SIMPCO Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2015-2019

Serving Iowa Counties: Cherokee, Ida, Monona, Plymouth, and Woodbury and Dakota County, Nebraska

SIOUTHLAND INTERSTATE METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL (SIMPCO)

ADOPTED JUNE 18, 2015 BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .......................................................................................................................... 1  
Section 1: Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 3 
Section 2: Summary Background ..................................................................................................... 4 
Section 3: SWOT Analysis ................................................................................................................ 7 
Section 4: Strategic Direction and Action Plan ............................................................................... 10 
Section 5: Economic Resilience ...................................................................................................... 16 
Section 6: Evaluation Framework .................................................................................................. 18
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2015 CEDS document is the result of a regional capacity-building process designed to provide regional leaders, businesses, counties, and cities with a framework for driving regional economic growth. The 2015 CEDS Strategy Committee worked diligently to identify the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and then translate the results into goals, objectives, and potential action items to improve this great area. A CEDS is required to be updated every five years to qualify for EDA assistance under its Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs, and is a prerequisite for designation by EDA as an Economic Development District (EDD).

The SIMPCO EDD is composed of six counties; Cherokee, Ida, Monona, Plymouth, and Woodbury Counties in Iowa, and Dakota County in Nebraska. The location is in the northwest part of Iowa and far northeast corner of Nebraska. The total population of the region is around 176,000 people.

The 2015 CEDS is designed to guide the region’s economic growth by strengthening and stabilizing the regional economy, and improving the overall living conditions for residents of the region. A strategy committee comprised of informed leaders and representatives of the counties and cities was formed to study current conditions, participate in an intensive SWOT analysis of the region, develop goals, objectives, and action items, and discuss the region’s economic resilience. The committee will continue to meet annually to evaluate progress and offer suggestions for improving future CEDS plans.

The Required Four CEDS Elements:

1. Summary Background: A summary of the economic conditions of the region.
2. SWOT Analysis: An in-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
3. Strategic Direction and Action Plan: The strategic direction and action plan should build upon the findings from the SWOT analysis and incorporate/integrate elements from other regional plans (e.g., land use and transportation, workforce development, etc.) where appropriate as determined by the EDD or community/region engaged in development of the CEDS. The action plan should also identify the stakeholder(s) responsible for implementation, timetables, and opportunities for the integrated use of other local, state, and federal funds.
4. Evaluation Framework: Performance measures used to evaluate the organization’s implementation of the CEDS and impact on the regional economy.

The CEDS must also incorporate the concept of economic resilience, or the ability of the region to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shifts, natural disasters, impacts of climate change, etc., and the SIMPCO EDD has included a section addressing this concept.

CEDS Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives were generated by the CEDS Committee to guide policy and action for the next five years:
Economic Development Goal: To create high-skill, higher-wage jobs within innovative clusters as a means to diversify the regional economy and improve economic conditions in the area for years to come.

Objectives:
- Develop a diverse industrial and commercial base that is competitive in the global economy
- Continue supporting the creation of a successful environment for local business creation and local business retention
- Target innovation clusters, such as “green” technology and value-added agriculture industries
- Foster the growth of the job support network necessary to maintain the high-skill positions and cluster developments

Workforce Development Goal: To develop and retain a highly-trained, competitive and entrepreneurial workforce that addresses and compliments the growing needs of the regional business community.

Objectives:
- Facilitate collaboration among economic development stakeholders to address the current and future employment and skill needs of the regional business community
- Improve workforce retention for local businesses
- Foster a workforce that can identify and execute on entrepreneurial opportunities
- Support further educational opportunities for current and potential workers
- Encourage local trades businesses to offer apprenticeship opportunities

Infrastructure Improvement Goal: To invest in infrastructure improvements such as roads, bridges, sewers, water facilities, broadband, and multi-modal transportation systems that will strengthen and diversify the regional economy.

Objectives:
- Maintain and expand the region’s infrastructure to address the needs of existing businesses and residences, as well as accommodate the needs of new and expanding businesses
- Target infrastructure improvements to areas in the region with the greatest need
- Pursue the development and maintenance of regional multi-modal transportation networks as a critical resource for economic growth

Diverse, Affordable, and Market-rate Housing Goal: To develop diverse housing options for all income levels to ensure the availability of housing supply for workers brought in by expanding businesses and new firms in the region.

Objectives:
- Work with employers, state and local housing and development agencies, banks, and private developers to encourage the development of affordable housing on a regional basis
- Balance workforce needs and elderly needs with housing needs as a means to identify the extent of need for diverse housing types in the region

Quality of Life Goal: To encourage resident retention and to develop cost-effective, regional solutions to local problems that better serve residents while providing a high quality of life.

Objectives:
- Encourage the development of a vibrant consumer environment including amenities such as personal services, eateries, child care, grocery stores and co-ops
- Support projects that enhance and sustain the quality of life of the region, such as smart growth, walkable communities, and mixed-use development
- Increase awareness among the region of the recreational and cultural resources, public services, and consumer alternatives available in every county of our region
INTRODUCTION

Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO), the third oldest multi-state council of governments (COG) in the nation, was organized as a voluntary association of local governments in 1965 and is guided by a board of directors comprised of city- and county-elected officials, representatives of the private sector and stakeholder organizations. SIMPCO collaborates with local governments in long-range strategic and comprehensive planning, community and economic development, transportation planning, and regional program management. It is also in charge of creating and implementing the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

The CEDS region, also known as the Economic Development District (EDD), consists of six counties: Cherokee, Ida, Monona, Plymouth and Woodbury in Iowa and Dakota County in Nebraska. The EDD is shown on the map.

The CEDS for the SIMPCO region was updated to direct economic development efforts for the next five years, beginning July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2020. This plan seeks to determine the forces, trends, and issues that will have the greatest economic impact upon the region and position it to take advantage of economic opportunities and to avoid or mitigate potential threats.

The CEDS is a realistic plan based on an in-depth assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats throughout the SIMPCO region, and it provides a guide and measurable steps of action to address critical issues. The CEDS is designed as a responsive plan that it can easily and quickly be adapted to unanticipated events such as natural disasters or economic development opportunities and threats which require sudden (and sometimes temporary) shifts in direction or a new focus. As the next five years progress, this document will be relied upon as a benchmark to help prioritize actions and evaluate outcomes for the entire region.

The CEDS Strategy Committee was essential to complete the document, and they are tasked with ensuring its implementation. The Committee is comprised of representatives from various segments of the region and includes economic development professionals, government officials, staff from the City and County, private industry representatives, and higher education experts, among others. The committee represents all major interest groups, providing a cross-section of interests and an expansive geographic area.
SUMMARY BACKGROUND

There are approximately 176,000 people living in the SIMPCO region, according to the 2012 American Community Survey. While Dakota County, Nebraska and Plymouth County, Iowa have enjoyed modest population growth, the remaining counties in the area have decreased by up to 10.2 percent of total population since the year 2000. The CEDS Strategy Committee has identified general and working-age population decline as a significant threat and weakness of the region. The cohort with the largest population increase in the region is the 55-59 year age group; the largest decrease is the 35-44 year age group. As with many areas of the state and country, the population of kids under 5 years and up to 20 years has decreased from 2000 to 2012. Adult populations aged 45 and older have generally increased during that same time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population - Total change from 2000 to 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%Change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly 40% of the people living within the SIMPCO region work in either the educational, health and social services or the manufacturing industries. From 2000 to 2012, the industries with the greatest percent increases in the number of jobs are the professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services and the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services. During the same time period the information, wholesale trade, and manufacturing industries had the largest decreases.

2012 ALL EDD - Where People Work
From 2000-2012, the median household income increased by nearly 25%, while the median household income for the state of Iowa remained steady during the same period of time. However, the percentage of families living below the poverty level in the region increased two percent from 2000-2012.

Each of the six counties in our region had moderately healthy increases in median household income. While median household income has risen in the SIMPCO region, the average wages in Iowa are ranked among the bottom 10 in the nation.

The percentage of the population with some college (no degree) through graduate/professional degrees has increased from 2000-2012. The percentage of population with less than 9th grade education through high school graduate has decreased in the same time.
Although this information implies that children and adults are reaching higher education levels, the trend could also be masking some effects of elderly population passing on. Anti-dropout laws began to take effect in Nebraska and Iowa following the First and Second World Wars, and as residents born during those times pass away, the average educational attainment rises as the current population is governed by the anti-dropout laws.

The SIMPCO region boasts a low unemployment rate as compared to Nebraska, Iowa, and the country. The rate continues to trend downward. An unintended consequence for local businesses of low unemployment rates is the absence of qualified workers to fill open positions. The CEDS Strategy Committee has identified this as an opportunity for the region to pinpoint ways to develop and retain a quality and qualified workforce.
Central to the outcome of the SIMPCO CEDS strategic direction and action plan is identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) of the region and determining ways to capitalize on the region’s strengths and opportunities while overcoming its weaknesses and threats.

A SWOT analysis assesses the region for trends, characteristics and situations that might contribute to the region’s economic growth or lead to its economic decline. Strengths and opportunities are items that bolster the economic viability of the SIMPCO region, with strengths being internal positive forces and opportunities being external elements that can lead to future economic benefit. Weaknesses and threats are actual and perceived items that harm the region’s economy. Weaknesses are internal issues that are damaging to the economy while threats are external influences that could negatively impact the region’s ability to grow.

The SWOT analysis was conducted by SIMPCO and the CEDS Strategy Committee as an intensive workshop-style process. Using the region as a whole unit, the Committee generated an exhaustive list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Each individual in the group then scored each item by its importance, intensity, and likelihood of occurrence where applicable. After that, items were ranked by score for each SWOT category with a list of items most important to the region and to each entity represented within the strategy committee, including both public and private interests.

Conducting the SWOT exercise in this way ensured that issues that were most to the group as a whole were those that would receive the most focus in the strategic direction and action plan. Items discussed in the SWOT analysis fell into several categories: economic development, workforce development, infrastructure improvement, diverse, affordable, and market-rate housing, and general quality of life. These categories from the Strategy Committee process naturally evolved into the goals of the plan.

The SWOT analysis was conducted over approximately two of the six strategy committee meetings, during which a large portion of the total meeting was utilized. The intent of the large amount of time spent was to create a solid framework for the strategic direction and action plan. Conversation surrounding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats specifically included actions and priorities that the Committee wanted to act upon. As a result, much of the strategic direction and action plan was completed, or at least was born, throughout the SWOT process.
**SWOT ANALYSIS**

The following two pages outlines the list of the top identified and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that were generated through several meetings of the CEDS Strategy Committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong agricultural economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good transportation network (rail, interstate, river, air)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low energy costs; dependable energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to economic growth by leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong public/private education; strong technical education for trade skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a workforce development agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low unemployment rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readily and easily available water and high-quality air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low commute time, good schools, and low cost of living (high quality of life)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legacy of manufacturing with a strong manufacturing base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Weaknesses</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for more housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in working-aged population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of entrepreneurial opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to attract and retain young workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging infrastructure (pipes, sewers, electrical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of apprenticeship opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining overall regional population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A segment of the manufacturing base was lost (transport grain for processing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate air service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of distance learning plan, as related to consolidated school districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a land grant university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunities

- Aggressive workforce development
- Retain businesses currently within the region
- Grow a local, skilled workforce with apprenticeships, internships, and career development centers
- Develop a career academy(s) with local school districts
- Improve infrastructure (roads, bridges, broadband, rail, airport, etc)
- Promote the low cost of living compared to other parts of the country
- Attract arts and entertainment options
- Create a consolidated, high-quality job website
- Market our regional successes more aggressively
- Become a more “kid-friendly” place
- Grow Population

Threats

- Filling the void left from the temporary employees of large-scale projects
- Worker retention
- Effective training in local colleges and trade schools to keep up with industry need and demand
- Lack of business succession planning
- Loss of political influence due to declining population
- An increase in workplace technology leads to fewer workers required
- Increasing crime rate
- Adverse environmental impacts
- Lack of qualified and eligible workers
STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND ACTION PLAN

As the CEDS strategy committee worked through the SWOT process, several centers of discussion emerged. Most individual items discussed fell under the categories of economic development, workforce development, infrastructure development, diverse, affordable, and market-rate housing, and quality of life. Those five categories became the pillars of the strategic direction and action plan that follows.

Before delving into the five categories that formed the strategic direction and action plan, the committee developed an overall vision statement to guide the next steps in the committee process (above). The goal and objectives for each category were developed with this vision in mind. After that, specific actions were generated for each goal with the most vital action items listed below. Note that while many actions are listed, the list is by no means comprehensive, nor are they listed in order of importance. This is because CEDS must be flexible enough to allow the region to capitalize on actions and opportunities not specifically listed in this plan that still reach one or all of the CEDS’s set goals.

Economic Development
The SIMPCO region is ripe with opportunities and new technologies, especially in the agricultural sector, and it is continuously seeking ways to diversify its economic base with more options, jobs, and resources for the citizens of the region. Strengthening current, local businesses, fostering a more amenable climate for new businesses and entrepreneurs, and offering incentives where appropriate are the major focal points for the economic development strategy. The following goals, objectives, and action items were developed with the intention of creating and promoting a diverse, sustainable economy for years to come.

CEDS Vision Statement

The SIMPCO region will be a preferred location for innovative businesses and entrepreneurs who desire a skilled workforce, quality infrastructure, high quality of life for residents, and a positive business environment in order to contribute to continual regional economic success.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To create high-skill, higher-wage jobs within innovative clusters as a means to diversify the regional economy and improve economic conditions in the area for years to come.

Objectives:

1. Develop a diverse industrial and commercial base that is competitive in the global economy
2. Continue supporting the creation of a successful environment for local business creation and local business retention
3. Target innovation clusters, such as “green” technology and value-added agriculture industries
4. Foster the growth of the job support network necessary to maintain the high-skill positions and cluster developments
Workforce Development

As discussed in the summary background, the region has been challenged by both the difficulty retaining working-age population and decreases in some key workforce categories related to trades, manufacturing, and wholesale trade. The region’s general population is also aging, with more workers at or nearing retirement age than those entering or remaining in the workforce. Continued growth in the region will rely upon not only new, more competitive, employment opportunities, but also on the creation and promotion of more education and training of potential employees. Extra effort and attention should be paid to educate, train, and incentivize residents throughout the region to create a skilled, reliable, and fruitful regional workforce.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Goal:** To develop and retain a highly-trained, competitive and entrepreneurial workforce that addresses and compliments the growing needs of the regional business community.
## Workforce Development (Cont.)

### Objectives:

1. Facilitate collaboration among economic development stakeholders to address the current and future employment and skill needs of the regional business community
2. Improve workforce retention for local businesses
3. Foster a workforce that can identify and execute on entrepreneurial opportunities
4. Support further educational opportunities for current and potential workers
5. Encourage local trades businesses to offer apprenticeship opportunities

### Actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Invested Parties</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a direct conduit between industries and potential workers by marketing</td>
<td>Private businesses, local education institutions, workforce development, Chambers of Commerce, ED Directors</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internships and apprenticeships at local education institutions and job fairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor employers and worker training programs to ensure they provide the skill</td>
<td>Private businesses, local education institutions, workforce development</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sets needed for available employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support entrepreneurial training through direct mentorship, networking, and</td>
<td>Private businesses, educational institutions, Chambers of Commerce</td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage area school districts to integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, and</td>
<td>Education institutions</td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (STEM) into educational programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support career academies</td>
<td>Education institutions, Chambers of Commerce, local entrepreneurship groups, City, County</td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a regional working group to market current business needs and desired target</td>
<td>SIMPCO, Chambers of Commerce, ED Directors, Private business leaders</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industries for future expansion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with existing programs to market potential employees for regional businesses</td>
<td>Regional economic and workforce development groups, state agencies and initiatives</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an unified economic development marketing message</td>
<td>SIMPCO, SEDC</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a regional database of trade-based positions.</td>
<td>Workforce Development, Chambers of Commerce, ED Directors, private business, SIMPCO</td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Infrastructure Improvement**

The strategy committee recognizes the importance of a viable, well-maintained, and diverse infrastructure program in recruiting and retaining businesses and residents in the region. In a CEDS-related public survey, respondents indicate that aging infrastructure is a major concern, and that infrastructure improvements are among the top two regional priority items. Connecting economic development efforts and infrastructure improvements continue to be a vital component of the CEDS strategy.

**INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT**

**Goal:** To invest in infrastructure improvements such as roads, bridges, sewers, water facilities, broadband, and multi-modal transportation systems that will strengthen and diversify the regional economy.

**Objectives:**

1. Maintain and expand the region’s infrastructure to address the needs of existing businesses and residences, as well as accommodate the needs of new and expanding businesses
2. Target infrastructure improvements to areas in the region with the greatest need
3. Pursue the development and maintenance of regional multi-modal transportation networks as a critical resource for economic growth

**Actions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Invested Parties</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue to support construction and expansion of all transportation modes through regional transportation efforts, applications for state and federal funding, and coordination of local planning needs</td>
<td>SIMPCO, Chambers of Commerce, ED Directors</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study the feasibility of incorporating additional airlines to serve the SIMPCO region</td>
<td>Chambers of Commerce, ED Directors, private business,</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve and expand the current rail system, incorporating an additional rail storage site</td>
<td>Chambers of Commerce, ED Directors, Private business leaders, SIMPCO</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist municipalities with water/sewer replacements and improvements</td>
<td>SIMPCO, local municipalities</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek fiber optic improvements for rural areas</td>
<td>SIMPCO, local municipality and county staffs, ED Directors</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue pressing IA, NE, and SD legislators to provide adequate funding for regional infrastructure</td>
<td>Chambers of Commerce, local legislators and elected officials, local business community, SIMPCO</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support efforts to renew barge traffic to Sioux City as an alternative mode of transporting goods</td>
<td>SIMPCO, private business, Chambers of Commerce, ED Directors</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diverse, Affordable, and Market Rate Housing

The SIMPCO region is committed to being a diverse and inclusive community, so developing housing options that appeal to a broad range of citizens is vital to creating an environment where people want to live and work. There are several large-scale projects in and around the Sioux City area currently that have created high demand for temporary and/or affordable housing options. The region has worked hard to fill the current housing gaps, target existing homes that need improvements or financial assistance, and prepare for current and future senior housing needs.

DIVERSE, AFFORDABLE, AND MARKET RATE HOUSING

Goal: To develop diverse housing options for all income levels to ensure the availability of housing supply for workers brought in by expanding businesses and new firms in the region.

Objectives:

1. Work with employers, state and local housing and development agencies, banks, and private developers to encourage the development of affordable housing on a regional basis
2. Balance workforce needs and elderly needs with housing needs as a means to identify the extent of need for diverse housing types in the region

Actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Invested Parties</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seek funding for housing rehabilitation, housing CDBG programming, homebuyer purchase programs, and housing assessments and plans</td>
<td>SIMPCO, local municipalities, ED Directors</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the development of multi-family housing to support young families, elderly populations, and low-income families to have options for purchase or rent</td>
<td>Local municipalities, SIMPCO, IA Workforce Development</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure city codes allow for and encourage affordable housing options</td>
<td>Local municipalities, SIMPCO, Workforce Development</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quality of Life

Many of the responses gathered from the CEDS survey indicate a strong importance placed on having a good quality of life; for example, safe neighborhoods, high-quality schools, shopping and dining options, recreation areas, low commute times, and reasonable cost of living. Oftentimes, quality of life amenities greatly affect an area's ability to retain and attract new workers. Ensuring that the region has employment options near public transportation and alternative modes of transportation, housing options that appeal to a broad range of families and lifestyles, and safe neighborhoods with high-quality educational opportunities is integral to the CEDS. The Strategy Committee spent considerable time focusing on quality of life goals and objectives that would draw new residents to the area and keep current residents calling this region “home”.
QUALITY OF LIFE

**Goal:** To encourage resident retention and to develop cost-effective, regional solutions to local problems that better serve residents while providing a high quality of life.

**Objectives:**

1. Encourage the development of a vibrant consumer environment including amenities such as personal services, eateries, child care, grocery stores and co-ops
2. Support projects that enhance and sustain the quality of life of the region, such as smart growth, walkable communities, and mixed-use development
3. Increase awareness among the region of the recreational and cultural resources, public services, and consumer alternatives available in every county of our region

**Actions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Invested Parties</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support and organize family-oriented cultural events, housing options, businesses, and institutions that are instrumental in maintaining the region’s high quality of life</td>
<td>SIMPCO, Chambers of Commerce, business associations, ED Directors, cultural groups, local education institutions</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving transportation access and connectivity to parks and natural resources</td>
<td>SIMPCO, Counties, IDOT, DNR</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that targeted businesses match the goals and objectives of the community</td>
<td>ED Directors, Chambers of Commerce</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage development near transportation hubs and along public transit corridors</td>
<td>Chambers of Commerce, ED Directors, business associations</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the crime rate through proactive enforcement</td>
<td>City/County local officials and law enforcement</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage communities to pursue downtown and Main Street revitalization</td>
<td>State/Federal Economic Development Agencies, Local government, regional economic development organizations</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support regional initiatives that positively impact the environment</td>
<td>SIMPCO, County and City governments, DNR, local organizations</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional economic prosperity is linked to an area’s ability to withstand, prevent, or quickly recover from major disruptions to its underlying economic base. In response to a more prominent role in the 2015 CEDS document, the strategy committee concentrated on identifying resources already in place that may respond to potential shocks to the economic region, as well as exploring ongoing efforts that may help the region mitigate the effects of potential shocks before they happen.

A set of potential shocks to the SIMPCO region includes damages due to weather events, such as flooding or tornadoes. For example, a very large flooding event occurred on the Missouri River and its tributaries in 2011. It not only devasted vast amounts of cropland and homes, but it completely disrupted all travel on Interstate 29 through the area. This crippled traffic on Interstate 29 from roughly south of Sioux City, IA to St. Joseph, MO for several weeks during that summer, impacting north/south regional business and tourist traffic. The region had and continues to have a Local Emergency Planning Council, as well as a Tri-State Incident Management Team. These were both steady-state initiatives that helped coordinate recovery efforts and emergency response to road closures and other significant obstacles during and after the flood.

Another major shock to the economy could arise from a major employer leaving the area the SIMPCO region. To counteract this, the region has measures in place to monitor potential employer-related regional setbacks and strategic groups in place to respond to other positive and negative economic events. The region has a very low unemployment rate (4.4%, SIMPCO region, Dec 2013), so when large employers either leave the area or arrive as a new employer, the area must work hard to either attract new workers or assist displaced workers with viable alternatives. For example, two major construction projects simultaneously began work in Woodbury County in 2014; CF Industries, Inc, began a $1.9 billion nitrogen plant expansion and Hard Rock Hotel and Casino built a $128 million facility in the heart of downtown Sioux City. Both together demanded hundreds of workers, but while every effort was made to employ local companies, the sheer volume needed required temporary workers be located to Sioux City. This strained the local housing market, so the SIMPCO region quickly mobilized the Grow Siouxland Task Force to address that issue, among others. The group was comprised of representatives from CF Industries, Inc, Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, IDOT, the County Roads and Planning Departments, emergency response professionals, SIMPCO, IDNR, and many other government and private individuals that came together to address the needs of temporary workers and previous residents. Though the Task Force was temporary, a precedent was set for regional collaboration with future large-scale projects.

Given these experiences, the SIMPCO region has actively prepared to mitigate economic impacts from weather, employment, and disaster-related shocks to its economic base with both steady-state initiatives, those which plan for and implement resilience, and responsive initiatives, the establishment of information networks. Steady-state and responsive initiatives related to creating a stronger SIMPCO region are as follows:
Steady-State Initiatives:

- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) – all counties
- Tri-State Incident Management Team
- County Emergency Operations Plans
- County Recovery Plans
- Community Evacuation Planning – Sioux City
- Pandemic Flu Committee (Woodbury County, Dakota County, Sioux City)
- The Siouxland Initiative – Chamber of Commerce, regional economic development
- Economic Development Corporations – all counties, business retainage visits, entrepreneurial support, site location services

Responsive Initiatives:

- County Multi-jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plans
- Local Emergency Planning Commission (LEPC) - Critical Training Exercises for all first responders

The region continues to implement steady-state and responsive initiatives through its CEDS Strategy Committee. The Committee plans to regularly meet and discuss the state of the regional economy, the status of projects which pursue the goals of the CEDS, and future resiliency efforts. These may include actively identifying persistent economic challenges other than those presented in this plan, preparing for other disruptions by developing “early-warning” tools and emergency strategies, and building creating economic flexibility by creating new partnerships. Between existing and future resiliency efforts, the region will be set to handle current or potential economic shocks to its base.
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The 2015 CEDS five-year plan is a thorough analysis of the current condition and perception of the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and offers goals, objectives, and actions to support growth from its current conditions. Measurable performance metrics are essential to the document in order to ensure actions are being initiated, projects are being documented, and subsequent results are quantified. The purpose of this section is to state evaluation methods of the CEDS document and assure the successful implementation of the plan.

The concept of regional wealth is weighed heavily when evaluating the effectiveness of the CEDS goals and objectives. To measure progress related to overall job growth and investments in the region, several measures will be included in future evaluations. While some measures directly measure job growth and wealth in the region, there are several indirect measures that contribute to regional wealth by concentrating on the built environment, social issues, cultural assets, educational offerings, and natural resources.

- Develop and utilize a regional reporting system that includes data for each county
- Regional synchronistic survey
- Number of jobs created after the implementation of the CEDS
- Number and types of investments taken in the region
- Number of jobs retained in the region
- Employment and unemployment figures
- Changes in the economic environment of the region
- Educational attainment
- Poverty rates
- Median household income
- Organizations forged to build partnerships among invested partners to increase economic resiliency within the region
- Monitor crime rates
- Monitor water/air quality
- Housing statistics
- Walkability score
- Demographics
- Monitor county business patterns to commute business formation rate/declines

The CEDS Committee will reconvene to evaluate the effectiveness of the CEDS goals and objectives as written, in addition to pursuing future resiliency efforts. Individual projects throughout the region will be examined for congruency to the CEDS goals and objectives, and will be documented as such. In addition to evaluation of current actions within the year, the committee will also discuss whether the CEDS document is relevant, and if current implementation and action items are meeting the expectation of the region. Finally, the committee will suggest changes to the document for future updates that may make it more effective for the region’s use.