CITY OF BROOKINGS

Community Economic
Development Master Plan

brookings
SOUTH DAKOTA

Brookings is a hub of opportunity that attracts innovators and collaborators.

It champions the fresh, sustainable ideas and a quality of life that makes South Dakota and our country thrive.

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Executive Summary

Ranked as one of the best cities to live in South Dakota, Brookings provides its 24,000-plus residents with amenities that include affordable housing, quality education, job opportunities and, best of all, a small-town vibe that welcomes everyone. The City has several active and engaged partners working together to expand development opportunities. Importantly, South Dakota State University (SDSU) anchors the regional economy and contributes to the community's culture and quality of place. Now is the time for Brookings to adopt a modern economic development strategy that harnesses the City's assets and prioritizes resources to achieve productive and sustainable growth.

Brookings provides many opportunities for year-round recreation with an abundance of parks, outdoor activities, and a lively downtown with unique shops and restaurants. The City of Brookings is home to a highly skilled workforce seeking success in industries ranging from agricultural technology and science to renewable energy and advanced manufacturing. Also, as an emerging center for innovation with the Research Park at South Dakota State University, Brookings has the foundation necessary for long-term economic growth and success.

To support the creation of Brookings' Community Economic Development Master Plan, Resonance performed a comprehensive demographic and economic assessment that evaluated the City's performance across a variety of metrics compared to a number of benchmark communities and evaluated Brookings' industry clusters to guide future business attraction and expansion efforts.

THE FOLLOWING TAKEAWAYS SUMMARIZE OUR LEARNINGS FROM THE RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS:

1. **Brookings is a fast-growing community with the best of both worlds.**

   Home to nearly 24,500 residents, Brookings' population has increased by 7% since 2015, double the national growth rate. Brookings has a small-town charm as well as all the larger town amenities. Residents can enjoy a variety of retail and entertainment in the downtown area, lots of events, and many museums without feeling lost in a big city.

2. **Brookings has strong economic output and income growth.**

   Brookings' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by 21% from 2010 to 2020, which outpaced the State of South Dakota (17%) and the nation (18%). Since 2010, median household income within Brookings has increased by 15% which surpassed the State of South Dakota (9%) and the nation (5%).

3. **Brookings has competitive export clusters—a foundation for a strong, diverse economic base.**

   Brookings has a strong economic base because it is reliant on the knowledge-based economy in SDSU and boasts a strong manufacturing cluster as well. Advanced Manufacturing, Agricultural Inputs and Services, Food Processing, and Ag Innovation collectively employ more than 6,000 employees, almost a third of Brookings' labor force.

4. **With strong liveability assets, Brookings is a great place for boomerang talent.**

   Brookings is a great place to raise a family, so it's a good choice for experienced talent who are looking to settle down. More than four in 10 of Brookings' residents have a bachelor's degree, and Brookings boasts a fast-growing knowledge sector: Growth in knowledge-based occupations is 37% greater than the U.S. average.

5. **Brookings has the foundation—research institution, skill talent, quality of place, a pro-business climate, and more—to grow a robust Ag Innovation and Bioprocessing sector.**

   A strong center for Ag Innovation and Bioprocessing, Brookings' businesses benefit from SDSU, highly skilled graduates, and a robust agricultural sector. However, the City needs experienced Research and Development (R&D) skills, and an opportunity lies in attracting SDSU alumni.

6. **Brookings has access to a strong university asset in SDSU, but it could be leveraged more.**

   Brookings is leveraging the University, but there is potential for further collaboration. This could take the form of internship and volunteer programs, engaging the university in placemaking initiatives in the downtown core, and technical training, among other things. These efforts would enable Brookings to expand its talent pipeline, revitalize some of its community areas, and embed technological progress in its industries.

7. **Brookings has a growing entrepreneurial community that needs more support.**

   Nearly three in four Brookings businesses are small (having fewer than 10 employees). Entry-level proof of concept (POC) funding for students would contribute positively to the entrepreneurial community in Brookings and would help commercialize ideas from the University.

8. **Brookings has a limited supply of real estate on the market.**

   Based on their monthly housing costs, just over a third of all renters in Brookings are rent-burdened, while fewer than two in 10 homeowners are home-burdened. However, due to the sharp increase in real estate prices in the last couple of years, housing affordability and a lack of housing options are major concerns for residents. Maintaining the City's housing affordability and options is essential to attracting and retaining skilled talent.

9. **Diversity is what makes Brookings great.**

   Almost 12% of Brookings' residents are people of color, growing 26% in the last five years. Cultural initiatives, ethnic products, and a celebration of indigenous roots would promote inclusion in Brookings.

10. **Placemaking investments would further support place-led economic growth in Brookings.**

    The Brookings downtown is a great asset. Facade improvements, infrastructure investments, new green spaces, community gathering facilities, and a focus on winter recreational options would lead to an increase in visitation and would attract businesses and talent to Brookings.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE SEVEN GOALS OF BROOKINGS' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN:

1. **Investment for future prosperity.**

   We will attract investment to grow Brookings' economy and create generational prosperity.

2. **South Dakota-grown and scaled.**

   We will build Brookings into the premier entrepreneurial community in America's Heartland.

3. **Prairie innovation.**

   We will bring passionate innovators, academics, and investors together to create an inclusive innovation hub.

4. **Skills for tomorrow.**

   We will invest in the diverse talent that will fuel the future of our community.

5. **"Anything but ordinary."**

   We will promote and celebrate Brookings as an extraordinary destination for families, professionals, students, and visitors of all walks.

6. **Intentional, authentic storytelling.**

   We will promote Brookings' story.

7. **Effective implementation.**

   We will build an economic development ecosystem that effectively supports the implementation of this strategy.

The following report describes Brookings' Community Economic Development Master Plan and Action Plan and includes the Community Competitive Assessment (Appendix A), the Target Cluster Analysis (Appendix B), and the Stakeholder Engagement Summary (Appendix C).

Discovery and Engagement

To plan for future resiliency and growth, communities need access to economic and market data that will help them better understand what's happening in their local economies. Analyzing key data will inform policymakers, business owners, and community members as they make decisions, develop strategies, and take action in today's complex and challenging economic landscape. Harnessing key data equips economic development organizations to confidently create informed plans that address the true needs of their communities.

As such, a strong economic development strategy is grounded in extensive research that helps City leaders confirm community facts and dispel biases, identify opportunities, allocate resources, and recruit the right businesses to contribute to the City's long-term sustainable economic growth.

The Community Economic Development Master Plan for the City of Brookings is data-driven, sector-focused, and leveraged by deep input and inclusive engagement from a diverse, multicultural group of stakeholders. The sections below present our findings from the Demographic and Economic Analysis and the Stakeholder Engagement phases.

Demographic and Economic Analysis

Brookings is home to endless possibilities. A fast-growing college town, Brookings boasts a highly educated workforce and a strong knowledge-based economy. Home to South Dakota State University, Brookings takes pride in its strong Agriculture legacy and—supported by the University—elevates this important sector by developing and adopting new technologies in the space. As such, Brookings is leading what Ag Innovation and Bioprocessing will look like in the world in the years to come. Brookings' Manufacturing sector is equally critical to the economic success of the City. Located in the lowest-cost state for doing business, Brookings is home to major locally born companies that add to the City's character just as they add to its economy.

To support the development of Brookings' Community Economic Development Master Plan, Resonance performed a comprehensive demographic and economic assessment that consisted of two main components:

Competitive Benchmarking Assessment	Target Cluster Analysis

The key conclusions are presented on the following page.

Competitive Benchmarking Assessment

The **Competitive Benchmarking Assessment** synthesized the demographic and economic trends impacting the City. The analysis compared Brookings to 15 of its peer communities across six categories: Economic Vitality, Innovation, Talent, Diversity, Equity, and Quality of Place. This part of the research included data for more than 50 metrics and grouped them into key categories that provided a holistic view of the City's comparative advantages. The following are the learnings from this assessment:

FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- **Brookings is fast-growing.** Both the City and the region grew at rates higher than state and national averages.

- **Brookings is attracting immigrant talent.** Foreign-born individuals have increased in the last five years at a rate four times the national average.

- **Brookings has a strong and growing knowledge workforce.** The share of employment in knowledge occupations is 7% higher than the national average, with strong growth that is 75% higher than the state average.

- **Brookings has lower median household incomes.** Median household income ($57,471) is $2,400 lower than the state average and $7,500 lower than the national average.

- **Brookings is closing the gender wage gap.** The gender wage gap is in line with state and national averages, and female incomes have risen at a rate two times the national average.

- **Brookings provides a good quality of life.** The City has cultural and recreational amenities that should be promoted.

Target Cluster Analysis

The **Target Cluster Analysis** acts as the primary and essential foundation for supporting all future business attraction, expansion efforts, and incentives and for helping to shape a narrative that resonates with new enterprises, site selectors, and talent.

In light of the calls for equity and social justice over the last 18 months, our target cluster analysis assessed traded clusters from the lens of equity and resilience—as well as competitiveness—as opposed to an evaluation that relies solely on an economic growth focus. It also focused on traded (as opposed to local) clusters since they tend to have higher wages and higher levels of innovation, in addition to being more resilient and durable.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE KEY TARGET CLUSTERS FOR BROOKINGS:

Advanced Manufacturing

Home to Daktronics, Larson Manufacturing, and 3M, Brookings has a robust Manufacturing cluster. The cluster is the strongest in terms of competitive advantage—the advantage is more than 21 times the national average—and total employment, with more than 3,500 workers. It is also the largest contributor to the economy in terms of Gross Regional Product (GRP), generating $720 million in 2021.

Food Processing and Manufacturing

Brookings has a specialization in cheese manufacturing thanks to the SDSU Dairy and Food Science Programs, and the Bel Brand's Cheese Manufacturing Plant is a major draw to further expand the cluster. The cluster is competitive—the advantage is more than 6 times the national average—and shows growth that is in line with the state average.

Ag Innovation

The Ag Innovation cluster is the fastest-growing cluster in Brookings, growing by 27% over the last five years and surpassing the state's job growth in the cluster. It is supported by a highly educated workforce, where almost six in 10 employees have a bachelor's degree or higher. Ag Innovation is supported by SDSU's excellence in the field through the Precision Agriculture program and also through robust work by the Research Park. Major employers in this cluster include Dynamic Concepts, Conference Technologies, and Banner Associates.

Agricultural Inputs and Services

The Agricultural Inputs and Services cluster is the second-highest in terms of competitive advantage—the advantage is more than seven times the national average—and a major employer with a strong employment base of more than 1,400 workers. This cluster is supported by Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce initiatives such as the Ag Teacher Resources Grant, Ag Scholarships, Feed the Farmer, and the Ag Appreciation Banquet. Major employers include Sterling Technology, Hill Top Dairy, and K C Dairy.

Stakeholder Engagement

Our team performed targeted outreach to key stakeholders to gather input on strategic priorities, develop a broad sense of plan ownership and collaboration, and create advocates for the plan's goals. Discussions addressed an array of issues: growing an entrepreneurial ecosystem, promoting the City's quality of place, engaging local anchor institutions to drive development, positioning Brookings as an ideal place for young professionals, and more. We also conducted two surveys—one for residents, and one for businesses. Both surveys were widely distributed with the help of the City Manager's Office.

The Stakeholder Engagement complemented the research and provided thoughtful guidance in the development of the Community Economic Development Master Plan. Some of the key conclusions are presented on Page 17.

Roundtable Discussions

More than 50 Brookings residents, business owners, elected officials, economic development partners, University leaders, and others participated in a series of roundtable discussions.

From these discussions, the following emerged as key themes and takeaways and have helped to build the Economic Development Strategic Plan:

- **The pioneer spirit of the Midwest.** Collaboration is a key feature of the Brookings community. The community is small enough that people know each other, network, and get things done. This is supported by friendly people, welcoming neighborhoods, and a strong willingness to progress.

- **Strong economic portfolio.** Brookings has a strong economic base because it is reliant on the knowledge-based economy at SDSU and has a strong Manufacturing cluster. At the same time, it does not rely heavily on retail. The availability of a strong Manufacturing cluster attracts workers due to a pool of opportunities and retains talent in the City, as workers have options to transition locally from one position to another.

- **Strong workforce pipeline.** The SDSU Jerome J. Lohr College of Engineering is a strong asset for Brookings' Manufacturing community, graduating engineers who become manufacturers in town. That being said, Brookings needs to implement graduate retention tactics to attract its graduates to stay and work in Brookings.

- **Open for business.** Businesses are attracted to Brookings' tax climate and business climate, as well as its efforts in marketing and promoting the City's Ag Innovation cluster throughout the United States.

- **Accessible networking.** Young professionals appreciate Brookings' friendly culture because it facilitates networking, job connections, and accessible opportunities for upward economic mobility. Young professionals appreciate the ability to connect directly with City and community leaders because it makes them feel like their voices and perspectives are heard and considered during policy and decision-making. Overall, accessible networking encourages young professionals to engage in civic discussions and projects.

Community Survey

The City conducted a community survey that was answered by 758 respondents—89% living in Brookings. Community members identified safety, access to quality healthcare, and employment opportunities as the top three reasons why they have chosen Brookings as their home. Analyzing results from the survey, we were able to conclude that Brookings' strengths are its safety and access to quality healthcare, while its weaknesses are housing affordability and shopping options.

Business Survey

The City conducted a business owner survey that was answered by 79 respondents—46% have been operating a business in Brookings for 11+ years, 39% for 6 -10 years, and 35% for fewer than five years. The respondents expressed that the availability and quality of labor are the most challenging factors for doing business in Brookings. Almost half (49%) of the respondents think business planning and labor support programs—such as resources on how to start a business and write a business plan, access to consumer data, employee training, development opportunities, and continuing education programs—are needed to bolster their businesses.

Economic Development Strategy

As economic conditions inevitably change, accompanied by new challenges and opportunities, the resilience of a city's economic development strategy will be tested. Long-term economic development efforts that are built on a foundation of core values and principles will enable Brookings to be adaptive, rather than simply reactive, to these changes.

Brookings will advance its economic development priorities with both existing and evolving partnerships. Key public and private stakeholders and partners all must contribute to the City's vision and values and its opportunities and objectives. Further, they must come together to develop a plan that enables Brookings to identify and respond to new opportunities as they arise.

The defined goals, objectives, and tactics of the economic development strategy will enable stakeholders to understand their specific roles. Collectively, these individual actions will create a prosperous and equitable future for Brookings.

Throughout the five years of this plan, Brookings' economic development priorities will evolve in response to the City's growth and the rapid pace of change in the economy. City leaders and its economic development partners will examine the strategy annually to identify deficiencies and update the strategy to address changing needs. The City—together with its economic development partners—will also be exploring public-private funding to implement the plan. To ensure ongoing implementation and governance, this group will meet annually to report progress on four key metrics:

- **Jobs**—tracking the number of new jobs in Brookings, with the aim of increasing jobs by 4% in the next five years (in line with state growth) to provide 520 new jobs

- **Income**—tracking the income of households in Brookings, with the aim of increasing household incomes by 18% in the next five years to $67,816 (in line with state growth)

- **Consumer Spending**—tracking the personal consumption expenditures in Brookings

- **Capital Investment**—tracking the dollars dedicated to capital investments in Brookings

Using best practices in economic development, the following plan lays out the guiding principles for this analysis. The plan includes seven broad goals, supporting each with specific evidence of its importance and key priorities. Appendix D lays out an implementation plan that includes action items, key partners, and metrics.

We will attract investment to grow Brookings' economy and create generational prosperity.

Outside investment improves the resilience of the community. Investments allow cities to expand infrastructure and services—essential for long-term growth—without placing an extra burden on the citizens. Outside investment can also take the form of business attraction, which can quickly create quality jobs and enhance regional competitiveness. This serves as a way to signal that a city is primed for growth and innovation, further increasing investments and business interests. With a robust investment stream, cities can create shared prosperity and lessen the impact of unpredictable events. Community members can be supported in ways that would not be possible without a dynamic economy.

An economic development strategy that includes diverse, high-growth sectors will enable the City to adapt to everchanging and unexpected conditions. Brookings' established clusters—Advanced Manufacturing, Ag Innovation, Agricultural Inputs and Services, and Food Processing and

Manufacturing—provide a solid foundation for a resilient economic strategy. Each sector provides jobs across the income and education spectrum, from large employers that anchor the economy to the many homegrown businesses that innovate and inject life into the community. Sector strategy focuses on not just one firm or subsector but rather on the business ecosystem. When businesses of all shapes and sizes are given a place to grow, social equity and upward mobility grow, too. The result is a local economy that is competitive and dynamic.

The City will look to the Brookings Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) to lead on this goal. BEDC is the primary engine for promoting economic growth in Brookings and the surrounding area. It serves as an advocate for the business community by building relationships with companies that allow them to succeed by taking advantage of the area's unique and progressive business environment.

The Evidence

- Brookings' cluster strategy—for expansion as well as retention—should be centered on four sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Ag Innovation, Agricultural Inputs and Services, and Food Processing and Manufacturing. These sectors are competitive, fast-growing, and supported by strong programs at South Dakota State University.

- The Brookings region represents 4% of the state economy, ranking fifth in South Dakota. Productivity is high at $62,202, on par with state and national averages.

- Brookings is competitive in Agriculture, Manufacturing, and Education. Its fastest-growing industry is Professional Services, growing by 122% in the last five years.
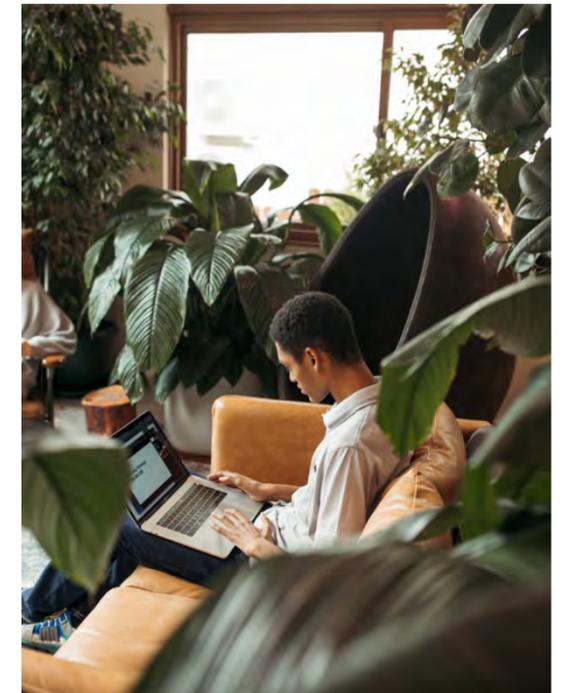
Evaluation Metrics

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **New Businesses by Cluster**—tracking the number of new businesses in Brookings by industry cluster

- **Employment by Cluster**—tracking employment levels by industry cluster

- **New Investment**—counting the number and value of new investments in the City

- **Median Household Income**—tracking growth in incomes and standards of living

- **Median Earnings**—tracking growth in earning potential and the competitiveness of the City in attracting talent

STRATEGY 1.1

Build a business retention and expansion initiative for both emerging and legacy employers.

To support existing businesses, Brookings needs a business retention and expansion program that is focused on its strong clusters. It must do this while also attracting new companies by utilizing a value proposition that illustrates the City's economic competitiveness. Additionally, to better understand its interactions with community businesses, Brookings should host a series of roundtable discussions with major existing employers as well as policymakers. All players should come together to establish initiatives and strategies that promote, measure, and reevaluate cluster growth and engagement.

ACTIONS

- Host bi-annual cluster working groups—Advanced Manufacturing, Ag Innovation and Services, and Food Manufacturing—to identify specific cluster needs and supply chain opportunities.

- Conduct a formal business visitation plan for Brookings businesses, interviewing at least 24 major employers annually.

- Convene CEO networking sessions.

- Use engagement to identify opportunities and needs and report key findings systematically.

The lead organization for this strategy is the BEDC. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, Research Park, and the City of Brookings.

Develop a cluster-focused business attraction and site-selection initiative.

Brookings' economic strategy must be specific and intentional. Economic development efforts must focus on the investments that are most likely to succeed, in both new business attraction and redevelopment opportunities. This can be done within a framework that specifies target sectors, expands on best practices, and enhances collaboration among City departments and private-sector partners.

Brookings can also promote local investment opportunities by developing positive relationships with site selectors—particularly those conducting location searches for knowledge-based companies and global headquarters—who influence which cities will make the short list.

ACTIONS

- Strengthen partner and cluster strategy (staffing, information flow, RFPs, and marketing).

- Identify annual goals by cluster and markets.

- Conduct a bi-annual paid qualified lead generation campaign to generate meetings in key attraction markets and industry sectors.

- Attend commercial development trade shows to increase exposure for Brookings' business attraction efforts: CoreNet Global, NAIOP, Site Selectors Guild, ULI, ICSC, Select USA, Economic, MPA, CREW, and more.

- Build a target site-selection list and develop bi-annual community outreach.

- Host appropriate inbound City visits, tours, and trade missions with target companies, investment representatives, and site selectors.

- Develop a retail and restaurant attraction plan.

The lead organization for this strategy is the BEDC. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, Research Park, Visit Brookings, and the City of Brookings.

STRATEGY 1.3

Utilize public-owned land to attract quality jobs and investment.

For cities that are seeking to raise their rate of investment, especially when public finances are tight, public land is a potentially underutilized resource. Public land might be used in a variety of ways to attract private co-investment. It can be used as a means to plan and develop new functions and districts and to establish longer-term and higher-value goals for certain land parcels. It might be used as a means to lower costs and boost returns to private co-investors in land or projects that are otherwise uneconomic. Further, public land can be used as an equity contribution to a longer-term joint venture with a private partner, as part of a land-swap arrangement that helps to assemble one or more parcels for development, or as a means to resource and deliver social and environmental infrastructures within larger, commercially driven development.

ACTIONS

- Coordinate a strategy to evaluate the highest and best use (e.g., quality job creation and impactful development/redevelopment) of the City-owned land.

- Develop a strategy for evaluating, measuring, and reporting impact over time.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include the BEDC.

STRATEGY 1.4

Plan for the future of the City's infrastructure needs, including commercial sites, roadways, utilities, and more.

Brookings' public investments in streets, water, sewer, parks, and civic facilities can be leveraged to promote private investments. Strategically located parks and buildings can inspire private residential development, and targeted infrastructure improvements can attract new industries. By maximizing private investment, infrastructure extensions can support the long-term costs associated with infrastructures and facilities.

ACTIONS

- Partner with various City departments and boards, Brookings Municipal Utilities, and development stakeholders to maintain and evaluate development assets and needs: land, infrastructure, and utilities.

- Advise City Council on development policies to support economic growth and align with cluster needs.

- Serve as a trusted advisor to businesses and investors on new real estate/commercial development and redevelopment transactions that further the City's economic landscape.

- Partner with SDSU to use artificial intelligence and machine learning to solve challenges (e.g., urban site planning and transportation modeling).

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include the BEDC, Brookings' Municipal Utilities, Visit Brookings, and SDSU.

We will build Brookings into the premier entrepreneurial community in America's Heartland.

A focus on entrepreneurship and small businesses leads to the generation of new ideas, allowing the region to enhance economic growth. Entrepreneurs can quickly capitalize on emerging economic opportunities, boosting the region's competitiveness. Through small business creation, regions can establish a stable economy with enhanced productivity, innovation, and job creation. With a strong base, small businesses can be assisted with scale-up, leading to wealth creation and generating greater prosperity for the area.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses give the community an identity. Supporting multicultural small businesses enables the regional landscape to mirror the community it is serving. As a result, the prosperity generated is shared across all groups, and people feel a greater sense of pride in their community, making them more willing to support the local economy.

The City will look to the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce to lead this goal. The Chamber continues to be the leading business organization in the Brookings area—promoting, connecting, enriching, and advocating for the Brookings-area business community and providing endless opportunities to help businesses succeed. Made up of 500-member businesses, the Chamber connects all cross-sections of the City's business community.

The Evidence

- Brookings has a pro-business climate, thanks to the state not imposing a corporate income tax. South Dakota has a 4.5% state sales tax rate, a maximum local sales tax rate of 4.5%, and an average combined state and local sales tax rate of 6.4%. South Dakota's tax system ranks second overall on the 2022 State Business Tax Climate Index.

- Brookings has a concentration of small businesses: 87% of businesses in Brookings have fewer than 20 employees. This share is 85% on the national level.

Evaluation Metrics

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **New Businesses Formation**—tracking the number of new businesses in Brookings by size of business

- **Investments**— tracking the investment dollars made in the City

Provide Brookings' small businesses with technical training, networking opportunities, and mentorship.

Information sharing and opening the lines of communication ensures that small business needs are met by improving the capacity of business owners. By connecting entrepreneurs to mentors and training opportunities, Brookings can create a supportive ecosystem where small businesses can thrive.

ACTIONS

- Develop a calendar of small-business coaching (business plans, marketing plans, and succession plans) and networking opportunities for Brookings businesses.

- Coordinate and offer resources for existing and prospective entrepreneurs, including "How to Start a Business" webinars, calendar of resources, and more.

- Support and promote small-business resources and training offered by the Brookings Chamber, BEDC, and Research Park.

- Continue to provide ribbon-cutting events and other promotional awareness for new businesses.

- Conduct a biannual business owner survey to track business perceptions and indicators in Brookings.

- Host a series of "pop-up" shops to feature the products/services of home-based businesses in Brookings.

The lead organizations for this strategy are the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, BEDC, and Research Park. Partners include Downtown Brookings.

Identify capital to grow new and existing businesses in Brookings.

Capital is needed to grow new and existing businesses in Brookings. An example is a revolving loan fund that can provide the gap financing measure Brookings needs for the development and expansion of its small businesses. The fund replenishes itself by using the interest and principal payments from old loans to make new loans. This flexible source of capital, combined with more conventional sources, can help bridge the difference between what borrowers can obtain on the private market and what they need to start or sustain a business.

This approach has been successful for the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, which operates several revolving loan fund programs through its Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The loans are used as gap financing products for commercial real estate development and small- and medium-sized business development in Pittsburgh. Likewise, the Oregon Business Development Fund—a state-level revolving loan fund managed by Business Oregon—provides capital to Oregon-based businesses to use for land, buildings, equipment, machinery, and working capital.

ACTIONS

- Convene a working group to advise on the creation of the revolving loan program: goals, guidelines, and value proposition.

- Evaluate best practices from other Midwestern cities similar to Brookings.

- Raise capital for funds by 2025, begin to distribute funds, and evaluate for impact.

The lead organization for this strategy is the BEDC. Partners include Research Park.

Create and sustain a "Buy Local" initiative, connecting small businesses to residents, students, and University purchasing.

Without "buy local" campaigns, many businesses would not have survived the pandemic. Brookings can build on this with a citywide "buy local" initiative that encourages residents to support retail establishments, restaurants, and other businesses in their community. Beyond the economic benefits, such an initiative will invigorate the City's brand and instill an even greater sense of local pride.

ACTIONS

- Convene a task force of Brookings businesses, residents, students, and SDSU procurement officials to evaluate the promotional efforts for buying locally.

- Evaluate "buy local" campaigns from other communities, taking lessons learned and applying them to Brookings (focusing on those with a university procurement presence).

- Develop a systematic, measurable approach/plan that can be sustained over time and measured.

The lead organization for this strategy is the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce.
Partners include the City of Brookings, SDSU, Visit Brookings, and Downtown Brookings.

Establish a plan to create and offer adaptable commercial facilities and public spaces in Brookings' downtown.

The concept of adaptive facilities—created by transforming shopping malls to mixed-used spaces, converting warehouses to breweries, or using distribution centers for indoor agriculture, for example—is becoming a key factor in the real estate ecosystem. Existing but vacant properties can be transformed for entirely new uses, giving a fresh lease on life to neighborhoods and boosting the local economy.

ACTIONS

- Cultivate leads for downtown spaces to support pop-up retail.
- Explore the feasibility of shared spaces downtown, including best practices in other cities, business models, and needed resources.
- Advance the City's Downtown Redevelopment/Infill Program efforts, including developing a Downtown Master Plan that outlines opportunities for adaptable and shared spaces.

The lead organizations for this strategy are the City of Brookings and Downtown Brookings. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce.

Host an annual CO.STARTER (or like program) cohort.

The ability to monetize creative talent is essential to a thriving community. A CO.STARTER business accelerator program is designed to provide young entrepreneurs with the insights, relationships, and tools to turn their ideas into action and sustainable businesses. It allows aspiring entrepreneurs to study, shape, and fine-tune their concepts in a collaborative and welcoming environment. Cultivating native creative talent will position Brookings for long-term success.

ACTIONS

- Become a partner in the Community Navigator rural spoke.

- Host an annual CO.STARTER cohort to introduce participants to Brookings and its destination assets.

The lead organization for this strategy is the BEDC. Partners include Research Park and the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce.

We will bring passionate innovators, academics, and investors together to create an inclusive innovation hub.

Innovation is essential for regional competitiveness and resilience. A strong innovation infrastructure, ranging from easily accessible internet to top-rated research institutions, places a region at the forefront of the outside investment cycle. With the creation of new ideas and products, investment funds and outside businesses will prioritize tapping into the innovation economy. A strong innovation base ensures that a community can stay at the forefront of evolving industries. As some clusters fade, innovation is needed to gain a competitive advantage in new clusters. Additionally, innovation also enables clusters to remain strong, even as technology advances.

The City will look to the Research Park at SDSU to lead this goal. The Research Park strives to establish itself as a physical environment that can develop, attract, and retain technology companies that are aligned with the talent and sponsored research conducted at SDSU.

The Evidence

- Brookings is anchored by a strong knowledge-based economy, where more than 6% of the City's workforce is employed in professional services, a share that is 45% higher than the state average, and with robust growth over the last five years.

- South Dakota State University has the highest R&D expenditure in the State ($60.9 million in 2020).

- From 2012 to 2021, the Research Park at SDSU assisted 119 companies that invested $300 million in facilities and equipment in the City of Brookings, Brookings County, and/or the state of South Dakota.

- The Research Park has a major economic impact on the City of Brookings. Over the last 10 years, its operations have led to the creation of 1,060 jobs, both directly and indirectly, to generate more than $58 million in income.

Evaluation Metrics

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **Start-ups Supported (Total, By Ownership Characteristics)**—tracking the number of start-ups supported

- **Venture Capital**—tracking the amount of venture capital deals and dollars being invested in the City

- **Spinouts from SDSU**—tracking the commercialization of business ideas from SDSU

Support the Brookings Research Park to incubate and scale tech-focused enterprises.

The Research Park at South Dakota State University was developed by the SDSU Growth Partnership. It is the mission and purpose of the partnership to provide a place where industry and university collaboration intersects. All of the major players of the partnership provide key inputs that enhance the mission and purpose and ensure that they become successful. By supporting the Research Park, the City provides the opportunity for the community to strengthen its economic development-based strategies on the innovation derived from the University system.

ACTIONS

- Expand the support of the startup and entrepreneurial events and support initiatives hosted by the Brookings Research Park (as outlined in its strategic plan).

- Align Brookings' cluster initiatives to support high-growth startups and scaleups.

The lead organization for this strategy is Research Park. Partners include SDSU, the BEDC, and the City of Brookings.

Increase technology transfer and commercialization from SDSU faculty and students.

Technology transfer enables private industry and academia to make practical use of advanced research, development, and technical expertise. A university's economic climate requires capital and knowledge, takes advantage of government technology initiatives, and serves as a catalyst for the creation of new companies. In this sense, universities have a seedbed effect on their local economies. To effectively commercialize university inventions—and, in turn, foster regional economic development—Brookings must take a more active role in technology transfer.

ACTIONS

- Convene an advisory committee to help guide Brookings' University-led economic development and SDSU engagement.

- Build sustained relationships with SDSU commercialization and tech-transfer officials to identify scalable enterprises and connect them with resources in Brookings and South Dakota.

- Host pitch sessions for SDSU student entrepreneurs.

- Champion the successes of University-founded enterprises in Brookings.

The lead organization for this strategy is the Research Park. Partners include SDSU and the BEDC.

STRATEGY 3.3

Develop "Proof of Concept" funding ($500K) to support early-stage ideas.

Until they meet specific milestones, new technologies are risky ventures. Proof of Concept grants can reduce this risk by increasing the new technology's potential to meet these milestones, which may include prototypes, new data, and other discoveries that support the idea's validity. POC funds can also uncover technological weaknesses that might stand in the way of further product development. "De-risking" a new idea can increase its potential to become its own startup or to be licensed to an existing company. By providing POC funds, Brookings will promote the commercialization of innovations that have sound technical and economic feasibility.

ACTIONS

- Convene a working group to advise on the creation of the Proof of Concept fund: goals, guidelines, capital strategy, and value proposition.

- Evaluate best practices from other Proof of Concept funds in small and mid-sized cities.

- Raise capital for $500K, begin to distribute funds, and evaluate for impact.

The lead organizations for this strategy are the Research Park and the BEDC. Partners include SDSU.

Partner with the South Dakota Enterprise Institute and other organizations to increase angel funding.

For startups seeking funding, angel investors provide a welcome alternative to other, more predatory forms of funding. The support provided by angel investors fosters innovation that ultimately translates into economic growth. By increasing angel funding—which is often the primary source of funding for high-growth potential businesses—Brookings is supporting this key component of effective and sustainable economic development.

ACTIONS

- Build and expand relationships with venture capital organizations and investors (by target city and industry).

- Develop an outreach plan to target high-wealth individuals and previously successful entrepreneurs to support promising Brookings enterprises.

The lead organization for this strategy is the Research Park. Partners include the BEDC and the South Dakota Enterprise Institute.

Celebrate and promote Brookings' entrepreneurial success stories.

Behind every business are business people. Brookings should highlight this human element of economic development by celebrating local entrepreneurs and their impact on the community. These campaigns will benefit local businesses and also encourage more people—including people from diverse backgrounds—to open businesses.

ACTIONS

- Develop a systematic approach to identify diverse small businesses and innovative startups in Brookings.
- Promote Brookings' successes across multiple communication platforms: website, blogs, social media, and direct emails.

The lead organization for this strategy is the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce. Partners include the BEDC, Research Park, Downtown Brookings, and Visit Brookings.

We will invest in the diverse talent that will fuel the future of our community.

Talented workers improve the productivity of the region, yielding higher output and increasing competitiveness. When people enjoy and excel at their jobs, their employers benefit from greater efficiency and productivity. Members of the knowledge economy generate new ideas that can both improve existing businesses and create new businesses. This creates a continuous cycle of business formation and attraction. Businesses choose where to locate based, more than any other reason, on the talent pool available. Thus, a commitment to developing skilled workers—and aligning their skills with strong and emerging clusters—forms the foundation of economic growth.

The Evidence

- Brookings' share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher (42%) is greater than the national average and the state average. Also, as home to a large Manufacturing sector, the share of residents with an associate's degree in Brookings is 46% higher than the national average.

- Brookings has a strong and growing knowledge workforce. Its share of employment in knowledge-based occupations is 7% higher than the U.S. average, with 7,700 residents employed in this category. This share has grown by 21% over the last five years, a growth rate that is 37% higher than the national average and 75% higher than the state average.

- Brookings is attracting immigrant talent. The foreign-born resident population is experiencing fast growth in the City, growing by 25% in the last five years—a rate that is more than four times the national growth rate. And foreign-born individuals are relocating to Brookings over other communities in South Dakota.

Evaluation Metrics

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **Educational Attainment**—tracking the share of Brookings residents by education level

- **Share of Residents 25-34 Years of Age**—tracking the growth in attracting young talent

- **Scholarships Granted**—tracking the number and amounts of scholarships granted to upskill Brookings' residents

- **Housing Units**—tracking the number of new housing units in Brookings

Grow the offerings and impact of young professionals' engagement.

Attracting and retaining young talent ensures Brookings' economic success. Connect2140 is a committee of the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce that consists of young professionals from diverse backgrounds and industries who assist their peers with networking, helping them to develop both personally and professionally. By supporting these efforts, the City has a better chance of retaining this dynamic and vibrant pool of talent.

ACTIONS

- Expand the reach and offerings of Connect2140 for young professionals.
- Continue to provide access to young professionals to Leadership Brookings.
- Develop an initiative to highlight the efforts and contributions of young professionals.

The lead organization for this strategy is the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce. Partners include the BEDC and the City of Brookings.

Increase participation and support for accessible public transportation.

Mobility and accessibility are essential elements for a good quality of life and the full development of people and societies. Efficient, safe, affordable, and accessible transportation systems not only promote economic productivity and create jobs but they also can increase access to employment, recreation, and other essential life-shaping opportunities. By increasing access to public transportation, Brookings ensures equitable access to opportunities in the region.

ACTIONS

• Partner with the Brookings Area Transit Authority (BATA) staff and board to grow support and funding among major employers and area hotels for increased transit offerings and use.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include the Brookings Area Transit Authority and the BEDC.

Expand childcare support within the City.

Roads and bridges provide the physical infrastructure workers need to reach their workplaces. Likewise, quality child care, paid family and medical leave, home- and community-based services, and higher-quality jobs for care workers provide the infrastructure that working parents need. In April 2021, more than 200 leading economists signed an open letter to Congress encouraging lawmakers to make long-overdue public investments in the country's physical and care infrastructure. These experts recognize that this infrastructure, particularly affordable and reliable child care, is necessary for both the financial stability of working families as well as the nation's growth and global competitiveness. By expanding child care support in Brookings the City allows the active participation of working parents in the economy.

ACTIONS

- Evaluate Brookings' childcare ecosystem to better understand gaps and needs.

- Support the growth and expansion of childcare enterprises in Brookings by offering capacity-building and technical services.

- Complete a childcare facility (creating 80 childcare slots).

The lead organization for this strategy is the BEDC. Partners include the City of Brookings, the Brookings School District, and SDSU.

# Grow career pathways within the City's growth sectors via the City of Brookings Scholarship Program.

To pursue a dream and establish a livelihood, one needs access to financial resources. Renewable, equity-driven scholarships can help level the playing field, providing students with the opportunity to choose the right school and the flexibility to work fewer hours so they can focus on their studies.

ACTIONS

- Continue to invest dollars to support the City of Brookings Scholarship Program, aligning awards with growing sectors in the City.

- Market the program to eligible students.

- Promote and evaluate the scholarship program's success and impact.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include the BEDC, the SDSU Foundation, and Build Dakota.
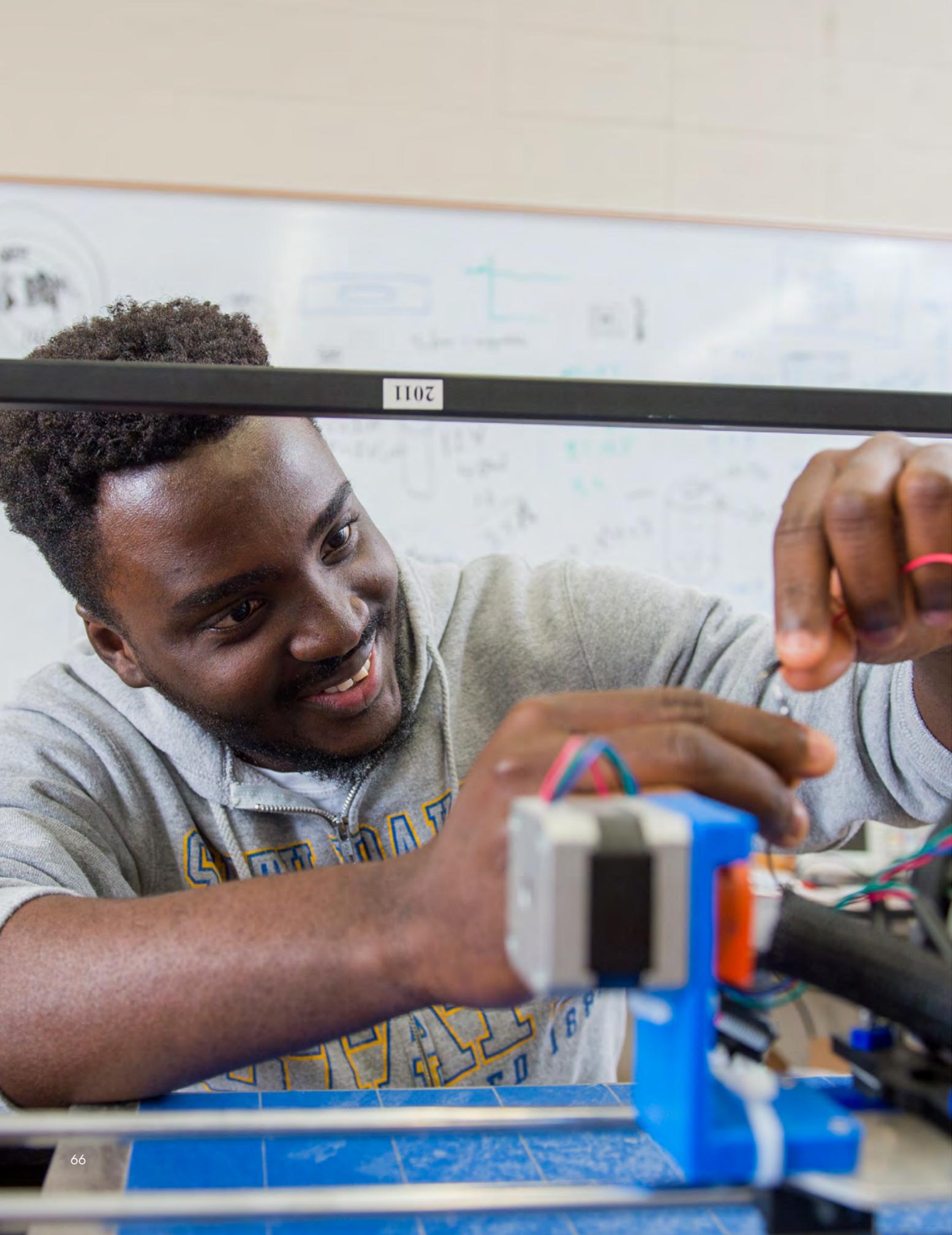
STRATEGY 4.5

Grow career and technical education (CTE) programs and training initiatives aimed at supporting career pathways in trades, manufacturing, agriculture, and construction.

Brookings' skills and training programs must align with the needs of its target clusters. The City's target sectors are technical and therefore require close collaboration between public-sector and private-sector partners to ensure that workers are being trained to fulfill the precise needs of local companies.

ACTIONS

- Engage Brooking's workforce development partners, the Brookings School District, and private-sector employers quarterly to discuss needed training programs.

- Administer a survey to uncover training gaps in Brookings.

- Develop partnerships between educational providers and employers to increase CTE and apprenticeship initiatives.

The lead organization for this strategy is the BEDC. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, the City of Brookings, and the Brookings School District.

Launch "Connect Brookings" to connect SDSU students to internships, mentors, and volunteer opportunities.

To develop and sustain a supportive center for learning, Brookings needs strong partnerships, and one of the efforts of Connect Brookings is connecting students with industry in a more intentional way. The City can cultivate collaboration among local businesses, residents, and students as they explore new innovations and technologies. Additionally, it can promote exhibits, speaker series, and non-credit programming to attract new talent to Brookings. These collective efforts can go a long way in removing barriers to economic opportunities, and other cities have found much success this way. In New York, private equity firm Blackstone partnered with Ideator, an innovation network, and New York University to create Blackstone Launchpad, a campus-based program that supports budding entrepreneurs. And in Philadelphia, the nonprofit organization Campus Philly hosts meetups between key industries and higher education institutions.

ACTIONS

- Develop a plan for a University-focused talent initiative that connects SDSU students to Brookings via networking, classes, mentoring, volunteering, and other avenues.

The lead organization for this strategy is the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce. Partners include the City of Brookings, SDSU, and Visit Brookings.

STRATEGY 4.7

Implement strategies outlined in the Brookings City Housing Study.

A healthy housing sector is critical to a city's economy. With an adequate, well-functioning housing market, an economy can support labor mobility and respond to unexpected circumstances. The Brookings City Housing Study makes a number of recommendations, particularly with regard to rental housing and housing affordability needs. The City must implement these recommendations if it is to support its workforce.

ACTIONS

- Advance the housing priorities outlined in the Brookings City/County Housing Study.
- Reflect updates and investments in economic and destination development communication and marketing materials.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include the BEDC and Visit Brookings.

Promote a citywide diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and welcoming initiative.

A citywide DEI and welcoming initiative can have an important impact on making the Brookings economy more inclusive. Such a program can encourage business creation and the participation of disadvantaged and under-represented groups. It is also a great way to bolster the local economy by widening the pool of suppliers and creating competition, both of which have a positive impact on quality and prices. Finally, it will provide businesses of color with new avenues for networking and gaining new clients and will emphasize the City's commitment to equitable economic growth.

ACTIONS

- Assemble a diverse advisory committee, including City officials, residents, Human Rights Commission, cultural representatives, business and community leaders, and philanthropic representatives to help guide the City's DEI and welcoming efforts.

- Catalog best practices across North America, focusing on inclusive economic development, business support programs, and welcoming initiatives.

- Utilize the City of Brookings' marketing and communication platforms to welcome new residents and promote various citywide DEI initiatives, featuring participating companies, businesses, and community leaders.

- Celebrate the cultural diversity of Brookings.

- Devise a citywide DEI Action Plan.

The lead organizations for this strategy are the City of Brookings, the Human Rights Commission, and the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce. Partners include the BEDC, Visit Brookings, and SDSU.

We will promote and celebrate Brookings as an extraordinary destination for families, professionals, students, and visitors of all walks.

Due to the pandemic and the rise of remote work, it is more important than ever for communities to take active steps to attract people—doing so increases the tax base and talent pool, and thus increases resilience. Placemaking draws people to a city while establishing the culture of the area. Many talented workers seek not only a place that is unique and caters to their interests but also a place that champions diversity and allows new ideas to flow. With welcoming spaces that reflect the diversity of the population, communities can create environments that enhance well-being and innovation.

The open spirit of placemaking ensures that all members of a community are included. Intentional placemaking can increase well-being and connectedness. Beyond that, placemaking can include a reimagining of cities so that resources and needs are easily reachable. With this, all members of a community can thrive, and economic growth and equity will be maximized.

The Evidence

- Brookings has important strengths to promote as they relate to its quality of place: a vibrant downtown, a dynamic culinary scene, and an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities.
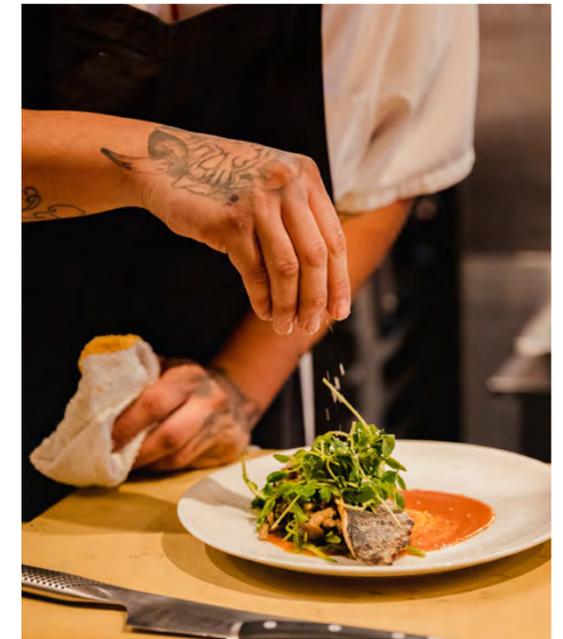
Evaluation Metrics

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **Visitors**—counting the number of visitors to Brookings
- **New residents**—tracking population growth
- **New businesses**—tracking business growth

Devise a citywide placemaking plan.

Quality of life and location decisions are intricately connected. Talent can choose where they want to live and work and increasingly seek out amenity-rich communities that are vibrant, attractive, safe, and accessible. The continuous cycle further enriches the location: Businesses attract talented workers who seek quality places, and quality places attract new businesses, jobs, and residents. Unsurprisingly, when residents have a strong attachment to a place, the GDP growth of that place exceeds the national average.

ACTIONS

- Catalog underutilized spaces throughout Brookings and other commercial corridors, understanding ownership, potential uses, and limitations.

- Create a systematic placemaking program that includes selection criteria, funding plans, and marketing approaches; ensure it is represented in the updated Downtown Master Plan.

- Pilot the placemaking program, evaluate impact, and scale.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include Downtown Brookings and Visit Brookings.

Explore a business improvement district (BID) designation and additional funding mechanisms for downtown Brookings.

Business improvement districts are geographic-based areas that hold business owners accountable for funding activities and improvements that promote their community. By designating a BID within the City, Brookings can potentially strengthen small business communities, revitalize older commercial neighborhoods, attract new businesses, and create new jobs.

ACTIONS

- Hire a firm to assist the City in developing a Downtown Master Plan (including funding models, strategies, and programs).

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include Downtown Brookings.

STRATEGY 5.3

Evaluate the uses and zoning of downtown and underserved corridors in Brookings.

Zoning is a fundamental element in successfully creating jobs and attracting new economic investment. It affects the location of manufacturing activity, commercial uses, residential areas, population density, and polluting facilities. Evaluating zoning will help the City better understand market conditions, while also helping business owners understand how zoning could encourage entrepreneurship in Brookings.

ACTIONS

- Convene a task force of business owners, City officials, residents, developers, and representatives from the Brookings Planning Commission to systematically evaluate zoning throughout Brookings.

- Evaluate and address the challenges that prevent redevelopment and investment.

- Create user-friendly maps to explain zoning and update property availability for commercial corridors in the City.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings.

STRATEGY 5.4

Study additional needs and gaps in order to support a robust visitor economy, including seasonal visitation.

There are many moving pieces in a successful visitor economy. Managing them requires a clear, long-term focus that summarizes the destination brand. Brooking must define the experiences it offers as a destination and present these experiences in a way that influences perceptions and persuades people to visit. Studying all of the components, including the gaps, of Brookings' visitor economy will enable the City to establish itself as a successful, economy-boosting destination.

ACTIONS

- Establish a working group to support the exploration of a tourism gap analysis and a destination master plan.

- Evaluate findings from the recent hotel study to offer insights into Brookings' visitor market and missing accommodation assets.

- Compare and contrast Brookings' destination assets to peer communities in the Upper Midwest.

- Determine if Brookings should pursue the creation of a new destination master plan. (If so, and if funding is available, consult with an advisory services firm to support the gap analysis and planning process.)

The lead organization for this strategy is Visit Brookings. Partners include the City of Brookings.

STRATEGY 5.5

Develop a sports and small group conference strategy.

The City of Brookings and SDSU have a multitude of event spaces, including the Dana J. Dykhouse Stadium. Putting these spaces to use for meetings, conferences, seminars, symposiums, and a variety of workshops will both generate income for the City and University and attract visitors, especially on weekdays. Attracting sports events and conferences will set in motion a virtuous cycle of increased visitors generating funds for improved visitor experiences.

ACTIONS

- Coordinate with SDSU and accommodation partners to identify sports, group, and conference assets.

- Establish a working group to identify shared goals for Brookings' sports, group, and conference efforts and an action plan for attracting new sporting events and small conferences to the area.

- Coordinate with a lead generation firm, if necessary, to establish target prospects and associations and to establish metrics.

- Develop improved marketing and rental information on community/SDSU facilities.

The lead organization for this strategy is Visit Brookings. Partners include SDSU, the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Brookings School District.

Curate and promote destination experiences.

The days of old-school tourism trade shows, glossy marketing brochures, and magazine advertisements are gone. Instead of cookie-cutter offerings, today's tourists want authentic, curated experiences. By developing a strategy for building these "experiences," Brookings can drive tourism, economic development, and local investments in new restaurants, brew pubs, recreational activities, concerts, and more. City partners will need to work directly with stakeholders in the cultural and recreational sectors to identify experiences and local characters to highlight.

ACTIONS

- Expand/update the inventory of Brookings' destination assets: cultural and recreational amenities, music, art, food, breweries, and more.

- Develop curated destination experiences for Brookings residents, SDSU students, and target visitors; test ideas on social media.

The lead organization for this strategy is Visit Brookings. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce.

STRATEGY 5.7

Grow and support the City's investments in community and recreational facilities.

Recreation activities can bring new investment to local economies, encourage people to revitalize existing downtowns, and conserve natural resources, ultimately leading to improved quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Brookings has a lot to offer, and by increasing the amount and scope of investments, it can create jobs, increase access to a good quality of life, and strengthen its community.

ACTIONS

- Advance Brookings' Economic Development Master Plan to generate additional resources/revenues for community assets.

- Explore public-private partnerships (including those with SDSU) to support new recreational facilities.

- Ensure community and recreational facilities are a priority for future City and neighborhood planning efforts.

- Develop accessible spaces for new seasonal recreational business ventures (e.g., snowshoeing, bike rentals), especially for winter and indoor activities.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include Visit Brookings and the BEDC.

STRATEGY 5.8

Partner with the Brookings School District and other organizations to leverage investments in underserved neighborhoods.

The benefits of a better education are two-fold. There is personal gain—higher wages, greater economic mobility, a better quality of life—but there is also a public, collective benefit. The Brookings School District has made large investments in neighborhood schools, and with a more skilled and productive working population, the local economy will thrive.

ACTIONS

- Identify and communicate the City's community development goals for all City neighborhoods.
- Invest in and collaborate with partners on placemaking and community-building efforts in the City's underserved areas.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include the Brookings School District.

We will promote Brookings' story.

City branding and promotion enable communities to establish their value proposition: What makes this city worth moving to or investing in? Story-telling is one of the most effective ways to activate and engage people's emotions and imaginations. In that vein, forming a narrative is effective at attracting people and investments to the region. With a strong brand, people become aware of and are drawn to what makes a region unique. This increases talent in the region and also increases local attachment and retention through a strong sense of place. Additionally, a brand identity can articulate unique strategic positioning, giving a competitive advantage over other nearby regions in terms of business attraction. Promotion sets the tone for what the City wants to be and what it wants to accomplish, creating a vision that people can invest in.

The Evidence

- Branding helps communities, cities, and destinations distill and articulate their unique strategic positioning and differentiating characteristics. A strong brand will help Brookings compete in the global marketplace. Promoting unique characteristics is important to attracting investment, people, and capital to Brookings.

- A well-articulated place-branding strategy strengthens a community's sense of place because it aligns the language and messages created for and by businesses, communities, and visitors.

Evaluation Metrics

The following metrics should be tracked to assess impact:

- **Unique Visitors**—measuring interest in the Visit Brookings' website

- **Social Media Engagement**—tracking interest in Brookings as a destination to live, work, and visit

Create economic development promotional materials to support investment attraction.

Brookings needs to have the appropriate materials in place to support its economic development and tourism efforts, including websites, social media, and multimedia assets. Economic development and tourism is as much about storytelling as it is about policy work. Professional, creative marketing materials are a prerequisite for being taken seriously by visitors and businesses. It's also critical for economic development staff to collect data on the effectiveness of these materials and campaigns and respond accordingly.

ACTIONS

- Refresh the BEDC website to include a vanity URL; updated research/data reflecting the City's clusters, demographics, and destination assets; and exploration tools for site selectors.

- Prepare industry investment marketing portfolios (brochures and videos) for clusters (ensure they are available in print and digital).

- Develop a consistent "Why Brookings?" story and pitch to be used by all partners (updated annually).

- Make appropriate out-of-market investments (conference attendance, ad placements, and more) to support target sector growth.

The lead organization for this strategy is the BEDC. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, Research Park, and Visit Brookings.

Grow the branding efforts of Visit Brookings.

The availability of airlines, travel websites, travel agents, and transport options has made getting around easier than ever and given travelers a world of destination options. This means that cities, towns, and regions are competing with one another to attract similar people with similar interests. Growing the branding efforts of Visit Brookings will enable the City to spotlight the unique qualities and amenities that make it preferable to other destinations. The increased activity around the City's hotels, restaurants, and retail businesses will help boost the local economy.

ACTIONS

- Support the investments in marketing Brookings (especially those of Visit Brookings), including coordination of marketing campaigns in targeted destination development and site selection publications and social media efforts with an enhanced digital focus.

- Annually refresh Brookings' marketing collateral, both digital and print, to reflect the changing dynamics in the City.

The lead organization for this strategy is Visit Brookings.

Develop a robust communication plan to share successes and wins with policymakers, stakeholders, and the community.

Branding helps a city distinguish itself in order to attract visitors, residents, businesses, and resources. Global cities and well-known tourist destinations have been doing it for years. But over the last decade, a growing number of smaller cities have developed branding strategies to promote their uniqueness. Brookings' policymakers and urban governments can use this branding approach to manage perceptions, promote the City's distinctiveness, and share its successes with the world.

ACTIONS

- Develop and execute quarterly email newsletters to Brookings' business, economic development, and community partners.

- Offer quarterly briefings and updates to elected officials about the City's economic and destination development efforts.

- Create a collaborative annual report that celebrates Brookings' economic development successes.

The lead organization for this strategy is the BEDC. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, Research Park, Visit Brookings, and SDSU.

Advance a community champion initiative.

In successful cities and business districts across the globe, communities are leveraging champion/ ambassador programs to attract and retain next-generation talent. By instituting such an initiative, Brookings can inspire young professionals, business owners, and major corporations with a stronger sense of civic pride and involvement.

ACTIONS

- Activate plan to engage community members and champions to update destination review sites and social media: TripAdvisor, Yelp, Instagram, and Facebook.

- Host a Brookings Champion "training" workshop for Brookings businesses and engaged community members on tactics for promoting and supporting Brookings via social media and more.

The lead organization for this strategy is Visit Brookings. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce.
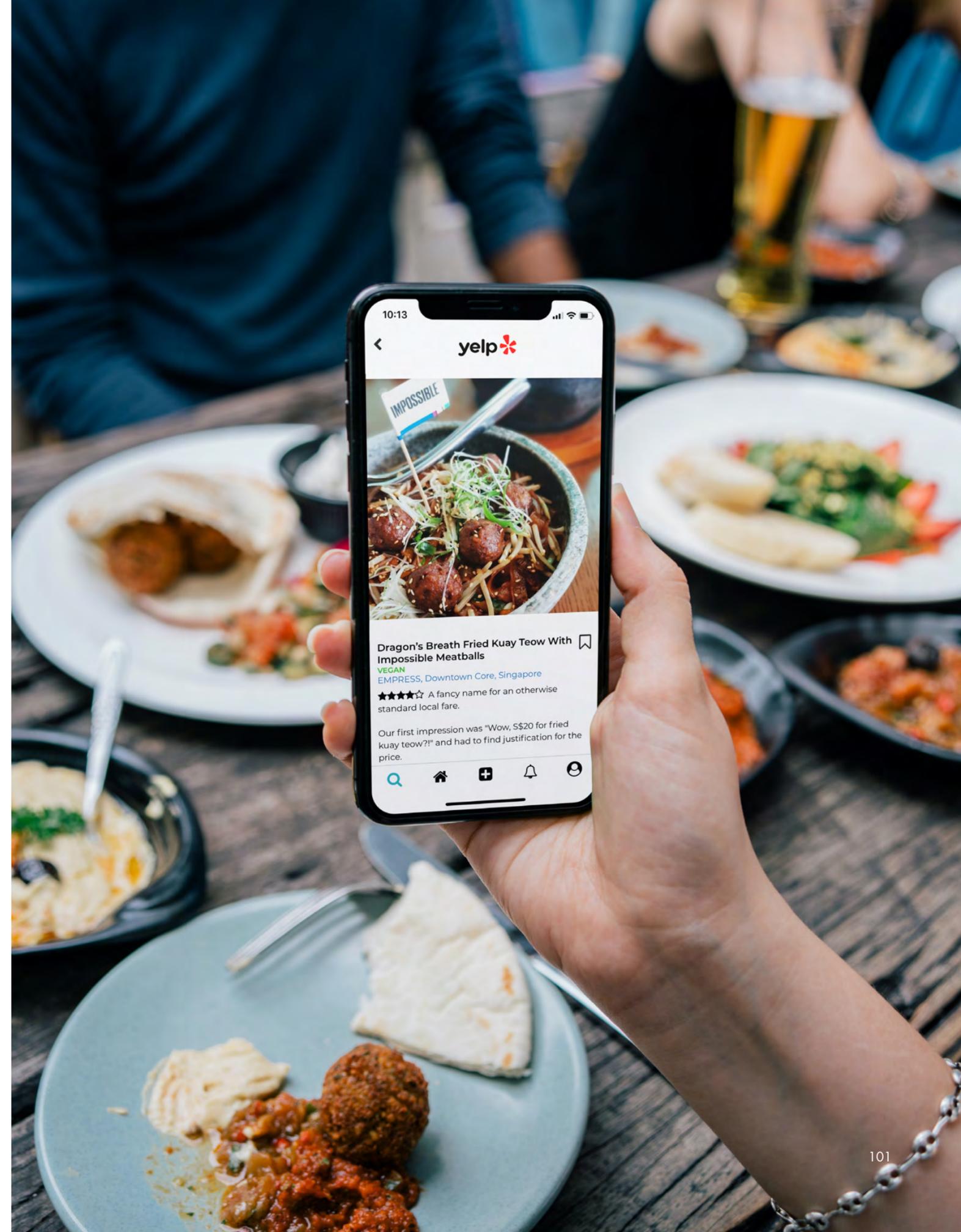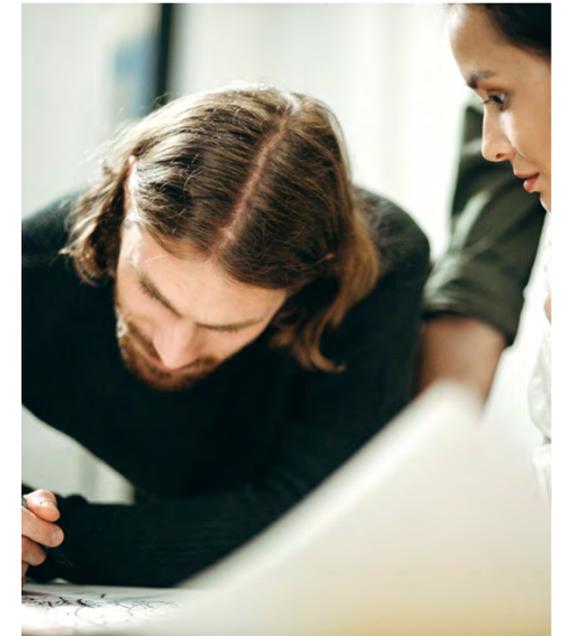
We will build an economic development ecosystem that effectively supports the implementation of this strategy.

In order to effectively support the implementation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan, the City of Brookings needs an ecosystem structure that will inform and drive culture, ways of working, departmental focuses and priorities, and resource allocation. It should also provide tools, processes, and resources to operationalize and continuously monitor and measure progress. An organizational ecosystem should set the direction of the City in a way that is consistent with the economic development goals and accessible and practical to the various City partners.

The Evidence

- A robust economic development ecosystem will enable the City of Brookings to deliver on its strategic priorities by aligning staffing levels with priorities, establishing efficient reporting relationships, and structuring work between partners in a way that facilitates communication and collaboration.

- The new economic development strategy for the City of Brookings calls for stronger partnerships with educational institutions and closer relationships with Brookings' entrepreneurial community and key industries. As such, the roles and responsibilities of staff and partners must be reviewed to position the City to optimally deliver on its new mandate.

STRATEGY 7.1

Engage Brookings area organizations to evaluate our economic development ecosystem and resourcing.

The ideal economic development ecosystem can most likely differ for each community. Best practices suggest that finding the ideal ecosystem entails a careful and thoughtful analysis of the community's own goals, assets, and needs. Armed with that analysis, each community will have a better shot at making effective economic development structures.

ACTIONS

- Conduct a gap analysis in Brookings' economic development staffing and resources.

- Compare the Brookings model to other peer cities for lessons learned.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, Research Park, Visit Brookings, and the BEDC.

Adopt a structure to effectively manage the process and resources necessary to leverage our limited resources to accomplish the goals of this study and all of the City's economic development activities.

An organizational structure is a set of rules, roles, relationships, and responsibilities that determine how an organization's activities should be directed to achieve its goals. The organizational structure for the City of Brookings' economic development efforts should provide a smooth flow for all economic development activities, enabling the City to progress the Community Economic Development Master Plan and achieve its goals.

ACTIONS

- Build an efficient organizational structure, staffing, resources, and partner plan that aligns with Brookings' Economic Development Master Plan.

The lead organization for this strategy is the City of Brookings. Partners include the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce, Research Park, Visit Brookings, the BEDC, and Downtown Brookings.