

**FOCUS 2020**

**QUALITY OF PLACE  
SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

**APRIL 22, 2009**

## Executive Summary

How does the “quality of place” or “quality of life” in this community rate when measured against the wants and needs of those who live here?

Where are we now and where do we want to be in the future?

The Quality of Place committee, after months of examining our community, determined that our city and region do indeed have many strong points, from healthcare to job opportunities to recreation and numerous categories in between. At the same time, the committee was able to identify opportunities for improvements, which if implemented, will improve our quality of place and our odds for growth and prosperity.

Our committee defined Quality of Place as those characteristics that make a region distinctive and attractive as a place to live and work, including its natural and man-made surroundings, civic traditions, educational institutions, employment and recreational opportunities, and cultural amenities.

The committee is aware that locations with favorable quality of place characteristics tend to experience both greater economic and population growth. Our challenge was to identify those sometimes elusive categories of “place” that would allow the committee to determine where our community is meeting the standard, where it falls short, and to then make recommendations for improvement.

Our committee ultimately developed 12 indicators from which we attempted to define “quality of place.” They are: aesthetics, economics (jobs, work force, technology), schools, housing, health and wellness, churches, recreation, entertainment and culture, retail services, senior citizen services, tourism, and diversity.

In each category, the committee was able to identify strengths and explain how each category contributed to quality of life here. At the same time, these categories opened avenues for improvement. Both the strengths and areas of improvement are listed in the information that follows this summary.

While the committee ranked the opportunities within each category, it did not rank the 12 overall categories. And since the financial resources that must accompany most of the opportunities were not identified, the timetable for their implementation must be largely undetermined. Our report, however, does indicate short and long-term timelines for each category.

Our conclusion is that if many or most of the opportunities for improvement recommended by the committee come to pass, our community will be a better place to live, and well-positioned to grow and prosper in the future.

# Indicators

## I. Aesthetics

### **Strengths:**

Preservation and utilization of historical buildings such as the (Carnegie Resource Center, Masonic Temple)

Development south of I-90

Development along bypass

Effort by Mitchell Main Street...And Beyond!

Continued tree planting programs

City beautification programs already in place

Parks

Housing developments

### **Opportunities for Improvements:**

1. Enhance historical significance of the Corn Palace city-wide via a Bronze Sculpture Walk
2. Improve city entrances with green space, signage, etc. (state regulations investigated)
3. Encourage Mitchell Main Street...and Beyond! group to create a BID or TIF district to fund downtown improvements such as roof and tuck pointing, or consult with the City and the existing program for façade improvement.
4. Upkeep of property: Residential/Commercial/Rental; review ordinances in place and add additional ordinances if necessary and seek greater city involvement for enforcement.
5. New buildings need to be aesthetically pleasing: Recommendation to add a landscape ordinance for existing properties as well as all new construction projects.
6. Green space in parking lots throughout the city.
7. Enforce the litter laws throughout the community.
8. Promote litter clean-up crews and "Adopt a Highway Program."
9. Consider burying power lines.

*Timeline: mid term, 1-3 years*

## **II. Economic Opportunities, Work Force/Jobs/Technology**

### **Strengths:**

Low unemployment rate

Welcoming community

South Dakota Department of Labor

Complete Career Center (CCC)

Level of technology

Manufacturing opportunities

Mitchell Area Development Corp. separate from the Chamber is positive

Professional Services: Legal, medical, investments, banking and insurance satisfactory

### **Opportunities for Improvement:**

1. Work with DWU, Center for Entrepreneurship and business people to offer mentorship programs and/or seminars for new business.
2. Small Business Development Center offers assistance to those seeking help while establishing a business. It needs to be more visible or more highly promoted.

*Timeline: short term, 1 year or less*

## **III. Schools**

### **Strengths:**

Mitchell Public Schools

Mitchell Christian School

John Paul II Catholic School

Dakota Wesleyan University

Mitchell Technical Institute

Longfellow Elementary new construction project

Safe schools

Dual credit

### **Opportunities for Improvement:**

1. DWU/MHS build a football stadium.
2. New indoor pool facilities/options (not necessarily at MMS...)
3. New high school: This committee wants to continue its support and encourage the construction of a new high school sooner rather than later.
4. Promoting community usage of both DWU and community library.
5. Investigate whether dual credit can be enhanced.
6. Request for the addition of dorms via the private sector on the MTI Campus.

*Timeline: longer term, 1-5 years.*

## IV. Housing

### **Strengths:**

Spring city clean up

Housing zoning

New developments

Number of apartments, duplexes, condos

Affordable housing

### **Opportunities for Improvement:**

1. Ordinances to regulate exterior home maintenance: Promote and support the usage of the city clean-up coupons.
2. Implement and enforce via the city council and city building inspector the ICC. Property Maintenance Code.
3. Review the nuisance ordinance.
4. Sidewalk improvement.

*Timeline: short term, 1 year or less*

## V. Health/Wellness

### **Strengths:**

Exceptional healthcare

Number of physicians high relative to communities our size

Continues to be a strong effort to enhance medical and professional services

Cancer center

Dental facilities

Chiropractic facilities

Physical therapy/therapists

Optometric Clinics

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

1. Wellness/indoor aquatic center – community partnership (Mitchell School District, Avera Queen of Peace City of Mitchell, Dakota Wesleyan University).
2. Strongly encourage the addition of bike lanes on city streets. The lack of such lanes has become a safety issue for children and adults alike.

*Timeline: longer term, 1-3 years*

## **VI. Churches**

### **Strengths:**

Good variety

Youth programs

New church building additions

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

1. A recommendation was made to encourage churches throughout the community to pool their resources in order to provide additional services.

*Timeline: short term, 1 year or less*

## **VII. Recreation/Lake Mitchell**

### **Strengths:**

Green space and parks

Outdoor Aquatic Center

Baseball field stadium, concessions

New soccer fields

Extended bike /hiking trails

Trap shooting range

Boating /Fishing

Hunting

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

1. Support an accelerated program to improve and eventually eliminate the existing algae problem at the lake. Introduce a program that would support the addition of grasses and reed buffers which once established would provide filtration and assist with erosion issues along with alleviating some of the algae issues.
2. Continued development of bike/walking trails.
3. Develop a primitive campsite on the western side of Lake Mitchell with a minimal self-pay admittance fee.
4. Support the development of public access areas around the lake.
5. Additional gym space.
6. Consider the development of camper cabins and additional sites for trailer campers on the wood tree farm on the south side of Lake Mitchell.
7. Expansion of tennis courts.
8. Strongly promote the existing Canoe rental (Lake Mitchell/James River) program
9. Consideration of MHS track for public use.
10. Support the development of Sandy Beach and Kibbee Park.
11. Picnic areas (Picnic shelter built by spillway).

12. Enforce litter laws.
13. Creative use of old City dumpsite.
14. Potential for 4-Wheeler trail/racing.

*Timeline: Longer term, 1-3 years*

## **VIII. Entertainment/Cultural and Educational Events**

### **Strengths:**

Spring, Summer & Fall Sporting Events  
Community Theater  
Movie Theaters  
Bowling  
Concert Series  
Corn Palace Festival  
Stampede Rodeo  
Dakota Wesleyan University  
High School entertainment  
Concerts (Amphitheater)  
McGovern Library

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

1. Website development for all community activities within the community, surrounding areas and for tourists: register and log-in scenario. Monitor and control content to some level. Require a user name and password.
2. Create park/pathway with life-size bronze sculptures of the famous performers/politicians who have appeared at the Corn Palace.
3. More indoor non-athletic, interactive family activities independent of but within the Corn Palace.

*Timeline: short term, 1-2 years.*

## **IX. City Retailers/Restaurants/Night Life/Hospitality**

### **Strengths:**

Convention Visitors Bureau  
Specialty shops downtown  
Good efforts on the part of Mitchell Main Street...And Beyond!  
New development on south side  
Non-smoking bars  
Services important

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

1. Improve the appearance of empty stores on Main Street.
2. Improve buildings.
3. Recommendations received for expanded hours downtown.
4. Research and consider ways to improve alleys and “back half” of Main Street.
5. More specialty shops downtown.

*Timeline: long term: 1-5 years*

## **X. Senior Citizens Support and Services**

### **Strengths:**

James Valley Community Center, a nice facility, convenient  
RSVP service  
Independent/assisted living facilities

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

1. Intergenerational activities
2. Alzheimer’s facility
3. Additional promotion

*Timeline: short and long term*

## **XI. Tourism/Chamber of Commerce**

### **Strengths:**

Good location  
Corn Palace  
Dakota Discovery Museum  
Prehistoric Indian Village Museum  
McGovern Library

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

1. Support the updating and redoing of the Corn Palace billboards on highways and the Interstate.
2. Signage on route to Corn Palace is inadequate. Encourage an evaluation.
3. “Harvest Festival” needs expansion and upgrade.
4. Increase tourism announcements on radio.
5. Investigate feasibility of a trolley for tourists.

*Timeline: Longer term, 1-3 years*

## **XII. Diversity (Age, Gender, Economic and Race)**

### **Strengths:**

Currently, individuals and families from many ethnic groups are present on our university campus, technical school, public and private school system, hospital and clinics, manufacturing, landscaping and many other businesses within and around Mitchell.

### **Opportunity for Improvement**

1. Review and evaluate whether programs or educational tools exist to assist with welcoming and integrating all newcomers into our community. And if so, to what extent recognizing additional services may be needed. If not, it would be of value to develop and implement programs that would enhance the quality of place for all who choose to make Mitchell their home.
2. Review the economic status of our community considering the economic downturn and the number of layoffs and its impact on various age groups throughout the community and surrounding areas.

*Timeline: short term, 1 year or less*

*Respectfully Submitted By FOCUS 2020, Quality of Place Subcommittee:*

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