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# WATERTOWN PUBLIC OPINION

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Redfield Area Development Corporation executive director Gianna Schieffer, right, takes photos of the demolition taking place inside a former bank building being converted into a daycare facility in Redfield, S.D., on Feb. 3. PHOTOS BY BART PFANKUCH / SOUTH DAKOTA NEWS WATCH

# Redfield tackles child care crisis

### City turning old bank into day care

**Bart Pfankuch**  
South Dakota News Watch

REDFIELD – Gianna Schieffer doesn't need data or stories from other parents to prove the point that this central South Dakota city has a worrisome shortage of day care options.

Schieffer, executive director of the Redfield Area Development Corp., has for the past couple of years led an effort to obtain grants and loans, solicit donations and host fundraising events to get the money to convert a former bank building into a large child care center in downtown Redfield.

As a working mother of two, including an energetic toddler, Schieffer can point to her own situation as evidence of the shortage and the stress it can cause. On a recent day in February, the in-home child care provider Schieffer relies on came down with the flu, leaving her and several other parents with nowhere to drop off their children.

Schieffer's husband runs a ranch supply store located well out of town. But fortunately, Schieffer works alone in a downtown office and was able to bring 2-year-old Maya with her to work.

"This is exactly the kind of situation we're hoping to avoid with the new day care, where we could offer a drop-in service for parents on a daily or emergency basis," Schieffer said. "If you want to work as a parent, you have to take your kids somewhere."

The lack of child care is a common problem in cities both large and small across South Dakota and creates ripple effects beyond the immediate uncertainty for working parents.

Combined with a shortage of affordable housing, the dearth of day care is stunting potential economic and population growth as schools, government agencies and businesses are in some cases unable to hire employees because workers cannot find care for their children.

The problem is worse in dozens of small, rural communities that are often isolated from large population centers with more options.

The community has embarked on a three-year campaign to raise the roughly \$1 million needed to buy a former Wells Fargo bank building in town and convert it to large child care able to hold 51 children upon



This former Wells Fargo bank building in Redfield, S.D., shown on Feb. 3, 2026, is being converted into a daycare facility with money from local fundraising activities, grants and donations.

launch and eventually more than 90 children.

Redfield does not have a center-based day care operation and has seen the number of small, at-home providers fall from 10 in 2023 to seven in 2026. Some of those remaining providers are nearing retirement age and are likely to stop providing the service in the coming years, Schieffer said.

Jake Dawson is a father to two pre-school age children and feels lucky that he and his wife are able to drop their children off at an in-home day care in Redfield while he works the farm and his wife works in town.

Dawson used to run a John Deere dealership in Redfield and said he often heard from employees or prospective employees that obtaining child care was a challenge. Dawson said he knew of at least two parents who had to drive 50 miles each way either to Miller or Aberdeen in order to drop off their children during the workday.

Dawson, who serves on the board of the Redfield development group, said it is clear that a dwindling number of child care openings is holding the city back.

"From an economic development standpoint, having day care available is a huge asset," he said. "In today's world, I think young families are looking for

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# North Dakota approves battery storage

### Regulator warns of fire risks

**Jeff Beach**  
NORTH DAKOTA MONITOR

North Dakota has approved its first two large battery storage sites, but one regulator said future projects should better address risks associated with fires at the sites.

The three-person Public Service Commission on Wednesday unanimously approved a battery storage site in northwest North Dakota's Burke County. In January, it approved a similar project in Emmons County in south-central North Dakota. Both projects are connected to NextEra wind farms, providing a more consistent flow of electricity.

Before Wednesday's vote, commission Chair Randy Christmann said he wanted to "get a point out to industry" that it should provide a list of all toxins that could be released if a battery site were to catch fire — one of the primary concerns about the storage systems.

"I hope in the future, on these applications, the full list of things that could come off of a fire are provided in advance to the local emergency officials and let them decide if they think they need additional resources for personal protection, or if they want to oppose the project," Christmann said.

He said the discussion of emissions from a fire came too late in the process for the Burke County project, and he is concerned that applicants are "glossing over" the fire risks.

At a public hearing on the Emmons-Logan project in November, NextEra said the company had been in

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# Cartel leader's death leads to violence across Mexico

### Sheinbaum says unrest has calmed, regular activities resume

**Lauren Villagran and Kathryn Palmer**  
USA TODAY

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Feb. 23 that normal activity had resumed following a day of violence in several regions of her country.

"Today, there is tranquility," she said, adding that peace had been secured and blockades largely cleared.

The unrest was triggered by the Feb. 22 killing of a powerful cartel leader in a military operation.

Nemesio Oseguera, commonly known as "El Mencho," was Mexico's most-wanted cartel leader, with a \$15 million bounty for information leading to his capture. He rose through the ranks and launched a deadly coup to become the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, or CJNG. The criminal enterprise rapidly grew into a continent-spanning empire that rivaled its former allies in the Sinaloa Cartel, run by kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, who is serving life in prison.

Oseguera's death triggered waves of violence across Mexico as cartel operatives carried out revenge attacks. Gunmen suspected to be his supporters blocked highways across several states and set cars and businesses ablaze.

Mexico Security Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch said that 25 members of the National Guard and one security guard died in cartel attacks on Feb. 22.

The violence prompted the U.S. State Department

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