

2020 MMDC Annual Report

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
1700 Technology Drive NE, Suite 300
Willmar, Minnesota, 56201



Photo by Jenna Kolstad

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| MMDC Values | 4 |
| Board Chair Message | 5 |
| Executive Director Message | 6 |
| Executive Director Goals | 7 |
| Our Commissioners | 8 |
| Farewell to Donn Winckler | 10 |
| New Faces at MMDC | 11 |
| Special Thanks to Veteran MMDC Staff | 17 |
| Other Big Changes at the MMDC | 18 |
| Financial Highlights | 20 |
| Economic Development | 21 |
| Initiatives | 22 |
| Transportation Planning | 23 |
| Regional Transportation Coordination | 24 |
| Other Projects of Interest | 25 |

Introduction:

The continued mission of the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) is to “administer state and federal programs, coordinate multi-jurisdictional activities, and provide technical assistance to governments, business, and local organizations to maintain or enhance the quality of life”. Since 1974, the MMDC has served stakeholders who may not have the staff or expertise needed to achieve their goals. We work throughout the MMDC Region to ensure a “success infrastructure” is in place, so that all can achieve success and contribute to their communities.

The intent of this report is to inform our valued stakeholders – our local units of government, our businesses and organizations, and, most importantly, our residents – of the good work the MMDC does to benefit our dynamic region. At the MMDC we do what we do because we value the history and believe in the potential of this place we choose to call home!

MMDC Value Statement

Vision/Goals: While acknowledging and valuing the history of our Region, we will influence decisions that result in healthier, more resilient, more inclusive, and more prosperous communities while maintaining a future-focused perspective.

Accountability: We believe the MMDC should be held accountable to the residents of our Region, and to our funding partners, for the quality of our work, for the fiscally-responsible management of our budget, and for the continuous promotion of opportunity and development throughout our Region.

Professionalism: We will promote opportunities for MMDC staff and Commissioner development, encourage leadership at all levels, and expect professionalism to be demonstrated through our conduct and through our achievements.

Communication: We value timely, open, honest, and respectful communication as a pathway to improved MMDC effectiveness.

Adaptability: We welcome new ideas and challenges as opportunities for improvement and the advancement of the MMDC organization and Region.

Diversity: The MMDC aspires to lead as an organization where equality and inclusion is achievable for all, regardless of ethnicity, age, ability/disability, religion, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, or other difference. We believe that all deserve respect, dignity, and an opportunity to learn, grow, and achieve.

Teamwork: The MMDC supports teamwork throughout the organization and collaboration, both throughout our Region and beyond its borders. We will not hesitate to share our talents when partnering will lead to the achievement of greater outcomes for our communities.

Imperfection: We acknowledge our humanity. As humans, we will make mistakes. We will help each other learn from these mistakes and will strive for continuous improvement.

A Message from our Chairperson

“Change is the law of Life. And those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future.” – John Fitzgerald Kennedy



Kevin Crowley, Chairperson

Most of us have to admit that we don't always appreciate change. Change is not easy. Change is uncomfortable. Change is work! But what we get out of change largely depends on our attitude toward it. Those who resist it can easily find themselves being drug along a path of dissatisfaction. On the other hand, those who embrace change as an opportunity for innovation and growth can often achieve terrific, previously unimagined results.

2020 was difficult for many reasons. It will be certainly be remembered as a year of change and transformation at the MMDC. While the exit of several long-term staff was challenging for our organization, it brought us an opportunity to inject new energy and incorporate fresh ideas. It motivated us to develop and strengthen our partner relationships so that, together, we can dig in and tackle common challenges to help the businesses and communities of our great region. Finally, it showed us that the MMDC

may have, at least at times, become a bit too comfortable, doing things the way we'd always done because it was the path of least resistance. This is no longer the case and I'm happy to say that the MMDC expertise, and determination to do new and great things for our region. Join us!

Respectfully,

Kevin Crowley, Chairperson

A Message from our Executive Director

The hardships of 2020 will not soon be forgotten. Many became ill, lost loved ones, or suffered financial hardships due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We also watched as divisiveness ran rampant through our country and, in some cases, through our own families. Fueled by unresolved social problems and contentious elections. Fanned by those who put the desire to win over the need to seek the truth, to share the truth, and to do the right things. But, in times of great difficulty, character becomes apparent. While we've experienced hardship and strife, we can find inspiration in those who have dedicated themselves to helping us overcome. Front-line workers, in all sorts of roles, joined scientists, scholars, poets, and especially friends, family, and neighbors who have offered frequent glimmers of hope to anyone open to noticing them. We're reminded that we can, and we must, overcome. Amid the events of 2020, the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) entered a period



Eric Day, Executive Director

of significant change. We were also presented with new and exciting opportunities. This report will provide insight into the MMDC's 2020 calendar year. I hope you will find it informative and enjoyable. If you wish to learn more about the MMDC or our services, or if you have an idea that you'd like to share with us, please reach out. I look forward to hearing from you and learning how we might collaborate.

Thank you to all of those who have provided tremendous support and have helped me learn and adjust to my new role over these past months. Without the guidance and support of the MMDC's amazing staff, dedicated board, and talented local, regional, and statewide partners and counterparts, this would have been a daunting challenge. However, with your encouragement, it has been a pleasure and I am in your debt.

At Your Service,

Eric Day, Executive Director

MMDC Executive Director Goals

Ensure Visibility:

The MMDC must be top-of-mind, not only for each community's staff and elected officials, but also for employers, organizations, and other potential collaborators.

Ensure Value:

All who contribute funds to the MMDC must realize a significant return on that investment.

Ensure Effectiveness:

The MMDC must be known as an agency that can deliver results in the areas of community and economic development, grant writing and administration, business financing, and project.

Ensure Sustainability:

While the MMDC must work to ensure an environment of innovation and look for new opportunities as well as new funding streams to serve our residents.

2020 Board of Commissioners

Kandiyohi County:

- Kevin Crowley (Chair) - Municipality (City of Pennock)
- Gary Danielson - MMDC Region School Boards (NL-S)
- Rick Fagerlie - City Over 10,000 Residents (City of Willmar)
- Robert Moller - Public Interest (Agriculture/Aggregate Mining)
- Shawn Mueske - Public Interest (Higher Education/Ridgewater)
- Rollie Nissen - Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners
- DuWayne Underthun (Vice-Chair) - Townships (Willmar Township)

McLeod County:

- Robert Anderson - Townships (Hassan Valley Township)
- Doug Krueger - McLeod County Board of Commissioners
- Tracy Montgomery - Municipality (City of Plato)
- Dave Sebesta - City Over 10,000 Residents (City of Hutchinson)

Renville County:

- Jeff Benson - MMDC Region School Boards (BOLD)
- Doug Erickson (Treasurer) - Renville County Board of Commissioners
- Sue Hilgert (Secretary) - Municipality (City of Olivia)
- Paul Simonsen - Townships (Bandon Township)

Meeker County:

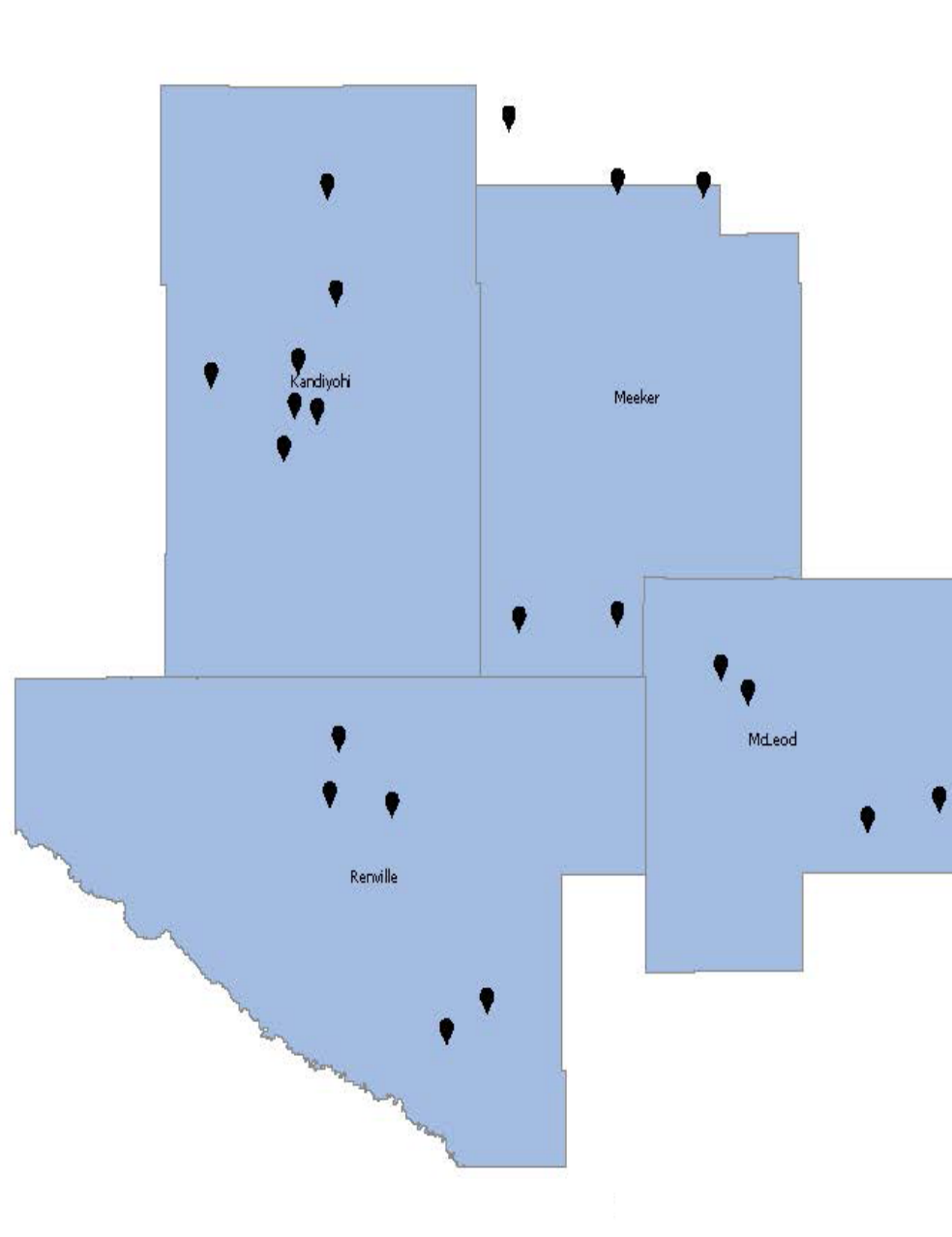
- Frank Eder - Municipality (City of Watkins)
- Lorallen Schmeling - Townships (Cedar Mills Township)
- Steve Schmitt - Public Interest (Manufacturing Sector)
- Francis Schweiss - Public Interest (Manufacturing Sector)
- Jill Hoff - Public Interest (Workforce Development/CMJTS)

Ex-Officio:

- Maureen Melgaard-Schneider - Public Interest (Aging Population)

Regional Disbursement of 2020 MMDC Commissioners

“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room
here on earth” – Muhammad Ali



MMDC Bids Farewell to Long-Time Director, Donn Winckler

“Retirement is not the end of the road. It is the beginning of the open highway.” – Unknown



In January of 2020, long-time Executive Director Donn Winckler took his final bow from the Regional Development stage to embark on new adventures. The MMDC thanks Donn for his decades-long commitment to the MMDC Region. With the support of our Board of Commissioners, our organization brought millions of grant dollars to the region under his steady leadership. These funds supported important projects that have lasting and positive impacts on commerce, safety, and the standard of living throughout our four counties. Donn, a natural spendthrift, also took care to leave the MMDC on solid financial footing so that we would have the personnel and resources necessary to provide first-rate services while holding down rates for our regional stakeholders. Thank you, Donn, for your numerous contributions to the MMDC and the people of this region. Enjoy your well-deserved retirement!

New Faces at the MMDC

“No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main” - John Donne



Eric was born, raised, in the MMDC region, where he has made a career of improving the lives of its residents. With a background in social work and workforce development, Eric strives to be useful and is happy to serve both the MMDC and the residents of this dynamic region of Minnesota. He values respect, innovation, dedication, and social justice. Eric joined the MMDC in late March, just days before Governor Walz’s “Stay-at-Home” order. While he admits that he still feels a bit out of his depth in certain areas, he likes to point out that he’s “still swimming”. In his free time, Eric enjoys spending time with his family, including his wife Sommer, son Spencer, daughter Bailey, and

family dog Weather. He also enjoys traveling, throughout the U.S. and abroad, boating, hiking, watching movies, and reading crime fiction. The Fugitive and Top Gun are two of his favorite movies and Minnesota’s own John Sanford is his favorite novelist.

Eric Day, Executive Director

eric.day@mmdc.org - (320) 262-5851

New Faces at the MMDC

“The struggle will continue, and we will conquer without a doubt” - Dr. Bobby E. Wright

Justice accepted his position with the MMDC in May of 2020, shortly after completing his master's degree in city and regional planning at Clemson University. He also has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and sustainability from Northern Arizona University. Justice has a passion for helping communities realize their full potential through thoughtful planning. This might include working with public stakeholders on zoning or ordinance projects but could also include leading more involved comprehensive plans used to guide development over the course of a generation. While he enjoys his work in these areas, projects that focus on the environment and food security are of particular interest to Justice.



Justice is also an advocate of the farm-to-table lifestyle. He sources his own meat, vegetables, eggs, and other groceries from local growers and artisans whenever possible. He's also an avid cycling enthusiast and makes a conscious effort to avoid traveling by car when he can get to his desired destination using one of his several different bicycles.

Having only recently moved from South Carolina, Minnesota winters are new to Justice. However, he has leaned in and embraced them. When the snow flies, he enjoys touring the area on his fat bike, though he still has some understandable reservations about traveling over the top of our area's many frozen lakes. When winter is too intense, Justice enjoys staying indoors and enjoying a good book. One of his current favorites is the Warmth of Other Suns, by Isabel Wilkerson, though his absolute favorite author is Malcolm Gladwell.

Justice Walker, Community Planner
justice.walker@mmrdc.org - (320) 262-5858

New Faces at the MMDC

“Not all who wander are lost. Maybe they’re just looking for bacon” - Unknown



During the summer of 2020, CARES Act funding gave the MMDC the opportunity to strengthen our Economic Development department, and Rick joined our organization in August. While new to the MMDC, Rick’s passion for community and economic development has been evident throughout much of his career. His early career centered around organizing communities in the areas of crime prevention, community gardening in North Minneapolis. He also provided technical assistance and coached emerging businesses while employed as an Enterprise Facilitator. More recently, Rick enjoyed a successful career in community-focused banking, first as a commercial lender in the metro area, and later as Market

President in the communities of Albert Lea and Bird Island. He has also worked as an ag, home mortgage, and consumer lender. Rick brings a wealth of knowledge to the MMDC, where he now works to help our businesses and other stakeholders build resilience and recover from the economic injuries resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rick lives in Olivia with his wife Maria. He is the proud parent of his daughter, Erin, who works for 3M in Western Pennsylvania. Rick considers himself a bit of a “foodie” and loves projects that make quality food more accessible to all.

Rick Bonlender, Economic Development Professional

rick.bonlender@mmdc.org - (320) 262-5855

New Faces at the MMDC

“A great pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do.” - Walter Bagehot

CARES Act funding also empowered us to welcome Michelle to the MMDC team and, in September, she started in her new economic developer role. Michelle was born and raised in Greater Minnesota. She had the privilege of growing up surrounded by agriculture and a small-town atmosphere, traced back to her grandparents' farms in Southwestern Minnesota's Nobles and Murray counties. In addition to an associate's degree in finance and credit, from Alexandria Technical College, Michelle holds a bachelor's degree in business management as well as a Master's of Business Administration Degree from Southwest Minnesota State University. She also brings significant customer service, supply chain management, and relationship-building experience to the MMDC. She is digging in to help our region bounce forward after pandemic-imposed setbacks.



Michelle loves the rural atmosphere and the unique offerings of Greater Minnesota. She enjoys being a part of community projects that enhance people's lives. Michelle is also passionate about bringing affordable and quality broadband to Greater Minnesota and is currently involved with Kandiyohi County's Broadband Committee. Michelle and her husband have three grown children and enjoy spending time with their dog at home near Willmar.

Michelle Marotzke, Economic Development Professional

michelle.marotzke@mmdc.org - (320) 262-5856

New Faces at the MMDC

“Great things come from hard work and perseverance. No Excuses” - Kobe Bryant



In October, with the support of the MMDC's Personnel Committee and Board of Commissioners, the MMDC created a new Communications Specialist position and selected Ben for this role. While both Ben and his position are new to the MMDC, both are quite important. In his new role, it's Ben's job to ensure the public has a good understanding of what the MMDC is and what our organization does for the community. He brings a wealth of know-how and works with each of our teams to ensure our final products, including published documents (e.g., this report), videos, and other items, are both professional and compelling. Ben also manages the MMDC's new social media accounts to provide a first and lasting impression of our agency. Ben enjoys the

opportunity to put his skillset to work serving the MMDC Region. Ben is also happy to serve as the MMDC's own human "Swiss Army knife". He helps keep the rest of the team up and running by assisting with projects, fielding calls, interfacing with visitors, and supporting daily operations. Ben lives at his home in Willmar. He is a huge sports fan and one can often find Ben at a Willmar Stingers game or watching another sporting event from his home with his dog Harmon (as in Killebrew) at his side. Much of the balance of his time is spent honing his video-sound production and social media management skills through various projects.

Ben Carlson, Communications Specialist/Office Assistant

ben.carlson@mmdc.org - (320) 262-5853

New Faces at the MMDC

“If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.” - Maya Angelou

Terry joined the MMDC in late-December because he wanted to give back to his community. In his Regional Transportation Coordinator role, he’ll work with new and existing transportation providers to increase and/or coordinate services help our region’s non-driving residents connect with the rides they need to remain independent while fully participating in community life.

Terry is a native of Windom and a University of Minnesota graduate. He has served the Willmar area as a Funeral Director since 1999 and continues to assist on an on-call capacity. For over 20 years, Terry also served as a Cornea Procurement Technician for the Minnesota Lions Children’s Eye Clinic, earning both the Helen Keller and Melvin Jones awards. Terry is an active member of the Willmar Noon Lions Club and has also served on the Willmar Community Center Board, as treasurer for the Widowed Persons Support Group, and as a past volunteer firefighter. He is also active with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber.



Terry and his wife Tanya have two children, Eli and Sophie. They enjoyed spending time at the lake and supporting each other in all their activities.

Terry Smith, Regional Transportation Coordinator

terry.smith@mmrdc.org - (320) 262-5859

A Special Note of Gratitude to Our Veteran Staff

While the MMDC welcomed an enormous amount of new changemakers in 2020, it is important to recognize that none would be successful without the ability to rely on the guidance, talent, expertise, and even friendship from our veteran staff.

Sue Gimse, Finance Director

sue.gimse@mmrdc.org - (320) 262-5852

Special thanks to MMDC Finance Director Sue Gimse, who agreed to serve as our organization's Interim Director during the organization's Executive Director search, who constantly serves as a resource and sounding board for newer staff, and who diligently attends to all fiscal matters to ensure sound audits.



"Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway." - Earl Nightingale



Les Nelson, Economic Development Director

les.nelson@mmrdc.org - (320) 262-5854

Additional thanks to MMDC Economic Development Director Les Nelson, who has been happy to share his expertise, has taken on additional supervision responsibilities, and has remained ever-dedicated to the businesses and workers of our region.

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant." - Robert Louis Stevenson

Kyle Ten Napel, Community Planner

kyle.tennapel@mmrdc.org - (320) 262-5857

Finally, thank you to transportation-focused Community Planner Kyle Ten Napel who, despite his youth, has the third-longest tenure with the MMDC among existing staff. Along with his positive attitude, Kyle's willingness to jump in and assist with any sort of project have been invaluable to our commission.



"Get better today" - Russel Orhii

Other Big Changes at the MMDC

Beyond staffing changes, the MMDC made some terrific advancements in 2020. In August, with the support of our board, the MMDC vacated the basement of the Willmar City Office Building and relocated to the MinnWest Technology Campus. While we appreciate the hospitality the City of Willmar showed MMDC over the course of a whopping 40 years, we have quickly fallen in love our new surroundings. Our new-to-us office is bright, comfortable, and space-efficient. This in addition to being loaded with character and surrounded by a beautiful campus and friendly new neighbors.



Other Big Changes at the MMDC

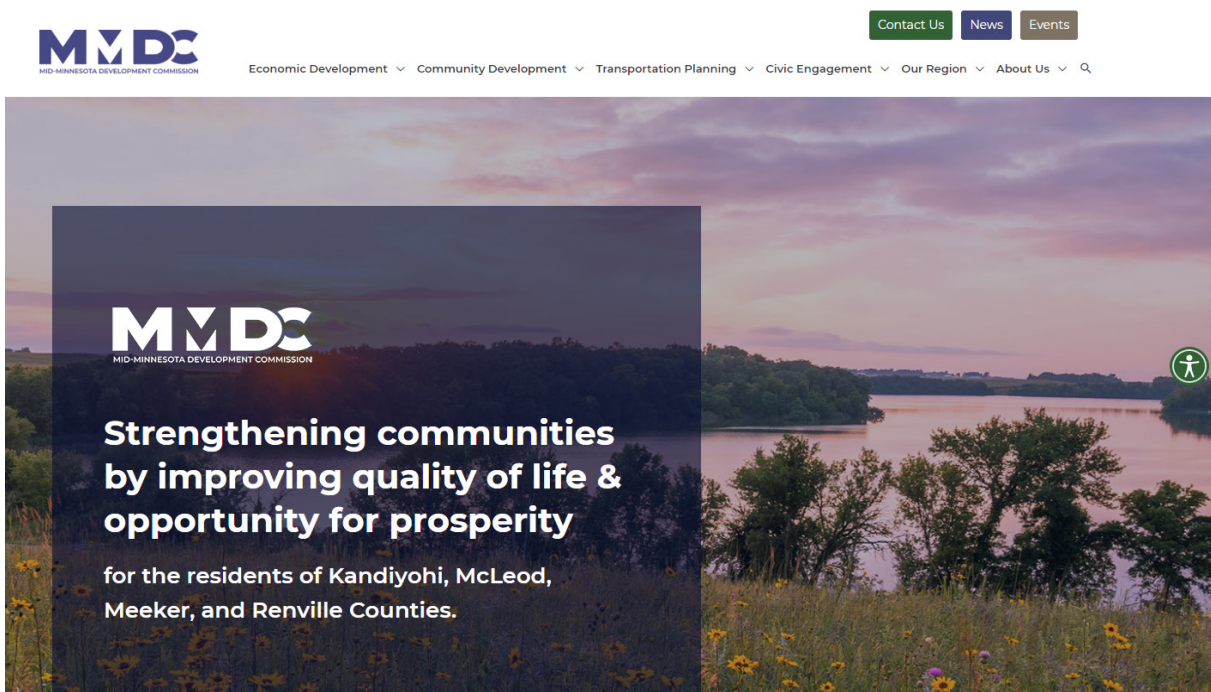
Last, but certainly not least, the MMDC commissioned the development of our brand new logo and website, still found at www.MMRDC.org. In addition to providing us a fresh new look, we intend to use our new website to share resources and opportunities for our stakeholders. We'll also use the site to highlight our region's amenities. We want our new site to be a go-to resource for those who wish to attract businesses and talent to our region, as well as those who simply want to immerse themselves in our region's culture and take advantage of all the amazing things that make this area great!



Previous MMDC
Logo



New MMDC Logo



New MMDC Website

Financials & 2020 Budget

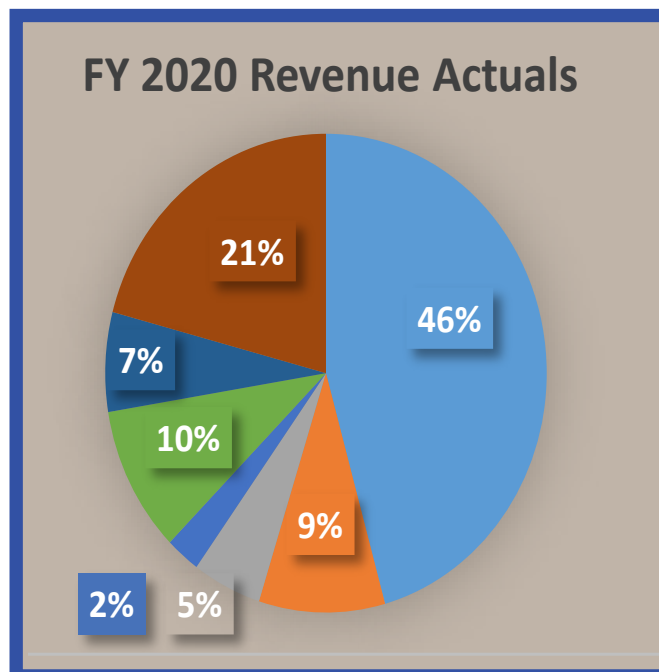
REVENUES

| | FY 2020 Budget | FY 2020 Actuals | FY 2021 Budget |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Local Tax Levy | \$ 347,556 | \$ 346,598 | \$ 357,983 |
| Economic Development Administration | 70,000 | 70,000 | 270,000 |
| MMDC Revolving Loan Fund Administration | 28,000 | 38,448 | 29,258 |
| MMDC RLF Cares Fund Administration | | - | 42,407 |
| MN Department of Transportation - SRTS | 19,220 | 19,200 | - |
| MN Department of Transportation - Planning | 75,000 | 75,000 | 75,000 |
| Local Contracts/Miscellaneous | 57,668 | 50,954 | 38,024 |
| MN Department of Transportation - RTCC | 194,812 | 158,449 | 175,520 |
| | <u>\$ 792,256</u> | <u>\$ 758,649</u> | <u>\$ 988,192</u> |

EXPENDITURES

| | FY 2020 Budget | FY 2020 Actuals | FY 2021 Budget |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Salaries & Fringe | \$ 641,829 | \$ 593,964 | \$ 769,135 |
| Supplies & Printing | 14,074 | 14,269 | 16,934 |
| Communications | 29,196 | 29,849 | 26,197 |
| Services | 50,368 | 51,748 | 77,953 |
| Capital Outlay | 6,369 | 6,231 | 37,500 |
| Volunteer Services | 585 | 584 | 300 |
| Travel & Training | 14,765 | 14,569 | 43,569 |
| Commissioner Travel/Expenses | 7,225 | 8,235 | 7,285 |
| TOTAL | <u>\$ 764,411</u> | <u>\$ 719,449</u> | <u>\$ 978,873</u> |

Fiscal Year 2020 Audit: The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission contracts with Conway, Deuth and Schmiesing, Certified Public Accountants, Willmar, Minnesota to conduct an annual audit. The Fiscal Year 2020 auditors report expresses an unqualified opinion on the General Purpose Financial Statements of the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission.



Economic Development

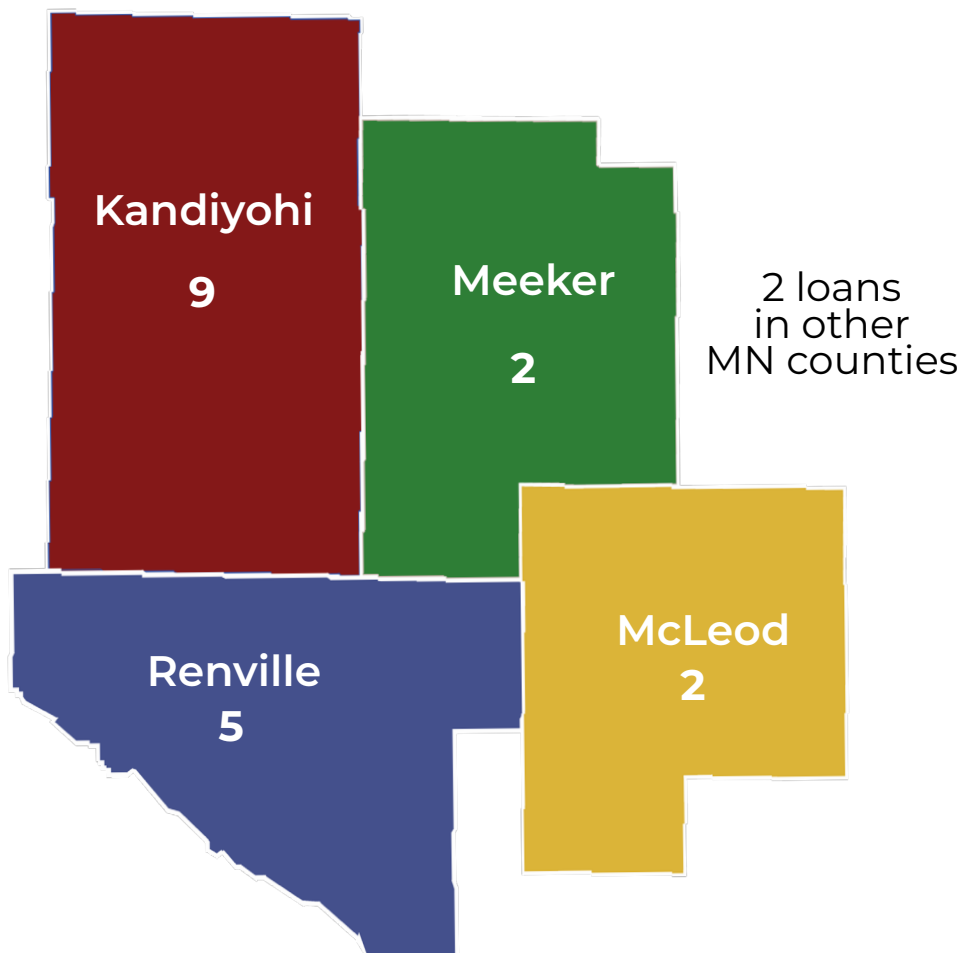
The MMDC collaborates with regional partners to accomplish goals outlined in our region's Economic Development Administration-approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This can include pursuing funds for infrastructure projects and working to reduce underlying barriers to workforce participation and economic wellbeing (e.g., housing, childcare, and broadband shortages). The MMDC also provides technical assistance and financing to businesses throughout the MMDC Region to preserve and create jobs while supporting the local economy.

\$1,289,000 lent

20 Businesses Assisted in 6 counties in Minnesota

\$4,750,000 leveraged (Private sector or grants)

Number of Active 2020 Loans by County



Regional Resilience:

To respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic and to help our region cover from the economic injuries that resulted from it, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) invited the MMDC to apply for a two-year, \$400,000 grant. We were awarded funds in July and used this new resource to triple the size of our Economic Development Team. Our two new Economic Development Professionals, Rick Bonlender and Michelle Marotzke, are working with businesses, organizations, and communities across our region to improve resilience and make sure our region bounces – not just back, but forward! Since coming aboard they have written successful grant proposals, helped businesses connect with relief opportunities, dug in to improve underlying barriers to regional success (e.g., broadband and childcare gaps) and joined forces with communities to address local concerns. Les Nelson is guiding the department, while also managing the MMDC's two revolving loan funds, including a new \$870,000 fund capitalized as part of the EDA CARES Act. Please reach out if you own or know of a business, organization, or community we can help!

Community Development:

The MMDC helps communities improve quality of life for their current and future residents. We can partner with our stakeholders in a variety of ways to achieve this on both a local and regional level. We enjoy assisting stakeholders with their development through comprehensive planning, ordinance development, and other traditional means. However, we also love collaborating with those who share our aspiration to address shortfalls, overcome shared barriers, ensure inclusiveness, and encourage growth. We don't think of communities as places, but as people.



Atwater Ordinance Project



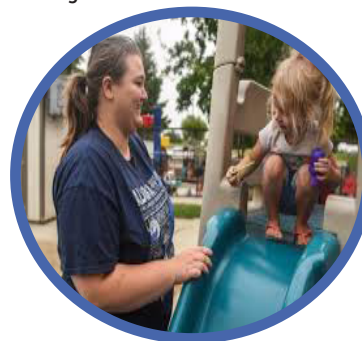
Watkins Ordinance Project



Willmar Comprehensive Plan



Halal Certified Meat Access



Rural Child Care Innovation Program

Transportation Planning

The MMDC works with communities to address multiple facets of transportation planning to ensure safety and promote healthy living. This includes partnering with school districts and their municipalities to develop Safe-Routes-to-School plans, working with communities to develop trail plans, and collaborating with other local stakeholders to improve walkability/bike-ability. We also provide technical assistance whenever our local communities require guidance or direction on a transportation-related project.

Additionally, the MMDC participates in the Minnesota Department of Transportation's District 8 Area Transportation Partnership (ATP). The work of this group guides the prioritization of construction projects that incorporate the use of federal aid highway, state trunk highway, and federal transit funding. When combined, ATIPs from each of the State's districts create the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).



Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination

It is essential that our residents with transportation barriers maintain the ability to fully-participate in education activities, employment, and community life. The MMDC receives funding and guidance from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) to work toward improved coordination of transportation services throughout our four-county region. We know that our four counties are fortunate to have numerous, high-quality service providers. However, we also know that these providers are resource-limited and that no one provider or provider type can deliver every needed ride, particularly during the evening, on weekends, or in our more rural areas.

While our Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination Council (MMRTCC) program did suffer a setback in 2020, both due to the COVID-19 pandemic and unfortunate staff departures, we did have the good fortune to hire long-time regional resident Terry Smith in late-December. Terry is helping us to get back on track. He is available to meet with individuals or groups, in person or via phonetechnology, to help them navigate public and private transportation options. He is also focused on related activities, such as volunteer driver recruitment and the development and maintenance of a regional Transportation Resource Guide, which will help us increase transportation availability for our non-driving residents so they may continue to live in their own homes or in their other preferred settings.



Photo by Todd Anderson



Photo by Stacy Peterson

Other 2020 MMDC Project Highlights:

Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) Participation:

Made available through First Children's Finance and funded by the MN Department of Human Services, the RCCIP is an innovative community engagement process designed to address childcare challenges and support rural communities as they develop solutions to increase the supply of high-quality, affordable childcare. MMDC has been an active RCCIP participant in both Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties and, in the fall of 2020, was happy to contribute by bringing the RCCIP program to Renville County as well.



Atwater and Watkins Ordinance Projects:

In 2020 the MMDC helped the Cities of Atwater and Watkins modernize their respective Codes of Ordinances to address nuisance issues, provide a foundation for more effective code enforcement, and ensure a high standard of living for their residents. We also provided technical assistance to other communities and organizations on specific ordinance and zoning-related issues.

ACGC Safe-Routes-to-School Planning:

To improve the ability of students and their parents to walk and bike to school, the MMDC partnered with the Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City district, and key leaders from each community to develop a Safe-Routes-to-School Plan. This plan will be used to direct educational activities and guide/prioritize infrastructure improvements for years to come. Funding for this project was provided by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.



Other 2020 MMDC Project Highlights:



Two-Phased Willmar Comprehensive Plan:

Comprehensive planning is a process that determines community goals and aspirations in terms of community development. The result is a plan designed to express and regulate local policies on transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing. In 2020, the MMDC worked with the City of Willmar's Planning Department to complete Phase 1 (data collection) and begin Phase 2 (plan development) of their new comprehensive plan. While the MMDC's plans are always tailored to meet the needs of each community, we are proud to take part in this ambitious planning project for our region's largest municipality.

Halal-Certified Meat:

While the MMDC region is home to people from many different cultures, ethnicities, and religions, 2020 provided an opportunity for us to learn that many of our Muslim residents have faced great difficulty when trying to purchase Halal-compliant goat meat. We discovered that most of this cultural staple is imported from Australia, which means that it has often been frozen for six months by the time a family can purchase it. The MMDC is working with local goat producers and processors to address this issue and create a local supply chain for this product. We expect locally-sourced goat to be available for purchase in area stores in 2021.



Hwy 23 Coalition Involvement:

This coalition was formed to promote highway improvements along the MN State Highway 23 corridor. The MMDC serves as the fiscal agent for the Hwy 23 Coalition and provides staff assistance, via the MnDOT Transportation Planning grant, to support safety and commerce-promoting improvements along Minnesota's second-longest state route.



It's Been a Year...Thank You!

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." – African Proverb

MMDC

MID-MINNESOTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION