



**Roosevelt Custer Regional Council**

# **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

**North Dakota Region VIII**

Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley,  
Hettinger, Slope, and Stark Counties

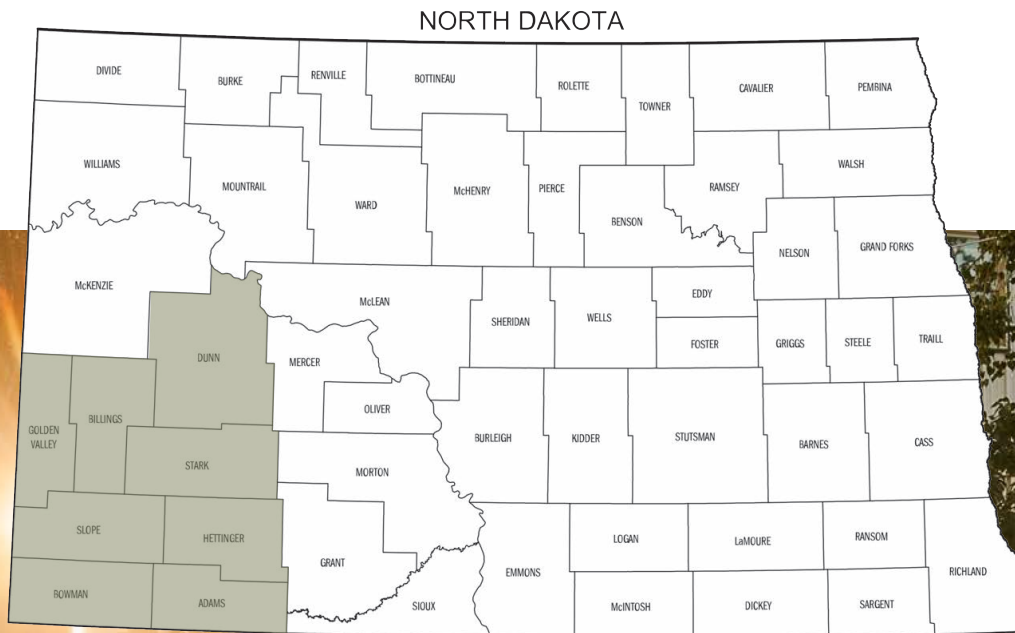
**2024 - 2028**



 **Roosevelt Custer**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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# Introduction

Roosevelt Custer Regional Council (RCRC) is one of eight regional councils and Economic Development Districts (EDD) of North Dakota, recognized through the Economic Development Administration (EDA). RCRC is responsible for building and implementing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the eight-county region in southwestern North Dakota that it serves.

This CEDS document is a community-based plan for ongoing economic regional development and growth in southwestern North Dakota. A CEDS plan is required every five years to gain EDA assistance under its programs, the process also provides input from the counties to address the needs of the region. The CEDS plan engages community leaders and residents to create a strategic platform for regional collaborations.

This plan was compiled by RCRC and follows the parameters of the EDA. The strategy was developed over an eight-month period in 2022 and 2023 with participation from county residents, local governments, regional partners, legislators, state and federal partners, and regional businesses. This plan also includes data from a regional online questionnaire that was distributed throughout each county and its communities.

The following sections provide a framework for the RCRC CEDS:

- **Summary background** details the economic conditions of the region.
- **SWOT analysis** explores regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- **Strategic direction and action plan** outlines a regional strategy to ensure community vitality and resilience; grow and diversify the economy; and foster a regional approach to economic development.
- **Evaluation framework** identifies performance measures used to evaluate the implementation of the CEDS and the impact on the regional economy.

## 2023 RCRC Board of Directors and CEDS Steering Committee

Josh Buchmann	Bowman County	Lyn James	City of Bowman
Devan Laufer	Hettinger County	Greg Nordsvan	City of Killdeer
Anthony Larson	Adams County	Tom Marman	City of Beach
Dean Franchuk	Stark County	Dennis Rice	City of Marmarth
Robert Kleeman	Dunn County	Robert Baer	City of Dickinson
Steven Klym	Billings County	Ryan Jilek	Stark County Development
Rory Farstveit	Golden Valley County	Dean Baar	Billings-Stark SCD
Scott Ouradnik	Slope County	Andrew Sampsel	Dunn County SCD
Troy Mosbrucker	City of Mott	Stuart Nielsen	Slope-Hettinger SCD
Todd Corneil	City of Medora		

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## Summary Background

RCRC is one of eight regional councils in North Dakota. Established in 1973, RCRC serves an eight-county region in the southwest corner of the state. RCRC also operates as the Economic Development District under the EDA. Supported by County Governments, the regional council provides assistance for improving economic conditions and development in the counties of Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope, and Stark.

### CEDS Committee

The CEDS Steering Committee for this planning session was made up of the RCRC Board of Directors as well as regional partners serving southwestern North Dakota. The committee consisted of members representing local governments, economic development organizations, financial institutions, and local businesses.

The completion process of this strategic plan spanned fifteen months and was executed under the supervision of RCRC staff and the CEDS Committee. The initial phase involved gathering comprehensive demographic information for all eight counties within the region. Subsequently, a survey was developed to assess the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and was distributed to a wide range of stakeholders including residents, elected officials, and other relevant individuals in each county. The survey responses were compiled by county and utilized as a foundational basis for county meetings, where valuable insights were further collected. Over a period of three months, visits were conducted to all eight counties which enabled a deeper understanding of the region's dynamics. The gathered information from these visits was utilized to create the regional SWOT.

Following the county visits, RCRC staff dedicated efforts to compiling and synthesizing all the gathered information, culminating in the creation of action plan objectives. Collaborative meetings with the CEDS Committee were convened to review regional goals and collectively establish relevant performance measures. Subsequently, RCRC staff completed a draft of the strategic plan, which was presented to the RCRC Board of Directors. The board members contributed thoughts and recommendations, further refining the plan's content and direction. With the completion of the draft phase, redesigning was undertaken to ensure optimal clarity and coherence. The finalized plan was then strategically disseminated through various channels such as email distributions, newsletters, and other appropriate communication mediums to ensure wide-reaching accessibility and awareness.

# Economic Condition of the Region

## Regional Characteristics

The predominantly rural region acts as the gateway to the west with the city of Dickinson being the main hub. The city of Medora serves as the main tourist destination in the state and is nestled in the badlands, centrally located in this region.

The region has strong roots based in agriculture and ranching long before the state was formed in 1889. With rolling prairies and buttes, this region has always been a thoroughfare for expansion of the west.

## Geography

RCRC's region encompasses a stunning landscape, spanning across eight counties that stretch over the remarkable Badlands and Missouri Slope regions of North Dakota. Within its vast expanse are natural wonders such as Sully Creek State Park, Little Missouri State Park, portions of the Little Missouri National Grasslands, and the south unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Additionally, this region proudly hosts White Butte, the highest point in North Dakota. In total, the region spans an impressive 10,002 square miles.

## Economic Foundations

The Southwest Region of North Dakota is primarily characterized by fertile farming and grazing lands, with agricultural and ranching serving as the backbone of the regional economy. However, the past two decades have witnessed a remarkable boom in oil and energy production, thanks to the strategic location within the southern portion of the Bakken Formation and its abundance of coal and other resources. Moreover, the region is flourishing as a tourist destination, attracting over 500,000 annual visitors to Medora, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and surrounding areas. This number is only projected to rise in the coming years with the completion of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library.

## Resiliency throughout the Region

The EDA defines resiliency as the ability to recover quickly from shock, the ability to withstand shock, and the ability to avoid shock all together. Establishing economic resilience in the regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how risks will impact the economy, and to build responsive capacity. The outcome will successfully counter the vulnerabilities of the region.

Climate resiliency in southwestern North Dakota is an increasing focus for the region. As the area experiences the impacts of climate, including more frequent extreme weather events and shifts in precipitation patterns, building resilience becomes crucial. Efforts to mitigate the risks associated with these changes and adapt to the new normal is vital. Local communities, organizations, and governmental agencies are collaborating to develop strategies that enhance the region's ability to withstand and recover from climate-related challenges. By prioritizing climate resiliency, southwestern North Dakota aims to protect its environment, economy, and communities from the impacts of a changing climate and ensure a sustainable and prosperous future.



## Broadband Expansion

North Dakota covers over 70,000 square miles but has a relatively small population, ranking as the fourth smallest in the country with fewer than 800,000 residents. Despite its low population, North Dakota has earned recognition for its impressive broadband infrastructure. It ranks in the top ten for internet and holds the fourth position for overall infrastructure. The state takes pride in leading the nation for quality of life. Over 75% of its citizens have access to Gigabit services, ensuring fast and reliable internet speeds. North Dakota boasts more than 325 communities, and its STAGEnet project guarantees that all public sector anchor tenant locations, including county courthouses, school districts, higher education campuses, and state government buildings, have a minimum of 1G service with the potential to acquire 100G if needed. Furthermore, North Dakota became the first state to achieve 1Gb/s service delivered to every K-12 District. The state has fewer than 10,000 serviceable addresses that cannot acquire 1G service, indicating widespread access. Impressively, 95.4% of North Dakotans have access to 100Mb or greater internet speeds, further highlighting the state's commitment to comprehensive broadband coverage.

During visits to each county within RCRC's region, it was evident that broadband infrastructure is highly satisfactory. Feedback from each county confirmed that broadband access is generally wide-spread and dependable. However, one area was identified in Billings County that currently faces limitations in broadband connectivity. Nevertheless, plans are already underway to address this issue by implementing the necessary infrastructure to serve the area. This vital project is anticipated to reach completion within the next couple of years. RCRC remains committed to actively supporting the expansion of broadband services throughout the region and the entire state.

## Equity

Equity is a fundamental principle embedded within this CEDS, guiding efforts and commitment to ensuring that programs are accessible to all who qualify. Inclusivity is acknowledging that every member of the community, regardless of background or circumstances, should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from economic development initiatives. The active engagement and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders helps create an inclusive and equitable approach to development that addresses the unique needs and aspirations of the region's communities. Thus, an example is set for other regions by showcasing the power of equitable practices in fostering sustainable growth. By providing equitable opportunities for individual, organizational, community, and regional growth, a cohesive region is built where everyone can contribute and prosper.



# Regional Demographics

## Age Spread

As of 2020, 15% of the population is 65+ with this number projected to grow in the coming years. Within the region, 26% fall within the young adult category, ranging from ages 25-44. The age trends of the region mirror that of the rest of the United States.

## Population Growth

From 2010 to 2020, the total population grew 7% in the region. The highest growth occurring in Stark County. The counties of Billings, Dunn, Hettinger, and Golden Valley experienced small growth over this period of time. The counties of Adams, Bowman, and Slope have experienced population loss due to outmigration. Overall, most counties have been suffering population loss steadily since the 1970's.

## Education Attainment

Over a third of the population, at 35%, has earned an associate degree or higher. This is below the national average of 48.4%. There is a large section of people that have attended some college but did not receive a degree at 23%.

## Race and Ethnicity

The majority, at 80.8%, of people in this region identify as white, most coming from Scandinavian and German descent. Whereas 7.4% identify as two of more races and 5.3% identify as Hispanic/Latino/a/x. This is similar to the state of North Dakota overall.

## Poverty rate

The regional poverty rate sits at 10.56%. This is very similar to the entire state which is at 11.1%. Hettinger County has the highest levels at 14.4% and Bowman County has the lowest levels at 9%.

## Income

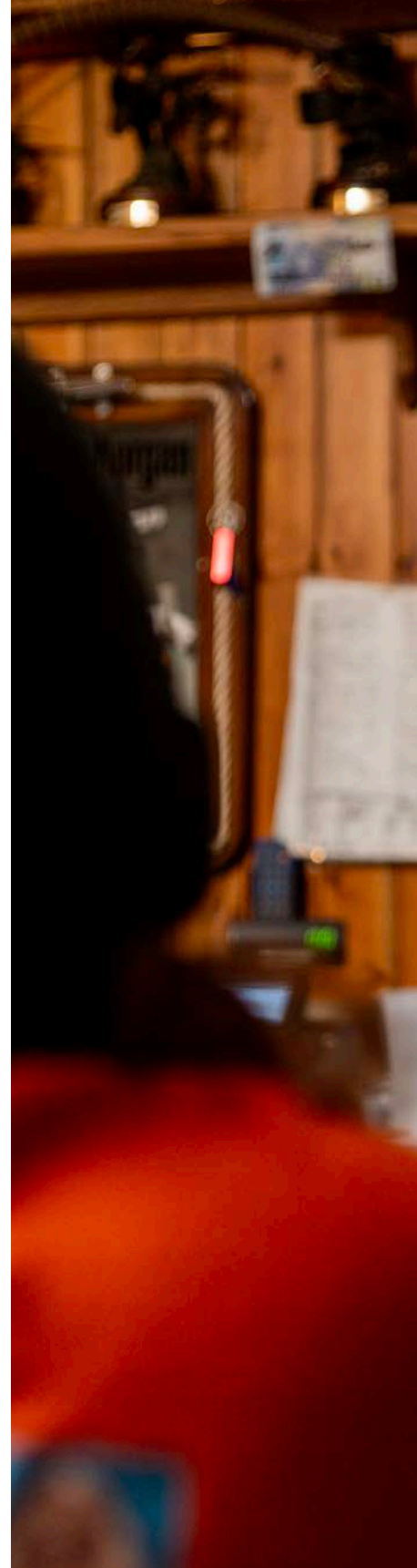
The region's per capita personal income was \$37,445 which is almost identical to the rest of the state \$37,343. Both the region and the state are very similar to the national average at \$37,638. The region's average income per household is \$71,164 which is higher than the rest of the state at \$68,131 and just slightly higher than the national average of \$69,021. Dunn County has the highest per capita income at \$47,472 and household income at \$84,459.

## Veterans

The region has a lower percentage of veterans, at 5.4%, than the national average at 7% and North Dakota's average of 8%.

## Mean Travel Time to Work

The average time residents of this region spend traveling to work is 19.5 minutes. Residents of Golden Valley County have the longest commute times, with an average person driving 24.6 minutes to work, compared to residents of Bowman County who have the shortest commutes averaging 15.3 minutes.







HETTINGER COUNTY

**46,868**

2020 Population

**21,116**

2020 Labor Force

**1.95%**

Regional Unemployment Rate

# SWOT Analysis



This section identifies the critical internal and external factors by comparing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of the region. This analysis was developed through a community survey distributed to each county. Following the survey, county focus groups were held to further gather information from residents. The information gathered from these events are directly reflected in the final SWOT. It is important to note that not all points apply universally to all counties within the region, as each county possesses unique characteristics and circumstances that contribute to their individual responses. Therefore, while this analysis provides a general overview, it is essential to consider that not all points are accurate for every county in the region.

## Strengths

### Industry

- Agricultural and ranching
- Mining and natural resources
- Access to capital

### Infrastructure

- Access to high-speed broadband
- Quality of roads
- Theodore Roosevelt Expressway

### Tourism

- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Theodore Roosevelt National Park
- White Butte
- Medora
- Dinosaur Digs
- Enchanted Highway

### Quality of Life

- Local regional schools
- Strong sense of community
- Access to post-secondary education
- Safe communities
- Low population density
- Family oriented communities
- Short commutes

## Opportunities

### Value added agriculture

- Movement towards localizing food

### Value added energy

- Carbon sequestering
- CO<sub>2</sub> pipeline

### Tourism and destination development

- Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library
- Increased visitation

### Infrastructure

- Conversion of energy infrastructure

### Regional Collaboration

- Planning and capacity building
- Regional projects and programs

### Workforce Development

- Southwest Area CTE Academy
- Increased number of remote workers
- New industry opportunities
- Immigration

### Healthcare

- Telehealth expansion

## Weaknesses

### Workforce

- Limited hiring pool
- Insufficient childcare
- Lack of skilled workforce
- Aging population
- Limited job advancement opportunities

### Main street/downtown

- Vacant/aging buildings
- Business retention
- Aesthetics

### Housing

- Available land options

### Healthcare facilities

- Limited mental health options
- Distance to healthcare facilities
- Lack of specialists

### Transportation

- Distance to large airports
- Lack of public transportation

## Threats

### Housing

- Construction costs

### Workforce

- Outmigration
- Departure from the workforce to care for dependents or aging population

### Healthcare

- High healthcare costs
- Workforce shortage
- Aging population

### Industry

- Loss of any major employer
- Over-reliance on agriculture and energy industries
- Supply chain shortage and delays
- Lack of diversification

### Infrastructure

- Remoteness/distance from major interstates
- Lack of or poor condition of developable land

### Climate

- Drought
- Fires
- Severe storms

# Strategic Direction

## Vision statement

Inspire regional collaboration for a prosperous Southwest ND.

## Mission Statement

To support southwest North Dakota through rural innovation, regional collaboration, leadership, tourism, economic and community development.

## Regional Goals



Enhance Capacity and Support for Rural Communities



Market the Region as a Great Place to Live, Work, and Play



Support Tourism Industry Growth within the Region



Support Economic Growth and Diversification



Enhance Housing Development Capacity



Strengthen Organizational Capacity

## Strategy 1:

## Enhance Capacity and Support for Rural Communities

The Southwest Region wishes to strengthen rural communities and aid local communities in their growth. The regional council aims to build community capacity, support the growth of rural communities, and enhance the overall economic development within the region. This will be achieved through advocacy for state funding and the implementation of various services and initiatives.

### 1.1 Advocate for State Funding

**Goal: Secure financial resources from state-level sources to fund various regional capacity-building activities.**

Advocating for state funding is a critical first step. It involves collaborating with state legislators and agencies to obtain the necessary financial support required to implement the various initiatives and services aimed at strengthening the regional council and supporting rural communities.

**Collaborators:** State Legislators and Government Agencies, Counties and Local Governments, Regional Organizations and Community Leaders

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2027

### Evaluation Metric

Measure the amount of funding secured and the successful passage of legislation supporting these efforts.

### 1.2 Offer Paid Technical Assistance for Grant Writing

**Goal: Provide grant writing assistance to public organizations in the region to help them funding opportunities.**

Grant writing is a fundamental skill for accessing external funding. By offering expert assistance to public organizations, the goal is to increase chances of successfully obtaining grants which can further development and sustainability.

**Collaborators:** Counties and Local Governments, Regional Organizations and Community Leaders

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Track the number of organizations assisted, the success rate of grant applications, and the amount of grant funding secured.

### 1.3 Offer JDA Contract Services

**Goal: Facilitate the management of Job Development Authority (JDA) roles within multiple counties throughout the region, with the aim of fostering economic development and strengthening partnerships.**

JDA's are a strategic way to collaborate with counties. The goal is to support JDA's to increase economic growth, job creation, and infrastructure development in a cooperative and mutually beneficial manner.

**Collaborators:** Counties and Local Governments, Regional Organizations and Community Leaders, Private Sector Businesses

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Record the number of JDA's established, the number of JDA projects, and their economic impact on the region.

### 1.4 Provide Customizable a La Carte Services

**Goal: Provide a range of customizable services, including marketing, program management, and project management, to address the specific needs of regional organizations.**

Recognizing that different organizations have unique requirements, offering a menu of services allows for a more tailored approach. These services aim to address the specific challenges and goals of organizations within the region.

**Collaborators:** Counties and Local Governments

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Measure the usage of these services, customer satisfaction, and the successful execution of projects.

### 1.5 Offer Strategic Planning Services

**Goal: Offer strategic planning services to regional organizations and communities to guide long-term development.**

Strategic planning is essential for the sustainable growth of organizations and communities. By offering support in this area, the goal is to help chart a clear path forward and align efforts and resources with regional development objectives.

**Collaborators:** Counties and Local Governments, Regional Organizations and Community Leaders

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Assess the number of organizations and communities engaged in strategic planning, the successful implementation of strategic plans, and the long-term impact on the region.

## 1.6 Support Leadership Growth

**Goal: Promote and foster the growth and advancement of community leaders, encouraging active engagement in civic and nonprofit organizations.**

Cultivating champions within the region is crucial for sustained growth and prosperity. Investing in the development of these leaders will play a pivotal role in shaping the region's future, ensuring the ongoing fulfillment of regional development goals.

**Collaborators:** Community Members, Non-Profit Organizations, Civic Groups, Government Agencies

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Number of new board members and number of vacancies filled on boards and organizations throughout the region.



## Market the Region as a Great Place to Live, Work, and Play

The Southwest Region wishes to enhance its image and gain recognition for its unique offerings not only in the state but throughout the nation. A comprehensive marketing campaign has been devised to establish the region as a great place to live, work, and play. To accomplish this, several specific objectives have been identified to guide the strategy. Achieving these goals will contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of the region.

### 2.1 Enhance Regional Brand Recognition

**Goal: Elevate the recognition of the region's brand and identity, leading to positive perceptions as a destination for both career and lifestyle opportunities.**

Building a strong regional brand is essential to attracting people. A well-defined and positive brand identity will make the region more memorable and appealing to prospective residents and job seekers.

**Collaborators:** Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Regional Employers, Marketing Agencies and Creative Professionals, Local Educational Institutions

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Measure brand recognition and perception through surveys and online engagement.



## 2.2 Create a User-Friendly Website

**Goal: Collaborate with a web development company to design and launch a website that highlights the region's strengths, job opportunities, amenities, and quality of life attributes.**

Enhancing the region's digital presence is key in attracting individuals seeking new opportunities. This online platform will serve as a comprehensive resource for potential residents and job seekers, fostering a positive perception of the region.

**Collaborators:** Marketing Agencies and Creative Professionals, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Regional Employers

**Timeline:** 2024

### Evaluation Metric

Track website traffic, user engagement, and the number of job applications received due to the website.

## 2.3 Develop High-Quality Videos and Photography

**Goal: Collaborate with videographer/photographer to produce high-quality videos and photos showcasing the region's natural beauty, communities, and employment prospects.**

Visual storytelling will create compelling videos and photos to showcase the region's natural beauty, vibrant communities, and promising employment prospects. These multimedia assets will be instrumental in marketing efforts, capturing the essence of the region and resonating with potential residents and job seekers.

**Collaborators:** Marketing Agencies and Creative Professionals, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations

**Timeline:** 2024

### Evaluation Metric

Track video views, social shares, and user comments.

## 2.4 Produce Engaging Promotional Materials

**Goal: Partner with digital marketing experts to create captivating content, such as blog posts, infographics, and social media campaigns, to promote the region's lifestyle and career opportunities.**

Crafting captivating content is pivotal in promoting the Southwest Region's unique lifestyle and career opportunities. This dynamic content will be continuously created and shared to effectively communicate the region's appeal and engage with the target audience.

**Collaborators:** Marketing Agencies and Creative Professionals, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Monitor the reach, engagement, and conversion rates of digital media content.

## 2.5 Leverage Social Media Platforms

**Goal: Create an active presence on platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram to connect with potential employees.**

Establishing an active presence on key social media platforms is crucial in connecting with potential employees. This ongoing engagement strategy will enhance the region's visibility and appeal to a broader audience.

**Collaborators:** Marketing Agencies and Creative Professionals, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Measure follower growth, posts reach, and engagement levels on social media.

## 2.6 Partner with Local Employers

**Goal: Collaborate with regional businesses to highlight job openings and success stories, showcasing the employment opportunities in the region.**

Supporting local employers in finding and retaining qualified talent is key to workforce development. By acting as a bridge between employers and job seekers, the region can fill job openings with qualified individuals and support the growth of local businesses.

**Collaborators:** Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations, Regional Employers, Local Educational Institutions

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Track the number of jobs posted by local employers and the number of hires resulting from the campaign.





BILLINGS COUNTY

## 2.7 Promote Quality of Life Attributes

**Goal: Highlight the region’s quality of life aspects, such as education, healthcare, recreational activities, and community events.**

Quality of life is a crucial factor in attracting and retaining residents and workers. By focusing on aspects like education, healthcare, recreational activities, and community involvement, the goal is to ensure that the region is a desirable place to live.

**Collaborators:** Marketing Agencies and Creative Professionals, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations, Local Residents

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Survey residents and newcomers to assess their satisfaction with the quality of life.

## 2.8 Utilize Targeted Advertising

**Goal: Use targeted online advertising to reach potential employees in neighboring regions and demographics that match the desired workforce.**

Targeted online advertising will be important in reaching the desired potential employees in neighboring regions and desired workforce that align with the region’s needs.

**Collaborators:** Marketing Agencies, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2025

### Evaluation Metric

Measure the click-through rates, conversion rates, and return on investment for online advertising campaigns.

Strategy 3:

## Support Tourism Industry Growth within the Region

The Southwest Region wishes to support and stimulate the growth of the tourism industry in Southwest North Dakota, by capitalizing on the upcoming Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Medora, dinosaur dig sites, Enchanted Highway, historical sites, and other attractions. The aim is to transform the region into a prominent tourist destination while encouraging economic development and employment opportunities across all counties.

### 3.1 Strengthen Regional Tourism Network

**Goal: Foster a collaborative and well-connected regional network among tourism businesses and organizations.**

By building a strong network, local tourism businesses and organizations can share resources, coordinate marketing efforts, and collaborate on initiatives that benefit the entire region. This enhances the region’s overall appeal as a tourist destination.

**Collaborators:** Local Tourism Businesses, State Tourism Department, Local Chambers of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Medora Foundation, Local Government Agencies, ND Small Business Development Centers

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Measure the number of new partnerships formed, increased collaboration, and shared marketing efforts among tourism businesses.

### 3.2 Promote Regional Attractions

**Goal: Develop, distribute, and promote marketing assets that showcase the region’s unique attractions.**

Effective marketing is vital in drawing attention to the region’s attractions. Highlighting these attractions will not only bring in more visitors but boost local economies.

**Collaborators:** Local Tourism Businesses, State Tourism Department, Local Chambers of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Medora Foundation, Local Government Agencies, Economic Development Organizations

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Track the increase in the number of visitors to these attractions and the engagement with marketing materials.

### 3.3 Support Tourism Business Development

**Goal: Provide support and resources to aspiring entrepreneurs and small businesses seeking to enter the tourism industry.**

Encouraging and assisting new businesses in the tourism sector creates jobs and diversifies the local economy. It also brings fresh ideas and services to cater to the needs of visitors.

Collaborators: Local Tourism Businesses, State Tourism Department, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Medora Foundation, Local Government Agencies, ND Small Business Development Center

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Monitor the number of new tourism-related businesses established, job creation, and revenue growth.

### 3.4 Enhance the Visitor Experience

**Goal: Encourage investment in infrastructure, amenities, and signage to improve the overall experience of visitors throughout the region.**

An enhanced visitor experience not only leads to higher satisfaction but also encourages visitors to stay longer and explore more of what the region has to offer, ultimately benefiting local businesses and adding to the local economy.

Collaborators: Local Tourism Businesses, State Tourism Department, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Medora Foundation, Local Government Agencies

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Measure the increase in visitor satisfaction, return visits, and the length of stay in the region.

### 3.5 Coordinate Educational Programs

**Goal: Offer educational and training programs for tourism industry professionals to improve skills and knowledge.**

Educated and well-trained professionals provide higher-quality services, resulting in better experiences for tourists and increased repeat visits. This also elevates the overall reputation of the region.

Collaborators: Local Tourism Businesses, State Tourism Department, Local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Organizations, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Educational Institutions

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Track participation rates in educational programs and the subsequent improvement in the quality of services offered by tourism businesses.

## Strategy 4:

# Support Economic Growth and Diversification

The Southwest Region wishes to actively facilitate economic growth and diversification by understanding the needs of local businesses, offering financial support, connecting businesses with resources, addressing childcare needs, exploring possibilities for attracting immigrants for workforce, and addressing food access challenges. These initiatives aim to create a more vibrant and diverse economy in Southwest North Dakota.

### 4.1 Conduct a Business Retention & Expansion Survey

**Goal: Aim to gain insights into specific concerns and needs of local businesses, enabling the development of targeted strategies to support their growth and expansion.**

As a critical starting point, the BR&E survey will expand the knowledge of the current business landscape and guide the development of strategies for future years.

**Collaborators:** Local Businesses, Financial Institutions, North Dakota Small Business Development Centers, Agriculture and Food Producers, Community Organizations

**Timeline:** 2024

### Evaluation Metric

Assess the number of businesses surveyed, identify key concerns, and measure the effectiveness of responses to address those concerns.

### 4.2 Provide Regional Assistance Through Lending Programs

**Goal: Offer financial support through loan programs to local businesses, fostering expansion and innovation.**

Financial assistance is crucial for businesses and entrepreneurs seeking to grow and diversify. Loan programs provide access to capital that can be used for expansion, investment in new technologies, and job creation.

**Collaborators:** Local Businesses, Financial Institutions, North Dakota Small Business Development Centers

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Track the number of loans granted, the amount of capital disbursed, and the number of jobs created or retained through these loans.

### 4.3 Connect Businesses with Resources

**Goal: Facilitate businesses' access to essential support services and other resources.**

By connecting businesses with support services, the goal is to increase the chance of success, enhance capacity, knowledge, and competitiveness.

Collaborators: Local Businesses, Financial Institutions, North Dakota Small Business Development Centers, Local Organizations

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Measure the number of businesses connected with support services, their level of engagement, and the success of implemented strategies.

### 4.4 Organize Local Food Access

**Goal: Establish a regional food business center to eliminate food deserts and promote local food production.**

The development of a food business center addresses both economic and food access issues. It supports local food producers, increases food security, and stimulates the regional economy by providing opportunities for food-related businesses to flourish.

Collaborators: Local Businesses, Financial Institutions, North Dakota Small Business Development Centers, Agriculture and Food Producers, Community Organizations

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Assess the number of food businesses supported, the increase in local food production, and number of food businesses connected with resources.

### 4.5 Develop New American-Friendly Policies

**Goal: Collaborate with local and state policymakers to create a welcoming environment for new Americans, ensuring that policies support integration into the workforce and community.**

Immigration may be key to solving the workforce challenge. It is important to make sure our communities are prepared to welcome new residents and potential job seekers.

Collaborators: Local Governments, State Agencies, Immigration Advocacy Groups

Timeline: 2026 - 2028

#### Evaluation Metric

Monitor the successful implementation of policies and gather feedback from both new Americans and the community.



## 4.6 Develop Workforce Integration Programs

**Goal: Establish programs to assist new Americans in navigating employment opportunities, language acquisition, and cultural integration, facilitating seamless entry into the regional workforce.**

Integration is the key to success. Making sure communities are prepared with programs to navigate integration successfully will be critical.

Collaborators: Local Businesses, Educational Institutions, Community Organizations

Timeline: 2026 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Track program participation, assess employment outcomes, and gather feedback to measure the effectiveness of workforce integration programs.

## 4.7 Mobilize Community Childcare Resources

**Goal: Work with communities to identify and mobilize resources for expanding childcare facilities, including exploring grants, subsidies, and partnerships with local businesses.**

Childcare plays a critical role in workforce participation. Challenges lie in having adequate facilities and also in maintaining a sustainable business model that allows businesses to secure workforce.

Collaborators: Local Governments, Community Organizations, Educational Institutions, Businesses

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Assess the increase in childcare facilities, evaluate the number of additional spots available, measure the utilization of grants and subsidies, and monitor the sustainability of childcare businesses.

## 4.8 Develop Family Education on Childcare Funding Options

**Goal: Implement educational programs to inform families about funding options available for childcare, making it more affordable and accessible.**

Childcare programs are greatly underused in southwest North Dakota compared to the rest of the state. Educating families on available programs may offer an opportunity to assist in making childcare more affordable.

Collaborators: Local Organizations, Childcare Providers, Educational Institutions

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Monitor family participation in educational programs, assess awareness levels of funding options, and measure the impact on childcare utilization in the region.





Strategy 5:

## Enhance Housing Development Capacity

The Southwest Region wishes to foster economic growth by addressing the challenges related to housing, a key factor in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. Strategies will be created and implemented to enhance the region’s capacity for housing development.

### 5.1 Conduct a Housing Needs Assessment

**Goal: Collaborate with local communities to conduct a comprehensive assessment of housing needs, considering factors such as affordability, accessibility, and housing preferences.**

It will be important to understand the needs of the region and possible strategies that may work for each. A housing needs assessment will provide an understanding that will enable programs to move forward successfully.

**Collaborators: Local Governments, Real Estate Developers, Housing Advocacy Groups, Community Development Organizations**

**Timeline: 2024 - 2025**

### Evaluation Metric

Assess the number of communities involved in the assessment, identify key housing needs and preferences, and measure the effectiveness of the assessment in informing future housing development strategies.

## 5.2 Implement Incentive Programs

**Goal: Work with local and state authorities to develop and implement incentive programs that encourage private investment in housing development.**

Vision West has developed a comprehensive handbook that includes potential programs that could be implemented. These resources along with others will be utilized to develop incentives and programs that can be used to successfully add to the housing supply in Southwest North Dakota.

**Collaborators:** Local Governments, State Agencies, Real Estate Developers, Financial Institutions

**Timeline:** 2025 - 2026

### Evaluation Metric

Track the number of implemented incentive programs, monitor the level of private investment in housing development, assess the effectiveness of incentives in accelerating housing projects, and measure the number of houses built.

## 5.3 Facilitate Public-Private Partnerships

**Goal: Foster collaboration between public and private sectors to leverage resources and expertise for housing projects. This includes exploring partnerships with non-profit organizations and private developers.**

Facilitating and collaborating with various partners is essential for addressing this challenge successfully. No single organization can solve all aspects, necessitating the cultivation of partnerships for a successful outcome.

**Collaborators:** Local Governments, Non-Profit Organizations, State Agencies, Real Estate Developers, Financial Institutions

**Timeline:** 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Measure the number of established public-private partnerships, assess the resources and expertise leveraged through partnerships, evaluate the success of housing projects delivered through these collaborative efforts, and track the number of houses built.





Strategy 6:  
**Strengthen  
Organizational Capacity**

The Southwest Region wishes to strengthen the organizational capacity of the Regional Council by developing internal programs, enhancing marketing and communication efforts, expanding the annual meeting, and establishing the organization as a key resource. These strategies aim to make the council a more effective and visible means for economic development in Southwest North Dakota.

**6.1 Create Internal Programs to Address Needs**

**Goal: Develop and expand in-house programs and initiatives to address the needs of the region.**

Creating and expanding internal programs allows the Regional Council to directly address economic development issues in the region. These programs can include training, support, and resources for local businesses and organizations, helping them thrive and contribute to the regional economy.

**Collaborators: Local Businesses and Organizations, Community Members, Government Agencies, Board Members**

**Timeline: 2024 - 2028**

**Evaluation Metric**

Track the number and variety of programs developed, participant engagement, and the impact of these programs on the community.

## 6.2 Enhance Communication and Marketing Strategies

**Goal: Improve the organization's marketing and communication efforts through social media, newsletters, and an annual report.**

Effective marketing and communication are essential for building the organization's visibility and credibility. Enhancing these efforts ensures that the council's message reaches a wider audience, engages stakeholders, and highlights its achievements and initiatives.

Collaborators: Local Businesses and Organizations, Community Members, Government Agencies, Board Members

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Monitor engagement and reach on social media platforms, newsletter subscription and open rates, and feedback on the annual report's effectiveness.

## 6.3 Increase Effectiveness of the Annual Meeting

**Goal: Expand and strengthen the annual meeting to provide a platform for networking, collaboration, and information sharing.**

The annual meeting serves as a vital platform for bringing together local businesses, organizations, and community members. Expanding and improving this event promotes collaboration and information sharing, ultimately fostering regional development and collaboration.

Collaborators: Local Businesses and Organizations, Community Members, Government Agencies, Board Members

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

Measure the increase in attendance of the annual meeting, the diversity of participants, and the quality of content presented.

## 6.4 Become a Regional Resource Hub

**Goal: Position the organization as the primary resource hub for economic development in the region, disseminating information, tools, and opportunities effectively.**

Becoming the go-to resource hub means providing businesses and organizations with valuable information, tools, and opportunities for growth. This strengthens the council's role as a catalyst for economic development in the region.

Collaborators: Local Businesses and Organizations, Community Members, Government Agencies, Board Members

Timeline: 2024 - 2028

### Evaluation Metric

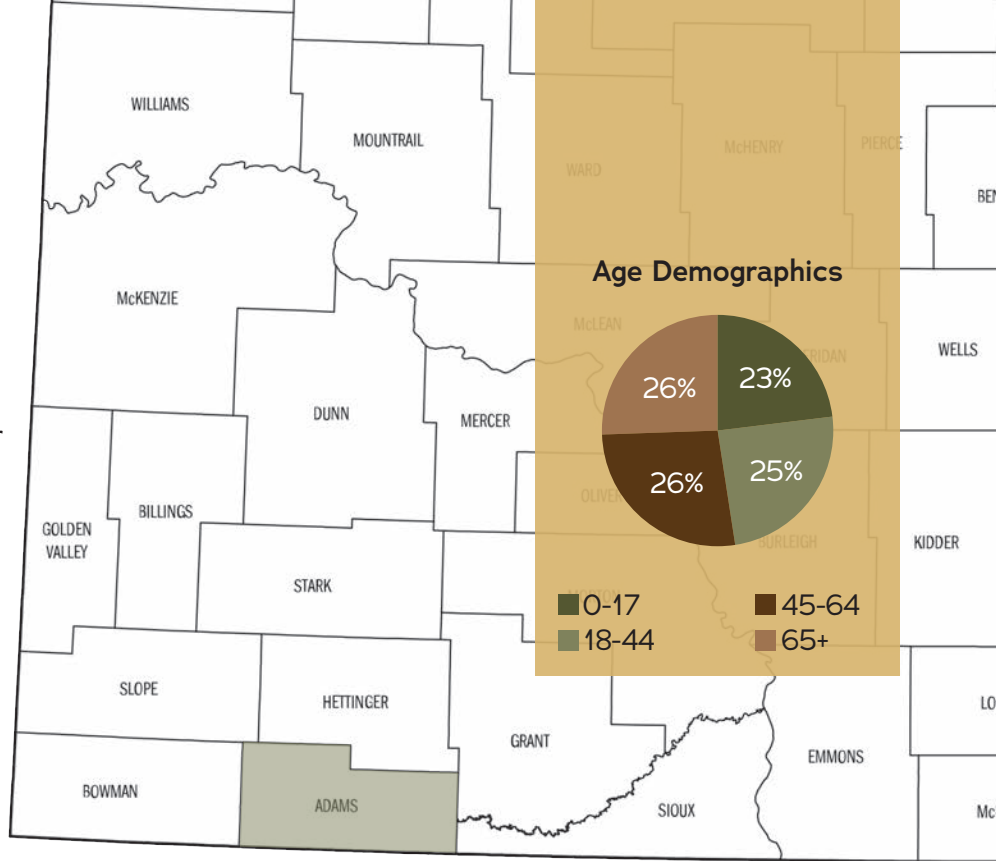
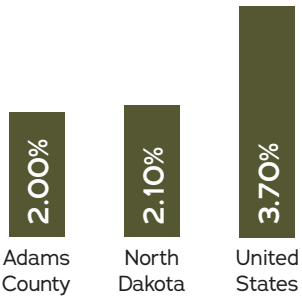
Track the number of resources communicated, the engagement of the target audience, and the utilization of these resources.

# County Data

## Adams County

2020 population: 2,200  
 Population change from 2010: -6%  
 Land Area: 988 mi<sup>2</sup>  
 Unemployment Rate: 2%  
 Poverty rate: 12%  
 Median income: \$32,330/year  
 Median household income: \$52,896/year

### Unemployment Rates

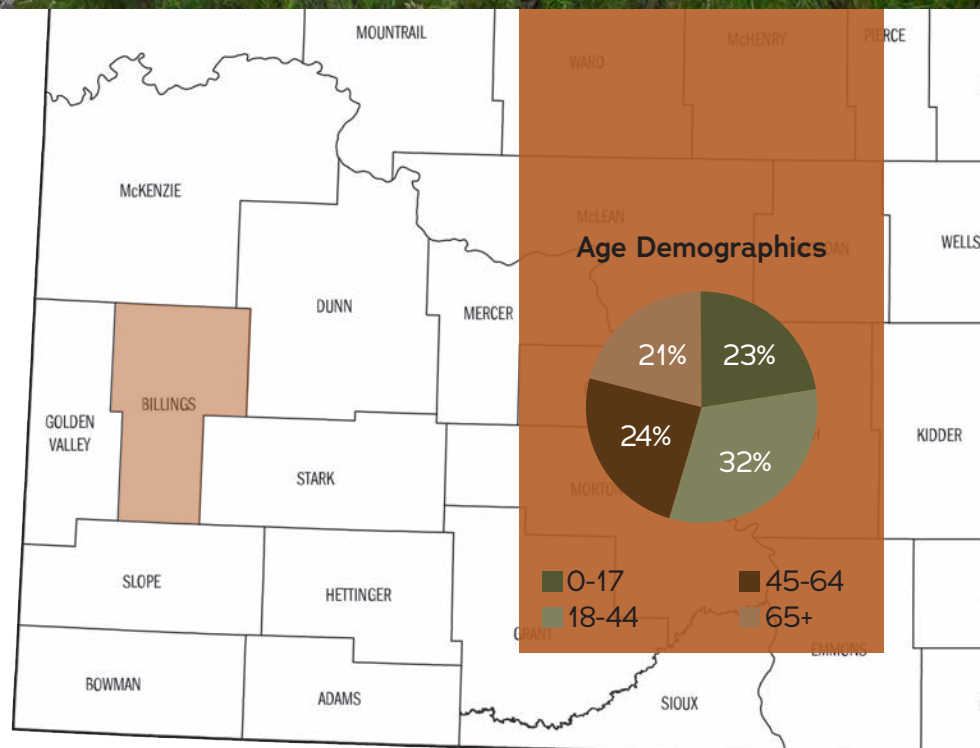




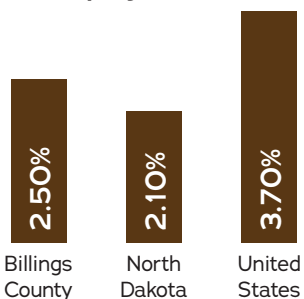
**BILLINGS COUNTY**

**Billings County**

2020 population: 945  
 Population change from 2010: 21%  
 Land Area: 1,152 mi<sup>2</sup>  
 Unemployment Rate: 2.5%  
 Poverty rate: 10.8%  
 Median income: \$38,026/year  
 Median household income: \$71,375/year



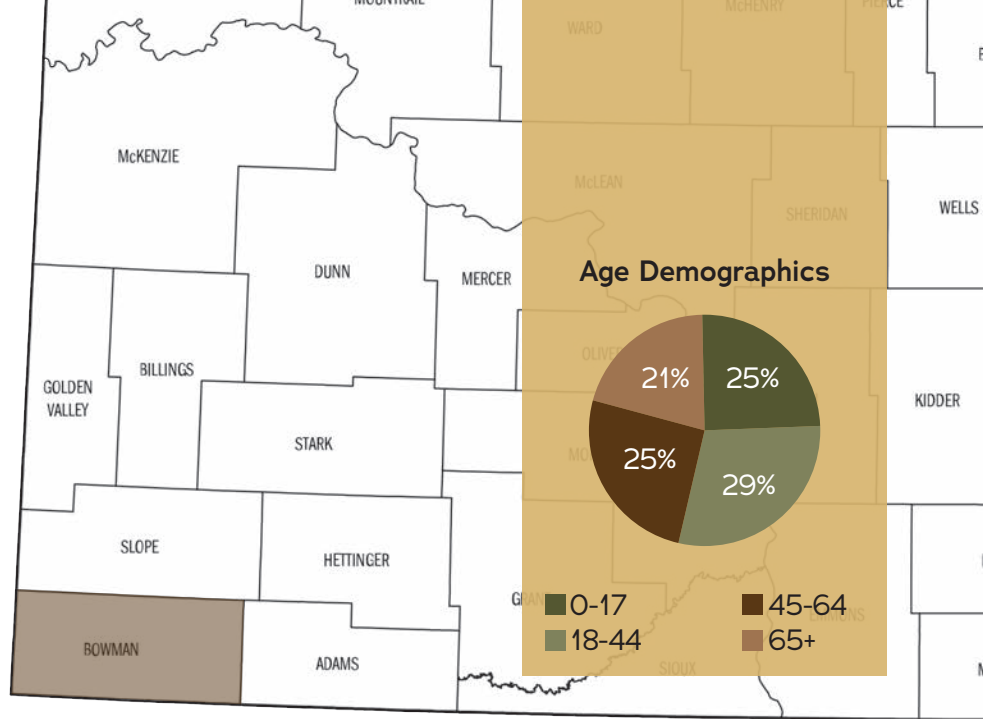
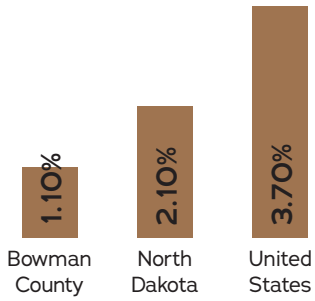
**Unemployment Rates**



## Bowman County

2020 population: 2,993  
 Population change from 2010: -5%  
 Land Area: 1,162 mi<sup>2</sup>  
 Unemployment Rate: 1.1%  
 Poverty rate: 9%  
 Median income: \$37,482/year  
 Median household income: \$76,447/year

### Unemployment Rates



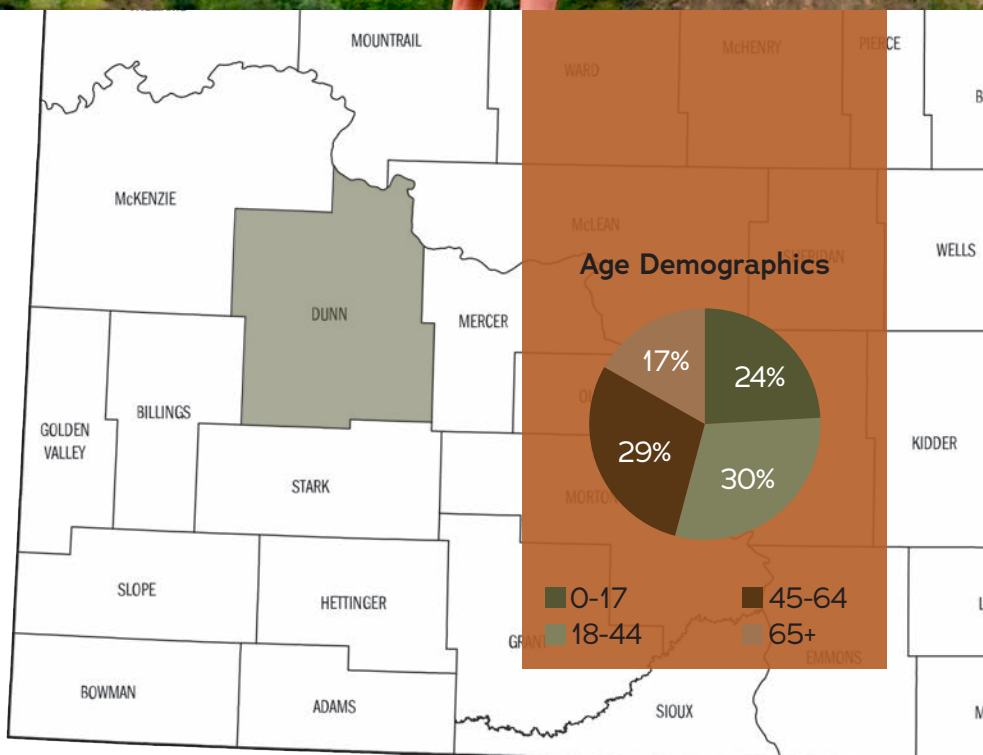
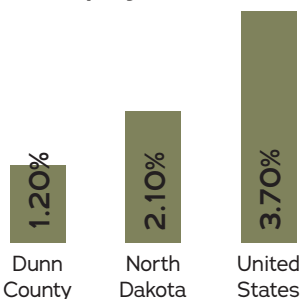


DUNN COUNTY

## Dunn County

2020 population: 4,095  
 Population change from 2010: 16%  
 Land Area: 2,010 mi<sup>2</sup>  
 Unemployment Rate: 1.2%  
 Poverty rate: 11%  
 Median income: \$47,472/year  
 Median household income: \$84,459/year

### Unemployment Rates

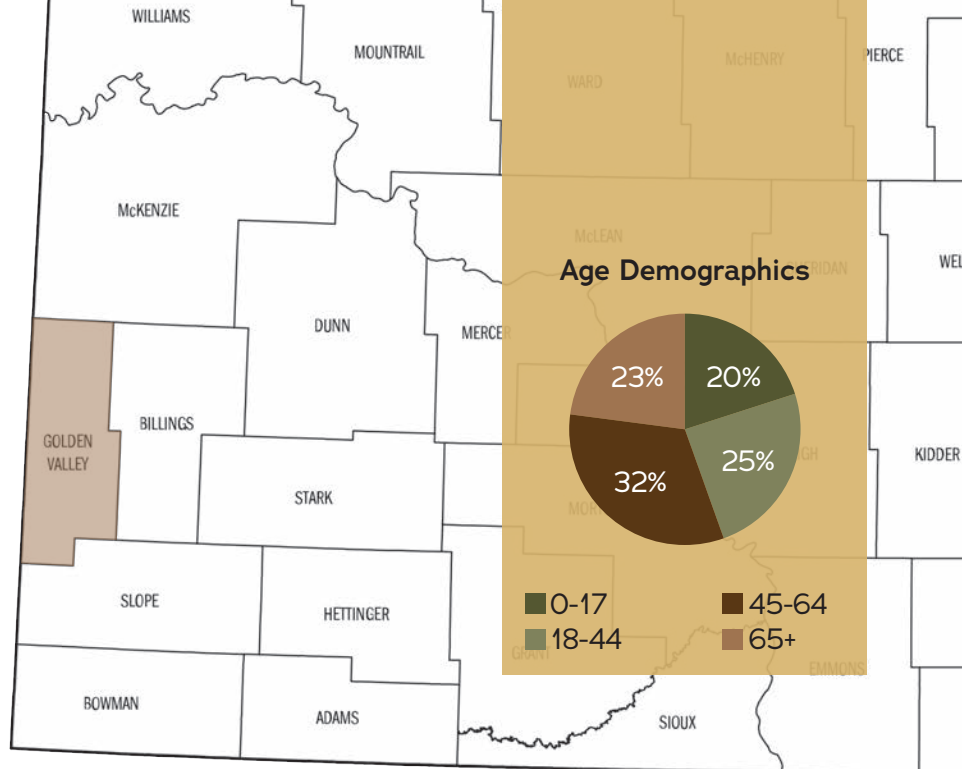
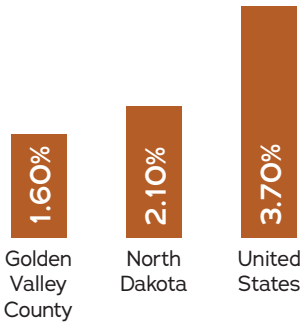




## Golden Valley County

2020 population: 1,736  
 Population change from 2010: 3%  
 Land Area: 1,002 mi<sup>2</sup>  
 Unemployment Rate: 1.6%  
 Poverty rate: 12.7%  
 Median income: \$37,702/year  
 Median household income: \$83,295/year

### Unemployment Rates



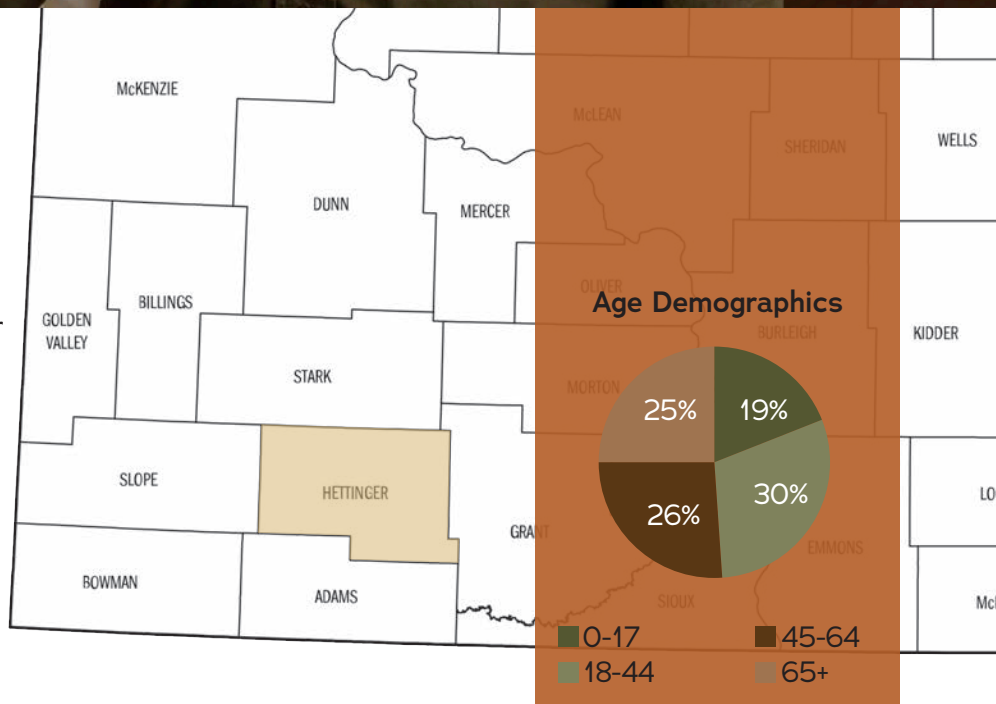
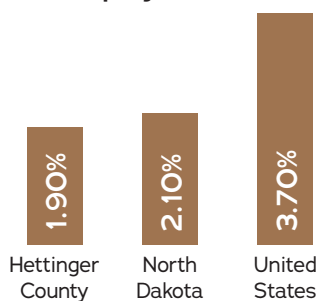


HETTINGER COUNTY

## Hettinger County

2020 population: 2,489  
 Population change from 2010: 0.5%  
 Land Area: 1,132 mi<sup>2</sup>  
 Unemployment Rate: 1.9%  
 Poverty rate: 14.4%  
 Median income: \$33,535/year  
 Median household income: \$62,865/year

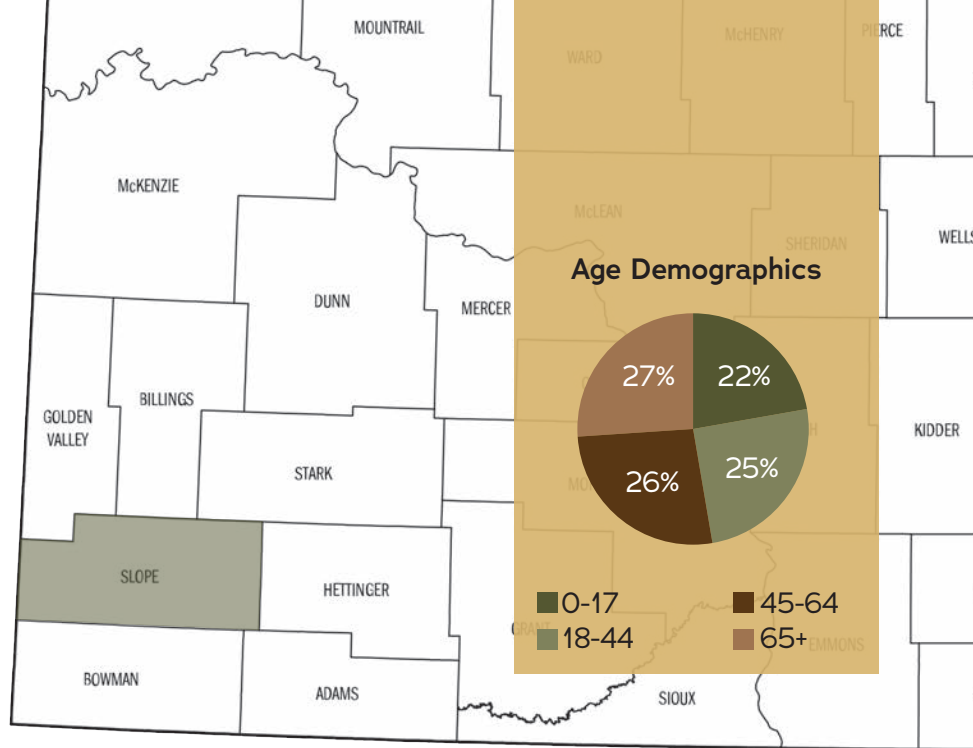
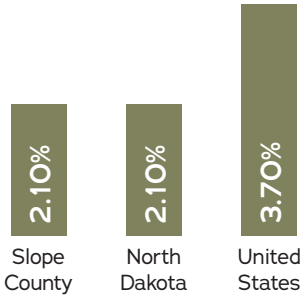
### Unemployment Rates



## Slope County

2020 population: 706  
 Population change from 2010: -3%  
 Land Area: 1,218 mi<sup>2</sup>  
 Unemployment Rate: 2.1%  
 Poverty rate: 12.8%  
 Median income: \$35,915/year  
 Median household income: \$67,614/year

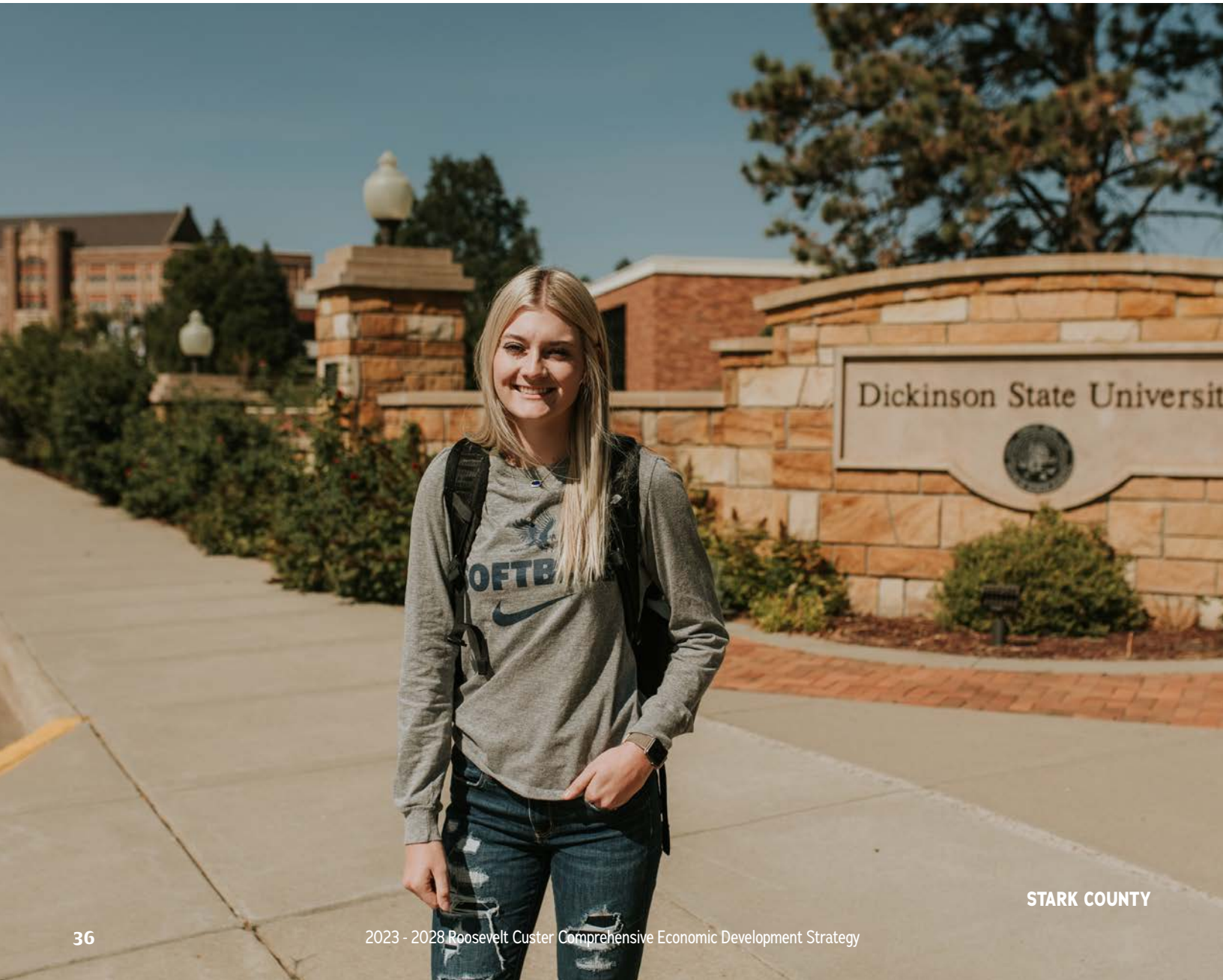
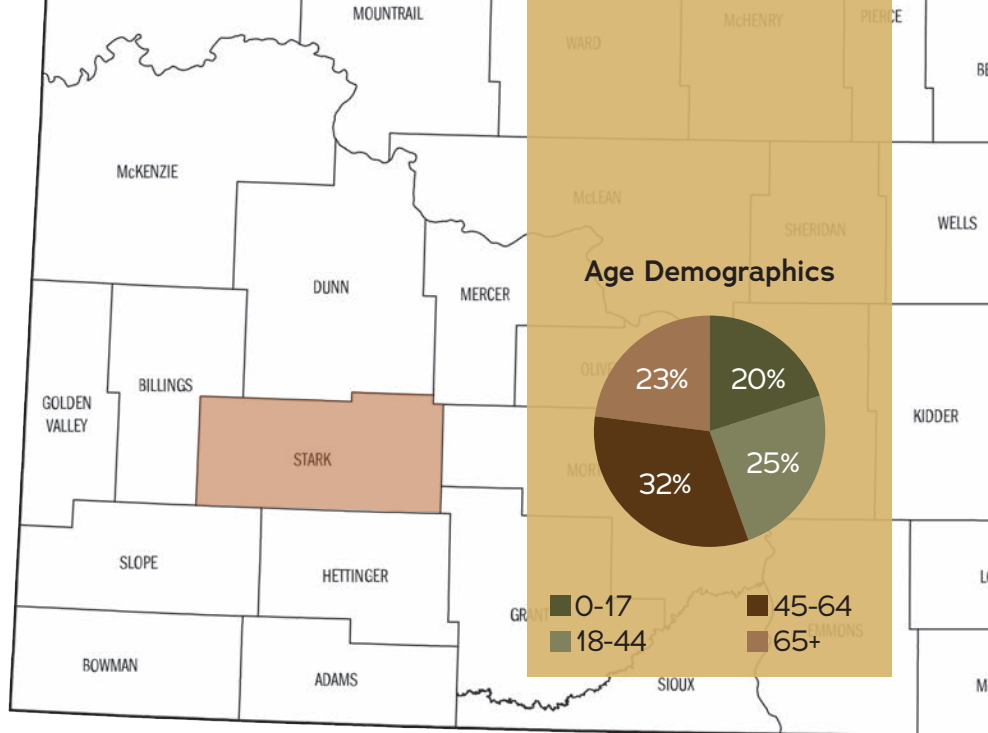
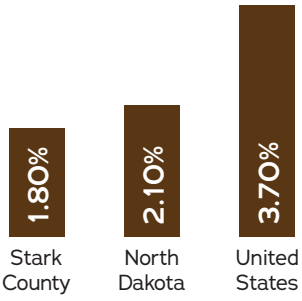
### Unemployment Rates



## Stark County

2020 population: 33,646  
 Population change from 2010: 39%  
 Land Area: 1,338 mi<sup>2</sup>  
 Unemployment Rate: 1.8%  
 Poverty rate: 10.1%  
 Median income: \$37,099/year  
 Median household income: \$70,364/year

### Unemployment Rates



STARK COUNTY

# County Information



## County Focus Group Meetings

Adams County | May 19, 2023 | Hettinger, ND

Billings County | June 13, 2023 | Medora, ND

Bowman County | April 17, 2023 | Bowman, ND

Dunn County | April 13, 2023 | Killdeer, ND

Golden Valley County | May 22, 2023 | Beach, ND

Hettinger County | June 16, 2023 | Regent, ND

Slope County | April 5, 2023 | Amidon, ND

Stark County | June 28, 2023 | Dickinson, ND

## Overall Summary of County Meetings

### Highlights the Counties recognize:

- Much of the region feels that there is a strong sense of community.
- Much of the region recognizes the growing tourism sector as a positive for communities.
- Counties feel that their diverse range of industries and well-paying job opportunities was a positive aspect for economies.
- Counties feel they have a safe environment for raising families.
- Counties attributed central location and convenient access to neighboring counties, essential services, and amenities to be beneficial to communities.

### Obstacles the Counties are facing:

- Much of the region feels that there are limited childcare options available.
- Much of the region faces challenges with housing affordability and availability.
- Counties see workforce availability as a challenge.
- Some counties addressed concerns about the quality of schools in communities and the ability to attract teachers.
- Some counties lacked essential necessities due to remote locations.
- Several counties are in need of Main Street revitalization.

### Rising Potential for the Counties:

- Much of the region sees expanding tourism and increased visitation as an opportunity to enhance and expand.
- Counties are excited about business expansion and diversification.
- All counties see high-speed broadband connectivity as a positive aspect for the region.
- Indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities are a strengths in several counties.
- Redevelopment and expansion of vacant industrial buildings are important to some counties.
- Counties see vacant buildings along their Main Streets presenting opportunities for revitalization.
- Placemaking through community-driven projects is an opportunity for counties.







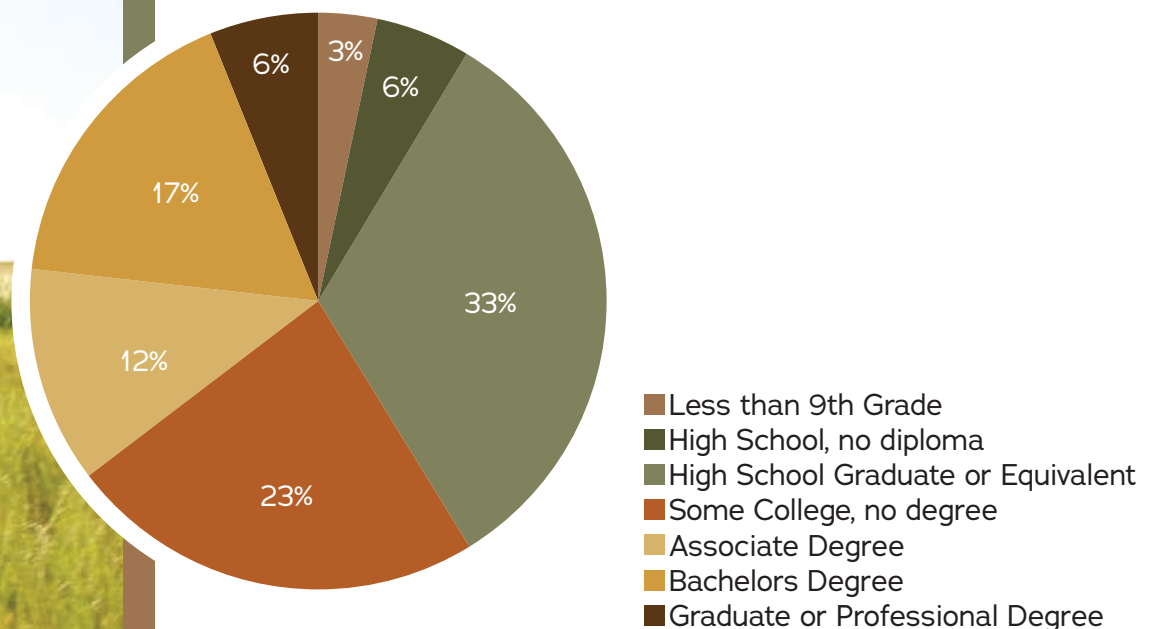


### County-Specific Observations:

- **Adams County:** Focus on revitalizing the Main Street and improving the quality of schools.
- **Billings County:** Address the challenges of infrastructure struggling to keep pace with growth and staffing shortages, especially during the tourism season, to support the thriving tourism sector.
- **Bowman County:** Explore opportunities for business expansion and tourism to add to job advancement opportunities.
- **Dunn County:** Focus on workforce availability, childcare, and housing to support the diverse range of industries.
- **Golden Valley County:** Address housing and childcare challenges to accommodate the influx of young families. Address hurdles caused by high construction costs.
- **Hettinger County:** The Enchanted Highway is a renowned attraction that draws people to the county and fosters tourism and economic opportunities. The county sees tourism expansion as a promising opportunity for growth. Ongoing challenges include housing, childcare, and workforce availability.
- **Stark County:** Leverage existing strengths in tourism and community engagement to address interconnected challenges in childcare, workforce, and housing. Consider Dickinson Airport renovation and address the challenge of being overlooked due to proximity to Bismarck.
- **Slope County:** Focus on expanding tourism, placemaking, and mitigating the impact of the declining population and remoteness. Address the lack of essential necessities and challenges facing the local school.

Overall, there is a sense of optimism and a desire for progress across all counties. Each county faces unique challenges, but there are also many opportunities for collaboration and shared success.

### Education Attainment Levels of RCRC Region



## Additional Regional Demographic Data

### RCRC Population Trends

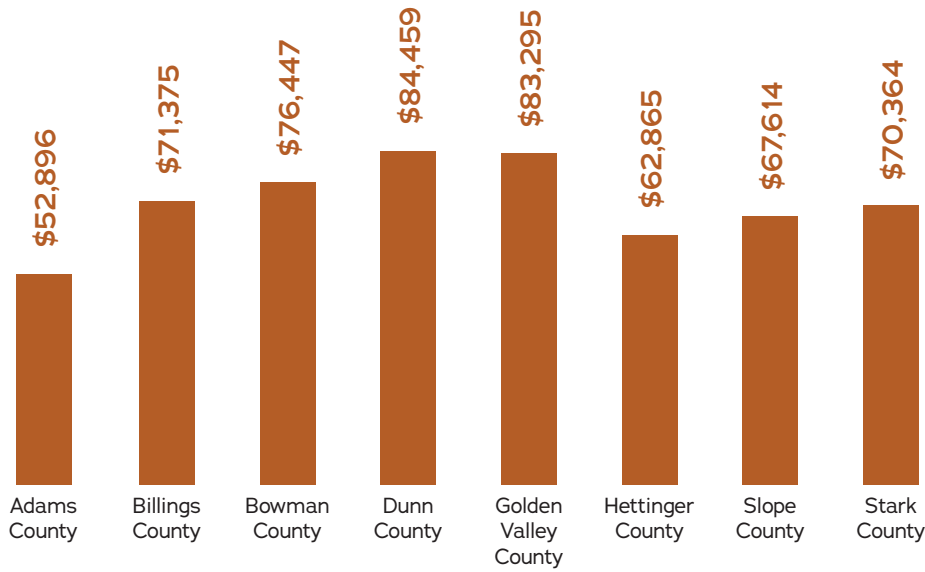
	2010 Population	2020 Population	Change	% Change
Adams County	2343	2200	(143)	-6%
Billings County	783	945	162	21%
Bowman County	3151	2993	(158)	-5%
Dunn County	3536	4095	559	16%
Golden Valley County	1680	1736	56	3%
Hettinger County	2477	2489	12	0.5%
Slope County	727	706	(21)	-3%
Stark County	24199	33646	9447	39%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38896</b>	<b>48810</b>	<b>9914</b>	<b>25%</b>

### Mean Travel Time to Work (Minutes)

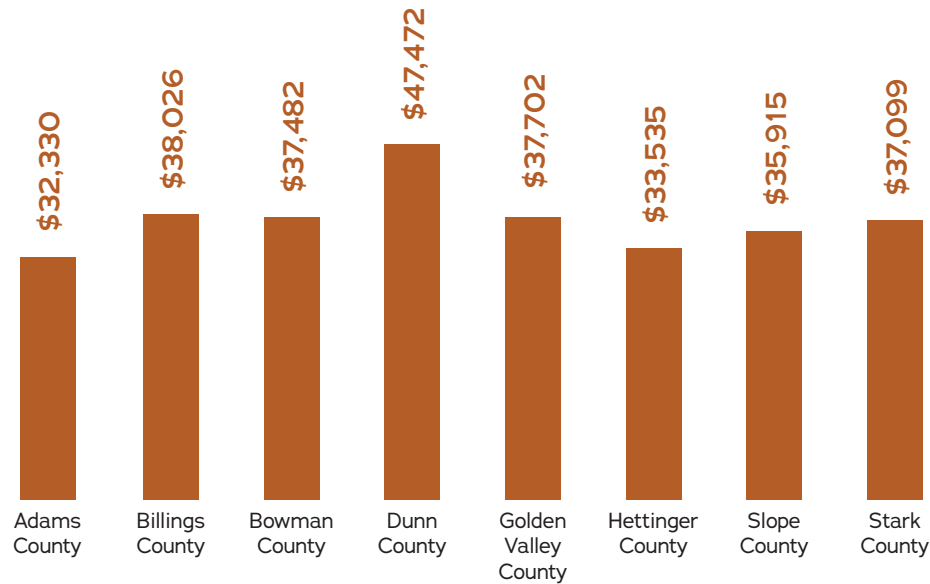
Adams County	15.7
Billings County	23.9
Bowman County	15.3
Dunn County	23.6
Golden Valley County	24.6
Hettinger County	17
Slope County	19.4
Stark County	16.6



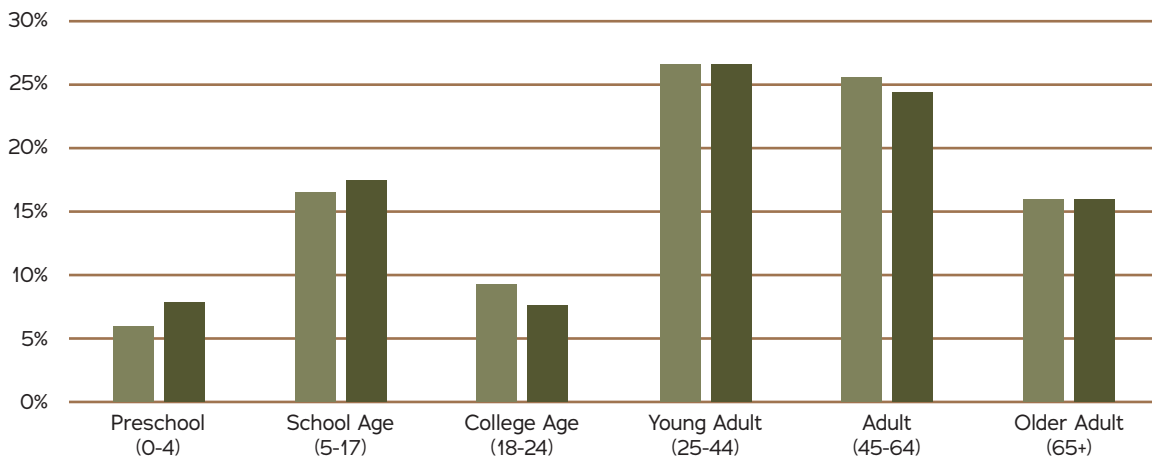
## Median Annual Household Income of RCRC Region



## Median Annual Single Income of RCRC Region



## Population Spread of RCRC Region





# Roosevelt Custer

## REGIONAL COUNCIL

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