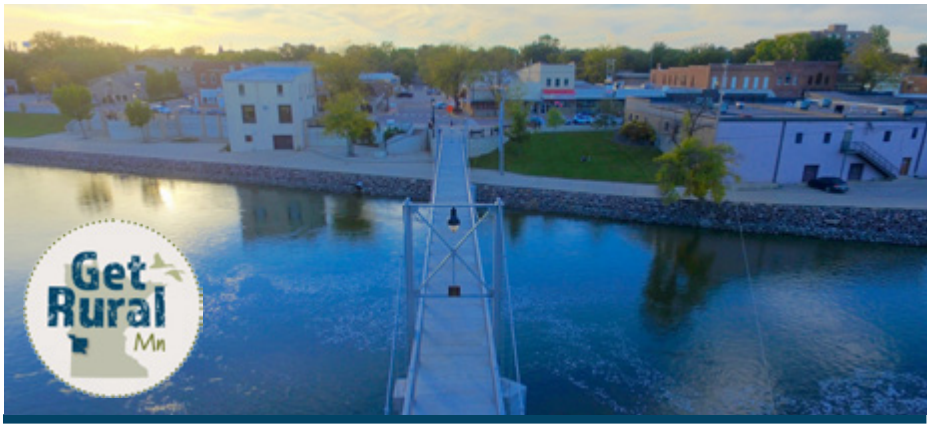
Get Rural MN

Upper Minnesota Valley
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Helping Communities Prosper



Why do we want to do this?

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?

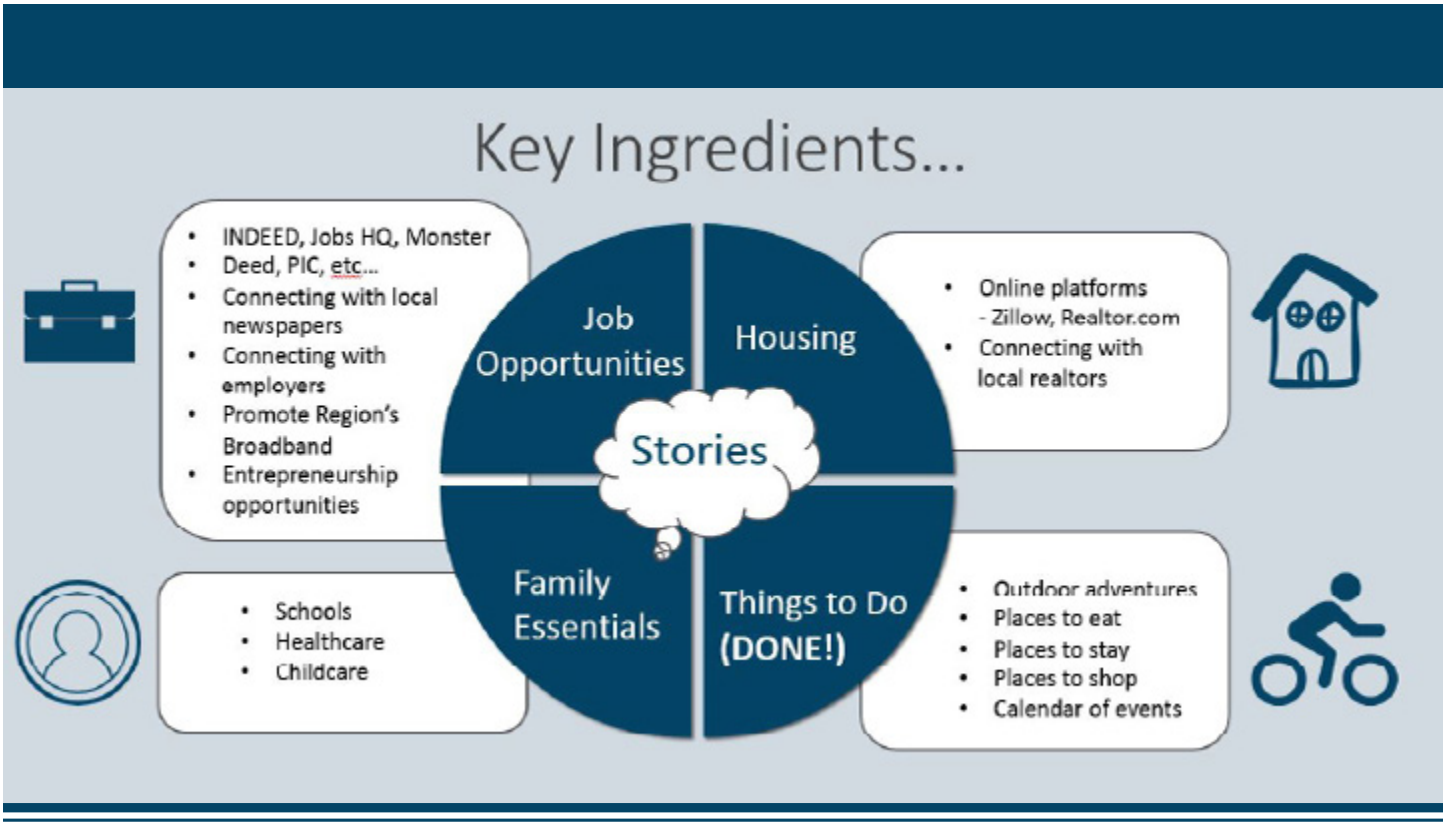
Newcomers will....

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*. We want to build on that program and offer information to convert those visitors into new residents. 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:

- An online portal that has information and links to key decision making resources: employment opportunities, housing, things to do, resources for families (schools, daycare, etc). We plan to expand the Prairie Waters website to include these additional topics.

  - 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.

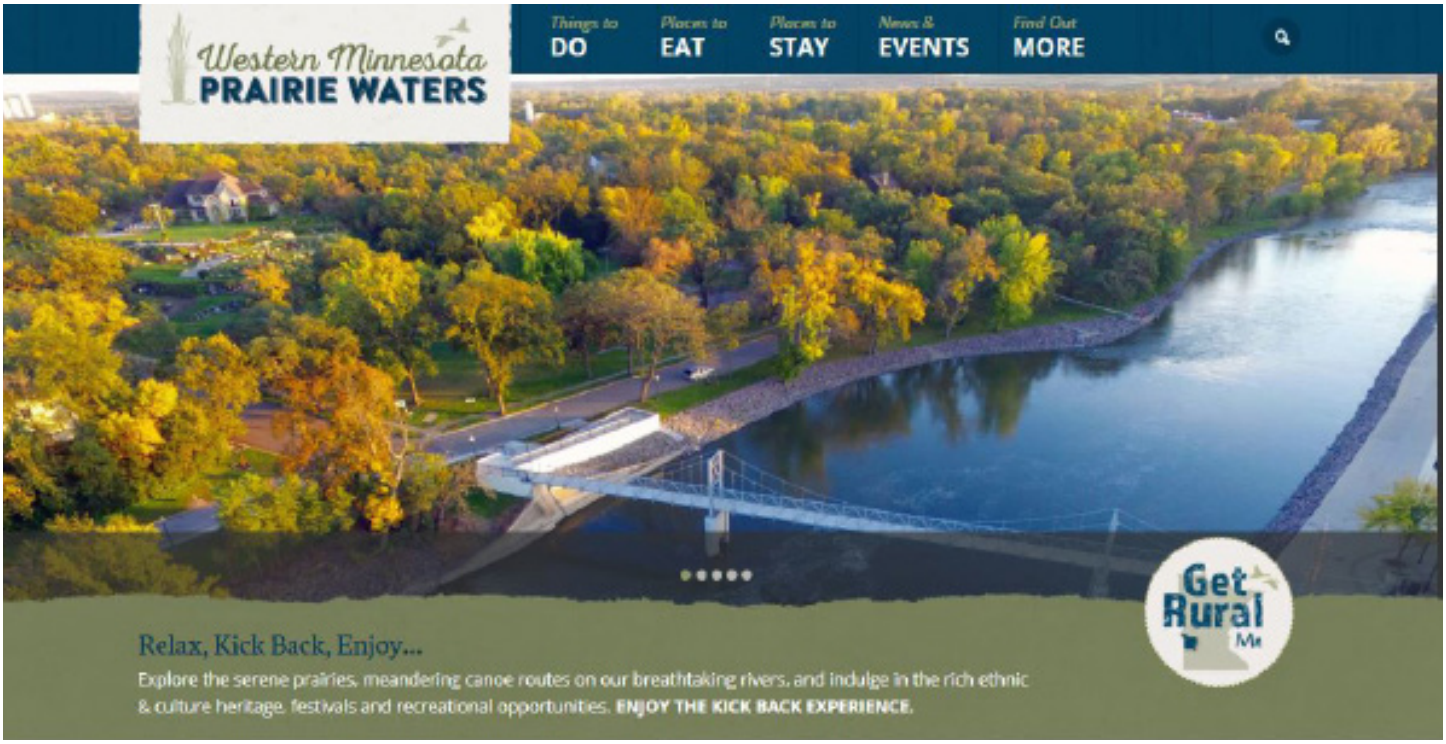
  - Provide access to local information like daycare, healthcare, and other local resources.

  - Develop a way to showcase housing options in the region. This includes the development of an online tool to gather homes for sale or rent.

  - 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 PIC 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 (modeled after Mn Bump's Media Associate program).
- Continuing to collect and produce high quality visuals of our region. This will include new videos, photos and interviews or stories of people and places.

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?

Based on previous work conducted in our region the RDC sought grant funding from the Blandin Foundation and started to discuss expanding the focus of Prairie Waters to be more than just a tourism marketing program.

- Recently expanded all Prairie Waters information to include all five counties (website and visitors guide).
- Created tourism and lifestyle slideshow for all five counties and the Prairie Waters city members to incorporate on their website or other online platforms.
- Collected tons of new imagery for 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.
- 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 city & chamber staff to share the concept and gather feedback.
- Met with PIC 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. Identified key partners that will be required to provide and maintain regional information.

The NEXT steps ... Now-Dec 2017

- Finalize online portal plans and costs - expansion of Prairie Waters website
- Develop master budget for the expansion of the Prairie Waters Program.
- Present budget to cities and counties for their 2018 budget cycle.
- Seek other grant resources for the initial startup of this project.
- Continue to collect imagery. Work with drone pilot and interns.
- Continue to run social media campaigns.
- Complete and publish existing local video stories. Identify video stories that could relate to potential newcomers lifestyle situation. Make plans to collect any additional stories. Seek a contract with a professional videographer to develop key 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
- 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.

Will you support this idea and help us share with others?