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What can  
we be  
best at?

To work with  
and on behalf of  
our local units  
of government

What are  
we deeply  
passionate  
about?

What  
drives our  
economic  
engine?

# 2009 Annual Report



Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

# Mission

Enable the region to thrive through assisting local governments



# Message from the Chair

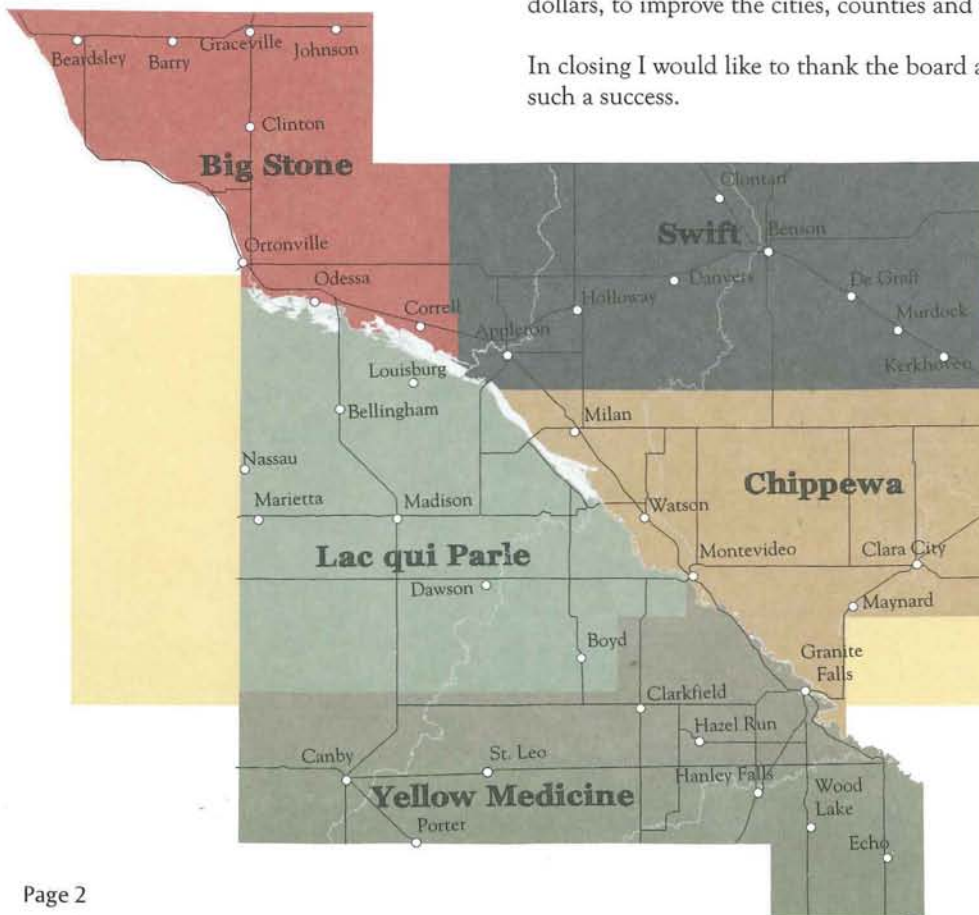
David Frost once said "Don't aim for success if you want it; just do what you love and believe in, and it will come naturally." As the chairman of the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission I believe this statement truly reflects our state of mind. From the board members to the director, to all the valued employees, there is a true belief in our region.

I look forward to the commission meetings and listening to all the board members. Our board conversations range from a school's change to an energy efficient heating and cooling system, to a city's concern about flooding issues. Discussions are held on commercial and residential rehabilitation, to the concern over our transportation system. The common thread is always about improving our region by working together or sharing information to assist one another. I believe the commission is very open to ideas and processes to lead our successful communities.

The board can only set policy and direction; the rest is always up to staff to carry out the mission. Working with Dawn Hegland and all of the staff, I can only say they simply believe in Western Minnesota and the people who live here. With the projects that they work on and all the obstacles that they need to overcome, the staff consistently comes through. Throughout this past year staff has worked with local, state and federal governments taking the necessary steps to build stronger relationships. These relationships are crucial to identify programs or sources of dollars, to improve the cities, counties and townships within our region.

In closing I would like to thank the board and the staff on making this past year such a success.

*Gary Wehrich*



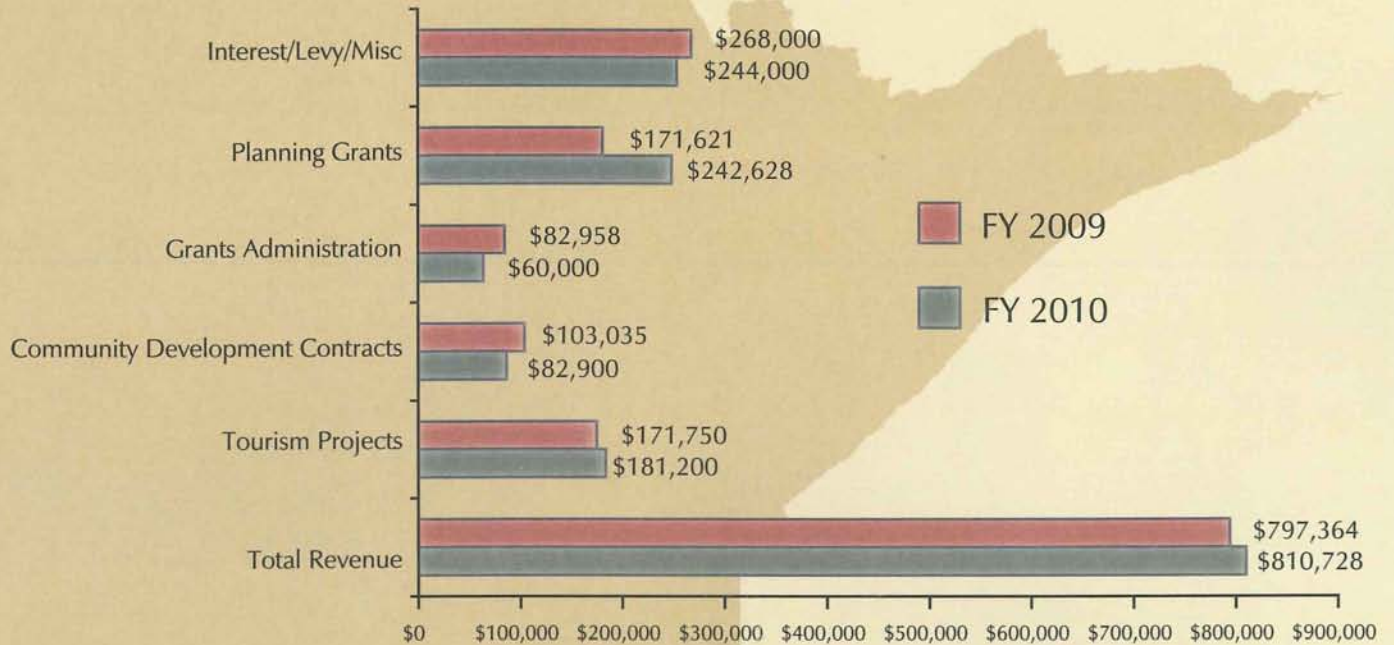
Serving our five counties and 37 communities



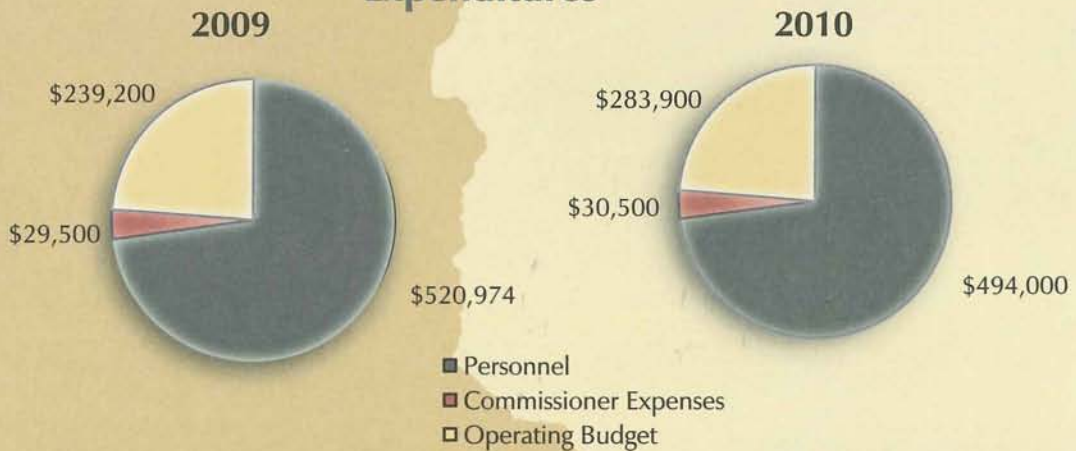
# Financial Report

Revenue and Expenditure Comparison  
Current FY 2009 and Proposed FY 2010

## Revenue



## Expenditures



2009

Total Revenue - \$797,364  
Total Expenditures - \$789,674  
Excess Revenue - \$7,690

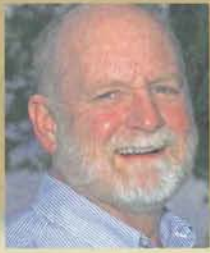
2010 Proposed Budget

Total Revenue - \$810,728  
Total Expenditures - \$808,400  
Excess Revenue - \$2,328



# Board of Directors

## Big Stone County



Brent Olson  
County Board



Craig Randleman  
Municipalities



Harold R. Dimberg  
Townships

## Chippewa County



Jim Dahlvang  
County Board



Nancy Strand  
Municipalities



David VanKlombenburg  
Townships

## Lac qui Parle County



Harold Solem  
County Board



Greg Thole  
Municipalities



Tim Patzer  
Townships

## Swift County



Gary Hendrickx  
County Board



Ron Ronning  
Municipalities



Warren Rau  
Townships

## Yellow Medicine County



Gary L. Johnson  
County Board



Scott Peterson  
Municipalities



Erling Albin  
Townships

## Public Interest & Tribal Council



Juanita Lauritsen  
Work Force  
Council



Pamela Lehmann  
Lac qui Parle  
County EDA

## School Board



Brett Buer  
Dawson-Boyd



Kimberly Mitchell  
Lac qui Parle Valley



Bruce Swigerd  
Prairie Five CAC, Inc.



N. Scott Larsen  
Upper Sioux  
Community



# Staff



*Back* Arlene Tilbury  
Financial  
Director

Jacki Anderson  
Community Development  
Senior Planner

*Middle* Jen Remboldt  
Administrative  
Assistant

Jenifer Fadness  
Communications  
Planner Assistant

Dawn Hegland  
Executive  
Director

Barb Jordahl  
Financial  
Planner

Kristi Fernholz  
Tourism  
Senior Planner

*Front* Michelle Bouta  
Community Development  
Planner

Katie Meyer  
Community Development  
Planner

## Message from the Executive Director

What a year! There have been lots of changes here at the RDC. We said good-bye to four long term staff, and were joined by three new energetic employees. We also have nine new board members from throughout the region. Our office has a fresh new outlook on our region thanks to the new ideas developed in consultation with staff and the board. In addition, I have had the great pleasure to enter into the role of Executive Director after 14 years as a planner at the RDC. I thank the Board for their trust in me to guide the work of the Commission as we transition through these changes.

Like other staff and board members, I frequently find myself explaining what the UMRDC does. I say the usual

about working for units of government, and grant writing and administration, community planning etc but find it most useful to share some examples of projects we are working on. I share how we assist in getting funds and doing all the paperwork to get a new fire hall; fix up the exterior of people's houses and businesses; help cities access funds after natural disasters like tornados and floods; provide workshops on things like wind power; help prioritize road, bridge, city bus, and trail construction projects; provide funding to start or expand businesses; and help cities and counties plan for their future. I am amazed and energized when I think of all the things we helped to do in the last year. The most rewarding part my job is to see something

get completed that we assisted with. Our staff and board are passionate about this work and through our regular meetings are reinforcing our mission to enable the region to thrive by assisting units of government.

As we reflect on what we have done in this last year, and those details are outlined in this report, we are challenging the agency to do even more and be the best at what we can do. We are looking forward to another exciting year working on a new set of projects that will help our community prosper. If you have questions about how we can help your community, do not hesitate to contact our office!



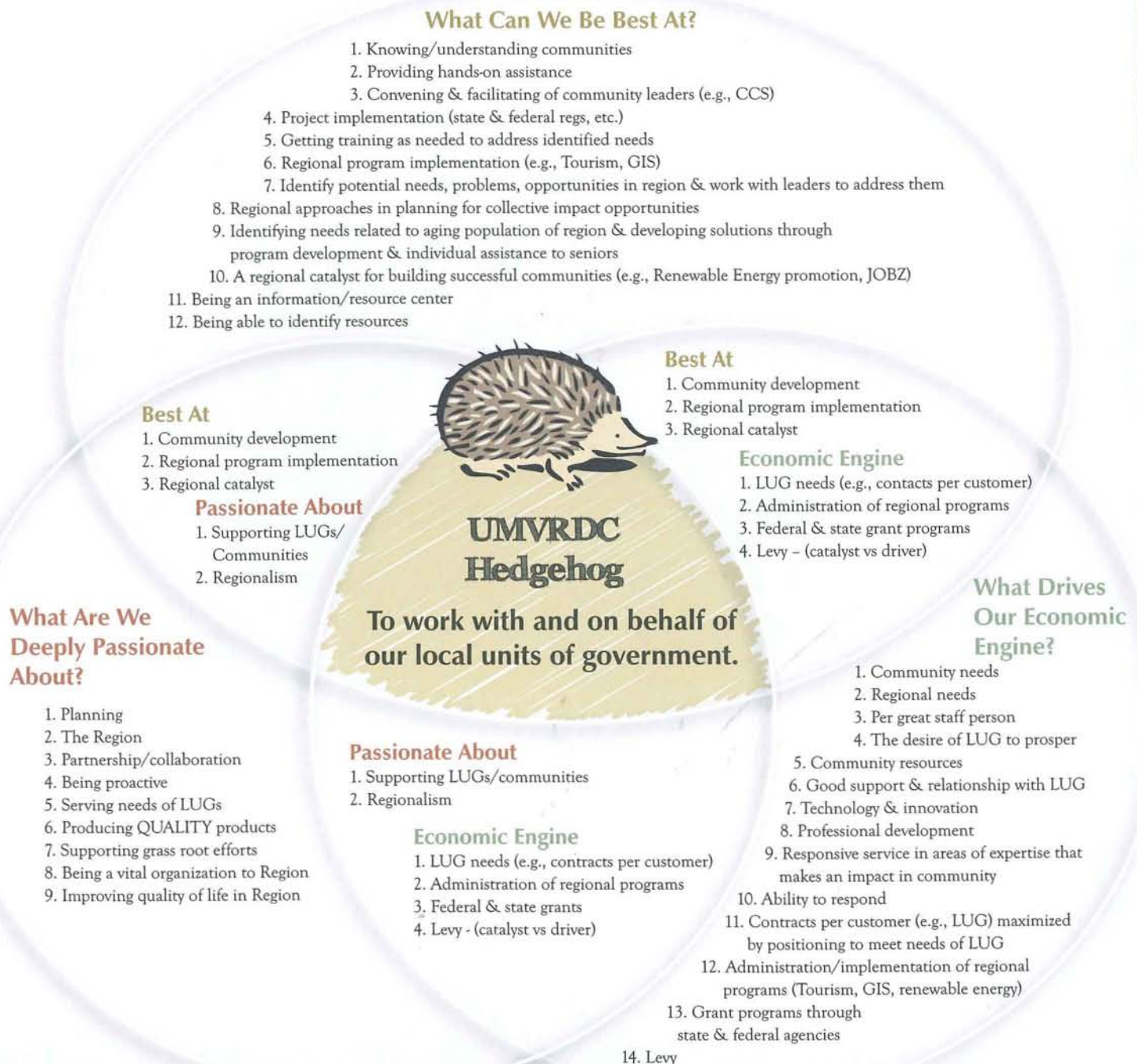


## The UMVRDC's Good to Great Process

### The Hedgehog Concept (Simplicity within three circles)

The Hedgehog Concept is an operating model that reflects a deep understanding of three intersecting circles: 1) what you can be the best in the world at, 2) what you are deeply passionate about, and 3) what best drives your economic or resource engine.

The UMVRDC analyzed the agency by asking these questions. Topics that overlapped into the center circle became a simple clear concept, called the Hedgehog.





# nity Development

The UMVRDC continues to implement our strategic planning process that has set the future course for the UMVRDC. The goal of this plan is to position the UMVRDC to best meet the needs of the local units of government (LUGs) it was created to serve.

Our strategic plan is based on Jim Collins' Good to Great process, which came out of research that shows building a great organization proceeds in four basic stages: 1) disciplined people, 2) disciplined thought, 3) disciplined action and 4) building greatness to last. This process is intended to move an organization from good to great and to create a deep understanding of what an organization CAN be best at. The UMVRDC used the models and ideas in this book to guide them through their strategic

planning process. Based on these ideas, we have developed our "Hedgehog" concept, shown to the left, and our BHAGs (Big Huge Audacious Goals).

"Definition of BHAGs: action-oriented; clear (who, what, where, by when); compelling and gripping—people "get it" right away; bold; bordering on hubris and the unattainable. It is a 10- to 30-year objective—like a big mountain to climb—that serves as a unifying focal point of effort, galvanizing people and creating team spirit. It is crisp, compelling and easy to understand." (Good to Great, Collins, 2001)

Listed below are our BHAGs and a summary of our accomplishments in each one.

## BHAG Accomplishments in 2009

### ● BHAG #1: Be the premier agency for community development in Region 6W.

Implemented 23 contracts in Benson, Granite Falls, Clarkfield, Maynard, Clara City, Appleton, Browns Valley, Lac qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine, Big Stone, Chippewa Counties and Upper Sioux Community.

Sent numerous email blasts about upcoming opportunities and events.

Met quarterly with Economic Development Professionals in the region. Meetings and business tours were held in Ortonville, Maynard, Benson, Dawson, and Appleton.

Participated on the Clean Energy Resource Team.

Co-sponsored renewable energy meetings in Lac qui Parle County.

Participated on Area Transportation Partnership 4 & 8.

Attended training on Tax Increment Financing, USDA programs, Economic Developers Association of MN conference, American Planning Association Conference, National Association of Development Councils conference, Southern MN Tourism Association, America's Byway Resource Center teleconferences, and State Byway conference.

Staff received Business Retention and Expansion Specialist status.

Implemented a community leadership/visioning process in Appleton through the Center for Community Stewardship.

Hosted a "Business Retention and Expansion" and "Know Your Region" workshop with the University of MN.

Hosted a regional resource fair for cities with agencies like DEED, USDA, PCA, U of M, Office of Energy Security.

Hosted free entrepreneur classes once a month.

### ● BHAG #2: Implement regional approaches to address needs in Region 6W.

Initiated a regional telecommunications study with the Blandin Foundation.

Partnered with the University of MN Crookston EDA Center on a statewide telecommunications survey.

Participated in SW MN FIRST Grant Team; helped transition that into the Southwest MN Alliance for Regional Teamwork. [www.thesmartlink.net](http://www.thesmartlink.net)

Helped create the SouthWest Minnesota Center for Rural Entrepreneurship in conjunction with the Southwest Initiative Foundation and other partners. [www.swmncore.com](http://www.swmncore.com)

Participated in Southern MN Regional Competitiveness Project. <http://www.mnsu.edu/ruralmn/regcomp.html>

Organized regional renewable energy meetings.

Sustained Western MN Prairie Waters CVB.

Provided staff for the Meander Art Crawl.

Provided staff for the MN River Valley Scenic Byway.

Completed our role as aging specialist for the Minnesota River Valley Area Agency on Aging.

### ● BHAG #3: The RDC name will be as recognizable as the "golden arches" by communities in Region 6W.

Developed new tagline: "Helping Communities Prosper."

Using our new logo, we developed new letterhead, envelopes, commissioner business cards, staff business cards, annual report, newsletter, fax, other office forms, and notepads.

Hired new "communications assistant" who will have time to allocate towards marketing projects.

Held an open house in October 2008.

### ● BHAG #4: The RDC Commission will be viewed as "the" model for board leadership and involvement within Region 6W.

Developed UMVRDC Board Member orientation packet. The executive director met with eight new board members in spring 2009 to review the packet.

Met with BHAG committees 10 times in FY 2009.

Profiled two new board members in June 2009 newsletter.

Developed new information packet for city/county visits.

Met with all five county boards to talk about the services of the RDC.





## Community Development Programs

### Hazard Mitigation

Successful applications were authored for Big Stone, Chippewa, Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties, all of whom are receiving matching grants to assist with the update of each county's All-hazard Mitigation Plan. Hazard mitigation update activities will begin this summer for each of the counties listed above as UMRDC staff Kate Meyer coordinates the process.

Applications were also authored for Lac qui Parle County and the Upper Sioux Community to update their All-hazard Mitigation Plans. Both applications are under FEMA review.

### Browns Valley Hazard Mitigation

The UMRDC started working with the City of Browns Valley after the devastating flood in March 2007. The city has completed approximately 90% of the housing projects, and ground breaking took place on May 30, 2009 for the flood diversion project. This project is made possible in part by a grant provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature. Staff continues to work with the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District, the Department of Natural Resources, and other consultants for the administration of the project.

### Granite Falls Hazard Mitigation

Staff continues to work with the City of Granite Falls and the Department of Natural Resources for flood recovery and mitigation efforts. Construction of the new City Hall is complete and work continues on Phase I of the levee improvement project, flood retaining walls, and relocation of the water treatment plant.

### Western Minnesota Revolving Loan Fund (WesMN RLF)

The WesMN RLF Loan Board approved five new loans during fiscal year 2009 to assist new and expanding businesses throughout the region. These loans totaled \$233,000 for the uses of working capital, fixed assets and real estate. Businesses receiving low interest loans from the WesMN RLF include:



SpecSys, Inc. - Benson, MN	\$50,000
Swift Manufacturing - Clara City, MN	\$75,000
Clarkfield Family Foods - Clarkfield, MN	\$28,000
Appleton Hardware, Inc. - Appleton, MN	\$50,000
Appleton Meat Center - Appleton, MN	\$30,000

### Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Applications

Maynard & Clara City are a little over one year into their SCDP grant that was awarded in the spring of 2008. The two communities are completing owner-occupied and commercial rehabilitation activities along with building a new community center in Maynard.



The Maynard Event Center opened in June 2009.

This year, the UMRDC authored two more SCDP grants that were awarded: one for Benson and the four surrounding townships of Benson, Clontarf, Six Mile

Grove and Torning; and a joint application for Granite Falls and Clarkfield. Each of the communities will be implementing a combination of owner, rental and commercial rehabilitation. Benson and the townships will work to complete 17 owner-occupied units and five commercial properties. Granite Falls and Clarkfield will work to complete 22 owner-occupied homes, four rental properties and one commercial property. UMRDC staff is gearing up for 2010 SCDP applications and will be authoring two more pre-applications this fall.

### Economic Development Administration (EDA) Application

The UMRDC assisted the City of Appleton with an application to EDA for a fiber-to-the-premise project throughout the community. The City of Appleton is surrounded by fiber but has none running through the community. The proposed project would connect every business and home to this state of the art technology bringing this small community into a competitive technological world. Fiber to the premise would allow some of Appleton's major employers to remain competitive by offering expanded bandwidth for transfer of large documents as well as allow remote communication between affiliate businesses. The application was submitted this spring to the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration for consideration.

### 6W Community & Economic Development Professionals (EDPros) Meeting

The Region 6W Community & Economic Development Professionals group continues to meet on a quarterly basis, rotating from county to county. In each host county, the EDPros group visits a business and discusses regional economic development issues and opportunities.



# nity Development

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The UMRDC continues to work with the U.S. Department of Commerce on economic development activities throughout the region. These activities are outlined in the CEDS. With a major CEDS plan overhaul completed in 2008, staff worked in 2009 and explored priority areas in the CEDS. These priority areas were developed with input from local elected officials and community leaders from all five counties who attended workshops as a part of the overhaul process in 2008. As a result, five major priority areas were developed: Renewable Energy, Business Retention and Expansion, Entrepreneurship, Local Foods, and Telecommunications. UMRDC staff found opportunities to implement projects in all five areas:

**Renewable Energy** through workshops for small and community wind projects.

**Business Retention and Expansion (BRE)** by participating in Yellow Medicine County's BRE program.

**Entrepreneurship** by offering monthly entrepreneurship classes and partnering with the Southwest Initiative Foundation and the Small Business Development Center.

**Telecommunications** by working with Blandin to create a broadband provider inventory for the region; partnering with the University of Minnesota Crookston EDA Center to survey broadband usage by rural businesses; and by working with a private consultant to complete a UMRDC website assessment.

**Local foods** through the promotion of local growers in the Prairie Waters tourism publications and website, participation with the Pride of the Prairie committee ([www.prideoftheprairie.org](http://www.prideoftheprairie.org)), and by using and promoting local foods at the Prairie Waters and UMRDC annual meetings.



Attendees participate in a valuable roundtable discussion.

## Region 6W City Resource Fair

In April, a resource fair was held, with presenters from Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, USDA Rural Development, University of Minnesota Extension, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and Minnesota Office of Energy Security.

These agencies provided information to elected officials on their programs and services.

## Benson Comprehensive Plan Addendum

The UMRDC is currently assisting the city of Benson through the process of amending their Comprehensive Plan. This will be completed fall 2009.

## Renewable Energy

UMVRDC staff assisted with sponsoring two wind information meetings focused in Lac qui Parle county with over 60 people in attendance. Featured speakers were Melissa Peterson, Windustry; Jeff Bendel, Juhl Wind; Pat Louwagie, accountant from Marshall; Cheryl Glaeser, Southwest Initiative Foundation and the REDI program; Dave Winkleman, WERC; and Dave O'Brien, HG Wind.

## Center for Community Stewardship (CCS)

UMVRDC assisted with the Center for Community Stewardship (CCS) community leadership/visioning project in the city of Appleton. The project has been named "Energize Appleton." UMRDC staff facilitates meetings of a group of local volunteers. These volunteers have been researching community assets; getting ideas, comments and feedback from local citizens through small group presentations and surveys; developing a draft community "destiny statement" and goals



## Area Transportation Partnerships (ATP)

We participated in ATP 4 and ATP 8 meetings to review and rank applications for 2013 federal funds for roads, bridges, trails, public transit, and railroad crossings. The total investment in Region 6W for 2010-2013 is \$47,558,037 for projects. The totals per county are:

Big Stone	\$5,298,600
Chippewa	\$26,760,453
Lac qui Parle	\$6,716,531
Swift	\$6,872,453
Yellow Medicine	\$1,910,000

## Aging Program Development and Coordination

Technical assistance was provided to entities looking at developing adult foster facilities and adult day services, including regulations, rules, and financing options. Technical assistance was also provided to existing service providers and counties regarding programming issues, marketing, sustainability, grant seeking, policies and procedures.

## Aging Program Information and Referral

Client contacts were made the past year for information and assistance. Many were repeat callers, with more complicated and time consuming assistance required. Most clients do not qualify for county assistance programs but are near poverty level. UMRDC worked closely with county staff and health plans, Social Security and Medicare, and addressed "donut hole" issues. The majority of referrals have come from local outreach and word of mouth.





## Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway



“The purpose of the Alliance is to encourage economic development through the promotion, preservation and protection of the intrinsic qualities of the Minnesota River Valley.”

The 287-mile tourism destination is a group of committed individuals representing a variety of interests including Chambers of Commerce, various attractions and historic sites, State Parks, local and state governmental bodies, private businesses, and concerned individuals. UMRDC staff continues to provide staffing and fiscal services to the Byway.

One of the highlights of 2008 was the Minnesota State Byway conference in Montevideo. Approximately 70 participants from other Byways around the state gathered at the Hollywood Theatre

for workshops and informational seminars. Bootleggers of Granite Falls catered the event with local foods and Jerry Ostensoe provided entertainment on Wednesday evening. UMRDC staff helped to coordinate this event as the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway was the host byway.

Other highlights from the past year include:

- Distributed over 7,000 of our Byway Guides including distribution at the Mall of America, at Travel Information Centers on the state's southern borders, fulfilling visitor requests and to Byway businesses and attractions.



*Dawn Hegland greets participants of the 2008 State Byway Conference at the Hollywood Theatre in Montevideo.*

- Exposure in various media including Explore Southern Minnesota, MN Trails and MN Moments.
- Completing work on 15 Interpretive Panels to be installed along the Byway. The 2' x 3' signs are slated to be installed September of 2009.
- Administering the website with continual upgrades and improvements such as Google maps.
- Direct mail piece in collaboration with Prairie Waters, sent to 11,000 households in the Midwest.



## Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Tourism



The mission of Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is to promote our area as a great place to visit, live and work, and staff has continued to seek out projects that accomplish that mission.

A few of the highlights from the past year include:

- Completed the New Prairie Waters Website. This website is one of the few places to gather critical and interesting information about our Region online. The website has an appealing new look and is easy to update and maintain.



- Continued distribution of the Prairie Waters Regional Visitors Guide. This full color, glossy publication of Prairie Waters is the premier visitors guide for our region with 25,000 copies printed and over 83 advertisers.
- Created and placed numerous ads in our regional papers, statewide and out of state publications.

- Received over 3000 requests for information in 2008 and almost 1500 in the first half of 2009.

- Managed the toll-free informational phone line: 866-866-5432.
- Created and distributed two Direct mail pieces, one in collaboration with the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway going to 11,000 households
- Bicycling Around Minnesota (BAM) took place August 20 - 23, 2008 in our region and 120 riders have a new appreciation for our region. Prairie Waters staff assisted in coordinating this event.
- Wrote a successful grant to Minnesota Office of Tourism procuring more than \$10,000 for advertising in our region.

**www.prairiewaters.com**  
**866.866.5432**



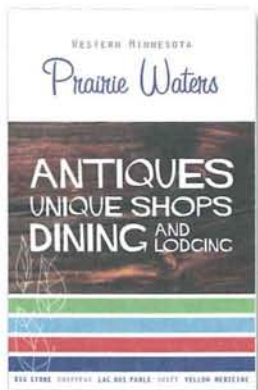
# nity Development

- Completed two applications for federal Byway funding. The applications were ranked high by the state committee and will provide funds for staff coordination and a significant marketing campaign for the Byway. Funding should be announced in the fall of 2009.

[www.mnrivervalley.com](http://www.mnrivervalley.com)



- Created a new regional brochure: Antiques, Unique Shops, Dining and Lodging Guide. The brochure was a collaborative effort between Prairie Waters and the chambers, Convention and Visitors Bureaus, and cities in our region, and is a comprehensive directory for all of our five counties. This useful brochure has been extremely popular.



## Meander Art Crawl

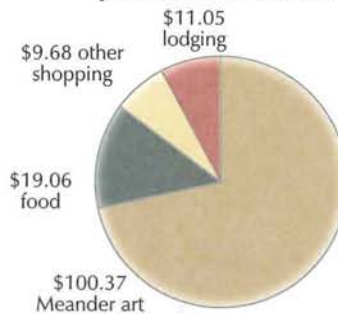
The UMRVDC helped coordinate planning, managed finances, and developed and implemented marketing for the 5th annual Meander in October 2008. Forty-five local artists participated.

### 2008 Meander Economic Impacts

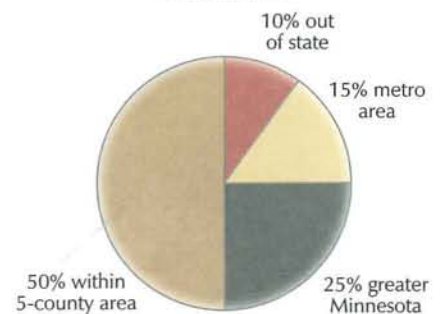
- Total reported Meander art sales to customers during the Meander weekend was \$57,316, an increase of 30% from 2007. (38/44 surveys reported)
- Of the money raised to organize the Meander through sponsors and artists, 93 percent was spent on products or services (printing, paper, advertising, graphic design, staffing) in the five county area.
- Average number of studios customers visited was 12, an increase of 4 studios from 2007.
- 81 percent of customers said the quality of the art was excellent.
- 85 percent of customers said their overall experience was excellent.



Average Expenditures per Customer: \$151.21



Where Attendees Came From



Shoppers admire artwork on display in Milan.



Meander 2009 is October 2, 3 & 4!

[www.artsmeander.com](http://www.artsmeander.com) 866.866.5432





Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

323 W. Schlieman Ave. Appleton, MN 56208

320-289-1981 (phone) 320-289-1983 (fax)

[www.umvrdc.org](http://www.umvrdc.org)

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## Fact

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into formation and another goose flies at the point position.

## Lesson

It pays to take turns doing the hard task and sharing leadership with people, as with geese, interdependent with one another.

