



PRESS RELEASE

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Grow Grand Island and Grander Vision merge and form strategic plan

Grand Island, Neb.— The Grow Grand Island and Grander Vision community groups recently held their first joint meeting, officially consolidating the two visioning groups into one implementation committee.

Don Smith, chairman of Grow Grand Island, opened the meeting by praising the high level of cooperation demonstrated by the planning partners who worked over the past two months to address Mayor Jeremy Jensen’s wishes to see the two initiatives merged.

The organizations involved in merging the two plans include the Grand Island Area Economic Development Corporation, Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, Grand Island/Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau, City of Grand Island, Hall County, and Grow Grand Island.

At the meeting, a new brand for the implementation committee was approved – “Grow Grand Island, A Grander Vision for the Heartland.” This brand represents the blending of the two planning efforts and also speaks to the regional focus of the long-range strategic plan.

Mayor Jensen said, “Thousands of area residents participated in the Grander Vision plan and the Grow Grand Island Business Development Strategy. Many recommendations of the Grander Vision plan fit well with those in the Grow Grand Island plan. The joining of the two makes the best use of available resources. One strategic plan for the community also assures community organizations and public entities are focused on the same goals.”

Now that the work of the two consulting firms, Market Street Services, Inc. of Atlanta, GA, and Design Workshop, Inc. of Denver, CO, has been completed, the implementation of the strategic plan will be managed locally.

Smith noted, "With an active, strategic planning effort in place, we will be much better positioned to capitalize on the opportunities we see today and pursue new ones on the horizon. The Grow Grand Island plan will be used by government, school districts, and other organizations to guide their own long-range planning."

The strategic plan will be centered on 39 recommendations organized under six overarching goals. These goals are: advancing job creation; elevating standards of living; improving talent attraction and retention; advancing educational attainment; increasing volunteerism and engagement; and helping existing businesses grow. Specific targets, to be achieved by the year 2020, will be established for each of these goals.

Pam Lancaster, Hall County supervisor said, "Grand Island and its neighboring communities and rural areas are tied together economically, culturally, and socially. Residents throughout Hall County and central Nebraska are encouraged to help make the recommendations contained in the Grow Grand Island, A Grand Vision for the Heartland strategy a reality."

In order to gauge progress, Grow Grand Island will focus on a number of community benchmarks such as median household income, graduation rate, and total employment as measurements. As the different components of the plan come to fruition, the impact on the overall prosperity of the community will be felt.

The committee plans to share the baseline benchmarks to the public with a press release in April and will report to the community annually on the progress made on the six goals.

Chamber of Commerce President Cindy Johnson noted, "It is exciting to have this comprehensive, holistic approach to making Grand Island and our neighboring communities attractive and supportive for small business growth, existing business expansions, resident and employee recruitment and retention, and new business relocations. The Grow Grand Island, A Grand Vision for the Heartland initiative will further enhance prospects for quality, targeted growth while, at the same time, ensure quality of life amenities and community assets appealing to a wide range of residents are provided."

Mayor Jensen added, "We know the people of Grand Island and Hall County are committed to seeing their communities prosper. We need, and ask for, your help in achieving these goals. With 39 recommendations, there is a place for every resident to volunteer, get involved, and make a difference."

Citizens interested in volunteering in the Grow Grand Island initiative can

contact the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce at 308-382-9210. A copy of the Grow Grand Island, A Grand Vision for the Heartland strategic plan can be viewed at www.grander-vision.com or www.growgrandisland.com.

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