. Relaxed and uncrowded. Away from all the distractions and noise. Welcome to the beautiful Rendezvous Region, home to small but stunning lakes and waterways. To find your perfect paddling lake visit us North of Grand Forks and online at RendezvousRegion.com

Come together



“Come together - again”



Safe. Serene. Relaxed and uncrowded. Away from all the distractions and noise. Welcome to the beautiful Rendezvous Region, home to stunning parks & campgrounds. For the complete list visit us at RendezvousRegion.com



Please remember that the photographer always owns the content - every photograph. This means you can't simply pull photos from the Internet. Any photo you use should include permission to use it - or, by contract, that you own the rights to it.

And, likewise, you must obtain photo releases when the person - or people in the photograph are identifiable.

Remember that you are NOT selling scenery, you are selling activities - things to do that make you worth a special trip. And to sell it, you need to have both still and moving images of a person, or people, enjoying that activity.

Since the brand is based on attracting groups of people, showing multiple people enjoying a great activity will always reinforce your brand positioning.

In the concepts on the previous pages and to the right, we used stock photography - something you should avoid at all costs. These are simply to showcase the types of images - showing people having a great time - that you need to capture and add to your photo library.

One way to keep costs down is to create a marketing partnership with your photographer or photographers. In this case, all the photos are used to promote the public good - tourism. They would not be used to promote a particular business. And this is a great way to provide the photographer some exposure.

In exchange for favorable licensing costs, provide a photo credit every time you use one of their photographs, whether on a print ad, poster, website or social media post.

Secondly, when used online, make sure the photo credit is a link to a page on your website, showcasing the photographer: who they are, their experience, and then a separate link to their website. Your photographer can tell a great story about the Rendezvous Region as well and can be included in your marketing efforts, creating a great partnership.

Your photographer may or may not be the same person as the one who works with your on-camera personality and so you may end up with a "team" of professionals, which is fine considering the fact that this is a social media and public relations program being established to promote the region.

But it's important that they know each other and may, in fact, work together on location shoots where you can capture both still and video photography.

Likewise, your photographer may be able to capture both still and b-roll video footage used to supplement the on-camera content. Quite often, still photos can be included in video content.

Over the first year of this program you should have perhaps 100 to 200 quality photographs showcasing people and activities in all four seasons.

These will be used on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest (catering to various hobbies), on the primary website (a visual first experience), in print ads, on billboards, on posters promoting the region, etc.

And the style of photography will be showcased in the Brand Style Guide, which your photographers will need to have a copy of and will need to adhere to.

There are three critical elements to the success of the marketing program outlined in this plan:

1. Your on-camera personality
2. Your photography and video content
3. Your written copy, headlines, key marketing messages

Julie Rygg, and the Grand Forks marketing effort includes some outstanding photography, and so she and her team may be able to assist in finding top notch photography and on-camera expertise.



Safe. Serene. Relaxed and uncrowded. Away from all the distractions and noise. Welcome to the beautiful Rendezvous Region, home to stunning parks & campgrounds and dozens of small but awesome lakes for epic and memorable catches of just about every size. For the complete Fishing & Hunting Guide visit us at RendezvousRegion.com

Come together - again



Recommendation #17: Contract for professional marketing services: Graphic design, copywriting, public relations

Implementation timeline: November 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region Tourism

Approximate cost to implement: Per project cost

Funding source options: Marketing funds

Rationale and to-do steps: This is one of those recommendations that could easily be moved to the front of the list, once funding is in place. And this recommendation could include separate services:

- Copywriting (writing copy, headlines, and content)
- Public and media relations (now including social media)
- Graphic design

The firm contracted to develop the Brand Style Guide might be the same firm that offers other services. Some full-service firms have all these disciplines in-house, while others will team with outside expertise.

The priority list, however is:

- Your content creator - your writing expertise. Yes, this is #1.
- Then your on-camera personality, that has to deliver this messaging
- Then your photography: still and video content, editing, audio, music
- Then your public relations expert: niche-market media, travel media, etc.
- Your social media effort (managing what is being said)
- Then, finally, graphic design: this is the discipline which creates to overall “look and feel” of your marketing effort.

All too often the focus is on graphic design, and while it's important, content creation is - by far- THE most important aspect of the marketing effort.

Do not issue an RFP (request for proposal) for these services. Instead issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). You want the very best you can afford. Always look at the level of expertise they offer - including actual completed assignments for current or past clients and as you look at their work, ask yourself “did they close the sale?” If yes, that's terrific.

In the end, you have one chance to get this right. Funding will disappear if you end up in a do-over situation.

Once you've found the best, with place-branding and place-marketing expertise (tourism), then work to negotiate a fee schedule with them.

If they are simply too expensive or you don't care for their methodology, then go to number two on the list.

Nearly every assignment they are given will be priced individually, meaning you would let them know what the assignment entails, and they would provide a cost to complete it.

These assignments may include:

- Media buys (such as outdoor - billboards, radio, print, etc.)
- Brochure design, copy writing, production and printing
- Poster design, copy writing, printing
- Writing and direction for on-camera appearances
- Direction for still and b-roll photography
- Post production editing, polishing, and delivery to various formats
- Obtaining editorial in niche publications (RVing, fishing, hunting, camping)
- Managing social media content (introducing new stories)

In a perfect world, the staff hired to manage and implement the Rendezvous Region marketing would, in essence, be an in-house ad agency with all these areas of expertise, so this recommendation is to get supporting services, where and when needed.

It's often advisable to contract with expertise in the markets you are trying to attract. Since they live there and know the area, they will know what it will take to convince other locals to head your way.

Lastly, this expertise will likely extend beyond just tourism marketing. The goal of this effort is to attract new residents and new investment - increasing the workforce, retaining the existing workforce, and increasing investment into the region. It's extremely important that every portion of this effort be coordinated with a similar look and feel so it all dovetails together.

Recommendation #18: Reach out to RV and Camping YouTube Influencers, blogs, and vlogs, publications

Implementation timeline: November 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region Tourism

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: As noted earlier, overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors: they spend money on lodging, dining, shopping, fuel, groceries and other local services.

The primary draw into the Rendezvous Region will promote camping since it's the type of accommodation the region has in spades. This certainly doesn't mean there will be no focus on filling hotel rooms, since these visitors spend even more than RVers, but the fastest, easiest way to tap into the tourism industry without competing directly with Grand Forks and other urban and suburban areas would be to tap into the RV industry.

RVers, in particular, are extremely active on YouTube, very active on review sites, and belong to a host of camping clubs and organizations. They are social media savvy and subscribe to several industry-specific publications.

Many of the social media outlets are "how to" channels, while others provide travel inspiration: places to go, recommendations for certain RV parks, things to do, road conditions, best time of year to be there, etc.

Implementing this recommendation would mean contacting relevant influencers through their websites, blogs, vlogs, and YouTube channels. While, generally, North Dakota - east of Bismarck - is largely unknown to most RVers (except for those here for Harvest) it can be promoted as a new largely "unexplored" area of the country where there are ample quality RV parks, dozens of lakes for just about every-type of recreation, first-rate historical attractions, and uncrowded, safe, and generally good weather conditions during the late spring months, summer and fall months.

Also, there are several RV-specific publications that are continually looking for new places for their audiences to discover and explore.

It would be good to get hard copies of RV publications, reach out to them and secure editorial calendars and to review current content so you can see how and where the Rendezvous Region can provide useful content for their readers.

Here are a few YouTuber and RV influencers worth reaching out to:

- RV Love (Marc and Julie Bennett)	53,300 subscribers
- Less Junk, More Journey (Nathan & Marissa)	183,000
- RV Lifestyle (Mike & Jennifer Wendland)	155,000
- LivinRVision (Brian & Michelle)	36,000
- Changing Lanes (Chad & Tara)	228,000
- Live Amazing (Liz Amazing)	56,600
- Mortons on the Move (Tom & Cait Morton)	112,000
- Long Long Honeymoon (Sean & Kristi)	253,000
- You, Me & The RV (Phil & Stacy Farley)	152,000
- Never Stop Adventuring (The Skeltons)	2,120*
- Keep Your Daydream (Marc & Tricia Leach)	468,000
- Drivin' & Vibin' (Kyle & Olivia)	127,000
- Getaway Couple (Jason & Rae Miller)	67,900
- Enjoy the Journey (Tom & Cheri Kenemore)	164,000
- Compendium (RV and camping reviews)	64,000
- Creativity RV (Robin)	243,000
- Embracing Detours	29,500*
- Endless RVing (Izzy & MJ)	64,200
- Fate Unbound (David & Roe)	131,000
- Finding Life's Adventures	1,850*
- Grand Adventure	70,800
- Irene Iron Travels	33,800*

* Newer and lower subscription influencers will be easier to convince to come into Northeastern North Dakota - but let them know you'll help them increase their subscribers by promoting their input into the region.

Be there to help them find the best campgrounds, and the best local experiences. You do not need to pay these folks, but you can find ways to help them "hook" new viewers. So, don't just invite them, actually reach out and be there for them.

Recommendation #19: Begin loading the YouTube channel with “Best of” content videos geared to camping and RVing

Implementation timeline: December 2022

Leadership: Rendezvous Region

Approximate cost to implement: None

Funding source options: None required

Rationale and to-do steps: As you establish the Rendezvous Region YouTube channel, create Playlists by type of activity:

- Best campgrounds & details
- Icelandic State Park
- Turtle River State Park
- Pembina Gorge & Frost Fire
- Top fishing spots & what to fish for
- Top paddling spots
- Must visit historic sites & museums
- Here for harvest? What to know and what's new
- Must attend festivals and events
- Top 10 Did You Know facts & teasers
- Great towns and hidden gems

This list will help define the type of photography, videography, and on-camera content you'll want to begin developing. While you may create a number of videos in a short period of time, post one each week.

What people enjoy is consistency without overloading them with content. And make sure your posts are seasonal. You can even create separate channels, one for each season of the year so that people can search your channel by season, or type of activity.

There are 11 playlists here, and if you posted four videos in each playlist, you'd be creating 44 posts - and if you uploaded one each week, you'd be well on your way to creating a YouTube following.

The key to success is to provide useful information, not just fluff or marketing jargon. People want help, not a sales pitch. Always keep that in the back of your mind when creating this type of content.

Let potential visitors know your personal “Top 5” or “Top 7” area parks and campgrounds, great little eateries with great pie or another specialty, and where they can go to fill a propane tank. Useful is the key word. While making it fun.

People want - and need - details, details, details. For fishing: what will I catch? Is it catch and release or catch and keep? Where do I get a fishing license? Is there a fishing season? What time of day is best for certain species of fish? Where can I get bait and tackle? And what's best for catching each type of fish? Are there catch limits? And is that per day, or per fishing license?

Above all, do NOT be afraid to promote private businesses that rent or sell gear, or bait, or offer guide services. Promote specific places to eat and tell them WHY it's one of your favorites. Let us know where to purchase groceries, or treats locally. Promote great little retail shops. After all, this is about creating jobs, helping local businesses survive and grow.

Helpful means providing specifics and avoiding generalities like “then grab some lunch at a local diner.” That's not helpful and will get people to hit the back button or next button within seconds.

Avoid the pitfall of posting video content just for the purpose of posting something each week. As the old saying goes, “If you have nothing to say, then say nothing.”

We spent several weeks in the Rendezvous Region during the sugar beet harvest. While locals complained about the muddy roads and large trucks everywhere, we found it absolutely fascinating. Most Americans have likely never even seen a sugar beet. So creating video content explaining how the Harvest works will be fascinating - especially since the region is one of the top spots in the world for sugar production. In our observations, it was like watching an orchestra taking place and working around the weather. What may be boring to you, can be incredibly fascinating to others.

Recommendation #20: Frost Fire - issue RFQ for the creation of a Master Development, Management & Marketing Action Plan

Implementation timeline: November 2022

Leadership: Red River Regional Council

Approximate cost to implement: \$120,000

Funding source options: Grants | Planning grants

Rationale and to-do steps: The Pembina Gorge, next to Icelandic State Park, should be the region's best tourism asset. While millions of dollars have been secured and invested into creating a better experience for visitors to the Gorge and Frost Fire, its potential has not been fully developed or realized. A two-plus year pandemic certainly didn't help, but now's a great time to start planning for the future.

Quite frankly, most first-time visitors would have no clue what "Frost Fire" is or does. We certainly didn't. We thought it was either a dessert, a pub or eatery, or a distillery. One of the items coming out of this recommendation is to consider a renaming of the park. Even when we drove up to the locked gates there was nothing telling us what the place is or does.

In our opinion, it should become the "Pembina Gorge All Terrain Park" and that can include the state park next door, the golf course and perhaps even neighboring properties that could be developed to create a Ropes Course, zip line or other activities, such as floating or rafting the river in season.

Together this can be an amazing destination - as a single attraction - over separate attractions.

The top priority for Frost Fire is to sit down and determine what it wants to be over the next three years, five years, twenty years:

- A seasonal local ski and bike hill that can break even?
- A destination resort?
- Does it want to grow the theater aspect? Retail? Lodging? Housing for staff?

The very first question to ask is "How do you see Frost Fire ten years from now?" What's your vision for Frost Fire, long term? Once the board makes

a decision on this, then the board should be reconfigured with champions that are all about achieving that vision. Many may drop off and they should be thanked at a Board Dinner for their service in keeping the dream alive, especially over the past two-plus years.

If the decision is to grow it into a money-making destination, then next up would be contracting with expertise to determine what's feasible considering demographic and geographic primary and secondary markets. Who will it draw? And is there enough population and desire to make it feasible?

When it comes to tourism, and places similar to Frost Fire, the day-trip market typically lives within a 45-minute drive (each way) of the destination. Visitors will come for the day, ski, bike or hike, then head home.

On the other hand, if you want to attract visitors from a two-hour drive, or further, then you will be attracting overnight visitors. This brings us to the Four Times Rule: People will travel a distance if you have activities that cater to them, four times longer than it took to get there. So, if someone drives two hours, do you have activities that will last eight hours (four times the two-hour drive)?

They typically spend four to six hours with the primary activity and then eight to ten hours with complementary activities. Those "complementary" activities might include dining, shopping, hiking, theater, visiting nearby historical attractions, sightseeing, or relaxing in nearby accommodations.

Overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors, since they are there for multiple meals and are also paying for overnight lodging.

And the more you have to offer (collectively) the further people will come, the longer they will stay, and the more likely they are to return time and again.

If the decision is to grow Frost Fire to more than a seasonal local ski hill, run by volunteers and a skeleton season staff, then the board will need to bite the bullet and create a Master Development, Management & Marketing Action Plan.

This is not a cheap undertaking, but it could be done in phases - the first of which would be feasibility: a look at any competition, the geographic and

demographic audience it will attract, and what it would take to attract that audience in terms of capital and ongoing investment.

If it's simply not feasible to grow beyond what it is now, then you might be out \$20,000 or so, but at least you'd have an answer.

With resort development, it's a different animal altogether. With resorts it's a process along the lines of "If you build it, they will come." Roger Brooks' experience working in several major ski resort destinations (albeit a long time ago), Frost Fire did not have the potential to become a major destination development resort simply because there's not enough land or terrain to support multiple lifts, accommodations, retail and the other supporting infrastructure.

But it could be a very successful small-scale or "intimate" year round destination, the likes of Holiday Valley Resort (known simply as Holiday Valley) based in Ellicottville, New York. Founded in 1957, it's always been a small day-trip destination until 1995 when the Inn at Holiday Valley opened, making it a multi-day destination because of the lodging facility.

The town of Ellicottville is home to 1,100 people, and Cataaugus County, New York is home to 77,000 residents. Buffalo, NY is an hour away and Erie, Pennsylvania is about a two-hour drive away.

While it has more ski lifts, that possibility could easily be accommodated at Frost Fire by developing a plan that might include the golf course and by working with the State Parks system on being a concessionaire and managing the Pembina Gorge State Park that currently has no dedicated staff to manage it.

It would be beneficial to have several board members travel to Ellicottville and talk to the folks in the town and at Holiday Valley to ask them the hard questions about growth, financing, the effects of COVID, what it takes to make it work, what they would do over if they had the chance, etc.

Detroit Mountain would be worthy of another fact-finding mission, although it's already a very popular tourist destination and has nearly a dozen hotels in Detroit Lakes, less than a ten-minute drive from the mountain, and it has a downtown that is far more tourism-ready than Walhalla currently is. That being said, Walhalla certainly has the potential of becoming a destination

downtown, if it so desires, along the lines of Ellicottville, Detroit Lakes and others throughout the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic states.

Finally, it might be worth contacting master developers with experience in this type of development and invite them out to take a look and get their first impressions.

Start by contacting the folks at East West Partners (ewpartners.com), Resort Development Partners (resortdevpartners.com). Let them know that you have a market of 1.2 million residents within a two-hour drive (please double-check these numbers to make sure they're accurate) and that you'd like them to come visit the area to see if it has any potential, in their eyes.

You might also contact the folks at Vail Resorts, formerly Vail Associates, that has developed and managed a number of resorts.

Over several months you could get a very good idea of what will work, what won't and what it will take to go where the Frost Fire board wants it to go.

If you get a green light to proceed, then submit an RFQ for the creation of the Master Development, Management and Marketing Plan. Do NOT issue an RFP, but decide who you think is the best fit, and go with that firm.

This will likely include urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, trail and ski hill expertise, hotel and retail design and operations, and other disciplines.

Your respondents will likely include disciplines from other companies partnering to provide you with a complete plan. Make sure you include phases, starting with feasibility. If the project is simply NOT feasible, you can pull the plug before the entire cost of the plan is lost.