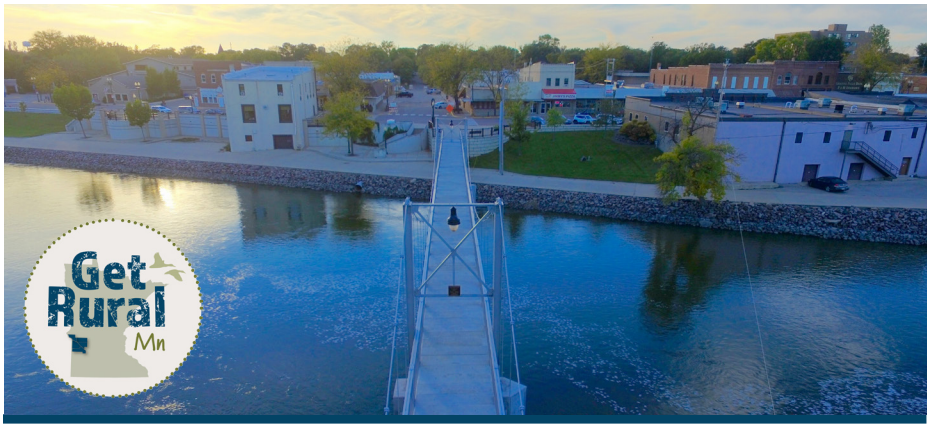
Get Rural MN

Upper Minnesota Valley
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Helping Communities Prosper



Why Market the Region? *To attract and retain residents.*

Based off of the UMVRDC's 5-year assessment that was sent out to all of the Local Units of Government within Region 6W, the TOP issue identified was marketing our communities/area to attract new residents, workers and families.

According to research completed in our region Ben Winchester, a Research Fellow at the University of MN Extension Center for Community Vitality suggests that most rural Minnesota counties including those in Region 6W are really experiencing a "brain gain". Statistics show that although our bright and talented youth are leaving for college there is an influx of 35-44 year olds that are coming into the region bringing their education, experience, wealth and children.

Many of them are not coming for a job nor have family ties, many are just looking for better *quality of life* and are willing to leave a higher paying job in the cities for the what the rural areas have to offer. The notion of people coming into the region on their own got a few economic developers thinking, what if we started marketing to this demographic? Would more people come? Would more people stay?

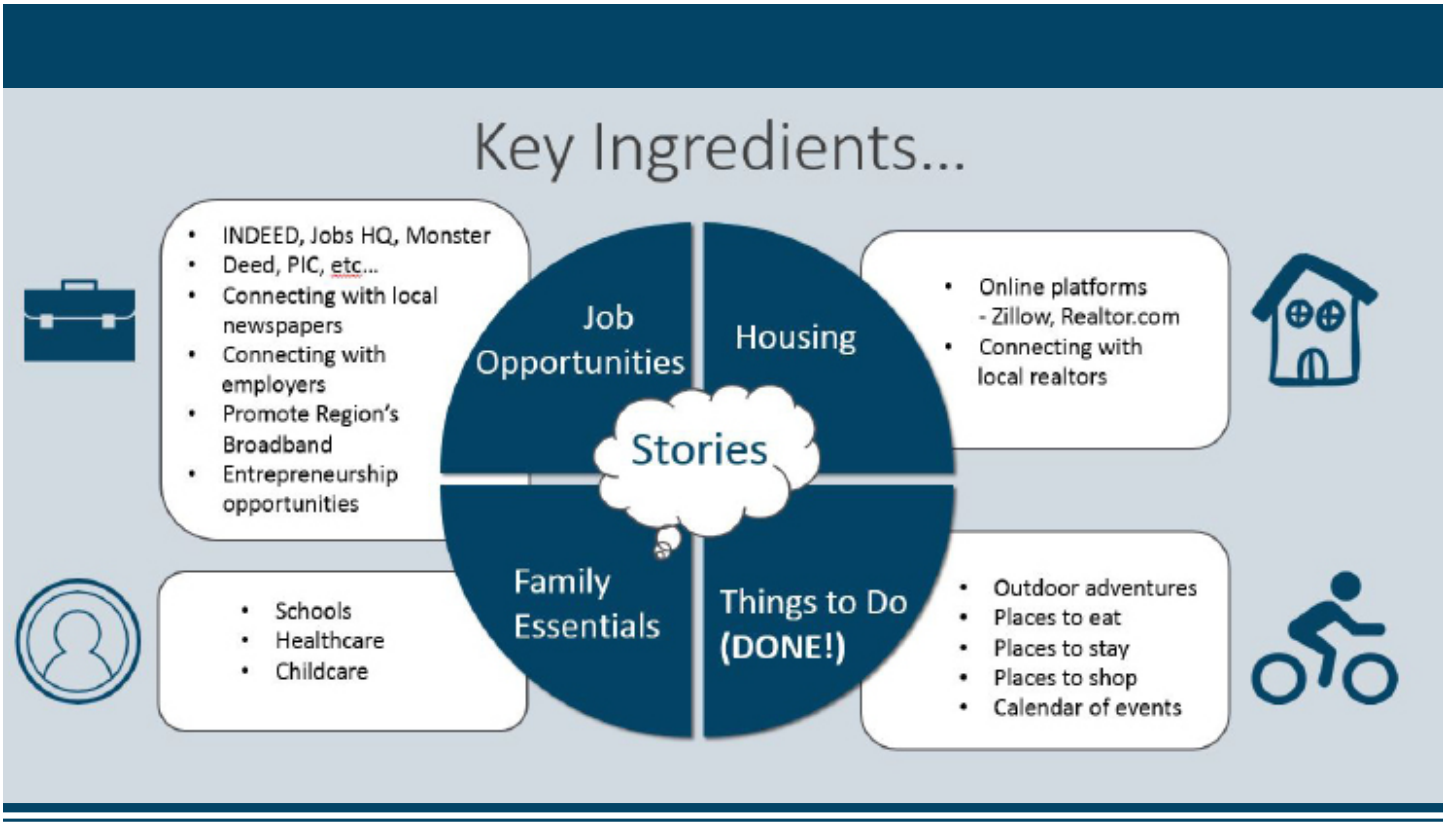
Newcomers will….

1. **Fill existing job openings**
2. **Start new businesses or take over existing ones**
3. **Introduce more kids into schools**
4. **Become new home owners**
5. **Become new taxpayers**
6. **Become new community leaders**

Quick Facts!

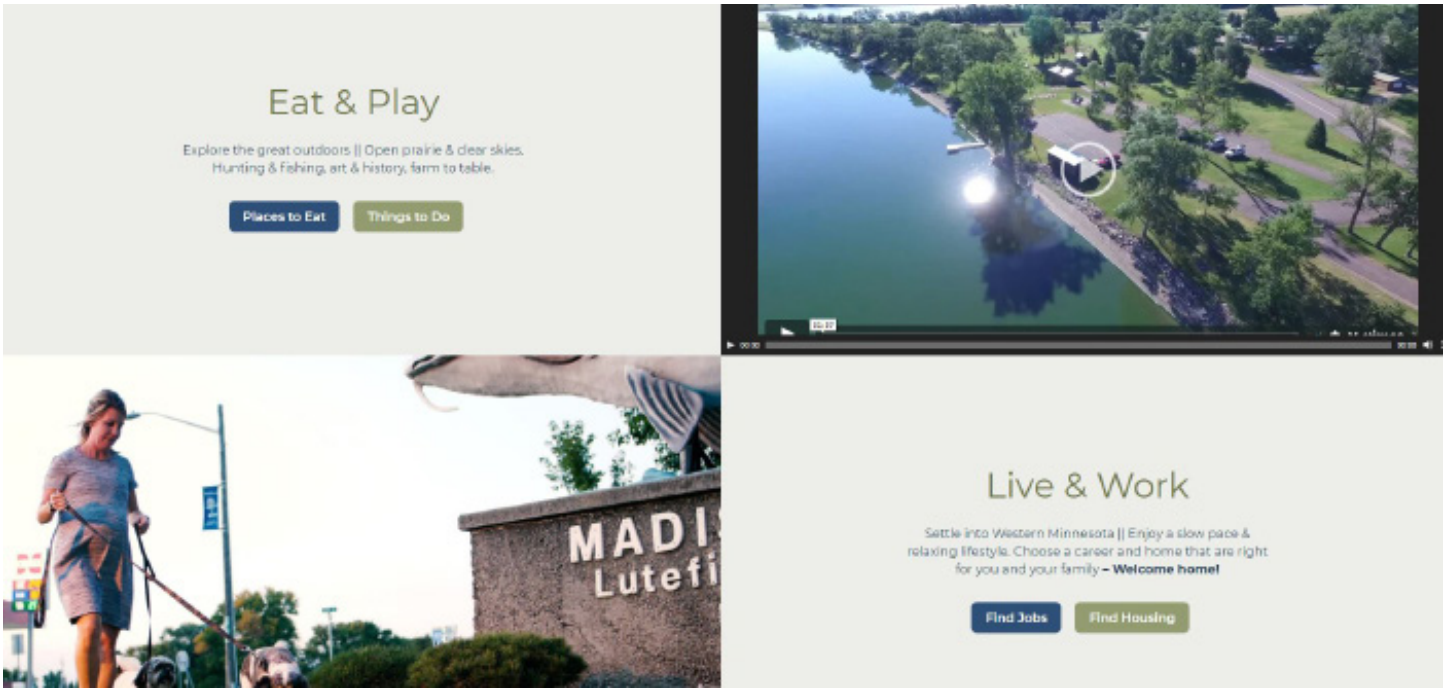
According to the "Regional Recruitment: Strategies to Attract and Retain Newcomers" report....Key findings include:

- (77%) Moved to find a less congested place to live.
- (75%) Moved for a better environment for raising children.
- (69%) Moved to find better quality local schools.
- (66%) Moved for lower housing costs.
- (63%) Moved to find more outdoor recreational activities.
- (53%) Moved for lower the cost of living.
- 75% of respondents moved with their spouse/partner. 25% moved alone. 51% moved with children.
- 45% have occupational skills in management, business, financial, or professional fields. A total of 50% of respondents were trained in another field or profession that they are currently not utilizing.
- In their previous community, 36% held a leadership role in a community, church, school, civic, or any other type of group or organization. This rose to 60% for those in their current community.
- In their previous community, 62% donated money to local community organizations, charities or causes. This rose to 81% in their current community.



Before you are a local you are a visitor. We have a well-developed and supported regional brand and marketing system already in place - **Prairie Waters Regional Tourism**. Prairie Waters is a one stop shop for all the things to do within the region. The overall goal is to expand on the Prairie Waters program and offer information to convert those visitors into new residents by creating a one stop shop of information for a potential newcomer. We want to create a system that makes it easy for someone to get the information they need to make a move to our region. This includes developing the following:

- Expanding the www.prairiewaters website to include information and links to key decision making resources: employment opportunities, housing, things to do, resources for families (schools, healthcare, childcare etc).
  - Work with the schools in the region to create a marketing message that showcases what their school offers and what they are proud of. Making it easier for both new school employees and new families to find out information about each school.
  - Provide access to local information such as education, childcare, healthcare, and other local resources.
  - Pull housing listings from online platforms. Connect with local realtors.
  - Work with DEED to customize a cost of living tool for our region.
  - Work with local EDA's to gather entrepreneur opportunities and services in the region. This includes services like business plan development and financing as well as business opportunities for sale.
  - Work with DEED, local newspapers and other job posting outlets to develop a system for aggregating the variety of jobs that are available in our region. Also work with Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council to integrate their current workforce marketing efforts.



- A regional network that agrees to support and use the Get Rural brand. This includes links on local websites, sharing of social media posts, integrating logos and links into email etc.
- A network of community navigators that can help answer questions and navigate newcomers to resources they are interested in (city clerks, chamber managers, economic development staff).
- A network of local business and organizational partners that are willing to share and promote the online portal as a resource for their potential new employees. Provide links to Get Rural videos and the website to showcase the region for new employees.
- A network of locals who will be willing to contract to provide ongoing narrative, photo, and video posts.
- Continuing to collect and produce high quality visuals of our region. This will include new videos, photos, interviews and stories.

Economic Impact

- In a focus group of "newcomer" households in the five-county region, 46% reported household incomes of $75,000 or greater in 2009.
- The newcomers reported total household incomes of $3.7 million in 2009.
- Due to the spending of this income, an additional $1.7 million in economic output was created in the five-county region in 2009.
- This included 16 additional jobs and $433,000 in labor income. In other words, for every 3 "newcomer" households, 1 existing household, on average, received $27,000 in new income.
- In total, the 52 "newcomer" households created $132,000 in state and local tax collections in 2009.

What have we done?

Thanks to our partnership with the Blandin Foundation, the UMVRDC EDA and Prairie Waters Programs, over the past two years we were able to complete the following:

- Created tourism and lifestyle sideshows for each Prairie Waters city/county members. These sideshows can be embedded directly onto a website, social media platforms or used on any other online marketing platform
- Collected new imagery/content of the region including photos, videos, interviews, marketing narratives for community events. These are all free and accessible to the region through an online file sharing platform {Dropbox}.
- Completed 10 high quality videos showcasing the region.
- Created multiple social media feeds: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Vimeo. Actively posting through all these channels.
- Convened regional stakeholder group to provide strategic planning and input on the development of this project.
- Engaged consultant from the Return to Rural project in Alberta, Canada to assist with branding and messaging with regional stakeholders.
- UMVRDC staff met and/or made a connection with each city over 1,000 population in our region to discuss the expansion of the program.
- Met with Private Industry Council to learn more about their Hire Wire initiative to identify ways we could collaborate.
- Engaged web consultant in discussions about the development of the online portal - redesigned the Prairie Waters website. Identified key partners that will be required to provide and maintain regional information.
- Present budget/ work plan to cities and counties for their 2018 budget cycle.
- Expand the Prairie Waters website with information on employment, housing, healthcare, education, childcare, etc.

The NEXT steps … 2018

- Seek other grant resources.
- Continue to collect imagery. Work with drone pilot and interns.
- Continue to run social media campaigns.
- Continue to create stories.
- Meet with each Prairie Waters member city and county to show them how to access and use online digital resources. Add slideshow to their website, download photos for their website, use the Get Rural logo etc.
- Identify key stakeholders to represent different portions of the region - local communicators/bloggers
- Create business and property profiles.
- Develop relationships with local partners - newspapers (jobs), realtors (housing), schools (family essentials), etc...
- Continue to have conversations with local partners and stakeholders in the region about the development and sustainability of this program. Gather commitments and support.