



Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**



**What drives our
resourc engine?**



**What are we deeply
passionate about?**



**What can we
be best at?**



Helping Communities Prosper

2011 Annual Report



Message from the Chair

It has been a pleasure to serve as chairman this past year. Thank You to the Board and Staff for a successful and exciting year.

During World War II, *Fireside Chats* were famous for communicating the state of our country and our progress in the war. It may be time that our region has some *Fireside Chats*. Our UMRDC Region 6W serves 5 counties and 37 communities with the goal to improve the quality of life within our region.

Please take the time to look over our annual report and see the many projects the UMRDC is involved in. The Meander Art Crawl is a good example of how successful a project can be with communities working together, from Ortonville to Clara City, Dawson to Benson, and cities in between.

Now for some stunning statistics that have been brought to my attention recently. Our UMRDC office opened in Appleton and staff was hired in July, 1974 - 37 years ago. Many changes have taken place in the past 37 years, one being the population of the region:

1970 population 61,809

2010 population 45,190

Net loss of 16,619, 27% of our population!

Five out of the top fifteen fastest declining counties in the state were in our region. Minnesota gained 385,000 people from 2000-2010. Our five county region lost 4,821. We have two counties that are 6th and 7th in the state with the lowest percentage of households with people under age 18, and 20% of our population is 65 and over (the state is 12.7%).

People are on the move today, according to migration statistics from the IRS, 2005-2008. Our five county region lost 1,055 persons.

- Our 5 county region has 3,346 square miles with a population of 45,190.
- Cass County has 2,017 square miles with a population of 28,567.
- Beltrami County has 2,501 square miles with a population of 44,442.
- St. Louis County, the largest in land area, has 6,225 square miles and a population of 220,226.

The question is, how long can we afford all the duplicated services for an area the size of our region? Do we need, and can we afford, 25 county commissioners, 5 sheriffs, county attorneys, engineers, auditor-treasurers, data processing managers, land and resource managers, license bureau directors, recorders, social service directors, veterans services officers, etc.? Maybe it's time we start to consolidate some of our services.

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) REDESIGN is about finding better ways to provide many services for all of Minnesota through:

- Bold Local Leadership,
- Increased Collaboration,
- Improved Process Efficiency,
- Structural Changes to the status quo.

Do we want to do something, or do we want the state to do it for us?

Thank You.



Message from the Executive Director

Throughout this report, you will find a "laundry list" of projects we have been working on over the last year. I do assimilate the process of developing our annual report to laundry (and I do quite a bit of laundry at home with a farmer husband and three kids). Just like at home, we have to sort and organize and get things cleaned up and in order. This process is not easy, but it has to be done. After our laundering process, we end up with a dazzling pile of projects scattered throughout the region that all support our mission: "Enable the region to thrive through assisting units of government."

We take our mission seriously. Regional Development Commissions were created in legislature to serve and assist units of government, and we want to help with their needs. Those needs change and we need to respond to those changes.

You can see, by looking through this report, the diversity of projects we do. The needs we assist with vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In any given day or week, we write grants; provide technical services like mapping; review ordinances; file reports; manage finances for projects and organizations; administer surveys; develop comprehensive plans; we coordinate and facilitate meetings; research programs and funding sources; or find answers to questions from local, state or federal agencies. Depending on what we are working on, our expertise can be a mile wide and an inch deep or a mile deep and an inch wide. This is because we need to be as flexible as possible to respond to the needs of our region. Often, there are new programs and new projects for us and we need to learn on the job. On other occasions, we have a great deal of confidence and experience to lend to the project.

That is why I love this job - the variety. I never know what kind of "laundry" we will need to sort and organize over the coming year, but I know it is our job to get it done!

Mission

Enable the region to thrive
through assisting local governments

Board of Directors

Big Stone County



Brent Olson
County Board



Angela Doren
Municipalities



Harold R. Dimberg
Townships

Chippewa County



Jim Dahlvang
County Board



Mike Thein
Municipalities



Jim Schmaedeka
Townships

Lac qui Parle County



Harold Solem
County Board



Jeff Olson
Municipalities



Mark Bourne
Townships

Swift County



Gary Hendrickx
County Board



Heather Giese
Municipalities



Warren Rau
Townships

Yellow Medicine County



Gary L. Johnson
County Board



Scott Peterson
Municipalities



Mitch Kling
Townships

Public Interest & Tribal Council



Juanita Lauritsen
Work Force
Council



Pamela Lehmann
Lac qui Parle
County EDA

School Board



Brett Buer
Dawson-Boyd



Kathi Thymian
Ortonville



Bruce Swigerd
Prairie Five CAC, Inc.

Staff



Back

Jen Remboldt
Administrative
Assistant

Jacki Anderson
Community Development
Senior Planner

Jenifer Fadness
Communications
Planner Assistant

Front

Arlene Tilbury
Financial
Director

Kristi Fernholz
Tourism
Senior Planner

Dawn Hegland
Executive
Director

Barb Jordahl
Financial
Planner

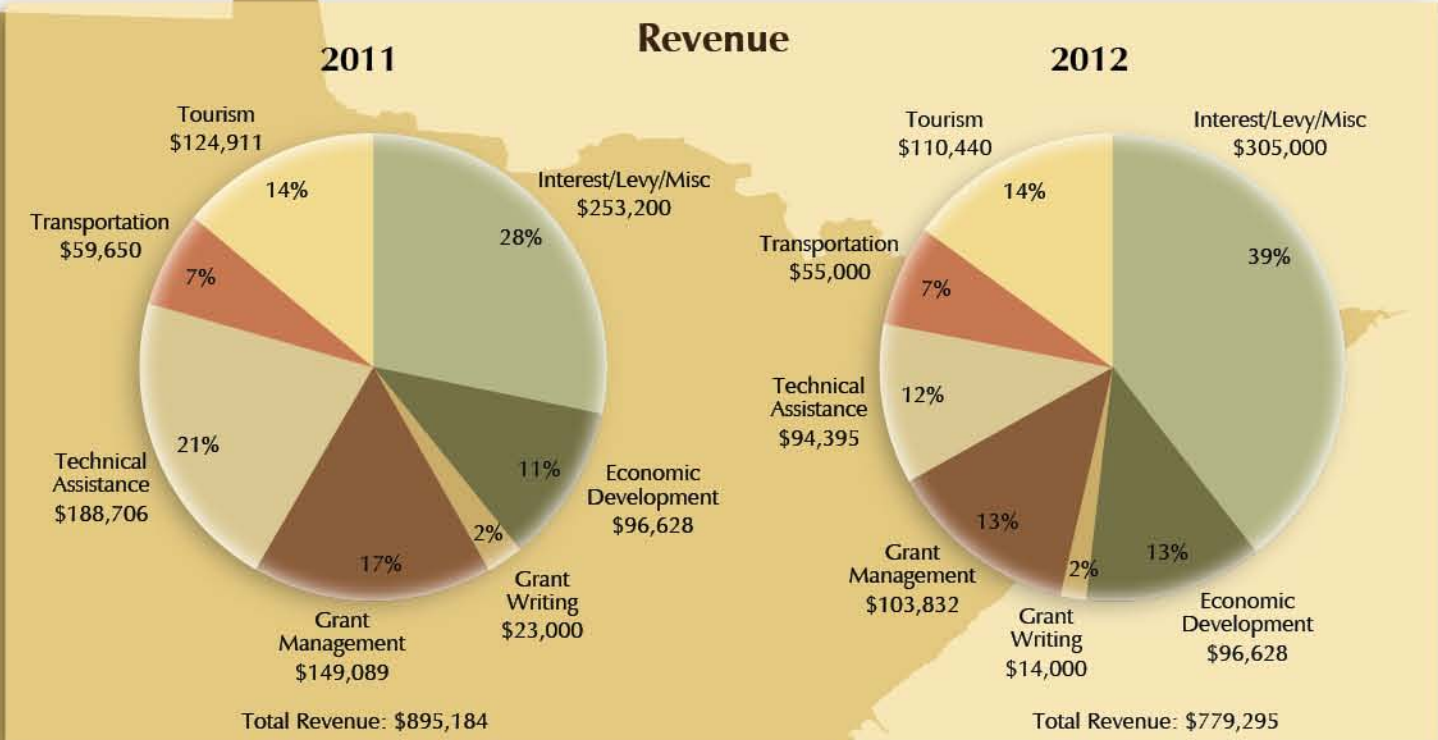
Financial Report

Revenue and Expenditure Comparison, Current FY 2011 and Proposed FY 2012



Serving the 5 counties,
37 communities,
1 tribal nation,
94 townships, and
10 school districts
in the Upper Minnesota River Valley

The amount of money invested in our region
as a result of the UMRDC's work:
\$1,588,409



	FY2011	FY2012
Salaries/Fringe	511,200	508,065
Data Acquisition	500	500
Commissioner's Expense	39,000	38,000
Audit	12,000	13,000
Hedge Hog Grants	15,000	20,000
Computer Technical Assistance	25,000	18,000
Contract for Services/Comm Dev	17,000	12,000
Copy Charge/Xerox Lease	10,000	10,000
Depreciation	10,000	10,000
Dues	3,000	3,000
Insurance	3,500	3,500
Legal Fees	10,000	2,000
Miscellaneous/Employee Morale	4,000	4,000
Office Rent	12,210	12,210
Postage	15,000	10,500
Printing/Advertising	11,000	5,000
RDC Marketing/handouts	10,000	2,000
Registration/Training	13,500	13,000
Repairs/Maintenance	1,000	1,500
Software Maintenance	11,000	11,000
Sub./Publications	2,000	2,000
Supplies	10,500	7,000
Telephone	8,000	7,000
Travel/Staff	25,000	25,000
Meander Art Crawl	16,700	18,450
Tourism Trade Shows/Ads/Byway	15,000	16,000
TOTAL	\$811,110	\$772,725

2011
Total Revenue: \$895,184
Total Expenditures: \$811,110
Excess Revenue: \$84,074

2012 Proposed Budget
Total Revenue: \$779,295
Total Expenditures: \$772,725
Excess Revenue: \$6,572

The UMVRDC's Good to Great Process

The UMVRDC continues to implement our **Good to Great** strategic planning process that is defining the future for the agency. The goal of this plan is to position the UMVRDC to best meet the needs of the local units of government it was created to serve.

Our strategic plan is based on Jim Collins' book *Good to Great*. We have spent the last five years focusing on moving our organization from good to great by examining our organizational values, what

we are passionate about, what we can be best at, and what drives our resource engine.

In 2010 the UMVRDC reviewed our strategic plan using *Good to Great* as a framework. Based on these ideas, we developed the three **Hedgehog Concepts** and our **BHAGs (Big Huge Audacious Goals)** shown on these pages.

The Hedgehog Concept

The Hedgehog Concept is an operating model that reflects a deep understanding of three intersecting circles:

- 1) what you can be the best in the world at,
- 2) what you are deeply passionate about, and
- 3) what best drives your economic or resource engine.

What Can We Be Best At?

Matching local needs with information and funding to accomplish projects.

Responding to community/regional needs
 Connecting communities with technical and financial resources
 Subject matter experts on planning, economic development, tourism, hazard mitigation, etc.
 Management of grants/programs
 Navigating state and federal regulations by acting as liaison
 Using our wide range of experience and networks to find solutions

Finding funds for projects
 Blending local and technical know-how
 Knowing our region and having a vested interest in it
 Working with multiple jurisdictions
 Managing time consuming projects that require good planning and bridging resources
 Grant writing
 Unbiased, results-based solutions



What Drives Our Resource Engine?

Excellent results at a reasonable price.

- Providing excellent service at reasonable cost
- Successfully completing projects with tangible results
- Responsive, knowledgeable service
- Talented staff with a wide range of expertise
- Local contracts
- Levy
- Knowing our communities and their leaders

UMVRDC Mission

Enable the region to thrive through assisting local units of government.



What Are We Deeply Passionate About?

Solutions consistent with the values in Region 6W.

- The rural quality of life
- Helping communities not only survive, but prosper
- Making the region a great place to live, work and play
- Assisting local units of government to address issues such as planning, zoning, technology, transportation, development, and tourism
- Acting as liaisons with local/state/federal agencies
- Implementing complicated projects
- Learning from the past and applying in the present to prepare for the future
- Desire to produce quality product
- Solutions that fit region's real needs and way of life
- Getting results
- Superior service

Big Huge Audacious Goals

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

(*Good to Great*, Collins, 2001)

BHAG Accomplishments in 2011

- **Community Development BHAG:** Be the premier agency for community development in Region 6W.
 - The UMVRDC had a total of 21 contracts for service with 7 different cities and 1 county for different types of planning, technical assistance and grant writing.
 - 3 cities and 1 county entered into more than 1 contract with the UMVRDC.
 - 2 cities entered into 3 or more contracts with the UMVRDC for service during FY11.
 - The UMVRDC assisted in the coordination of over 20 workshops/trainings in the region. (Broadband Classes, ED Pro's)
 - Prairie Waters Tourism Program was honored with a Collaboration Award from the Southwest Initiative Foundation.
 - Continue to implement activities for Prairie Waters Tourism Program.
 - Provided staff for the Meander Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl.
 - Provided staff for the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.
- **Marketing BHAG:** All local units of government (LUGs) in Region 6W will know who we are and what we do.
 - Introduced new RDC website that reflects our current branding. Site is continually being updated and used as a tool for consistent, timely communication with LUGs.
 - Continued to make all marketing efforts consistent with RDC branding.
 - Created new marketing packets that highlight various programs and services areas, while featuring specific project examples.
 - Sent at least 40 email blasts and at least 15 press releases.
- **Board Stewardship BHAG:** Have 100% active participation of the UMVRDC Board.
 - Processed 6 new board members in 2012. Completed orientation with 2, other members are scheduled for orientation.
 - Reappointed 3 public interest representatives: Economic Development: Pam Lehman, Workforce: Juanita Lauritsen, Community Action Agency: Bruce Swigerd.
 - UMVRDC staff coordinated 4 speaker engagements for UMVRDC Commissioners and other interested parties:
 - Cameron Macht, DEED Data Analyst, shared regional self employment data, August 2010;
 - Bill Coleman, Blandin Foundation Consultant, gave a presentation on broadband in Minnesota, October 2010;
 - Mark Nelson, MnDOT, spoke about Minnesota Go Transportation Vision, November 2010;
 - Patrick Weidemann & Shiloh Wahl, MnDOT District 8 & 4 Planners, discussed the Draft Area Transportation Improvement Program, March 2011.
 - Utilized the round robin at Commission meetings to share information and current issues with other jurisdictions.
 - Continued to utilize the Planner Update to inform and educate board members about the services and projects of the UMVRDC. Recycled the planner update into a monthly email blast to elected officials and government staff in the region.
 - Surveyed board members to determine priorities for an annual board event. Determined a board tour was the priority for 2012. The tour will occur on the July 2011 board meeting day and will feature projects the RDC has worked on in the region.
 - Surveyed Commission members quarterly about the process, content and functions of the board meetings.
 - Featured 9 Commission members in quarterly newsletters.

UMVRDC's Core Values

- Strong board stewardship
- Staff is accountable to and driven by the Board and the units of government in this region
- Integrity
- Respectful, open and transparent
- Agency's role is to assist, guide and facilitate projects and programs for units of government in this region
- Excellent customer service
- Progressive thought and action
- Value all of our communities
- Strive for excellence in work and products
- Collaboration and cooperation
- Value the region's lifestyle and all it has to offer
- Pride in the agency's abilities and capabilities

Grant Writing

City of Dawson

Jacki assisted the City of Dawson with grant writing services that helped secure \$500,000 from the Department of Employment and Economic Development's Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) program for improvements in their industrial park to assist expanding businesses. Funds would be used for road, curb & gutter improvements and would support a new pre-treatment plant needed for new and expanding business in Dawson's industrial park.

City Websites Grant

The Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC) Program offered grants to promote the use of broadband technology, so Kristi applied for funds to create websites for the smallest cities in Region 6W. Of the 19 of our 37 cities who do not currently have city websites, two communities stepped forward to be included in the grant. Echo and Bellingham will be working with Kristi and Jenifer to create their community websites. The grant will pay for start up expenses such as design, content development, and photos, while the cities will pay for ongoing expenses.

Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Grant Writing

Jacki and Michelle authored a short-form application for the City of Benson to rehabilitate eight homes, continuing the work from a prior grant to rehabilitate 17 homes. The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) approved the grant application in June for additional homes and work will begin late summer 2011 on the rehabilitation projects.

Forecast Grant

The UMRDC received \$2,000 to create a public art plan for Region 6W. Kristi will gather a team of people who have an interest in public art in our region. Forecast staff will assist by researching other regional public art plans in areas similar to ours. This research will also outline the benefits for our communities and the economic impact of public art. Two planning meetings will be held with the local team to help complete a regional public art plan.

This grant is in collaboration with the Southwest Arts and Humanities Council, supported with funds provided by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund as appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on November 4, 2008.

Shared Services Grant

Michelle authored a Shared Services Grant Application on behalf of Benson, Clontarf, Danvers, and DeGraff. They were awarded \$25,000 from the State Fire Marshal's Office to complete a shared fire and rescue services study for the four cities. A local taskforce will be used to assist with the following elements of the study:

- Benchmarking existing fire services by examining staffing, budget, technology, political environments and facilities.
- Determining if shared services make sense from service level, political, technological and financing perspectives.
- Making recommendations for shared operational models, governance, funding, staffing, technology and facilities.

The study is expected to be complete by the end of 2011.

Grant Management

Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Grant Management

UMVRDC staff are experts in the fiscal administration and technical reporting obligations of grants like the Small Cities Development Program. Below is a list of communities we are assisting in the fiscal administration of their grants:

- NEW! Benson - \$172,400 for the rehabilitation of 8 homes.
- Benson - \$487,321 for rehabilitation of 17 homes and 5 commercial properties
- Appleton - \$564,750 for rehabilitation of 15 homes and 10 commercial properties.
- Clarkfield/Granite Falls - \$573,288 for rehabilitation of 22 homes, 4 rental properties, and 1 commercial property.



Browns Valley Flood Recovery

Barb continues to provide technical support and serve as fiscal agent to the City of Browns Valley in their flood recovery efforts. Browns Valley has utilized over \$7.9 million from local, state and federal funding sources for housing assistance, city repairs, and a diversion project.

Granite Falls Flood Recovery

During this fiscal year the City of Granite Falls received an additional \$1,440,445.00 from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The Levee Improvement and Dike Road Repairs Projects were completed this year. In all, over 200 residential and commercial properties will be protected by the levee that was raised, and the repairs done on the dike road will provide additional erosion control during flood events. Work continues on the Prentice Street Project that provides flood protection for the residents on this street.

Since the floods of 1997 and 2001, UMRDC staff have worked with the City of Granite Falls in their flood recovery efforts utilizing over \$16.8 million from state and federal funding sources.

Special Regional Project: Broadband



At the end of 2010, UMRDC staff began work on part of a successful 2 year \$4.7 million federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant awarded to the Blandin Foundation. The UMRDC region was selected as one of 11 demonstration communities in the state to develop projects and strategies to increase broadband utilization in the region. The project - called Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC) - emphasizes broadband education, training, technical assistance and barrier removal. The project has numerous components that began implementation over the last year.

Broadband Classes for Businesses

The University of Minnesota Extension is encouraging local businesses to use the Internet to reach new customers, sell more products and services, and stay connected with their existing customers. They are hosting 21 free classes to teach internet based technology between Ortonville, Montevideo, Clara City, Dawson, Madison, Appleton and Benson. The classes are:

- Doing Business Online
- Google Tools
- Using Social Media in Business
- Roadside Advertising in a Digital Age
- Marketing Your Website



PCs for People Staff delivered computers to the RDC offices. These 25 computers were distributed throughout the region.

PCs for People & Atomic Learning

The UMRDC worked with county Human Service agencies to distribute 25 refurbished computers from the non-profit PCs for People to low income individuals in the region. These recipients also are receiving a free one year subscription to Atomic Learning that provides an endless array of teaching modules for computer and internet literacy.

Digital Literacy Classes

The Southwest Minnesota Workforce Center and Adult Basic Education (ABE) received \$49,500 for Digital Literacy online curriculum instruction. Training courses will teach the following skills:

- Using a computer, mouse, touchpad and keyboard;
- Develop a resume, do an online job search, apply for jobs online;
- Prepare for employment (career goals, interests and abilities, possible jobs, etc.);
- Perform basic computer tasks on the job;
- Understand basic online searches and basic internet safety;
- Evaluate sources and resources;
- How to communicate electronically.

Knowledge Worker Classes

Working with Minnesota Learning Commons, the Knowledge Worker course will provide online instruction for knowledge-based occupations. The class will teach career pathways, technology in the workplace, and innovation, as well as problem solving, critical thinking, importance of networking relationships, and entrepreneurship.

Three class sessions are going to be held in our region in Ortonville sponsored by the Ortonville EDA, MnWEST Community Technical College Canby and the Montevideo Workforce Center.



MIRC grant recipients presented status reports to the MIRC Steering Committee in May 2011.

Local Demonstration Projects Funded Through MIRC

Dawson-Boyd Schools, \$25,000: Creation of a Multimedia Collaboration Center, a Student Tech Team, and a hybrid (online and classroom) Teacher/Community Training Academy.

Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority, \$25,000: Funding for the LQP Computer Computer.

Big Stone County Public Internet Project, \$6,554: Provide more convenient public access to government information.

Ortonville Public Schools & Ortonville Economic Development Authority, \$10,000: Assist businesses in developing websites and online information.

Johnson Memorial Health Services, Dawson, \$15,000: Using computerized technology to track and monitor conditions of 6 patients.

Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission, \$4,405: Create websites for the cities of Bellingham and Echo.

UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund



The UMRDC Revolving Loan Fund (RDC RLF) assists with financing for business start-ups, expansions, and retention projects needing working capital, fixed assets and real estate. A total of \$120,200 in revolving loan funds were lent to three businesses.

Madison Meats received \$37,200 for equipment and working capital to assist with the reopening of the local meat market.

Al's Mercantile in Dawson received \$50,000 to assist with the purchase of the hardware store.

Handeland Chiropractic in Clarkfield received \$33,000 for equipment and fixed assets to help establish a new chiropractic office.

As a result of these three loans, 13 jobs are expected to be created and retained within the first 24 months.

In addition to RLF funds, another \$547,100 was leveraged in public and private funding creating a total of \$667,300 of investment for these three projects.



Brad Handeland (left) received RLF funds to purchase equipment for his new chiropractic office in Clarkfield.

The RLF worked with owner David Roth (below) to reopen Madison Meats.



Technical Assistance

Clara City Comprehensive Plan

Kristi is working with Clara City to create their first comprehensive plan so the city can make informed decisions to guide the future. Kristi and Jacki are working with the Clara City planning commission to research, gather public input and write the plan.

The plan will include a community profile, chapters on land use, housing, parks and recreation, economic development, transportation and public utilities/facilities, and a section on implementation with goals and action plans. In order to gather information from the public, Clara City has decided to develop a city-wide survey to be distributed this summer and will incorporate the results into the plan.

County Hazard Mitigation Plans

Katie and Jacki completed All-Hazard Mitigation Plan updates for Big Stone, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine Counties and the Upper Sioux Community. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) deemed the plan updates "excellent." Swift and Lac qui Parle Counties will be finishing their updates in the fall of 2011.

The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan challenges our counties and cities to determine the likelihood of disasters, refine strategies to mitigate potential disasters, and look at the costs of disasters. These plans are now ready to be used as a resource to support requests to the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) and FEMA for mitigation planning and assistance. All finished plans can be found on the UMRDC website at www.umvrdc.org.



Granite Falls Strategic Planning

The Granite Falls Economic Development Authority (EDA) contracted with the UMRDC to assist with strategic planning for community projects. Jacki and Michelle facilitated a startup meeting with Granite Falls EDA, Granite Falls Riverfront Revitalization group, and other interested organizations and citizens. Together, they identified community projects and potential resources for implementation. A total of

68 ideas were gathered and prioritized. RDC staff helped identify potential funding sources for the top ten projects in the final report prepared for the Granite Falls EDA. The community already had great ideas; the goal of the strategic planning process was to give the community some focus and outline the next steps to bring their ideas closer to implementation.

Graceville Website

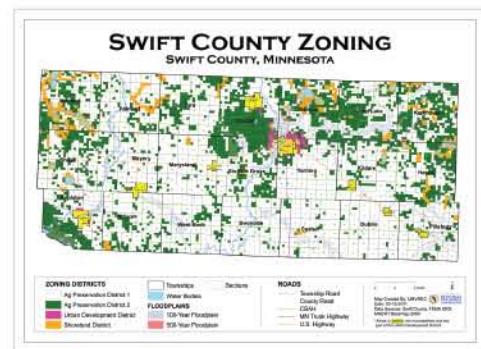
The city of Graceville has a new presence on the internet! They contracted with the UMRDC to set up a GovOffice website for their community, and it went live in November 2010. Kristi worked with the Graceville city clerk to determine what should be included, gather content, take additional photos, and create a custom design. The website features many photos from in and around their community.



www.gracevillemn.com

Swift County Zoning Update

Swift County contracted with the UMRDC to update their current Zoning Ordinance and streamline all additional county ordinances into a Code of Ordinances. This project included review of Floodplain Management, Shoreland Maintenance and Protection, and five separate land use regulation ordinances, which now make up a comprehensive Zoning and Land Regulation Ordinance. Additional



ordinances include an updated Park Ordinance and Mini-Truck Ordinance.

Katie also updated their Zoning Map to complement the new Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Map will be available to the general public on the Swift County web site, in addition to

township-specific zoning maps to show increased detail of zoning districts.

This project is an extension of Swift County's Comprehensive Plan, which was created in collaboration with the UMRDC in 2007.

Upper Sioux Community Energy Plan

The Upper Sioux Community has contracted with the UMRDC to complete a long range energy plan that is expected to be finished this fall. The energy plan initiated a panel discussion on renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal. The process also incorporates energy audits and data collected by the Upper Sioux Community staff about existing energy usage on the reservation. This fall, as part of the long range plan development process, strategies and best practices for energy efficiency will be identified and considered for implementation. This energy plan will be the first of its kind in our region and we look forward to continuing to work with the Upper Sioux Community and completing their long range energy plan.

Transportation

Transportation Planning

The UMRDC continues to provide local transportation planning assistance to the region through a contract with the MN Department of Transportation. Transportation issues continue to be critical issues for our region. We rely heavily on the existing transportation system to get to work, school, medical appointments, vacation, and to get commodities into and out of the region. The UMRDC would like to assist the local units of government to ensure its people and businesses of this region are adequately served by all modes of transportation.

Michelle participated in ATP 4 and ATP 8 meetings to review and rank applications for 2015 federal funds for roads, bridges, trails, public transit, and railroad crossings. The total investment in Region 6W for 2012-2015 is \$12,020,716 in federal funds.



Special Regional Project: Regional Recruitment

For the last 2 years Dawn and Jacki have facilitated a group of regional economic development professionals looking for strategies to attract and retain higher skill, higher wage demographics in the region. Research has shown that those in the age range of 35-45 years are seeking out rural lifestyles.

The topic of their meetings has been coined "Regional Recruitment" and the project includes three phases: education and research, mobilization of resources, and implementation and marketing.

Work completed to date includes:

- Focus groups with new residents in the region to understand influential factors in their decision to move to our region.
- A mail survey was done to ask additional new residents about their influential factors.

- An economic impact analysis of newcomers based on data collected from surveys and focus groups.
- An analysis of where the highest concentration of potential new residents exists in Minnesota.
- An analysis of the online presence of businesses in all 37 cities in the region.
- A report called "Regional Recruitment: Strategies to Attract and Retain Newcomers" that can be found on the UMRDC website.

Our regional team has been fortunate to receive support and assistance from the University of Minnesota including: Extension, Crookston EDA Center, Morris Center for Small Towns Students in Service Intern, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs Community Assistance Program Intern.

Upper Minnesota Valley Local Public Transit - Human Service Coordination Plan

As a result of Congress passing the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA - LU) in August of 2005, grantees under the New Freedom Initiative (53117), Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC - 5316) and Elderly and Disable Transportation Program (5310) must meet certain requirements in order to receive funding. These programs are required to be part of a "locally developed coordinated public transit-human service transportation plan". MnDOT contracted with the UMRDC to complete an update of the 2006 transit coordination plan we completed.

The goal of the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan is to identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provide strategies for meeting those needs; and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation in the region.

Michelle and Dawn have been working through the planning process with a local steering committee that oversees the development of the plan. Public input was gathered to date through a transit provider questionnaire and a public workshop to identify strategies for addressing the transit needs in the region. A summary of the identified strategies is available on the UMRDC website under the "take note" section on the bottom of the home page. Later this summer the UMRDC will post on our website a draft version of the full plan for public comment. This plan will integrate the strategies for the region and provide background and a framework for coordinated transit in the region.



Key Economic Findings of Newcomers in Region 6W:

- 46% reported household incomes of \$75,000 or greater in 2009.
- Total household incomes of \$3.7 million in 2009.
- Due to the spending of this income, an additional \$1.7 million in economic output was created in the five-county region in 2009.
- This included 16 additional jobs and \$433,000 in labor income. In other words, for every 3 "newcomer" households, 1 existing household, on average, received \$27,000 in new income.
- Creation of \$132,000 in state and local tax collections in 2009.



Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

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

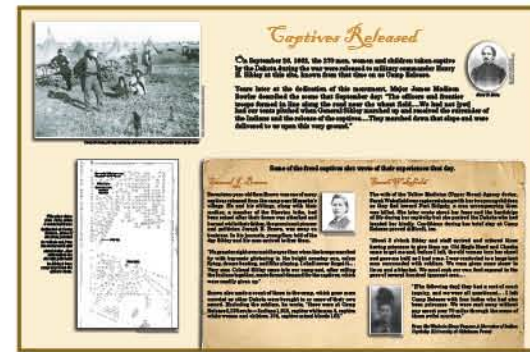
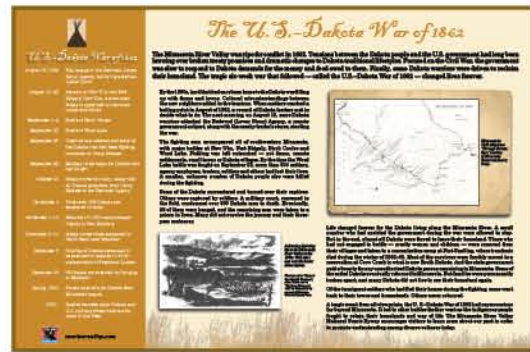
The 287-mile Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Alliance is a group of committed individuals representing a variety of interests including Chambers of Commerce, various attractions and historic sites, State Parks, local and state governmental bodies, private businesses, and concerned individuals. UMRVDC has been providing staffing and fiscal services to the Byway since 1996.

Projects include:

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

- Received funding from the Minnesota Historical Society Historical and Cultural Grant Funds made possible through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment for 10 interpretive signs about the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 along the Minnesota River Valley.
- Received a Schmidt Foundation grant to continue the U.S.-Dakota War interpretive project and additional interpretation along the Minnesota River.
- Submitted one application for federal Byway funding to update and enhance the corridor management plan.
- Updated aging byway road signs along the byway.

By late summer, the byway plans to have the new signs installed at the following locations: Camp Release in Montevideo, Renville County Park #2, Henderson, Milford Monument (near New Ulm) and New Ulm.



These are two of the ten interpretive signs that will be placed along the byway to assist travelers with interpreting historic sites from the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.



- Hosted two familiarization tours. In September 2010, over 20 people toured in and around Redwood Falls, including Alexander Ramsey Park and Gilfillan Estates near Morgan.

The other tour was held in June 2011 and started at the New Ulm library and toured Fort Ridgely, the Lower Sioux Agency, Redwood Falls and Morgan.

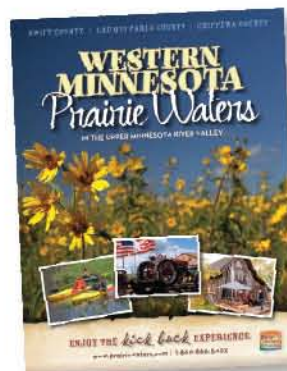
www.mnrivervalley.com
888.463.9856



Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Tourism

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

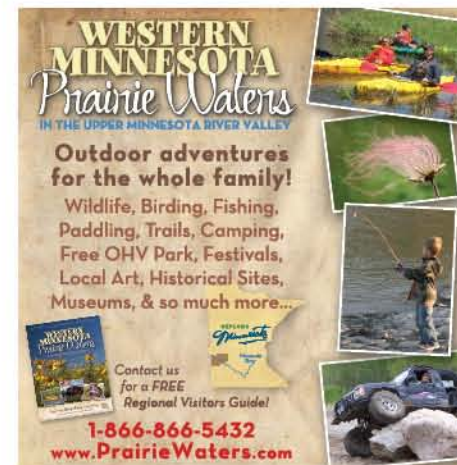
In May 2010, Prairie Waters received the Southwest Initiative Foundation's (SWIF) Collaboration Award. The award was a great honor, and included invitations to the SWIF Best of Southwest Minnesota 25th Anniversary Banquet, a handcrafted vase by potter Bill Gossman, and a grant of \$1,000. Kristi and Jenifer accepted the award on behalf of Prairie Waters.



Visit our website or call our toll-free number to request one of our FREE Visitors Guides!

- Other highlights from the past year include:
- Continued to promote the area and highlight events on our Facebook Fan page. We currently have over 600 fans that we market to with weekly updates.
 - Re-designed the Prairie Waters Regional Visitors Guide. This full color, glossy publication is the premier visitors guide for our region with 25,000 copies printed and distributed throughout the state and mailed to those who request information.
 - Wrote a successful grant to Explore Minnesota Tourism procuring more than \$10,000 for advertising in our region.
 - Hosted a free wine tasting at Hinterland Vineyards near Clara City for our Annual Gathering. The event was a great success with approximately 80 people in attendance.
 - Maintained and updated the Prairie Waters website.
 - Received over 3,000 requests for information in 2010 and 1,400 in the first half of 2011.
 - Created and placed numerous ads in our regional papers, statewide, and in out-of-state publications such as Midwest Living, AAA, and South Dakota Magazine.

www.prairiewaters.com
866.866.5432

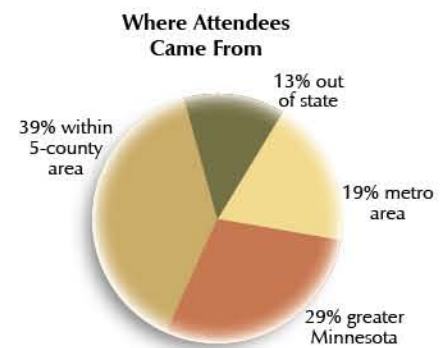
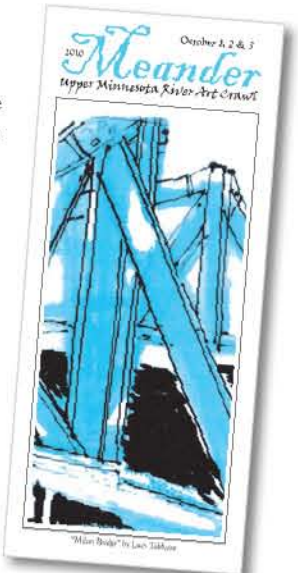


Meander Art Crawl

Kristi and Jenifer helped coordinate planning, manage finances, and develop and implement marketing for the 7th annual Meander in October 2010. Forty-five local artists participated.

2010 Meander Economic Impacts

- \$69,395.00 in Meander art sales was reported by artists during the Meander weekend, an increase of 4% from the previous year.
- The average art sales per artist was \$1,652.
- 83% of the money raised to organize the Meander through sponsors and artists was spent on products or services (printing, paper, advertising, graphic design, staffing) in the five county area.
- Customers visited an average of 11 studios over the weekend.
- 79% of customers said the quality of the art was excellent.
- 78% of customers said their overall experience was excellent.
- 80% of customers said they plan to attend the next Meander.



Malena Handeen (left) discusses her art in the Loose Tooth Cowgirl Saloon, the gallery on her farm near Milan.



Meander 2011 is September 30, October 1 & 2!

artsmeander.com 866.866.5432



An art-filled display (below) at the home of Deb Connolly near Danvers.



Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

323 W. Schlieman Ave. Appleton, MN 56208

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

www.umvrdc.org

PRST STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 63
APPLETON, MN

Fact

The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson

In groups where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement — to stand by one's heart or core values and encourage the heart and core of others — is the quality of "honking" we seek.

