

Many Voices, One Minnesota: A Sesquicentennial Plan for Our Future



Published January 20, 2009 by the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission

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Memorandum

To: Fellow Minnesotans

From: State Senator Ann H. Rest and State Representative Morrie Lanning
Co-Chairs, Engage the Public, Plan for the Future Committee, Minnesota Statehood
Sesquicentennial Commission

Date: December 2008

Re: Many Voices, One Minnesota – A Plan for Our Future

The report that follows this memo represents hundreds of interactions with thousands of Minnesotans in every county over the past two and one half years (2006 to 2008) to create a snapshot of what Minnesotans were thinking about and planning for their future as Minnesota reached its 150th year of statehood.

Early on, the Minnesota Statehood Sesquicentennial Commission created a committee to “Engage the Public, Plan for the Future.” Embarking on this process to do just that was one of the major efforts of the Commission, its staff, and volunteers across the state. This report -- “Many Voices, One Minnesota – A Plan for Our Future” -- is the final result.

We want to thank first and foremost the citizens who took the time to engage in this great civic process. Many thanks as well to our partners on the ground – the Minnesota Association of Townships (who helped get the early word out about the community input process), the Regional Development Commissions (who undertook most of the community meeting facilitation), and the Sesquicentennial Commission staff, Sesquicentennial Fellows and student interns who compiled and completed this massive overview of Minnesota in 2008.

We hope this report won’t end up collecting dust on a shelf somewhere. Instead, it can be a living document that provides a sesquicentennial checkpoint for citizen leaders, policymakers, and elected officials as we move together into our next fifty years of statehood.

Authors' Note

To: Readers & Fellow Minnesotans

From: Authors of Many Voices, One Minnesota—A Plan for Our Future

Date: December 2008

Re: Many Voices, One Minnesota – A Plan for Our Future

The Sesquicentennial interns and fellows who contributed to this report were honored to have the privilege of being part of its historical legacy. We would like to thank the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission for giving us this opportunity of a lifetime. As most of us were college students or recent college graduates when we began, it was inspiring to work on a project with our future, as Minnesotans, at its heart.

In the following pages, we sought to realize the vision for “Plan for Our Future” established by the Sesquicentennial Commissioners: State Representative Morrie Lanning, Senator Ann Rest, and Executive Director Jane Leonard. We hope that this report adequately represents the voices and aspirations of Minnesotans across the state and provides an illustrative snapshot of Minnesota in 2008.

For readers who would like to examine the topics and resources we used in more depth, we provided appendices containing the responses from the Community Conversations meetings, the spreadsheet used to analyze Community Conversation data, and copies of original documents like the Minnesota Milestones ballot.

The greatest challenge of this report was succinctly presenting a topic with such great breadth. It is only a snapshot of the issues, policies, and concerns for the future on the minds of Minnesotans today. Above all, we sought to create a report that was balanced, with a diversity of views and opinions. We hope that this report can be useful to policymakers and citizens of Minnesota alike as we plan, hope and dream about the next fifty years of statehood.

**Many Voices, One Minnesota:
A Sesquicentennial Plan for Our Future**

Table of Contents

Project Overview	6
Data from Community Conversations	9
Regional Development Commission Summaries	22
MN Milestones Survey Data	51
Issue Initiative Summaries	56
Community Leaders Interviews	88
Appendices	106

Project Overview

May 11, 2008 marked the 150-year anniversary of Minnesota's statehood. In this sesquicentennial year, the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission has taken every opportunity to celebrate, and reflect on, the rich progression of Minnesota's history and culture over the past 150 years. This responsibility intersected with the task of formulating a plan that could unite an understanding of our past with the vision we have for the future of our great state, Minnesota.

To carry out these goals, the Commission created an "Engage the Public, Plan for the Future" committee, led by Senator Ann H. Rest and Representative Morrie Lanning, both members of the Commission representing the State Legislature.

The Committee worked with Commission staff to outline a process that would engage Minnesota citizens in planning for the future well-being of Minnesota.

The resulting process and report, *Many Voices—One Minnesota: A Sesquicentennial Plan for our Future*, has been carefully built to represent Minnesota in 2008. It represents what citizens believed and observed during the statehood sesquicentennial about their own state and what these 2008 citizens hoped for and would be willing to commit to ensure that future happened. The process lifts up the very idea of statehood, which itself is the embodiment of democracy – government of, by and for the people. The Plan for Our Future process counted on and encouraged civic engagement across the state.

Each component of the Plan for Our Future has been chosen to embody a particular piece of Minnesota—the concerns of current citizens, the opinions of community leaders, the work that is being done in the legislature, and the work of other civic-involvement organizations. The combination of these components is intended to produce a *snapshot* of Minnesota in 2008 as well as a *roadmap* to guide our progress into the future.

Beginning in October 2007 thru August 2008, we reached out to citizens in every region of Minnesota through community conversation meetings hosted by the Regional Development Commissions and other partners, to record citizens' thoughts about Minnesota's development and the priorities they felt were most important in guiding Minnesota's future. Finally, we asked them what they would commit to do or are currently doing, within their own communities, to maintain Minnesota's high quality of life. The results were collected, sorted, and analyzed to form a succinct account of Minnesotans' ideas and concerns throughout the state. Overall, citizens were both engaged and thoughtful in their responses and the results indicate both a continued dedication to Minnesota's future among the communities and many concerns about what our main focus should be in the coming years.

This is not the first time Minnesotans have been asking to gauge the future, and it won't be the last. In 1991, a team of researchers from Minnesota Planning, the state's planning agency, interviewed thousands of Minnesotans throughout the state about their vision for the future. Based on these interviews the State Legislature adopted the Minnesota Milestones—19 goals, which, if achieved, would make Minnesota the kind of place its citizens envision.

As part of the process of creating the Sesquicentennial Plan for Our Future in 2008, the State Legislature directed the Commission to gather input on the Minnesota Milestones, which hadn't been updated in several years. We did so by administering a survey to attendees of the

2008 Minnesota State Fair at the Sesquicentennial venue there. The survey was designed to determine if these 19 goals were still in line with how Minnesotans envision their future.

The goals from the 1990s were presented and the participants were asked to rate how strongly they agreed (or not) that each was still an important Minnesota Milestone. To expand on this data we also asked participants to rank in order of importance for Minnesota's future well-being the issues of Economy, Education, Transportation, Environment, Health Care, Social Issues and Government (which had emerged in the earlier community conversations across the state as priority areas). As in our community conversations, this survey proved an interesting and telling account of Minnesota's values and commitment to its future.

The community conversations and the 2008 MN Milestones survey both provide fascinating and meaningful accounts of how Minnesotans feel currently regarding our state's opportunities and challenges for the future. To complement this information, we contacted and interviewed various community and organizational leaders from across the entire cultural and socio-political spectrum. The interviews were composed both of questions taken directly from our community conversations as well as questions specific to the participant's perspective given their unique position in their particular field.

Summaries of these interviews are included with this report to help envision not only the concerns of citizens at large but also the concerns and visions of those in positions of authority and prominence within our communities. It was also a priority that the political inclination of all involved was secondary to the thoughtful input they had regarding their vision for Minnesota's future.

Minnesota is fortunate to have many organizations working to plan for and build a bright future. To highlight some of this work and gauge current progress on issues highlighted in our community conversations and Minnesota Milestones projects, we put together a list of these planning-related organizations, and summaries of their current work, in the areas of economy, education, transportation, environment, health care, social issues and government.

Again, this provides another way to create a snapshot of Minnesota in 2008. This list is by no means comprehensive. There are many people in our great state working in all of the areas we have mentioned. Those included here have been selected to provide a brief glimpse at the scope of work underway across many disciplines, at local, regional, and statewide levels.

If a statewide plan for our future is to be implemented, it would need the talent and cooperation of all those organizations working together to improve Minnesota's future. We partnered with the Regional Development Commissions (RDCs) on the initial Plan for Our Future community conversations because they have been doing just that for the past 30-plus years, having been set up originally as the regional arms of the State Planning Agency and stewards of federal economic and community development resources. The State Planning Agency no longer exists, but the RDCs still serve as a bridge between citizens and governmental agencies throughout the state to plan for and implement strategies that improve our state.

As a follow-up to the community conversations the RDC's led, we asked each of the commissions to send us a brief summary on their region's current and future challenges and opportunities. These reports help to tie the rest of our information together and provide perhaps the most accurate snapshot of Minnesota, by region, in 2008.

The final product, a composite of each of these components, is the report here, *Many Voices—One Minnesota: A Sesquicentennial Plan for our Future*. It aims to be a thoughtful, and thought-provoking look into Minnesota in the year 2008—our concerns, our desires, and our ideas of how to ensure Minnesota maintains and improves its celebrated culture, civic

engagement, and high standard of living. This report will hopefully serve as a living document, functioning as a reminder of where we stood today so we may take the right steps forward into tomorrow. Funding for this project was provided by the Sesquicentennial Commission and a grant from the Bush Foundation for civic engagement.

Data from Community Conversations

At the heart of Plan for Our Future are the Community Conversations that took place between Fall 2007 and Summer 2008. Seven Regional Development Commissions (RDCs) hosted Community Conversations¹ and over 31 counties participated. Moreover, during Statehood week (May 11-17, 2008), we conducted Plan for Our Future meetings in each of the five Capitols for A Day². The response data from the New Ulm Capitol for A Day was the most complete and formal, conducted as a regular Plan for our Future conversation by the Region 9 RDC, so it was included in this report, as well.

The goal of the Community Conversations was to engage Minnesotans across the state in a thoughtful dialogue about the next fifty years of statehood and to encourage them to imagine their role in creating a good future. At each meeting, participants answered three questions individually and then in groups. They recorded their individual responses on questionnaire sheets provided for them. The three questions were:

1. What do we want the future to be like for the next generations?
2. What are the “got-to deal with” issues if we’re going to make that future real?
3. What would you like to tell Minnesotans 50 years from now—at the state’s bicentennial—that you are personally working on today to ensure they have the same or better quality of life you have now?

The responses were gathered by RDC and Sesquicentennial Commission staff and combined with an online survey. These materials composed the “raw” data of this report and were ultimately the guiding force behind Plan for Our Future. The questionnaire sheets were also the first step in a process of organizing and presenting the information they contained in the most effective way possible.

One underlying principle guided the process of organizing the data: let the information speak for itself. During Summer and Fall 2008, a group of Sesquicentennial interns and fellows compiled all of the responses to present it as a comprehensive spreadsheet.

Beginning in June 2008, the first challenge was to transfer all of the handwritten responses to an electronic format. Retyping each response verbatim the Sesquicentennial staff was careful to avoid re-wording or summarization. The electronic document containing all of the responses from the Community Conversations and the New Ulm Capitol for A Day is available online at www.mn150years.org as an appendix to this report.

After all the responses were compiled electronically (divided by Question, Region, and Meeting Time/Date), the remaining challenge was to find a way to clearly and concisely present the information. At this point, the information really did speak for itself. The interns and fellows noticed that there were recurring topics, issues, and concerns that Minnesotans across the state expressed. From these trends, seven categories emerged: the economy, the environment,

¹ Region 1, Region 6E, Region 11, Region 6W, Region 4, Region 9, and Region 7E

² Bemidji, Thief River Falls, Detroit Lakes, New Ulm, and Winona

education, social issues, health care, transportation, and government. Virtually every response was able to fit into one of these broad categories.

The broad categories served as a helpful starting point for organizing the information, but soon another phenomenon became apparent: despite the incredible diversity of responses, certain issue areas were repeatedly invoked. For example, many responses (to Question One and Two) in the “Transportation” category referred to road and bridge safety. A considerable amount of responses in this category also focused on congestion and public transportation. Consequently, the interns and fellows decided to sort the data further into subcategories within each broad category.

The development of subcategories was also based on what the information indicated rather than on criteria imposed by any other factor or person. Through many discussions, the interns and fellows developed subcategories based on the frequency that an issue area occurred and on semantic decisions that would make the subcategories as generalized as possible. Very complex categories in which there was great diversity of opinion tended to have more subcategories.

One of the difficulties that the interns and fellows faced was the challenge of preserving the “voice” of Minnesotans throughout the categorization process. As a result, they developed an additional refining “category” called “Specific Area of Concern.” This final refinement allowed them to express the specific issue that some responses contained.

For example, one respondent wrote: “Highways – complete 4-lane from Nisswa to Walker³.” This response fell into the category: Transportation; the subcategory: Road/Bridge Infrastructure; and it has listed under Specific Area of Concern: 4-lane highway from Nisswa to Walker.

Due to the length of some responses, the original message had to be summarized to fit into the Specific Area of Concern category. Also, some general terms developed naturally in this category because they occurred very frequently. One example of this phenomenon is found in the “Environment” category. The subcategory “Conservation/Health” contained many responses that addressed clean air and clean water simultaneously. In the Specific Area of Concern category, “Air/Water” became a frequently occurring descriptor.

In the process of working with the information from the Community Conversations, the interns and fellows faced two large challenges: first, the challenge of preserving the “voice” of the respondents and letting the information speak for itself; and, second, the challenge of making the information accessible and useful for those who wish to analyze it. The information, as it is recorded in this report, was not the product of professional analysts or statisticians. However, when taken at face value, it is an honest illustration of what Minnesotans in 2007-2008 were thinking and feeling as they considered the future.

³ Question 2, Region 6E: Nisswa Chamber of Commerce – 11.21.07

Regional Development Commission Community Conversations Fall 2007-Spring 2008

- Region 1 (October 24 – November 15, 2007)
 - Roseau City Center (10/24/07)
 - Red Lake Falls Community Center (10/25/07)
 - Ada High School (11/05/08)
 - Warren Community Center (11/07/07)
 - Hallcock Courthouse (11/08/07)
 - Lake of the Woods (11/09/07)
 - Crookston City Hall (11/15/07)
 - Thief River Falls Heritage Community Center (11/29/07)
- Region 6E (November 11 – November 21, 2007)
 - Willmar (11/05/07)
 - Litchfield City Hall (11/06/07)
 - McLeod County Courthouse, Glencoe (11/06/07)
 - Renville County (11/15/07)
 - Nisswa Chamber of Commerce (11/21/07)
- Region 11 (November 11 – December 12, 2007)
 - University of Minnesota (11/20/07)
 - University of Minnesota (12/06/07)
- Region 6W (December 12, 2007)
 - Appleton (12/19/07)
 - Other meetings (were already combined when received)
- Region 4 (January 25 – May 5, 2008)
 - Clay County, Moorhead (01/25/08)
 - Grant County, Elbow Lake (01/29/08)
 - Otter Tail County, Fergus Falls (02/13/08)
 - Stevens County, Morris (02/14/08)
 - Douglas County, Alexandria (02/15/08)
 - Otter Tail County, New York Mills (02/25/08)
 - Wilkin County, Breckenridge (02/28/08)
 - Pope County, Glenwood (03/03/08)
 - Traverse County, Wheaton (03/03/08)
 - Becker County, Detroit Lakes (05/05/08)
- Region 9 (February 7 – March 13, 2008)
 - Martin County, Fairmont (02/07/08)
 - Nicollet County (02/21/08)
 - Fairbault County (03/04/08)
 - Waseca County (03/10/08)
 - Sibley County (03/13/08)
- Region 11: Minneapolis, Central Public Library, July 24, 2008

- Region 7E (no dates noted; meetings already compiled and combined when results received)
- Region 5: Meetings were held but results were missing

Categories of responses in Order of Frequency

Environment: 471 (22.3%)

Social Issues: 435 (20.6%)

Economy: 370 (17.5%)

Education: 297 (14%)

Health Care: 227 (10.7%)

Government: 163 (7.7%)

Transportation: 152 (7.2%)

Environment

Of the seven categories, the environmental category was the most mentioned in the community conversations. It is divided by three major subcategories: conservation/health, conservation/recreation, and sustainability. All are broad enough to encompass many secondary divisions of their own.

It should be noted that while all the primary categories are ultimately connected, spillover is particularly relevant in the environmental. For example, comments having to do with organic farming, economic sustainability, and the development of public transportation are in the economic and transportation primary categories, even though it wouldn't have been inaccurate to include them here.

Environment Subcategory: Conservation/Health

This category contains concerns about environmental health and its connection to human wellbeing. Many are about environmental health in general. A "clean, healthy environment" is typical. Others are about air and water cleanliness and pollution. Again, most survey participants simply stated concerns. A small proportion tied concerns with specific actions, such as "strictly enforce clean air/water regulations," from Nisswa (11/21/07).

Environment Subcategory: Conservation/Recreation

This category is similar to the former, but its responses relate more to recreational opportunities than human health, in the strict sense. Concerns for the aesthetic dimension, public spaces, and the maintenance of the wilderness and wildlife fall here. Typical comments include: "I would like this state to stay just as beautiful as it is. I would like the lakes to stay clean and the wild life to flourish," from Warren Community Center (11/07/07), and "Space where people can get away from the hustle and bustle and enjoy the outdoors," from Thief River Falls (11/29/07).

Environment Subcategory: Global Warming

Even more than in other categories, the responses comprising this one are simple restatements of the category itself. Examples of those more complex than “global warming” or “halt global warming” include: “Highway congestion that is contributing to global warming and loss of work and quality time can be solved with the use of mass transit. The faster we vacate cars for more bus and rail transportation, the faster we can decrease our dependence on fossil fuels that are the greatest cause of global warming,” from Renville County (11/15/07), and “Global warming – state level,” from the University of Minnesota (12/06/07).

Environment Subcategory: Sustainability

This category is comprised of submissions involving rising gas prices, the development of alternative and renewable energy sources, recycling, and environmental sustainability in general. Examples include: “I want renewable energy to be 90-100% of our usage,” and “Cheaper gas – more ethanol from various sources (not to depend on other countries),” from Appleton (12/19/07), and “I would like to live in the state that was of the most environmentally friendly in the nation (i.e. – electric buses, and effective transit systems, tax breaks for environmentally friendly buildings and homes),” from the University of Minnesota (11/20/07).

Social Issues

This category was developed for the responses that dealt with issues like family, children/young adults, and crime/safety, sense of community, culture, and social topics that did not fit into any other category. This category has the second greatest number of responses and also a high number of subcategories, mostly due the broad range of topics it covers.

Social Issues Subcategory: Civic Engagement

Responses in this subcategory often dealt with a person’s desire to see more civic engagement, more unity at the local level, and more active concern for the community.

Social Issues Subcategory: Community

Responses in this subcategory had the common theme of an individual’s relationships to the community or to others. It also contained the aspirations of many respondents, such as hope for a better future, beliefs in the strength of communities, and commitment to social virtues like compassion for others and personal responsibility.

Social Issues Subcategory: Crime/Safety

A large numbers of respondents wrote about the challenges that crime and safety pose for the future. Drug use, safe communities and schools, and violence were frequently cited in the responses in this subcategory.

Social Issues Subcategory: Elderly

Responses about older members of the community occurred often and were put into this subcategory when they addressed the social issues that the elderly face. Some of the responses in this subcategory described the need for more senior-friendly communities and the important role that seniors can play in the lives of younger generations.

Social Issues Subcategory: Family

The responses in this subcategory were usually straightforward: preserving family values, work/family time balance, and good parenting. Some responses about spiritual activities were also included in this subcategory or in the Community category.

Social Issues Subcategory: Multiculturalism

Minnesotans from virtually every region that participated were concerned about multiculturalism, especially the need for more tolerance, diversity, and cross-cultural communication. Some Minnesotans were also concerned about preserving “Minnesota” culture, too.

Social Issues Subcategory: Quality of Life

Quality of life responses were often similar to responses in the Community subcategory, but differed in some important ways. Responses that connected particular issues—like poverty—to ideas about attaining (or keeping) a good standard of living went into this subcategory. Moreover, some respondents simply listed “Quality of life” or “standard of living” as being important to the future.

Social Issues Subcategory: Youth

Responses about the social concerns that young people face went into this subcategory. Some of the most frequently cited topics in these responses were the need for more recreational places and activities for young people, the importance of good role models, and kids that were “too busy” with activities.

Social Issues Subcategory: Other

This subcategory was created to catch all of the responses that had to do with social issues, but could not be placed in any other category. Many of the responses were abstractions or general thoughts about the future.

Economy

Economic comments were the second most common of the seven major categories mentioned during the community conversations. A wide variety of concerns are included, and ten subcategories were necessary: affordability of commodities, agriculture, debt, equity/poverty, jobs, housing, regional security, sustainability, rural development, local development and development in general.

Economy Subcategory: Jobs

This was the most populated of the economic subcategories. It includes concerns about job availability, security, wages and benefits, and discrimination. Some simply wrote: “better paying jobs with benefits,” while others called for fair, living wages, or a higher minimum wage. A few referred to specific sectors of the workforce, such as manufacturers and healthcare employees. Comments having to do with jobs in rural areas are in the rural development subcategory.

Economy Subcategory: Affordability of Commodities

This subcategory includes concerns with the affordability of basic commodities in general, or to specific sorts, such as food. Gasoline, however, has its own place in the environmental category.

Economy Subcategory: Agriculture

This subcategory notes calls for increased investment in organic, local, and sustainable agriculture, as well as a focus on more essential crops for increased food security.

Economy Subcategory: Debt

Citizens' responses concerned with the negative effects of debt on the near and distant future fall here. Some blamed specific causes, such as the war in Iraq, while others were as general as "No national debt for future generations," from Wheaton (3/3/08).

Economy Subcategory: Local/Regional Development

Most in this subcategory were concerned with economic development on the local and regional scale in general. A few wrote about small and family-owned businesses.

Economy Subcategory: Rural Development

This subcategory includes calls for improved business opportunities in rural areas, including job availability, increases in wages and benefits, and sustainable, diverse industries. A few responses included demands for more or less governmental intervention, while most simply expressed a goal, such as "We need to have higher salaries in rural areas," from a Crookston citizen (11/15/07).

Economy Subcategory: Equity

This subcategory calls for focus on the lower and middle classes and fairness in societal cost-sharing. A few commentators explicitly blame the subsidization of corporations and corporate power in general.

Economy Subcategory: Poverty

Most concerns in this category were about the eradication of poverty in general, and some covered related conditions, such as homelessness.

Economy Subcategory: Housing

The majority of these comments were calls for more affordable housing, although some included demands that housing be accessible to everyone, including the lowest socioeconomic classes. Housing that is friendly to the elderly was also a notable concern.

Economy Subcategory: Regional Security

This subcategory includes calls for diversification and self-sufficiency on the state and national levels.

Economy Subcategory: Sustainability

This subcategory includes calls for sustainability in economic terms, including references to balance between economic growth and environmental health, long-term economic planning and, “A tax system that rewards healthy life styles and clean environmental awareness” from Thief River Falls (11/29/07).

Economy Subcategory: Other

A number of respondents wrote about economic development in such a general way that it did not fit into the more specific categories.

Education

In the responses from the Community Conversations, education was a topic of concern for both the future and the “got-to-deal-with” present. For this reason, it became one of the main categories in which responses were grouped. As a category, it ranked fourth in terms of the frequency with which it was mentioned (the categories “Social,” “Economy,” and “Environment” came before it). While some respondents in the Conversations listed “Education” without further elaboration for questions one and two, many more wrote about their specific concerns in relation to education. From these concerns, the subcategories “Funding,” “Quality/International Competitiveness,” “Technological Competency,” and “Ongoing/Lifelong Learning” were developed. These subcategories are based entirely on the responses and were not developed, or even conceived, until the authors of this report read all of the responses. Consequently, they are the result and reflection of the responses themselves.

Education Subcategory: Funding

“Funding” as a subcategory of Education means the funding of education in Minnesota and occurred 42 times among respondents. These respondents often wrote short phrases like “Education—funding” under Questions One and Two, while others cited specific funding concerns like “Public schools,” “Higher education,” “No referendums,” and “Reasonable” to “Fully funded.” Throughout the process, Sesquicentennial staff made sure that the specific funding concerns of respondents were preserved in this report.

Education Subcategory: Quality/International Competitiveness

“Quality/International Competitiveness” was created to encompass responses that sought the improvement of Minnesota schools and that often remarked on the need for more “global” learning so that future Minnesotans could compete effectively in a global society. There were 76 responses that fell under this subcategory. These two issues (“Quality” and “International Competitiveness”) were put together to make this subcategory as broad as possible without creating fractions or repetition of categorization of responses. Nonetheless, the voices of Minnesotans are preserved in the “Specific Concerns” category, where the respondents own words were preserved as was possible. Some respondents wrote at length on a particular concern, in which case the authors of this report had to summarize their response.

Education Subcategory: Technological Competency

“Technological Competency” arose as a subcategory from responses that cited the need for more access to, experience with, and understanding of information technology. Access to technology, both in the classroom and elsewhere, was a concern for multiple people as exemplified in these two responses: “We should have technology access everywhere” (Question 1, Region 6W, Appleton Meeting) and “Equal access to technology: for example DSL” (Question 1, Region 4, Grant County-Elbow Lake). Moreover, respondents were concerned about schools having access to technology and technological learning for careers.

Education Subcategory: Ongoing/Lifelong Learning

“Ongoing/Lifelong Learning” is comprised of responses that indicated a concern for post-secondary, on-the-job training, and new skills education. In this subcategory, some respondents also wrote that they enjoyed learning for the sake of learning and sought opportunities to do so.

Health Care

Many respondents wrote about health care in questions 1 and 2. This category was straightforward since many respondents listed “Health care” as a primary concern for the future or as a “got-to-deal-with” issue. Although this category spoke for itself quite clearly, it was more challenging to identify subcategories that adequately caught the essential message of a response.

Health Care Subcategory: Affordability

This subcategory was easily identified from many responses that said something like: “Health care—affordable.” A smaller amount of responses in this subcategory were more descriptive. For example, responses addressed affordable health care in particular realms like rural communities or local health care. Other descriptive responses that combined subcategory topics like “*Quality* affordable health care” were put here.

Health Care Subcategory: Holistic

“Holistic” is used as a catchall word for responses that dealt with health and wellness generally, preventative health care, care for diverse groups (children, elderly, people with disabilities), and different types of health care (dentistry, for example).

Health Care Subcategory: Quality

This subcategory focused on responses that had to do with different types of health care quality. Responses about medical research and finding cures for particular diseases were also included here. Many responses about health care quality were also tied to ideas about affordability and holistic practices.

Health Care Subcategory: Access

The term “access” was used to encompass responses that dealt with access to health care, particularly those responses that were about universal or national coverage. All

respondents seemed to agree that access to health care was important or an issue that should be addressed, but differed on what solutions they believed were best.

Transportation

Transportation became a category due to the many respondents who listed it, or an issue related to it, as one of their concerns for both the immediate and distant future. 130 respondents cited transportation-related concerns in their answers for Questions 1 and 2, especially the general improvement of the state's transportation infrastructure.

The individual responses of Minnesotans across the state most often fell into three subcategories: "Congestion," "Road/Bridge Infrastructure," and "Public/Mass Transportation." Respondents would often list short phrase words in their answers, such as "Better roads" or "Safe bridges" while others went into more detail on specific issues or concerns, like this person from Region 6E who wrote, "[We need a] 4-lane highway from Nisswa to Walker." As much as was possible, the authors of this report preserved individual remarks like this one. Other times, responses that contained the same idea, such as "Road and bridge safety," but were worded differently, were classified using the same words and phrases, for example:

Subcategory: Road/Bridge Infrastructure;
Specific Concern: Safety.

[Editor's note: for those of you reading this report well into the future, August 1, 2007, was the day that the Interstate 35 bridge fell into the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, killing 13 people and injuring hundreds more. Bridge safety took center stage in Minnesota and the nation after this tragic event.]

Transportation Subcategory: Road/Bridge Infrastructure

The subcategory "Road/Bridge Infrastructure" emerged from the many responses that were concerned with the safety, extent, and improvement of the state's roads and bridges. Some respondents simply listed the words "roads" or "bridges" without further explanation while others went into more detail.

Transportation Subcategory: Public/Mass Transportation

The subcategory "Public/Mass Transportation" also arose from a bulk of respondents who cited it for Questions 1 and 2. Respondents were much more specific in their individual concerns for this subcategory. The specificity was preserved as far as possible. For example, a few different respondents wrote about the need for more public transportation in Greater Minnesota, but all used different wording to express themselves. As a result, these responses were grouped in this way:

Subcategory: Public/Mass Transportation;

Specific Concern: Access in Greater MN.

Transportation Subcategory: Congestion

“Congestion” was cited frequently enough to become a subcategory, but was not listed as frequently as the other two subcategories. Respondents whose responses were listed under “Congestion” would simply write that word or “Traffic” in their actual answers. Since congestion was the issue at hand, it became the subcategory title.

Government

The broad category, “Government,” contains all of the responses relate to government explicitly. Other responses were related to government, but indirectly, such as “Government—healthcare” or “Diversified, state-wide development.” In these cases, the main issue that the response addressed was used to categorize it (in the first case, healthcare, in the second, economic development). However, responses that dealt specifically with government, whether local, state, federal or international, were grouped in this broad category. Like many of the other categories, there were trends that permitted all of the responses to be grouped into subcategories. These subcategories are: Cohesion, Federal/State, International, Planning, Responsiveness to Citizenry, Size of Government, and Taxes.

Government Subcategory: Cohesion

“Cohesion” comprises of responses that dealt primarily with partisanship and state-local cooperation/communication.

Government Subcategory: Federal/State

The “Federal/State” subcategory contains responses dealing with immigration, social security, and federal policies.

Government Subcategory: International

The “International” subcategory was developed to categorize responses that went beyond federal or state issues. Most of the responses in this category deal with world peace, war, or the military.

Government Subcategory: Planning

“Planning” contains responses about state planning and is different from some subcategories classified under “Economy” (such as, “Development” and “Rural Development”). Responses in the “Planning” subcategory deal with state-led planning initiatives such as transportation infrastructure, land use, and long-term and regional plans.

Government Subcategory: Responsiveness to Citizenry

“Responsiveness to Citizenry” contains responses about the way in which these Minnesotans would like to see the government, elected officials, and politics in general relate or respond to them and their needs. Responses in this category were very diverse.

Government Subcategory: Size of Government

The “Size of Government” subcategory is comprised of responses that dealt with “big” or “small” government. Many respondents in this subcategory expressed concerns about regulation.

Government Subcategory: Taxes

The final subcategory, “Taxes,” has similarities to some of the subcategories of “Economy” but its responses make specific reference to the role that the government plays in taxation.

Question Three Categories

Question Three (“What would you like to tell Minnesotans 50 years from now—at the state’s bicentennial—that you are personally working on today to ensure they have the same or better quality of life you have now?”) was unique from the others in that it asked Minnesotans to imagine what they themselves would do to create a better future. Consequently, different categories were needed to express the new ideas that appeared. Responses were grouped by categories only, with no subcategories, and simply an “Individual Response” column to convey the respondents’ original thoughts. The categories are below along with the number of responses in each category. (Note: There were fewer responses overall for Question Three because many respondents wrote only one answer instead of listing several.)

Civic Involvement (65 Responses)

The responses in this category showed a fascinating trend. Many Minnesotans wrote that they wished to run for public office as their contribution to the future. There was not only an interest in running for office, but also, in engaging in more civic activities like voting, attending community meetings, and encouraging others to be civically engaged, as well.

Community Involvement (68 Responses)

Responses in this category all expressed numerous ways of being involved in one’s community. Involvement here is different from volunteerism in that the respondents often described specific activities or pursuits, like being involved with churches, historical societies, neighborhood groups, and local newspapers.

Donation (30 Responses)

Respondents who were grouped in this category wrote about donating time or money to make the future a better place. A few wrote specifically about donating blood, making food shelf donations and contributing to scholarship funds.

Education (10 Responses)

Although there were only a few responses in this category, they were unique enough to stand apart from the other categories. Respondents wrote about finishing their own education, teaching, supporting education, and setting the stage for education in their communities.

Environmental (71 Responses)

The responses in this category dealt with ways that an individual could work to benefit the environment. Respondents wrote, for example, that they would recycle, conserve energy, find environmentally friendly jobs, ride bikes instead of driving, join ecological preservation groups, and simply enjoy the outdoors more.

Family and Community (116 Responses)

This category unites aspects of other categories; especially community involvement, education, and environmental, but is different in the way the respondents framed their responses. These answers focused on activities that they would undertake as a family or as part of a community. Examples of some responses are buying local goods and services, tourism, teaching children to respect diversity, preserving family importance, combating drug and alcohol abuse, and working toward small changes in the family and community.

Personal Responsibility (19 Responses)

Responses in this category focused on how an individual could produce positive changes. Some responses were anecdotal, like one that said “Life is not a big government handout,” while others were more instructional, “Use individual strengths and talents to improve the world.” Some responses were entrepreneurial, too, like one about starting an 18-hole disc golf course, and yet others were reflective, like one that expressed hope to write a book.

Volunteerism (172)

This was the largest category and most respondents began with: “I will volunteer to...” followed by an activity. The volunteer activities that respondents wrote about were very diverse, including, among many others, 4-H, tutoring, youth activities, conservation or environmental work, coaching, scouts, the arts, social services, and even a few related to the Sesquicentennial (two “State history—Sesquicentennial” responses came from Region 6E).

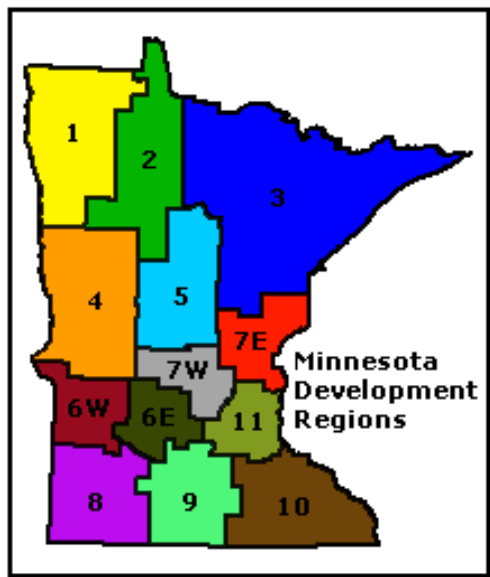
Regional Development Commission Summaries

“Regional development organizations are multi-county planning and development districts that encourage cooperation between citizens, local government officials, and the private sector. Initially created in the 1960's, they have grown in number to over 300 and are located throughout the United States. These regional organizations are best equipped to help rural areas because they provide a critical mass of expertise needed at the local level.”

“Regional Development Organizations are the catalysts for strategic planning in rural communities. They help identify local needs and priorities. In addition to planning, regions sponsor many programs, including services for the poor and elderly, job training, small business finance, and minority enterprise programs. Each region is governed by a policy board that includes elected officials, business leaders and citizen representatives.”

“Because they are flexible, regions are more often more creative in seeking innovative solutions to local problems. They frequently function as "laboratories for new ways of governing.”

“The Minnesota Regional Development Organization (MRDO) is made up of representatives from each Regional Development Commission in the State of Minnesota, in order to combine and coordinate efforts at the State legislature and in other matters affecting Regional Development Commissions state wide.⁴”



The RDC's helped conduct the Plan for our Future community conversations. The following section provides an overview from each RDC regarding the current (2008) situation in their region, written by the staff of the RDC or in consultation with them or their website(s).

⁴ Minnesota Regional Development Organizations. <http://mrdo.org/> Copyright Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, 1998

Northwest Regional Development Commission Summary Region One

Region 1, located in the Northwestern corner of Minnesota, includes the counties of Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau. The Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) was created through the actions of local units of government in 1973. The Commission is a group of 35 representatives of Counties, Cities, Townships, School Districts and special interest groups which sets the general policy and direction of the agency. The Commission appoints a board of Directors made up of one member from each county and a Chairperson elected at large to conduct its monthly business.

The Commission also appoints advisory committees to help in setting specific program direction. Committees are active in Aging, Arts, Economic Development and Transportation. The Commission has also entered into a cooperative agreement with the Northwest Minnesota Enterprise Fund Inc. to provide program guidance on the revolving loan fund⁵.

NWRDC's Funding Sources

The Commission is authorized to levy a limited amount of local property taxes and to enter into contracts with other units of government and private foundations to operate programs and services which benefit the area.

The NWRDC provides local match for each of the programs through the local tax levy.

NWRDC's Background

The Northwest Regional Development Commission is a body of 21 local elected officials and 15 public interest members who have formed a special purpose unit of government, as authorized by the Regional Development Act of 1969, to **"develop plans and implement programs which address growth and development issues"** in Northwest Minnesota.

The Commission began operation on February 2, 1973.

NWRDC Programs

- **Economic Development Program**
- **Community Development Program**

Economic Development Program⁶

The Economic Development Program is designed to assist in the creation of new jobs by providing general planning guidance, technical assistance for specific industrial projects and services to local units of government.

Background

The counties of the region have been designated as an Economic Development Planning District of the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The Commission has also formed a

⁵ "NWRDC Region Development." NWRDC. 17 Dec. 2008 <http://www.nwrdc.org/the_nwrdc.htm>.

⁶ "Economic Development Program." NWRDC. 17 Dec. 2008 <<http://www.nwrdc.org/economic.htm>>.

cooperative agreement with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development in relationship to providing services within the Region. These relationships have resulted in the Commission providing a point of contact where communities or individuals can obtain information on all types of assistance available for economic development and direct professional services.

Funding Sources

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and RDC Tax Levy.

Types of Services Available

The Economic Development programs of the NWRDC are guided by the input and direction of the Economic Development Planning Committee. Each year the staff and Committee members update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) for the Region and establish the service priorities for the upcoming year. The CEDS currently identifies the following types of services and priorities:

Services

- Regional Economic Analysis and Planning
- Local Planning
- Technical Assistance to Local Development Groups
- Grant Writing
- Business Financial Packaging Assistance
- Business Counseling and Referral
- Information on other Development Programs and Resources
- Data and Statistics

Development Priorities

- Housing Development
- Agricultural Value Added Processing
- Manufacturing Growth
- Tourism Coordination and Promotion
- Promote and Encourage Innovation
- Support Environmentally Sustainable Development

Community Development Program ⁷

Purpose

Discuss and develop solutions to rural issues and common problems in Northwest Minnesota.

Background

The Local Issues Program was created by the Commission in response to requests from local units of government and community groups for services that would help in addressing local development problems or opportunities. The Local Issues Program attempts to fill the special service needs of the local area not met at the local, state or federal levels. Providing these services on a regional basis makes specialized skills available in a cost effective manner.

⁷ "Community Development Program." NWRDC. 17 Dec. 2008 <<http://www.nwrdc.org/local%20issues.htm>>.

Because our region consists of rural areas and small towns, the Commission has placed a high value on this type of service.

Funding Sources

RDC Tax Levy, Local Contracts.

Types of Services Available

The types of services available depend, to a high degree, on the types of services requested. Requests for services which are not listed will always be considered if staff have the background needed. In those cases where outside help is needed, assistance will be provided in locating and securing that help. The following is a list of the services which have been used most often:

- Tourism Promotion and Directory
- GIS Mapping for Recreation Promotion
- Arts & Culture Promotion
- Grant Writing
- Comprehensive Planning, Zoning and Mapping for local government
- Disaster Mitigation and Recovery
- Regional Planning and Project Development
- Housing

Headwaters Regional Development Commission Region Two

Regional Description

The Headwaters Region is located in north central Minnesota at the transition zone between the Northern Forest and Mineral Belt to the east and the Wheat Belt to the west. It is a very rural region, sparsely populated, and is remote from any major metropolitan area. This region includes the five counties of Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods and Mahnomen. The Region has a total of 22 incorporated communities, five with populations over 1,000.

The Region is approximately 175 miles in length and averages about 40 miles in width. The Headwaters Region is one of the largest regions in the State of Minnesota, with a total land area of 6,276 square miles (16,754 sq. km.).

The Region's land use is dominated by vast forest. Over one-half of all land in the Headwaters Region is forested. These forested lands are most prominent in the eastern one-half of the Region, and are most commonly found in Beltrami, Hubbard, and Clearwater Counties. The remaining land use in the Region is primarily surface water, marsh, and cultivated land, with each claiming 14 percent of the total land area in the Region.

In addition to the vast forests and many lakes, the Headwaters Region is home to many unique resources which distinguish it from other regions in Minnesota. Included within the Region's boundaries are the Northwest Angle, the northernmost part of the contiguous 48 states, and Lake Itasca, the source of the Mississippi River. Also included in the Region are three Indian reservations, three state parks, ten state forests, and one national forest.

The Headwaters Region's 2000 population was 76,004 persons (United States Population Census). This is a 13.8 percent increase from 1990 and a 36.8 percent increase over the last 40 years. About 54 percent of the population in the Headwaters Region resides in Beltrami County and 16 percent live in the City of Bemidji, the regional center.

Increasingly, the most important economic resource in the Headwaters Region will need to be its human resources or labor force. In the new emerging economy, skills and knowledge will determine the winners and losers. The population pyramids below display the distribution of the population by age and sex categories based upon the 1990 and 2000 Census. In examining the population pyramids, three significant trends emerge:

1. Despite its population growth, the Region will experience a significant decline in young people. The student age population, (ages 6-18) will continue to decline. This is significant not only from a long-term labor force perspective, but will be critical for schools in the Region as well.
2. There will be a decline in people of working age. In the past decade, the Region's labor market has become very tight. Employers, for the first time, have difficulty finding employees with the right skills and abilities. Estimates show the worst of the labor shortage will be in 2015.

4. There has been a dramatic rise in the elderly population in the Region, particularly seniors over the age of 85. This rapid increase could have a long-term impact on the Region's social services.

Regional Challenges and Opportunities

As a result of these labor force trends, communities in the Region will need to find ways to compete in the face of new economic imperatives. "Quality of Place" is a critical component of the business location decision-making process. In addition, as the labor force shortage grows, potential employees will also have a variety of job opportunities available to them, and will be looking for attractive areas in which to work, live and raise a family. The Region will have to examine its ability to attract and retain skilled workers to be competitive with other regions.

The new economy offers numerous opportunities for individuals, but will pose significant challenges for those without skills thus increasing the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots." It is interesting to note that the fastest growing job sectors in the new economy are projected to be in those areas that include the lowest paying jobs. Individuals without skills will be increasingly challenged to attain the lifestyle they desire.

School districts will also be challenged to offer quality K-12 educational opportunities in the face of declining enrollment. Over 80 percent of school districts in Minnesota face declining enrollments, including nearly all of the districts in Northwest Minnesota. Declines of 20 to 30 percent over the next decade will be common. Schools provide more to a community than an accessible location for educational opportunities. They are almost always the heart and soul of a small community, and are the major determining factor in the types of recreational and cultural opportunities in a small town.

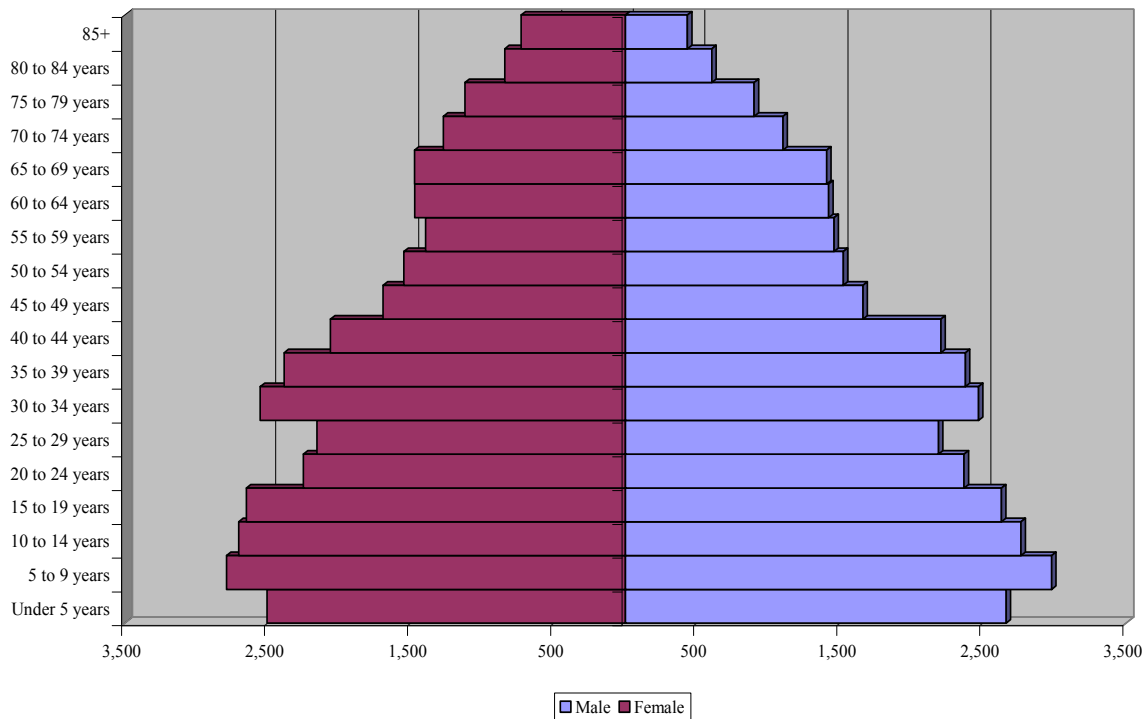
Affordable housing will also continue to be a significant challenge. This issue becomes key for those communities that are struggling to improve their quality of place. It is also a challenge that may impede economic growth in many parts of the area. As the population continues to increase, so does the need for affordable housing. Current economic conditions, including a soft housing market, make it especially challenging to meet this need.

Another challenge in the Headwaters Region is that the American Indian population faces significant problems. The American Indian population has the highest poverty rates, unemployment rates, and out of wedlock birth rates within the entire area. For the Region to be successful these challenges need to be addressed.

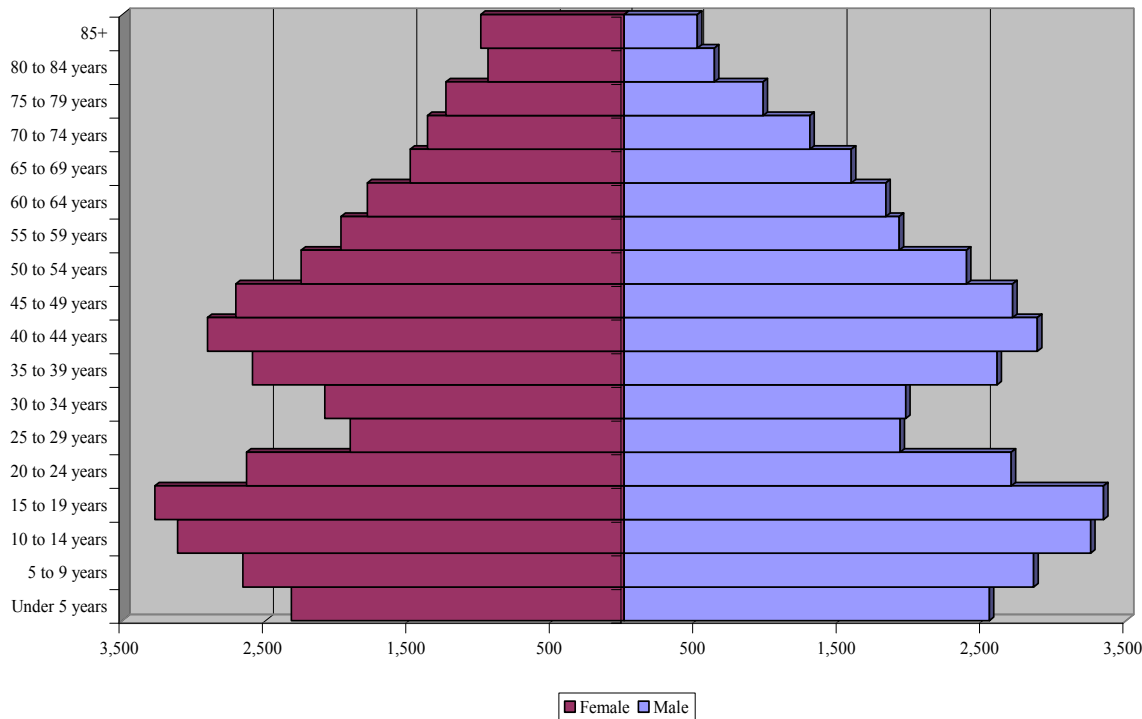
The challenges that face this Region are significant but not insurmountable. In the new economy there will be many opportunities to grow our region in new and innovative ways. The quality of place in this region is something that communities will need to focus on to attract skilled workers and retain the talented people we have in our region. Embracing these trends in the new economy will be key to our success in the coming decades. Improving the Region's quality with concerted efforts to improve schools, increase affordable housing, and grow our talent base will reduce the gap between the different socio-economic groups in our region and set the Region up for success.

The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

Headwaters Region 1990 Population Age Distribution



Headwaters Region 2000 Population Age Distribution



Region
Three

In the far
northern
portion
of
Minnesota

sota is a region bounded by Canada to the north and Lake Superior to the east. Called the “Arrowhead Region” due to its angular shape, it is made up of seven counties: Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis. There are three primary Indian Reservations: Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, and Grand Portage. The Region is 19,578 square miles in area. Northeast Minnesota experiences moderate summers and strong winters, but the areas near Lake Superior experience weather unique from the rest of the state. The moderating effect of Lake Superior keeps the surrounding area relatively cooler in the summer and relatively warmer in the winter. Northeast Minnesota has a diverse economy, is rich in natural resources, and has something to offer for everyone.

The Region is served by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC). ARDC’s mission is to serve the people of the Arrowhead Region by providing local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems and fostering local leadership.

People

The people of the Arrowhead Region come from a mix of native tribes, early Scandinavian farmers, European mining families, and welcomed newcomers. The estimated 2008 population is 318,964 people. Like much of the State, the Arrowhead’s population is aging and the baby boomer generation is retiring. There is still a strong workforce, however, and there is significant migration into the region from both working families and retirees that are “moving to the lake.” On average, Arrowhead residents have graduated from high school and have at least some level of post-secondary education. The typical household earns \$44,012 in annual income.

Economy

One hundred fifty years after statehood, Minnesota’s Arrowhead Region is poised for a historic period of economic growth. The Mesabi Iron Range between Grand Rapids and Babbitt is in the planning and mobilization stages of several major industrial projects that could inject \$3.5 billion into the regional economy and create several thousand construction and permanent jobs. These projects are building upon three of the region’s traditional strengths: ferrous and non-ferrous mining, wood and paper products, and power generation.

The Iron Range is not the only part of the Northland enjoying new economic opportunities. Some of the region’s most promising new careers are being generated in five sectors: aerospace, manufacturing, technology, energy, and healthcare. Duluth-based Cirrus Design, an industry-leading manufacturer of personal aircraft like the SR-22 and its new personal jet – The Cirrus Vision -- exemplifies the convergence of the manufacturing, aerospace sciences, and technology strengths of the region. Economic development groups, higher education, and government are working with private industry to build upon these assets.

The Duluth Superior Seaway Port Authority continues to set records for cargo. In 2007, nearly 48 million metric tons of cargo passed through the port. A large portion of that tonnage is taconite leaving the Port, spurred on by strong international demand from growing countries like China and India. The Port is also playing a role in America’s drive for energy independence.

Many of the major components for wind energy conversion systems arrive in the Port from the East Coast and Europe via the St. Lawrence Seaway and are then loaded on trucks bound for wind farms in the Upper Midwest.

Much of information for this section was provided by www.northlandconnection.com.

Recreation and Natural Resources

Forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife characterize the Arrowhead Region. The Lake Superior shoreline is uniquely rugged with high cliffs and waterfalls. The Region's interior is a maze of forests, wetlands, lakes, rivers, and scenic roadways bounded by many square miles of public lands and recreational properties. The water and the air are clean and clear and the woods are home to a variety of wildlife, some of which are unique to northern Minnesota, such as the timber wolf and moose.

The Superior and Chippewa National Forests cover millions of acres in the Region with a mix of boreal and western prairie forests. They provide places for outdoor adventure of all kinds from camping and wildlife viewing areas to recreational trails for hiking, bicycling, skiing, ATV use, snowmobile riding and more. The Superior Hiking Trail is one of the nation's top hiking trails, extending across the Lake Superior ridgeline for over 200 miles.

For bicyclists and cross country skiers the region has miles of trails of all experience levels, including over 100 miles of paved bicycle trails. ATV and snowmobile riders enjoy some of the most scenic and uninterrupted riding in the State and can ride between both National Forests. The Forests are also abundant in water resources with more than 2,000 lakes and rivers that offer a chance to canoe, boat, fish and camp where early Native Americans, voyageurs, missionaries, loggers and explorers once traveled.

About a third of the Superior National Forest is designated as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW)-America's most visited wilderness area. The Region also has numerous State and County Parks and Forests, which protect and highlight unique natural and cultural areas and provide further opportunities for the public to experience the outdoors. Northeast Minnesota is also home to Minnesota's only National Park. Voyageurs National Park is a labyrinth of lakes and islands that provide a unique water-based recreation experience in all seasons of the year.

Visitors look forward to the solitude and recreation opportunities that the Arrowhead Region provides whether it is a day spent hiking or a camping trip. Natural resource protection and public access to the outdoors is a priority for Region's parks, forests and wilderness areas.

The Future

The future continues to be bright for the Arrowhead Region. ARDC is working with Iron Range communities to help prepare for the expansion in the mining industry by addressing the housing

needs of the incoming working families and looking forward to a further diversification of their population as jobs are filled by people from other areas of the state, nation, and world.

ARDC is leading an effort to enhance Northeast Minnesota's alternative energy role in the nation and world. Wind generation is being promoted and implemented. Biomass generation is on the horizon and other energy projects are being examined. Strengthened by the resource of the world's largest inland port, the Arrowhead seeks to become an energy leader.

ARDC's Area Agency on Aging is preparing the region for the baby boomer age shift. Communities need to be thinking of the people they serve and how an aging population impacts cities and towns.

The Metropolitan Interstate Council, a cooperative effort between ARDC and its counterpart in northwest Wisconsin, continues to address transportation needs of Duluth and Superior. Priorities include a major push to connect the Twin Ports to the Twin Cities by passenger rail. Changing driving habits are making this connection more viable every day.

ARDC will also continue to assist the Region's scenic and historical roadways. Scenic Byways are a unique resource for tourism, historical preservation, and community togetherness.

The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission is proud to serve Minnesota's Arrowhead Region and its people!

West Central Initiative Foundation Region Four

West Central Initiative serves the counties of Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse and Wilkin, and is the area designated as Minnesota's Economic Development Region IV in west central Minnesota. The region encompasses 8,615 square miles and measures approximately 125 miles between its northern and southern boundaries and 85 miles east to west. The region is bounded on the west by North and South Dakota and is approximately 200 miles from the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area.

The region is essentially rural with most communities having populations less than 1,000. The total regional population from the 2000 Census was 210,059 and the population continues to increase. The largest city in the region, Moorhead, has a 2000 population of 32,177 and is part of the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Statistical Area. Other major cities in the region include: Fergus Falls (13,471), Alexandria (8,820), Detroit Lakes (7,348) and Morris (5,068). The region is served by Interstate Highway 94, U.S. Highways 10, 59 and 75, as well as numerous state highways.

Business and Employment

West Central Initiative has been involved in economic development since its inception in 1985. We work to strengthen the economy in our region and in Minnesota to sustain families and help them fulfill their aspirations. One of the best ways we've found to do this is by fostering and supporting the creation and retention of quality jobs and self-employment opportunities.

West Central Initiative's Business Development Programs offer several types of loans, plus indirect consulting services to businesses in west central Minnesota.

We are considered a "gap" lender in the industry. We fund 10-40 percent of the total financing need for qualified applicants. Our loan programs typically supplement or complement conventional or bank financing. We do not compete with the local bank, but our funds help the financing package succeed for the prospective business or the existing firm to expand. WCI will not, however, participate in a project that can be financed entirely by traditional sources. We actively work and promote the loan programs with the banks in our region.

Communities and the Region

The purpose of WCI's Community Initiative is "...to assist communities and the greater region in developing the capacities necessary to address priority needs and sustain their economic and social viability." The assistance provided to communities in west central Minnesota may take the form of direct services, technical assistance, grant funding, and development of local philanthropic resources. WCI also undertakes a number of region-wide efforts that have impact on the viability of local communities through this initiative.

Workers and their Families

The purpose of WCI's Workers and Their Families Initiative is "to address long-term shortages and gaps in the availability of skilled labor by assisting workers in attaining skills that enable them to earn a livable wage, helping workers and their families overcome barriers to economic success, and working with children and youth to ensure that they enjoy a start in life that will prepare them to become economically productive adults."

WCI accomplishes this through carefully tailored grant programs and support of a region-wide partnership to address workforce issues called the West Central Minnesota Labor Force Development Council.

Special Projects

There are several special projects that are not programs of West Central Initiative. However, WCI is a strong partner or has provided funding. The projects received initial funding from WCI and WCI continues to provide staff support in many of these projects. In some cases, WCI serves as the fiscal agent for these projects. In other cases, WCI provides continued financial and ongoing staff support since these projects are seen by WCI as critical to the viability of west central Minnesota.

The Central Minnesota Counties of Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd and Wadena Region Five

The area served by Region Five Development Commission is very diverse economically, physically and demographically. However; the issues and opportunities faced by businesses, local governments and citizens are commonly shared throughout the region.

There are 65 communities located within the region, the vast majority of them still under 2,000 residents. The population is expected to explode in the next decade as baby boomers retire and move to the lakes area. Some cities in Crow Wing County have already experienced growth in excess of 64%. On the other hand, Todd and Wadena Counties are dealing with substantial out-migration issues, as are many other agriculturally based counties in Minnesota. The advent of the Internet has allowed the region to communicate and compete in the global marketplace.

Geographically our region is where three distinct environments or biomes converge. The western plains and prairies, the northern coniferous forest and eastern hardwood forest all intersect in central Minnesota. To the north encompassing the Walker, Hackensack and Longville area, there are deep, pine forests, the majority of which are state and federal land. Lakes, large and small, as well as the Mississippi River run through the surrounding terrain.

This area and the Brainerd Lakes area just to south can be considered the heart of “The Land of 10,000 Lakes” for which Minnesota is known. In 2008 it remains a sportsman’s paradise offering unlimited outdoor activities. It is a prime resort area that provides a plethora of outdoor choices for visitors and residents alike. The Paul Bunyan, Soo Line, Heartland and other trail systems now interconnect to provide mountain bike, ATV and snowmobile riders a unique experience.

A four-lane highway now facilitates travel from the Twin Cities metro area for easy access, where once only unpaved, rough and rutted roads snaked through the area. In the early 1900’s goods were brought up the Gull River to access Gull Lake. There was only a narrow trail to the lake at that time from Brainerd. In a book recording Brainerd’s first half century published in 1920, it was reported that there were three cabins on Nisswa Lake and that future growth in the area seemed possible. What an understatement this has proven to be.

The south and west boundaries of the region possess rich farmland and rolling hills that still define the prairie landscape. An agricultural hub, this area has expanded and acquired a manufacturing and meat packing sector. Innovative wind turbines now dot the Highway 71 corridor in Todd County and further developments in biomass technology raise future expectations for increased prosperity. There is an ever-increasing Latino population today in Todd County, which first migrated to fill employment opportunities in the meat packing industry. They remained to assimilate into the community and to raise families, attend school and open businesses.

The ethnic makeup of Region Five is still largely representative of the first European settlers who came to the region to harvest timber, work the land and mine iron ore. People of German

and Scandinavian heritage by far make up the majority of the region's residents; a sizable Native American population still resides in the region.

The inhabitants of this region are trusting, hardworking and hearty individuals. Life can be a challenge when the temperature dips below zero. The "locals" generally mow more lawn and push more snow around than their city counterparts. Cutting wood is a family activity and still the main source of heat for many residents.

"Up North" is the best place to live; birds, deer and fish are plentiful. Wide-open spaces and solitude can be found just a few minutes or miles from bustling commercial hubs. Local residents take advantage of the recreational opportunities available out their backdoor. Sitting around a bonfire is entertainment. The region is a safe place to live; many people still don't lock their doors unless they are leaving for the entire day; security is often provided by a very large dog.

A number of family farms are quietly disappearing as larger, consolidated operations are sprouting up, many with absentee owners. Iron ore mining is no longer a viable industry in Crosby/Ironton on the Cuyuna Range and hasn't been for many years.

Conservation is now incorporated into logging, using softer, less intrusive methods than the previous clear-cut method. Interest in biomass energy in Minnesota has increased recently, driven by higher energy prices and state-supported incentives to produce renewable energy. An energy law, passed in 2008, mandates that by 2022 the United States produce 21 billion gallons of ethanol from grass cellulose (switch grass) and biomass from wood, animal waste and even garbage.

While a variety of wood-fired energy facilities have been in operation in the state for quite some time, recent expansion of the energy industry has raised concerns about the impact of increased removal of biomass from the state's forests. The installation of a wood gasifier at the Central Minnesota Ethanol Cooperative in Little Falls is an example of new capacity in the renewable fuels industry. There are a number of benefits of biomass energy such as providing jobs locally and reducing use of fossil fuels. Ethanol production takes an enormous amount of water and our central Minnesota region is blessed with an abundance of clean water.

Economically, the region has higher unemployment and lower wages when compared to the rest of the state, due in part to seasonal employment in the accommodation and food service and construction sectors. This results in unemployment rates that rise above 10% during winter months. The resort industry in Region Five lost 92 businesses from 1985 to 2000; there are reported to be 260 remaining. These losses further depressed the area's economy. Many of the resorts have been in the same families for generations.

As the 150th year of statehood comes to a close, central Minnesota and Region Five look forward to the challenges ahead while remembering the hardworking, freedom loving, settlers of old.

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission Region Six-East

Region Six-East is located in south-central Minnesota, bordering on the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area to the east and the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area to the north. The Region is comprised of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties, with a population of approximately 119,000 people. There are 40 municipalities and 82 townships.

The Region is located between the corn belt to the south and the lake region to the north. As a result, the Region has both strong agricultural and vast natural resource characteristics. The Minnesota River forms Renville County's southern border. Efforts are underway along the river valley to expand tourism, taking advantage of the scenery and its numerous historic sites. Kandiyohi, Meeker, and McLeod County have many lakes that also provide for diverse recreational and tourism activities.

With 1.675 million farmland acres, Region Six-East is heavily tied to value-added agricultural production and food manufacturing. Renville County is the number one county in the state for sweet corn, corn for grain, and green peas production. Other major crops in the Region include dry edible beans, soybeans, and sugar beets.

The County is also home to the Southern Minnesota Sugar Beet Cooperative. The City of Glencoe, in McLeod County, has a large vegetable processing plant. Livestock production also plays a large role within the Region with numerous feedlots raising hogs & pigs, turkeys, beef cattle, along with many dairy farms. The DEED Labor Market Information Office reports that the Region has 16.5 percent of the state's animal production jobs, 10.8 percent of the agricultural jobs, 7.7 percent of the food manufacturing jobs, and 5.3 percent of the crop production employment. The State's largest poultry processing company is located in the City of Willmar, in Kandiyohi County, with the Jennie-O Turkey Store.

The manufacturing sector is the Region's largest employer. Food manufacturing and computer/electronic product manufacturing rank one and two in employment. McLeod County is one of Minnesota's largest manufacturing employment counties, with the City of Hutchinson housing two of the larger manufacturing employers: Hutchinson Technology and 3M Corporation.

The Region offers a skilled, strong work ethic work force, but there will be challenges in the upcoming years to have the workforce numbers that are necessary to fill the needs of the Region's employers. It will also be important that the Region is prepared to handle the ever-increasing needs for job training and specialized education to meet the needs of employers. The expanding need for workforce will require additional housing. Making sure this housing is made available and affordable will be another challenge to meet in the future.

Health Care is also a major employment sector in Region Six-East. The Region has five hospitals. The City of Willmar draws large numbers of persons from throughout western and central Minnesota to the community's medical facilities. Ridgewater College provides higher education opportunities at their Willmar and Hutchinson campuses.

With close proximity to the Twin Cities and St. Cloud metro areas, the Region as a whole is experiencing slow but steady population growth. Following the trend seen in all of Greater Minnesota, the population growth rate among the elderly is on the rise with the aging of the baby boomer generation. By 2030 it is projected that the Region will have more than an 80 percent increase in persons 65 years old and over, making up over 24 percent of the population. Planning for this aging population increase is underway and will need to be continued. Additional services and programs will need to be developed to enable the elderly to live independently as long as possible.

Another major trend for the Region during the past fifteen years has been a significant increase in the ethnic diversity in its population, particularly in Kandiyohi County. Willmar is home to the third largest Chicano/Latino community in Minnesota outside of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. East Africans are another ethnic group coming into the Region in ever increasing numbers. While making strong progress, the Region will need to continue finding solutions to bridging cultural gaps, fostering understanding, and breaking barriers. More than ever, the communities in the Region are embracing ethnic diversity as one of their greatest assets.

Efforts are under way in the Region to explore alternative/renewable energy development. There are two ethanol plants located in the Region. The feasibility of wind energy is being studied, and in at least one location a commitment has been made to construct wind turbines. Biofuels, farm and community-based digesters, solar and green building technologies are some other areas with strong potential for development in the Region.

Lastly, Region Six-East has challenges when it comes to transportation and other infrastructure needs. High inflationary costs associated with road construction along with limited financial resources have caused many needed projects to be delayed or not even brought forward. The Region lacks a four-lane highway connection to the state's interstate highway system. Some communities have water and sewer infrastructure that needs to be upgraded or replaced. These projects are expensive and add a significant burden on small communities to make these necessary investments. There is also the need for the Region's communities to be able to offer the latest in telecommunication services.

The willingness to work together to meet challenges and to capitalize on the many opportunities and advantages the Region possesses will become vital in an age of global competition. Region Six-East's location, abundance of natural resources, and the greatest asset, its people, will help ensure the region has the means it needs to have a prosperous future.

Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission Region Six-West

The five counties of Region 6W (Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties) that are served by the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission are located along the South Dakota border in west central Minnesota covering 3,346 square miles of land. The region is characterized by a gently rolling glacial drift plain containing many closed depressions occupied by an abundance of small lakes and wetlands. The majority of the prairie is used for agriculture. Tree coverage is concentrated along the banks of the Minnesota River Valley and its tributaries and around the lakes.

The region's total estimated population in 2006 was 47,765, a 4% decrease from 2000. Chippewa County remained the most populated county in the region with an estimated population of 12,781. Big Stone County is the least populated with an estimated population of 5,495. The state in comparison has seen an overall 5.9% increase in population from 2000 to 2006. Peak populations in these five counties were during the 1940s. Since then, they have seen slow declines with some reprieves over the years. The most drastic population loss for the region was during the 1960s and 1980s.

The State Demographer's Office forecasts that this trend will continue through 2030 with an estimated population drop to 44,500, an additional 10% decline. This type of decline is not unique to these five counties of the state. Out-migration of youth, an increase in the elderly population, less farmers, smaller families and a depressed agriculture market are all factors contributing to declining populations in rural areas.

The region has a total of 37 communities. The largest community is Montevideo (5,463) followed by Benson (3,390) and Granite Falls (3,057) that serve as the region's commercial/industrial centers. However, 70% of the region's communities contain under 500 people. One interesting phenomena is occurring with the arrival of 'younger' adults (35-44 year olds). The Center for Small Towns at the University of Minnesota, Morris, attributes this to quality of life factors, low housing costs and advances in telecommunications and technology. This may be an untapped opportunity for the region, which has not been fully captured. A downside is that the children of this age group move on after they finish school, in search of higher wages, career fulfillment or social opportunities not available in our rural, small communities.

It was estimated in 2006 that there were 18,379 employees in the region. The largest employment industry in the region was health and social services (3,237 employees) – not surprising when 23 percent of the population is over 65 years of age (the statewide figure is 12%). From 2002-2006 a modest 1.51% overall employment growth took place in Region 6W.

Sustaining a diverse local economy with a range of business sectors would help strengthen the region's capacity for employment. Other large employers include manufacturing and service activities while mining, retail trade, transportation, information, finance and education sectors have declined in recent years.

Historically the region's unemployment rate has been lower than the State average until 2002 when Region 6W and the State averages fell nearly in sync. It is projected that the labor force will increase modestly. However the unemployment rate may fluctuate with the economic status of the region, state and nation. In 2007 the Minnesota Work Force Center estimated 24,614 people in the labor force in Region 6W with 23,313 employed resulting in a 5.3% unemployment

rate. During this same time period Minnesota's unemployment rate was 4.9% and the United States' was 5.0%.

In 2005 the regional median per capita person income was \$28,972, which has increased steadily since 2000, but is still 78 percent of the state figure at \$37,290 and 84 percent of the national figure at \$34,471. Out of the five counties the per capita personal income is highest in Chippewa County, while still lower than the state and national figures, and Swift is the lowest overall. Region 6W has the lowest average weekly wage at \$496 compared to other EDD regions in Minnesota in the second quarter of 2007. The 2000 census indicates that 4,450 people, or 7.16% of the population in Region 6W, were below the poverty level. Minnesota reported 7.1% of the population is below poverty.

Of the region's over 25 years of age population, 80.9 percent are high school graduates. Nearly 24 percent have some post secondary training but no degree, 8 percent have an associate degree, 10 percent have a bachelor degree and 2.3 percent have a master's degree.

Regional Trends:

- Anticipated loss of population in the region.
- The region's over 65 population is anticipated to grow to 30% of total population by 2030.
- The loss of youth is causing a strain on the local economy – loss of workforce and higher service needs.
- The region has a lack of livable wage jobs. Two income families are necessary to maintain household costs. It is difficult to find skilled or college-level employment in the region.
- Main street businesses are declining due to the mobility of people, their willingness to travel and the lack of locally available goods and services.
- The region is expected to see an 18% reduction in employment by the year 2035.
- Employment growth in the region will be in healthcare, community and social services, and food preparation and serving related occupations.
- Future job market favors “knowledge” workers or service-producing jobs. White-collar jobs will experience a decline.
- The region fosters entrepreneurship from within the existing labor force to grow new businesses.
- Industry “clusters” that exist in Region 6W include: precision agriculture equipment manufacturing, electrical component manufacturing, dairy processing and value-added agriculture cooperatives.
- Agriculture remains vital to the region's economy.
- The number of overall farms in the region decreased by 20.3% from 1982 to 2002. The number of acres of land in farms increased by 3.4% and the average farm size has increased from 2,006 acres to 2,549 acres or 27.1%.
- The average estimated market value of farmland and buildings per farm increased by 43.5%
- The average total crop acres increased 30.1%.
- There has been a slight increase in “hobby” farms with no or limited income.
- The region is underserved with telecommunications infrastructure. The rural and more isolated areas are especially underserved. Primary local phone providers include Qwest, Sprint, Frontier Communications and Embarq with a few smaller local telephone companies. There are numerous long distance phone service providers and a variety of point of presence internet and dial-up providers. High tech telecommunication services are critical to being economically competitive locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

- The region has many roadway types. A commonly identified need is a four-lane highway leading into the Twin Cities region. Several corridor groups are advocating for either MN Highway 7 or U.S. Highways 12 or 212 to be that highway.
- A large portion of the population work outside the region and that is not balanced out by an equal amount coming into the region to work.
- The region lacks a true “regional center”. This means less services and retail – residents are driving out of the area to purchase goods and services and local businesses struggle to survive.
- Other major transportation issues for the region include lack of funds, a tax base that cannot support the transportation needs, lack of maintenance, need to improve heavy commercial routes, safety issues around signage, shoulders, speed limits, transit needs and need for more trails.
- Airports within the region do not support commercial service. The closest cities that do are Fergus Falls and St. Cloud. Air service may need to be addressed for the region to remain competitive.
- The railroad infrastructure includes these three companies: Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, the Twin Cities and Western Railroad and the Minnesota Central Railroad. Most of the goods transported by rail are agriculture-based. A new intermodal rail facility has been developed in Montevideo.
- With few exceptions the Region’s communities are served with adequate, but aging, water and sewer infrastructure. However, of the 37 cities within Region 6W, four do not have public water systems and six do not have public sewer systems. There remains a constant need to update systems due to age or environmental and public sanitary laws or codes.
- The UMVRDC board in their recent strategic planning process found that community development issues remain high priorities throughout the region. Looking for technical assistance on these issues is critical since many of the 37 cities have limited or no staff to work on these issues.
- The region needs to be more aggressive and successful at marketing the region as a great place to visit, live and work. Marketing strengths include inexpensive housing (\$51,560 median housing value compared to the State’s of \$122,400), inexpensive land for economic development, low crime, good schools, no traffic congestion, a quieter lifestyle and terrific natural resources.

There are some factors the region cannot change. Change is neither good or bad, it just is. As a region, together we can make the right choices to deal with change.

East Central Regional Development Commission Region 7E

Region Seven, the East Central Regional Development Commission serves the counties of Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine.

History of the East Central Regional Development Commission⁸

The East Central Regional Development Commission was organized by petition of local units of government in the year 1973. Formation of regional development commissions - RDCs - is authorized under the Regional Development Act of 1969. An updated Regional Development Act was passed in 1997 by the Minnesota Legislature. There are 13 development regions in the State of Minnesota. Twelve of the development regions were created by executive order of the Governor in 1969.

Mission of the East Central Regional Development Commission

The East Central Regional Development Commission's mission is to provide leadership and direction through creative problem solving. We do this by initiating projects and programs that lead to creative solutions to regional problems, by providing technical assistance and by identifying and developing available resources. Our mission is to provide a leadership role as an advocate for East Central Minnesota to bring about positive change.

ECRDC Population Growth by Area⁹

Area	1980	1990	2000	2006 Estimate
Chisago County	25,717	30,521	41,101	50,278
Isanti County	23,600	25,921	31,287	38,436
Kanabec County	12,161	12,802	14,996	16,279
Mille Lacs County	18,430	18,670	22,330	26,057
Pine County	19,871	21,264	26,530	28,355
Region 7E Total	99,779	109,178	136,244	159,405

⁸ "About Page." ECRDC. 17 Dec. 2008 <http://www.region7erdc.org/index_files/about_us.htm>.

⁹ "Regional Data and Information Center." ECRDC. 17 Dec. 2008
<http://www.region7erdc.org/index_files/demographic.htm>.

Community and Economic Development¹⁰

The ECRDC serves as a designated district of the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) for Region 7E. The EDA provides funds to the ECRDC to provide technical assistance to units of government and others in the county for community and economic development efforts. Technical assistance ranges from general information across a variety of state and federal programs to specific grantmaking services related to public works projects and business expansions.

Economic Development Programs and Services:

- Economic and Community Dev. Planning
- Housing Planning Assistance
- Community Facilities Finance Packaging
- Business Finance Packaging
- Grant Application Planning and Preparation
- Small Business Revolving Loan Fund
- Census Data and Information Center
- Other assistance possible by request

Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)

The East Central Regional Development Commission has established a Revolving Loan Fund for business development. It is designated to offer financing primarily to private manufacturing projects on a long-term basis. Projects MUST be located within Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs or Pine Counties .

The RLF funds include federal and local dollars. A number of communities/jurisdictions within the eligible counties have contributed/pledged local matching funds for this program.

Purpose of the RLF

- Create or retain permanent, private sector, full-time jobs
- Provide capital for business development and expansion within the region
- Achieve maximum number of jobs per loan fund dollar.
- Bolster the tax bases of local units of government.

Transportation Planning

The East Central Regional Development's Transportation Program¹¹ works with local officials to assist in solving transportation problems and act as a liaison between local governments and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

¹⁰ "Community and Economic Development." ECRDC. 17 Dec. 2008
<http://www.region7erc.org/index_files/ecrdc_econ_dev.htm>.

¹¹ "Transportation Planning." ECRDC. 17 Dec. 2008
<http://www.region7erc.org/index_files/ecrdc_transportation.htm>.

Projects:

Area Transportation Partnership (ATP)

Regional Development Commissions assisted Mn/DOT in establishing ATPs throughout the state to solicit and prioritize federally funded transportation projects. RDCs continue to participate on ATPs, assist in developing ATP policy and procedures, and prioritizing projects for federal funding.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC works closely with a committee consisting of local, state and federal government representatives in development of plans and programs.

Section 16 Transit Vehicle Grant Program

This program provides assistance to local organizations in preparing the grant applications, participates on the Statewide Review Committee, and conducts Monitoring Programs of existing vehicles.

Statewide Planning

Statewide Planning provides local perspective on state planning efforts by participating on the following committees: Minnesota Scenic Byways Committee, State Transportation Plan, ISTEA Management Systems Committees, and Transit Coordination Advisory Committee.

Safe Communities Coalition

Based on a review of local traffic crash data, the Isanti County Safe Communities Coalition will focus on passenger safety along with a new drinking and driving initiative. This initiative involves the continued development of a partnership with local liquor providers, community leaders, law enforcement, and others.

Southwest Regional Development Commission Region Eight

Region 8 includes the nine counties in the far southwest corner of Minnesota including; Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood and Rock. The region includes 81 cities, the largest of which are Marshall, Worthington and Redwood Falls. The 2007 population estimate for the region is 117,205.

The region has experienced a sustained period of out-migration resulting in a reduction in the region's population. Some of the losses due to out-migration, however, have been offset by an influx of new immigrants to the area. These new immigrants, primarily of Hispanic, African and Asian descent, have added vitality to the region. While there are cultural barriers to overcome, they represent a unique opportunity for growth within the region.

Agriculture remains the primary economic engine in the region. Agriculture does not mean simply row crops or livestock. It also means such value added products as ethanol and bio-diesel. The region is currently home to four ethanol production facilities with another under construction, as well as two bio-diesel production facilities. Renewable energy represents a great opportunity within the region due to its crop production abilities and its geographic location.

The region is home to a glacial formation known as the Buffalo Ridge. The Buffalo Ridge divides the region geographically, with the eastern side being in the Mississippi River watershed and the western side being in the Missouri River watershed. This unique feature has allowed the region to be at the forefront of wind energy development and has had a significant impact on the region's economy. Suzlon Rotor Corporation, a company based in India, operates a blade production facility in Pipestone to take advantage of the growing market for wind energy.

There are diverse industries in the region, with many being tied to the agricultural sector, such as animal processing. The region is also home to Schwan's, headquartered in Marshall, easily recognizable by its distinctive fleet of yellow trucks bringing ice cream and other foods directly to consumers at their homes. Other commercial and industrial businesses are located in the region, and due to the region's population levels, many are looking for workers. The southwest presents opportunities for working in cutting edge fields such as renewable energy. Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, and Minnesota West Community and Technical College campuses in Jackson, Pipestone and Worthington, present many educational opportunities as well.

The region has many recreational opportunities for the outdoors person, with a lot of open space ideally suited for hunting, horseback riding or other activities such as bird watching or hiking. Southwest Minnesota is a great place to live and work and to raise a family.

The South Central Minnesota Counties Region Nine

Region Nine, is a 9-county region -- Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan -- located in south central Minnesota. These nine counties comprise over 5,064 square miles, approximately 6.32% of the state's total area. The counties vary in size from Blue Earth, 752 square miles, to Waseca, 415 square miles. The largest cities are Mankato, 35,031; New Ulm, 13,714; North Mankato, 12,577; Fairmont, 10,727; St. Peter, 10,682; and Waseca, 9,737. The smallest cities are La Salle, 84; Walters, 80; Heidelberg, 98; Cobden, 51.

Region Nine exists in a geographic area that received heavy glaciations. Present day topography reflects this history. The area is largely flat to gently rolling with some areas of moraine. The river valleys formed by large glacial melt rivers make deep gorges in the otherwise flat topography. The Minnesota River Valley, which flows northwest to southeast, then southwest to northeast through the region, is the most dramatic. This valley, which ranges from one to two miles wide, is characterized by outwash areas, fertile, flood-made soils and bedrock outcroppings.

The region has had slow growth, and in some areas declined, over the past decade. While most counties added population, at 3 percent, Region Nine's growth was much slower than the state rate of 12.4%. From 1990- 2000, growth was fastest in Le Sueur (9 percent), Waseca (8 percent), and Sibley counties (7 Percent). From 2003 to 2004, these counties experienced population increases over 1%.

At the community level, two of the three largest cities, Mankato and New Ulm, grew at the same rate as Region Nine, about 3 percent from 1990- 2000. The City of Mankato continues rapid growth from 33,844 in 2003 to 34,597 last year. Also, Lake Crystal and Montgomery grew over 16 percent from the 1990- 2000 and over 1.0% last year. These two cities experienced the fastest growth primarily because they are located outside of larger communities, Mankato and New Prague, respectfully.

Population declined in Martin (-4.9 percent), Faribault (-4.5 percent) and Brown (-0.3 percent) counties from 1990- 2000. Fairmont, located in Martin County, lost over 3 percent of its population during this time. The City of New Ulm has experienced population loss over the past year.

Data from the MN Demographer's Office shows that Region Nine's population increased by 2.2% between 2000 and 2006, from 222,790 to 227,798. Region Nine did not keep pace with the population increases in Minnesota. Minnesota's population increased 6.3% percent from 2000 to 2006.

The population projections prepared by the State Demographer's Office indicates that the region will see a mix of population growth and loss with significant increases overall in the Region's 65+ age group.

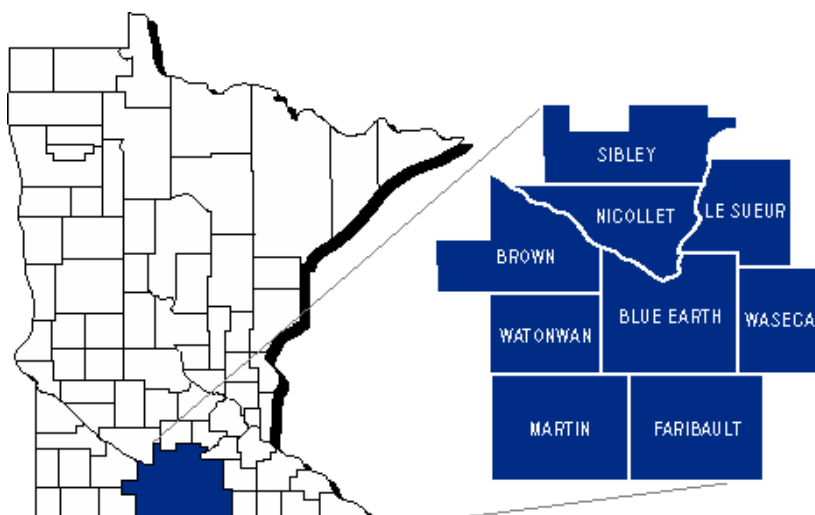
The number of individuals age 55 to 64 increased by more than half the previous decade, making it the fastest growing age group. Not only has this group historically participated in the labor market at lower rates than their younger counterparts, in the current decade they will begin moving into retirement. Moreover, the group ages 0 to 24 declined over the same period, as did those in their prime earning years, ages 35 to 44. As more and more workers move into retirement years, there will be fewer coming in behind them to take their places. This is the source of concern for future labor shortages.

Major employers in Region 9 are distributed throughout the region. Large employers are found in healthcare, education, telecommunications, food manufacturing and printing. Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties are home to the most major employers with healthcare, education and printing being represented.

Decaying and outdated physical infrastructure of small cities is an emerging issue. This impacts more than just health and quality of life. New homes and businesses need water and sewer, and if a community is unable to offer this, they will not be able to attract new residents or businesses. Many communities will have limitations placed on new development if their systems are not in compliance with state regulations.

The residents of South Central Minnesota exemplify “Minnesota Nice.” Newcomers are welcomed into communities and are introduced to the rich heritage each town possesses. There is a strong connection between these communities. Region 9 has strong agricultural roots. The soil here is some of the most fertile in the country.

An indication of the quality of the soils is the percentage of land under cultivation. Regionwide over 85% of the land is cultivated with Faribault, Martin and Watonwan counties exceeding 90%. Only Le Sueur County with 71% in cultivation is under 80%. Six percent of the land in Region Nine is used for pasture and open space while forested land accounts for 3.5%. Marshland 1% and urban development 2% take up the remaining land uses. 2.2% of the area is covered with water bodies. You can still see how farming defines the area from the local grain elevators dominating small town’s skyline to the semi-trucks steadily hauling grain in the fall.



Population changes in Region 9 Development Commission area

COUNTY	2000	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	% Change 06-15	% Change 06-35
Blue Earth	55,941	58,977	60,830	62,980	64,730	66,740	68,060	6.7 %	17.3 %
Nicollet	29,771	31,934	32,390	33,800	34,980	35,980	36,490	5.8 %	15.6 %
Brown	26,911	26,424	26,600	26,760	26,990	27,240	27,280	1.2 %	3.4 %
Le Sueur	25,426	27,896	29,910	32,100	34,090	35,790	37,090	15 %	36.6 %
Martin	21,802	20,864	20,470	20,140	19,970	19,870	19,620	-3.4 %	-6.9 %
Waseca	19,526	19,605	19,700	20,070	20,400	20,690	20,760	2.3 %	6.3 %
Faribault	16,181	15,309	15,250	15,180	15,190	15,180	15,050	-0.8 %	-2.2 %
Sibley	15,356	15,309	15,370	15,520	15,700	15,850	15,840	1.3 %	3.5 %
Watonwan	11,876	11,480	10,900	10,670	10,500	10,360	10,170	-7 %	-12.7%

Metropolitan Council Region 11

The Metropolitan Council serves the seven-county Twin Cities metro area including the counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington.

The Council works with local communities to provide these critical services¹²:

- Operates the region's largest bus system.
- Collects and treats wastewater.
- Engages communities and the public in planning for future growth.
- Provides forecasts of the region's population and household growth.
- Provides affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families.
- Provides planning, acquisitions and funding for a regional system of parks and trails.
- Provides a framework for decisions and implementation for regional systems including aviation, transportation, parks and open space, water quality and water management.

2030 Regional Development Framework Summary¹³

During the 1990s, the Twin Cities metropolitan area gained more population – 353,000 people – than in any previous decade in our history.

Accommodating growth is not always easy, as any of us who have been stuck in rush-hour traffic can attest. And the Twin Cities will keep growing. By the year 2030, we expect the region to add nearly 1 million people – the equivalent of two Denvers plunked down within the boundaries of the seven-county metro area.

Such robust growth is a sign of our region's continued economic health and vitality. But it will bring both opportunities and challenges.

How do we accommodate growth while maintaining the quality of life for the 2.7 million people who already live and work here?

How do we preserve and revitalize the communities and neighborhoods we prize – the buildings, parks, shared spaces and streets that tell us we're "home" – while building new communities with their own character and sense of place?

How do we capitalize on our opportunities for economic development while preserving our vital natural assets and abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation?

¹² "About the Council." Metropolitan Council. 18 Dec. 2008 <<http://www.metrocouncil.org/about/about.htm>>.

¹³ "2030 Regional Development Framework Summary." Metropolitan Council. 18 Dec. 2008 <<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/framework/summary.htm>>.

It's about flexibility, efficiency and cooperation...

The purpose of the 2030 Regional Development Framework is to provide a plan for how the Metropolitan Council – in partnership with local communities, builders, environmentalists and others – can guide our region's growth and shape our future.

In the Framework, the Council emphasizes its commitment to:

- Work collaboratively with local communities.
- Make the most cost-effective use of new and existing roads, sewers and other costly infrastructure.
- Be accountable to the public – by establishing benchmarks for annually measuring the region's progress toward our goals.

The Framework recognizes that “one size does not fit all” – that different communities have different opportunities, needs and aspirations. But it also reflects the belief that all communities have a shared responsibility to help accommodate the region's growth in a sensible, cost-effective manner.

It also acknowledges that the Council doesn't have a monopoly on new ideas for guiding growth and development. Many of the ideas contained in the Framework grew out of efforts already underway in communities throughout the region – from Brooklyn Park to Burnsville and Maplewood to Maple Grove.

Our strategies for success

The Council's strategies are organized around four policies:

1. Accommodating growth in a flexible, connected and efficient manner.

- Supporting land-use patterns that efficiently connect housing, jobs, retail centers and civic uses.
- Encouraging growth and reinvestment in centers with convenient access to transportation corridors.
- Ensuring an adequate supply of developable land for future growth.

2. Slowing the growth in traffic congestion and improving mobility.

- Improving the highway system, removing bottlenecks and adding capacity.
- Making more efficient use of the highway system by encouraging flexible work hours, telecommuting, ridesharing and other traffic management efforts.
- Expanding the bus system and developing a network of new bus and/or rail transitways, based on a thorough cost-benefit analysis.

3. Encouraging expanded choices in housing locations and types.

- Allowing market forces to respond to changing market needs, including increased

demand for town homes and condominiums as baby-boomers grow older.

- Preserving the existing housing stock to help maintain a full range of housing choices.
- Supporting the production of lifecycle and affordable housing with better links to jobs, services and amenities.

4. Working to conserve, protect and enhance the region's vital natural resources.

- Encouraging the integration of natural resource conservation into all land-planning decisions.
- Seeking to protect important natural resources and adding areas to the regional park system.
- Working to protect our region's water resources.

Measuring our region's progress

Many of the goals and objectives established in the Framework are ambitious. Our success will hinge on the efforts not only of the Metropolitan Council, but also those of local communities and our other regional partners. They also will require the commitment of additional resources – particularly in the areas of highways and transit.

Minnesota Milestones Ballot Results Summary

The Minnesota Milestones Ballot, administered at the Minnesota State Fair in 2008, had a grand total of 3223 respondents from more than 444 different Minnesota zip codes. The majority of participants declined to provide geographic (or demographic) information but opinions of all kinds were expressed; some opinions dealt with the 19 Minnesota Milestones. Others were focused on the general state of Minnesota as we move into the future. Below are the results.

2008 State Fair Ballot Results

Total Respondents: 3223 people from 444 different MN Zip Codes.

Ethnicity/Race

- Black or African American: 14
- American Indian: 44
- Asian or Pacific Islander: 23
- Latino or Hispanic: 29
- White: 2901
- Other: 38

Sex

- Female: 962
- Male: 513

Original Minnesota Milestone Goals

(Respondents were asked if each of these were still relevant.)

1) Minnesotans will participate in government and politics.

- Strongly Agree: 1562 (48.9%)
- Agree: 1549 (48.5%)
- Disagree: 69 (2.2%)
- Strongly Disagree: (13 .4%)

2) Government in Minnesota will be cost-efficient, and will provide services designed to meet the needs of the people who use them.

- Strongly Agree: 1230 (38.4%)
- Agree: 1291 (40.3%)
- Disagree: 621 (19.4%)

- Strongly Disagree: 63 (1.9%)

3) Minnesota will have sustainable, strong economic growth.

- Strongly Agree: 1200 (38.1%)
- Agree: 1574 (49.9%)
- Disagree: 348 (11.1%)
- Strongly Disagree: 28 (.9%)

4) Minnesota's workforce will have the education and training to make the state a leader in the global community.

- Strongly Agree: 1390 (43.7%)
- Agree: 1391 (43.7%)
- Disagree: 361 (11.3%)
- Strongly Disagree: 39 (1.2%)

5) Minnesotans will have the economic means to maintain a reasonable standard of living.

- Strongly Agree: 1283 (40.9%)
- Agree: 1465 (46.8%)
- Disagree: 345 (11%)
- Strongly Disagree: 37 (1.2%)

6) Minnesotans will have decent, safe, and affordable housing.

- Strongly Agree: 1194 (38%)
- Agree: 1405 (44.7%)
- Disagree: 492 (15.7%)
- Strongly Disagree: 49 (1.6%)

7) Rural areas, small cities, and urban neighborhoods throughout the state will be economically viable places for people to live and work.

- Strongly Agree: 1164 (37.2%)
- Agree: 1281 (40.9%)
- Disagree: 621 (19.9%)
- Strongly Disagree: 62 (1.9%)

8) All people will be welcomed, respected and able to participate fully in Minnesota's communities and economy.

- Strongly Agree: 1268 (40.4%)
- Agree: 1391 (44.3%)
- Disagree: 419 (13.3%)
- Strongly Disagree: 61 (1.9%)

9) Minnesotans will conserve natural resources to give future generations a healthy environment and a strong economy.

- Strongly Agree: 1500 (48.7%)
- Agree: 1332 (43.3%)
- Disagree: 221 (13.9%)
- Strongly Disagree: 26 (.84%)

10) Minnesotans will improve the quality of air, water, and earth.

- Strongly Agree: 1468 (47.8%)
- Agree: 1378 (44.9%)
- Disagree: 202 (6.6%)
- Strongly Disagree: 19 (.62%)

11) Minnesotans will restore and maintain healthy ecosystems that support diverse plants and wildlife.

- Strongly Agree: 1352 (44.3%)
- Agree: 1461 (47.9%)
- Disagree: 219 (7.2%)
- Strongly Disagree: 21 (.69%)

12) Minnesotans will have opportunities to enjoy the state's natural resources.

- Strongly Agree: 1539 (50.4%)
- Agree: 1383 (45.3%)
- Disagree: 117 (3.8%)
- Strongly Disagree: 14 (.46%)

13) Minnesota children will not live in poverty.

- Strongly Agree: 1240 (40.6%)
- Agree: 1077 (35.3%)
- Disagree: 656 (21.5%)
- Strongly Disagree: 81 (2.6%)

14) Minnesota families will provide a stable, supportive environment for their children.

- Strongly Agree: 1286 (42.3%)
- Agree: 1426 (46.9%)
- Disagree: 295 (9.7%)
- Strongly Disagree: 34 (1.1%)

15) All children will be healthy and start school ready to learn.

- Strongly Agree: 1224 (40.1%)
- Agree: 1100 (36%)
- Disagree: 665 (21.8%)
- Strongly Disagree: 63 (2.1%)

16) Minnesotans will excel in basic and challenging academic skills and knowledge.

- Strongly Agree: 1244 (41.1%)
- Agree: 1336 (44.2%)
- Disagree: 403 (13.3%)
- Strongly Disagree: 42 (1.4%)

17) Minnesotans will be healthy.

- Strongly Agree: 1195 (39.3%)
- Agree: 1544 (50.8%)
- Disagree: 274 (9%)

- Strongly Disagree: 26 (.86%)

18) Minnesota communities will be safe, friendly, and caring.

- Strongly Agree: 1241 (40.4%)
- Agree: 1477 (48.1%)
- Disagree: 324 (10.6%)
- Strongly Disagree: 29 (.9%)

19) People in need will receive support that helps them live as independently as they can.

- Strongly Agree: 1036 (34.1%)
- Agree: 1471 (48.4%)
- Disagree: 468 (15.4%)
- Strongly Disagree: 64 (2.1%)

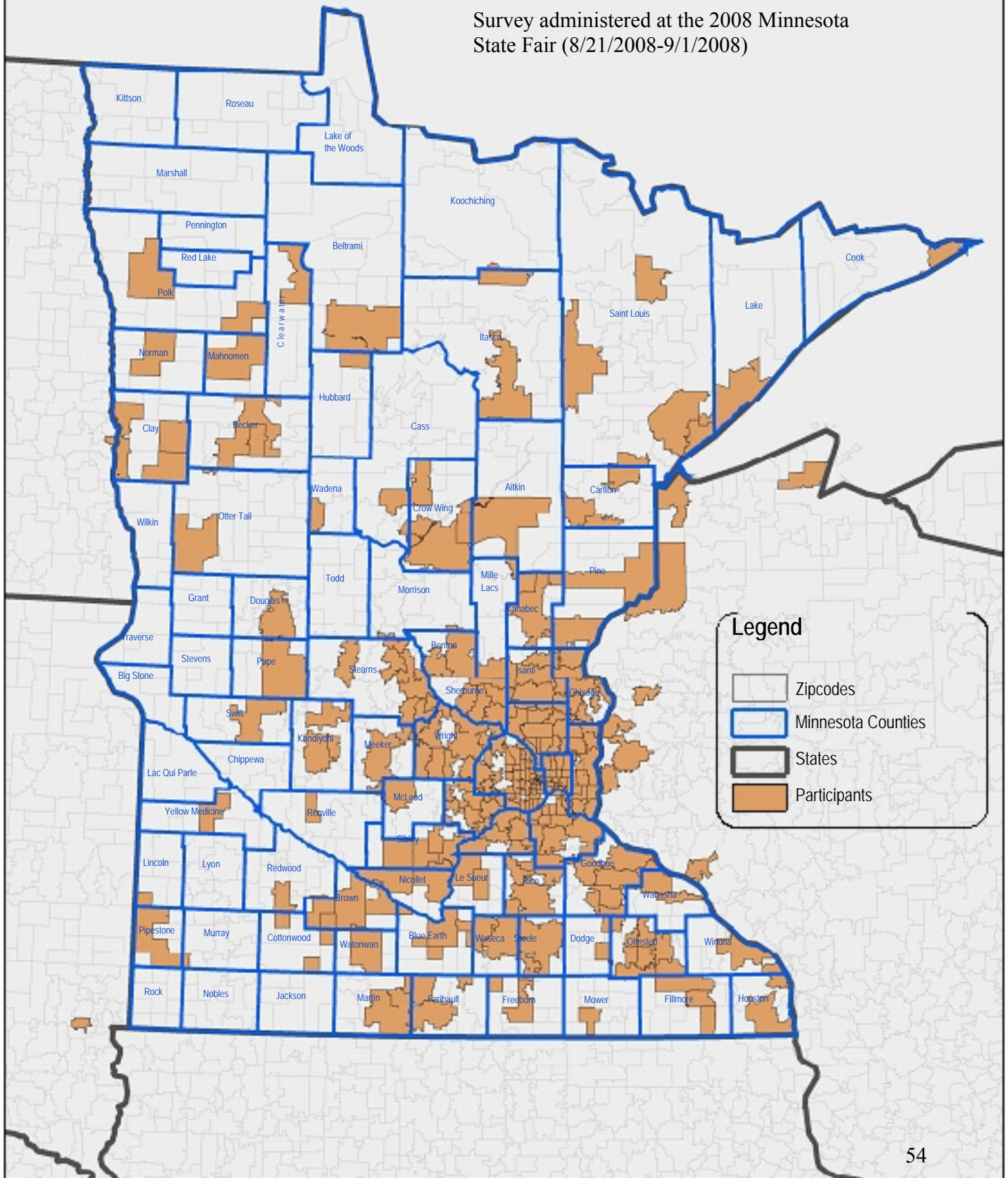
20) I will take the Sesquicentennial Pledge: “During the Sesquicentennial year, I will endeavor to learn from the state’s past, reflect on lessons from both its successes and failings and get engaged in planning for Minnesota’s future well-being.”

- Yes: 2741 (93.9%)
- No: 175 (6.1%)

Minnesota Sesquicentennial Survey

All Participants

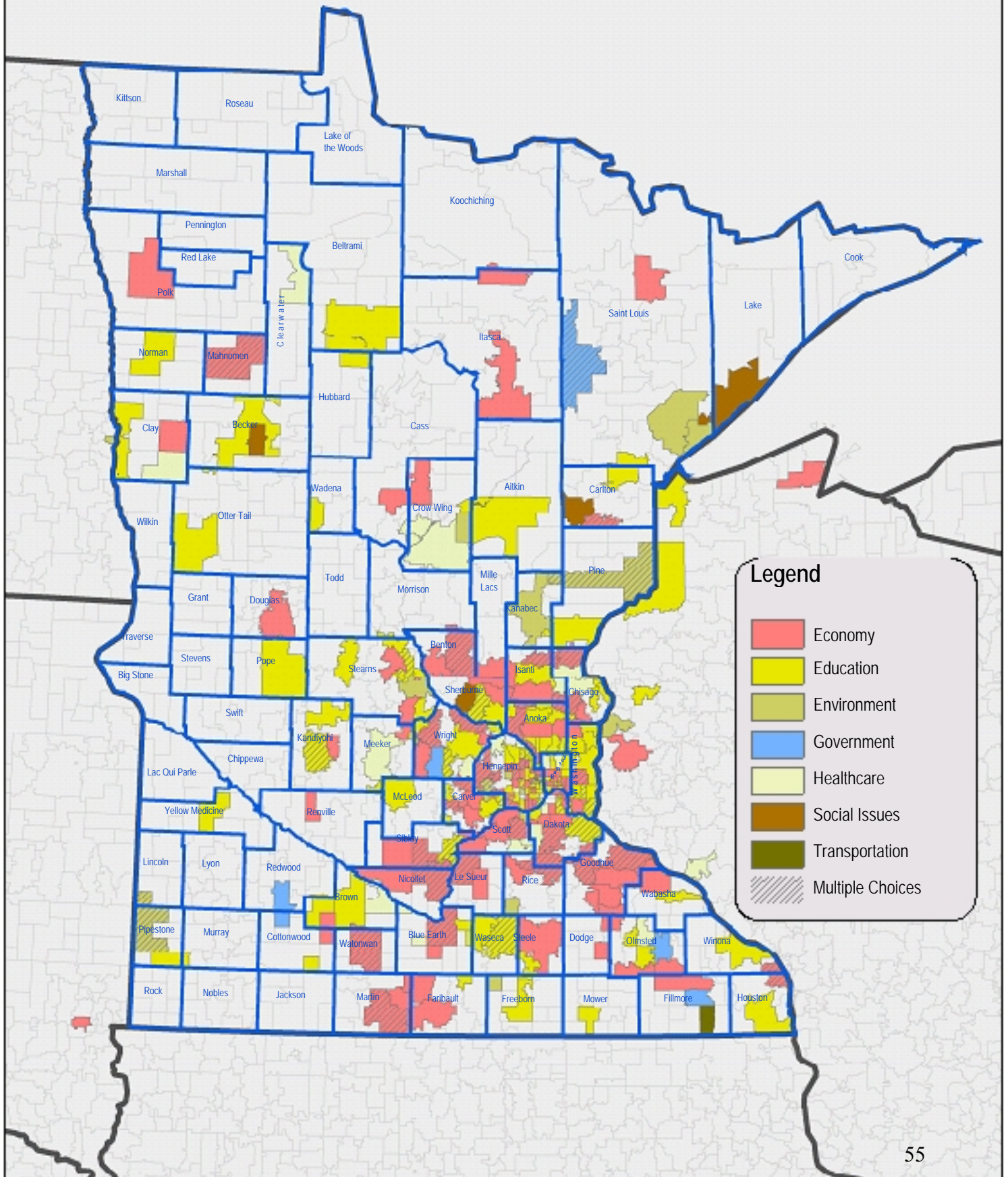
Survey administered at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (8/21/2008-9/1/2008)



Minnesota Sesquicentennial Survey

Overall Priority One Choices

Survey administered at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (8/21/2008-9/01/2008)



Summaries of Issue Initiatives

The Economy—Initiatives for a Crisis

2007 saw the collapse of the housing market across the United States, and 2008 witnessed the collapse of the stock market. What began as an economic downturn became a recession, with far-reaching, global effects. The following articles illustrate how the economic crisis is affecting Minnesota and its Midwestern neighbors, the toll it is taking on average citizens and daily life, and what possibilities there may be for the future.

From the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

fedgazette

All signs point to a down 2009¹⁴

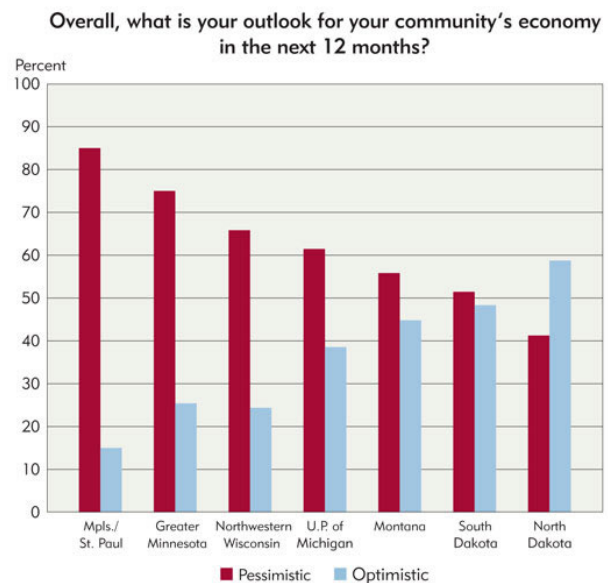
Tobias Madden - Regional Economist

January 2009

A vast majority of business leaders in the Ninth District expect a recession in the U.S. economy in 2009, according to the November *fedgazette* business outlook poll. This was evident across district states as well as across economic sectors. Leaders also have a pessimistic outlook for their own businesses and communities. One cause of the pessimism is credit conditions. The outlook is the worst in the 18-year history of the poll. A small silver lining: Inflation concerns have moderated.

The outlook for local economies is dismal across most parts of the Ninth District. Respondents from all areas look for business investment, employment and consumer spending to drop in their communities. The severe downturn in housing starts is likely to continue, according to respondents. They see contraction in their own operations, as they expect decreasing employment and capital investment. Besides the overall economy, complying with government regulation is the main concern among responding business leaders.

Nearly 80 percent of the respondents foresee a recession in 2009. "Deep trouble," a Minnesota wholesaler commented. The average recession responses range from 63 percent in northwestern Wisconsin to 85 percent in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Meanwhile, the recession responses



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

¹⁴ Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/research/>

across sectors range from 72 percent of retailers to 92 percent of agricultural producers. However, a Minnesota manufacturer said, "The current situation is part of the economic cycle; the sky is not falling."

Respondents expect inflation to moderate in 2009. About one-quarter predict inflation of around 1 percent, and about a third predict roughly 2 percent. However, 20 percent look for inflation of 4 percent or higher. The finance, insurance and real estate sector foresees the lowest level of overall inflation. The lowest inflation predictions for 2009 come from South Dakota and Montana.

The majority of respondents—71 percent, the most in the poll's history—are pessimistic about their community's economic performance in 2009 (see chart). The pessimism is strongest in Minnesota, and Wisconsin respondents were in a similar mood. "Look for improvement in third quarter 2009," commented a professional service firm from western Wisconsin. South Dakota respondents were neutral, and North Dakota respondents were optimistic.

From the League of Minnesota Cities

The Foreclosure Crisis and Neighborhood Viability¹⁵

The foreclosure crisis sweeping the country is having a diverse range of effects on neighborhoods and on cities' financial health right now. The quality of life in many neighborhoods around the state is decreasing as a result of vacant homes and the sight of boarded windows, neglected property maintenance, displaced renters, and fears about crime.

Cities are facing a wide variety of new and additional costs as a result of foreclosures, including:

- Increased demand for public safety services to prevent vandalism and other crimes at vacant homes.
- Costs to board up windows and to address neglected maintenance like snow shoveling and garbage removal.
- Lower property values of vacant foreclosed homes and neighboring homes, hurting city tax bases.

At the same time, cities are having revenue problems as a result of foreclosures and the dramatic slowdown in housing construction and home sales. Cities are facing delinquent and reduced property tax collections and lost fees. State sales and income tax returns are lower. Revenues from taxes on real estate transactions are down. Cities have seen significant decreases in building permit fee revenues. In Minnesota, housing starts are down 58 percent from a peak of 41,843 in 2004.

¹⁵ League of Minnesota Cities. <http://www.lmnc.org/page/1/foreclosure-issue.jsp>

Cities are undertaking initiatives to prevent further foreclosures, manage the properties that have been foreclosed and recover properties that have fallen into disrepair in their community.

Big Ideas Forum Summary: Foreclosure & Neighborhood Viability¹⁶

June 11, 2008, LMC Annual Conference, Rochester

The Big Ideas Forum on foreclosure and neighborhood viability was facilitated by Matt Fulton, City Manager of Coon Rapids. Melissa Manderschied, coordinator of the Minnesota Foreclosure Partners Council, presented foreclosure data, information on causes and effects of foreclosure, legislation and other actions to mitigate the problems associated with foreclosure. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions, share ideas on what cities can do and suggest what tools and resources are needed. The following captures the notes as recorded at the forum.

Resources:

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York offers data on subprime and alt-A mortgages that may be useful in predicting where foreclosures will occur.

Prevention: What cities are doing

The following are prevention strategies for cities and links to examples of cities that are using them:

- Publish a brochure of resources for individuals facing foreclosure; make it available both online and in hard copy.
- List resources for homeowners on city's web site.
- Work with your county development agency.
- Hold an informative foreclosure prevention workshop, and invite banks, community organizations, and those concerned about foreclosures in their neighborhood.
- Ask residents about housing concerns at community meetings.
- Send out information on foreclosure help with all utility bills.
- Start a Neighborhood Improvement Program where each staff person is assigned to a different neighborhood to identify/track problems; firefighters note issues, too. This type of program has been implemented in Coon Rapids.

Management: What cities are doing

The following are ideas cities can use to manage foreclosures:

- Use existing groups/talents in the community in dealing with maintenance issues, including:
 - Youth groups that do service projects,
 - Senior volunteers to scan neighborhoods,
 - "Eyes on the street" volunteer program in which residents tell the city problems they see.
- Repetitive clause in nuisance ordinances:
 - Mowing (one letter covers entire summer),
 - Difficulty in identifying owner, assess costs back to property.
- Adopt a seven-day mowing cycle.

¹⁶ League of Minnesota Cities. <http://www.lmnc.org/page/1/Sum-BI-Foreclosures.jsp>

- Establish a registration/notification system to identify properties that are vacant versus those where the owners are on vacation.
- Ask snowbirds to register so that police can do a few extra patrols during the winter.
- Start an Adopt a Vacant Property Program.
- GIS applications:
 - Map delinquent utilities and target prevention resources.
 - Map foreclosed properties.
- Meet with Realtors to gauge perceptions of various neighborhoods.

Recovery: What cities are doing

One idea discussed at the forum regarding recovery from foreclosure was to educate area Realtors about short sales, which may reduce the amount of time a property is vacant. A short sale of a house is where the proceeds fall short of what the owner still owes on the mortgage. Many lenders will agree to accept the proceeds of a short sale and forgive the rest of what is owed on the mortgage when the owner cannot make the mortgage payments. By accepting a short sale, the lender can avoid a lengthy and costly foreclosure, and the owner is able to pay off the loan for less than what he or she owes.

Health Care Initiatives—Minnesota's Aging Population

Estimates from the State Demographer's Office predict that Minnesota will have 1.3 million people who are 65 years of age or older by 2030. Currently, approximately one person turns 61 years old every 7 seconds across the nation. Moreover, by 2020, Minnesota will have more seniors than children. What does this "age wave" mean for our future? Ecumen, the state's largest non-profit senior housing company, conducted a survey in 2006-2007 to gauge the opinions, desires, and concerns of Minnesotan "Boomers." The results, published in the report "The Ecumen 'Age Wave' Study," give much food for thought for Minnesota's policy makers, businesses, and citizens young and old. The report's final conclusions are listed below:

What Baby Boomers Are Telling Minnesota

1. People - not just boomers - desire choices that help them live where they want to live, how they want to live.

Throughout their time on Earth, baby boomers' desires have led to a wide array of new products and services built around independence, personalization, ease, choice, convenience, and wellness. Think child daycare options, health spas and the BlackBerry. What they largely desire as they look ahead in terms of housing, services and public policy isn't, in most cases, available to them today. Their desire for change and choice will not abate with time. It's not just a boomer desire; it's a human desire.

2. "People" must be front-and-center, not "paternalism."

Many of the products for seniors today are built on what a younger generation assumes that seniors need, not what they actually want. That keeps our society from delivering the options and services that they desire most, especially the desire and option to live in their home and have a local network in place that provides social, recreational, civic, wellness, and spiritual opportunities. This paternalistic approach keeps ageist assumptions alive, such as what we often see in today's advertising. In so many people's eyes, if you're old, you're invisible. Boomers are telling us they won't be invisible. We must focus on people's wants, not just their needs.

3. Many products and public policies that are focused on helping people to plan and pay for the future miss a critical mark: Aging is about living.

Many baby boomers don't understand long-term care insurance. In fact, many of them dislike the name "long-term care." Many boomers feel that we need more and different options to help us pay for our future. Some of those even involve taxes when people see value in return for that cost. And a huge value is being able to live where you want to.

Changing paradigms around aging are essential in this effort. Some people are beginning to think differently. For example, one insurance company changed the name of its product from long-term care to "total living coverage" and features centenarians in their marketing who are living the life they envisioned because they planned for it earlier in life. We've increasingly seen people plan for college savings because they've become

knowledgeable about the value of saving and see value in college savings products, e.g., 529 savings plans. Anyone making a product for seniors or people planning for their future as seniors would be well served to remember four words: Aging is about living (even at the end of life).

4. Technology is essential to ensuring Minnesota and America ride the age wave. (Unfortunately, other countries are seizing space we should own.)

Technology – from the internet to the iPod – is ubiquitous in boomers’ lives. That’s not decreasing. Boomers are telling us that they love technology and see it as a tool that will help them stay independent. Unlike other countries, however, that are moving technology products to market faster to help people live independently, the United States is stuck in a regulatory mode that is reactive instead of proactive. For example, government reimbursements help fund many technologies in hospitals, but not technologies that help keep people out of hospitals and expensive care. European countries, Japan and South Korea are encouraging U.S. companies – through benefits and less bureaucratic environments – to set up research and development outside the United States. The global aging services market has been estimated to be as high as \$140 billion dollars.

5. Boomers and aging present unprecedented opportunity for Minnesota and our country. Baby boomers are telling us a lot. Most want to:

- Live at home, not in institutions.
- Live in communities close to a wide variety of amenities.
- Participate in the payment of their care costs.
- Have more options for paying for that care.
- Do some type of work in retirement.
- Positively impact a community’s life.
- Volunteer.
- Use technology.
- Have public policies that help them live where they want to live.

*The Ecumen “Age Wave” Study
Copyright 2007*

Project 2030

Many non-profit organizations, businesses, and government agencies at all levels of society are taking on the issue of aging. The challenges for meeting the needs and desires of aging Minnesotans and their families are great, but the opportunities for this new phase in population growth are equally immense.

While decentralized initiatives and organizations are preparing for this huge demographic shift, the Minnesota Department of Human Services is leading the charge with “Project 2030,” a comprehensive effort to adequately meet the demands created by the Age Wave.

From the Minnesota Department of Human Services:

What is Project 2030?

- It is a special project of the State of Minnesota coordinated by the Aging Initiative of the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The project is being carried out in partnership with the Minnesota Board on Aging.
- Its purpose is to identify the impacts of the aging of Minnesota's population and help prepare the State's response to the baby boom generation that begins turning 85 in 2030.
- During 1997 and 1998, an intensive planning process took place that engaged over 3,000 Minnesotans in these issues, and resulted in a final report on the two-year planning phase of the project and more than 15 related publications.

Project 2030 is addressing four major themes:

- Increased personal responsibility to save and prepare for retirement and old age.
- Expanded emphasis on personal responsibility for long term care planning and health promotion and maintenance.
- Increased "age-sensitive" physical, service and social infrastructures at the community level, including wise land use, life cycle housing, responsive service delivery systems and strong social ties within communities.
- Continued strong economic growth within the State, including creative use of our aging population, both in the work force and non-paid roles.

What are the expected outcomes of Project 2030?

- Visible momentum within all sectors of Minnesota to develop solutions that meet the needs and demands of an aging society.
- Strong and active partnerships with a broad variety of public and private groups that identify and take actions that respond to the coming age wave.
- Key actions state government can take now to prepare for 2030.
- The overall goal is not to reinvent but re-energize existing strategies and partnerships wherever possible.

2030 Policy Directions

The nine policy directions identified by the Project 2030 report are:

1. Increase personal responsibility to plan for retirement and old age.
2. Increase options for greater personal responsibility and choice in provision and payment of long term care.
3. Support health promotion and maintenance to prevent or reduce disability rates in our population.
4. Create "age-sensitive" social infrastructures that support and help people as they age.
5. Strengthen, maintain or redesign the service delivery systems in our communities.
6. Build or adapt physical infrastructures to achieve wise land use, lifecycle housing, better transportation and supportive design of public spaces while promoting environmental sustainability.
7. Promote creative use of the state's aging population both in the labor force and in non-paid, contributory roles.

8. Promote flexibility in the workplace in order to accommodate the changing definition of work and retirement within an extended lifespan.
9. Invest in high quality education and training for our young people to ensure a high quality workforce in the future.

*Minnesota Department of Human Services
Copyright 2008*

Government Initiatives—Voters and Democracy in Minnesota

In May 2008, Secretary of State Mark Ritchie pitched a challenge to all Minnesotans: a goal to achieve 80% voter turnout in the November 2008 elections.¹⁷ Ritchie's "80 in '08" campaign strived for higher voter turnout rates than the last record-breaker in the 1956, when 83% of voting Minnesotans cast ballots in the race between Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson (Eisenhower took Minnesota with 53% of the vote).¹⁸

Ultimately, Minnesota did not reach the 80% threshold—voter turnout was approximately 2.9 million voters, or 77.5%—but it did see a record number of citizens register to vote.¹⁹ In late September 2008, 84% of Minnesotans had registered to vote and thousands more registered on election day at the polls.²⁰ Yet, some believe that democracy in Minnesota still faces significant challenges.

The Minnesota Chapter of the League of Women Voters (LWVMN) lists "access and voting rights, how votes count, the influence of money in politics, judicial independence, government transparency and access, and the integrity of the election process," as factors that could impair or compromise some democratic processes in Minnesota.²¹ The LWVMN is currently engaged in a project called "State of Democracy" to determine the health of democracy in Minnesota and to produce a set of recommendations based on its findings. "State of Democracy" is a non-partisan, collaborative project that includes partners from:

- Center for Law and Politics, University of Minnesota Law School
- Center for the Study of Politics and Governance, Humphrey Institute
- The Citizens League
- Minneapolis Urban League
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- The Secretary of State
- TakeAction Minnesota

The "State of Democracy" report will debut in May 2009, and during the remainder of 2008 and into early 2009, the project will manifest itself in conferences, public presentations, and citizen input meetings.²²

¹⁷ "MN Voting Chief Aims For 80 Percent Turnout In '08." WCCO News. May 22, 2008.
<http://wcco.com/local/voter.turnout.80.2.730333.html>

¹⁸ Sundquist, Becky. "Minnesotans expected to vote in massive numbers." Politics in Minnesota. November 3, 2008. <http://www.politicsinminnesota.com/2008/nov03/1335/minnesotans-expected-vote-massive-numbers>

¹⁹ "Minn. Voter Turnout Estimate: 77.5 Percent." WCCO News. November 5, 2008.
<http://wcco.com/local/minnesota.voter.turnout.2.856764.html>

²⁰ "Minn. voters register in record number." Minnesota Public Radio. September 26, 2008.
<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2008/09/26/voters/>

²¹ "State of Democracy: A Project of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota Education Fund." League of Women Voters Minnesota Education Fund. May 21, 2008.
<http://www.lwvmn.org/edfund/StateOfDemocracyProject.asp>

²² "State of Democracy: A Project of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota Education Fund." League of Women Voters Minnesota Education Fund. May 21, 2008.
<http://www.lwvmn.org/edfund/StateOfDemocracyProject.asp>

The following projects, initiatives, and organizations are just a sample of some of the efforts across the state to address the challenges and opportunities of Minnesota's government for the future.

The Minnesota Participation Project, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

Minnesotans are stepping up to the challenge of keeping and improving their governmental processes, including one major effort undertaken by the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. The Minnesota Participation Project (MPP) is an initiative from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to wake the "sleeping giants of the democratic process," nonprofit organizations.²³ The MPP's goal is to engage 501 (c)(3) organizations in widespread efforts to promote voter registration, voter education, and "Get Out The Vote (GOTV)." Nonprofit organizations large and small can and have participated in the MPP and occupy the unique position of being credible, trust-worthy, and having access to many hard-to-reach groups of the population. The MPP was most active during 2007-2008, but is certainly not limiting itself to the 2008 election year; the MPP has an ongoing mission to engage the nonprofit community in promoting democracy throughout Minnesota.

MAP 150, Citizens League

MAP 150, the acronym for "Minnesota Anniversary Project 150," is a far-reaching project created by the Citizens League.

From the Citizens League site²⁴:

The Citizens League launched its Minnesota Anniversary Project "MAP 150" in 2005 as part of its contribution toward launching Minnesota's next 150 years. MAP 150's goal is to improve Minnesota's problem-solving capacity by developing tools and processes that place citizens more fully in the role of "co-producers" of the public good. It seeks to put into practice "the wisdom of crowds" in the public arena, processes virtually nonexistent in the public sector.

MAP 150 has four primary pilot projects: "Minnesota Property Tax Facts," "Redistricting," "Students Speak Out," and "CitiZing!".²⁵

- *Minnesota Property Tax Facts*: The nonpartisan Citizens League, as part of its MAP 150 initiative, is partnering with the League of Minnesota Cities to find out from citizens: What do Minnesotans really want to know about their property taxes? Because our property tax system is so fractured and complicated, answers can be hard to find. Our goal is to develop a practical tool that will help public officials meaningfully engage with citizens about property taxes.

²³ The Minnesota Participation Project. "About MPP." Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. September 29, 2008. <http://www.mncn.org/mpp/about.htm>

²⁴ Citizens League. "MAP 150: Home." <http://map150.org/>

²⁵ Citizens League. "Minnesota Anniversary Project (MAP 150)." 2008. <http://www.citizensleague.org/map150-1/>

- *Redistricting*: With redistricting just around the corner in 2010, the possibility looms that Minnesota may lose a congressional district and be subject to a drastic change in districts. Citizens rarely have much of a role in the redistricting process...until now. The goals of the Redistricting projects are:
 - To involve Minnesotans in a discussion about redistricting reform, demonstrating that if involvement opportunities are meaningful and engaging, citizens will participate in important policy subjects that may be otherwise not gain much attention.
 - To educate and raise awareness of Minnesotans on the fundamental questions and options in this redistricting issue.
 - To move the ideas and input of these citizens into the formal policy discussion at the state legislature.
- *Students Speak Out*: Schools across the board face a plethora of challenges. Students Speak Out is a place for students and adults to constructively dialogue about the causes and consequences of these issues, as well as to help create solutions.
- *CitiZing!*: CitiZing! will be Minnesota's first web platform designed for citizens collaboration on public problems, aiming to become the online civic network for collective problem solving.

In the News...

After experiencing one of the greatest voter turnouts in Minnesota's history, the 2008 elections have yet to reach a definitive conclusion in the race for the second U.S. Senate seat. The close race between incumbent Republican Norm Coleman and Democratic candidate Al Franken has gained national attention, as evidenced by this editorial in the New York Times. As of the writing of this report, the race has still not been decided.

The New York Times
The Board

A Blog by the Editorial Writers of The New York Times

December 23, 2008

So, Will it Be Senator Franken?

By The Editorial Board

Al Franken reportedly now leads the Minnesota Senate race by 48 votes, according to the latest numbers from the Secretary of State's office. The counting is not over, but it's winding down.

There are still decisions to be made about absentee ballots, and about claims that some votes were counted twice.

It's too early to say whether Mr. Franken or incumbent Senator Norm Coleman will win, but one thing is becoming clear. Minnesota is pretty good at running elections.

The most important thing about this recount is that all votes in Minnesota are cast on paper — mainly on optical scan forms, that get read by computer. That means that when the votes have to be recounted, there are paper ballots that can be inspected. In states that have paperless electronic voting, this cannot be done.

The state Canvassing Board also seems — at least on the information that has emerged so far — to be performing its duties responsibly, and trying its best to figure out the intent of the voters.

It may seem pretty strange that Christmas is nearly here, and Minnesota still has not called its Senate race. But that's a result of how close the race is — a mere handful of votes, out of some 2.9 million cast.

The deliberate way the state is reviewing the ballots is not a weakness in the state's democracy, but a sign of health — and of what appears to be a sincere commitment to calling the race for the candidate with the most votes.

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Transportation Initiatives—Infrastructure Demands of the Future

During rush hour on August 1, 2007, the 35W bridge in Minneapolis collapsed taking the lives of 13 and injuring dozens. Now, at the end of 2008, a replacement bridge has been completed but transportation issues are still at the forefront of Minnesotans' concerns for the future.

Organizations like the Minnesota Transportation Alliance (MTA) and the Met Council have ideas on how to improve and sustain Minnesota's transportation systems for future generations. The passages below are from MTA's 2008 Transportation Primer and Met Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan Update report published in September 2008. (Page numbers noted below reference to actual organizational report.)

The Need for Increased Transportation Funding:

Minnesota Transportation Alliance 2008 Transportation Primer (Pg. 3):

Minnesota's population is projected to increase by at least one million people over the next 15 years. These new residents will generate over 4 million additional trips every day on our highways. Our population is also aging and with high fuel prices, people are looking for options. Bridges have been closed due to wear and tear on aging infrastructure. If action is not taken to increase investments, we can look forward to:

- **Continuing deterioration of the system.** Our transportation system is aging, requiring increasing investments just to maintain its current condition, much less improve it.
- **Little improvement in reducing traffic crashes and fatalities**
- **Growing congestion** that will cost businesses money and residents precious time with family and friends.
- **Increased costs due to project delays.** The longer it takes to address bottlenecks, build new bridges, provide more transitways and expand two-lane highways with safety problems, the more expensive those projects become for taxpayers.

Every year of delay adds to the cost of a project as inflation in the cost of materials has skyrocketed.

Met Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan Update (Pg.1, Chapter 1):

Even if current and future funding levels were commensurate with those of decades past, there would still not be enough money to "fix" congestion throughout the region's highway system. Adding enough highway capacity to meet unlimited demand over the next 25 years would cost some \$40 billion dollars, an amount that, if funded by the state gas tax alone, would add more than \$2 per gallon to the cost of fuel.

The lack of adequate funding to support even modest highway and transit programs has been a problem in past years and remains so, despite recent changes in state

transportation financing. Two-thirds of revenues from the state motor vehicle sales tax (MVST) are currently dedicated to transportation and the figure will rise to 100 percent by FY2012. But MVST revenues have been declining since 2002, and although an upturn is forecasted for FY2010, predictions of a turnaround have been off the mark since 2003.

A recent state law will channel new revenue to highways and transitways in coming years. The law directs MnDOT to first commit the highway funds to system preservation, especially to bridges, but leaves MnDOT to clarify funding questions about possible capacity expansions.

Making progress toward a more effective transportation system:

Minnesota Transportation Alliance 2008 Transportation Primer (Pgs. 3-5):

Minnesota's transportation infrastructure consists of:

- Roadways
- Transit Systems
- Ports and Waterways
- Railroads
- Airports

Roadways – From township roads to city streets to county highways to the interstate system, roadways form the backbone of our transportation system, allowing people to move within communities while providing key connections between regional centers and other states. The roadway system consists of:

- **Trunk Highway System** – 11,882 miles (29,227 lanes miles) of highway including the interstate system.
- **County Highway System** – 44,946 miles (91,072 lane miles) of highway including 30,543 miles on the County State Aid system.
- **City Street System** – 22,020 miles (44,855 lanes miles) of streets including 3,221 miles on the Municipal State Aid Street system.
- **Township Roads** – Minnesota has 56,486 miles (112,973 lane miles) of township roads.

Bridges – With our thousands of lakes and waterways, Minnesota needs thousands of bridges. We currently have 13,067 bridges in the state and of those, 1,156 bridges are structurally deficient and 423 bridges are functionally obsolete. The condition of Minnesota's bridges has come under intense scrutiny in the aftermath of the I-35W bridge collapse. A number of aging bridges have been closed due to deterioration problems: the Highway 23/DeSoto bridge in St. Cloud, the Lowry Avenue bridge in Minneapolis, and the Winona bridge was re-opened for passenger vehicles only.

Transit Systems – Minnesota communities benefit from the availability of transit service. From the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit line in Minneapolis to dial-a-ride service in rural areas, thousands of Minnesota residents rely on transit service to get to work, to

medical appointments, to meetings, to businesses and other important destinations. Transit service allows everyone to have the mobility we need to live our lives.

Metropolitan Area Transit – In the 7-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, transit service is provided by a variety of providers through various services. All transit service in the Twin Cities area falls under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council. In 2006, providers in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area provided 85,881,219 rides. Here's the breakdown:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ○ Total Rides 85,881,219 | ○ Suburban Providers 4,396,006 |
| ○ Metro Transit (Buses) 64,400,000 | ○ Small Urban 178,202 |
| ○ Hiawatha Light Rail 9,000,000 | ○ Rural 717,422 |
| ○ Metro Mobility 1,222,821 | ○ Northstar Coach 181,924 |
| ○ Contracted Providers 2,470,657 | ○ U of M Shuttle 3,314,187 |

Greater Minnesota Transit – MnDOT's Office of Transit has jurisdiction over transit service provided in the 80 counties outside of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. In 2006, Greater Minnesota transit systems provided 9,826,705 rides. These rides were provided by urbanized systems in areas like Duluth, St. Cloud and Rochester, small urban systems and rural systems. Within 7 of the counties in Greater Minnesota, transit service is only provided in certain cities while in 6 counties in Greater Minnesota no public transit service is available at all.

Ports and Waterways - The Mississippi River system includes over 222 miles in Minnesota. The river system supports 5 ports (St. Paul, Minneapolis, Savage, Red Wing and Winona) whose combined 2007 transported tonnage was 12.1 million tons.

Minnesota's largest river tonnage commodities are agricultural products, namely corn, soybeans and wheat. Minnesota agriculture ships over 60% of its total agricultural exports down the Mississippi River. The river navigational system serving Minnesota is maintained by the federal government. The U.S. Corps of Engineers operates all 29 locks and dams on the upper Mississippi River.

Minnesota has four ports (Duluth, Two Harbors, Silver Bay and Taconite Harbor) on Lake Superior whose combined transported tonnage in 2007 was 68 million net tons. Minnesota's taconite industry represents 61% (38.4 million net tons) of Minnesota's 2007 total tonnage transported on Lake Superior.

Freight Rail – Minnesota is home to four Class I railroads: Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Canadian Pacific Rail, Union Pacific Railroad, and Canadian National. These systems operate on a total of 2821 miles of track. In addition, we have five Class II railroads (Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern; Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range; Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific; Wisconsin Central and Iowa, Chicago and Eastern) operating on

861 miles of track. Minnesota also has 15 Class III railroads operating on 775 miles of track.

Air Service – Minnesota is served by 158 airports located in 141 cities providing air transportation for people and cargo to keep people connected and keep our businesses competitive.

Met Council’s 2030 Transportation Policy Plan Update (Pgs. 1-3, Chapter 1)

Slowing the growth in congestion

While growth is a good thing, it poses challenges. In 1990, 30 percent of the region’s freeway lanes were congested during peak periods; by 2000, the figure had grown to 60 percent. In the Council’s 2003 survey of metro area residents, traffic congestion ranked as the No. 1 concern, outpacing crime, education and housing.

There are no “silver bullets” that will eliminate congestion. But the Council’s *Transportation Policy Plan* contains policies and strategies designed to slow the growth in congestion and improve mobility. Consistent with the *2030 Regional Development Framework* – the umbrella chapter of the Council’s metropolitan development guide – the *Transportation Policy Plan* calls for:

- Planning and investing in multi-modal transportation choices based on the full range of costs and benefits.
- Encouraging mixed-use development in centers along transportation corridors that better links housing, jobs and amenities, and reduces the need for single destination trips.
- Making more efficient use of the regional transportation system by encouraging flexible work hours, telecommuting, ridesharing and transit ridership.
- Focusing highway investments first on maintaining and managing the existing system, and second on slowing congestion.
- Building transit ridership by expanding the current bus system and developing a network of dedicated rail and/or bus “transitways.”
- Encouraging local communities to implement a system of fully interconnected arterial and local streets, pathways and bikeways.

Growing the transit system

The transit plan is intended to increase ridership by 50 percent, to 36 million riders per year, by 2020 – with the goal of doubling ridership by 2030. The strategies for achieving the 2020 target include:

- Adding new express bus routes, limited-stop routes, improved frequency and longer hours of service, as well as additional passenger amenities such as transit centers, bus stop shelters and park-and-ride lots.
- Funding enhancements such as bus-only shoulders, ramp meter bypasses and signal priority that give buses travel-time advantages in mixed traffic.

- Providing additional fare incentives such as the Metropass now available through employers and the U-Pass available to University of Minnesota students.
- Developing a network of dedicated “transitways” – including bus rapid transit, light rail and/or commuter rail – with mode choices based on a careful cost/benefit analysis. The region now has two such transitways in place or nearing completion: bus rapid transit on I-394 and LRT in the Hiawatha corridor. Five additional transitways should be added between 2005 and 2020, with work done to advance three more.

The cost of implementing the transit plan: \$500 million in capital investments to grow the bus system and \$800 million to \$1.4 billion to build the transitways, with an additional \$120 million a year for operating costs by 2020.

Education Initiatives—Challenges and Solutions

The following excerpts are taken from two reports, one published by the Center for the American Experiment entitled *Education Accountability in Minnesota: No Child Left Behind and Beyond* (September, 2004), and the other published by Growth and Justice entitled: *Smart Investments in Minnesota Students: A Research-Based Investment Proposal* (October, 2008). Both of these reports address the Minnesota educational system and what steps can be taken to improve and sustain its traditionally high standards among all socioeconomic sectors. (Page numbers noted below reference to actual organizational report.)

Education Accountability in Minnesota: No Child Left Behind and Beyond

Center for the American Experiment

Accountability

- Education policymakers and administrators in Minnesota see accountability as an issue that both transcends *No Child Left Behind* and is sometimes constrained by it (Pg. 1).
- Minnesota educators understand that they have a dual obligation to (1) help all children to succeed, and (2) present taxpayers with the evidence that their investment in public education is paying positive dividends in the form of increased academic achievement. They recognize that this is a new era in public education, and most are embracing accountability even while confronting the challenges it brings (Pg. 2).

Achievement Gaps

- The fact that this achievement gap exists across the country is well-documented and a cause for alarm, but the depth and breadth of the gap here in Minnesota should be a rallying cry for change (Pg. 3).
- Minnesota, long a leader in national measures of academic achievement, must move into a *new* stage of leadership where we maintain our position and continue to cultivate academic excellence in the aggregate, while rising to the challenge of providing a quality education for struggling students, thereby narrowing, and eventually closing, the achievement gap (Pg. 8).

Implementing a Value Added Accountability Model

- States such as Minnesota are developing systems that could serve as models of robust and meaningful accountability for the rest of the nation. A value-added model that would meet these criteria is one that would measure (1) individual growth and (2) growth against a fixed achievement standard toward which all students and schools can aspire (Pg. 13).
- Pilot or demonstration projects should be allowed for states that have developed value-added accountability models that are rigorous, demand high standards and have fixed standards as growth targets. The law [NCLB] should be designed to ensure that stagnant

or unacceptable levels of achievement are not masked by the existence of non-challenging standards or non-academic measures (Pg. 13).

Dealing with ineffective teachers

- Reform the state employment law, PELRA (Public Employee Labor Relations Act), to make it easier for administrators to document the relative ineffectiveness of certain classroom teachers, thus allowing them more freedom in selecting their staffs (Pg. 18).
- Consider a pilot program whereby teachers would give up tenure for a permanent pay increase. This could be coupled with a performance pay initiative, providing an incentive for teachers to be as effective as possible (Pg. 18).

Assigning teachers to best meet the needs of students

- Legislators should revisit the teacher assignment bill that was introduced by Gov. Tim Pawlenty and passed by the House Education Policy Committee during the 2004 legislative session (Pg. 20).
- There are several pay-for-performance models currently being piloted in Minnesota. Efforts in the area of alternate models of compensation should be expanded to include pilot projects that provide additional pay for highly effective teachers assigned to schools with challenging student populations. Such efforts should have a strong evaluation component (Pg. 20).

Student Mobility

- This multi-faceted issue has not received much attention and clearly needs further study. Educators with high numbers of students transferring into their districts should be called together to discuss the issues they face, the strategies they employ, and the possible solutions they can propose (Pg. 22).

Special Education

- Allow districts to pilot a scholarship program for special education students similar to Florida's McKay scholarship program (Pg. 28).
- The state auditor should be prepared to audit districts when reports of irregularities in special education funding are made (Pg. 28).
- Care should be taken that resource room teachers have access to the assistance of general education teachers and appropriate materials for their students (Pg. 28).

Teacher Licensure

- Consider legislation requiring the Board of Teaching to develop a more flexible policy regarding science licensure, similar to that offered for social studies teachers (Pg. 29).
- Consider legislation establishing criteria that can be applied to the granting of reciprocity to experienced and qualified teachers who arrive in Minnesota from other states (Pg. 29).

Testing: Accountability vs. Diagnostics

- Provide funding to the Department of Education for the development of diagnostic tests that are aligned with the state academic standards. These could be used on a voluntary basis by local school districts and would not replace the grade-level specific MCAs that are used for accountability purposes (Pg. 32).

Funding: New Strategies

- Consideration should be given for piloting a number of alternate models for delivering instruction, such as longer school days, longer school years, or year-round schools. Any demonstration project should have a rigorous evaluation component (Pg. 34).

Conflicts of Interest: Community Fairness and Protecting Classroom Dollars

- A state entity may wish to pursue a study to identify the existence of conflict of interest violations in the state under current law, and analyze the requirements in other states to determine if Minnesota's conflict of interest laws need to be updated (Pg. 35).

Smart Investments in Minnesota Students: A Research-Based Investment Proposal

Growth and Justice

Opportunity Gaps

- Minnesota's greatest opportunity for increased growth in attainment rates lies with low-income students, students of color, and American Indian students (Pg. 7).
- Not surprisingly, failure to perform at grade level predicts later academic trouble. Getting all students to meet grade-level proficiencies is one key to raising the state's post-secondary attainment rate (Pg. 7).

Investment in Minnesota Education

- Growth & Justice began its consideration of education investments in 2006 with *Invest for Real Prosperity*, a strategic framework for achieving a more prosperous, just, and sustainable Minnesota. It proposed increased public investment in Minnesota, using evidence to determine "what works at a good price." Education — along with health care and smart infrastructure — was selected as a key area of investment that could increase our state's capacity to create wealth and increase each individual's chance of participating in that economic growth (Pg. 18).
- *Invest for Real Prosperity* made the case that Minnesota began investing less in state and local government services as a proportion of our income over the last decade — about 1.5 cents less per dollar than during Governor Arne Carlson's administration. And over that period, our economic growth, once well above the national average, has slipped to the middle of the pack (Pg. 18).

Funding Disbursement

- Educational research and economic analysis sponsored by Growth & Justice indicates that an annual \$1 billion investment in human capital would more than pay for itself — through higher earnings for each additional graduate, greater state tax revenue from higher wages and economic growth, and lower social costs paid by taxpayers (Pg. 2).

TABLE A: DISTRIBUTION OF INVESTMENTS BY INTERVENTION

INTERVENTION	AMOUNT
Prenatal to age 3: Need-based early care includes prenatal care/healthcare access, parent mentoring/home visits	\$35 M
Birth to age 4: Need-based quality child care, expands availability	\$85 M
Pre-K (age 4) to 3rd grade: High quality half-day 4-year-old preschool; class size reduction (Pre-K to 3rd grade); social skills training, e.g., Child-Parent Center, Success for All	\$285 M
4th to 8th grade: Emphasis on rigorous/college-prep coursework, coupled with tutoring-intensive reading/math instruction, e.g., AVID	\$105M
9th to 12th grade: Small learning communities, college-prep curriculum, teacher development, parent involvement, targeted at low-achieving, high discipline problem students, e.g. Talent Development High School, First Things First	\$55M
9th to 12th grade: Rigorous coursework including dual enrollment options, e.g., expanded PSEO, College in School, Early College High School	\$95M
Out-of-school support: Social supports include summer school/after-school tutoring and mentoring, reducing pregnancy rates, substance abuse, and dropout rates, e.g., Achievement for Latino Academic Success, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, CASASTART, Carrera	\$140M
In-school counselors: Reduce ratio from 792 : 1 to 488 : 1	\$10M
Drop-out prevention: Monitor progress, build relationships, connect schools with families and students, e.g., Check & Connect	\$10M
Transition to post-secondary: Aimed at promising, low-income students with academic potential; provide counseling and academic preparation for college readiness, e.g., Admission Possible	\$65M
Post-secondary need-based aid: Improve financial access for all students	\$115M
Total	\$1 billion

(Pg. 21)



(Pg. 21)

Summary of Goals for Minnesota's Future (Pg. 22):

- Increase student wellness and readiness for learning.
- Increase the rate of students who are successful readers by the 3rd grade.
- Increase the number of students who successfully complete rigorous coursework.
- Reduce high school dropout and pregnancy rates.
- Reduce the financial burden of post-secondary education on students and families.

Social Issues Initiatives—Regional Solutions to Statewide Issues

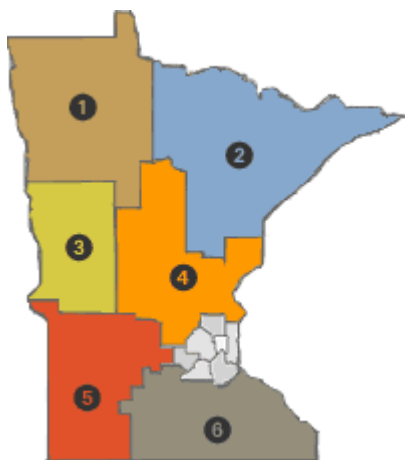
Minnesota's social issues in 2008 are diverse. They range from aging populations to equitable education to family to immigration and multiculturalism. Across the state, every township, city and county faces its own unique challenges and opportunities as we prepare for the future. Meanwhile a plethora of social initiatives—from PTA meetings to broad cultural coalitions—work simultaneously to solve the problems we are facing in the short and long term.

One of the most far-reaching investments in the state's social issues is the McKnight Foundation's support for the six Minnesota Initiative Foundations. McKnight and the State of Minnesota partnered over 20 years ago to create these regional outreach mechanisms as a part of the state's efforts to address rural development. The McKnight Foundation's official site for the Initiative Foundations describes them now as follows:

“The Minnesota Initiative Foundations—independent, nonprofit philanthropic organizations created by The McKnight Foundation in 1986—work to make the six regions outside the metropolitan area stronger and more prosperous. Each foundation's priorities are decided by people in its own region, with grants and loans supporting economic development, leadership development, community building, and families, youth, and seniors. To date, The McKnight Foundation has invested over \$210 million in these foundations.”

Minnesota Initiative Foundations

The six Initiative Foundations cover the entire area of Minnesota with the exception of the Metropolitan Area. They are:



- (1) Northwest Minnesota Foundation
- (2) Northland Foundation
- (3) West Central Initiative
- (4) Initiative Foundation
- (5) Southwest Initiative Foundation
- (6) Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

Each Foundation is undertaking a series of innovative projects to address the unique challenges of its region, but the following summaries highlight the initiatives that pertain to social issues in particular.

Northwest Minnesota Foundation

The Northwest Minnesota Foundation serves Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau Counties.

Early Childhood Initiative and Minnesota Thrive Initiative²⁶

The Northwest Minnesota Foundation, along with the other five Minnesota Initiative Foundations, and generous support from the McKnight Foundation, has made an ambitious six-year commitment to the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative. Our purpose is to promote high-quality early care and education for children from birth to age five throughout the state, while supporting parents in their important work. Local early childhood coalitions design strategic action plans to improve outcomes for their youngest children. Grassroots advocacy for early childhood help direct our state's future public policy decisions.

The Northwest Minnesota Foundation (NMF) and an Action Team of area leaders are focusing on strengthening early childhood mental health services for young children and families in the Bemidji, Blackduck and Kelliher communities. With \$1.5 million from the Bush Foundation in a \$2.5 million project, NMF selected this area as one of six pilot sites to participate in the statewide Minnesota Thrive Initiative - promoting the healthy social and emotional development of our youngest children. The six Minnesota Initiative Foundations (MIFs) are collaborating in this joint venture. Bemidji-Blackduck-Kelliher will receive \$380,000 over three years for planning and implementing a continuum of care.

The goals of the Minnesota Thrive Initiative are to raise awareness of children's mental health needs between the ages of birth and five, determine existing services and gaps, and develop a network of services for families and young children, supporting healthy social and emotional development. The local Action Team will work to gather information and develop a plan, so that existing services work well together and gaps in service are eliminated. Training for professionals, parents and the whole community will also be part of the plan.

From the Wilder Research Report “Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative”²⁷

Like the wiring process in a young child’s brain, the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative is transforming communities – relationship by relationship. Through an organic process carried out in communities throughout greater Minnesota to identify and plan strategies to ensure that all children thrive, five key components of a nurturing community emerged. Backed up by research evidence, these components are:

²⁶ Northwest Minnesota Initiative Foundation. “Early Childhood Initiative.” http://www.nwmf.org/prog_eci.php

²⁷ Wilder Research. “Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative.” Page 9. August 2007.
http://www.nwmf.org/images/publications/wilder_report_hi.pdf

1. **Strong families** – The Initiative works to build trusting relationships and partnerships that support healthy choices and connect parents to information and resources on their own terms.
2. **Engaged community members** – Young children need advocates, and when people understand what children need to succeed, they pitch in to improve conditions and outcomes for them. Engagement tends to breed more engagement.
3. **Effective and coordinated early care and education** – By coordinating efforts to produce essential information, eliminate duplication, and fill service gaps, early care and education professionals increase their own community connections, sense of mutual trust, and opportunities for service coordination.
4. **Early learning opportunities** – The Initiative empowers parents with information and supports child care providers to help children gain literacy skills and to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and/or physically.
5. **Ready schools** – The Initiative eases the transition to kindergarten by building relationships between parents, teachers, and schools and by promoting parent involvement in their children’s education.

Northland Foundation

The Northland Foundation serves Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake and St. Louis Counties.

KIDS PLUS Program²⁸

From the Northland Foundation’s site:

Launched by the Northland Foundation in 1990, the overall goal of the KIDS PLUS Program is to improve the well-being of children and youth in northeastern Minnesota. Prior to creating the program, the Foundation conducted extensive research to identify the best approaches to address children and youth issues in the region. A key strategy: connect kids with caring adults from all sectors of their community and great things will happen!

Today KIDS PLUS consists of a family of programs that support children and youth from birth to adulthood.

The KIDS PLUS focus areas are:

- technical assistance and support to communities;
- youth leadership, volunteerism, and philanthropy;
- convening and training; and
- early childhood development.

The Foundation's Grant Program complements KIDS PLUS by dedicating approximately 70 percent of its annual grant funding to support efforts that strengthen children, youth, and families. The knowledge and years of experience the Northland Foundation has in working directly with communities has contributed to a broad array of opportunities, programs, and resources throughout the region.

Selected Component Programs to KIDS PLUS

AGE to age: bringing the generations together: Launched in fall 2008, this exciting initiative enables elders, adults, and youth to explore how their generations are alike and how they are different. The program is designed to strengthen relationships among all ages and offer older adults and young people a chance to work together to benefit their communities.

Youth Leadership Program: The goal of the KIDS PLUS Youth Leadership Program is to develop young leaders who will serve their communities now and in the future. A unique aspect of the program is the adult mentor component. Together, youth and adults participate in a yearlong Youth Leadership Academy, which offers a series of interactive workshops to build relationships and sharpen their leadership, communication, and team-building skills.

The program concludes with the planning and implementation of a community service project. This project provides an opportunity for young people to put into practice their new knowledge and skills, promotes the power of youth-adult partnerships, and helps community members recognize youth as resources and leaders. Hundreds of young people are discovering they can make a difference!

Since 1998, nearly 800 young people and 300 adult mentors have participated in Youth Leadership Academies.

Youth in Philanthropy Program: Young people have fresh ideas, new perspectives, and a genuine desire to make things happen. The Youth In Philanthropy Program taps into the energy and boundless enthusiasm of young people. The program has two components:

- Youth grant making board that provides resources for youth-developed projects; and
- Training and educational sessions for youth on project design and grant writing.

In 2000, in collaboration with our long-time partner, the Minnesota Power Foundation, the Northland Foundation developed the KIDS PLUS Youth In Philanthropy Board. The program provides a venue for teaching young people about the art of giving and the importance of civic involvement. As part of the Foundation's KIDS PLUS Program, Youth in Philanthropy is designed to infuse youth into leadership and decision-making roles. This grant making board is made up of young people in grades 8-12 and adults from around the region. Grant money up to \$1,000 is awarded for projects that are planned, written, and carried out by young people with the support of an adult advisor.

West Central Initiative Foundation

The West Central Initiative Foundation serves Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse and Wilkin Counties.

Workers and their Families Programs²⁹

The purpose of WCI's Workers and their Families Initiative is "to address long-term shortages and gaps in the availability of skilled labor by assisting workers in attaining skills that enable them to earn a livable wage, helping workers and their families overcome barriers to economic success, and working with children and youth to ensure that they enjoy a start in life that will prepare them to become economically productive adults."

WCI accomplishes this through carefully tailored grant programs and support of a region-wide partnership to address workforce issues called the West Central Minnesota Labor Force Development Council.

Family Economic Success Region-wide Grants³⁰

Description: The West Central Initiative (WCI) Family Economic Success (FES) Grant Program is designed to support coalitions in providing programs and services that help families in west central Minnesota overcome barriers to effective workforce participation and self sufficiency.

The FES program was developed by agencies and organizations from across the region that work with families on a daily basis. These partners meet regularly as part of an FES Council. The Council promotes the economic success of families by sharing information, researching issues, thinking of and implementing solutions, and evaluating progress.

Goals for Applicants: Grant applicants must address one of the four following goals:

1. Family members in west central Minnesota are building skills that qualify them to hold better jobs in their communities.
2. Job seekers and workers in west central Minnesota can find and afford the dependable, convenient, and appropriate child care they need to maintain a job.
3. Children of working families in west central Minnesota get early childhood care and education that prepares them to succeed in school and life.
4. Families in west central Minnesota take advantage of tax benefits **and** develop knowledge and skills to achieve family economic success.

²⁹ West Central Initiative Foundation. "Workers and their Families Programs." 2007.
<http://www.wcif.org/programs/workforce/index.shtml>

³⁰ West Central Initiative Foundation. "Family Economic Success Region-wide Grants." 2007.
<http://www.wcif.org/programs/workforce/fesregion.shtml>

Initiative Foundation

The Initiative Foundation serves Benton, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena and Wright Counties.

Methamphetamine Program³¹

The Initiative Foundation believes that no other issue can threaten the health and well-being of Greater Minnesota communities like the production, distribution and use of methamphetamine. All of the foundation's programs and priorities are potentially impacted by this dangerous drug, which is why we launched ***Minnesota ICE: A Rural Response to Methamphetamine*** - the state's first allied effort to combat the meth epidemic.

With support from The McKnight Foundation, Bush Foundation, Hazelden Foundation and other local and regional supporters, Minnesota ICE (Intervention, Care and Education) began in November 2005 with a statewide conference that attracted more than 2,500 community leaders and concerned citizens to St. Cloud. The foundation also published a special ***IQ Magazine*** to increase awareness of meth in Minnesota.

Since then, twelve county and community-wide coalitions have been formed to prevent further destruction by meth in our local communities.

Key program components included:

- Supporting volunteer coalitions at the county level
- Awarding grants that mobilized volunteers and resources to implement local prevention, intervention and efforts to support recovery from meth addiction
- Increased awareness and education about the dangers of methamphetamine
- Serving as a resource clearinghouse, specifically ***IQ Magazine***.
Realizing that meth is only part of the problem, most of the coalitions are now expanding their efforts to focus on teen alcohol prevention and other illicit drugs.

We are currently partnering with the following ATOD (Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug) Prevention Centers to provide direct technical assistance to each of the Initiative Foundation coalitions

Facts about Meth use in Minnesota

- Meth is mainly a rural epidemic. Between 1999 and 2003, police raided more than 750 clandestine meth labs located mainly in Greater Minnesota. Meth "cooks" prefer the seclusion of rural communities.

³¹ Initiative Foundation. "Communities—Methamphetamine" 2006. http://www.ifound.org/community_meth.php

- Meth consumes financial resources of local governments. Meth-related expenses total in the millions per rural county, diverting taxpayer dollars from community services and improvements.
- Meth poisons neighborhoods and natural resources. Every pound of manufactured meth yields five to seven pounds of toxic waste, most of which is dumped in drains or on the ground.
- Meth threatens children and families. About one out of twenty Minnesota high school seniors reported trying meth at least once. Half of all raided meth labs have children present.

Southwest Initiative Foundation

The Southwest Initiative Foundation serves Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties.

Connected Communities Programs³²

The Connected Communities Initiative is a Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) program that helps leaders and teams, nonprofit organizations, and other sectors of community improve their communities through training opportunities, leadership and development efforts. The Initiative is based on the core belief that good leadership, citizen engagement, capitalizing on our local and regional assets, and connecting resources within the communities and region will make southwest Minnesota a place where growing numbers of people choose to live and work.

The Connected Communities Initiative has four components:

1. Connected Communities Partnership (CCP)

CCP Purpose:

Communities that are selected to participate in the Connected Communities Partnership receive a long-term commitment from SWIF to help them plan for the future. CCP brings together a broad base of community leaders and citizens to identify and implement high impact opportunities to make their community an even more desirable place to live.

CCP Focus:

CCP is designed to achieve high impact change at the individual, team, and community levels, with an emphasis placed on tangible community outcomes. CCP aims to create compelling improvements that substantially impact the quality of community life and that are recognizable by both existing residents and potential newcomers.

³² Southwest Initiative Foundation. "Connected Communities." 2007.
<http://www.swmnfoundation.org/connectedcommunities.html>

CCP helps communities identify their strengths and how to build on them in the context of what neighboring communities and the region have to offer. This approach deepens the community's sense of place and understanding of how to succeed within and beyond its surrounding area.

Eligibility:

Eligible communities are within the 18 counties of SWIF's [service area](#) and have fewer than 6,000 people. Communities must demonstrate signs of readiness, commitment, and the ability to fulfill CCP requirements at each stage of the process. Two communities per year, one in the fall and another in the spring, will be selected as CCP communities.

SWIF Commitment:

Each CCP community is provided a SWIF staff member to guide them through the process, high quality trainers and facilitators, technical assistance, and grants up to \$5,000 to cover training and convening expenses and grants up to \$15,000 to implement high impact projects.

2. Nonprofit Leadership and Development

Recognizing the value that nonprofit organizations play in their communities, we are modifying SWIF's former Nonprofit Management Institute and Technical Assistance Program to one that provides training and educational opportunities on topics that will increase the organizational capacity of nonprofits.

3. Regional Education, Training, and Networking

To prepare and equip individual leaders throughout southwest Minnesota, SWIF will host and convene networking and training opportunities on relevant community development topics such as: Leadership 101, Appreciative Inquiry, and ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development).

4. Community Development and Leadership Toolbox

We are currently developing a toolbox of resources, best practices, and a list of approved consultants that will be made available on this Web site within the coming year to assist communities with economic and community development efforts.

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

The Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation serves Blue Earth, Brown, Dodge, Faribault, Fillmore, Goodhue, Freeborn, Houston, LeSueur, Martin, Mower, Nicollet, Olmsted, Rice, Sibley, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, Watonwan, and Winona Counties.

New Immigrants Program³³

New immigrants to our region seek opportunities to contribute. They bring skills we need and a desire to become involved. Their presence invites new thinking, provides needed stability in the workforce, and enriches community life and institutions.

As a foundation, our priority is workforce practices that create a level playing field for all, and that help immigrants gain the skills they need to contribute. *The initiatives we fund will aid transitions, augment work skills, and open doors to community life in the region.*

Accepted proposals will help make this three-level vision reality:

- Employers will create work places where immigrant workers can function safely, effectively, and efficiently. As a result, they will meet competitive challenges.
- Workers will have a fair opportunity to fulfill career goals and grow wealth. They will become self-sufficient.
- Community members will know that opportunities and services are equal. They will grow with the challenges of greater diversity: socially, culturally, and economically.

In the area of workforce development, we all succeed when:

- An increasingly diverse workforce has the skills needed to contribute.
- More skilled workers are working.
- We achieve sustainable economic growth.

The Foundation strives for these results.

Tools for Community Growth

We work with communities and organizations that commit to collaboration. We support asset based, local work with these tools:

TOWN MEETING INITIATIVE

Our Town Meeting Initiative brings community members together to evaluate the assets of the community, set goals, and accomplish a project of choice. We provide facilitation, technical assistance, and up to \$15,000 to assist asset based community development (ABCD) efforts that lead to economic growth and prosperity.

³³ Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. "New Immigrants." <http://www.smifoundation.org/immigrants.php>

INCENTIVE GRANTS

Grants launch programs, inspire collaboration, and move communities toward future investment. We provide up to \$20,000 to support asset based collaborative projects or programs that support emerging business and workforce initiatives.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

We provide networking opportunities and expertise to regional partners for programs and activities related to our focus areas.

CONVENINGS

We collaborate with regional partners to create small and large convenings that enhance awareness, increase knowledge, and produce results related to our focus areas. This expands perspectives, connections, and the scope of projects.

Interviews with Community Leaders

Interview with Clarence Hightower, Executive Director, Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties (Community Action) September 2008

Interview Questions

Area: Education

1. What unique perspective (your background, upbringing, affiliations, etc) do you bring to this interview?
2. Can you briefly describe the state of education in Minnesota look like right now (a snapshot of where we are at)? What are the challenges and opportunities before us?
3. How does education in Minnesota currently compare to the rest of the Midwest region and the nation?
4. What long term trends do you see in Minnesota education and what major factors will affect it over the next 50 years?
5. What type of state do you want to leave to your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren? Said a little differently, but still speaking of our state, what do we want the future to be like for the next generations?
6. Given where we're at right now, and the trends we see, what are the key issues and challenges we have to address to make that future real? What are the "got-to-deal-with" issues?
7. In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood and thinking about the next fifty years to come, what will you do and encourage other Minnesotans to do to make the future a better place at the Bicentennial (200th anniversary)?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Mr. Hightower came to Minnesota from Illinois, but has been active in leadership activities in this state for most of his career. His first leadership position was at the North Community YMCA in 1982, where he was Executive Director and then as President of The City, Inc. For ten years, Mr. Hightower was the President and CEO of the Minneapolis Urban League, before coming to Community Action. He is also the recipient of the Minneapolis Award (1996) and the Bush Leadership Fellowship (1989). "I'm passionate about working with low-income people to rally them around strategies [to reduce poverty]," he said. Community Action, which was established in 1964, has as its mission the goal of stamping out poverty and lifting people out of it to self-sufficiency.

Poverty is a complex issue in Minnesota, but some facts about it are very clear. A disproportionate number of people of color live in poverty and experience serious gaps in income and education with other Minnesotans. Education is possibly the most critical problem. "I think we've created a two-tiered education system," Mr. Hightower said. He explained that there are achievement gaps in education in Minnesota and that the high school graduation rate of students of color is "dismal." However, Mr. Hightower believes that there are also more systemic problems with education, namely, that too many high school students are ill-prepared for college. In areas like reading comprehension, writing, and mathematics, first-year college students find themselves taking remedial courses to just to come up to speed.

These two challenges with education in Minnesota—achievement gaps for students of color and students who are ill-prepared for college—could be ameliorated by some measures, Mr. Hightower believes. He was hopeful about the role that state colleges' boards of trustees could

play in making better college preparation part of high school curricula, with programs like PSEO (Post-secondary education opportunity, in which high school students take college level courses at post-secondary institutions). Moreover, he would like to see a much more seamless transition for students going from high school to college. In terms of relating these solutions to students of color, Mr. Hightower thinks that needs-based education is key to improving high school graduation rates and college preparation. “Schools need different resources, and at least adequate resource allocation for all schools,” Mr. Hightower said.

In areas besides education, Mr. Hightower hopes that the future will be better, as well. “I wish we could figure out how to get rid of institutional racism,” he said. “[it] really impacts the quality of life for everyone in the state.” He also hopes that there will be more investment in ideas, individuals, and social capital. He believes that many of these issues are related to social consciousness. “I don’t think we have a clear idea of what ethic we want to guide our future,” he said. “In the next fifty years, we have to develop a consciousness of problems like racism, education and income gaps, teen pregnancy...and decide not to let that pass.”

“I think that I have a huge responsibility,” Mr. Hightower concluded. “I will continue to be an advocate. I will endeavor to keep the issues out front. Moreover, I will continue to be a leader of consistent morals and ethics.”

Interview with Ilean Her, Executive Director of the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans November 2008

Interview Questions

Area: Asian Pacific Minnesotans

1. What unique perspective (your background, upbringing, affiliations, etc.) do you bring to this interview?
2. Please describe briefly your council's role in addressing the issues and concerns of Asian Pacific Minnesotans and their communities. What is your vision for the council, especially as you think about the future?
3. What trends do you think will most affect Asian Pacific communities in Minnesota over the next fifty years?
4. What do you think will be the major challenges and opportunities for Asian Pacific Minnesotans in the future?
5. What type of state do you want to leave to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Said a little differently, but still speaking of our state, what do we want the future to be like for the next generations?
6. Given where we're at right now, and the trends we see, what are the key issues and challenges we have to address to make that future real? What are the "got-to-deal-with" issues?
7. In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood and thinking about the next fifty years to come, what will you do and encourage other Minnesotans to do to make the future a better place at the Bicentennial (200th anniversary)?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

Ms. Her is a second generation Hmong immigrant and comes from a family of refugees who resettled in Minnesota from Laos. She believes that her experiences growing up mirror those of many other Asian Minnesotans in terms of learning to navigate the public education system, being bilingual, and living among different cultures. Ms. Her is an attorney by training and sought after as an expert on Asian-American experiences, public policy development, civic engagement, and community leadership development. Her position as Executive Director of the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans puts her in the unique position of drawing from her knowledge and skill-set to achieve the Council's mission: to be an advisor to policymakers, an advocate for the community, and a builder of bridges.

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans was created by legislation in 1985. Asian Minnesotans, feeling a disconnect between their communities and the state's laws and resources, petitioned the government to create the Council. Ms. Her believes that the job of Minnesota government is to ensure that the public is informed, happy, healthy and engaged. Ms. Her's vision for the Council is that it would help to fulfill this state responsibility among Asian Minnesotans. "It's really about having a community," Ms. Her said. She hopes that the Council will continue to encourage Asian Minnesotans to become active and engaged in civic life in the future.

When thinking about the next fifty years, Ms. Her believes that one of the most influential trends that will affect Asian Minnesotans is the "age wave" of retiring boomers. She points out that in

2008, there are no Asian CEO's of any major corporation in Minnesota, but she hopes that this will change as the traditional workforce retires and more diverse workers fill the ranks.

She hopes that more Asian Minnesotans will enter into non-traditional fields—including civic leadership and public office—in the future. Moreover, Ms. Her foresees a blossoming of Asian Minnesotan artists: she believes that improved literacy among first and second generation immigrants is feeding an emerging generation of writers, poets, and artists. She hopes that this trend will “change the artistic landscape of Minnesota” by infusing it with new ideas and ultimately becoming a “mainstream” part of Minnesota culture.

Key to the economic enfranchisement of Asian Minnesotans that Ms. Her foresees is education, an area in which there are many opportunities, but also significant challenges. Greater numbers of Asian Minnesotans translates into more financial and political clout, but persistent gaps in education, particularly higher education, is a major challenge. Ms. Her explained that the rate of enrollment among minority groups in general is low even though the population is becoming more diverse.

These two trends mean that Minnesota will produce fewer and fewer college graduates if the rates persist. For Asian Minnesotans, especially recent immigrants, higher education is critical to wellbeing and upward mobility. “In this economy,” Ms. Her said, “this [Asian Minnesotan] community is not equipped for the high tech job demands that are emerging.”

Ms. Her said that many Asian Minnesotans adults are losing jobs in the manufacturing sector and need training or re-training for new “high tech” jobs that are key to the state's future. The issue of training/re-training is complicated by language barriers and a lack of readiness on the part of the government to invest significantly in producing a competitive workforce.

However, Ms. Her sees many opportunities for young Asian Minnesotans. The most positive and exciting trend she observes is a growing number of “firsts” for young people—everything from first-time Asian Minnesotan home owners to the first Asian Minnesotan news anchors and mainstream authors. She feels that the major challenge for young Asian Minnesotans will be finding empowerment.

Families and children need to live and grow in empowering environments, especially in terms of the school systems. Ms. Her is proud of Minnesota's school systems and recognizes that they have come very far in meeting the unique needs of Asian Minnesotans, but believes that we can focus even more on the delivery of services to achieve greater success and empowerment.

At the end of our interview, I asked Ms. Her the same three questions that the Sesquicentennial Commission pitched to Minnesotans across the state during the Community Conversations. When considering her ideal vision for future generations, Ms. Her “want[s] Minnesota to be fully invested in its natural resources.” She hopes that future generations have the luxury of participating in family activities—like in-state vacations and weekend excursions outdoors—and that they are happy, healthy, and engaged.

She wants to see Minnesota fully invested in health care and education, as well. Again, education is a critical factor in building a better future and one of the “got-to-deal-with” issues that Ms. Her identified. She said that the “promise of education” is not fully there for students of color and students from low income families. Ms. Her hopes, that for her part, she can continue to encourage the civic engagement and cultural contributions of Asian Minnesotans.

“I hope that people and leaders come together to make the right investments,” Ms. Her concluded. “So that future Minnesotans can say, ‘They made the right plans in 2008 and followed through.’”

**Interview with Jan Malcolm, President and CEO, Courage Center
October 2008**

Area: Health Care

(Ms. Malcolm responded to the following interview questions with written remarks, which are copied exactly below.)

What unique perspective (your background, upbringing, affiliations, etc.) do you bring to this interview?

I've spent my whole career in health care and public health administration, and had the great honor of serving as the state's Commissioner of Health for four years in the administration of Governor Ventura.

What is the state of health care in Minnesota right now, especially with regards to issues of access and health care reform? What are the challenges and opportunities?

In 2008, the Legislature passed the first really comprehensive health reform bill in probably 15 years. That legislation laid out some big goals, but we have a lot more work to do to implement and add to the ideas about how to expand access and control costs.

The opportunity is that there is now broad agreement that there is a lot of waste in the current health care system, and that despite spending almost twice as much as most other countries, a smaller percent of our people get the health care they need, and our health results are not as good as countries that spend far less. Everyone agrees we need to put more emphasis on prevention, and not just on expensive attempts to "cure" problems after they occur. We also now know that higher quality care is actually LESS expensive over the long term, not more, and that there is tremendous variation in spending and quality across regions of the US, and even among provider groups here in MN.

The challenge is the sheer size and complexity of the system, and that if we are to achieve real cost savings, almost everyone's "ox will get gored" at least to some degree. And for a long time, special interests and some politicians have told us there is a simple fix or a "villain" we can point at, that will make the changes painless for the rest of us. It just isn't true. But, there is no question we can build a smarter, better quality, more affordable system for the future if we're willing to take the long view and make the needed investments up front in prevention, primary care, care coordination, and quality improvement.

Can you describe, briefly, the implications of Minnesota's aging population and what it means for the future?

It means we need to change the orientation of our health care system away from discrete episodes of acute care that begin and end, to management of chronic conditions and to all the many inter-related needs that people with multiple and complex conditions have. Whether related to disabilities acquired by aging, or disabilities related to congenital conditions, traumatic injuries or illnesses, chronic conditions account for 75% or more of all health care

spending, but the system isn't built around anticipating and responding to that. Here again, if we change this, we can improve quality AND reduce costs at the same time.

What long term trends do you predict for health care in Minnesota and what major factors do you think will affect and shape it over the next 50 years?

We'll see much more attention to the measurement and systematic improvement of quality, and we'll see people playing a much larger role in their own care—from being expected to take more responsibility for personal health choices and having a larger economic stake in doing so, to having to understand the cost consequences of the way we each consume medical care.

I HOPE we'll see much more emphasis and financial support for the kinds of services that actually make the most difference to health status—things like public health interventions to change risk factors, primary care to monitor health and catch problems early, and things like excellent physical therapy and adapted fitness programs that can help people regain and MAINTAIN as much physical functioning as possible.

What type of state do you want to leave to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Said a little differently, but still speaking of our state, what do we want the future to be like for the next generations?

A state that strives to be a leader, and that cares at least as much about the future as about the present. I hope we'll continue to lead not just the nation but the world in the education, health, and civic engagement of all of our people.

Given where we're at right now, and the trends we see, what are the key issues and challenges we have to address to make that future real? What are the "got-to-deal-with" issues?

We need to deal with the our failure to keep pace with the investment needs in education, health, and our common infrastructure over the last many years. But we have to do it in a responsible, accountable, affordable way. We do no one any favors by wasting public resources on things that don't work.

We must deal with disparities—in education, jobs, earnings, and health. The concentration of poverty in our communities is at the core of all of these issues, so this will take concerted attention to how all of our big policy choices intersect—from housing to transportation, education and health care, to community design and tax policy. We need a bigger, longer-term, more connected vision about all of these big questions.

In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood and thinking about the next fifty years to come, what will you do and encourage other Minnesotans to do to make the future a better place at the state's Bicentennial (200th anniversary)?

We need to get all of our citizens to engage in our government—to understand more about how it works, to learn how to advocate for what matters to them, and to hold leaders in the public, private and non-profit sectors all accountable to what we all do to promote the common good and the future health of our state, not just the individual interests of today.

Interview with Kathryn Draeger, Ph. D., Director, Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, University of Minnesota—Twin Cities
October 2008

Interview Questions

Area: Environment/Natural Resources

1. What unique perspective (your background, upbringing, affiliations, etc) do you bring to this interview?
2. What is the state of natural resources management and the environment in Minnesota right now (a snapshot of where the state is at)?
3. Given your background in agriculture and the environment, can you comment on what the trends will be for Minnesota's natural and agricultural resources?
4. What factors will play a big role in both over the next 50 years?
5. What type of state do you want to leave to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Said a little differently, but still speaking of our state, what do we want the future to be like for the next generations?
6. Given where we're at right now, and the trends we see, what are the key issues and challenges we have to address to make that future real? What are the "got-to-deal-with" issues?
7. In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood and thinking about the next fifty years to come, what will you do and encourage other Minnesotans to do, to make the future a better place at the Bicentennial (200th anniversary)?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

Kathryn Draeger, an adjunct professor of agronomy and plant genetics at the University of Minnesota, is also the statewide Director of the U of M Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships. The Partnerships works to sustain Minnesota's natural resource-based communities and industries by addressing community-identified agriculture, natural resources, and tourism issues in partnership with the University of Minnesota. In addition to working with Minnesotans in all parts of the state, Ms. Draeger has experience working in environmental and agricultural development in Israel, South America, and India.

Dr. Draeger believes that the state of natural resources in Minnesota is worsening; "We've put extreme pressure on our resources," she said, with natural habitats decreasing, prairie lands diminishing rapidly, and observable climate change affecting the land. Over the past century, she explained, "generational forgetting"—or, the gradual loss of collective memory from generation to generation—has made some changes, such as decreases in the amount of wildlife, seem less extreme.

"New generations have lost a reference point for understanding what is a 'normal' ecosystem," she said. For example, large populations of waterfowl in the first half of the twentieth century are remembered by older generations that witnessed them migrate; Dr. Draeger recalled older Minnesotans telling her that, in their youth skies used to expansively fill with ducks and geese flying south. However, younger generations are only used to seeing limited numbers of migrating birds, but have no idea that these numbers used to be much higher. Dr. Draeger has noted similar patterns of generational forgetting in areas like the scope of the state's land and water resources, which she fears are being rapidly depleted.

Despite negative trends for Minnesota's natural resources, Dr. Draeger is hopeful for the future of agriculture. "There are exciting trends in agriculture," she said. "Opportunities [for

Minnesota] to be self reliant in food, fuel, and fiber exist.” As part of her work with the U of M Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, Dr. Draeger is looking more at the local and regional level for growth in areas like biofuels, where Minnesota has a comparable advantage over other states and global competitors. “Having biofuels used and produced at the local level makes sense,” Ms. Draeger said, pointing out some of the economic benefits it would bring to the state and, especially, the promise it holds of reinvigorating rural areas.

Dr. Draeger believes that the main challenge that Minnesota faces with regards to its natural resources and agriculture is our current dependency on fossil fuels, especially petroleum. “Peak oil”, in which global petroleum supplies are believed to have reached their peak, threatens the cost-efficiency of energy consumption and could have negative repercussions on society and industries like agriculture. Finding safe, stable sources of energy will be a critical factor over the next fifty years for both the state and the nation.

Moreover, the preservation and conservation of Minnesota’s water supply is important. Groundwater depletion, mercury in lakes and other waterways, algae and bacteria in surface water, and invasive species are some of the greatest challenges the state faces with regards to the water supply.

When thinking about the future, Ms. Draeger has many hopes. “I hope that future Minnesotans have access to healthy communities and environments,” she said. “And that we’ll be citizens, not consumers.” She also hopes for peace. The issues that need to be dealt with immediately to make this future a reality, Dr. Draeger enumerated, are first, to find ways to conserve energy, and second, to find ways of living without oil.

For her part, Dr. Draeger will work locally to achieve far-reaching results. “I will work to save family farms and increase the number of farmers,” she said, in hopes of increasing food security by supporting local food production. She also believes that Minnesotans working together have a lot of potential to affect positive change. Faith communities working to support the less fortunate and strong community investment in children are just two examples. “There are difficult times ahead,” Ms. Draeger concluded. “But I would offer a message of encouragement to future Minnesotans. If you are reading this in 2058 I hope that we have left you abundant natural resources, the means to care for yourselves and your families, and thriving, caring communities.”

Interview with Lester Collins, Executive Director of the State Council on Black Minnesotans
December 2008

Interview Questions

Area: African American Minnesotans

1. What unique perspective (your background, upbringing, affiliations, etc.) do you bring to this interview?
2. Please describe briefly your council's role in addressing the issues and concerns of Black Minnesotans. What is your vision for the council, especially as you think about the future?
3. What trends do you think will most affect Black Minnesotans over the next fifty years?
4. What do you think will be the major challenges and opportunities for Black Minnesotans in the future?
5. What type of state do you want to leave to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Said a little differently, but still speaking of our state, what do we want the future to be like for the next generations?
6. Given where we're at right now, and the trends we see, what are the key issues and challenges we have to address to make that future real? What are the "got-to-deal-with" issues?
7. In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood and thinking about the next fifty years to come, what will you do and encourage other Minnesotans to do to make the future a better place at the Bicentennial (200th anniversary)?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

Mr. Collins has spent over 30 years in Minnesota; originally from Philadelphia, he attended college at Macalester in Saint Paul and then graduate school at the University of Minnesota. Since he began working at the Council on Black Minnesota, his vision has been right in step with the Council's vision: "to ensure that the needs of all Minnesotans of African descent are clear to the policy makers who impact their well-being by providing equal protection of the law and guaranteeing that this community receives and has access to state services and programs."

The Council has a 17-member board composed of both public members and legislative members, and the Council's mandate is statewide. It has many partners across the state, in non-profit, government, and private sectors, and serves as a forum for African American Minnesotans to be actively involved in and informed of public policy. The Council has made great strides for African Americans since its inauguration, but Mr. Collins is concerned that much of the progress made is threatened by the current economic crisis. "I hate to say it," he said. "but some of the same issues that affected us in the last fifty years [like] education, housing, the economy, are back."

The challenge of equal access in key areas like education, housing, and the job market has been exacerbated by the economic downturn and recession that began in 2007. African American Minnesotans have been hit particularly hard. Mr. Collins believes that tough economic times are producing a setback of at least ten years; for example, the collapse of the housing market has put

homeownership out of the reach of many African Americans who were eligible for it only a few years ago.

Moreover, the rise in foreclosures is adversely affecting children and families who face the challenges of relocating and interrupting primary and secondary education. “I would hope things improve in the future,” Mr. Collins said, “but...it’s hard to think about the next fifty years.”

One way to ensure a better future for African American Minnesotans may be to improve education and graduation rates for children of color. Although Minnesota ranks among the top states for good education, there are considerable achievement gaps for children of color. The Council is facing this challenge through its partnerships with the African American Leadership Council, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, the office of the Superintendent of St. Paul Public Schools, and others.

These groups are working together and individually on initiatives specifically aimed at reducing the achievement gap. In addition to the achievement gap, Mr. Collins cites entrance into post-secondary institutions as a major challenge. The rising costs of tuition make college a difficult goal for nearly all young people to reach, but students of color often have even more difficulties financing an education.

What Mr. Collins hopes for the future is that it will be “a society and a state that is respectful of all individuals of any ethnicity and color.” “I want the future to be one where representation and administration on all levels of leadership reflects the diversity of all the individuals that live within the state,” he said. He also hopes that Minnesota takes on more environmental stewardship, so that the quality of its natural resources remains high.

He also believes that investments made in children and families will yield the greatest returns. For the present time, Mr. Collins thinks that early childhood education, education and job training for young mothers, access to healthcare, and transportation are among the most critical issues that Minnesota must address in order to realize a better future. “I think we need to move on the other side of punitive strategies,” he said, referring to some of the policies that affect young mothers in particular. “They [the strategies] need to be more encouraging and positive initiatives and efforts.”

Mr. Collins will continue to work on giving hope to people by supporting and promoting positive, proactive policies, especially for Minnesotans of color. “I will continue to work to have all people and all ethnicities...recognized for their talents and gifts, contributions and abilities,” he concluded.

**Interview with Rogelio Muñoz, Executive Director, Minnesota Chicano Latino Affairs Council
December 2008**

Interview Questions

Area: Latino Minnesotans

1. What unique perspective (your background, upbringing, affiliations, etc.) do you bring to this interview?
2. Please describe briefly your council's role in addressing the issues and concerns of Latino/Latina Minnesotans and their communities. What is your vision for the council, especially as you think about the future?
3. What trends do you think will most affect Latino communities in Minnesota over the next fifty years?
4. What do you think will be the major challenges and opportunities for Latino/Latina Minnesotans in the future?
5. What type of state do you want to leave to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Said a little differently, but still speaking of our state, what do we want the future to be like for the next generations?
6. Given where we're at right now, and the trends we see, what are the key issues and challenges we have to address to make that future real? What are the "got-to-deal-with" issues?
7. In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood and thinking about the next fifty years to come, what will you do and encourage other Minnesotans to do to make the future a better place at the Bicentennial (200th anniversary)?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

"I will always say there are two things I'm proud of: being from Texas and living in Minnesota." That is how Rogelio Muñoz, Executive Director for the Minnesota Chicano Latino Affairs Council, sums up his identity as a fifth generation Texan and current resident of Minnesota. Mr. Muñoz comes from an historically established Hispanic community in Texas and worked in Washington, D.C. before coming to the Midwest for graduate school. When he arrived in Minnesota, he became familiar with the public policy challenges the Latino community faced here. "I felt like I wanted and needed to contribute to the representation of the Hispanic community here," he said, and became involved with the Council.

The Chicano Latino Affairs Council recently celebrated its 30th anniversary with a celebration that was attended by over 600 people. In 1978, the Council on Spanish-Speaking Minnesotans was officially established (its predecessor was the Office of Migrant Affairs) and became the Chicano Latino Affairs Council in 1996. The issues that the Council and its predecessors addressed have changed over time, moving from predominantly labor issues, migrant issues, and agriculture to "the same issues that any other Minnesotan [faces]:" health care, higher education, workforce equity, and access to good primary and secondary education. Even if the issues have changed, the mission of the Council has not. "Our job is to capture the Latino voice and make sure it is represented in public policy," Mr. Muñoz said.

Mr. Muñoz' personal vision for the Council is that it would work itself out of a job; that is, he hopes that the issues Latino Minnesotans face will ultimately be incorporated into mainstream public policy. For this goal to be realized, Latino Minnesotans must be well represented by the policies that are created and investments must be made into communities. Mr. Muñoz believes

that critical issues like the achievement gap, lack of access to health care, housing, and inequality could be righted with such a comprehensive approach.

“If we continue to have public disinvestment...potentially, it could be a very big problem for our future,” he said. The challenges that Latino Minnesotans face are two-sided, he continued. Settled immigrants face the reality of gaps in wages and education, while new immigrants face difficulties related to immigration and the workforce.

However, one of the greatest opportunities for Latino Minnesotans, and Minnesotans in general, is the increasingly globalized state that Minnesota is becoming. “We need to utilize the social capital and human capital we now have in our state,” Mr. Muñoz said, “to be competitive with other states and other countries.”

Thinking about the future, Mr. Muñoz hopes that the next fifty years of statehood offer better opportunities for education, and also believes that education is the most important “got-to-deal-with” issue we face today. “Education is the engine of social change,” he said. “We need to make more investments in public schools, early childhood, graduation rates and higher education.”

For his part, Mr. Muñoz hopes to use his skills and commitment to public policy and Latino Minnesotans to make the future a better place. He believes that everyone has a stake in their own future as well as the future for others. “I think there has to be a shared interest,” he concluded. “And where there’s a shared interest, there’s a shared responsibility.”

Interview with Bill King, President, Minnesota Council on Foundations September 2008

Interview Questions

Area: Social Issues: Philanthropy

1. What unique perspective (your background, upbringing, affiliations, etc.) do you bring to this interview?
2. Briefly describe the philanthropy efforts you see Minnesotans participating in right now. What are the challenges and opportunities?
3. Everyone talks about the concept of “Minnesota Nice.” Can you comment on what that means for philanthropies in Minnesota?
4. What trends do you see in the future for philanthropic activities in Minnesota and what are the major issues or factors that you think will affect philanthropy over the next 50 years?
5. What type of state do you want to leave to your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Said a little differently, but still speaking of our state, what do we want the future to be like for the next generations?
6. Given where we’re at right now, and the trends we see, what are the key issues and challenges we have to address to make that future real? What are the “got-to-deal-with” issues?
7. In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood and thinking about the next fifty years to come, what will you do and encourage other Minnesotans to do to make the future a better place at the Bicentennial (200th anniversary)?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

Mr. King has two unique perspectives of Minnesota: one rural, as someone raised in Greater Minnesota; and one urban, as a current resident and worker in the Twin Cities. Mr. King’s statewide perspective and broad range of professional experiences make him an apt leader for the Minnesota Council on Foundations (MCF), a nonprofit, regional membership association of small and large, public and private foundations and giving programs. Mr. King has been working full-time at the Council for the past 22 years.

One of the MCF’s duties is to track philanthropic spending in the state of Minnesota. Its most recent report on giving found that Minnesotans gave approximately \$5.1 billion to nonprofit organizations; approximately \$4.1 billion was from individuals and \$1.1 billion from corporations and foundations. Mr. King said that human services received the majority of giving (25%), while education (21%) and public affairs/society benefit (18%) came in second and third. Minnesotans also gave to the arts (16%), health (11%), environment/animals (4%), religion (3%) and international affairs (2%). “The places where you see the most given is a statement about priorities and needs,” Mr. King said.

Over the past several years, giving trends in Minnesota have remained relatively consistent. However, some challenges are beginning to emerge. Primarily, the financing of nonprofits is changing; tax dollars are shrinking and, as a result, there is a greater demand for corporations and individuals to fill in the gap. Mr. King believes that this situation requires all sectors of society—including the government—to find new solutions for the provision of services. He would like to see better partnerships between the key actors of businesses, government, and the nonprofit community to address these challenges.

Corporate giving in Minnesota has a long history, beginning with the Dayton brothers’ philosophy of “enlightened self-interest” and the 5% and 2% Clubs. “The culture of giving [in

Minnesota] has been institutionalized in large part due to the foundations these companies established,” Mr. King observed. He believes that, while “Minnesota Nice” may have something to do with the high levels of giving, he would rather see something more like “Minnesota Strategic” fuel the future of corporate giving. “I hope that there is a strategic analysis of giving,” Mr. King said. “Where will we get the most benefit? At the intersect of corporate interest and community need.” The role that corporations can play in improving society through giving is a large one, and one that Mr. King hopes will continue to grow in the future.

When thinking about the next fifty years, Mr. King wishes to leave a legacy of access to future generations: access to good education and a good economy where a person “can be the best you can be.” He thinks that the got-to-deal-with issues in the present are also education and the economy. The two are related, he said, with education and economic issues key to addressing the gaps (racial, social, etc.) in society.

Reflecting on philanthropy in Minnesota, Mr. King concluded, “The thing that makes Minnesota unique is the vibrancy of our civic society and civic engagement...we all have to strengthen our connections with one another.”

Interview with Tim Penny, President and CEO of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
October 2008

Interview Questions

Area: Government/Politics

1. What unique perspective (your background, upbringing, affiliations, etc) do you bring to this interview?
2. From your point of view, what do you think is the state of government and politics in Minnesota right now (a snapshot of where the state is at)?
3. What trends do you see in the future for Minnesota government and politics?
4. What are the major issues or factors will affect Minnesota politics and the legislature over the next 50 years?
5. What type of state do you want to leave to your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren? Said a little differently, but still speaking of our state, what do we want the future to be like for the next generations?
6. Given where we're at right now, and the trends we see, what are the key issues and challenges we have to address to make that future real? In other words, what are the "got-to deal with" issues?
7. In light of the 150th anniversary of statehood and thinking about the next fifty years to come, what will you do and encourage other Minnesotans to do, to make the future a better place at the Bicentennial?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

Mr. Penny is a lifelong resident of Minnesota and his family has lived in the state for the past five to six generations. In 2002, he ran as the Independence Party candidate for governor and served as the U.S. Congressman for Minnesota's First Congressional District from 1982 to 1994. Currently, he is the president and CEO of the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, a regional development organization funded by the McKnight Foundation and local donors. Mr. Penny is also a Senior Fellow at the University of Minnesota, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute's Center for the Study of Politics and Governance.

In this interview, Mr. Penny focused on politics and governance in Minnesota. When asked about the state of Minnesota's politics in 2008, he thought that we were in the midst of a stand-still; that the state was not being as innovative or ambitious as it could be in the face of challenges. "In terms of energy, diversity, and aging...we don't seem to be acting as aggressively as we could be," he said. Mr. Penny identified the key challenges in Minnesota's future as renewable energy, bio-business, entrepreneurs, immigrants, and aging workers: these are all components of what could be opportunities for the state, if only they are addressed thoughtfully in the present.

Part of the problem may be budgetary and another part political. Mr. Penny believes that solving the challenges faced by the state will involve doing more with less. However, political gridlock, he said, impedes progress. "I don't see a lot of constructive working relationships [in Congress] right now," he remarked. Mr. Penny hopes that the third party in Minnesota could be one way of reducing gridlock and increasing constructive change, and sees promise in the third party's ability to consistently take at least 5% of the vote over the past 10 years.

When thinking about the next 50 years, Mr. Penny wants to leave, to future generations, a state with a vibrant economy, healthy citizens, and a global outlook. He believes that a vibrant economy is key to a high standard of living and supports better lifestyles. It also contributes to

another important area: preserving natural resources and the great outdoors, and encouraging investment in parks and recreation.

Moreover, Minnesota, like other states, is quickly becoming part of a global society. “We are a part of the world now more than ever before and key to economic success is being competitive in the world,” Mr. Penny said. He hopes that the state will be competitive not only in terms of business, but also in terms of education and other forms of social capital. “I want Minnesota to be known to the world to be a cut above the rest,” he said.

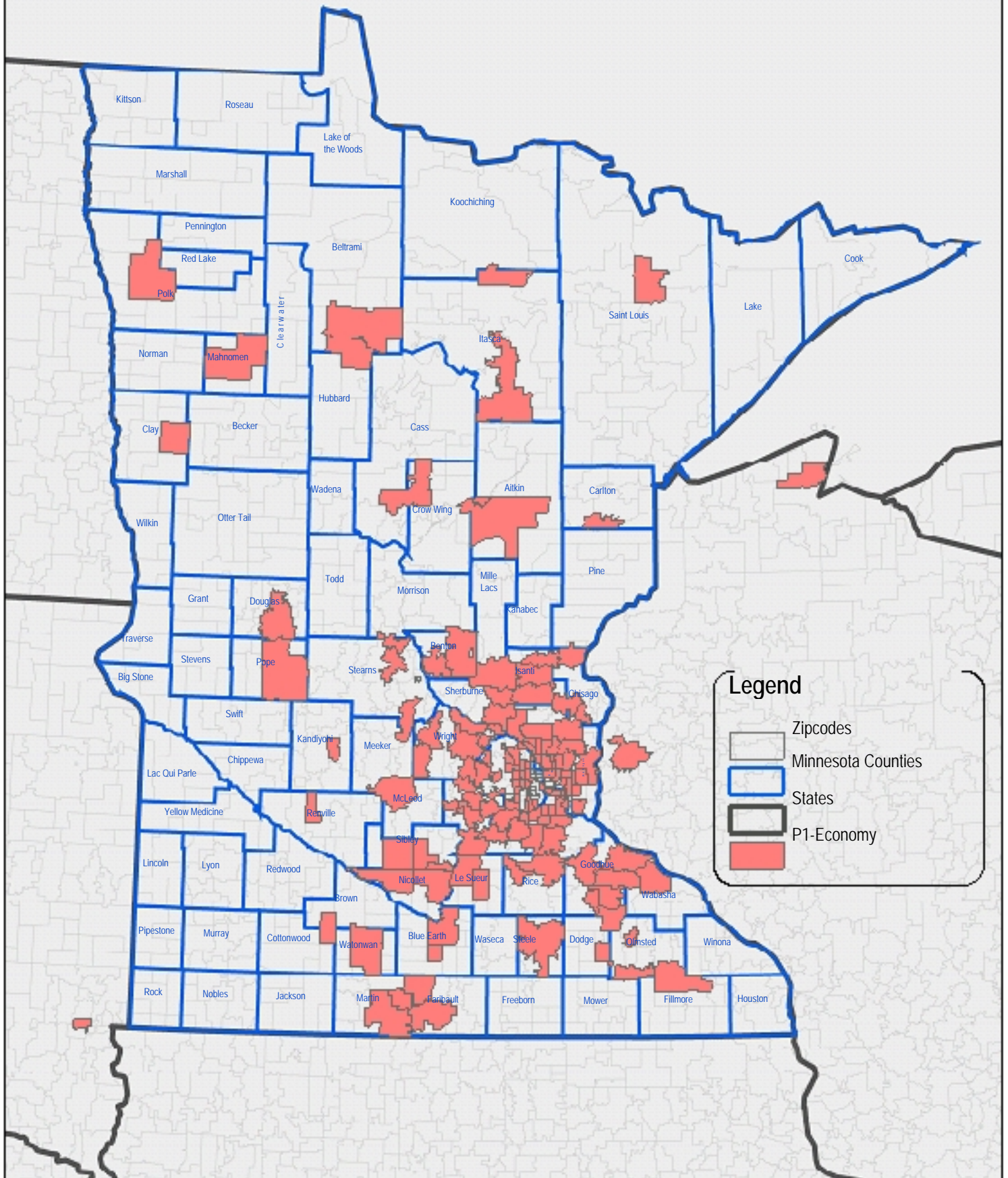
To make this future a reality, Mr. Penny believes that the got-to-deal with issues right now are the aging population and workforce, economic diversification, education (especially early childhood), and the state’s aging infrastructure. “I see a real opportunity for Minnesota to become a leader in the bioscience industries,” Mr. Penny said, if the state begins investing strongly in education and research now. He also believes that one phenomenon, the growing segment of aging baby boomers, could be a great asset in terms of building a strong core of dedicated volunteers in the state.

Mr. Penny sees a future of challenges and opportunities, and the potential for success if we play our cards right in the present. For his part, he hopes to use his skills and knowledge to make a difference today that will contribute to a better future. Mr. Penny is investing in the future through his scholarship fund for Minnesota state universities, teaching, and his continued involvement with the third party. “I can use my voice and my influence to make a difference,” he concluded.

Minnesota Sesquicentennial Survey

Priority One: Economy

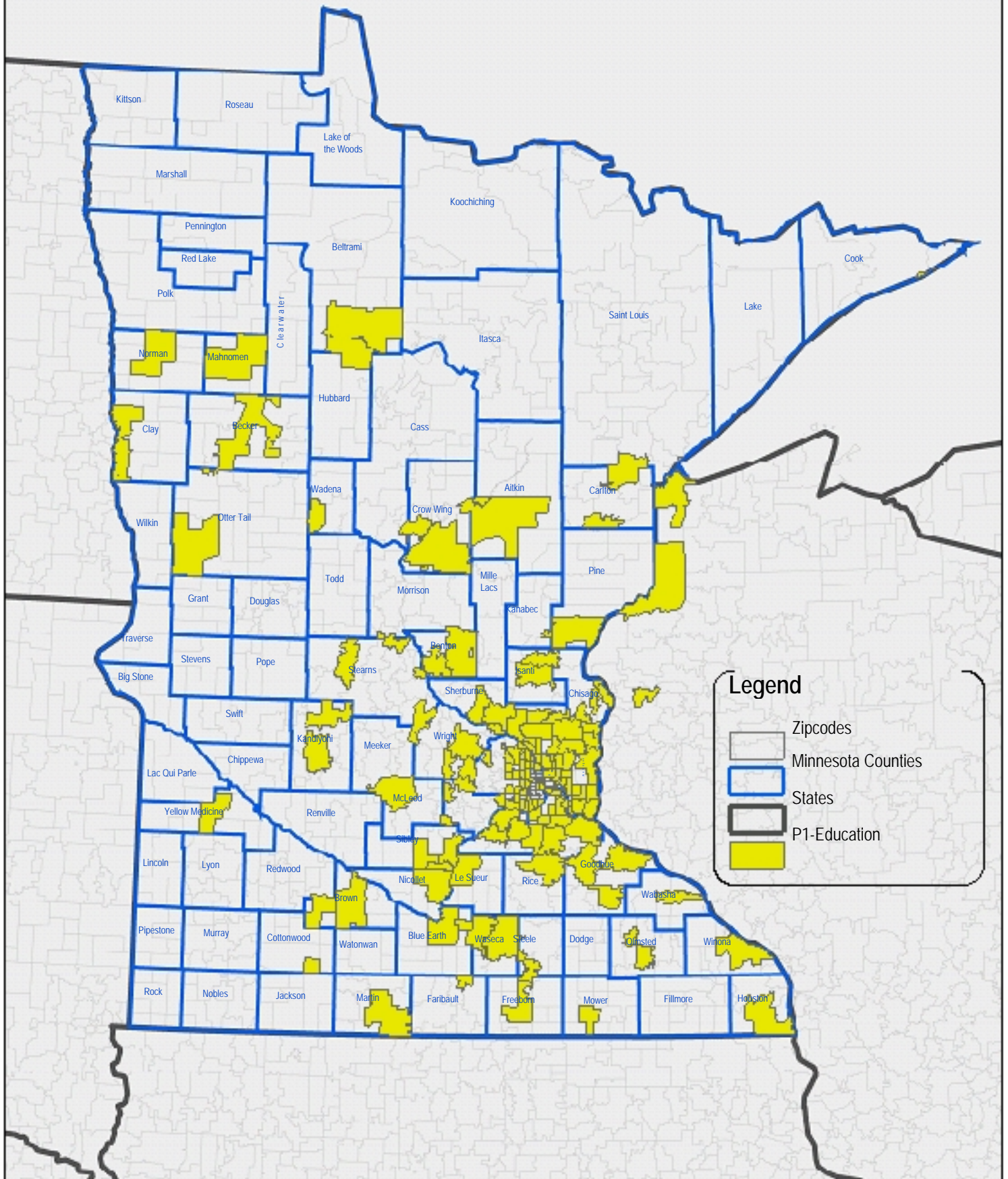
Survey administered at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (8/21/2008-9/01/2008)



Minnesota Sesquicentennial Survey

Priority One: Education

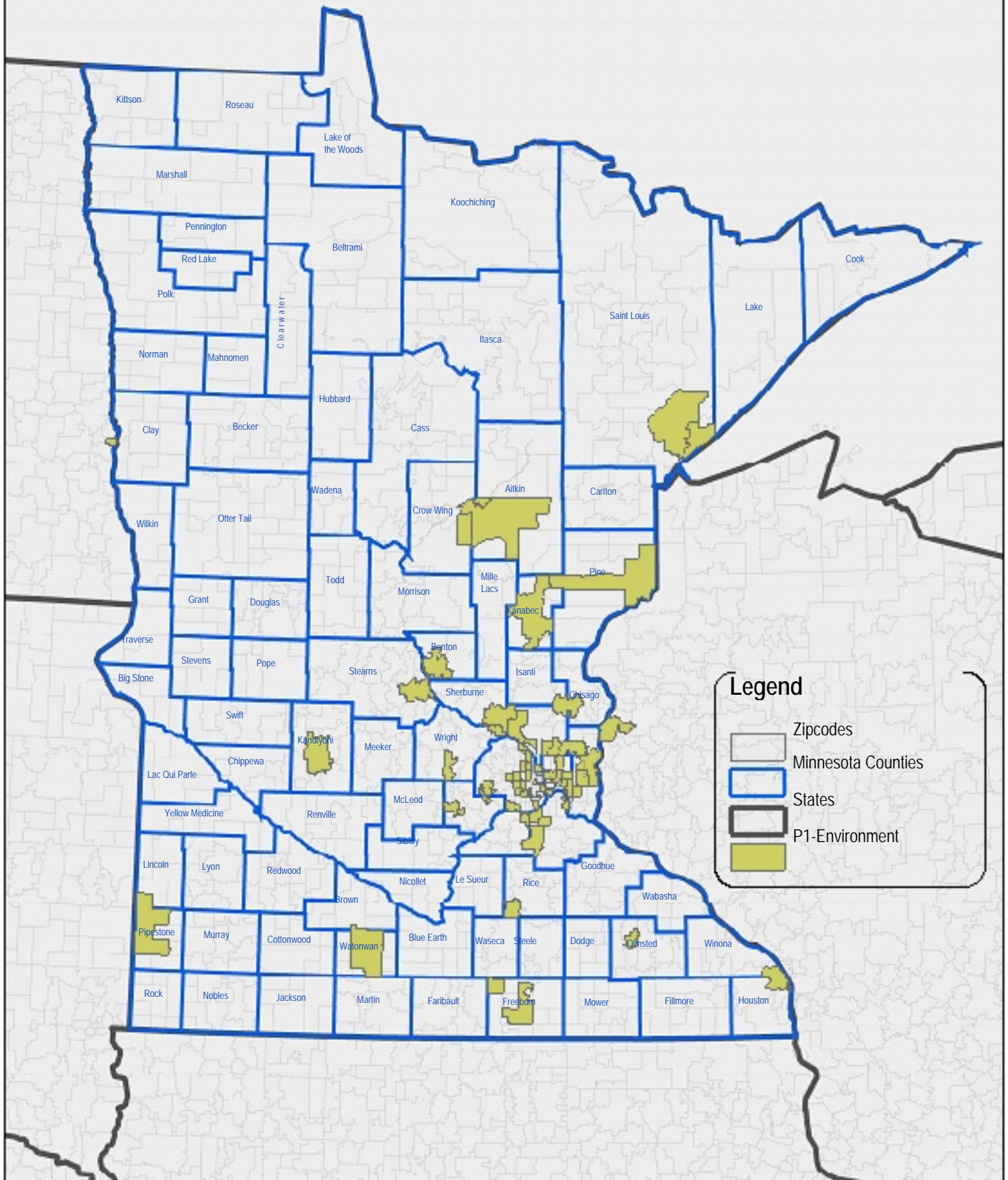
Survey Administered at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (8/21/2008-9/1/2008)



Minnesota Sesquicentennial Survey

Priority One: Environment

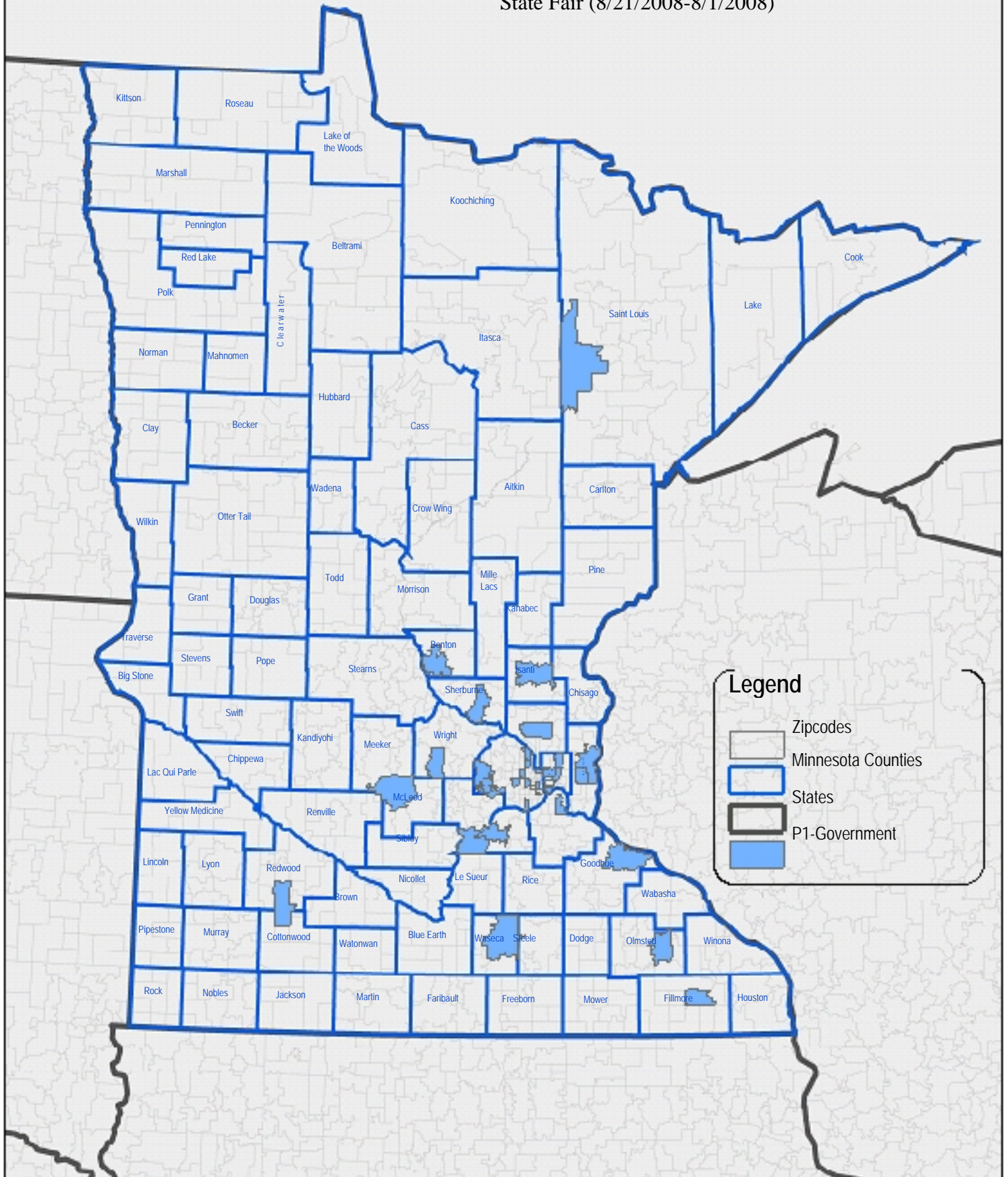
Survey administered at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (8/21/2008-9/1/2008)



Minnesota Sesquicentennial Survey

Priority One: Government

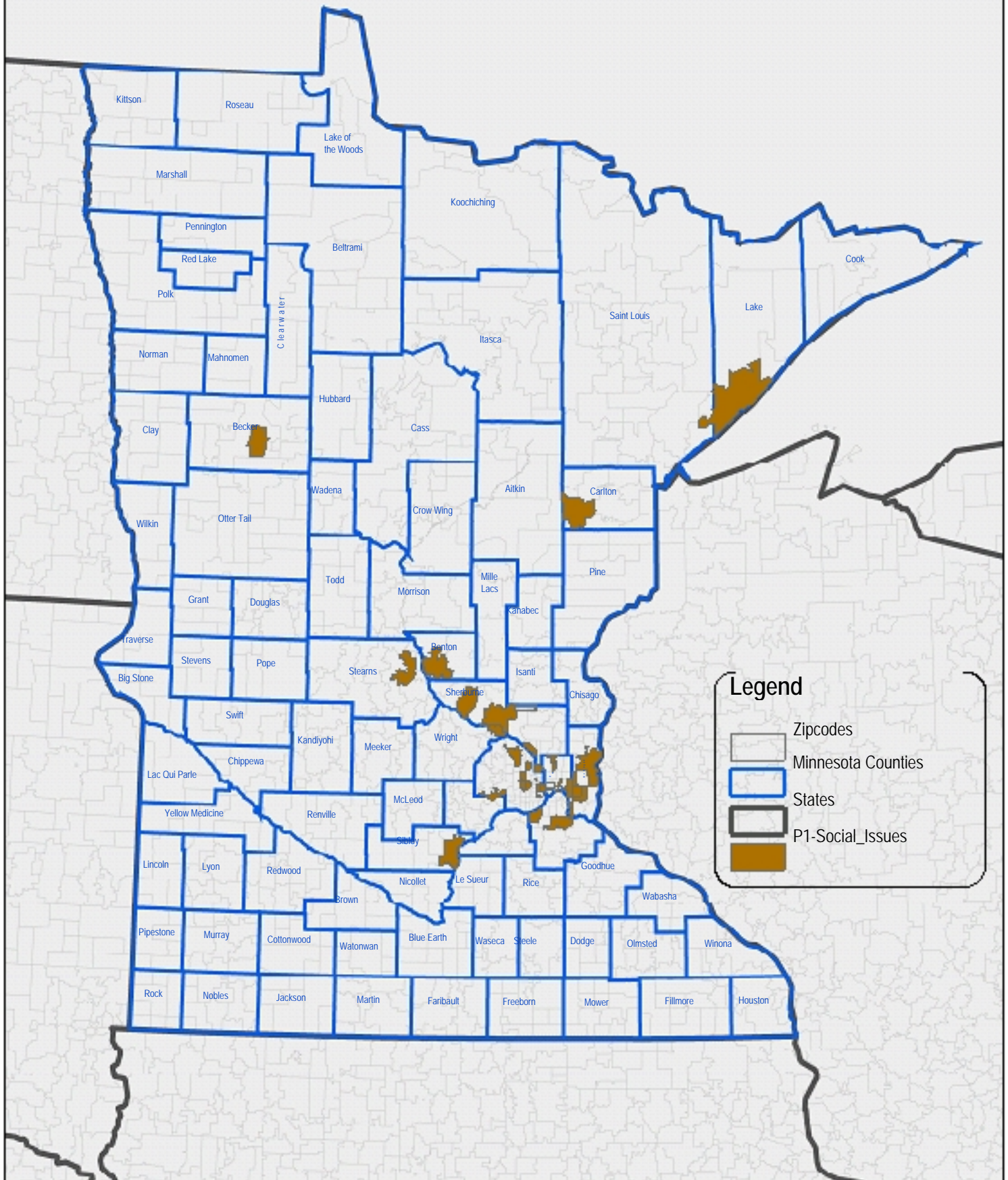
Survey administered at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (8/21/2008-8/1/2008)



Minnesota Sesquicentennial Survey

Priority One - Social Issues

Survey administered at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (8/21/2008-9/1/2008)



Minnesota Sesquicentennial Survey

Priority One: Transportation

Survey administered at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (8/21/2008-9/1/2008)

