



Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

2019 Annual Report



Message from the ...



Executive Director

It has been a year of new things.

The UMVRDC spent time this year looking at new ways to do our work, new internal processes, new ideas for ways we can address ongoing critical needs in the region, and ways to build new partnerships.

We are excited that we have added two new team members during the last year and look forward to the new ideas and work they will be accomplishing on behalf of the region. New staff will allow us a little more capacity to implement some of the new ideas we have for doing our work.

UMVRDC staff and the board began a new strategic planning process this spring and we will be working over the summer to prioritize all the new ideas and recommendations and determine an implementation plan for the first year. There is an eagerness in the recommendations of the plan to continue to be able to respond to the large body of projects we do regularly in the region. Things like transportation, economic development, business lending, development of the arts, marketing of our region, grant writing and administration. There is also a real interest on how to get to some of the bigger needs and opportunities in our region. Things that don't have a simple path or solution like housing; childcare; diversity, equity, and inclusion.

I also spent time this year working on some organizational development and planning. I worked with a consultant with the goal of developing some new ideas on how our small office can attract and retain talent, provide a vibrant and flexible work environment, arrange and organize both our work and our employees in new ways to maximize skills and interests. The ideas we brainstormed were bold and stretched me to think about things in new ways. I will be working with the staff and the board over the next year to roll out some of these new ideas and look forward to seeing how they will impact our work.



“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”

-Walt Disney



Board Chair

Greetings,

After a long, cold, snowy winter—probably the worst I have ever seen—who would ever think we would have a spring like last year, wet and doesn't want to warm up.

Our board is again completely full, all seats at our board meetings have representation. Attendance at our meetings are excellent, probably one of the best of all the meetings I go to. Meetings are a strong asset to the UMVRDC because members are becoming more vocal all the time. Staff are excellent at presenting monthly updates along with the Director monthly report. Communication between the staff and board is the number one reason for good performance. Thanks staff, board members, and executive director!

Our fiscal year is July 1 to June 30 and staff, executive director, and board of directors are working on budgets, personnel, and other annual requirements. These annual processes will reflect the new ideas that were developed this spring through organizational and strategic planning efforts. We look forward to implementing these new ideas throughout the coming year.

I have been board chair for three years now. One more year will complete my term limits as chair, so after next year we will be having a new chairperson. Thanks again to all that participate with and help make the UMVRDC such a great organization!



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Feel free to contact us at anytime via email, phone or stop by the office! Stay connected by visiting our website for project updates, funding opportunities, regional examples and more!

Follow us on Facebook!

www.umvrdc.org 

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Commission Board Members

Big Stone County



Jay Backer
County Commissioner



Chad Hoppe
Graceville City Council



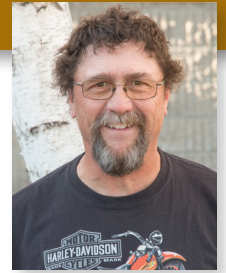
Harold R. Dimberg
Ortonville Township



Jim Dahlvang
County Commissioner



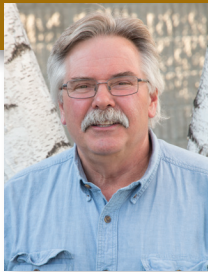
Jim Curtiss
Montevideo Mayor



Jim Schmaedeka
Louriston Township

Chippewa County

Lac qui Parle County



Roy Marihart
County Commissioner



Jeff Olson
Dawson City Council



Mark Bourne
Hamlin Township



Gary Hendrickx
County Commissioner



Warren Rau
Hegbert Township



Lucas Olson
Benson City Council

Swift County

Yellow Medicine County



Gary L. Johnson
County Commissioner



Gene Bies
Canby City Council



Gene Stengel
Granite Falls Township

Tribal Council



Chuck Swanson
Upper Sioux Community

Public Interest



Carrie Bendix
SW MN Private
Industry Council



Dawn Regnier
MN West Community
& Technical College



Winthrow Block
Clara City
Administrator



Diane Kepner
Prairie Five CAC, Inc.
Board



Brett Buer
Dawson-Boyd School
Board



Bill McGeary
Benson School
Board

School Board

Financial Report

AMOUNT OF MONEY INVESTED IN OUR REGION AS A RESULT OF THE UMRDC'S WORK IN FY19:

\$4,404,091

Contractual services the UMRDC provided to the region
\$604,667

Funds brought to the region as a result of our work
\$3,799,424

FY19 Ending Account Balances

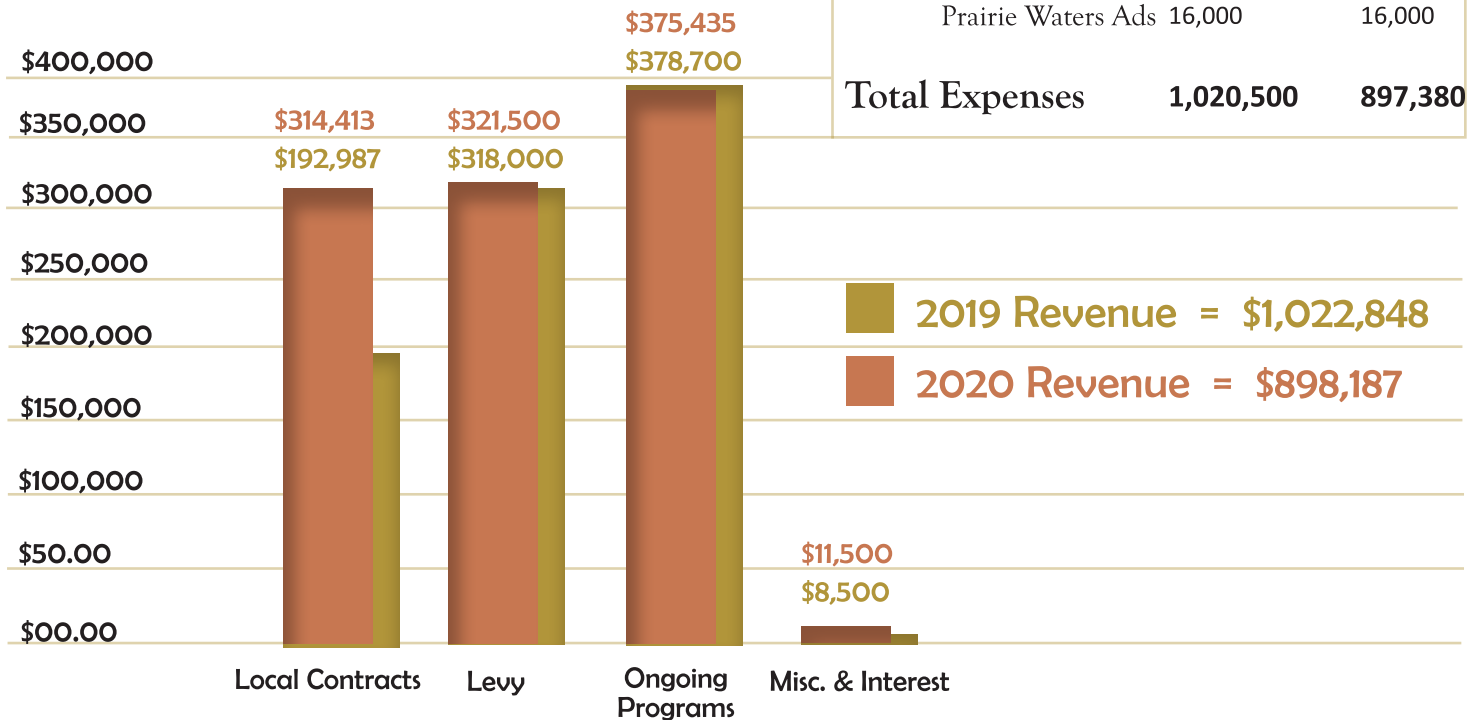
General Checking	\$150,568
Money Market	\$316,054
CD	\$351,157
Scenic Byway	\$10,507
Auto	\$64,510
Equipment	\$29,485
RLF Available for Lending	\$496,588

The most recent audit report is available to view at www.umvrdc.org.

Expenses

Total Expenses	FY20	FY19
Salaries/Fringe	811,740	654,710
Commissioner's Expense	25,500	26,500
Audit	14,000	14,000
Contract for Services	28,100	55,600
Copy Charge/Xerox lease	4,000	4,000
Depreciation	3,000	3,200
Dues	3,000	5,000
Insurance	1,300	1,300
Legal Fees	2,000	2,000
Miscellaneous	1,000	3,500
Office Rent	12,210	12,210
Postage	3,500	3,500
Printing/Advertising	4,500	4,500
RDC Marketing	2,000	2,000
Registration	4,000	4,000
Repairs/Maintenance	1,000	1,000
Software	8,650	7,000
Sub./Publications	2,000	2,000
Supplies	4,500	6,860
Telephone/Internet	8,000	8,000
Staff Travel	30,000	30,000
Morale	2,000	2,000
Wellness	2,000	2,000
Web Hosting/Maintenance	3,500	3,500
Pass Thru Activity		
Meander	23,000	23,000
Prairie Waters Ads	16,000	16,000
Total Expenses	1,020,500	897,380

Revenue





City of Graceville



City of Clarkfield



City of Granite Falls



City of Milan

Rehabilitation of Homes and Businesses

The UMVRDC staff continues to author grant applications and provide the general administration of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) which helps cities and communities with funding for housing, public infrastructure, and commercial rehabilitation projects.

Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley

The Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley SCDP grant was awarded in the summer of 2016 following the UMVRDC working with the three communities through their application process. The \$637,500 award is being utilized to rehab 26 owner-occupied homes and six commercial properties.

Benson

The UMVRDC has been working with the City of Benson's SCDP grant awarded in 2017. The UMVRDC's authored grant in the amount of \$638,250 will wrap up in September of 2020 and will have benefited an estimated 20 owner-occupied homes and six commercial properties.

Clarkfield

The City of Clarkfield was awarded a SCDP grant that will be available through September 2021. Clarkfield's \$1,107,430 grant will be used to rehab fifteen owner-occupied homes, five commercial buildings, and their water tower rehabilitation project.

Granite Falls

The City of Granite Falls was awarded a SCDP grant that will be available through September 2021. Granite Falls will be able to provide \$625,888 in grant funds to 11 owner-occupied homes, seven single family rental homes, and six commercial properties.

Canby

The City of Canby was notified in the June of 2019 that their UMVRDC authored SCDP grant application had been awarded. The City of Canby's upcoming project total over \$1.3 million will allow 17 owner occupied homes and 12 commercial businesses to receive needed rehabilitation.

Milan-Watson

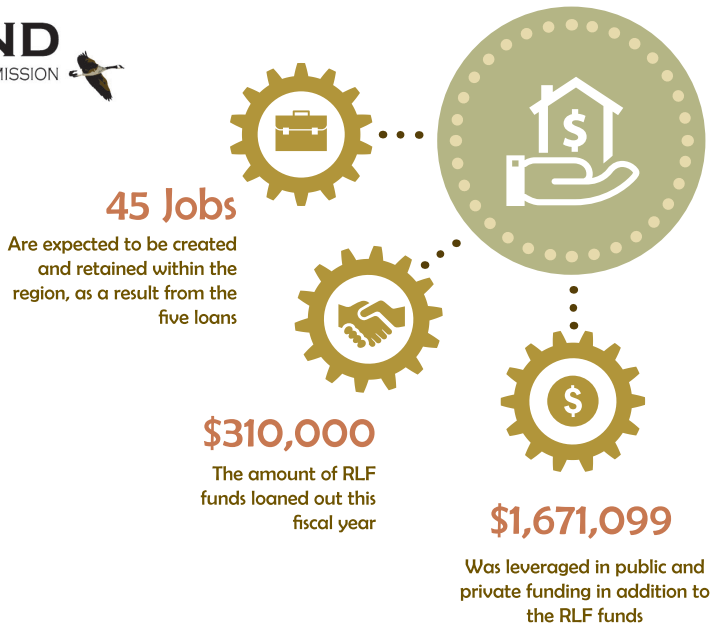
Milan and Watson were also notified in the June of 2019 that their UMVRDC authored SCDP grant was awarded. This joint application will provide rehabilitation to 14 owner occupied homes along with 16 multi-family rental units. Four commercial properties will also receive rehabilitation through this almost \$1.1 million project.

Business Lending

RLF Portfolio 6/30/19	
Total Loan Funds	\$1,755,302.05
Loans Current	33
Loans Default/ Deferred	0
Funds Committed	\$26,000
Total Receivables	\$1,258,713.95
Total Available for Lending	\$407,588.10

A combination of 45 full and part time jobs were created or retained as a result of the five new business loans closed by the UMVRDC during this last year. In total, the RLF lent \$310,000 to businesses in the five-county region. Loans for the businesses listed were approved for equipment, fixed assets, and real estate.

A total of \$1,981,099 of RLF funds, along with additional public and private dollars were spent on these five projects. Financial partners in the projects include F & M Bank of Appleton, CenBank, Dawson Co-op Credit Union, First Bank & Trust, Southwest Initiative Foundation, Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority, and the Ortonville Economic Development Authority.



- \$40,000** Appleton Power and Equipment, Appleton
Equipment/Inventory – Business Expansion
- \$100,000** GoFasters Powersports & Marine, Ortonville
Real Estate and Business Assets – Business Expansion
- \$40,000** After Five Supper Club, Madison
Equipment - New Business
- \$40,000** Hilltop Bar and Grill, Dawson
Equipment/Inventory – New Business
- \$90,000** Headquarters Bar and Grill, Graceville
Equipment/Inventory – Business Expansion

UMVRDC Seeks and Administers Local Loan Funds

Following the UMVRDC's assistance in writing the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Business Development Grant applications, both the City of Appleton and Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority received just under \$100,000 in grant funds to establish Revolving Loan Funds. Those grant dollars, paired with local funds from each of the entities, provide a new resource for funding new or expanding businesses.

The City of Appleton provided Grain Inspection, Inc with a \$149,999 loan in order for their business to relocate and expand their services. This estimated \$320,000 project allows for twenty-one jobs to be retained and created three additional jobs.

The Lac qui Parle Economic Development Authority approved and closed on two loans since being awarded the grant. The After Five Supper Club in Madison and Hilltop Bar, Grill, & Event Center in Dawson were recipients of the newly established funds. Total investment equaled \$437,499 for the two Lac qui Parle Economic Development Authority projects and 15 jobs were created or retained.

The UMVRDC has also been asked to consult with the Dawson Economic Development Authority on development and preparation of a framework, timeline, and funding structure for their own loan fund.

Browns Valley Grant Administration

The UMVRDC is in the second year of a contract to provide the City of Browns Valley fiscal agent and technical assistance for their \$750,000 DNR Flood Damage Reduction Grant. All designs permits and easements have been completed in the spring of 2019 with construction to be completed the fall of 2019.

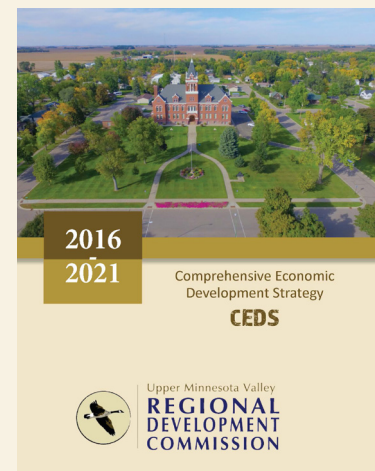
Browns Valley Diversion Project will reduce future flooding in Browns Valley. The project includes completion of a levee, culverts, ditch restoration and excavation. The project is state funded. UMVRDC staff are assisting the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District and the City of Browns Valley.

Economic Development Administration Funds Diverse Work in the Region

The UMVRDC annually receives funding from the U.S. Dept. of Commerce EDA to develop a work plan that impacts economic conditions in the region. Our guiding plan is called our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and it outlines keys issues and strategies in the region.

At the end of 2015, Regional Development Commissions across Minnesota completed *DevelopMN*, an overarching plan that looked at common issues and opportunities between regions. This plan created a new framework that all regional CEDS across the state followed.

The CEDS uses **four cornerstones** identified in *DevelopMN*. The UMVRDC uses these cornerstones to guide our annual work under economic development. Below is a list of the cornerstones and the work that the UMVRDC is performing under each.



Human Capital	Economic Competitiveness	Community Resources	Foundational Assets
<p>Developing, retaining, and attracting talent are critical for Greater Minnesota to sustain and grow rural businesses and communities.</p> <p>Developed and promoted a resident attraction program (Get Rural MN) under Prairie Waters regional marketing program.</p> <p>Developed regional childcare case studies.</p> <p>Served on the LYFT Career Pathways Advisory Committee. LYFT engages high school students in career skills and experiences through classes in conjunction with a local business or industry.</p> <p>Participate in the Manufacturing and Engineering Advisory meetings between businesses, Minnesota West, agencies, and school districts (YME, Montevideo, RCW, MACCRAY, and Lakeview) to develop education and business partnerships in the manufacturing and engineer career pathway.</p> <p>Participated in local broadband discussions like the Swift County Blandin Broadband and Yellow Medicine County Broadband Taskforce and statewide efforts like the Minnesota Broadband Coalition.</p>	<p>Making the region an attractive environment for growth requires communities to develop and link all available assets to support innovation and encourage business growth.</p> <p>Facilitated a business focus group as part of Prairie Water’s Get Rural initiative to focus on key recruitment challenges and regional workforce shortage issues.</p> <p>Worked on the concept and funding for the development of a regional developable properties inventory.</p> <p>Assisted Appleton and the Lac qui Parle County EDA in writing a USDA grant to establish a business loan fund. The UMVRDC continues to provide technical assistance to the funds by coordinating the loan process with local businesses. We are exploring the same idea with Dawson.</p> <p>Reviewed possibilities from the Opportunity Zone designation. We assisted the Granite Falls EDA with an application for the redevelopment of a property using this designation.</p> <p>Continued to write and administer grants from Minnesota Department and Economic Development Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) which helps cities and communities with funding for housing, public infrastructure, and commercial rehabilitation projects.</p>	<p>Communities seek to maintain rural values, their heritage through the preservation and improvement of local social, cultural, and natural assets.</p> <p>Developed and promoted Prairie Waters and the Get Rural initiative as a place for visitors and residents to get information about the region.</p> <p>Organized local and regional arts initiatives like the Meander Art Crawl and numerous local public art projects.</p> <p>Helped plan and seek funding for park and recreation facilities like Memorial Park in Granite Falls and Lac qui Parle County Park.</p> <p>Supported healthy communities by developing Safe Routes to School Plans and implementation strategies.</p>	<p>Proactive and collaborative approaches/ strategies to address infrastructure needs in a cost-effective manner by managing the access to, maintenance, replacement and growth of assets like transportation, utilities, and water.</p> <p>Worked with regional representatives to promote broadband deployment, specifically in Chippewa and Yellow Medicine Counties.</p> <p>Developed broadband case studies highlighting processes and resources utilized for broadband deployment projects within the region.</p> <p>Tracked broadband deployment by providers in the region.</p> <p>Helped organize a grant application to look at transit coordination needs in the region.</p> <p>Hosted a regional housing workshop to share examples in the region about substandard and dilapidated structures.</p> <p>Advised numerous communities on funding and resources for infrastructure improvements.</p>

Workshop on Substandard Buildings in our Communities

On January 11, 2019, the UMVRDC hosted a workshop where 43 people attended to discuss strategies for dealing with substandard buildings within the region.

This workshop highlighted city and county examples of proactive approaches to substandard and dilapidated properties. The program featured a presentation by the UMVRDC, a panel of speakers sharing local examples, and a round robin attendee discussion. Participants walked away with strategies that could work in their community. A resource center was created on the UMVRDC website as a result.



Canby Housing Inventory

Yellow Medicine County identified housing as a priority concern when they were determining economic development needs within the county. The cities of Granite Falls and Clarkfield previously worked with staff from the UMVRDC to facilitate a windshield survey of their housing stock. Recently, while preparing for a Small Cities Development Program grant application, the City of Canby determined this process would also benefit their community.

UMVRDC staff trained volunteers to collect housing conditions—consisting of type, condition, status, and occupancy, of the housing stock throughout the city. The data collected was tabulated and mapped which allows for the city and county to analyze the data in a variety of ways. Canby immediately used this data to apply for a grant to address scattered blight within the city.

Staff Support in Benson

The City of Benson is contracting with the UMVRDC to provide a variety of community and economic development support services. UMVRDC staff updated the city's marketing materials and staffed booths at the International Biomass Conference in Savannah, Georgia and at the American Dairy Products Institute in Chicago, Illinois. Additional support for work with Brightmark Energy on a possible new biomass facility is also being provided.

UMVRDC staff also are assisting the Benson Economic Development Authority by updating their revolving loan fund application, reviewing new loan applications, coordinating processes with borrowers, and managing their current loan files.

UMVRDC staff were involved with Benson's strategic planning staff retreat and the community strategic planning meetings, along with the assistance in the development of goals and strategies.



Granite Falls Redevelopment Plan

The Granite Falls EDA requested UMVRDC assistance in developing a Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Redevelopment Grant & Demolition Loan Program application and a proposal for the 2019 Minnesota Opportunity Zone Challenge competition administered by Community Exchange.

The proposed new development plan for the site will be for demolition of currently vacant dilapidated site structures and construction of a \$5 million, 10,000-12,000 square foot, three-story mixed-use building. The first floor will consist of retail/commercial storefronts. The upper two levels will consist of units available for market-rate housing. Total new residential unit occupancy will be approximately 28 units.

Lac qui Parle & Swift Counties All-Mitigation Plan

Hazard Mitigation Planning aims to break the cycle of disaster-repair-disaster and can help a community prepare for a more sustainable future.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires local units of government to have a multi-hazard mitigation plan in place in order to be eligible for funding that can proactively address disaster related issues identified in the plans. In order to continue to be eligible for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds, counties must update the plan every five years. Projects identified in the plans might include things like improved community sirens, storm shelters, improved disaster response processes and equipment, water diversion projects, and more.

UMVRDC staff has been working with Swift and Lac qui Parle Counties to update their plans.

Assistance to Firefighters Grant

The UMVRDC coordinated with 10 fire departments throughout the region to put together two applications for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program for a total of \$2 million dollars. The program helps fire departments across the country fund the replacement of critical fire equipment— such as turnout gear, air packs, and rescue kits.



Granite Falls Memorial Park

The UMVRDC continues to assist the City of Granite Falls with improvements to Memorial Park, which was designated a regional park in 2016 by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC).

The city is currently completing construction of phase one, which includes building a new shower house, improvements on the main park shelter, and making safety improvements to the park entrance. The request of \$595,613 was funded in the spring of 2017.

The city has just started to work on phase two which focuses on the south side of the park. The most visible changes so far are the invasive species removal in the park which has revealed the granite outcrops. Later this summer, work will begin to build the nature-based playground and renovate the RV campground. There will continue to be ecological restoration on the south side of the park for the next three years. Signage and trail improvements are also part of this phase which was funded in the spring of 2018 for a total of \$732,261 from the GMRPTC.

The UMVRDC helped with the funding requests, environmental review, and master planning process. The UMVRDC will be assisting with the next phase funding request due July 2019.

Lac qui Parle County Park

The Lac qui Parle County Park was designated as a regional park through the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) in the summer of 2018 after working with the UMVRDC to complete their master plan. Achieving regional designation makes the park eligible for Regional Parks and Trails Legacy funding where an estimated \$8 million will be available annually.

The UMVRDC continues to work with the Lac qui Parle County Park to identify steps needed to receive funding to implement the ideas outlined in their master plan. Their first phase of project includes the west entrance road, a bridge, and the park loop trail on the west side of the park. A funding request for this first phase was not successful in 2018, so a request will be submitted again in 2019.





Dawson Armory Building Conditions Assessment

The City of Dawson has received assistance from the UMRDC to help preserve a city-owned historic building. The Dawson Armory and Community Building, which houses the Dawson Public Library and Heritage Court Apartments, has experienced water infiltration through the roofing system and foundation. In 2018, the UMRDC wrote a successful grant to the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) for a Historical and Cultural Grant that funded a conditions assessment. The report was written over the past 12 months and the city is now positioned well to procure additional funding from the MNHS to move towards much needed renovation of the building.

Maynard Receives Grant to Preserve Historic Bank Building

The UMRDC has been assisting the City of Maynard with their historic Maynard State Bank building. Staff wrote and implemented a grant for the building to be placed on the National Register, which was completed in the spring of 2018. An additional \$10,000 grant was funded in the spring of 2019 to complete a conditions assessment on the building to help identify how to preserve this important historic building. Both grants were funded by the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS).



Kerkhoven Comprehensive Planning

The UMRDC started the planning process for the Kerkhoven Comprehensive Plan in early 2019. A task force has been meeting regularly to go through data and conduct a community survey that will help determine the goals and strategies to put into the comprehensive plan, which is meant to guide the city for the next 20 years (2020 - 2040).

A comprehensive plan serves as a legal basis for land use regulations and it provides guidelines for the city council and decision makers on how best to use city resources. It also gives an opportunity for residents to voice their shared vision for the community. The plan will include information on the past, present, and what it hopes for the future.

The task force will continue to meet in the coming months with a goal to complete their plan in the spring of 2020.



Transportation Planning

The UMVRDC continues to provide local transportation planning assistance to the region through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Transportation issues continue to be critical for our region to get to work, school, medical appointments, vacation, and to move products into and outside of the region.

Staff participate in the West Central and Southwest Minnesota Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs) in MnDOT Districts 4 and 8 respectively. The ATPs review and rank federally funded road, bridge, public transit, and transportation alternative projects. The total federal transportation investment for projects using federal funds in this region for the next four-year time period of 2020 to 2023 is \$85,223,626.

In addition to serving on the two ATPs, other transportation planning work done by staff this year includes:

- Working with local communities to develop Transportation Alternatives projects such as trails, scenic turn outs and overlooks, Safe Routes to School projects and other projects that enhance the transportation system for a wider variety of users

- Assisting MnDOT with various statewide planning such as the Bicycle System Plan, the Highway Safety Improvement Plan and the Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan

- Communicating with local communities about state and federal transportation opportunities and programs to help them improve their transportation system

MACCRAY has a Path Towards Safe Routes to School Plan

The ability to walk and bike safely continues to be a priority for Minnesotans. The MACCRAY School District (Maynard, Clara City, and Raymond) was recently awarded a planning grant to develop a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan which is aimed to improve safety, reduce traffic, and improve air quality near schools. The grant provides planning expertise and plan development support to schools. The plan will be completed by the UMVRDC and will be completed over the next 12 months.

MACCRAY joins a growing group of school districts with a SRTS program including: Lac qui Parle Valley, Montevideo, Yellow Medicine East, Dawson, Madison, Benson, Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg and Clarkfield.



UMVRDC's Hedgehog Grant



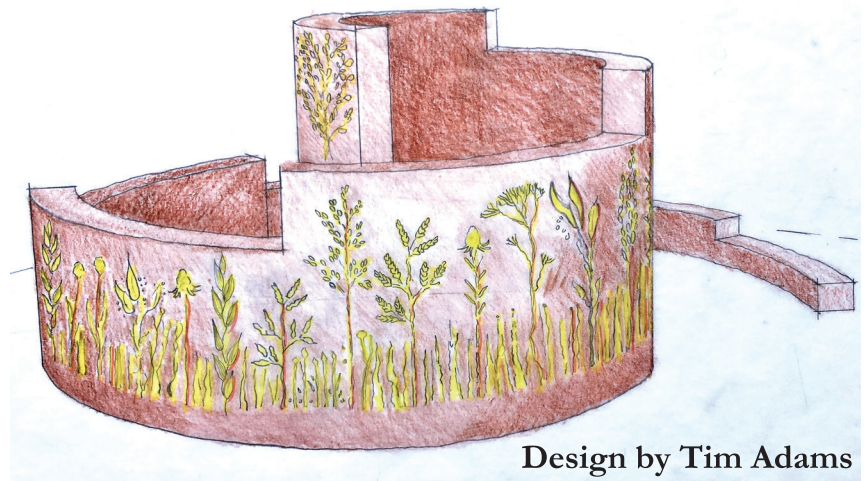
The UMVRDC's mission statement directs us to "Enable the region to thrive by assisting local units of government". We know through a recent survey that local governments have a lot of needs but are having a hard time paying for them. Those needs prompted the creation of the Hedgehog Grant to help subsidize the cost of the UMVRDC's grant writing and planning services. Applications and more program details are available at www.umvrdc.org.

In FY19, the UMVRDC used a portion of the local tax levy to subsidize the following work:

- \$5,000 City of Canby**
MN DEED SCDP grant writing to rehabilitate homes and businesses and improve community infrastructure.
- \$5,000 City of Kerkhoven**
City comprehensive plan.
- \$2,150 City of Dawson**
Historical Society grant writing for their library building.
- \$1,250 Granite Falls EDA**
MN DEED SCDP grant writing to rehabilitate homes and businesses and improve community infrastructure.
- \$3,700 Lac qui Parle County**
Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission planning.
- \$750 MACCRAY School District**
Grant writing for Safe Routes to School plan.
- \$1,500 City of Watson**
MN DEED SCDP grant writing to rehabilitate homes and businesses and improve community infrastructure.

Madison Arts Council

The UMVRDC has been providing grant writing and project coordination services to Madison to help them towards their goal of adding public art to their community. Their first idea is to have a lighted public art sculpture. Staff helped the group of invested community members identify the project, write and receive a planning grant to the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council, get artists interested in a project, help the group look through the design options, and pick a project. The group is now in the process of finding funds for the sculpture "Biome" that they would like to hire Tim Adams to construct.



Montevideo Arts Project

The UMVRDC has been providing grant writing and project implementation services to the Montevideo Arts Project (MAP) for several public art projects. MAP's 2018 project is to paint a set of cement stairs that are highly visible from main street. The UMVRDC wrote successful grants to the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council for a total of \$15,000. The project is under way and the staircase will be painted in summer 2019 with a theme of the Minnesota river and the river's plants and animals.

Prairie Waters Regional Marketing

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is a regional marketing effort of the four counties of Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Yellow Medicine, Swift and their communities. The purpose is to promote the area as a great place to visit, work, and live by highlighting the region's assets and opportunities. The program is managed by the UMVRDC and is funded by counties, cities, chambers, and economic development organizations in the region.

In addition to marketing the region's assets for attracting tourists, attracting and retaining residents is a key component for the sustainability of the region. Get Rural is an initiative of the Prairie Waters Program and serves as a regional recruitment tool that creates a positive narrative of the area—marketing to newcomers that will fill jobs, start new businesses, populate the schools, become home owners, taxpayers, and new community leaders. UMVRDC staff continue to update the Prairie Waters website to make it a convenient resource to find employment, housing, healthcare, education, childcare, stories on rural living, and things to do.

The program develops print and digital marketing campaigns and advertisements, manages and updates the website and social media outlets, hosts events, serves as a resource center, manages an online photo library, creates videos and much more.

The new 2019-2020 visitors/relocation guides are hot off the press and are being distributed. The guide is also available as a digital copy on the Prairie Waters and Explore Minnesota Tourism website.

Visit www.prairiewaters.com for projects, members, regional information, and more about the program! Follow the project on social media by searching "Get Rural MN" and/or "Western Minnesota Prairie Waters."

Facebook || Instagram || Vimeo || Pinterest

NEW 2019-2020 Guides
CHIPPewa | LAC QUI PARLE | SWIFT | YELLOW MEDICINE
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IN THE UPPER MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY
2019-20
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EMPLOYMENT/LIFESTYLE Lifestyle
Visit www.prairiewaters.com/category/stories to read firsthand accounts from Prairie Waters residents who'd live nowhere else but here.

	REGION 6W	MINNESOTA
MEDIAN MONTHLY RENT	\$577	\$906
MONTHLY CHILDCARE FOR 1 FULL-TIME CHILD	\$406	\$504
MEDIAN MONTHLY HOUSING w/ 1 CHILD	\$698	\$980
FAMILY OF 3 YEARLY COST OF LIVING	\$44,544	\$57,624
MEDIAN HOME VALUE	\$96,760	\$199,700

TRAVEL TIME TO WORK
<10 MINUTES
Region 6W 40.1% | MSP Metro 10.7%

COST OF LIVING
Cost to live for a typical family is \$43,896 in 6W, compared to \$60,864 in the Twin Cities. The median household income is \$52,781 in region 6W compared to \$65,699 statewide. The median family income is \$65,511 in 6W compared to \$82,785 statewide. 31.5% of households in the region earn more than \$75,000 per year.

Stay Connected, Work Remotely
Over the last several years, the Prairie Waters region has worked diligently to bring the fastest fiber broadband internet to its communities. In fact, two of the five counties in this region rank in the top 10 counties in Minnesota for individuals telecommuting from home. This allows residents to bring their jobs with them to the region, while enjoying life in a slower paced community. A recent citywide survey conducted in a Prairie Waters community showed that 17% of its residents were currently enrolled in a college course. High speed broadband is increasingly important to these students, as well as those in elementary and high school, where technology is developing more of a presence.

Get Rural Mn
Western Minnesota PRAIRIE WATERS

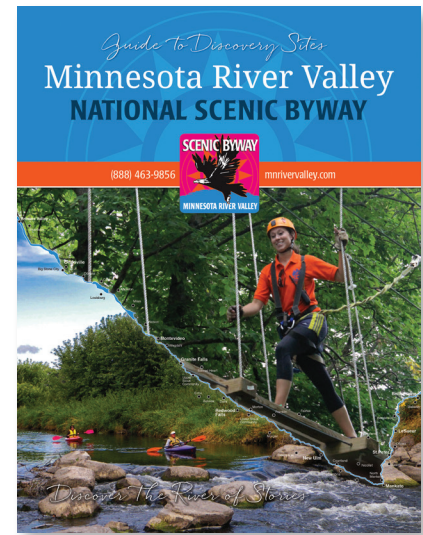
Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

The UMVRDC has been providing staffing and fiscal services to the byway since 1996.

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway (MRVSB) is a partnership of committed individuals from the 287-mile byway corridor, 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.

The byway plays an important role in linking and promoting historical sites and stories to better tell the history of the Minnesota River Valley through a variety of efforts, including its programs, website, roadside signs, brochures, and other marketing materials.

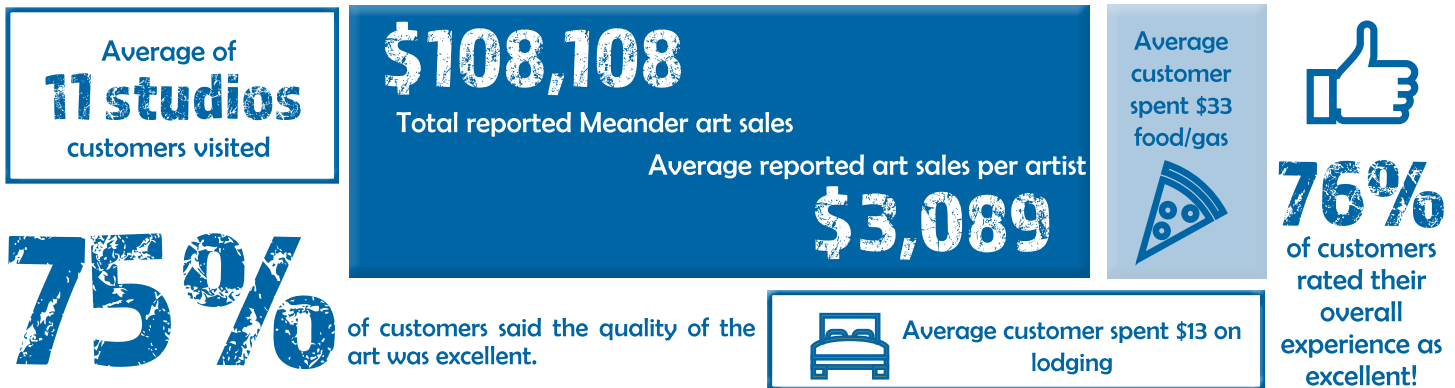
In the past year, the MRVSB has worked on marketing, keeping the website up to date, and distribution of the new visitor's guide. The byway has started to work on developing new projects such as new mapping, working on addressing abandoned monuments that deal with the U.S. - Dakota War of 1882, and new membership efforts.



15th Annual Meander Art Crawl Success

The 2018 Meander Art Crawl was another success! The UMVRDC continues to provide technical and financial management for the Meander. After tallying reports from meander artists, the UMVRDC found that Meander attendees purchased more than \$108,108 of art over the course of the three-day event.

Event-goers from near and far meandered through local artist studios spanning the five counties of Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Big Stone. The popular event highlights the region's artists and their studios while also introducing people to the region and giving a huge economic boost to the small businesses, too.



The UMVRDC has been a founding organizer of the Meander since it started in 2004 and each year is responsible for organizing the planning, artists selection, fundraising, marketing, and financial management of the event.



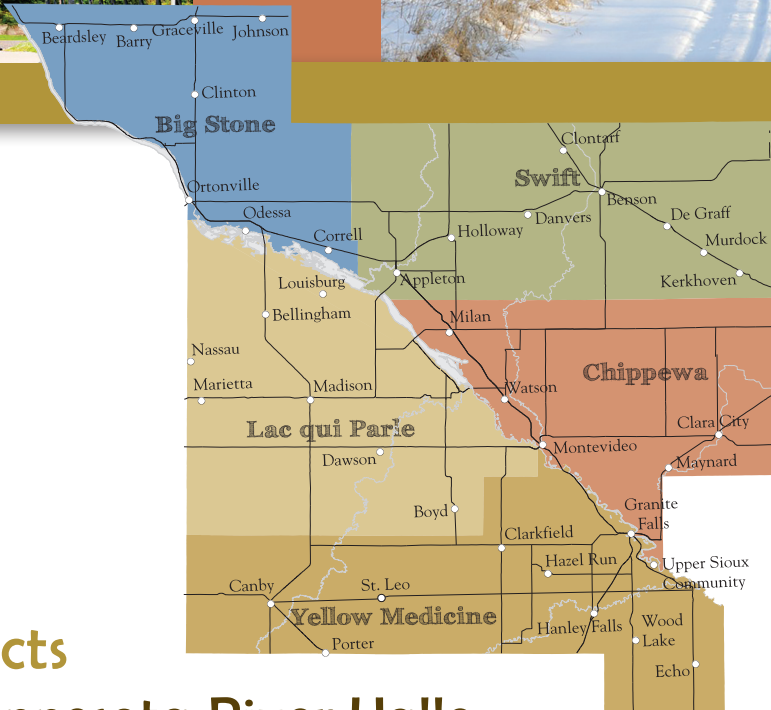


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