



# 2022-2027 Economic Development Strategic Plan

[www.willistondevelopment.com](http://www.willistondevelopment.com) | 113 4h St E Williston, ND 58801

# Introduction

Williston is the heart of the Bakken and a leader in the oil and gas and agriculture sectors that is driven by innovation and growth. Today, Williston's economy is vibrant with higher-than-average wages, increased school enrollment, quality housing, enhanced quality of life amenities, and a significant decrease in the average age of new residents.

A community based on commodities can experience challenges predicting economic cycles. It is inevitable that Williston will experience down cycles. Which motivates us to diversify, innovate, and grow the community in a way that improves quality of life, improves livability, and develops the economy.

This Strategic Plan seeks to minimize the impact of economic downturns while maximizing our potential to seize new economic opportunities while recognizing the balance between growth and livability.

This 5-year strategy will guide and promote economic activity and growth in Williston and the region.

Specifically:

- Further communicate to the public the role of WED for the city of Williston
- Build awareness of economic development
- Improve upon the quality of life for the community
- Build upon partnerships with WED and stakeholders
- Identify key strategic objectives to guide diversification and grow the economy

In Williston, we want economic development to foster business growth that will enhance the community through jobs creation, diversification, and promote a high quality of life. Additionally, economic development should shape the location, workforce, and resources that influence business creation, retention, expansion, and attraction that coincide with our values as a city.



# Executive Director Letter

Greetings,

It gives me great pleasure to present our updated strategic plan that will guide the Williston Economic Development office over the next five years. As you may recall, in 2018 Williston Economic Development embarked on a strategic planning session that set the framework for our Vision, Mission and direction towards our goals known as the three pillars of development. We experienced a lot of success in the short span of three years. Highlights Include:

- Recognition through the International Economic Development Council as a recognized Accredited Economic Development Organization.
- Launch of successful marketing programs such as: The Williston Works Podcast Series, Superstars Program, 21 Businesses in 2021, and the WED Futures Forum.
- Recipient of numerous awards: 2020 Developer of the year, 2020 Chamber Connector, Mid America Economic Development 2020 Marketing Program, and 2019 bronze award winner for our Economic Development Week.
- Assisted 21 new and existing licensed childcare facilities contributing more than 1-Million dollars in matching incentives.
- New business development of diversified industry: Busted Knuckle Brewery, Crusoe Energy Systems, FlowCore, Yellowstone River Beef, Cerilon Gas to Liquids facility, NDSU Research extension seed cleaning facility.
- More than 70 Retail business small and corporate opened or expanded since 2017.
- Contributing facilitator towards the redevelopment of Williston Square that has produced several new restaurant and retail entities as well as a regional medical provider.



As we move into 2022 and beyond, you will see our focus remain heavy on business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts, and quality of life development. We also remain committed to attracting and strengthening that coveted retail sector as defined by the wants and needs of our community. Something different you will see over the next several years is our intent to place a larger focus on diversification through the attraction and development of a value-added corridor, emerging technologies like cryptocurrency and the UAS sector, and a heavy push towards defining our role in the workforce development arena.

We are excited what the future holds for the development of Williston and will continue to work hard for the community of Williston to build a region we can all be proud of.

Best Regards,

Shawn Wenko



## About Williston

**W**illiston welcomes new and innovative ideas where businesses choose to start and grow. The city fosters an open-door business policy that provides valuable guidance, financial resources, and a “we will figure it out” attitude.

Currently, Williston has over 30,000 residents and it is the 6th largest city in the state. Williston’s population has grown at an annual rate of 5.82% since 2010 and potential to grow above the United States average growth rate. Williston serves more than 100,000 residents in its trade area. Williston is the economic, educational and health care hub for northwest North Dakota and northeast Montana. Located 18 miles from the North Dakota-Montana border and 60 miles from the U.S.-Canada border.

Williston is mainly built from increased activities in the oil and gas and agriculture sectors. The Bakken area is within the Williston Basin, which has rich deposits of petroleum, coal, natural gas. Due to its location, the Bakken is one of the most important sources of oil in the United States and is in the top three oil producers in the country resulting in about 1 million barrels of oil a day. Williston’s oil and gas industry is a leader in innovation and technology to

improve productivity, efficiency, and sustainability. The city offers huge opportunities for expansions and development from ample and diverse undeveloped land throughout the area. While current supply of office, industrial, and flex space is limited, the capacity to build and develop business or mixed-use area exists. Williston has three major highways, an international airport, and mainline rail access. There have been billions of dollars of investment in infrastructure over the past several years has opened the opportunity to globally and diversified opportunities.

There is a small business presence in every industry in Williston. Williston Economic Development and the Small Business Development Center partnership has provided financial, management, and business operation advising that has proven to be highly beneficial and valuable for the community.

A key component for diversification lies with the developmental efforts Williston Square, previous location of Sloulin Field International Airport. Plans for development of the 800-acre area include a new Sanford Health Regional Clinic, Power Play Hockey Facility, retail expansion, a mix of casual

and fast-food restaurants, quality of life aspects, and innovation opportunities. There are opportunities for brand new residential housing, parks, and green space. Construction of infrastructure, land use, and amenities are developing and provides a huge opportunity for growth and economic expansion for Williston.

Williston has a history known for being a leader in innovation. Many emerging industries and technological advancements develop within the city and with partnerships. The areas of expansion include UAS technology, cryptocurrency, gas to liquid technology, and other value-added opportunities that increase oil and gas industry efficiency.

Williston's public and private K-12 schools are an important attraction to business and a key retention asset. Recently, the public-school districts 1 & 8 merged into district 007 to provide the best possible education for students by sharing resources, ideas, and unity within the community. The new Williston High School was built in 2016 at a cost of \$56 million and the ASB Innovation Academy followed in 2019. Williston is also home to Williston State College, a two-year public community college in the North Dakota University System (NDUS) that is well known and highly regarded for their academic achievements and revered free tuition through their Regional County Graduate Scholarship (RCG) and Williams County Graduate Scholarship (WCG). A division of Williston State College is TrainND Northwest, a statewide workforce training network.

The recently constructed Williston Basin International Airport (XWA) with the new terminal's 109,000 square feet, updated technology, and optimal location provides businesses a valuable access to transportation. Delta, United Airlines, and Sun Country provide flights to Denver, Minneapolis, and Las Vegas. In addition, Williston has access to mainline rail that can transport materials, resources, products and passengers between Portland, Seattle, Chicago as well as the port of Vancouver.

The city is committed to programs and incentives designed to meet the needs of a wide range of businesses whether they are small, large, local serving or export oriented. Williston is well known for the STAR Fund that is voter approved to utilize 1% of the city's sales tax to be used for a variety of infrastructure, business, and community needs. Voters have approved the 1% city sales tax through June 30, 2030.

The city also utilizes many of the state's programs to improve city infrastructure, amenities, and growth to benefit the community. The city highly values partnerships to maximize impact by strengthening relationships, leveraging resources, and increase awareness.

Much more information about Williston's economy and its economic development opportunities and priorities can be found on the City of Williston's Economic Development website at [www.willistondevelopment.com](http://www.willistondevelopment.com).



# WILLISTON PROFILE

# 30,073



2021  
Population

# 31

Lower average age compared to state average of 34



55%  
male



45%  
female

# #2



Highest growth rated city in North Dakota with an annual growth rate of 5.82%



# \$85,426

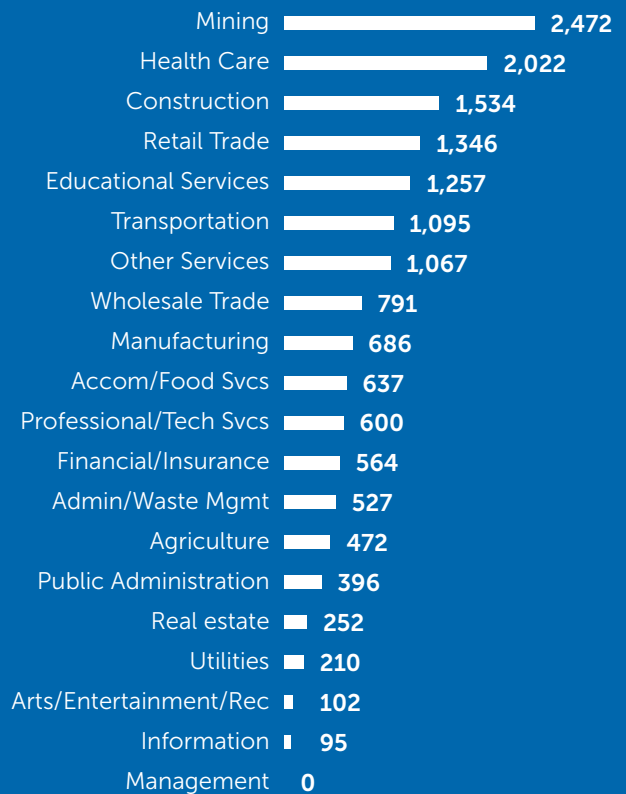
Average median household income in 2021 vs state average of \$64,894



# \$2 Billion

Dedicated to growth in infrastructure and housing over the past 10 years

## Employment by Industry



# #6

Largest city in North Dakota

# 65%



of residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher education

# 1,493

Registered businesses in the City of Williston



# Mission, Vision and Principles



## Mission

our Mission is to facilitate, lead and promote a vibrant business climate through sound economic policy.

We support our mission by focusing on these three core principles:

1. **Promote a high quality of life**
2. **Foster entrepreneur networks that promote innovation, diversification, and healthy business development for new and existing business.**
3. **Promote partnerships for increased economic development**



## Vision

Our **Vision** for Williston Economic Development is to be the development leader in western North Dakota by establishing Williston as a recognized, desirable, sustainable, and business friendly place in North Dakota for diverse industries to locate and conduct business.

## Background

Williston Economic Development is housed at the Williston Center for Development at 113 4th Street East. The office is considered a department within the City of Williston and is managed under the portfolio of the finance commissioner. WED has a full and part time staff of five that consists of the Executive Director, Small Business Development and Marketing, Program Development Coordinator, an Executive Administrative Assistant, and Development Associate. WED is an accredited Economic Development Organization.

## Value Proposition

Williston Economic Development is the development leader in western North Dakota by establishing Williston as a recognized, desirable, sustainable, and business friendly place in North Dakota for diverse industries to locate and conduct business.

Funding for business development comes from the STAR Fund which assists an average of 50 businesses a year, contributing more than 1 million dollars into the community.

We foster an open-door business policy with help from the Small Business Development Center and Tri-County Regional Development to facilitate, lead, and promote a vibrant business climate through sound economic policy.

There are more than 20,000 Economic Developers that do what we do every day. Economic Development is vital to marketing business and championing growth of community development.

# Initiatives

Six strategic initiatives have been identified in response to our analysis of Williston's economy and environment. These initiatives address how Williston Economic Development and the City of Williston engage with businesses in an active and community center manner. The goal of each initiative is to contribute to improving Williston's business climate and promote the city as welcoming and open for business. Each section specifies the goals, results and partners involved in implementing the initiatives.



Business Attraction,  
Retention, & Expansion



Value-Added  
Corridor Development



Quality of  
Life Development



Emerging  
Technology



Workforce  
Skills Training



Marketing  
and Branding

## Performance Metrics

Performance metrics are essential to understanding the impact of our programs and initiatives on the city. Our office evaluates the effectiveness of our efforts and our impact by how engaged the community is with our programs and the overall perspective the community has on our initiatives. The WED office is committed to spend our efforts on initiatives, programs, and activities that increase Williston's economic growth and quality of life.





# Business Attraction, Retention & Expansion

Engaging and assisting Williston's businesses to come, stay, and grow in Williston will continue to be the primary function of Williston Economic Development and its assisting partners. Business attraction, retention & expansion will benefit the city by growing the economy, amenities, and opportunities. The emphasis will be placed on attracting business that provide, retaining certain businesses, and expanding growing businesses. Efforts will be focused on effective marketing, facilitating projects, superior networking, and maintaining an open-door policy. Partnerships with bring exceptional insight, resources, and skills to this initiative.

## Goals

- Work with partners to proactively attract and coordinate with companies that are interested in the Williston area.
- Establish component of marketing plan to engage and increase awareness of Williston's resources and opportunities for business growth.
- Continue partnerships with SBDC to provide overall business consulting assistance to new and existing businesses.
- Establish a women-owned business criteria.
- Enhance outreach to existing business by developing a business retention plan.
- Enhance the Williston STAR Fund abilities by developing an annual follow-up/verification process, marketing promotions, and annual award banquet.
- Expand upon collaboration with relative entities to increase business attraction, retention, and expansion as well as increase public awareness of business activities.

## Results

- New Jobs
- Retained Jobs
- New investment
- Positive experience from businesses and entrepreneurs that interact with Williston Economic Development
- Strengthen partnerships

## Partners

North Dakota Small Business Development Center, Williston Chamber of Commerce, Williston Downtowners Association, Education and Workforce partners, Tri-County Regional Development Council, City of Williston STAR Fund, Williston Area Economic Diversification Group, City of Williston Commissioners, Western Regional Economic Development



# Quality of Life Development

Our research has shown that Williston lacks ample quality of life amenities that appeal to the younger community. Quality of life and recreational amenities serve a vital role in the development of a local economy to build a sense of place, attract workforce, attract businesses, and positively shapes perceptions of community. The focus of this initiative is to increase quality of life amenities that positively affect Williston's economic growth and image.

## Goals

- Focus development on Williston Square to attract and implement new amenities, facilities, businesses, and attractions that Williston currently lacks.
- Advocate for affordable housing that meet the needs of the city's business, workforce, and residents.
- Promotion of STAR Fund Community development projects to increase community awareness of projects and the opportunities available for development through the STAR Fund.
- Increase partnerships to develop quality of life and opportunities through collaboration.

## Results

- Implement a retail strategy that focuses on recognizing potential business preferences
- Continue to utilize state and local programs to expand and diversify
- Increase office and mixed-use space to diversify opportunities
- Increase quality of life aspects for community

## Partners

North Dakota Small Business Development Center, Williston Chamber of Commerce, Williston Downtowners Association, Tri-County Regional Development Council, City of Williston STAR Fund, Williston Area Economic Diversification Group, City of Williston Commissioners, Western Regional Economic Development, Community Builders, Williston Parks and Recreation District, Williston Convention and Visitor Bureau

# Workforce Skills Training

A highly competitive labor market and training requirement has made attracting and retaining reliable workforce a top priority. Workforce dynamics today are shaped by demographic changes that include growing younger workers and fluctuations in Williston's economic climate. The focus of this initiative is to partner with local, federal, and state entities to assist Williston's employers' access to a skilled and reliable workforce, and workers access to training to qualify them for meaningful and well-paying career paths.

## Goals

- Play an active role toward Career Technology Education Center.
- Develop a workforce development plan that incorporates partnering with workforce training related entities.
- Increase partnership with TrainND Northwest to provide valuable training for workforce to increase opportunities for employment.
- Support K-12 initiatives that inspire and educate students of career and business needs.

## Results

- Increase skilled workforce
- Reduce workforce turnover to keep workers in Williston
- Increase community awareness of training opportunities
- Increase partnerships with workforce related entities

## Partners

Williston State Community College, TrainND Northwest, Williston Basin School District #7, Jobs Service North Dakota, Education and Workforce partners, State Universities



# Value-Added Corridor Development

Recently Williston has identified value-added industries to further development the community. Value added industries processes raw materials into valuable resources. Partnerships will be critical to planning, implementing, and developing by utilizing different entities resources and knowledge. By focusing our efforts in developing a value-added corridor for primary sector industries will increase Williston's opportunities for economic growth.

## Goals

- Develop partnership action plan with Williams County shareholders
- Identify resources available to entice value added industries to area
- Strengthen relationship with North Dakota Department of Commerce
- Identify potential value-added industries to diversify Williams County

## Results

- Increased inquiries from value added industries in the region
- Creation of a city and county value added development group
- Increased valued added industries presence in Williams County

## Partners

Tri-County Regional Development Council, Western Regional Economic Development, State of North Dakota Department of Commerce, City of Williston Commissioners, Williston Area Economic Diversification Group, Williams County Commissioners



# Emerging Technology

Engage and assist entrepreneurs and innovators in emerging technologies to come, reside, and expand their businesses in Williston. Williston is a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship as the city aids start-ups, new or evolving businesses from multiple emerging technology industries. Companies come to Williston due to its location within the Bakken area, financial and assistance resources, and open-door policy. This initiative will be on enhancing and promoting Williston as a place for innovative business to flourish. Partnerships will play a huge role to ensure collaboration on attracting, retaining, and expanding emerging technologies in Williston.

## Goals

- Promotion of Vantis UAS Network to inform community and interested parties of emerging technology development
- Develop business attraction plan for technology & innovative-based business to diversify the economy
- Development informative Future Forum video discussions with relative stakeholders to share with interested entities through social media
- Explore the potential for autonomous package delivery zone
- Explore emerging technology viability of cryptocurrency in area
- Lay framework to identify success of AI and cyber security technology

## Results

- Demonstrate success and growth in innovative companies
- Increase interest from innovative businesses to locate to Williston
- Increase community awareness of emerging technology initiatives
- Enhanced viewership of Future Forum platform

## Partners

Tri-County Regional Development Council, Western Regional Economic Development, State of North Dakota Department of Commerce, City of Williston STAR Fund, TrainND-Northwest, Vantis North Dakota's UAS Network, City of Williston Commissioners, Williams County Commissioner, Williston Area Economic Diversification Group





# Marketing and Branding

An essential fund of economic development is marketing and branding as they provide critical information about the community to legislators, partners, businesses, workforce, and community residents. A strong brand conveys the essence of the community and contributes to successful recruitment and retention. Effective marketing ensures that key message reach and influences their intended audience. Williston Economic Development will update their current marketing plan to maximize effectiveness to attract and retain businesses.

## Goals

- Update and implement an annual marketing plan to increase community awareness of business, quality of life amenities, and expansion projects through social media, Williston Wire, Williston Works Podcast, Midwest Future Forum, etc.
- Continue to enhance image and reach of Williston Wire through weekly publication of articles, content, and news related to Williston economic development
- Continue to build upon annual spring Williston Economic Summit as the premier event for economic development information on Williston
- Host an annual Holiday Open House the second Friday in December to celebrate Williston's achievements
- Collaborate with partners to reach audiences and communicate Williston's advantages, opportunities, development, and brand

## Results

- Increase awareness of Williston developments
- Increase business participation in federal, local, and state programs
- Create a concise and engaging social media presence
- Increased presence and sponsorships of outside events

## Partners

Williston Area Chamber of Commerce, Williston Convention and Visitor Bureau, The Creative Treatment, media outlets, local businesses and organizations



