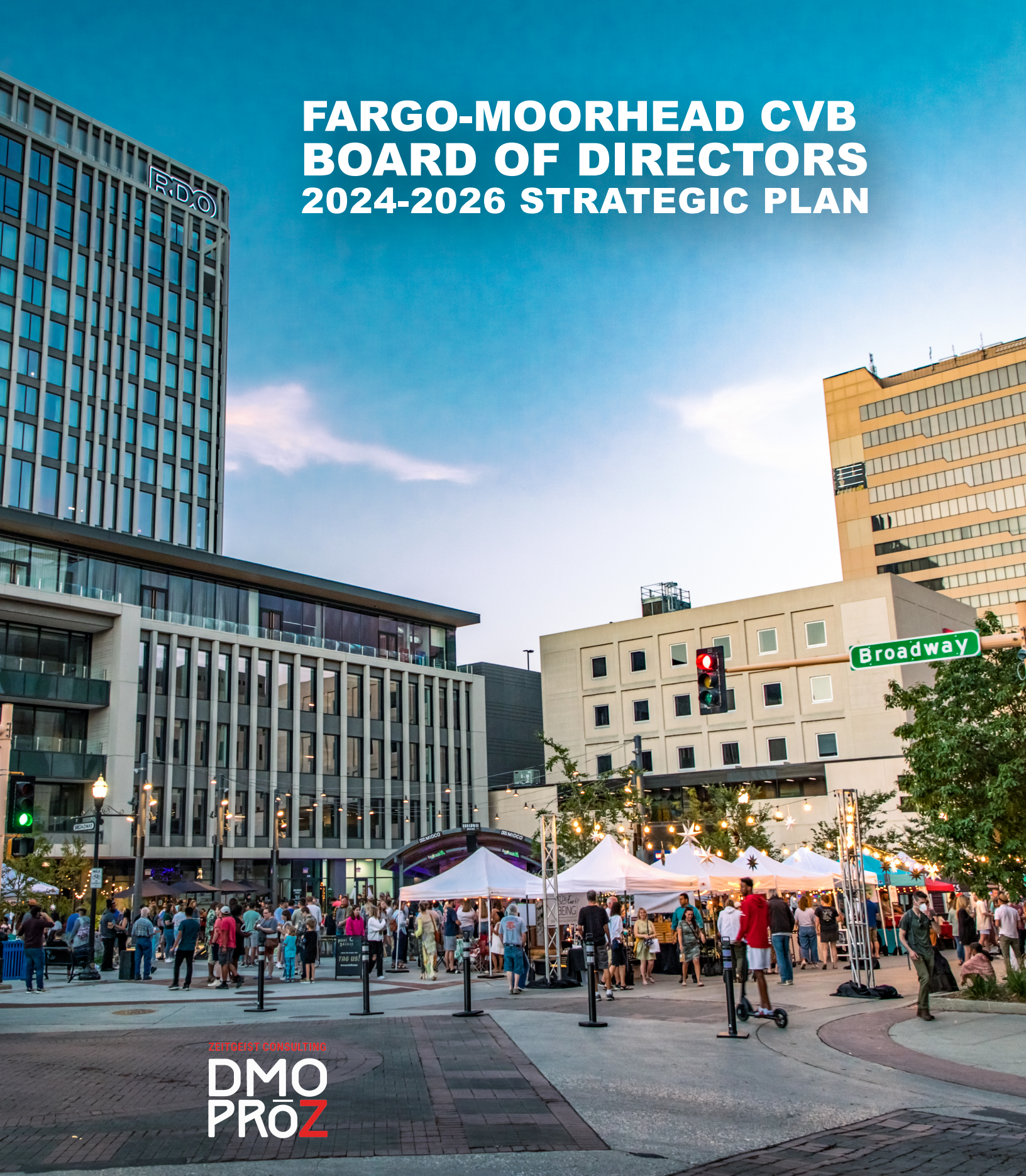


FARGO-MOORHEAD CVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



ZEITGEIST CONSULTING

**DMO
PRÖZ**

FARGO-MOORHEAD CVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GOAL Strategically Align Organizational Resources Toward High Value Market Segments

Objective A

Continue to Build upon the Success of the Sports Tournament & Event Market

Objective B

Continue to dedicate resources to other desired market segments as appropriate to the measured ROI of each

GOAL Advocate for Destination Development

Objective A

Continue to analyze opportunities to develop a Conference / Convention facility

Objective B

Continue to evolve the FMCVB Grant Programs to Align with our Destination Vision

Objective C

Identify ways to assist the Arts & Culture Community to be a more engaged player in the Visitor Economy



GOAL Enhance Community Livability and Sense of Place

Objective A

Actively join the effort to enhance community livability and sense of place

Objective B

Advocate for Enhanced Transportation and Mobility

GOAL Continue to Build Organizational Excellence

Objective A

Regularly review Organizational documentation to ensure policies don't inadvertently stand in the way of good governance

Objective B

Develop an Intentional and Detailed Succession Plan for Board and Professional Staff

Objective C

Increase Organizational Outreach to the region to develop a heightened awareness and appreciation for the area's Visitor Economy and the work of the FMCVB

Objective D

Continue to incorporate the values of Diversity, Equity, Social Inclusion and Accessibility into everything the FMCVB does



VISION, MISSION & VALUES

Vision is the “What,” as in “What do we want for our future?” Mission is the “How,” as in “How will we accomplish our Purpose and Vision.” And, Values are the moral code with which we dedicate our work.

All three Statements are crucial to the success of any organization...and for a Destination Marketing Organization, they serve as the North Star for everything the Board and professional Staff do.



Vision Statement:

The Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo CVB will collaboratively develop and promote a shared community vision to enhance the attractiveness of the region for visitors and residents alike.

Mission Statement:

The Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo CVB works to position our distinctive community as a desirable destination and gateway to the region and nation, resulting in a superior Quality of Life for its residents.

Core Values:

Start with Yes
Join Forces
Promote Proudly

FARGO-MOORHEAD CVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

GOAL

Strategically Align Organizational Resources Toward High Value Market Segments

Rationale: *Visit Fargo-Moorhead has spent the last 10 years leaning into Sports and Tournaments as a growth strategy, including the strategic use of Destination Development Grants from its Capital Budget. As more new facilities open, opportunities abound to allow for continued growth. At the same time, traditional markets must not be abandoned but, instead nurtured and re-imagined.*

Objective A

Continue to Build upon the Success of the Sports Tournament & Event Market

Potential Tactics:

- Look for “test” opportunities to participate in the production of a signature sporting event, rather than only assisting Local Organizing Committees
- Continue to engage with local facility operators and activity groups in search of new events in traditional and non-traditional sports
- Evaluate and restructure current event assistance and grant programs to be competitive within the region
- Define the Fargo-Moorhead Athletic Commission Brand
- Monitor the overall DMO Budget for growth over projections and places to reduce cost to make room for an additional Sports employee
- Determine how duties would best be reapportioned among new and existing staff
- Reevaluate the event enhancement program
- Have a presence at sports-related shows (sponsorships, booths, etc.)
- Intentionally communicate with hotel partners so they know the value of their participation in our events

Objective B

Continue to dedicate resources to other desired market segments as appropriate to the measured ROI of each

Potential Tactics:

- Continue to identify ways to make the destination a premier choice for meeting and event planners
- Continue to position the destination as a culinary, cultural and entertainment Mecca of the Midwest
- Develop a working group with area hoteliers to better understand the market opportunities they see and sense in order to guide future market direction and decisions

GOAL

Advocate for Destination Development

Rationale: *The Fargo region has undergone an amazing transformation of growth and reanimation in the past decade. Residents love it, visitors love it and the national media loves it. This is no time to let the community's collective foot off the pedal. And no agency is better positioned to advocate for future developments than the FMCVB.*

Objective A

Continue to analyze opportunities to develop a Conference / Convention facility

Potential Tactics:

- Re-start conversations regarding the potential placement of a public assembly facility that isn't connected or adjacent to the Fargodome
- Work with local lodging and attractions interests to identify their top interests in such a facility
- Work to connect regional developers and municipal officials to investigate mutually advantageous collaborations to develop a sustainable convention facility / campus
- Ask the EDC to analyze their inventory of vacant facilities that could be successfully re-imagined as Conference / Convention space



Objective B

Continue to evolve the FMCVB Grant Programs to Align with our Destination Vision

Potential Tactics:

- Consider redefining focus and being more specific and pro-active in aligning Grants in areas such as Placemaking, Sports, Tourism, Arts and Culture, etc.
- Develop new more systematic guidelines, application forms, formulas and post project reporting to provide program-wide continuity
- Expand grant goals beyond Room Nights to markers such as (not not necessarily limited to) :
 - Total visitation
 - Media visibility achieved
 - Social Media engagement
- Consider adding a Grant Writer to the FMCVB staff to manage DMO grants as well as assist other entities with their grant initiatives
- Dedicate the FMCVB to more proactively communicating the value of its Grant Programs

Objective C

Identify ways to assist the Arts & Culture Community to be a more engaged player in the Visitor Economy

Potential Tactics:

- Regularly meet with the Arts & Culture community to better understand their wants and needs to achieve their goals
- Identify ways the FMCVB can help enable the realization of these goals through the development of a specifically designed grant program
- Assist Arts & Culture groups in identifying ways they could be hired by incoming groups and events



GOAL Enhance Community Livability and Sense of Place

Rationale: *If a community doesn't effectively address Safety, Homelessness, Workforce, Childcare and Affordable Housing, it will cease to be a place where people want to visit, go to school or start a business. Thus, to fulfill its Mission of driving visitation into the region, the FMCVB must be actively engaged in addressing the issues that currently plague the community at large.*

Objective A

Actively join the effort to enhance community livability and sense of place

Potential Tactics:

- Engage with agencies and government task forces to identify which entity actively “owns” this initiative
- Proactively enter the conversation to better understand primary issues and needs
- Identify opportunities for the FMCVB and its industry partners to play a collaborative role in addressing core community issues
- Work to instill core values of Diversity, Equity, Social Inclusion and Accessibility
- Work with local schools and businesses to identify opportunities to create curriculum and job paths to bring new workers into the travel and hospitality sectors

Objective B

Advocate for Enhanced Transportation and Mobility

Potential Tactics:

- Continue to advocate for regionally branded wayfinding signage
- Stand ready to assist the Airport when pitching new routes and carriers
- Monitor legislation and advocate for passenger rail service upgrades for the region



GOAL

Continue to Build Organizational Excellence

Rationale: *The Fargo region deserves nothing less than a state-of-the-art Destination Marketing Organization. Rather than allowing momentum to carry the organization forward, the Board of Directors is committed to being intentional about ensuring the long-term sustainability of its community's DMO and Sports Commission.*

Objective A

Regularly review Organizational documentation to ensure policies don't inadvertently stand in the way of good governance

Potential Tactics:

- Identify whether present policies regarding how potential Board members qualify for service continue to provide the best possible candidates
- Review the Budget development process with a focus on aligning investments to better achieving organizational goals
- Ensure processes are in place to produce a Board and Professional Staff that are diversely representative of the community

Objective B

Develop an Intentional and Detailed Succession Plan for Board and Professional Staff

Potential Tactics:

- In conjunction with its review of By-Laws, the Board shall establish a detailed process for identifying and securing both Board members and Board officers that best advance the CVB's Mission and avoid lapses in leadership
- Along with Board Succession Planning, develop a similar process for providing continuity of Staff leadership
- Succession Planning for the CEO position should provide for the engagement of professional staff in the process, with ultimate decisions held by the Board



Objective C

Increase Organizational Outreach to the region to develop a heightened awareness and appreciation for the area's Visitor Economy and the work of the FMCVB

Potential Tactics:

- Identify opportunities to tell the FMCVB story through traditional and social media channels
- Search for opportunities for Board members to present the FMCVB story at service clubs and neighborhood events
- Look for ways to achieve increased visibility at signature events
- Analyze opportunities to build upon the CEO's Weekly Newsletter to touch a larger audience of influencers throughout the region

Objective D

Continue to incorporate the values of Diversity, Equity, Social Inclusion and Accessibility into everything the FMCVB does

Potential Tactics:

- Identify opportunities to develop programs to attract a diverse workforce (including New Americans) to the travel and hospitality sector
- Work with partner businesses to ensure they are as accessible as possible
- Analyze opportunities to add language accessibility features on the FMCVB website
- Support the development of destination assets and programming that highlights and celebrates cultural diversity and inclusion



BACKGROUND INTELLIGENCE

DMOproz utilized two primary sources of background data (along with guidance from the Board and Staff) to prepare for the October 19th, 2023 Strategic Planning Workshop.

First, we fielded an online survey that saw just under 200 responses from key community leaders and stakeholders. Then, on the days preceding the workshop we met face-to-face and in Focus Groups with over 30 community leaders to get a more nuanced view of the visions of the community for its future.

As background for the preceding Strategic Plan, we share the top line comments and thoughts we heard from both groups. For many of the online questions, responses have been merged and/or condensed to eliminate duplication and ease in readability.

THE ONLINE SURVEY

It's the Year 2035. Describe the Fargo Region:

- Numerous placemaking projects and programming which "surprises" people who visit the city. More locally owned and unique amenities/shops.
- We have a large convention center and additional destination amenities have been added; Fargo is known as a Midwest vacation and conference Mecca.
- Visitors are more diverse and the destinations are more welcoming of that diversity. Increased accessibility and language options, emphasis on eco-friendly offerings and sustainability efforts at destinations.
- More support for business tourism. Better city collaboration when it comes to wayfinding.
- The region has truly become a year-round destination for all, embracing winter with many unique offerings, and ensuring the "lake folks" want to stay in town.
- The metro downtowns (not just Fargo) are vibrant and walkable. Our parks and the riverfront are active and safe.
- Businesses are open longer hours in evenings and weekends.
- Moorhead's new downtown has more to offer and works well with the new fully connected multi-use trail system that draws people to town for recreation.
- In this perfect world of tourism in 2035, the industry has evolved to prioritize sustainability, personalization, and responsible travel, offering visitors unforgettable experiences while preserving the planet and benefiting local communities.
- There are enough employees to take care of the guests
- Our hotel is at 80% occupancy year-round.
- Increased visitation, driven by airport expansion and more carriers and an increase in international tourists.
- New additional draws include: a Waterpark and an Iconic state-of-the-art Science Museum. Bonanzaville has kept its charm. There's a new concert venue so that Taylor Swift can come back to town, Fargodome has been completely redone so the Bison can actually play real competitors like Alabama, a new Theater is up so that North Dakotans don't have to travel to Minneapolis for traveling Broadway shows, shopping has a whole new landscape of brands available that people actually want.

- Additional events and festivals...spread out more evenly over the year.
- More variety of entertainment that keeps visitors in the area for more than one night.
- We've moved beyond just external national concerts that flood the town with guests - We now have a midsize concert venue that is able to host local, regional, and national talent.
- A food and drink tax has been levied that goes to support local arts and culture.
- The Horse Park has reopened with year round betting.
- I see more large concerts at the FargoDome, more hotels in North Fargo/Downtown, and more attractions to draw in visitors from Canada and Great Plains region.
- Fargo-Moorhead is a destination city for the Arts and Entertainment industry with a new state-of-the-art performing arts center that hosts a variety of performances all year long.
- GFM has a better public transit system.
- Multiple indoor turf fields for soccer. Lighted outdoor turf fields for soccer. More than 7 indoor tennis courts.
- The Hulbert Aquatic Center will become known nation-wide as one of the top aquatic facilities in the nation, hosting regional and national events multiple times a year.
- We have large scale events and venues in walkable spaces that spark wonder and community for visitors.
- Continued growth of commercial businesses in the South Fargo area, beyond 52nd Avenue.
- Enough quality rooms and restaurants have been developed to fill all of our needs
- A more walkable downtown area...and a Downtown that has extended east and west.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the experience-based tourism offerings such as increased agritourism, mountain biking, nature based guided tours, additional breweries, wineries, and local foods.
- More high-end luxury hotels and convention space. More concert venues. More artistic and musical attractions.
- More opportunities to enjoy the river, bike trails that are at least 50 miles, hubs throughout the community that feature the arts and fine dining, a convention space surrounded by amenities.
- A greater emphasis on authenticity and culture. Visitors are able to experience the real Fargo-Moorhead, with its unique history, traditions, and people. Third, there would be a wider range of experiences available to visitors, including options for all ages, interests, and budgets.

Aside from the Pandemic, what has happened in the past 24 months that has moved the community closer to (or further from) your Visions for the future?

Closer To:

- Increased emphasis on Sustainability and Responsible Tourism. There is a waterpark planned in south Fargo, which will be a destination attraction.
- The opening of Broadway Square and Lights events.
- There's now an active group attempting to get the Science Museum open, Von Maur is dedicated to the old Herbergers space and FM Community Theater is trying to build something great.
- The possibility of a convention center.
- The opening of the Jasper has been a key differentiator in our visitor experience. The Red River Market and events of Folkways continue to grow in their production and attendance.
- Brewhalla, Suiteshots as a winter destination. Junkyard in WF.
- Proposed airport enhancements.
- Almost all of the major performing arts organizations in the community have had a change in leadership within the past year (new energy, excitement & ideas).
- Pride in the Park unequivocally responding to these things has helped the Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo community stand up and show our LGBT+ community members that they have a home here, too.
- Being awarded the Central Plains Baseball tournament for the first time and USA Swimming Sectionals and Futures.
- New Park District Facility and discussion on the Fargodome improvements.
- The commitment to new athletic facilities has helped create needed indoor space for athletic space.
- Increased collaboration between businesses, events, food and entertainment. We are stronger when we come together.
- The region has welcomed a number of new restaurants and breweries in the past 24 months.
- A lot of stakeholder engagement, conversations, conferences.
- The support of the Diversion to support the overall community. The vision of the Fargodome, new space proposed next to the Lights in WF, the new sports complex in Fargo, the Moorhead Mall space renovation.

Further From:

- Most businesses having problems with staffing which affects everything.
- I have concerns about taxing travelers to build a convention center in the wrong area of town that will need additional hotel rooms built to support that venue.
- Increased violent crime is increasingly an issue. An increase in homelessness and encampments.
- Negative media attention on Downtown is resulting in negative experiences for guests every day.
- Recent Culture War political stunts (specifically, anti-woman and anti-LGBTQ+ laws) are making our region look unwelcoming, mean and backwards.

What's next for the Region? What project or development would propel this community forward as a preferred destination?

- A State-of-the-Art Convention Center.
- Own Winter. Develop first class ski resorts, host more winter competition such as hockey, snowboarding and winter extreme games.
- A cohesive riverwalk or greenway experience.
- A premier hotel with a waterpark and/or resort that is family and sports team friendly.
- More flights and more carriers. Rail service from the MSP area. More efficient public transit.
- An greater investment in cultural institutions, the arts and public spaces.
- Clean up the city streets and homeless so visitors aren't afraid to walk Downtown.
- A state-of-the-arts Performance space with better sound than Scheels, and smaller than Fargodome.
- Mall spaces should be redeveloped into experience hubs, especially for families.
- More commercial properties, including dining along the Red River shoreline.
- I think all of the major projects currently on the board would be great. The challenge is paying for all these ideas and concepts.
- An indoor track facility to drive winter business.
- An expanded Zoo...and a Dave and Busters.
- Indoor Event Center Space, with proper hotel space connected or in very close proximity
- More indoor turf space for soccer, lacrosse and other sports that struggle with outdoor space in winter and springs.
- Shuttle Services.
- Increased size, attractiveness of the FargoDome, plus one or two other smaller concert venues. Outdoor amphitheater.
- An agriculture museum that is interactive and also includes a farm to table restaurant.
- D1 team status for MSUM for a winter sport would be a great draw to compliment the NDSU football success.
- Theme park (indoor/ outdoor), destination type shopping (e.g. IKEA).
- The Civic Center being utilized again for events.
- Science Museum.
- Indoor amusement park.
- A food truck complex mixed with ice skating, fishing and virtual reality.
- A destination food and beverage district. A block or two of great venues that gets travelers excited to spend their free time, and their money, having fun in our community.

What are the primary Strengths of Visit Fargo?

- The Staff. They are wonderful and are really in tune to the community and its needs.
- The collaboration with organizations around the community to help accomplish projects that will inevitably bring in tourists. The financial support is incredible and so valuable.
- Willingness to partner with others for the success of the region.
- Great leadership.
- Knowledge and Experience; willingness to help out organizations put on conventions.
- Its passion for our community
- Charlie's positive attitude.
- Great collaboration and advocacy.
- Working directly with local businesses and bringing in future groups and conferences.
- Building relationships with community leaders to bring in more business for the city.
- Uniting both sides of the river and organizing events.
- Strong and decisive leadership.
- Innovation and courage to try new things.
- Well-Respected amongst Civic and Private leaders in the region.

What are the primary Challenges facing Visit Fargo?

- Competing priorities and resources
- Capitalizing on all the opportunities before us with limited budget and staff.
- getting organizations to come here in the winter and travel expense/travel options.
- The pressure to be overly equitable in representing three communities. Being overly beholden to the hotel operators. Focusing exclusively on hotel stays as the primary measure of success for a DMO is a narrow perspective. This overlooks the significant cultural icons within the community that serve as promotional catalysts, drawing conferences and events.
- The voting population's resistance to investing in projects that would benefit the community long-term and a lack of vision from City elected officials.
- Being too tightly associated with the convention center idea, Fargodome and Bison Athletics.
- Money and raising enough of it to appease and help all their partners
- Bringing the entire community together to both share plans and desires and look for mutual synergies.
- Enlisting support from the community and its leaders.

STAKEHOLDER CONVERSATIONS

Primary Concerns:

- The Community has forgotten the importance and impact of USA Wrestling.
- The Arts, Heritage and the Zoo are not meaningfully supported by government and the private sector.
- The current Performing Arts Center plan is misguided.
- The need to support Downtown Businesses.

Primary Pain Points:

- Downtown Fargo at Night (crime and homeless).
- Lack of sufficient Commercial Air Service
- The oddly universal focus on Downtowns at the expense of other neighborhoods.
- ND's fiscal conservatism that could scuttle the Convention Center vote.
- So little for area teens to do.
- BIPOC entrepreneurs struggle to secure leases.
- Lack of Affordable Housing and Daycare impacts Workforce Development.
- Population impacts Workforce Development.
- University enrollment is declining.

Opportunities:

- Moorhead's wealth of Arts, Culture and Theatre...and #MoorheadProud (discounts for t-shirts).
- The Cultural Mall project (looking for State funding of \$7.5 million).
- The Science Museum (estimate 30-40% of visitors will overnight).
- Activate the River (2 cities / 1 Downtown).
- A more regional approach to Branding that includes the Lakes.
- Further investment in Sense of Place.
- Chamber and EDC embarking on a 5-year Comprehensive Plan (should the table be bigger?).
- D1 Status for MSUM Hockey needs our support.
- Information Centers on Campuses and all 3 communities.
- The need for additional Hotels and Public Transportation throughout the destination.
- Potential expansion of Commercial Air Service.
- Need to actively engage the nine Billion Dollar Corporations that call Fargo home.
- Humanely addressing Homelessness & Mental Health issues plaguing downtown (manage Street Life?).
- We need to be an active participant in creating experiences to enhance Quality of Life.

- Unleash and own Winter. Stop apologizing (you just don't have the right clothes). More Events and Festivals as proof of concept.
- Trails and Mountain Biking.
- We are a collection of unique assets. What can be our singular magnet?
- A High-end Campground or RV Park.
- Need more Ice to own Hockey in ND.
- Waterpark Hotel (the Wave).
- Large Event Space if the Convention Center vote fails (is that the Fairgrounds?).

Stray Comments:

- North of Normal has only scratched the surface of its potential. Triple Down!
- The Zoo has a higher annual attendance than college athletics...but gets no public support.
- The Diversion has freed us to think bigger than ever before.
- Our increasingly younger resident base should allow us to be bolder in Quality of Life initiatives.
- Let's work with our government leaders to let the entrepreneurs run (create and innovate).
- We need the CVB to step up and lead on major issues in the region.