

THE DEVELOPMENT LOFT AT LONG X

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW





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WATFORD
★ CITY ★
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MEET OUR TEAM

Growing a thriving McKenzie County...

- Rooted Innovation
- Vibrant Family-Focused Communities
- Energizing and Feeding America

"Far and away the best prize life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." - Theodore Roosevelt



Vawnita Best
City of Watford City
Community Development



Doug Bolken
McKenzie County
Tourism



Cauby Hartel
McKenzie County
Economic Development



Jess Hunt
City of Watford City
Community Development



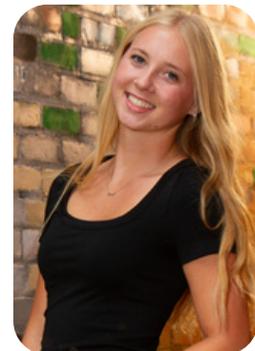
Keith Olson
North Dakota Small
Business Development
Centers



Jessie Veeder-Scofield
Long X Arts Foundation



Meghan Taunton
McKenzie County
Economic Development



Amelia Wisness
CWE Student
Long X Arts Foundation

The DEVELOPMENT LOFT AT LONG X



MCKENZIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

In 2025, McKenzie County Economic Development advanced its mission to strengthen the local economy through strategic investment in people, infrastructure, and community vitality. Working alongside the Job Development Authority (JDA), local cities, schools, healthcare providers, and private partners, our office focused on workforce development, housing, business growth, and quality of life initiatives that position McKenzie County for long-term success.

As the new Director of the McKenzie County Economic Development team, I am especially excited to step into this role at such a dynamic time for the county. I look forward to the opportunities ahead, collaborating with our partners and communities, and contributing to initiatives that support long-term growth and resilience. It will be a privilege to begin working with so many dedicated stakeholders, and I am enthusiastic about 2026 and what we can accomplish.

Workforce Development and Education Pipelines

Workforce remained a top priority in 2025 as our region was projected to lead North Dakota in job growth, with employment expected to increase by more than 13% by 2033. Supporting this growth, McKenzie County invested heavily in education, training, and career pathways.

A historic milestone occurred when the County committed \$5 million to the Bakken Area Skills Center (BASC) endowment fund, ensuring long-term support for instructors, equipment, and high-demand programming. The BASC expanded hands-on learning through oil and gas operator training, automation, heavy equipment, healthcare, and dual-credit programs with Bismarck State College. By training the upcoming workforce locally, we hope to retain people as they enter their careers. The JDA also supported committing \$500,000 to the Williston State College Healthcare Training Facility to help address healthcare staffing shortages while allowing residents to train close to home.

Other career efforts grew through initiatives such as Bison to the Bakken, which brought NDSU students to Watford City to connect with local employers, and by participating in the Cooperative Work Experience (CWE) program. Additional workforce tools promoted in 2025 included Operation Intern, ND Career Builders, Global Talent Connect, ROOT relocation grants, and Job Service North Dakota's virtual job fairs.

Enrollment growth projections for McKenzie County Public School District #1 further demonstrates momentum, with enrollment expected to increase by over 500 students in the next five years, reinforcing the need for continued workforce and infrastructure planning.

Housing and Childcare as Economic Infrastructure

Housing and childcare are foundational to workforce recruitment and retention. In 2025, McKenzie County launched its JDA Housing Down Payment Assistance Program, allocating \$4 million through 2025 to support homebuyers and new rooftop creation. The program has supported dozens of homebuyers with up to \$40,000 for new construction and \$15,000 for existing homes, encouraging residents and developers to build more homes throughout McKenzie County. There is currently \$2 million allocated in 2026 for the program.

The JDA is also in the early stages of exploring future housing solutions for residents aged 55 and older. Not only is senior housing a challenge in our community, but it also has the added benefit of freeing up traditional housing for new families and the broader workforce.

Childcare capacity was expanded with the opening of Bright Minds Daycare's new facility in Alexander in December 2025, which will serve up to 70 children. The JDA has been a big supporter of the project throughout the process, and we are excited for the additional childcare capacity in the area.

Business Development and Entrepreneurship

Supporting local businesses and diversification remained a key goal in 2025. The McKenzie County JDA launched its Interest Buy Down Program, helping businesses access Bank of North Dakota's Flex PACE and PACE programs to reduce financing costs, stimulate private investment, and grow the local tax base.

As we look ahead to 2026, our Economic Development team remains committed to supporting growth that attracts talent, strengthens businesses, and enhances quality of life. Through continued collaboration and investment, McKenzie County is building a resilient economy and a community where people are proud to live, work and call home.

Meghan Taunton
Economic Development Director



MCKENZIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Down Payment Assistance Program



73 existing home applications approved
\$1,071,620 in applications approved



45 new home applications approved
\$1,777,635 in applications approved



Interest Buy Down Program



\$250,000 designated to program

4 Flex PACE loans approved

\$170,000 in loans approved

- \$5.9 M TOTAL Capital invested
- 84 jobs created



McKenzie County
Job Development Authority

Rough Rider Center

\$50,000

Workforce Retention & Tourism

KidStop

\$100,000

Workforce Retention

Save the Maah Daah Hey

\$110,000

Tourism

McKenzie County
Heritage Association

\$500,000

Tourism

Bakken Area Skills
Center

\$5,000,000

Workforce Retention



WATFORD CITY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ANNUAL REPORT



Grow a thriving & sustainable community by:

1. Supporting economic growth and diversification initiatives - leveraging and aligning assets and resources
2. Providing community vibrancy through collaborative partnerships
3. Telling community stories - delivered to people where they are

69th LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2025 started quick out of the blocks, with the 69th North Dakota Legislative Session convening on January 7, 2025. Mayor Riely and the City Council established five legislative priorities for the 2025 session:

1. Protection of or Replacement of In Lieu of Ad Valorem Property Tax (Gross Production Tax)
2. Protection of Essential Services Funding
3. Protection of Infrastructure Funding
4. Protection of Community & Economic Development Services Funding
5. Protection of Local Decision making & Municipal Management

Working with the District 26 delegation, the League of Cities, and Western Dakota Energy Association, Mayor Riely, in partnership with the McKenzie County Commission engaged assembly members on legislation affecting Watford City's priorities. Mayor Riely, Chairman Lawlar and Commission Brown worked to protect energy producing formula communities' GPT funding. They ensured property tax relief was workable for rural, western North Dakota communities. Watford City also actively lobbied for state funding to support affordable housing initiatives and ensure those initiatives were workable for western communities. The assembly adjourned on May 3, 2025.

ROUGH RIDER FUND COMMITTEE & PROGRAMS Business Retention & Expansion | Community Vibrancy:

The Roughrider Fund, the 1.5 cent city sales tax established to enhance Watford City, grow the economy, and support community development activities – 3-year collections and percentage growth year over:

- 2025 sales tax collections
◦ **\$ 5,821,252.76** up **17.55%**
- 2024 sales tax collections
◦ **\$ 4,952,087.30** up **.389%**
- 2023 sales tax collections
◦ **\$ 4,932,879.38** up **10.91%**

Details of the 2025 RRF program investments can be found on pages 12 and 14 of this report. The committee, appointed by the mayor, continually seek to reinvest sales tax dollars (dollars generated by shopping local) back into the community in projects that meet the fund's mission, prioritizing projects that generate economic growth and drive the LOCAL multiplier effect on Watford City.

FIND YOUR FUTURE IN WATFORD CITY

This **three-year workforce attraction initiative** closed on December 30, 2025. Utilizing over \$300,000 of North Dakota Commerce – Workforce Division grant funding, partnering with WC EDC, Watford City activated and placed an awareness campaign recruiting education and healthcare professionals to Watford City. Find the detailed press release at the QR code on the next page.



WATFORD CITY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MY TOWN:

MY TOWN was one of our most exciting projects of 2025. We were honored to premiere season two, as episode one and to host an early release red carpet premiere. This was an amazing event for our community and an opportunity to reflect on our accomplishment of the last 15 years. We celebrated our transition from surviving “the boom” to thriving as a young, vibrant, growing community – together. You can find more information about MY TOWN at the QR code below.

CITY BRANDING & WELCOME SIGNS:

We worked with The Good Kids, a Bismarck based brand agency, to develop a succinct brand kit – relevant, functional and efficient on digital platforms. A brand that celebrates our community’s “Rooted Innovation”, a place “Where Freedom Meets Fulfillment”. With this relevant brand, we will be investing in community entrance signs in 2026.

HOSTING STATE LEADERSHIP:

In May we hosted Governor Armstrong and his team. City leadership provided a community tour showcasing infrastructure projects supported by the state and discussing community challenged we still face. City leadership continues to engage with the governor’s office and legislators across North Dakota, focusing on Watford City and McKenzie County’s importance in North Dakota’s economic future.

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT & ECONOMIC DEVERSIFICATION:

The Long X Development Loft team works to recruit and support businesses and economic development in Watford City and McKenzie County. From referrals sent up to the loft from the Long X Visitor’s Center and The Merc, to city, county and SBDC sharing trends, leads and information amongst each other, we are at the table and in position to support economic development and diversification in our community.

DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT - AREA 2 (2-A and 2-B):

After completion of the 2024 Downtown Redevelopment Vision Plan and community survey, City Council prioritized investment in improving Main Street. Vibrant downtowns and strong main streets are vital to community sustainability in small towns. Securing a \$400,000 North Dakota Commerce Tourism grant in 2024 provided additional momentum for developing Area 2 of the Downtown Redevelopment Vision Plan. 2-A: a multi-level retail building | 2-B: an urban square.

WATFORD CITY, ND - Improved digital presence YouTube & Website & Social

We improved our digital presence and communication platforms in 2024 & 2025 - Watford City, ND YouTube channel, www.cityofwatfordcity.gov powered by Proud City - City of Watford City official Facebook page.

Please check the QR codes below to learn more about our 2025 mission focused initiatives.

Vawnita Best
Community & Business Development Director



SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Region 1

BY THE NUMBERS:

100%
46
391
2210.5
\$104.79M
2,954

Rated Customer Satisfaction
New Business Starts
Total Clients Served
Client Service Hours
Capital Infused
Jobs Created



NORTH DAKOTA
SMALL BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Your Ideas - Our Expertise - Your Success

We had an exceptional year in 2025, arguably the largest reported loan year since I began with SBDC in 2003. This success reflects strong collaboration across our region, particularly the continued co-location of economic development staff in both counties. This allows us to respond quickly and efficiently to client needs. Equally critical is the ongoing support of our lending partners, whose engagement helps maintain a strong pipeline of projects.

Our region continues to face unique challenges, including high operating costs, limited availability of quality rental space, and extended construction and buildout timelines. Despite these hurdles, demand for our services remains strong. Due to the visibility of our program, we are frequently invited to participate in meetings throughout the region, allowing us to build and strengthen stakeholder relationships.

Flex PACE remained the lifeblood of our center in 2025. We relied on it heavily to help clients access capital and manage operating costs. The McKenzie County JDA invested \$250,000 in a community match Flex PACE fund for projects outside Watford City. JDA budgeted another \$250,000 for 2026, with a goal of building a sustainable revolving loan fund of \$1.5 million over the next 5 years.

While we have not seen a large number of AI-specific client requests, interest and adoption are clearly growing. Clients are increasingly exploring tools and software that improve efficiency and help offset workforce shortages. Given the difficulty of finding and retaining employees, more businesses are open to technology solutions that reduce labor needs or streamline operations.

Workforce remains the most significant challenge for our manufacturing clients, particularly retaining employees through training and converting them into long-term hires. Manufacturing in our region is closely tied to agriculture and oil. On the agricultural side, we assisted in securing an Ag Products Utilization Commission grant for both a new malting plant and a beef processing business. On the oil and gas side, lower prices have reduced demand for locally produced support equipment, though several fabrication shops remain active in gas sector projects. Welder availability is currently stable, helping meet demand. Looking ahead, a new power plant and two data centers could shift local manufacturing needs as new infrastructure projects come online.



- Bizminer
- Vertical IQ
- Business Reference Guide

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER



SBDC - Region 1 Center - 2025 Annual Report continued:

One of our largest challenges in prior years of accessing Flex PACE funding outside Watford City and Williston has largely been resolved. Local match programs now cover all areas within both counties. The creation of the McKenzie County Flex PACE match program allowed us to complete four Flex PACE loans in that county this year. We also helped facilitate funding for a community daycare in Alexander, which officially opened in late 2025. We are working on financing a new truck stop in Arnegard in 2026, which will be the first major project there in many years.

Our staff remains highly engaged across the region. Keith and Cyrena attend Brew Your Business in Williston monthly, and this year we launched Coffee & Commerce in Watford City, a quarterly initiative designed to foster business connections and entrepreneurial outreach. I attend weekly coordination meetings with Watford City economic development partners, as well as Roughrider Fund, McKenzie County Commission, McKenzie County Job Development Authority(JDA), Watford City Economic Development Corporation(WCEDC) and Bakken Area Skills Center(BASC) meetings.

We are grateful that clients consistently view us as a valuable and rewarding part of their business journey—an affirmation of our work and mission. We regularly participate in BASC programming and “Starting Your Business” workshops, providing insight into entrepreneurial challenges. Watford City’s CTE program continues to operate a strong work-based learning initiative, placing 35–50 students each semester with local businesses, helping build a future workforce pipeline.

The Williston Center remains highly visible throughout the region, with consistent participation in Job Service job fairs and board meetings of the Star Fund, Roughrider Fund, Western Region Economic Development, Williston Area Economic Development Group, Tri-County Regional Development Council, Watford City EDC, and McKenzie County JDA. We also hold weekly sync meetings in Watford City with Long X Development Team partners to ensure clear and timely communication.

This year also marked the completion of our strategic plan and re-accreditation for the next five years, which should reduce administrative demands moving forward. Significant effort was dedicated to revising rules for the Star Fund, Roughrider Fund, and Opportunity Fund, including updates to funding formulas, scoring systems, and allocations to better align with evolving regional priorities.

We are proud to report no loss of partnerships in 2025; every prior funder continued their support into 2026. Our center remains committed to rapid, effective client service, with timely response as a core priority.

Keith Olson
Center Director, SBDC ND Williston Center



Arnegard Truckstop

Bright Minds Childcare Center in Alexander



LONG X ARTS FOUNDATION



Long X Arts Foundation 2025 By the Numbers:

Kids Classes and Programs

- Monthly visits to Horse Creek School
- Homeschool and JCCA Visits
- End of year school visit to Fox Hills for entire school
- Ag in the classroom field trip to Ag Expo
- Miss Nelson Is Missing presented to all elementary school kids and community
- Free weekly art projects in the summer at Watford Market
- Kids author visit and art project with Greg Walter
- Art after school classes (September-May | 2x a week)
- Free ornament making at Parade of Lights

Community Classes

- 74 community classes
 - 703 tickets sold
- 12 private art parties

14 - Special Events in the community

10 - Special Events at The Merc

14 - Special Events in partnership

23 - Community Program Partnerships

4 - Concert Series concerts

6 - Art shows at the Gallery at Long X

1 - Community Theater Partnership



THE
Gala
2025

Long X Visitor Center Visits

10.8K total 2025 visits - up 37.7% from 2024

Visitors from 19 ND cities & 24 states consisting of:

Tennessee, Montana, Colorado, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Delaware, Texas, Minnesota, Idaho, Louisiana, Washington, Maryland, Florida, Michigan, Kansas, Ohio, Utah, Illinois, Wisconsin, California, Arizona, South Dakota, & North Carolina

Jessie Veeder - Scofield
Long X Arts Foundation Director



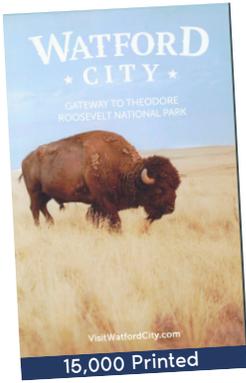
THE
Gallery
AT LONG X



TOURISM PRINT & DIGITAL PRESENCE

★ Hello ★ WATFORD CITY!

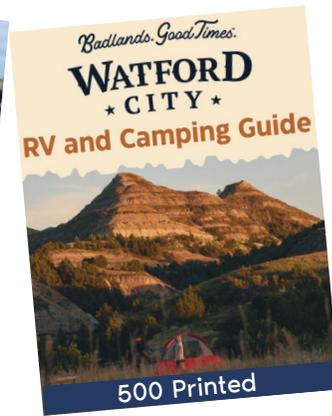
Brochures/Flyers



15,000 Printed



500 Printed



500 Printed



500 Printed



1,300,000 Printed

2025 North Dakota Co-Op Program

ND Tourism Travel Guide (Print)	225K Copies
North Dakota Living (Print)	3 Months Advertising, 80,000 Circulations Each Month
Cross Device Display (Digital)	300K Impressions
Cross Device Video (Digital)	150K Impressions
Native Ads (Digital)	250K Impressions
Social Media Level 3	Campaign objective: WatfordCityEvents.com - 320K Impressions
Enews (Digital)	Six ENEWS with 25% Open Rate on 40K Opt-In Subscribers
ND Tourism Features Listing	Long X Visitor Center / The Merc on ndtourism.com

2025 Conferences (Hosted/Supported):

Western North Dakota Synod 05/31 - 06/02/2025
• Returning in 2026

ND County Auditors & Treasurers 06/24 - 06/27/2025

ND Reclamation Conference 03/03 - 03/04/2025
• Returning in 2026

Bison to Bakken 05/22 - 05/23/2025

ND Petroleum Council Birds & Birdies 06/03/2025
• Returning in 2026

ND Petroleum Council Annual Meeting 09/16 - 09/18/2025
• Returning in 2026

**Hosted founder of Midwest Travel Writers
Sara Broers, a travel writer/influencer.**

**Attended in 2025:
North Dakota Co-Op Program
International Round Up
North Dakota Travel Industry Conference
Norsk Hostfest**

**McKenzie County Tourism provides
McKenzie Health with twice monthly
community orientation, a workforce
retention program.**



Vikings Yearbook Ad
480K Fan Impressions
600K Print
1.2 M Digital Impressions



Twins Yearbook Ad
1,1M Fan Impressions
500K Print
1 Million Digital Impressions

2025 BY THE NUMBERS

-  202,100 Visits
-  41 events
-  608 meetings / trainings
-  8 Large Conferences
-  5 User Groups
-  80 RRC & WCPR Programs



TOP EVENTS IN 2025

- Christmas Fest, Winter Classic Squirts Hockey Tourney & Border Battle weekend
- Winter Classic Youth Basketball Tournament
- Kick Off to Summer - Doug Johnsrud Memorial Baseball Tourney & Food Truck Rodeo week

EVENTS, VISITORS & VIBRANCY

BY THE NUMBERS

-  57,700 Visits
-  224 events
-  249 event days



TOP EVENTS

- McKenzie County Fair
- Monster Trucks
- Bares & Broncs

Visitor data from Placer.ai





FOX HILLS
GOLF COURSE

BY THE NUMBERS

2025 ANNUAL VISITS: 29.1 K
(up 9.8% over 2024)

- **Watford City** **20.4 K** 70%
- **McKenzie Co** **2.1 K** 7.2%
- **Williston** **1.8 K** 6.2%
- **Minot & Dickinson** **866** 3%
- **ND (rest of state)** **1.7 K** 5.8%
- **Out of state** **2.2 K** 7.6%

EVENTS, VISITORS & VIBRANCY

BY THE NUMBERS

2025 ANNUAL VISITS: 7.3K
(up 5.1% over 2024)

- **Watford City** **4.3 K** 59%
- **McKenzie Co** **1.2 K** 16%
- **Williston** **345** 4.7%
- **Minot & Dickinson** **321** 4.4%
- **ND (rest of state)** **646** 8.8%
- **Out of state** **513** 7%



BY THE NUMBERS

2025 ANNUAL VISITS: 3.1 K
(up .5% over 2024)

- **Watford City** **1.3 K** 42%
- **McKenzie Co** **195** 6.3%
- **Williston** **104** 3.4%
- **Minot & Dickinson** **165** 5.3%
- **ND (rest of state)** **372** 12%
- **Out of state** **951** 31%

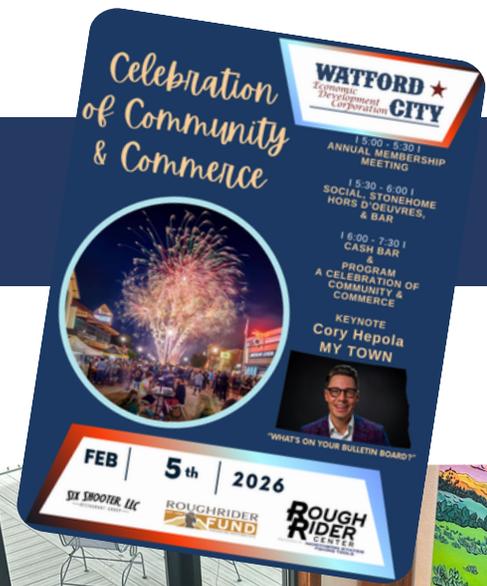
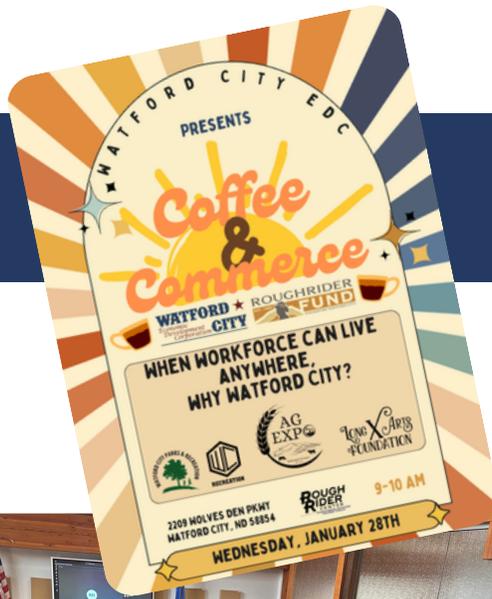
Visitor data from Placer.ai



WATFORD CITY EDC

2025-26 BOARD MEMBERS:

- JAKE WALTERS** - PRESIDENT
- VICKI MONSEN** - VICE PRES
- ERIN PERRY** - PRES ELECT
- VAWNITA BEST** - SEC / TREAS
- CALLI THORNE**
- BRIAN SMISET**
- KEITH OLSON**
- LUKE TAYLOR**
- SARA FITZPATRICK**
- STEVE HOLEN**
- CHELSEA BULSOMI**
- PETE EDIS**
- JUSTIN VOLL**
- SHILO CHAVEZ**
- BRADY BERTRAM**
- MICHELLE DEKOEKOEK**
- BRADY MUNRO**



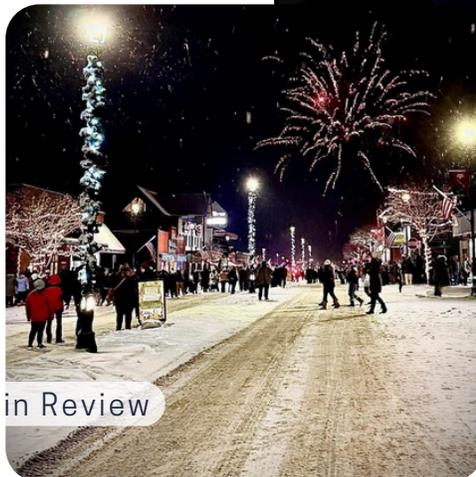
WATFORD CITY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BOARD MEMBERS

- JOSH NOLLMEYER**, PRESIDENT
- STEF RUSSELL**, VICE PRESIDENT
- JAYDEN LEISETH**
- YOLANDA ROJAS**
- DIANA POKRZYWINSKI**
- COLTEN HERBERT**
- VACANT
- MARY GUMKE**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



- TURKEY BINGO**
- TRAIL OF TREATS**
- PARADE OF LIGHTS**



COMMUNITY INTEGRATION AND ALIGNMENT

Living in McKenzie County Community Orientation

Every other month, the McKenzie County Community Orientation welcomes new residents to the area. Through this initiative by the Development Loft, attendees are given the chance to hear from community leaders, learn about the area and the opportunities it offers, and take a bus tour of Watford City.

60+
Participants

10
Participating
organizations



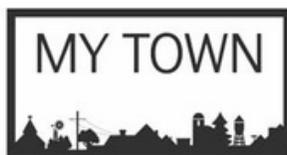
Living in McKenzie County Podcast & The Studio at Long X

'Living in McKenzie County' is a long form, original content multi-platform podcast series hosted by City of Watford City Community and Business Development Director, Vawnita Best with a roster of guest hosts. Emanating from The Studio at Long X, new episodes drop the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month on YouTube and all major podcast platforms. At the end of 2025, Brock White handed the content studio production off to Cauy Hartel, McKenzie County Technology and Communications Specialist. The Studio produces special projects and multi-platform content as lead or support to mission focused projects and programs.

26
New Episodes

23+
Hours of
content

35K+
2025 YouTube
views



BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION BY THE NUMBERS:

\$578.5 K IN INTEREST BUYDOWN AWARDS

BND FLEX PACE COMMUNITY MATCH:

- 6 BUSINESSES SUPPORTED
- 46 JOBS CREATED
- \$10.6 M CAPITAL INFUSED

\$50 K IN FORGIVABLE LOAN AWARDS

BUSINESS AUTOMATION & INNOVATION STARTUP & EXPANSION:

- 6 BUSINESSES SUPPORTED
- 21 JOBS CREATED
- \$238 K CAPITAL INFUSED

\$25.5 K IN SUPPORT OF LICENSED CHILD CARE FACILITIES

LICENSE RENEWAL GRANTS:

- 7 LICENSES FACILITIES
- 107 CHILDCARE PROVIDERS
- 58 INFANTS
- 460 TODDLERS



SBDC Business Success Story - Featured Business:

- **2016: Legendary Smiles** established w/ purchase of Maisey Dental
 - 1 dentist, 1 hygienist, 4 TOTAL employees
- **2018: S&S on Main** - Property group led by Monty & Chelsea purchased former S&S Motors and built out:
 - 7,500 sq/ft of ground level commercial space
 - 2019 Anchor tenant - Legendary Smiles + 2 additional suites
- **2019 expansion: Legendary Smiles dental group at S&S on Main**
 - 2 dentists, 1 hygienist, 9 TOTAL employees
- **2024 partnership: Bulzomi & Burbach & 2025 expansion:**
 - 3 dentists, 2 hygienists, 16 TOTAL employees
- **2026 and beyond - Expansion** (after annual CWE hosting since 2021):
 - First CWE student returning as hygienists in 2026
 - Adding space to accommodate hygiene growth

Permission to publish from:
Chelsea Bulzomi, Owner: S&S on Main & Practice Manger: Legendary Smiles

BUSINESSES PROVIDING GOODS & SERVICES

739 TOTAL BUSINESSES

- 93 over 20 years in business
- 540 1 - 10 employees
- 10 over 50 employees
- 40 Mining
- 101 Construction
- 13 Manufacturing
- 68 Retail
- 38 Transportation
- 20 Finance & Insurance
- 34 Real Estate & Rental
- 52 Professional, Science, Tech
- 35 Health Care
- 54 Lodging & Food Service



YOUTH SKILLS TRAINING - WORKBASED LEARNING - CAREER EXPLORATION - COMMUNITY & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



2025-26 school year career exploration days

- 25 businesses & organizations
- 7 North Dakota universities
- 600 participating students
- 16 participating school districts

Alexander, Belfield, Beach, Berthold, Bowbells, Bowman, Burke Central, Divide, Fairview, Johnson Corners, New Town, North Shore, Parshall, Stanley, Williston, Watford City



Find out more by scanning the 'Living in McKenzie County' podcast QR codes



LMC 01/06/2026 LMC 01/20/2026



WCHS Student Council members testified at the 69th Legislature, House Workforce Development Committee on the importance of civic leadership, community alignment and work based learning.

Students met with Gov Armstrong, Dist 26 leadership, Superintendent Baesler, and Director Bertagnoli.

Student Advisors: Scott Wisness & Amy Polivka



COMMUNITY VIBRANCY & OUTREACH

ROUGH RIDER FUND ENHANCEMENT GRANTS & BUILD GRANTS 2025 INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY VIBRANCY



- **Enhancement Grants - \$100,000**
 - **37 applications supporting 34 events | projects | programs**
- **BUILD Grants - \$ 2.8 M**
 - **10 projects**

SBDC, WCHS Cultural Fair, Downtown Area 2, Ribfest, Retail Strategies, McKenzie Co Ag Expo, McKenzie Co Heritage Park, McKenzie Health efficiency study, WC EDC Coffee & Commerce and Annual Mtg, Wolf Pup Learning Center

ROUGH RIDER FUND ENHANCEMENT GRANTS 2026 COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

- **\$ 60,000 to support community events and programming hosted by:**
 - **Long X Arts Foundation** **\$ 20,000**
 - **McKenzie Co Ag Expo** **\$ 20,000**
 - **Roughrider Center** **\$ 20,000**
 - **\$ 3,000 applications** **\$ 90,000**
- Per: Event | Project | Program
- Receipt reimbursable expenses for public events or programs
 - **24 applicants - \$ 66,455**
- January 2026 application round
- **\$ 23,545** available in spring round

WatfordCityEvents.com

4,100 users and 18,000+ visits in 2025



CONFERENCES, EXPOS, BOARDS & MEETINGS



Represented at:

- Williston Basin Petroleum Conference
- Norsk Hostfest
- Economic Development North Dakota (EDND)
- Vision West ND
- Western Dakota Energy Assoc (WDEA)
- Tri-County Regional Dev Council
- Lewis & Clark Dev Council
- Western Region Economic Development
- ND Rural Development Council
- SW Developers
- Train ND NW Foundation
- WCHS Career Development
- BASC Advisory Committees
- Ports to Plains
- Destination Marketing Assoc - ND (DMAND)



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABILITY & DIVERSIFICATION

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: 2026 & BEYOND

- **ADD VALUE TO NATURAL GAS** AT INTERSECTIONS OF:
 - AGRICULTURE
 - ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE , DATA & QUANTUM COMPUTING
 - MANUFACTURING
- **GROW & ATTRACT BUSINESSES WITH SPECIALTY SKILLSETS**
 - DEVELOP SKILL SETS AT THE BASC
 - BUSINESS INCUBATION
- **DEVELOP REGIONAL HEALTHCARE HUB**
 - AROUND THE HEALTHCARE ECOSYSTEM WHICH EXISTS IN WATFORD CITY
- **DIVERSIFY & SCALE TOURISM - EXPAND VISITS & STAY NIGHTS - RETAIN VISITORS**
 - THEODORE ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY
 - SPORTS TOURISM & WELLNESS BASED ATTRACTIONS
 - HISTORY, NATURE & NATURAL RESOURCE BASED TOURISM
 - RANCHING HERITAGE, HOMESTEADING, WILDCATTING & MHA TRIBAL CULTURE
 - EXPERIENCE RETAIL SHOPPING & SERVICES



47 RESIDENTIAL ROOF TOPS CREATED IN 2025

Watford City

- **18** Single-Family
- **0** Multi-Family

Alexander

- **2** Single-Family
- **0** Multi-Family

Arnegard

- **2** Single-Family
- **0** Multi-Family

Rural McKenzie

- **25** Single-Family
- **0** Multi-Family



Placer.ai

Aggregates and quantities visitors and zip code of origin spatially

bludot.io

County wide data base of businesses to manage business retention, expansion and communication efforts and activities

CoStar

Property inventory platform for tracking economic real-estate conditions including listings, occupancy rates, sales & rental rates

LOIS & Lasso on Strata Platforms

Platform of site selectors - to participate in competitive RFP's & RFQ's through blind portal requests





THE MAN IN THE ARENA

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Thank you to our community:

The residents of McKenzie County, elected officials, and to all who serve on boards and committees, without your service, our community simply would not be the place that it is.

Your service makes it a wonderful place to live a wonderful life!



AND
Thank you to Gene Veeder for coming in on special assignment in 2025

AND
to Daniel Stenberg and Brock White for the servant leadership provided to our community.

We are grateful for it and for each of you.