



First District News

418 18th Avenue NE | PO BOX 1207 | Watertown, SD 57201

Phone: (605) 882-5115 | Fax: (605) 882-5049 | Web: <http://association.1stdistrict.org/>

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Missouri River Energy Services to Build Toronto Power Station

Missouri River Energy Services (MRES) is currently evaluating the feasibility of building a 145-MW natural gas plant near Toronto, South Dakota, aimed at ensuring the delivery of reliable, cost-effective and long-term energy solutions to meet the demands of electric consumers. The project is currently in the design phase.

A site for the project has been identified approximately two miles north of Toronto, the project is to be constructed near a natural gas pipeline and a four-mile electric transmission line and substation will be constructed as part of the project. A Local Review Committee representing County Commissioners, School Districts and municipalities within the affected area defined by the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission will be reviewing the social and economic impacts of the proposed project in the coming months. For more information go to <https://www.mrenergy.com/energy-resources/generation>



FUNDS AWARDED



Brookings—\$8,000,000 ARPA Grant

Brookings Deuel Rural Water—\$1,357,708 ARPA Grant

Flandreau—SDDOT TAP Grant \$681,088

Grant Roberts Rural Water (Corona)—\$1,023,690 ARPA Grant

Joint Well Field Inc.—\$1,440,459 ARPA Grant

Kingbrook Rural Water—\$4,972,298 ARPA Grant

Lake Preston —SDDOT TAP Grant \$550,242

Madison/Lake Area Improvement Corporation—CDBG Grant \$1,020,000

Moody County/Boys and Girls Club—CDBG Grant \$740,000

Shared Resources—\$10,000,000 ARPA Grant

Sioux Rural Water—\$765,583 ARPA Grant



MY THOUGHTS...

By: Todd A. Kays



The First District is nearing the completion of the development of its 2024-2029 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The 2024-2029 CEDS is designed to bring together the public and private sectors within the First District in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen our regional economies thereby improving the overall living conditions for residents of the region.

Beginning in September 2023, the First District's Governing Body (CEDS Committee), with assistance of the First District Staff, collaborated with the First District member local units of government, economic development groups, businesses, State agencies and area leaders to develop a framework for the promotion of a regional economic growth strategy. First District staff conducted a regional economic development survey; held four CEDS committee meetings and eleven community outreach meetings throughout the district to obtain feedback on the survey, SWOT analysis, and proposed goals and objectives.

The CEDS analyzes the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources. An integral component of the development of the CEDS is the regional economic development survey. The purpose of the survey was to determine the perception of the local and regional economy as well as identifying local and regional needs in cities, counties and economic development organizations in the First District. The survey instrument was provided to over four hundred individuals representing 135 entities, including, economic development professionals, city and county elected officials, city and county staff, state and regional organizations, nonprofits, private businesses and education officials. The survey asked respondents to grade various issues that communities commonly face and assess which of these issues require more attention or the most improvement. The survey focused on local and regional economic issues. While each community, county and economic development entity had specific needs, the following is a summary of the survey results.

Respondents were asked to assess the assets and challenges of the region related to attracting and encouraging economic development.

Most Important Local/Regional Economic Development Resources/Strengths

- Quality of Life
- Existing Educational Facilities
- Existing Economy (Agricultural, Manufacturing)
- Available Infrastructure
- Leadership
- Business Opportunity
- Workforce

By far, the greatest resource/strength identified was that this area is a good place to live "quality of life." Many respondents noted proximity to larger metropolitan areas such as Sioux Falls as primary assets or strengths. In addition, respondents repeatedly talked about location in terms of access to highways and Interstates. After quality of life, the other major strengths identified were excellent local schools/access to higher education, a strong economy/business-friendly climate, good infrastructure/utilities, and strong leadership.



Major Challenges/Liabilities to Attracting and Encouraging Economic Development

- Available Affordable Housing
- Available Daycare Options
- Available Qualified Workforce
- Declining Population Base
- Availability of “Spec” Buildings and/or Development Property
- Aging Infrastructure
- Available Retail Opportunities
- Distance and Isolation from Markets (Rural Setting)

Some of the same areas that respondents listed as major strengths also appeared as major challenges or weaknesses. For example, workforce was the biggest challenge identified by respondents followed by maintaining the region’s population base. In terms of workforce, respondents focused on the lack of available labor, whereas in the previous question respondents primarily identified workforce as a strength based on work ethic. Many communities identified the lack of available “spec” buildings and/or commercial development property as well as affordable and affordable housing and day care options as necessary to capitalize on economic development opportunities as being deficient. While available infrastructure was listed as a strength, the age of infrastructure is also of concern.

To help address their economic and community concerns, the regional survey asked respondents to identify the top priorities to improving the local and regional economy.

Top Priorities/Opportunities to Improve Local and Regional Economy

1. Attracting new companies and/or skilled workers (#1 in 2016 and 2021)
2. Attracting/retaining youth and young families (#2 in 2016 and 2021)
3. Improving access and availability to affordable housing opportunities (#3 in 2016 and 2021)
4. Improving public infrastructure (#6 in 2016 and 2021)
5. Developing retail/service businesses (#4 in 2016 and 2021)
6. Growing existing local companies (#7 in 2021)
7. Develop land/buildings for industrial/business parks (#5 in 2016 and #6 in 2021)

The “priorities/opportunities” to success identified by respondents tend to reflect the top issues previously identified. Attracting new companies and/or workers and retaining youth and families was paramount. Having safe and affordable housing available for these young families was also an identified objective. Skilled labor is critical to meet the needs of businesses that want to locate or expand in the region’s communities as well as the availability of adequate infrastructure. As in 2016 and 2021, respondents pointed to the need to develop land and commercial buildings to accommodate expanding industries to attract industries to the community.

The 2024-2029 (CEDS) document is the result of a process which identified the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and then translated the results into goals, objectives, strategies, and potential action items to improve the local and regional economy of northeast South Dakota. Many hours of Staff and CEDS Committee time was dedicated in the preparation of this plan which will guide the First District’s efforts for the next five years.

A copy of the 2024-2029 CEDS is available for review at <https://association.1stdistrict.org/cedsplan/> The First District Governing Body will be meeting at 12 p.m. on Thursday, September 26, 2024, to review and adopt the CEDS. Lunch will be provided with an RSVP requested by September 20, 2024.

**First District
Governing Body Officers**

Mike Bartley.....Chairperson
Brookings County Commissioner
Gary Jaeger.....Vice Chairperson
Deuel County
Myron Johnson.....Secretary
Codington County Commissioner
Todd A. Kays.....Executive Director

Upcoming Events

September 26—Governing Body, First District
Office (RSVP by September 20)

October 14—Columbus Day, Office Closed

November 11—Veterans Day, Office Closed

November 28-29—Thanksgiving, Office Closed

DEADLINES FOR SUBMITTING DOCUMENTS TO THIS OFFICE MAY BE PRIOR TO DEADLINES LISTED HERE. PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE.

October 15—Bridge Improvement Plan Deadline

April 30, July 31, Oct. 31, & Jan. 31—Deadlines for

Local Infrastructure Improvement Program

April 1, July 1, Oct. 1, & Jan. 1—Deadlines for State
Revolving Fund (SRF) Applications

April 1 & Oct. 1—Deadlines for CDBG Applications

May 1, Aug. 1, Oct. 1, & Feb. 1—Deadlines for
State Water Plan (SWP) Applications



31st Annual Planning and Zoning Conference

The South Dakota Planners Association will conduct its 31st Annual Planning and Zoning Conference October 22-23, 2024 at The Box in Box Elder, South Dakota. The conference will offer opportunities for both lay and professional land use planners to broaden their experience. More information may be found at <https://sdplanners.org/event-5514772>

