

# Gwinner is Moving Forward...Come Along

Comprehensive Plan  
Gwinner, North Dakota

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This plan was partially funded by the North Dakota Partners in Planning (PiP) Grant Program:

**“Empowers communities to proactively plan their futures through comprehensive planning, economic development/diversification strategic plans or economic recovery plans.”**

### **Town of Gwinner:**

Thank you to Mayor Dan McKeever and Jessica Peterson, City Auditor

Thank you to the City Council

Thank you to Gwinner residents who completed the survey





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“A town is what its people make it. With every natural advantage a town will not grow unless its people have faith in it, boast it, seek to improve it and constantly work to make it a bigger and better town. Gwinner people are doing these things for Gwinner in a splendid way and results are being shown.”

(Prairie Press, 1923).

This Comprehensive Plan has particular focus on business and community development. Gwinner is successful mostly due to its largest employer, Doosan Bobcat. Gwinner has the amazing distinction of being the town where Bobcat was founded.

Gwinner’s population has been steady for many years. The residents of Gwinner like their small town but would also like to see some changes. This 10-year plan addresses the thoughts of the residents for the future of Gwinner so that it can, indeed, move forward.

### Key Findings of the Plan:

1. Residents live in Gwinner for the small town feel and would like more family-friendly community events.
2. Gwinner has a strong economy because of the Bobcat corporation, founded in Gwinner.
3. Business expansion opportunities exist for a downtown small business retail area.
4. Service expansion opportunities for health and dental care and other professionals are a priority.
5. Gwinner has room to diversify its housing with infill development, rehabilitation of older homes, smaller lots and smaller homes.
6. There are activities that could bring more tourism into Gwinner.







# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & THE GWINNER OF YESTERDAY

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## Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to aid Gwinner leadership as they manage change, development, and growth in the community. It details Gwinner's vision for the future, providing the tools necessary to achieve long-range planning objectives.

## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a city's roadmap for the future. It supports ordinances, establishes investment and regulation priorities, and prompts subsequent plans and studies. The plan also provides transparency and predictability for government objectives in the community, supplying residents with a clearly defined vision for the city's future and an opportunity for public input to determine the city's goals and objectives. Per North Dakota law, a comprehensive plan is also a prerequisite for zoning regulations, ensuring the city's ability to determine land uses in a manner reflective of community priorities.

North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) [§40-48-02](#) defines the purpose of the comprehensive plan: "The official master plan is declared to be established to conserve and promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the municipality." No other document absolutely addresses the ambitions, ideas, and needs of a community as the comprehensive plan; realization of the guidance it provides for municipal leadership is therefore essential for a city's future successes.

### The North Dakota Century Code §40-48-02

THE OFFICIAL MASTER PLAN IS DECLARED TO BE ESTABLISHED TO CONSERVE AND PROMOTE THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND GENERAL WELFARE OF THE MUNICIPALITY.

The adopted comprehensive plan will serve as a roadmap for future Gwinner priorities, policies, regulations, and projects. Its guidance is intentionally broad; as a non-regulatory document, it is important that the elements of the plan—the result of input from citizens, elected and appointed officials, city staff, business owners, and developers—reflect the wide range of priorities found in the community. Future decisions on city policies and regulations will refer to the vision of this Comprehensive Plan, using it as a benchmark for guidance and direction.

A comprehensive plan can provide direction for adoption of municipal policies or community investments such as:

- Business Recruitment strategies
- Adding amenities
- Recruiting professional services
- Building more housing
- Recreation enhancements and community engagement

A comprehensive plan is a city’s most important tool for guiding community change, growth, redevelopment, and improvement. Its influence extends far beyond the period of public input, drafting, revision, publication, and adoption to which it is subject: the goals and objectives of the plan will provide years of guidance for city officials and city staff in all departments.

### This Comprehensive Plan will:

- Establish a vision reflective of community priorities, ambitions, and interests.
- Provide guidance for zoning and subdivision regulations, as well as other land use management tools like district design standards and development efforts.
- Steer new development to the best locations and ensure the pattern of such development is appropriate, predictable, and sustainable.
- Identify characteristics of Gwinner which contribute to its strengths and establish a framework for capitalizing on such strengths.
- Practically assess opportunities for improvement in the city.

### Authority for a Comprehensive Plan

Titles 11, 40, and 58 of the North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) grant local governments the authority to regulate land uses within jurisdictional boundaries at the city, county, or township level. The NDCC also permits “home rule authority” for cities and counties, which enables local governments to establish certain authorities and powers for themselves which extend beyond the authority specifically granted by the NDCC. Gwinner adopted its home rule charter in 2004.

The state planning statute pertaining to municipal zoning did not include requirements for comprehensive plans until 1981. While the planning statute was amended to reflect the need for a comprehensive plan, the statute pertaining to city plans (different from comprehensive plans; includes transportation plans, housing plans, capital improvement plans, etc.) was never amended to require comprehensive plans. Consequently, local governments must have a comprehensive plan in place as a basis for zoning regulations.

## Sections of the Comprehensive Plan

Generally, a plan outlines topics that are most important to the residents of the town. Because the North Dakota Partners in Planning (PiP) grant is partially funding this opportunity, there are additional sections as required by the PiP grant. The City of Gwinner recognizes the importance of incorporating elements of the Main Street Initiative into their comprehensive plan.

This comprehensive plan encourages walkability as a means of creating a healthy, vibrant community. Right-sized complete streets and recreation infrastructure are priorities for the city, as they provide residents with more opportunities to engage in outdoor activities. To support economic diversity and a 21st-century workforce, the city will actively collaborate with Bobcat and other major firms in the area to support continued workforce development. Additionally, the city will increase the number of accessible storefronts for more businesses interested in remote office work.

## Public Involvement

The planning team met with the Mayor and City Staff in October 2022 to discuss the planning effort. At that meeting we confirmed the main priorities for the plan were to attract new businesses. The city expressed a strong interest in attracting businesses, services, and community events.

The consultant planning team again met in person with city staff in November 2022. The intent of the meeting was to provide an update on the plan's progress to city staff and to gather input on the city's preferred formatting and content of the plan. The consultant used the visit as an opportunity to distribute public survey flyers around the city. Gwinner residents used the QR code on the flyer to access and complete a survey, the results of which informed the priorities of the comprehensive plan.

A survey was completed which resulted in 45 number of responses. The main reason residents live in Gwinner is the small town feel (86.7%) followed by its friendliness (51.1%). Full survey results are in Appendix A.

There were two meetings in April 2023 and May 2023 with the City Council, Mayor, and staff.





### Gwinner of Yesterday

In the 1800s, settlers of primarily Norwegian and German descent came to the Dakota territory. According to the Sargent County website, “from 1880 to 1890 most of the pioneers moved into the county following the building of the Soo, Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads” (sargentnd.com).

Gwinner was founded in 1900. It is named for Artur von Gwinner who was a “large stockholder in the northern Pacific railroad in the early days” (Gwinner 1900-1975, page 2).

### Melroe Manufacturing

E.G. Melroe lived on a farm near Gwinner. He liked to tinker with his farming equipment for his own uses on the farm. He built and sold several windrow pickups to neighboring farmers. In 1947, he and his sons opened a small factory in Gwinner to build and sell his machines in between operating their own farm. Manufacturing was done in the winter months, as Mr. Melroe spent the summer months tending to his crops.

It wasn't long before the Melroe family could not keep up on the manufacturing and had to hire non-family members to help. In 1960, two men were hired who had built a small self-propelled loader that could turn around in a tight radius. They worked on it until it was ready for public sale. They named it the Bobcat.

Today, the Bobcat manufacturing plant in Gwinner is one of many throughout North Dakota and around the world. From its humble beginnings in E.G. Melroe's 6,000 square foot building, the modern Gwinner Bobcat facility is over 750,000 square feet, produces loaders, utility work machines, and attachments, and includes an engineering facility.









## CHAPTER 2: GWINNER OF TODAY

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### OVERVIEW

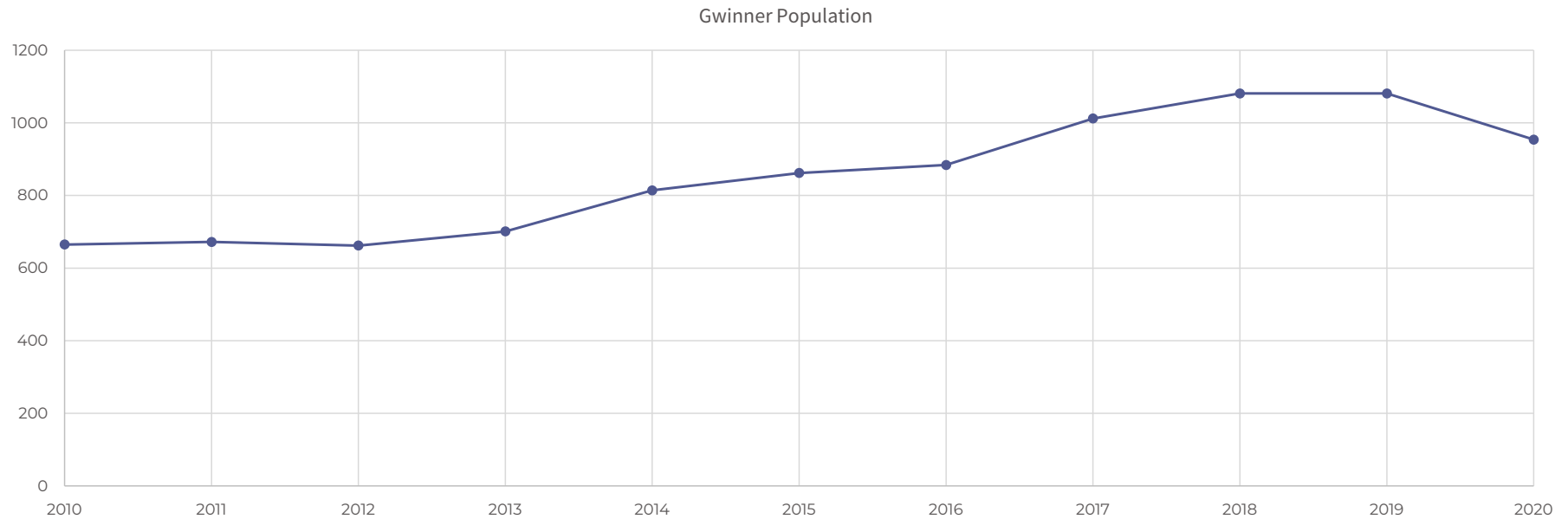
Gwinner is a small town with modern conveniences such as high-speed internet, a golf course, and bike paths. Citizens are active in the community. Gwinner is considered by many to be a “company town.” Bobcat, a major agriculture equipment manufacturer, has operated in Gwinner since 1947. It is the town’s largest employer. According to the [Bobcat website](#), “Gwinner is the birthplace of the Bobcat brand and the world’s first skid steer loader.”

With a median household income higher than peer communities in the region and a small town rural feel, Gwinner is a stable community with room to grow. The city’s leadership is actively exploring possibilities to diversify the city’s economy, to reduce reliance on the welfare of a single company and to provide employment opportunities for a greater variety of expertises.



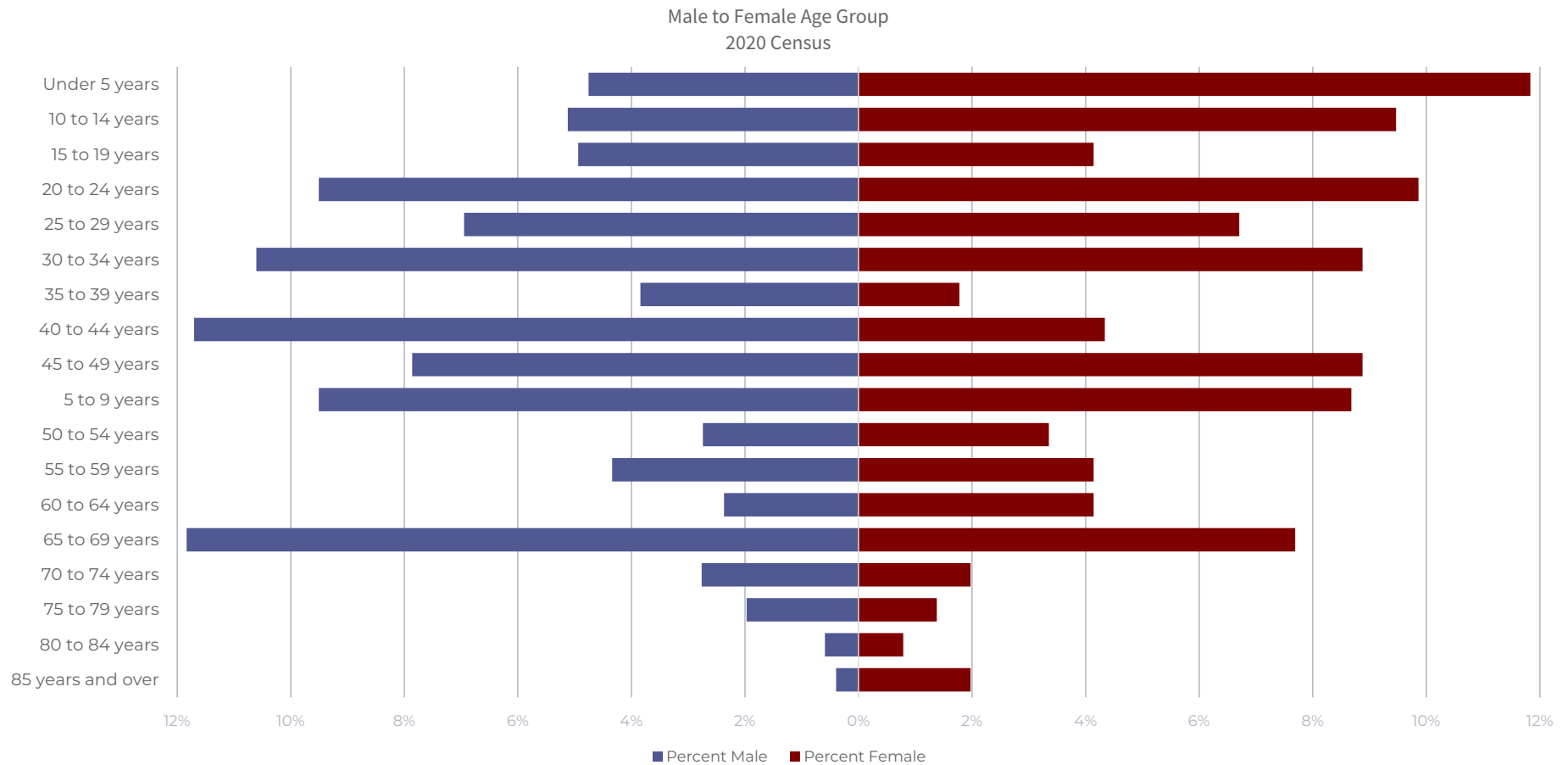
## DEMOGRAPHICS

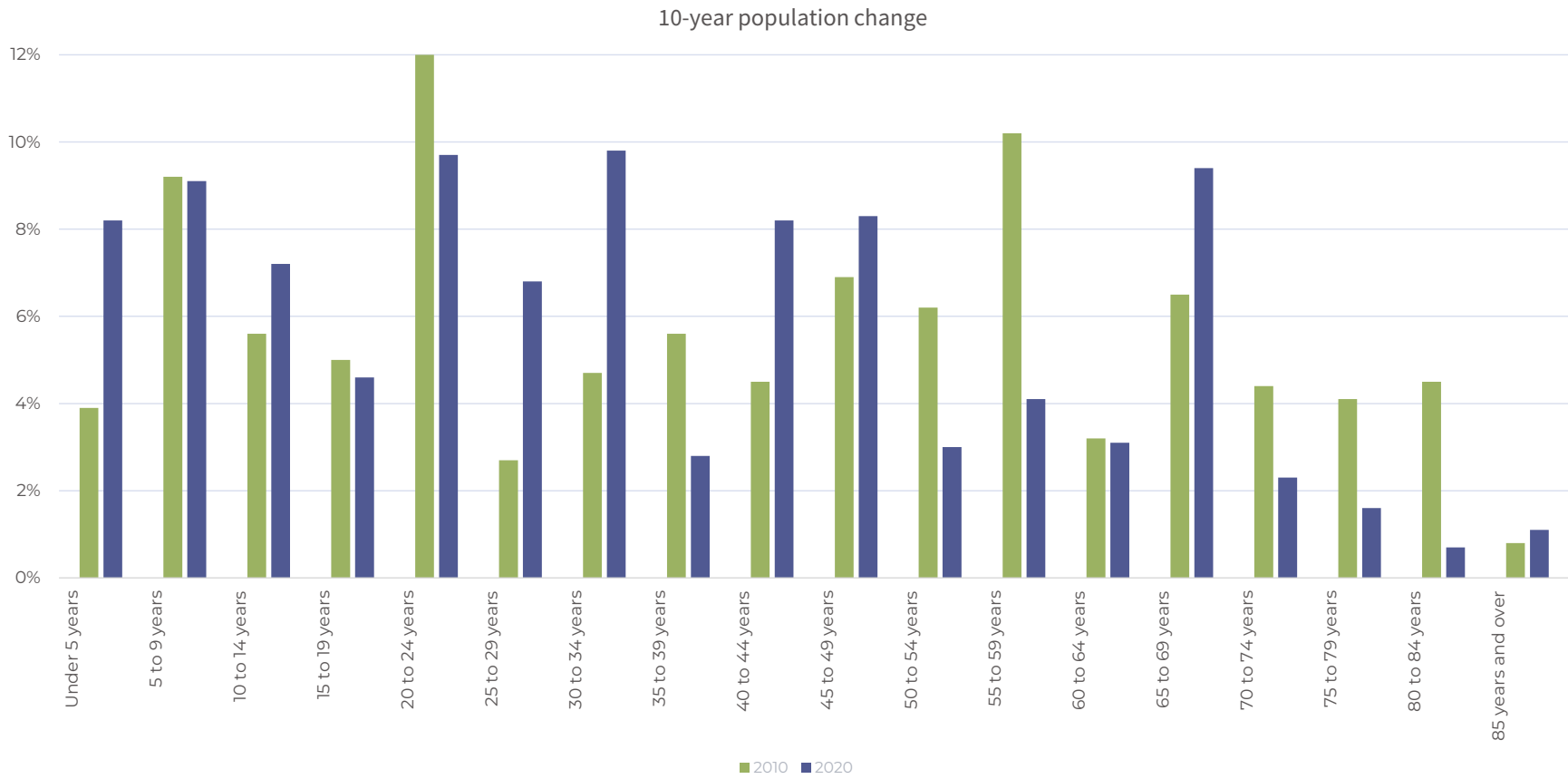
According to the US census, the 2020 population of Gwinner was 924. As it says on the website, “The residents of Gwinner enjoy a lively small-town atmosphere with many services and plenty of activities for people of all ages” ([gwinnernd.com](http://gwinnernd.com)). As the chart below demonstrates, Gwinner grew by 37% from 2010 to 2020 according to the US census American Community Survey.





The trend in rural communities throughout the United States is that the population is aging. However, over the past ten years in Gwinner, that has not been the case. Age groups from 29 to 49 have grown in the past 10 years. See chart below. The age groups from 70 to 84 have decreased with over 85 increasing slightly. There are also more children as demonstrated in the under 5 to 14 year old age groups. Gwinner appears to be attracting young families.







## DOWNTOWN CORRIDOR

Main Street has some historic store fronts as well as other non-historic buildings. Traditional-style lampposts provide pedestrian friendly lighting and are used to display flags and banners. The two former bank buildings, the Gwinner State Bank and the Farmers State Bank, are being utilized by other businesses.

Hero's Park: The city is seeking funding to revitalize a small downtown area into Hero's Park to honor local veterans, and has applied for a grant through AARP. This is an example of creating gathering places for the community.

The vision for the park is to have ADA accessible picnic tables, a pergola, trees and flowers. The Park will be anchored by two stone memorials to the community veterans. This is a good example of a low-cost solution to beautifying a strip of land that is underutilized and creating a community space. The city has made efforts to enhance the downtown area and continues to do so with Hero's Park.

Gwinner has a Renaissance Zone (RZ) program. This program was created by the North Dakota legislature for redevelopment and economic investment and can provide the following:

- Up to \$500,000 of income exempted annually on income derived at an approved zone business project (5-year max)
- Property tax exemptions for commercial and residential properties (5-year max)
- Up to \$10,000 tax credit per year for five years on qualified single-family homes (max \$50,000)
- 25% tax credit available for historic property on the amount invested (max \$250,000)
- Transferable credits upon selling a single family home
- Transferable exemptions upon selling or leasing a business

[Renaissance Zones are discussed more in Chapter 3 - Gwinner of Tomorrow.](#)





Gwinner



## CHAPTER 3: GWINNER OF TOMORROW

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The following sections are elements to the Comprehensive Plan as required by the Partnership in Planning of North Dakota.

## Smart, Efficient Infrastructure Development - Housing

Smart, efficient infrastructure is described by the State of North Dakota as capable of “creating mixed-use city centers and neighborhoods maximizes existing infrastructure, a clear economic benefit for taxpayers” ([nd.gov](http://nd.gov)). One way to achieve this is to prioritize infill development and to diversify retail and housing opportunities, making efficient use of infrastructure that is already in place rather than building new infrastructure. In the survey conducted of Gwinner residents, improved infrastructure and better housing choices were a common concern. Housing stock is very low in Gwinner. The city has developed creative ideas to increase it. There are currently incentives on services, lots, and “2 - 5 year tax exemption on all new construction, depending on lot location” ([gwinnernd.com](http://gwinnernd.com)). This is a pro-active response from the city to the issue. The city has already taken initiatives for smart, efficient infrastructure development by prioritizing infill development over new development, purchasing homes that have been removed from flood prone area in Fargo instead of constructing new homes, and supporting a mix of housing choices. The City of Gwinner supports the development of multi-family housing such as apartment complexes, senior housing, and townhomes.



As in many communities, most housing units are too large to appeal to smaller households. By identifying and addressing barriers to the development of “right-sized housing,” the city can facilitate construction of smaller homes. In this way, homeownership may become easier for some residents. Bobcat may have interest in creating some employee housing, particularly for single workers who may not need—or want—as much space as a larger household or family. The Renaissance Zone program applies to single-family housing and may be utilized to rehabilitate older homes as they are vacated.

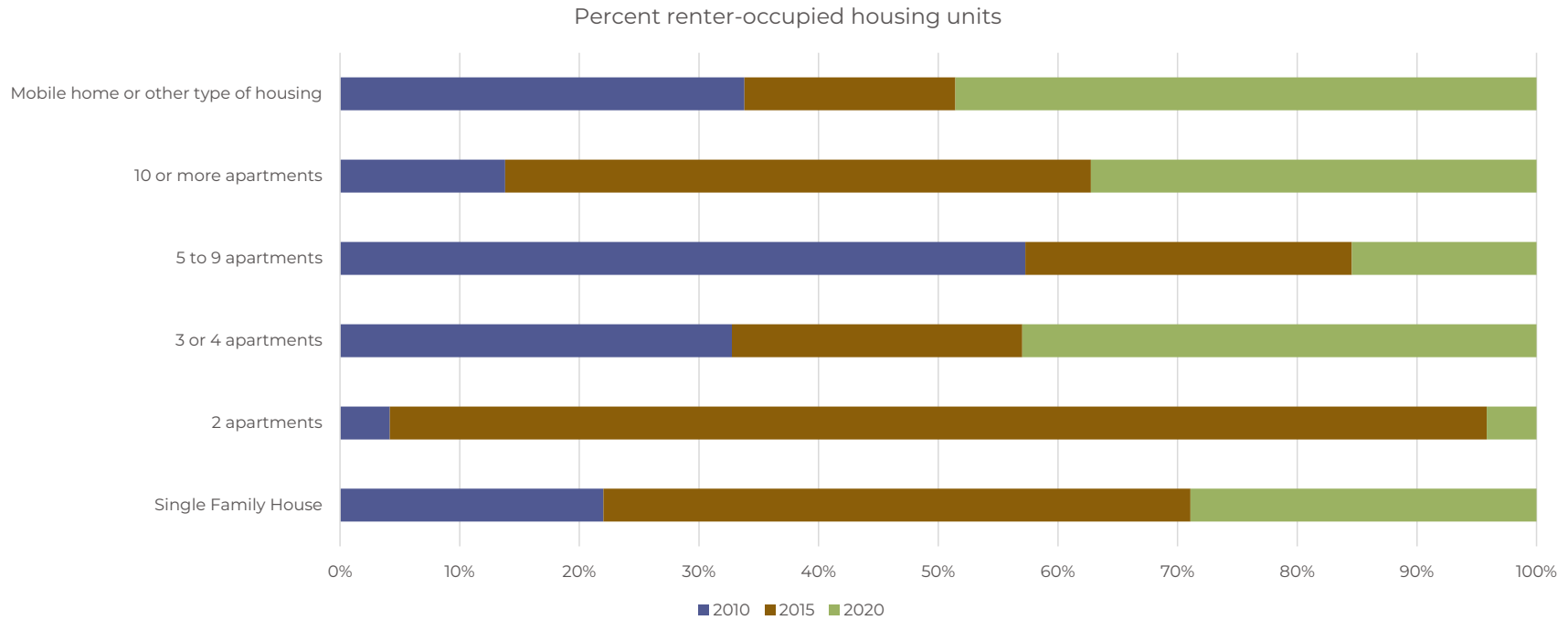
Gwinner can continue its efforts to use its infrastructure efficiently and provide a variety of housing types for residents by providing more flexibility in its land use regulations. Gwinner’s residential zoning district regulations allow for greater variety of use than most cities of comparable size and geography: single-, two-household, and multi-family dwellings are permitted in all residential areas, a policy decision that provides property owners with a breadth of development choices and buyers with various price points.

However, if construction costs for traditional building styles remain high, which, by all indications, they will, residents will seek alternative building styles and materials, such as prefabricated homes, smaller sized homes, or other viable options. While no immediate action may be required to facilitate these potential trends, it is advisable that city leadership actively research the relevant building codes and zoning regulation models that would be necessary to regulate and administer such development styles.

“Pocket neighborhoods” are areas similar to 1940s and 50s neighborhoods where there is a community sense and feel. Generally, the homes are smaller than in the outskirts of the area and may have a community park or common area. In Gwinner, the opportunity to add mid-priced housing in all residential neighborhoods will give property owners the freedom to add units, should they see an opportunity or experience a need for more housing or passive income. A great benefit of small-scale development projects of this nature is that if the demand for the additional unit(s) dissipates, the structure can be converted again to serve a different purpose.

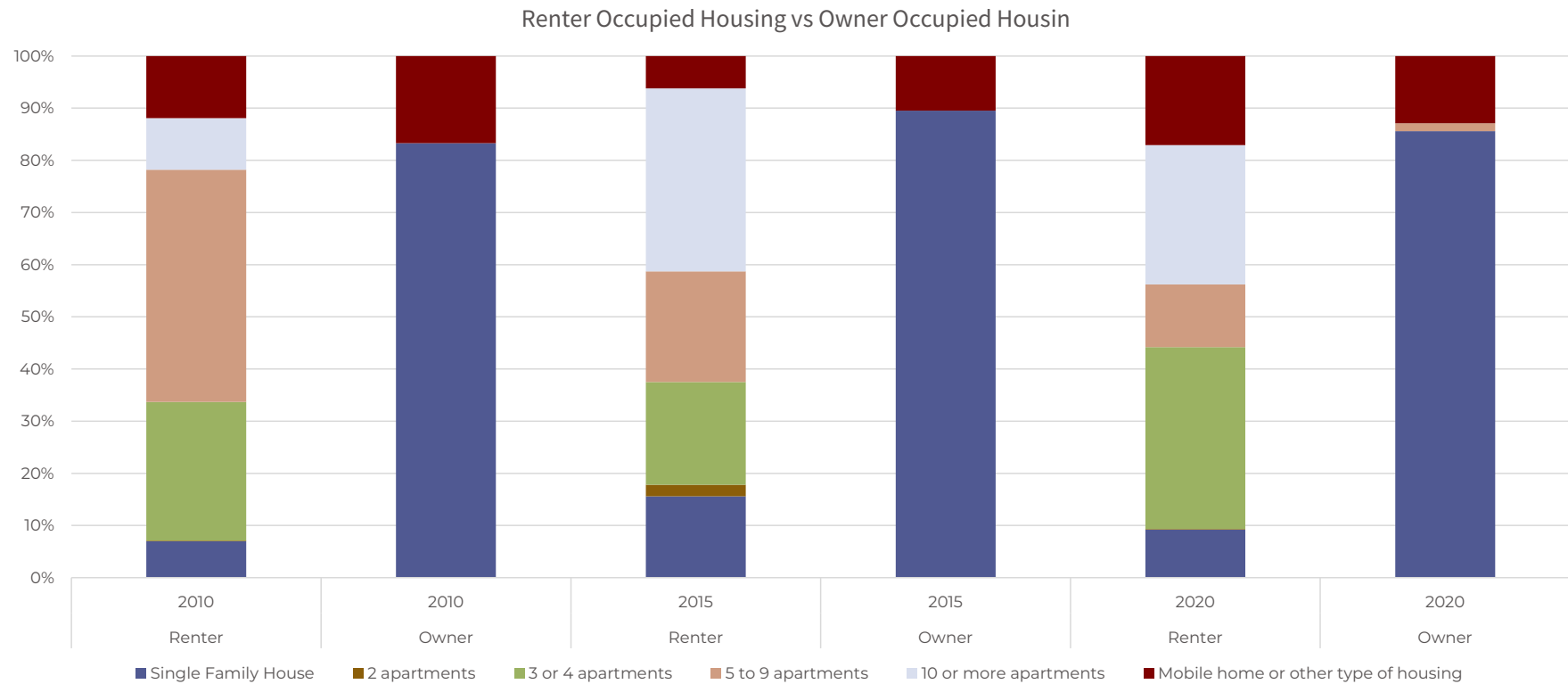
It is highly unlikely that all single-family houses in Gwinner would be instantly converted into triplexes, should missing middle housing forms be legalized. It is more likely that subtle, gradual adjustments will take place in some city neighborhoods while others remain unchanged for generations. Addressing missing middle housing is not a density mandate; it is permission for local leaders to address community housing needs creatively, efficiently, and equitably.

The chart below shows the percentage of renters in each housing type as defined by the US Census Bureau. Renters in 2020 had more houses with attached garages and mobile homes in the rental pool than in 2015 or 2010.

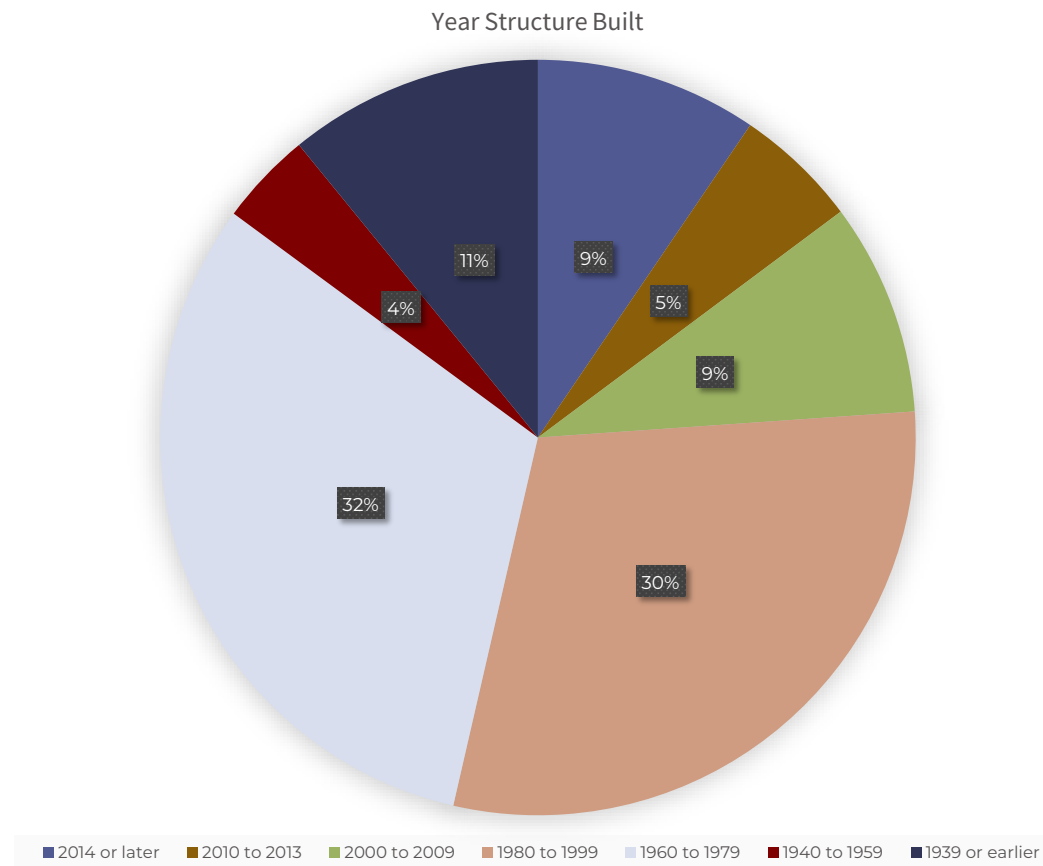




The chart below shows the percentage of owners versus renters in each housing type as defined by the US Census Bureau. Owner-occupied lived in more mobile homes in 2010 than in 2015 or 2020. Renter occupied increased in the “10 or more apartments” category in 2015, demonstrating that a new building was probably completed at that time. As is common, owner-occupied housing is predominantly single family homes or mobile homes



Lastly, the charts below demonstrate the age of the housing as captured by the US Census Bureau in 2020 ([census.gov](https://www.census.gov)). The majority of the Gwinner housing stock, 62%, was built between 1960 and 1999. Newer than 1999 comprises 23%.



Low cost housing in the area is partially addressed by a local not-for-profit. “The Region V Community Development Corporation has a principal purpose of planning, developing, owning, and managing Low cost housing projects in Southeastern North Dakota.” ([rvcdc.org](http://rvcdc.org)) RVCDC has built 31 rental units in Gwinner offering housing to people below 80% of the county median income and 55+ utilizing HUD HOME and other programs.

The RVCDC properties in Gwinner are generally multifamily and are located throughout Gwinner in neighborhoods with mixed uses. On the southeast side of Gwinner, one of the fourplexes is directly across from the park with a baseball field and the community pool.

Aging in place is an issue for many towns. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) may help alleviate the burden. “Grandma moved into a bungalow and now is closer to her daughter and grandkids. She feels safer and has more social connections with family.” ([usmodularinc.com](http://usmodularinc.com)) In addition, ADUs can help with rental property availability as well as helping the homeowner. Recently, Wadena County, Minnesota, passed ordinance allowing ADUs of up to 750 square feet in addition to the principal dwelling. According to the article, “the ADUs are meant to provide additional housing space for those that would like to live close to the primary home such as a parent or children of a parent. The housing was meant to offer lower cost housing with the convenience of living near each other.” ([wadenapj.com](http://wadenapj.com))



### Housing Goals

#### GOAL 1: ENCOURAGE A WIDE RANGE OF HOUSING TYPES AND STYLES INCLUDING BOTH OWNER OCCUPIED AND RENTAL UNITS.

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| POLICY 1.1 | Continue to provide incentives to builders and homeowners to build on the vacant lots |
| POLICY 1.2 | Consider accessory dwelling units with single family residences.                      |
| POLICY 1.3 | Prioritize smaller homes on in-fill areas and in new development.                     |
| POLICY 1.4 | Plan for development on the south side of Gwinner.                                    |

#### GOAL 2: ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF SENIOR RESIDENTS TO ALLOW AGING IN PLACE.

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| POLICY 2.1 | Support senior housing programs, including assisted living facilities.                   |
| POLICY 2.2 | Support and attract senior services including transportation, social services and meals. |

#### GOAL 3: CONSIDER A HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM WHEN OLDER OR DAMAGED HOUSES ARE AVAILABLE.

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| POLICY 3.1 | Partner with developers and realtors that are willing to resell homes at median prices.   |
| POLICY 3.2 | Use the Renaissance Zone program to assist with development and home ownership.   |
| POLICY 3.3 | Consider utilizing cash incentives for homeowners to do small rehabilitation projects such as painting peeling siding or repairing steps. |



## Healthy, Vibrant Community - Downtown Development & Recreational Opportunities

A “sense of place” is created by physical and non-physical ingredients that make up the essence of the community. Identifying characteristics common in North Dakota cities include roads shared with combines and other large ag-machinery; cold weather; the Vikings versus the Packers on fall Sundays; fighting the midsummer swarms of mosquitoes at the lake. One of the four pillars of the North Dakota Main Street initiative—Healthy, Vibrant Communities—calls for renewal of that “sense of place” by “renovating historic buildings, reviving marginalized areas, creating a vibrant hub downtown, walkable neighborhoods” ([Healthy, Vibrant Communities | North Dakota State Government - ND Portal](#)).

The Scenic Theater in Lisbon is an excellent example of revitalizing an historic building. (Photo from [cinematreasures.org](#)). The residents value this business and, as advertised on the theater website, the fact that it is the oldest continually operating movie theater in the country.

In Gwinner, outdoor seating and another type of pocket park—a small green space located on an underutilized parcel or unused parking spaces—in the downtown area could inspire an entrepreneur to open a new business on Main Street. Bakeries, breweries, and coffee shops that utilize outdoor space are very popular and create interest in the neighborhood.



Downtown activities are a great way to engage the community. Downtown Alive! is a one-day downtown event, held in Wahpeton, which has proven popular with residents and visitors. Below are photos from that event.

Downtown Alive! events include art projects and the farmer's market, as well as other community vendors and a pet parade. In farmer's markets across the country, vendors pay for a space to the organizing entity. In this way, these kinds of activities are low-cost options for community connections and engagement. Below are events from other communities that have a population of less than 5,000 in North Dakota:

- Leprechaun's Gold Geocache – Garrison
- Maple Sugaring Day – Garrison
- Evening hikes – Garrison
- Motorcycle Ride In – Cavalier
- Halloween in July – Bottineau
- Festival of Lights – Bowman

Parks, recreational facilities, and trail connections are essential components for the continued livability and well-being of Gwinner and its residents. According to the city website, there are three parks, a community pool and a picnic area, and a golf course with a restaurant ([gwinnernd.com](http://gwinnernd.com)). Gwinner has a nice, separated trail along the highway, and there are possibilities for additional trails for residents to recreate.



**Community Goals****GOAL 1: DEVELOP FAMILY FRIENDLY EVENTS FOR THE COMMUNITY.**

**POLICY 1.1** Consider hosting movie nights a few times a year in a local venue or outside during the summer.

**POLICY 1.2** Consider applying for grants for event development.

**POLICY 1.3** Consider hiring a part-time position or intern to organize events.

**GOAL 2: THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PAIR SNOWMOBILE TOURISM WITH A WINTER FESTIVAL.**

**POLICY 2.1** Consider a winter festival with possible funding assistance through the North Dakota Department of Commerce.

**GOAL 3: SUPPORT WINTER BIKE RIDERS COLLABORATING WITH THE LOCAL SNOWMOBILE ASSOCIATIONS TO CREATE SHARED AREAS.**

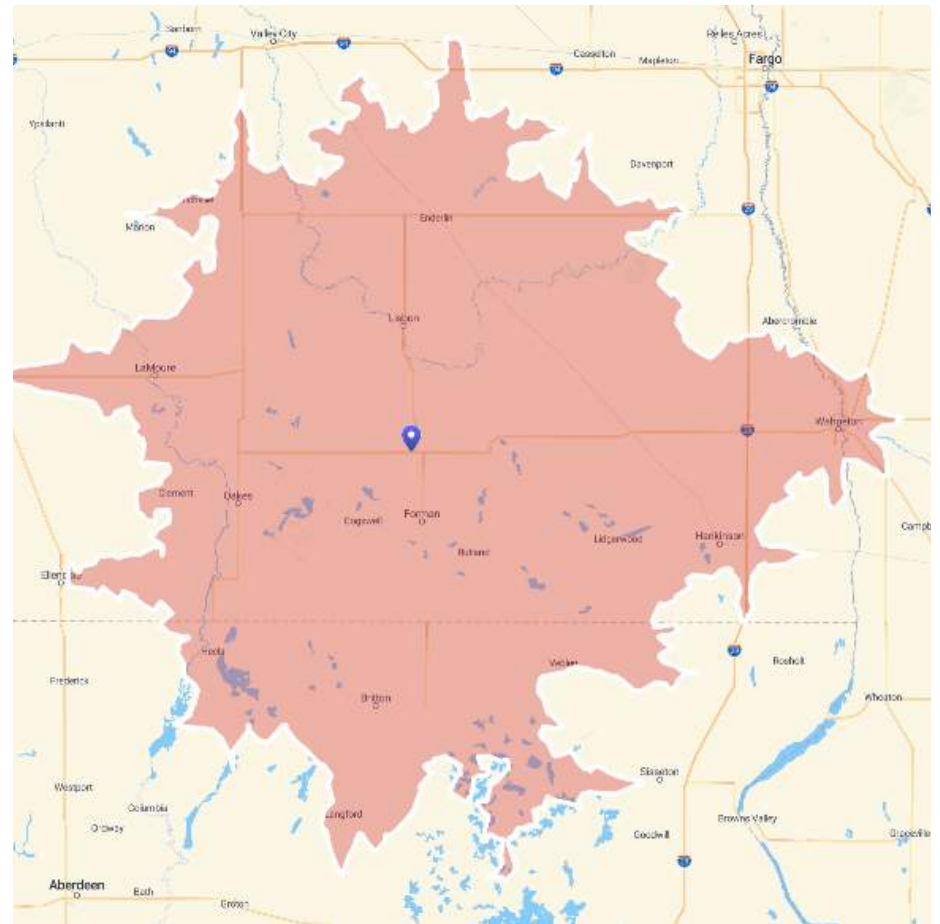
## 21st Century Workforce - Education

In 2017, Governor Burgum authorized executive order 2017-10 which created The North Dakota Workforce Development Council (NDWDC). Among the tasks of the council were “to establish goals for the development and coordination of education, employment, and training systems in the state evaluate progress toward meeting the goals and strategies identified and recommending new policy directions or legislation proposed to determine opportunities” for North Dakota ([commerce.nd.gov](http://commerce.nd.gov)). A product of this council is an information sheet titled “In Demand Occupations” which shows education, health care, engineering, financial and management, transportation, a list of skilled trades and other high demand opportunities for the next 10 years from 2020 to 2030.

North Sargent High School has a good graduation rate (90%) that is higher than the state average of 84%. To retain graduates and provide employment opportunities for young professionals, the NDWDC can be used to provide education and training in skilled trades that can be applied at jobs available in Gwinner. Below is a map displaying the one-hour driving radius from Gwinner:

Colleges and trade schools can also help prepare students for good jobs in Gwinner. The dominance of Bobcat as an employer makes trade school an excellent choice for those hoping to work in the manufacturing and engineering fields after high school. The nearest higher education institution is the North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, which offers apprenticeships, skilled trades training, and traditional courses.

North Dakota State University at Fargo is the next closest institute of higher education. The four-year land grant university offers a remarkable variety of courses, certifications, and degrees, including degrees students can utilize in Gwinner. Farm and ranch studies, nursing and medical, education, engineering, and entrepreneurial skills all have practical applications in the community.





## North Sargent Public School System

North Sargent 3 school district has pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade for the students of Gwinner. The North Sargent High School serves grades 9 through 12. The students are mostly white, with some Hispanic and Black students. Attendance is good – over 90%. Insights.ND.gov has a good dashboard with these statistics, charts, graphs and more. [Insights of North Dakota \(nd.gov\)](https://insights.nd.gov)

The North Sargent Public Schools published a Strategic Plan for 2020-2025. [District Information - OneDrive \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

The focus of the Plan is a new mission and vision for the school system, teachers and administration and especially the students.

### OUR MISSION

*Preparing learners today to thrive in the future.*

### OUR VISION

*To create a collaborative culture among our students, staff, family, and community. We will implement a purposeful learning experience to develop and engage students in the development of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity skills. We will achieve this by supporting our students in their intellectual, social, and personal growth. Students will be empowered to make a positive impact in the world.*

### OUR BELIEF STATEMENT

*We believe that all students can succeed. We value a safe learning environment through respectful relationships and a caring and supportive staff. Students are provided with a variety of curricular and co-curricular opportunities that enhance overall student growth.*

The Plan demonstrates a commitment to educational growth. The School Board and Superintendent of Schools also committed to creating a Long-Range Financial Plan. There is a Three and Five Year Plan conducted in “every even-numbered year,” the newest published in 2022.

In the Three and Five Year Plan, facility upgrades are addressed as the current capacity has been reached. The Plan indicates that a new facility should be considered and the current facilities re-purposed. See the complete plan [here](#).

### Education Goals

#### GOAL 1: GWINNER IS THE TOWN WHERE OUR KIDS AND GRANDKIDS WANT TO STAY.

**POLICY 1.1** Encourage high school students to consider careers that can be performed in Gwinner.

#### GOAL 2: GWINNER SUPPORTS EDUCATION.

**POLICY 2.1** Assist in passage of a Capital Improvements bond when a new school is needed.

#### GOAL 3: YOUNG GRADUATES COME BACK TO GWINNER AFTER POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL.

**POLICY 3.1** Consider new activities such as more bike trails and a skateboard park as well as providing indoor entertainment for young adults.

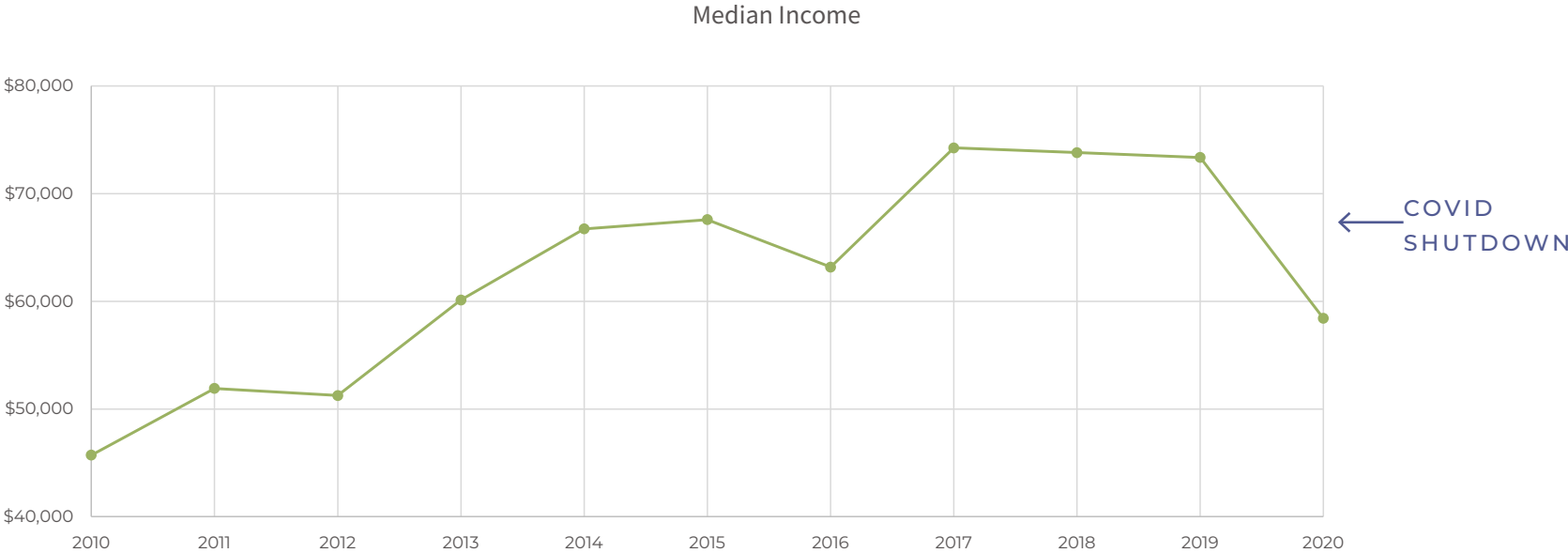
**POLICY 3.2** Create multi price point housing options for young adults and families.

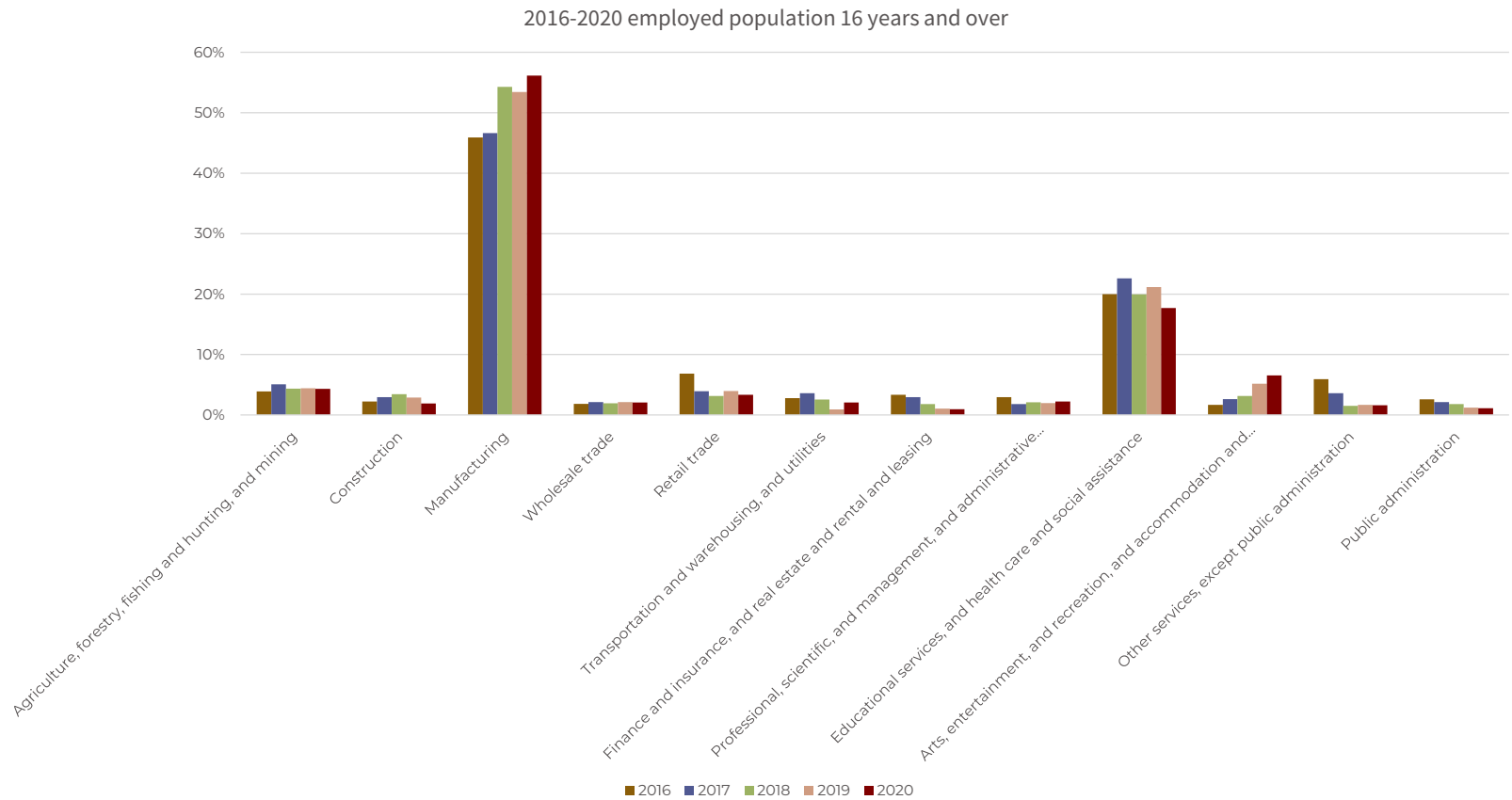
#### GOAL 4: PARTNER W BOBCAT FOR WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT.

**POLICY 4.1** With the North Sargent School District, create internships and/or high school classes to employ recent high school graduates.

### Economic Diversity

The median income in Gwinner was \$58,417 at the 2020 census, which is lower than the North Dakota state average of \$66,519. However, prior to Covid, the Gwinner median income was much higher, between \$74,000-\$75,000.

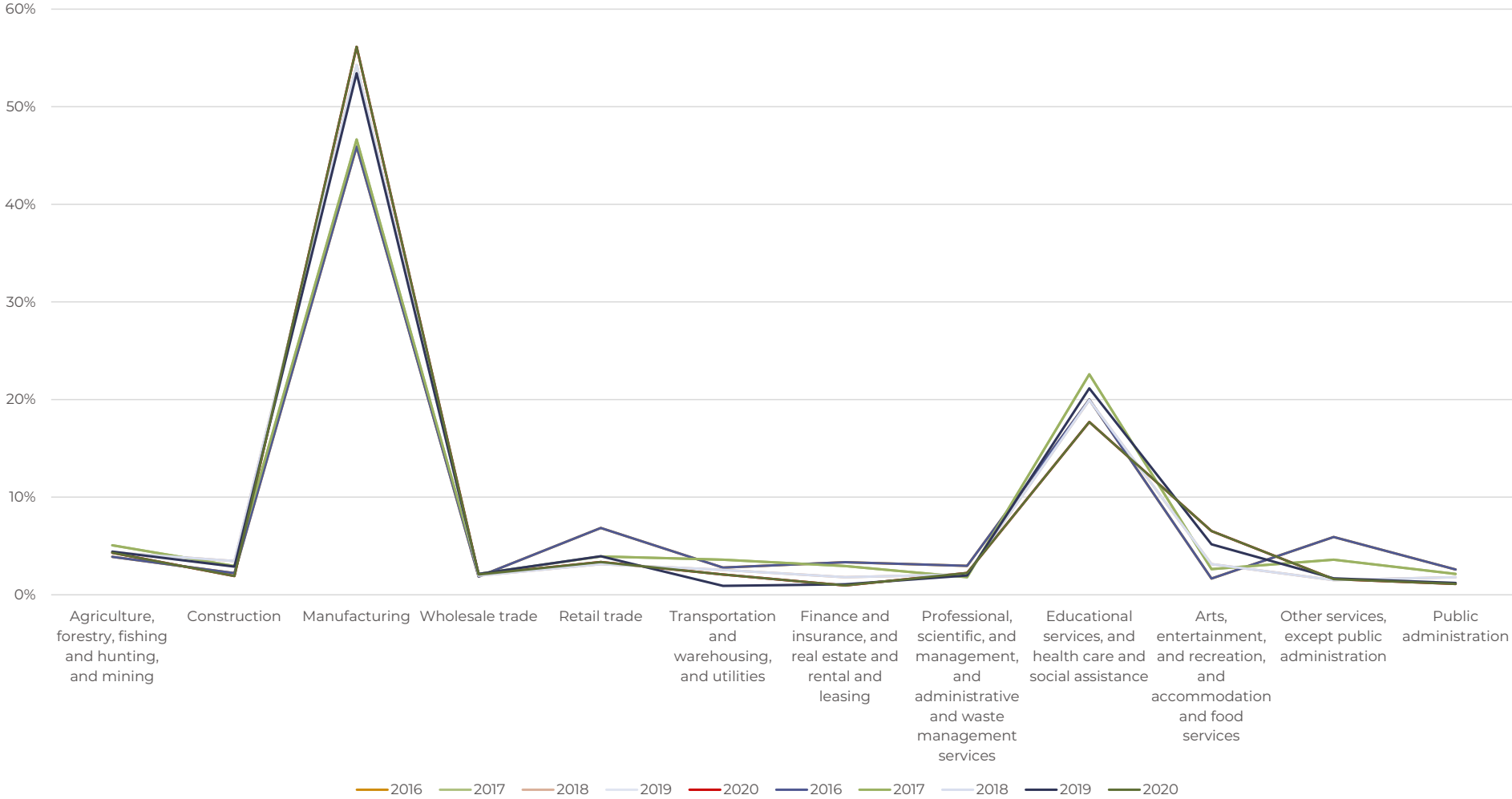




The highest percentage of the population works in manufacturing. Doosan Bobcat invested \$17 million in the Gwinner manufacturing plant in 2019 and wages are competitive. Also, employees are engaged in their communities. Below are two charts that both depict the change in employment sectors from 2016 to 2020. The data is the same and displayed two different ways.



2016-2020 employed population 16 years and over



The manufacturing sector is the largest and has remained strong for the period covered. Education and health care employs the second most number of people, while the remaining sectors employ much less. Only manufacturing and “Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services” have grown since the 2020 shutdown.

Although retail trade is a small percentage of the employment picture, this is the segment that can impact growth of the downtown area the most. This will be discussed more in the [“Downtown Corridor”](#) section.

When a small business opens, the percentage of economic development growth can be high. For example, a one-person shop hires a second person. That is a 100% of employee increase. Many small cities and town grow and diversify in just this way.

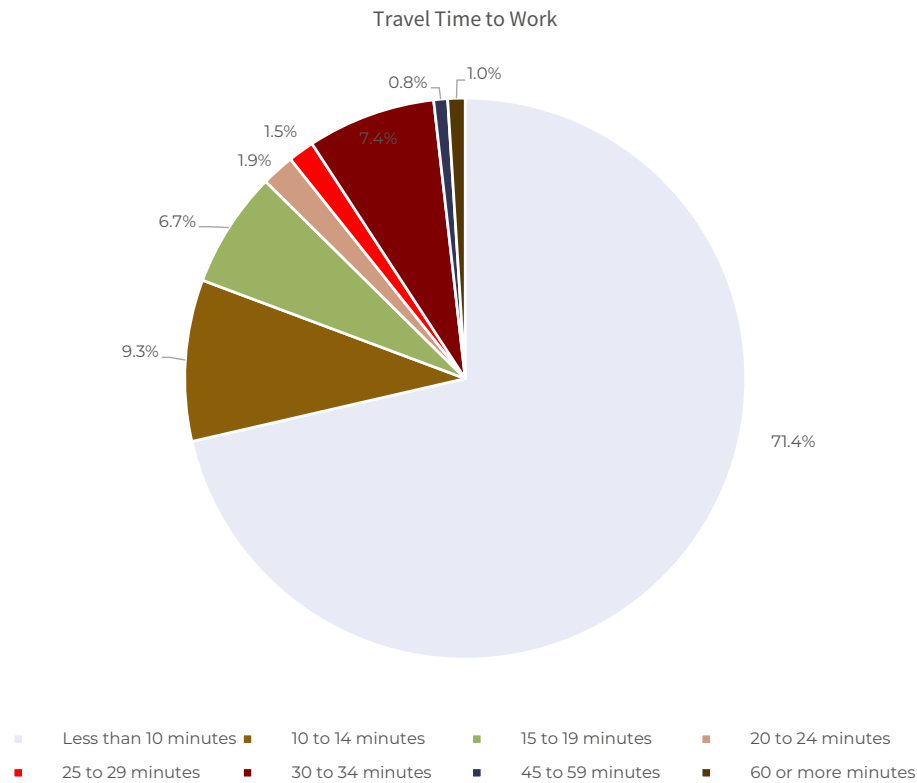
Gwinner is home of the Doosan Bobcat manufacturing plant. Bobcat is—and will likely remain—the largest employer in the city. Many Gwinner residents are interested in popular restaurant options commonly found in larger communities; this sector could be the focus of additional business attraction. According to [smallbizsurvival.com](#), “independent restaurants [generate twice as much local economic impact](#) as chain restaurants”. This website has good information about retail in small communities such as Gwinner. One idea to attract people to a small business is to have community events, which connects with the city’s idea to create more opportunities for community connections.

Breweries are a popular business that can bring people together. Often developed in downtown areas by reusing older buildings, a brewery can be a strong economic development tool. Breweries often serve pub food and are family friendly. Many close earlier than traditional bars.

Day cares are needed in Gwinner. The University of North Dakota published a resource guide to assist ideas for collaborative partnerships to address day care needs. There are workforce shortages and high operational costs in many cases. “The number of licensed childcare services in North Dakota covers only [40% of the current demand](#).” However, in home childcare can be an excellent option for stay at home parents that want to have [five or less kids](#) in the home. There are still training requirements, of course, but the start-up may be quicker.

The pie chart shows that most of the employees in Gwinner live near their jobs. Less than 30% travel more than 10 minutes to get to work. Approximately 19.3% are coming from out of the area based on a commute of 15 or more minutes. That demonstrates that Gwinnerites work in Gwinner.

According to [commerce.nd.gov](http://commerce.nd.gov), the State of North Dakota provides “business incentives, government accessibility and workforce performance.” It goes on to say that “North Dakota’s favorable positions as one of the lowest cost states for operating a business are driving top companies to establish operations in North Dakota.” Gwinner has a strong workforce and stable population.



## Renaissance Zone Incentives for Downtown

A zone project generally consists of a purchase, lease, or improvement to real estate located in the zone ([State of ND](#)). Gwinner has a Renaissance Zone (RZ) that can be utilized to attract new downtown business. Utilizing the RZ, one town in North Dakota has been able to attract a dentist, car wash, motel and other businesses by completing over 87 projects in 16 years with an investment of over \$9M into the downtown core. The staff at the North Dakota Department of Commerce is available to help Gwinner advance the goals of its RZ.

Service development is another avenue that Gwinner can enhance. In the public meetings, it was suggested that a service-oriented center be created by rehabilitating a vacant building or building a new structure as an office park. An office park may consist of doctor's offices and dental offices.

Franchises for food and services may be a good business fit for Gwinner. The “20 Best Franchise Opportunities for Small Towns” include Merry Maids, SeekingSitters Inc, a babysitting service, Visiting Angels, a senior in-home assistance franchise or even Caribou Coffee ([momandpopfranchise.com](http://momandpopfranchise.com)). If there is community support for such businesses to locate in Gwinner, it is recommended that city leadership instigate conversations with the companies and establish a productive professional relationship.

In addition to any franchise opportunities, entrepreneurs may do well to pursue an independent business the community lacks, such as reopening the café downtown. Artisan products, such as specialty coffee roasters, candy, breweries, and distilleries are popular options in small towns, as well. The Sweets Palace in Philipsburg, Montana, population 840, draws customers from all over the state and region. Families make a fun day of driving to Philipsburg and going to the candy store. It has helped make Philipsburg a tourist destination. There are many small towns across the country that attract small businesses with unique events reflective of local culture and character. Hawley, Minnesota hosts the annual Western Minnesota Steam Threshers Reunion, a popular combine and thresher show where visitors can see and appreciate historic and custom agricultural equipment and culture. Avoca, Nebraska has found a unique event to draw visitors: annual duck races are hosted in the town, during which local duck farmers bring thousands of their ducks and event participants can compete against one another by “racing” (or rather chasing) their rented ducks down lanes.

In Gwinner, tax incentives may be offered through the Renaissance Zone program to entice the opportunity further.

Utilizing the renaissance zone, the empty store fronts could be advertised to bring in potential small businesses to the downtown area. The historic nature of the area is appealing to entrepreneurs.

Tax increment financing (TIF) may be considered to continue upgrades that have been made or the city could invest from general funds. TIF districts are created, and the incremental funds are available for use by all property owners in the district. For example, Building A is assessed at \$100,000 and taxed for \$1,000. After beautification of the building/area, the building's assessment is \$110,000 and the new taxes are \$1,200. The increment of \$200 goes back to the TIF district to be used by other property owners for additional upgrades.

**Economic Goals****GOAL 1: GWINNER SUPPORTS A DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY.**

**POLICY 1.1** Create opportunities for downtown retail development

**POLICY 1.2** Consider utilizing the Renaissance Zone for commercial building and residential upgrades.

**POLICY 1.3** Create reasons for residents to go downtown, such as a Farmer's Market, an event at Hero's Park, or a car show on Main St.

**GOAL 2: THERE ARE SUFFICIENT PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AVAILABLE.**

**POLICY 2.1** Consider planning a small medical park near the Health Clinic where utilities are available.

**POLICY 2.2** Actively recruit needed professionals to move to Gwinner.



## Implementation Goals

ACTION ITEMS	REAL WORLD EXAMPLE	TIMEFRAME	LEAD DEPARTMENT(S)/ AGENCY	KEY PARTNERS
Create a page on the website to attract business. (Renaissance Zone)	<a href="#">Hankinson, ND</a>	0-6months	City Staff	Web Design Consultant
Hire an intern to organize community events.	<a href="#">State of ND</a> <a href="#">Americorps ND</a>	0-1 year	City Staff	North Dakota Commerce
Attract chain businesses that cater to smaller population centers.	<a href="#">Oakes, ND</a>	Americorps	Mayor, City Auditor	Economic Development Association of North Dakota
Attract small businesses to the downtown core.	<a href="#">Langdon, ND</a>	0-5 years	Mayor/Council/Staff	Staff committed to RZ
Varied housing choices	<a href="#">Valley City, ND</a>	0-5 years	Mayor/Council	Developers
Create community events	<a href="#">Hettinger, ND</a>	0-1 year	Civic Organizations	<a href="#">State of ND may have grants</a>
Consider additional snowmobile routes	<a href="#">Island Park, ID</a>	0-5 years	Mayor/Council	Snowmobile Clubs



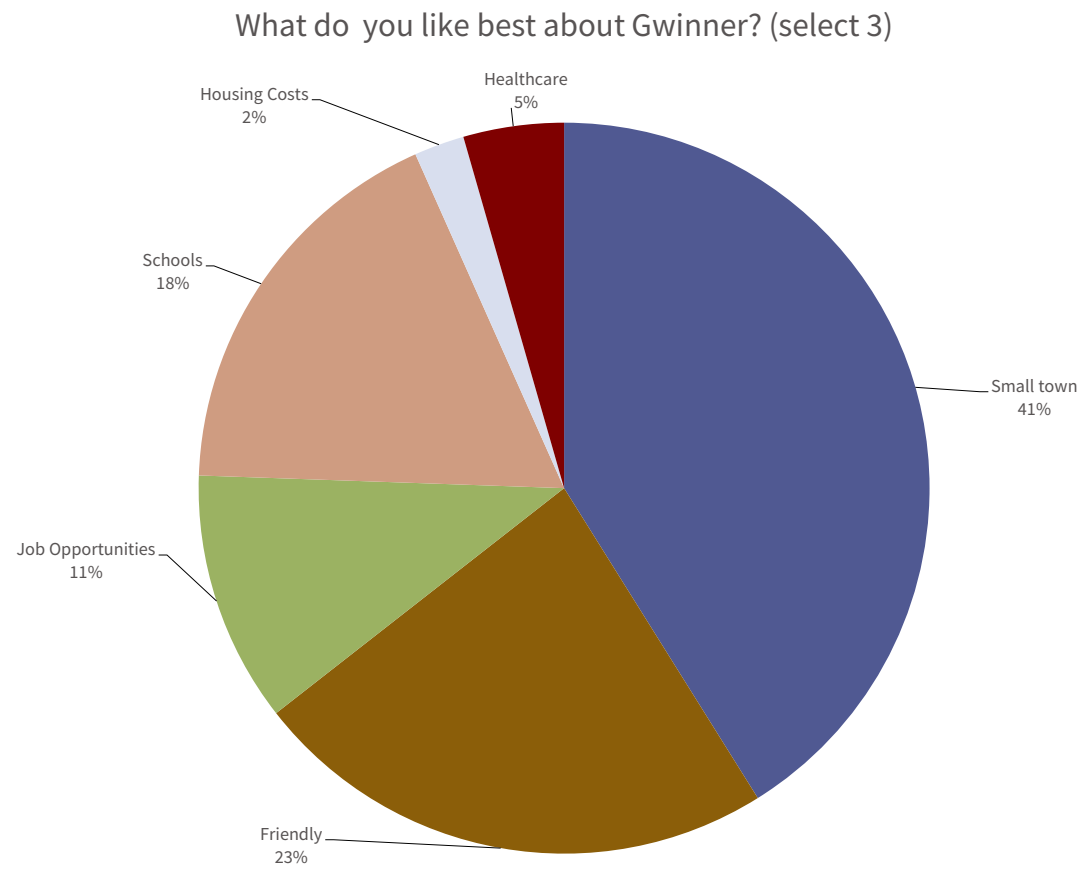


## APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS

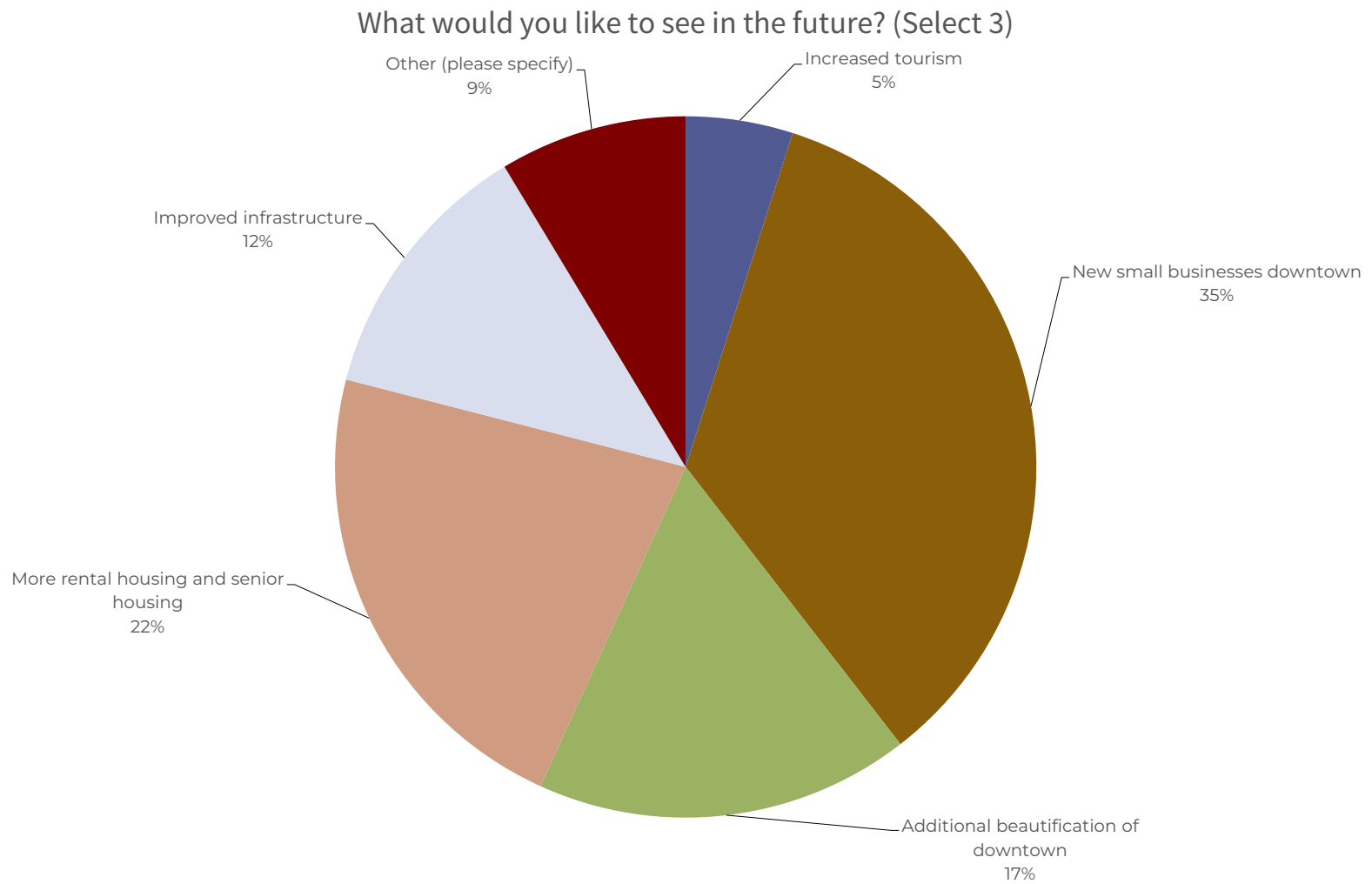
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## Survey Results

The City of Gwinner residents were invited to participate in a community survey. There were a total of 45 responses. The following are the results.







What kind of entertainment would you like to see in Gwinner?



What kind of outdoor recreation would you like to see in Gwinner (summer/winter)?

