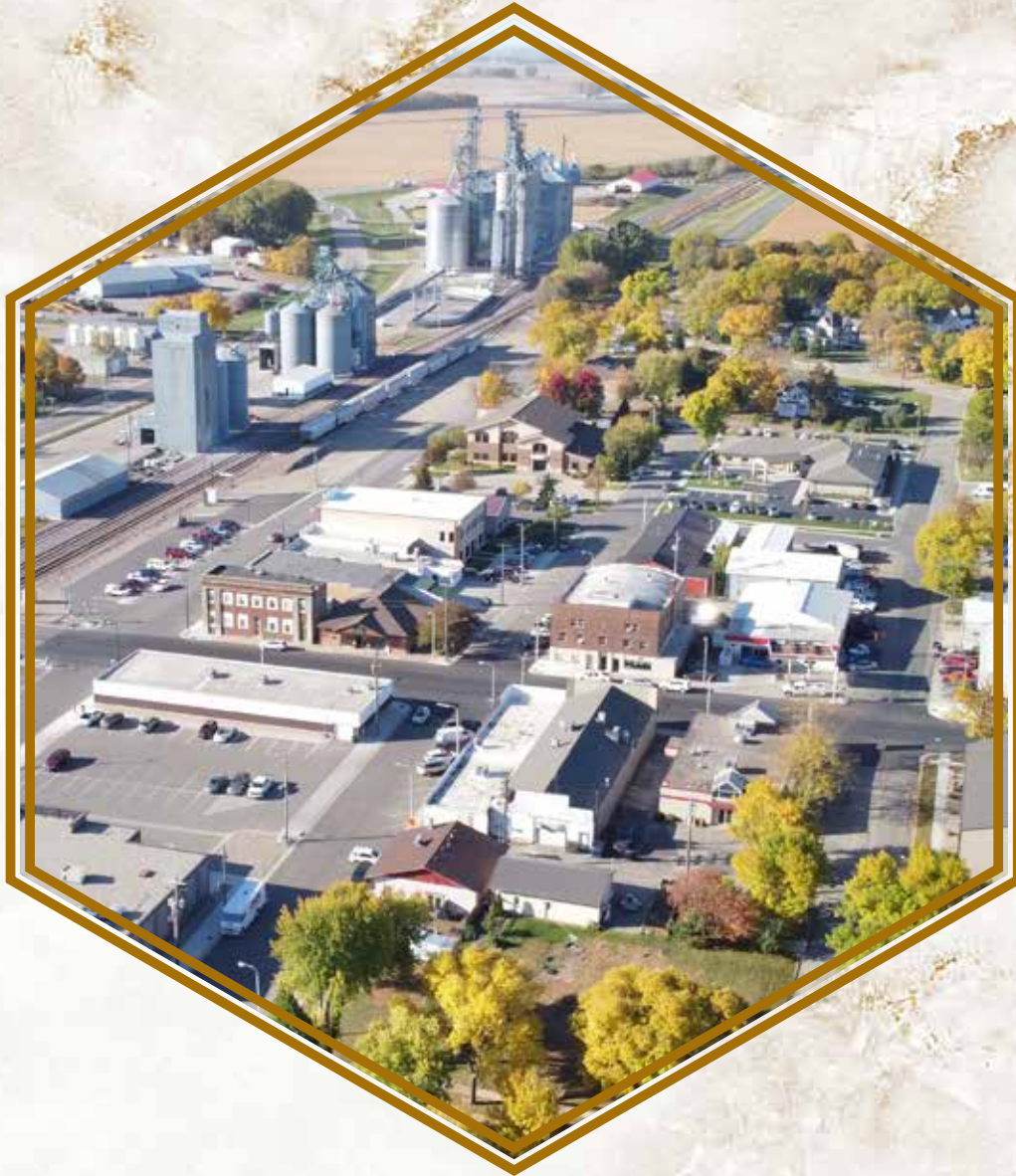




ANNUAL REPORT



2021

BIG STONE || CHIPPEWA || LAC QUI PARLE || SWIFT || YELLOW MEDICINE

Helping Communities Prosper

Message from the Executive Director

I am pleased to share with you the results of the work we accomplished in the region over the last year. Despite the unpredictable nature of our work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is much comfort looking back and seeing the strategic improvements in the region. I know of no one who would have predicted that local governments, businesses, schools, and residents would have seen more than 12 months of disruptions to services and daily life. Yet, we learned to adapt and do things differently. None of it was easy or fun but I do believe that we will see some of the adaptations continue. Investments were made in technology and processes for employees to work from home, complete education in new and different ways, and connect with a variety of new online resources and services from cities, counties, healthcare, and schools. Everyone learned something new.

Some projects we worked on continued despite COVID-19, reassuring us that some issues and projects transcend the pandemic we all were living through. Topics like housing, childcare, transportation, business finance, investment in recreation and other types of infrastructure all seemed to continue to be important and forward-looking areas to be working on. This report is full of examples of these sorts of projects which are the regular things we would normally highlight in any of our annual reports. This is a reminder that there were some important accomplishments that did not seem to be interrupted by the chaos of the last year.

There were also several projects that we worked on as a direct result of the pandemic and those projects had positive outcomes as well. We were able to lend more than \$1.7 million in federal funds to new or expanding businesses. This is a reassuring sign that there was optimism in the future of the region during the stressful last year. We also had the opportunity to assist two counties in distributing state and federal business relief grants to businesses that were continuing to persevere and operate their businesses throughout the difficult last year. In addition we received some pandemic related funds to work on a few topics important to the resilience of the region - from the Meander and Prairie Waters to topics like broadband, childcare and housing. We believe these are all opportunities to work on that will help our region be successful well beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am thankful for the great work we have done in collaboration with a variety of partners who are all interested in investing in the future of the region. Please review the variety of work contained in this report and I would welcome opportunities to discuss these or other projects that we could work together on!



Dawn Hegland - UMVRDC Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn Hegland". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mark Bourne - Board Chair



Message from the Board Chair

When thinking about the past year, I think about how COVID-19 impacted the lives of everyone in our region—business owners, students, teachers, and many others. The UMVRDC had to be flexible and adapt to as the year went on, facing the changes that came along with the pandemic. One of the greatest ways the UMVRDC was able to help others in this difficult time was through the management of the CARES Act, administering loans to business in the region totaling \$1.7 million. This allowed business to survive while dealing with restrictions due to the pandemic. I feel sad for the high school seniors who missed important events in their last year of school. Teachers had to jump into remote learning with very little notice. COVID-19 took lives and had an effect on everyone. I pray that things will get better.

Through it all, the UMVRDC kept working to help the five county area. The staff had been working from their homes with a limited amount of time spent at the office. Our board meetings were held via Zoom. The UMVRDC will continue to serve the region no matter what changes need to be made. Staff have done a great job working and adapting to the obstacles that COVID-19 created. The Board of Directors and staff continue working to help make Western Minnesota thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark J. Bourne". The signature is written in a cursive style.



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

www.umvrdc.org || 323 W. Schlieman Ave Appleton, MN 56208 || 320.289.1981 

UMVRDC Staff

Back

Dawn Hegland
Executive Director

dawn.hegland@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 101

Matt Moe

Finance Director

matt@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 114

Chad Kingstrom

Community
Development Specialist

chad@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 107

Jack Gottfried

Community
Development Specialist

jack@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 111

Bernice Robinson
Grants Management
Specialist

bernice@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 103

Front

Jordan Hulscher

Program Assistant

jordan@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 104

Melissa Streich

Communications
Coordinator

melissa@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 105

Jackie Sigdahl

Administrative
Assistant

jackie.sigdahl@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 100

Kristi Fernholz

Planning Director

kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 106

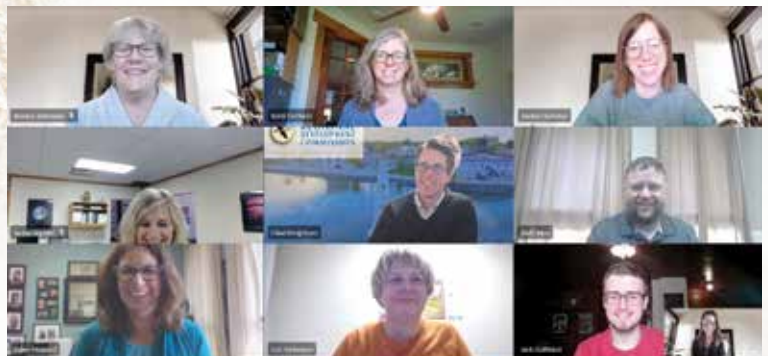
Lori Tostenson

Revolving Loan
Fund Officer

lori@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 102

We're Back!

After a year of working remotely,
the UMVRDC Staff are back in
the office!



UMVRDC Staff participating in a virtual staff meeting

Commission Board Members

Big Stone County



Jay Backer
County Commissioner



Michele Backer
Big Stone Municipalities



Harold R. Dimberg
Ortonville Township

Chippewa County



Bill Pauling
County Commissioner



Erich Winter
Chippewa Municipalities



Jim Schmaedeka
Louriston Township

Lac qui Parle County



Ben Bothun
County Commissioner



Jeff Olson
Dawson City Council



Mark Bourne
Hamlin Township

Swift County



Gary Hendrickx
County Commissioner



Aaron Koosmann
Hegbert Township



Lucas Olson
Benson City Council

Yellow Medicine County



Gary L. Johnson
County Commissioner



Denise Hanson
Yellow Medicine
Municipalities



Gene Stengel
Minnesota Falls Township

School Board



Brett Buer
Dawson-Boyd School
Board



Bill McGeary
Benson School
Board

Public Interest



Carrie Bendix



Dawn Regnier



Diane Kepner



Scott Marquardt

Tribal Community



Chuck Swanson
Upper Sioux Community

Financial Report

The amount of money invested in our region as a result of the UMVRDC's work in FY21

\$10,538,052

Expenses	FY22	FY21
Salaries/Fringe	901,244	832,441
Commissioner's Expense	23,300	20,050
Audit	14,000	14,000
Contract for Services	37,600	39,650
Xerox lease	4,000	4,000
Depreciation	6,000	5,700
Dues	5,000	5,000
Insurance	1,300	1,300
Legal Fees	2,000	2,000
Miscellaneous	1,000	3,200
Office Rent	12,210	12,210
Postage	3,500	3,500
Printing/Advertising	4,500	4,500
RDC Marketing Item	2,000	2,000
Registration	4,000	4,000
Repairs/Maintenance	1,000	1,000
Software	9,150	8,650
Sub./Publications	2,000	2,600
Supplies	4,500	4,500
Telephone/Internet	8,000	6,100
Staff Travel	25,000	2,500
Staff Morale	2,000	2,000
Staff Wellness	2,000	2,000
Web Hosting/Maintenance	3,500	3,500
Pass through expenses		
Meander	23,000	28,400
Prairie Waters Ads	23,700	16,000
Byway Partnership	29,800	-
Hazard Mitigation	3,600	-
EDA CARES Grant	50,000	6,383
TOTAL	1,208,904	1,037,184

Revenues	FY22	FY21
Local Contracts	\$297,136	\$264,087
Levy	\$328,000	\$328,000
Misc. & Interest	\$10,500	\$12,500
Contracts for Ongoing Programs	\$636,000	\$494,700
TOTAL	\$1,271,636	\$1,099,287

FY21 Ending Account Balances

General Checking	\$444,716
Money Market	\$22
CD	\$365,351
Scenic Byway	\$12,787
Auto	\$46,069
Equipment	\$11,607
RLF Available for Lending	\$380,230

The FY21 audit was conducted by Dana F. Cole & Company out of Montevideo, Minnesota. The auditor's report expresses an unmodified opinion on the General Purpose Financial Statements of the UMVRDC. The audit report is available online at www.umvrdc.org

Helping Communities Prosper

UMVRDC's Revolving Loan Fund

A combination of 108 full and part time jobs were created or retained as a result of the 13 new revolving loans closed by the UMVRDC during this last year. In total, the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) lent \$1,380,172 to businesses in the five-county region. Loans for the businesses listed below were approved for equipment, inventory, fixed assets, and real estate. Financial partners in these 13 projects include local banks and credit unions, Madison Business Development, Dawson Development Corp, and the Montevideo Community Development Corporation.



\$1,380,172

The amount of RLF funds loaned out this fiscal year



Jobs 108

The amount of jobs that are expected to be created and retained within the region, as a result from the 13 loans



\$6,727,672

Was leveraged in public and private funding in addition to the RLF funds

“

The Revolving Loan Fund program gave us new hope >>



Granite Falls Woodworks - Granite Falls, Minnesota

CARES Act RLF

Sunshine & Whiskey, Watson - \$77,100
New Ownership - Real Estate, Equipment, Inventory

Lein Lumber, Madison - \$90,000
Expansion - Equipment, Inventory - Working Capital

Granite Falls Woodworks, Granite Falls - \$51,000
Start Up - Equipment

Devos, Dawson - \$88,000
Expansion - Equipment

Madsen Family Chiropractic, PLLC, Montevideo - \$117,000
New Ownership - Equipment, Book of Business

Williams Family Companies LLC-Squeaky Clean Car Wash, Granite Falls - \$118,000
New Ownership - Book of Business/ Equipment

Evenson Properties, LLC -Ambient Chiropractic, Benson - \$107,500
Real Estate

Hanson & Dahl Funeral Home Inc d/b/a Anderson TeBeest Funeral Home, Granite Falls - \$60,000
Expansion - Working Capital

The Montevideo Design Group, LLC, Montevideo - \$200,000
New Ownership - Real Estate, Equipment

JAT HOLDINGS, LLC, Montevideo - \$200,000
Expansion - Real Estate

Wager Chiropractic, P.L.L.C., Dawson - \$39,572
New Ownership - Book of Business/Equipment

Fernholz Concrete, LLC dba Fernholz Grading, Madison - \$32,000
Expansion - Equipment

UMVRDC Original/Disaster RLF

Custom Roto-Mold, LLC, Benson - \$200,000
Expansion - Equipment/Working Capital

Business Lending

RLF Portfolio 6/30/21

Total Loan Funds	\$3,396,166
Total Loans	40
Loans Default/ Deferred	0
Funds Committed	\$539,828
Total Receivables	\$2,521,446.40
Total Available for Lending	\$335,892.08



*Jordan Wager with Wager Chiropractic
Dawson, Minnesota*

Administration of Local Revolving 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 \$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 UMVRDC provides support to both funds by working with applicants, managing loan payments, and providing information to both communities regarding new applications.

Sources for available gap financing are critical to funding business growth alongside other commercial financing and regional resources for economic development financing. The advantage of multiple resources allows for shared risk among various funding resources. These local RLF dollars are available to fund projects in partnership with local banks and other regional partners such as RLF funds available through the Southwest Initiative Foundation and the UMVRDC. Funds will be able to provide valuable gap financing to sustain and improve local commerce.

Helping Communities Prosper

UMVRDC's Local Assistance Fund

Application and more program details are available at www.umvrdc.org

The UMVRDC set aside \$20,000 from our local levy to help subsidize the following work in FY 2021. This allocation was previously know as the Hedgehog Fund but was rebranded in 2021 as part of our strategic planning and is now called the Local Assistance Fund.

City of Maynard - \$3,900

Maynard Bank Building Grant

City of Dawson- \$5,000

Dawson SCDP Grant

City of Benson - \$5,000

Benson SCDP Grant

Chippewa County - \$5,000

Chippewa County Hazard Mitigation Planning

City of Granite Falls - \$3,900

Granite Falls Transportation Alternatives Grant

Benson Seeks EDA Grant to Protect Infrastructure

The City of Benson requested assistance to author a grant application to the Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration to fund a wastewater treatment facility flood protection project and industrial park wastewater main upgrades. Staff worked the city and their engineer to define project scope of work, including all relevant design and construction cost estimates. The application was submitted in the summer of 2020 but required several additional revisions throughout the last year and eventually reducing the scope to just a protection berm around the wastewater treatment plant which protects the plant during flood events. The reduction in scope was due to updated construction estimates. The total project request is \$1,767,105.

Improvements to Memorial Park in Granite Falls

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 just completing Phase II of implementing their master plan which includes invasive species removal, signage, trail improvements, a nature-based playground, and renovation of the RV campground. This phase was funded in the spring of 2018 for a total of \$732,261 from the GMRPTC. Phase III funds from the GMRPTC was \$150,000 to complete additional rehabilitation on the main park shelter.

The UMVRDC helped with the funding requests, environmental review, and master planning process. The UMVRDC continues to assist with funding requests to the GMRPTC, which have gotten more competitive, to continue implementing their master plan. Memorial Park put in funding requests in the past two years that have not been funded.

Granite Falls will continue to seek funding to further implement the master plan of the park. The UMVRDC will be writing grants in the summer of 2021 for restoration to the Historic Park Entrance Piers, a trail around the lake area, and for invasive species removal around the lake area. Grants will be submitted to both the GMRPTC and the Department of Natural Resources Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program.



Playground Equipment at Memorial Park in Granite Falls, Minnesota



Students and teachers participating in a Walk to School Day in Appleton, Minnesota

Transportation

The UMRVDC continues to provide local transportation planning assistance to the region through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Staff participate in the West Central and Southwest Minnesota Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs) in MnDOT Districts 4 and 8 respectively. The ATPs review and prioritize federally funded road, bridge, public transit, and transportation alternative projects. The total federal transportation investment for projects using federal funds in our five-county region for the next four-year time period of 2022 to 2025 is \$19.77 million.

Staff continue to reach out to communities with opportunities to update or complete Safe Routes to School plans, encourage bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements coinciding with school or street construction projects, meet with trail advocates in the region, and keep the UMRVDC website current with road construction news and resources to help communities develop transportation projects.

The UMRVDC also work with MnDOT and other RDC transportation planners across MN with statewide planning, such as the District 8 and District 4 Freight Plans, a MnDOT Equity in Transportation research project, Electric Vehicle (EV) Planning Study, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Data Task Force.

Regional Transportation Coordinating Council

The UMRVDC was asked to assist Prairie Five Community Action Council with planning for a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) in our region. The process, funded by MnDOT, utilizes public input from a broad set of stakeholders to determine if an RTCC is a good fit for our region and how best to set it up. The purpose of the RTCC is to coordinate transportation gaps by providing more rides using the same or fewer resources and make transportation easier to use by the customers.

The UMRVDC assisted with the entire process and completed the operational plan in September 2020. Since then, the RTCC has been formalized by Prairie Five and has started implementing that operational plan.

Safe Routes to School

The Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg and Lac qui Parle Valley School Districts were each awarded Safe Routes to School Engineering Grants after UMRVDC staff assisted the districts with writing the grants. Each school worked with a small group of local stakeholders, including UMRVDC staff, and led by SRF Consulting, to look at potential bicycle and pedestrian improvements near their schools.

Lac qui Parle Valley elementary schools in Madison and Appleton were scheduled to undergo significant construction to their locations and this provided them the opportunity to look at how student drop off locations and pedestrian access to the buildings would be affected.

In the Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg school district, significant work had been done to identify potential bicycle and pedestrian improvements in both Murdock and Kerkhoven over the previous two years and this gave the district an opportunity to have a closer look at those proposed improvements by an engineer.

The schools had access to this grant after completing a Safe Routes to School plan for their districts. This process resulted in a detailed report that each district will have as a resource when applying for grant dollars to make improvements.

Helping Communities Prosper



Madison EDA Marketing

Downtown Madison, Minnesota

The Madison Economic Development Authority asked the UMRDC to assist in creating marketing materials for recruiting new residents to the City of Madison. The UMRDC developed a list of potential ideas, and the EDA narrowed it down to three projects: create six resident stories; create quality of life infographic posts highlighting the city's housing, healthcare, education, child care, employment, telecommuting, things to do, and community engagement; and create a marketing plan and social media calendar to implement the new materials.

In addition, staff added this information to the community employment "toolkit," that contains lifestyle and relocation information for regional employers to use during their recruiting process.

Employment Toolkit

As a result of the employer interviews that were conducted last summer, the UMRDC has created a community employment "toolkit" for Prairie Waters member communities that contain lifestyle and relocation information for employers to use during their employee recruiting process.

The employers can simply send the toolkit as a link to a potential new employee, where they can view stories from existing residents and information on housing, healthcare, education, child care, employment, telecommuting, things to do, videos, photos, and more. Employers will also be offered the customization allowing them to include specific employment information relating to their business. The toolkit is a perfect piece to recruit new residents to our region.



CCM Wellness Center - Montevideo, MN



American Surplus - Montevideo, MN



Cargill - Madison, MN



Maynard Bank Building

The UMRDC has been assisting the City of Maynard with their historic Maynard State Bank building. This past year has been focused on implementing the conditions assessment and preserving this historic building. Staff wrote a successful grant to the Minnesota Historical Society for a Historical and Cultural Grant for \$10,000 to fund the development of architectural documents for a new roof for the building. These documents are in the final stages of completion and will serve for the grant request for the construction of a new roof for the building.

All-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

As a result of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, FEMA requires that in order to be eligible for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds, local units of government must first have in place a multi-hazard mitigation plan. The UMRDC is working with the Upper Sioux Community and Chippewa County to update their plans.

The process involves looking through the past plan and updating information, cataloging historical and new hazards that may affect the community, and developing strategies based on changes in climate or other new local conditions to mitigate the negative impacts of those hazards.

Swift County Waste Management Campaign

The UMRDC is working with Swift County on an environmental project aimed at educating the public and businesses about separating recyclables and compostable items. The UMRDC will work with Scott Collins, Swift County Environmental Services Director, to create a county-wide educational program for residents and businesses about the importance of sorting their garbage to reduce the tonnage that had to be shipped to a landfill. An intern from the University of Minnesota, will go door-to-door, business-to-business, and town to town explaining the benefits of sorting organic materials out of the waste stream. In addition, UMRDC staff will create social media campaigns, run newspaper and radio ads, along with billboard ads highlighting the importance of recycling and the location of the trailers within the county.

Dawson Armory Building

The UMRDC continues to assist the City of Dawson with this city-owned historic building which houses their library and apartments. A conditions assessment was completed for the Dawson Armory which set the stage for a series of improvements for the building. The UMRDC assisted with the grant to the Minnesota Historical Society for a Historical and Cultural Grant to fix the roof and repair interior water damage. This grant was approved in late 2019 for the amount of \$184,000. The UMRDC continues to assist with grants management as they are in the final stages to complete this grant and preserve this historic building.

Helping Communities Prosper

OHV Park Master Plan

Over the past year, the Appleton Area Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Park steering committee met to capture park user feedback, review site conditions, and consider proposed improvements for the purpose of developing a park master plan. The master plan will show that the park has regional significance allowing Swift County to apply for Legacy Dollars through the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission.

The committee consisted of three Swift County staff and elected officials, two Department of Natural Resource (DNR) employees, two local park users, two planning staff from the UMRDC, and a landscape architect from Hagstrom Engineering.

UMVRDC staff developed a public participation plan to gather park user

feedback. The plan centered around the development and dispersal of a park user survey asking users where they came from, how old they were, how long they stay, how they learned about the park, how many people were in their group, why they visit the park, how many times they have visited the park, and what new amenities they would like to see added to the park.

Expanding the park has been a consistent demand by park users and to meet this demand four nearby parcels of land have been identified for possible park expansion.

The committee has developed final recommendations, presented them to the Swift County Board, and continues to work with the County on development of a public engagement plan.



Maynard, Minnesota

Administration of Business Relief Grants

The UMRDC was asked to assist both Chippewa and Yellow Medicine Counties in helping to develop a process and to administer their federal and state business relief funding as part of county allocations designated to support businesses impacted due to the COVID pandemic.

The UMRDC developed online applications, content for the county website, marketing materials and reviewed all applications and provided applicant customer service to ensure applications were complete and eligible. Staff helped develop and review criteria and worked with the county administrator to prepare a list of eligible applicants and expenses that were ultimately approved by the county board.

Chippewa County Federally Funded Business Grants provided \$279,830 to 54 businesses and non-profits.

Chippewa County State Funded Business Grants provided \$250,000 to 41 businesses.

Yellow Medicine County Federally Funded Business Grants provided \$558,751 to 63 businesses and another \$143,293 to other organizations and non-profits.

Yellow Medicine County State Funded Business Grants provided \$250,000 to 29 businesses.



Appleton Area OHV Park, Appleton, Minnesota

Chippewa County Business Grants

Federally Funded

\$279,830

State Funded

\$250,000

Yellow Medicine County Business Grants

Federally Funded

\$558,751 >>>>

State Funded >>>>

\$250,000 >>>>

EDA CARES

The UMRVDC received a supplemental EDA CARES grant to work on projects to help address the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Below is the workplan for FY21.



Digital Marketing and E-Commerce Transition Support

Training and support to transition local businesses to a 21st century digital economy (online presence/sales capability, social media, etc.) addressing resiliency and COVID recovery.



Regional Redevelopment Fund Feasibility Plan

Concept research, feasibility analysis and strategic plan for a regional fund focused on demolition and redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties.



Developable Properties Inventory / Opportunity Zone Targeting

Populate, manage, promote and coordinate utilization of the region's inventory of vacant or underutilized properties.



Regional Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)

Work with regional ED professionals to develop a formal BR&E initiative throughout the region to help identify opportunities to address economic recovery opportunities.



Child Care Industry Analysis & Outreach

Outreach to providers to identify need and coordinate recovery resources.



Broadband Access Analysis & Outreach

Outreach to remaining underserved geographies to identify need and coordinate available resources for broadband access and deployment.



Comprehensive planning with a focus on resiliency

Strategic planning for local units of government addressing proactive planning leading to more resilient communities.



Regional Marketing: Prairie Waters / Get Rural

Regional Marketing and Promotion Coordination
Employer/Community marketing kits



Regional Marketing : Meander Art Crawl

Online marketplace development and cooperative distribution
Training for artists to set up their own commerce sites
Online marketing/event with live video, auction.

Helping Communities Prosper

Small Cities Development Program

Supports rehabilitation of homes, rentals and commercial buildings

UMVRDC staff continue to author grant applications and provide general administration of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Small Cities Development Program (SCDP).

Granite Falls is looking to complete their grant in the fall of 2021. The goal is to rehab 14 owner-occupied homes, three single family rental homes, and six commercial properties. Almost \$900,000 in grant funds will provide a significant amount of impact throughout the community.

Clarkfield is also looking to complete their grant in the fall of 2021. Clarkfield's, \$1,107,430 grant is working to rehab up to 15 owner-occupied homes and five, possibly six, commercial properties. The grant also pays \$600,000 of the water tower project. The water tower is part of the \$24 million dollar infrastructure project in Clarkfield.

The UMVRDC also provides project income administration for the City of Clarkfield for their current Small Cities Development Program. The UMVRDC tracks and services loans and loan payments and serves as the contact for borrowers and provides reports to the City on loan activity and the balance of the fund, completes all the reporting requirements, and works with the City to develop a policy to administer the relending of the funds.

Milan and **Watson's** dual grant is in its second year. Total improvements made in these cities will be close to \$1.1 million project. The goal is to rehab 14 owner-occupied homes along with 16 multi-family rental units and four commercial properties. **Canby** is in its second year of the grant. The SCDP grant funds will

allow 17 owner occupied homes and 12 commercial businesses to receive needed rehabilitation totaling over \$1 million.

Appleton and Clara City are in their first year of the grant. All the policies and procedures and other start up documents have been completed. Applications are being received and projects are just starting.

Appleton will be able to provide funds to rehab 18 owner-occupied homes and five commercial properties, totaling \$1,057,530 in improvements.

Clara City plans to rehab 10 owner-occupied homes, eight single-family rental homes and four commercial properties. The total grant funds that will impact the city is \$902,209.

The UMVRDC wrote two SCDP grant applications during 2021. The communities of Benson and Dawson are waiting to be notified if they were awarded grants. **Benson's** grant would rehab 20 owner-occupied homes and 10 commercial properties, and **Dawson's** will provide funds for 18 owner-occupied homes and four commercial properties. Benson's total grant will be \$1,035,000 and Dawson's will be \$701,500. Those grants will widely impact our region.

UMVRDC staff provide general administration for all the grants. Prairie Five Community Action Council and Swift County Housing and Redevelopment Authority provides field administration.



Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus Grant Applications for Madison and Appleton

The UMRDC authored two grants to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). DEED received a special allocation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funds. This allocation was authorized by the CARES Act, Public Law 116-136, which was signed by President Trump on March 27, 2020, to respond to the growing effects of this historic public health crisis.

The City of Appleton submitted a grant to provide broadband infrastructure to support low-and-moderate income residents by offering increased connectivity for telework, telemedicine, telelearning, and televisits within the city of Appleton. The grant also included a commercial rehabilitation component for at least 12 businesses to update to new or repair their heating, ventilation and air conditioning system with good ventilation and safe air circulation.

The City of Madison submitted a grant to provide broadband infrastructure to support low-and-moderate income residents by offering increased connectivity for telework, telemedicine, telelearning, and televisits within the city of Madison. Both grants will provide broadband infrastructure to the premise for all residences. Businesses will be served through matching funds.

Granite Falls Recommended for Trail Funding

UMVRDC staff assisted Granite Falls with development of a community-wide survey to gauge community interest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and in writing a grant for a trail extension in Granite Falls. The application was submitted to the Southwest Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership who recommended the City of Granite Falls for Federal Transportation Alternatives Funding to complete a section of trail connecting neighborhoods on the northeast portion of town without bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure to the existing trail system. The trail will cost \$237,300 and will be constructed in 2025 with a combination of federal and local funds.



Helping Communities Prosper

UMVRDC Annual Community Survey

The UMVRDC conducted the annual survey in December 2020 to find out what the biggest issues and needs are for the region. From the 476 surveys sent out to elected officials and staff from the local units of government in our region, we received 121 responses.

The top ten most important issues that need attention are listed below. Of this list, seven were also in the top ten last year, and child care remained the #1 issue.

We also asked about issues caused due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The answers revealed that community connectedness, loss of revenue for businesses, and financial strain on the local unit of government budget were the top issues.

UMVRDC staff are using this information to inform our work plans for the coming year.

UMVRDC top issues:

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Child Care Accessibility & Affordability | 4. Demolition of Dilapidated Housing & Commercial Properties | 7. Road/Bridge Planning or Funding |
| 2. Improving Broadband | 5. Housing Rehabilitation | 8. Water Quality |
| 3. Marketing/Promoting our Community/ Area to Attract New Residents, Visitors, and Workforce | 6. Sewer, Sanitary Sewer, Storm Water, Drinking Water, Infrastructure Planning or Funding | 9. Redevelopment of Vacant Lots |
| | | 10. Senior Housing |

Developable Properties

The UMVRDC continues to develop strategies for dealing with vacant and/or underutilized properties in a sustainable and responsible way, and to market opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop or expand businesses and utilize available property in the region.

Last year the UMVRDC developed the first regional inventory of developable properties in the region and worked with cities and EDAs in the region to add 49 properties into the LocationOne Information System (LOIS). LOIS is a GIS based economic development platform used throughout the US, Mexico and Canada and is the basis for the site selector system used by the Minnesota

Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). Our regional Prairie Waters marketing program also pulls this data from DEED and showcases these entrepreneur opportunities under the work here portion of the regional website <https://prairiewaters.com/site-selector/>.

This year the UMVRDC has received CARES Act funding to support additional developable property work. We are currently updating and verifying data on the properties we collected as part of the inventory last year and will be working with an intern from the U of M Morris to add additional properties to the inventory.



Strategic Directions

New Initiatives

The New Initiatives strategic direction is intended to be directed by staff who see needs and opportunities in our region.

Online presence fact sheet outreach

Created a fact sheet with five tips on boosting your online presence. Used in marketing packets for the UMRDC board visits.

Active living plan research

Staff conducted a survey and created a fact sheet to see if communities in our region were interested in doing Active Living Plans. Though it is not a priority at this time, the information given out was valuable.

Regional Trends

The Regional Trends strategic direction is intended to provide staff time to work on projects identified in the annual survey and to be responsive to our region's needs. Work directed by the 2019 UMRDC Annual survey included the following two projects:

Child Care

The UMRDC connects with childcare resource providers to share and distribute information to the regions childcare providers. The RDC also is adding to our childcare case study collection

Employment toolkit

Creating a toolkit that includes lifestyle information for an employer to send to a potential new employee as a welcoming package.

City of Appleton Capital Improvement Plan

The City of Appleton has contracted with the UMRDC to create a Capital Improvements Plan for the following:

1. Understand the current financial status and how it relates to capital projects.
2. Identify needs and projects of city-owned properties and projects.
3. Identify how to pay for capital projects.

Benefits to a city having a Capital Improvements Plan are:

- Identify the most economical means of financing capital projects
- Increase opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid
- Connect or relate public facilities to other public and private development and redevelopment policies and plans
- Focus attention on community objectives and fiscal capacity
- Keep the public informed about future needs and projects
- Coordinate the activities of neighboring and overlapping units of local government to reduce duplication
- Encourage careful project planning and design to help a community reach desired goals
- The project is expected to be completed in this calendar year



Helping Communities

Prosper



Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Marketing



Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is a regional marketing effort promoting 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 natural, cultural, scenic, historic assets, and lifestyle. The program is managed by the UMRDC and is funded by counties, cities, chambers, and economic development organizations in the region.

2021 Prairie Waters Members include Chippewa County, Clara City, Montevideo/CVB, Milan, Swift County, Benson, Appleton, Lac qui Parle County, Dawson, Madison, Yellow Medicine County, Canby, Clarkfield, Granite Falls/EDA.

Regional Website: www.prairiewaters.com The website is a one-stop-shop that includes information on employment opportunities, housing, education, healthcare, childcare, things to do, etc.

Annual Gathering: Each summer staff hosts an annual gathering at a unique location throughout the region and invites visitors and locals to come enjoy free entertainment, food, and prizes while learning about the Prairie Waters program.

Advertising: In 2020-2021, Prairie Waters received a total of \$22,500 in CRISIS Grants through Explore Minnesota Tourism to spend locally on advertising our communities and events.

Visitor/Relocation Guide: This two-year guide has a print distribution of 25,000 along with a digital version. The only regional visitor guide in our 4-county region.

Employment Toolkit: Creating a toolkit that includes lifestyle information for an employer to send to a potential new employee as a welcoming package.



Mallards Baseball - Madison, MN



Lac qui Parle County Park



Band Performing Downtown Montevideo



Child Care

In response to annual survey results from both 2019 and 2020, the UMRDC has been working to understand the complexities of the child care crisis and how it is being addressed in our region. We have developed case studies on child care providers and based on conversations with other organizations working on the topic, we have developed a three-part plan of action to collect, connect and share.

We continue to collect resources and information about child care as we find them or are shared with the UMRDC from other child care stakeholders. Information in the form of available trainings, news articles, webinars, research, and funding sources from industry experts has been shared with existing and potential child care providers.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies

One of the major plans that guides work at the UMRDC is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). CEDS is a document that is composed of economic issues that the region faces, the economic goals that the region wants to achieve, and the solutions to reach those goals. The current CEDS is designed to cover strategies from 2016 - 2021. Going into 2021, the largest economic development project that the UMRDC will be focusing on is writing a new CEDS to help map economic goals for the region for 2022 – 2027.

The previous CEDS document was structured into the same four cornerstones that Minnesota Association of Development Organization's (MADO) DevelopMN document followed. The cornerstones are Community Resources, Human Capital Economic Competitiveness, and Foundational Assets.

The new CEDS will also be structured around these four cornerstones based on the issues current trends. Background research issues, needs and the formation of the CEDS Strategy Committee have been completed. The CEDS Strategy Committee is made up of representatives from different economic interests in the region. The CEDS Strategy Committee has identified strengths of the region, issues, and goals for the future. A public engagement strategy will also be part of the process last in 2021. The final copy of the CEDS will be adopted by the UMRDC in February 2022.

Federal EDA Planning Grant

The UMRDC was invited to reapply to the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development planning grant program. The grant provides funding to the UMRDC to provide economic development activities and services throughout the region. The UMRDC received \$192,500 in Economic Development Administration funds for a three-year grant to continue a comprehensive economic development planning program. Staff submitted this application in April 2021.

Helping Communities Prosper

2020 Arts Meander Covid Edition

Just like many other events in 2020, the Meander Art Crawl had to change and adapt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In place of the usual art crawl, UMRVDC staff worked to create the Meander Online Art Auction, held the first weekend in October 2020. Each Meander artist had the option to include up to three pieces of art on the auction, giving shoppers the opportunity to buy local art from the comfort of their own homes. A portion of each sale was donated to local food shelves.

A total of \$23,740 was reported in art sales as a result of the Meander Online Art Auction. A total of \$881 was raised for local food shelves. The average reported art sales per artist was \$765. While the usual, in-person art crawl was missed, the online art auction was a great way to keep the Meander alive in a year that saw so many events get cancelled.

Home Products Gallery Artists Auction Rules Contact Us Register Sign In

Meander

October 2, 3 & 4, 2020

Upper Minnesota River Online Art Auction

Welcome to the **2020 Meander Online Art Auction** featuring work by Meander artists from the Upper Minnesota River Valley. You can have fun window shopping in the preview time from September 21 to Oct 1. View artist bams here now. Enjoy the weekend of bidding and please continue to support our artists all year long!

WHAT: An online art auction. Each artist has chosen up to three original works of art for this auction. Artists will be donating up to twenty percent (20%) of their auction sales to local food shelves.

WHY: To showcase and support Meander artists. All auction sales go directly to the artist.

WHEN: Window shop now by viewing the [Auction Catalog](#). Bidding starts Friday, October 2 at 12 noon and closes Sunday, October 4, 2020 at 4pm.

WHERE: Online ONLY

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

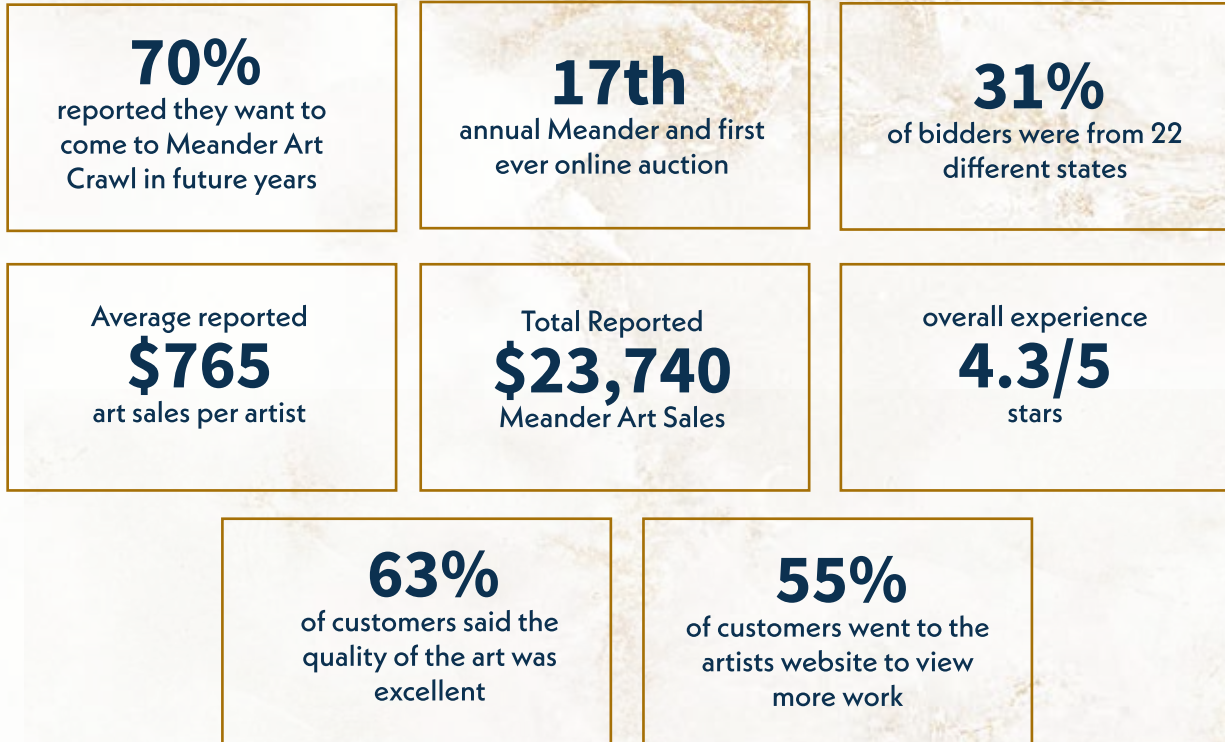
The UMRVDC has been providing staffing and fiscal services to the byway since 1996. The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway (MRVSB) is a partnership of committed individuals from the 287-mile byway corridor, representing a variety of interests including chambers of commerce, various attractions 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.

The MRVSB completed a Tear Map for the central portion of the byway. This project was paid for through a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society Legacy Grant. A company called mapformation created the map, and the hope is to complete the other sections of the byway in the coming two years: <https://www.mnrivervalley.com/central-section-byway-tear-map/>

The MRVSB has also worked on marketing, keeping the website up to date, and distribution of the new visitor's guide. The Byway received a Minnesota Historical Society Legacy Partnership Grant that will allow the Byway Alliance to work on updating past publications and continue building relationships with the Dakota communities along the byway.



Meander Online Art Auction Success







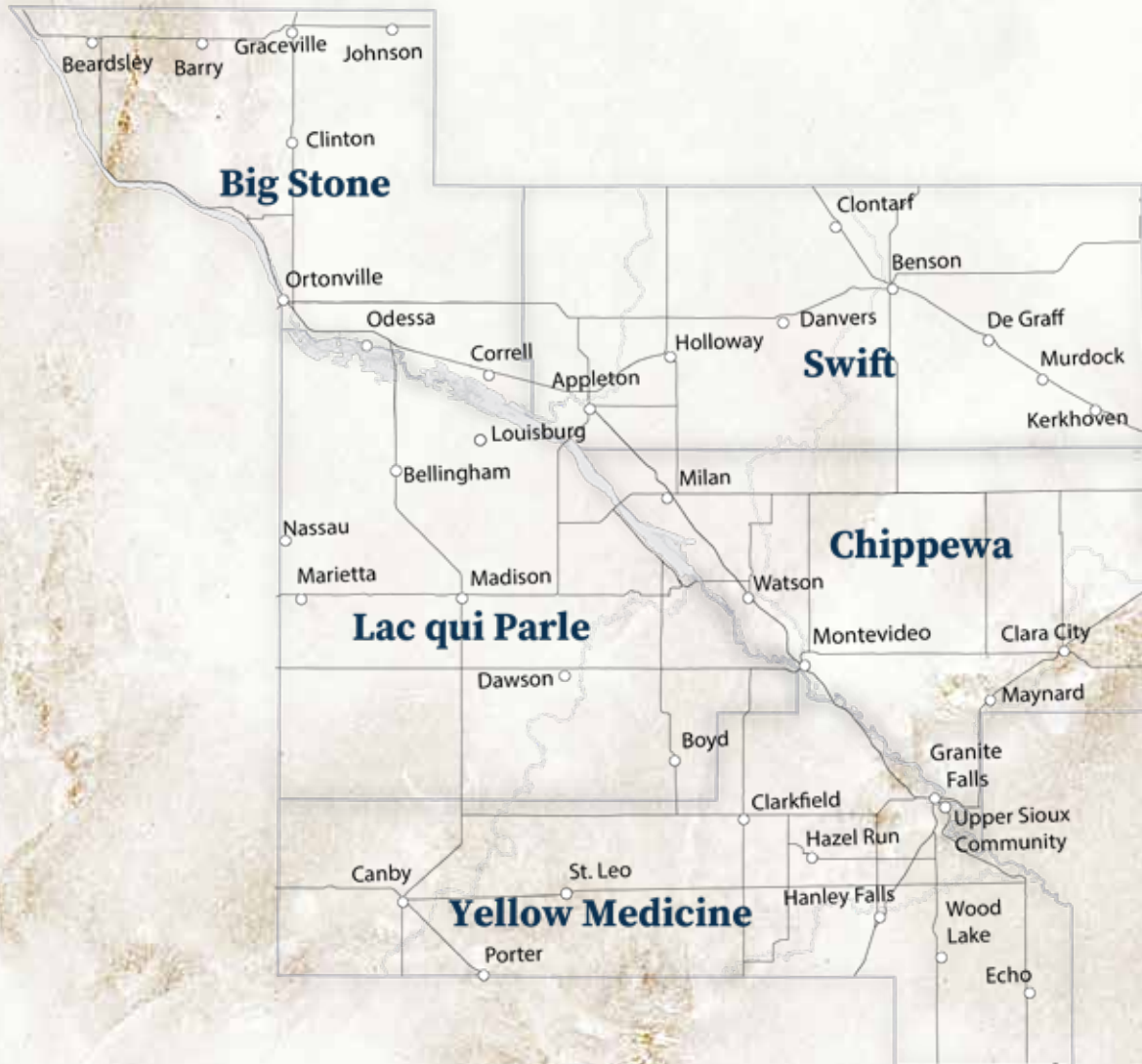


Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

323 W. Schlieman Ave Appleton, MN 56208
320-289-1981
www.umvrdc.org

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