



Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**



What can we
be best at?



What are we deeply
passionate about?

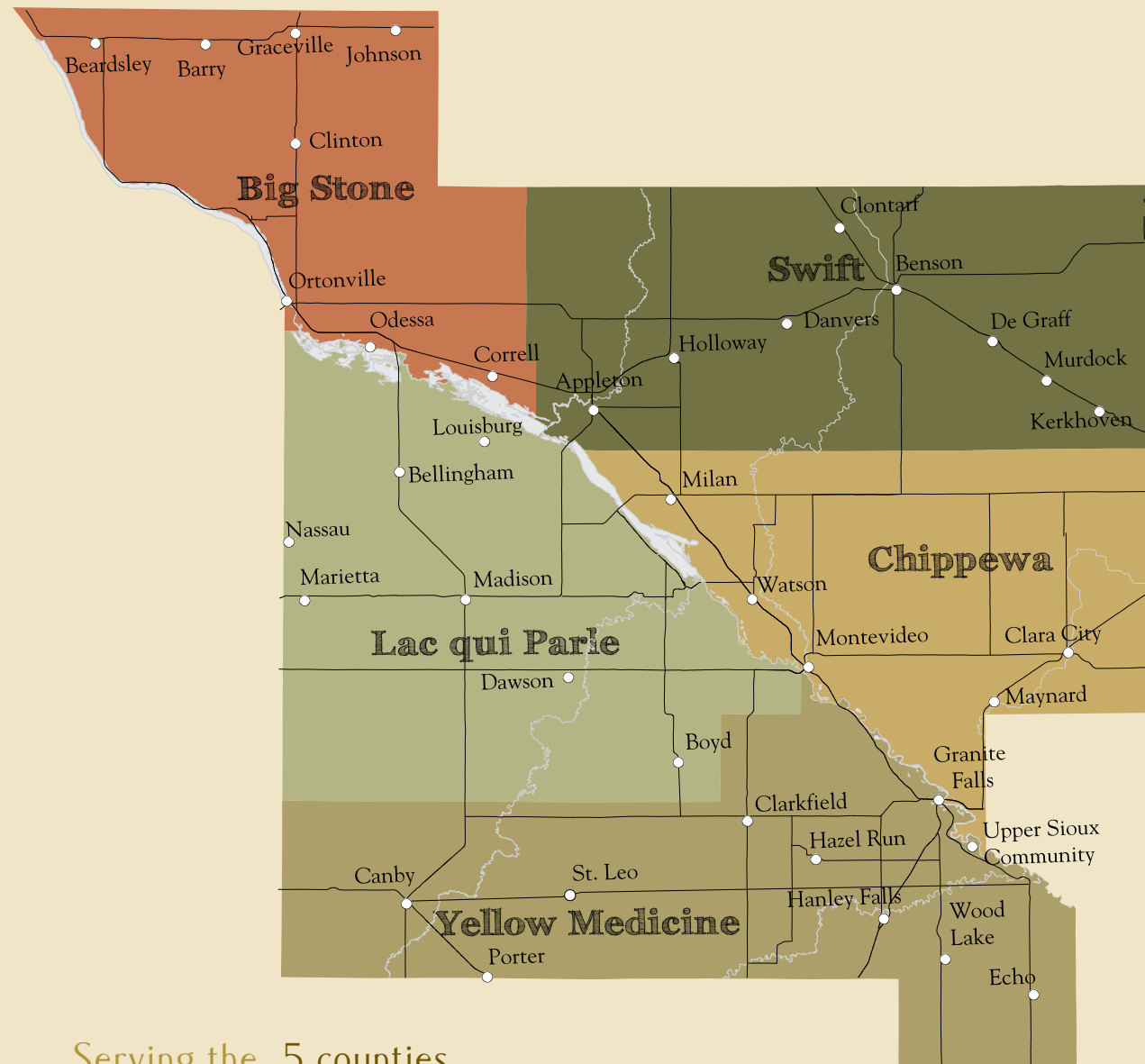


What drives our
resource engine?



Helping Communities Prosper

2012 Annual Report



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

The amount of money invested in our region
as a result of the UMVRDC's work in FY 2012:

\$1,807,032



Message from the Executive Director

Responsibility:

1. the state or fact of being responsible.
2. an instance of being responsible: The responsibility for this mess is yours!
3. a particular burden of obligation upon one who is responsible: the responsibilities of authority.
4. a person or thing for which one is responsible: A child is a responsibility to its parents.
5. reliability or dependability, especially in meeting debts or payments.

I recently had cause to look that word up. Like many words it has multiple definitions. I take this word seriously at home with my family (you have the responsibility to clean your own room, keep track of your own things, and help your little brother) and here at work (we are responsible to our board and to the units of government in our region to be efficient and transparent with the work we do). It is a word that I use regularly and feel it has a certain heaviness to it.

As defined in Minnesota Statute the UMVRDC has the responsibility to assist the units of government with information and services. We can help local governments write grants, develop plans, coordinate services, complete research and operate programs on behalf of the region. I feel fortunate to work within an agency that is empowered to help get things done. UMVRDC employees often talk passionately about using our combined knowledge, resources and abilities to help advance projects that serve needs in the region. We take the responsibility that has been assigned to us seriously.

Please review the highlights in this report and see how we have assisted the region throughout the last year. I want to ensure you that our team of talented and resourceful employees feel and understand the responsibility of our work and stand ready to serve you now and into the future. Please let us know if you have questions about the work in this report or how we can help you with your current needs.

*We are made wise not by the recollection of our past,
but by the responsibility for our future.*

- George Bernard Shaw

Dawn Edgeman

Mission

Enable the region to
thrive through assisting
local governments

Board of Directors

Big Stone County



Brent Olson
County Board



Angela Doren
Municipalities
Ortonville City Council



Harold R. Dimberg
Townships
Ortonville Township

Chippewa County



Jim Dahlvang
County Board



Mike Thein
Municipalities
Clara City Mayor



Jim Schmaedeka
Townships
Louriston Township

Lac qui Parle County



Harold Solem
County Board



Jeff Olson
Municipalities
Dawson City Council



Mark Bourne
Townships
Hamlin Township

Swift County



Gary Hendrickx
County Board



Heather Giese
Municipalities
Appleton City Council



Warren Rau
Townships
Hegbert Township

Yellow Medicine County



Gary L. Johnson
County Board



Scott Peterson
Municipalities
Granite Falls City Council



(Vacancy)
Townships

Public Interest & Tribal Council



Juanita Lauritsen
Work Force
Council



Pamela Lehmann
Lac qui Parle
County EDA

School Board



Brett Buer
Dawson-Boyd



Kathi Thymian
Ortonville



Bruce Swigerd
Prairie Five CAC, Inc.



(Vacancy)
Upper Sioux
Community

Staff



Back

Jacki Anderson
Community Development
Senior Planner

Arlene Tilbury
Financial
Director

Barb Jordahl
Financial
Planner

Jenifer Fadness
Communications
& Tourism Planner

Front

Dawn Hegland
Executive
Director

Jackie Sigdahl
Administrative
Assistant

Kristi Fernholz
Community Development
Senior Planner

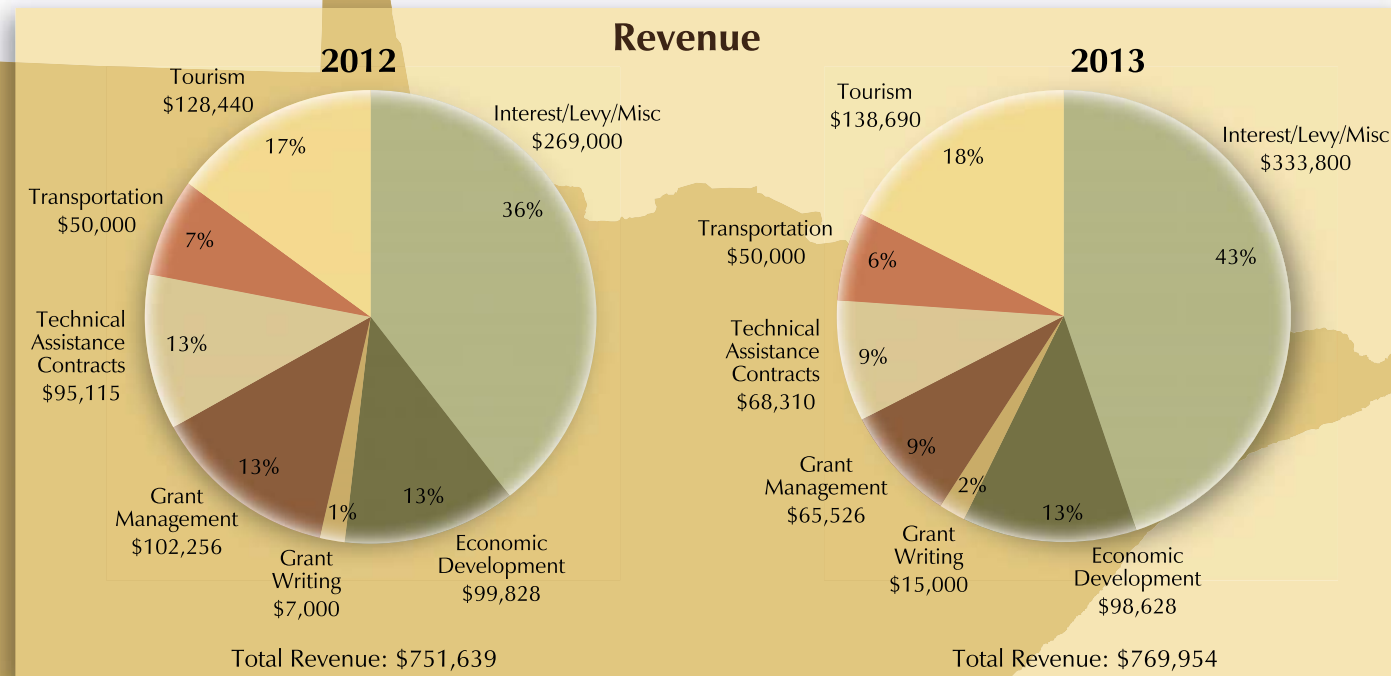
Lindsey Knutson
Community Development
Planner

UMVRDC's Core Values

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

Financial Report

Revenue and Expenditure Comparison
Current FY 2012 and Proposed FY 2013



Expenses

	FY12	FY13
Salaries/Fringe	508,000	533,829
Data Acquisition	500	
Commissioner's Expense	39,030	39,000
Audit	12,000	13,000
Computer Technical Assistance	16,000	12,000
Contract for Services/Comm. Dev	10,000	1,500
Copy Charge/Xerox Lease	10,000	10,000
Depreciation	11,000	11,000
Dues	3,000	3,500
Insurance	3,500	850
Intern		8,000
Legal Fees	2,000	2,000
Miscellaneous/Employee Morale	4,000	4,000
Office Rent	12,210	12,210
Postage	10,500	6,000
Printing/Advertising	5,000	5,000
RDC Marketing Items	2,000	2,000
Registration/Training	13,000	15,000
Repairs/Maintenance	2,000	2,000
Software/GMS Maintenance	11,000	8,000
Sub./Publications	2,000	2,000
Supplies	7,000	6,000
Telephone/Internet	7,500	2,500
Web Hosting/Maintenance		1,500
Travel/Staff	25,000	25,000
Meander Art Crawl	18,450	28,500
Tourism Trade Shows/Ads	16,000	15,000
TOTAL	750,690	769,389

2012
Total Revenue: \$751,639
Total Expenditures: \$750,690
Excess Revenue: \$949

2013 Proposed Budget
Total Revenue: \$769,954
Total Expenditures: \$769,389
Excess Revenue: \$565

In addition to the agency budget,
the UMVRDC fiscally managed
\$2,551,220
of grants for counties and cities

The UMVRDC's Good to Great Process

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

Our strategic plan is based on Jim Collins' book *Good to Great*. We have spent the last five years focusing on moving our organization from good to great by examining our organizational values, what we are passionate about, what we can be best at, and what drives our resource engine.

In 2010 the UMVRDC reviewed our strategic plan using Good to Great as a framework. Based on these ideas, we refined the three questions shown on this page.

The Hedgehog Concept

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

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

What Can We Be Best At?

Matching local needs with information and funding to accomplish projects.

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

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



What Drives Our Resource Engine?

Excellent results at a reasonable price.

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

UMVRDC Mission

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

What Are We Deeply Passionate About?

Solutions consistent with the values in Region 6W.

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

The UMVRDC's Hedgehog Grant: Helping Communities Prosper

The UMVRDC mission statement directs us to "enable the region to thrive by assisting units of government". We know through our recent survey that local governments have lots 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 our grant writing and planning services.

Since January 2011 the UMVRDC has set aside \$32,550 of our local levy dollars to cost-share the following projects:

- LqP County, Grant Writing: \$1,200
- LqP County, Grant Writing: \$750
- Swift County, Planning & Zoning: \$4,000
- Granite Falls, Strategic Planning: \$2,000
- Dawson, Grant Writing: \$4,000
- Clara City, Comprehensive Planning: \$4,250
- Dawson, Grant Writing: \$4,000
- Swift County, Planning: \$3,500
- Milan, Comprehensive Planning: \$4,850
- Granite Falls, Grant Writing: \$4,000

Applications and more program details are available on our website. To talk about potential projects that might be eligible for the Hedgehog Grant, please contact Dawn Hegland, Executive Director at 320-289-1981.

BHAG Accomplishments in 2012

“A **Big Huge Audacious Goal (BHAG)** is action-oriented; clear (who, what, where, by when); compelling and gripping—people “get it” right away; bold; bordering on hubris and the unattainable. It is a 10- to 30-year objective—like a big mountain to climb—that serves as a unifying focal point of effort, galvanizing people and creating team spirit. It is crisp, compelling and easy to understand.” (*Good to Great*, Collins, 2001)

● **Community Development BHAG:** Be the premier agency for community development in Region 6W.

- The UMRDC had a total of 26 contracts for service with 13 different cities and one county for different types of planning, technical assistance and grant writing.
 - Three cities and one county entered into more than 1 contract with the UMRDC.
 - Two cities entered into three or more contracts with the UMRDC for service during FY11.
- The UMRDC assisted in the coordination of over ten workshops/trainings in the region (Broadband Classes, Economic Development Professionals - ED Pros).
- Developed a mini planning workshop for cities under 500.
- Provided staff for the Meander Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl.
- Provided staff for the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.
- Provided eight new loans to new and expanding businesses in the region.

● **Marketing BHAG:** All local units of government (LUGs) in Region 6W will know who we are and what we do.

- Analyzing new website via site statistics and user feedback. Site is continually being updated and used as a tool for consistent, timely communication with LUGs.
- Continued to make all marketing efforts consistent with RDC branding.
- Sent at least 46 email blasts and over 20 press releases.

● **Board Stewardship BHAG:** Have 100% active participation of the UMRDC Board.

- Processed six new board members in 2012.
- Utilized the round robin at Commission meetings to share information and current issues with other jurisdictions.
- Continued to utilize the Planner Update to inform and educate board members about the services and projects of the UMRDC. Recycled the planner update into a monthly email blast to elected officials and government staff in the region.
- UMRDC staff coordinated 4 speaker engagements for UMRDC Commissioners and other interested parties: Katie Caskey, MnDOT; Deb Larson, Prairie Five Community Action Council; Jarrett Hubbard and Brigid Turk, MnDOT; and Rick Stulz, Lac qui Parle County Attorney.
- Surveyed board members to determine priorities for an annual board event. Determined a board tour was the priority for 2012. The tour will occur on the July 2012 board meeting day and will feature projects the RDC has worked on in the region.
- Surveyed Commission members quarterly about the process, content and functions of the board meetings.
- Featured three Commission members and four staff members in quarterly newsletters.

Special Regional Project:



C. K. Blandin Foundation included the UMRDC as one of 11 demonstration communities in its Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC) Program funded through the US Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

A UMRDC steering committee allocated \$90,000 toward seven projects that promoted the use of broadband technology and could show measureable outcomes by March 2012.

Big Stone County Does More Business Online

The goal was for Big Stone County to provide the public with more convenient access to government information and resources such as GIS, highway project information, county government forms, and four years of tax statements have been placed online and are available to the public.

- All GIS info (even paid subscription information) is available at a kiosk in the county building, the assessor's office staff are available to help customers and train them in finding and using the data.
- Statistics over the first year include 64,000 non-county hits and 11,000 unique hits.
- The GIS site has generated over 3,500 non subscription hits and has 1,750 paid subscription hits. These subscriptions will help pay for the maintenance of the site.

Lac qui Parle County Computer Commuter Goes Further with Program Development

The goal of the Lac qui Parle Computer Commuter is to increase the digital literacy of area residents by offering a free mobile computer lab.

- A coordinator is available at all times to offer FREE assistance and guidance as needed.
- The bus is in six communities once a week for four hours.
- Users range in age from teens to elderly and have a wide range of skills.
- 162 users to date; 84% are 50 years and older
- Average user spends 1.5 hours on the bus

Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities

Dawson/Boyd Schools Create New Collaboration Center Focused On Technology

The goal was to establish a Multimedia Collaboration Center (MCC) to use for school and community use.

- Rehabilitated a computer lab with multimedia technology and wifi to be used for increased student and public use.
- Established a Teacher/Community Expert Training Academy that offered in-person and online classes throughout the community. They offered classes on:
 - Basic Computer Care
 - Google Docs
 - Microsoft Office 2010
 - Overview of the Microsoft Cloud
 - Native American Strategies
 - Shutterfly
- Established a student tech team called the Computer Saavy Specialist (CSS). Students learned how to develop web pages, troubleshoot basic computer and hardware problems, perform computer maintenance, and refurbish computers. Classes were co- led by a team of teachers and a local business owner. This class will offer to develop web pages and learn about other social media options for local businesses.

Johnson Memorial Healthcare of Dawson Embraces Tele-health Opportunity

The goal was to help keep seniors in their homes longer by using technology to assist with their healthcare needs as well as increase social connections using video-conferencing instead of regular phone calls.

- Five local families were chosen to participate in the pilot Homestream project.



A final presentation from each of the MIRC fund recipients was held on June 15th at the UMRDC.

UMVRDC Helps Two of Our Cities Develop a Web Presence

The goal was to have the UMRDC develop two new websites for some of the smallest cities in the region.

The goal was to provide website options to cities in the region without websites, particularly the region's smallest cities.

- Two cities responded to our website offering: Bellingham and Echo. Both cities now have new websites.
- For more information on these two sites, please visit page 12 of this annual report.

Ortonville School Teacher and Students Partner with EDA to Create a Community Web Presence

The goal of the project was to provide a web presence for all Ortonville businesses.

- The EDA worked with two high school students to meet with businesses to collect information and pictures for more than 100 new or improved business and community websites.
- Organized a “Get Connected” program to further promote to review what businesses are using for internet tools, share tips, claiming businesses online, verifying map locations are correct, and more.
- Added wi-fi to the school building for greater public and student access to broadband.

Please visit our website at
www.umvrdc.org
for more information on MIRC
including links to these projects.

Pioneer Public TV Puts Rural Broadband on the Map



The goal of the project was to produce a video segment on broadband issues in rural areas.

- An initial 13-minute segment was submitted to the national PBS series Need to Know web site in early December 2011.
- The second phase developed and produced additional video content for a 26 minute broadcast describing the challenges facing rural area in the availability and use of broadband. The documentary looked at the impacts on businesses, farmers, youth and newcomers. This segment will play as documentary in their 45 rural counties in western Minnesota, northwestern Iowa and eastern South Dakota in September 2012 and they hope to share the content with other PBS stations.

Grant Writing

City of Dawson

Jacki assisted the City of Dawson with grant writing services to help them seek \$1.1 million from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) for infrastructure expansion in the city's industrial park. Funds would be used for road, curb & gutter improvements and would support a new pre-treatment plant needed for new and expanding business in Dawson.

The total project is estimated at just under \$2.4 million with nearly \$700,000 being local investment, \$500,000 coming from a DEED grant secured by RDC staff in 2010, and \$1,189,500 requested from EDA. It is expected that EDA will make a decision by fall 2012.

Granite Falls Pedestrian Bridge

Kristi and Lindsey authored two grant applications, one written for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for \$150,000 and the other written to the Federal Highway Administration Scenic Byway Program for \$512,000 to help restore the historic Granite Falls pedestrian bridge. The total cost for restoring the bridge is \$1,024,000. In May, Granite Falls was notified that the DNR grant was unsuccessful. In January, Granite Falls was notified that their application for the bridge restoration project ranked first among all National Scenic Byway applications in the state of Minnesota. The announcement of funded projects nationwide will be summer 2012.



The historic Granite Falls Pedestrian Bridge

Grant Management

Small Cities Development Program (SCDP)

The Appleton SCDP grant was awarded in the spring of 2010 and will be completed on December 31, 2012. The grant is for \$564,750 and consists of the rehabilitation of 15 homes and 10 commercial properties. Arlene and Barb work with the Swift County Housing and Redevelopment Authority and Prairie Five for the administration of this grant.

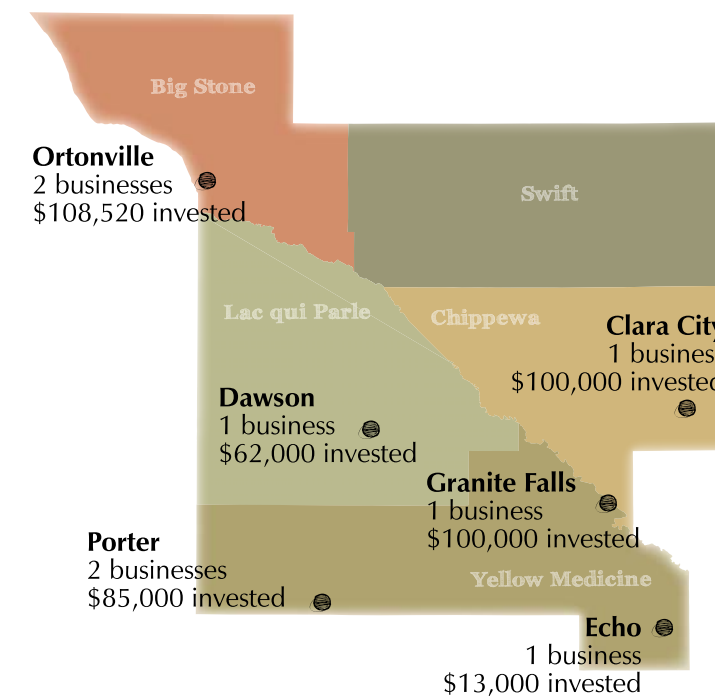
The City of Benson received a SCDP grant in June of 2011 and will be completed on December 31, 2013. The grant is for \$172,400 and consists of the rehabilitation of 8 homes. Arlene and Barb work with the Swift County Housing and Redevelopment Authority for the administration of this grant.

Granite Falls Flood Recovery

This fiscal year the City of Granite Falls received \$1,210,000 from the Department of Natural Resources for their comprehensive flood control project. The UMRDC provides fiscal and advisory services to the City of Granite Falls for ongoing flood mitigation needs.

Since the floods of 1997 and 2001, UMRDC staff have worked with the City of Granite Falls in their flood recovery efforts utilizing over \$18 million from state and federal funding sources.

UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund (RDC RLF)



Jacki managed the UMRDC Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) participation in 8 different loans over the last fiscal year. The RLF provides gap financing for business start-ups, expansions, and job retention projects needing working capital, fixed assets and real estate. A total of \$471,520 in revolving loan funds were lent to eight businesses:

- Barr's/Conroy Electric, Ortonville: \$46,000
- C&L Powder Coating, Echo: \$13,000
- CC Diamond, Clara City: \$100,000
- Granite Falls Dairy Queen, Granite Falls: \$100,000
- Jager Building Supply, Dawson: \$62,000
- Kaercher Publications, Ortonville: \$62,520
- Porter Elevator, Porter: \$75,000
- Merritt Construction, Porter: \$10,000

As a result of these eight loans, 44 jobs are expected to be created and retained within the first 24 months.

In addition to RLF funds, another \$2,550,175 was leveraged in public and private funding outside of RLF funds creating a total investment of \$3,021,695.

The RLF saw an increase in equity in this year's projects; just under \$500,000 was identified as owner investment in the projects listed above, that calculates to an average of \$62,500 of owner investment per project. Last year it was common to see little to no owner equity in projects.

According to the loan history, the RLF has more loans at year-end (37) than we've had in the last eleven years with a total of 37 loans the RLF has maintained a healthy portfolio with no delinquent or defaulted loans in the last year.



Kaercher Publications in Ortonville is using RLF funds to expand their business: they are constructing a new building and adding more printing equipment to increase their current printing capabilities (shown at right).

Special Regional Project: Regional Recruitment



Is Region 6W falling into the doom and gloom of the "brain drain" phenomenon? Not so much.

Ben Winchester, a Research Fellow at the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality suggests that most rural Minnesota counties including those in Region 6W are really experiencing a "brain gain." Statistics show that although our bright and talented youth are leaving for college, there is an influx of 35-44 year olds that are coming into the region bringing their education, experience, wealth and children.

Region 6W does continue to experience overall population decline. But on the upside of things, brain power seems to be coming into the region on its own without any marketing tactics or recruiting efforts. According to our research, many of them are not coming for a job nor have family ties... many are just

looking for better quality of life and are willing to leave a higher paying job in a city for the what the rural areas have to offer. The notion of people coming into the region on their own got a few economic developers thinking, what if we started marketing to this demographic? Would more people come? Would more people stay?

Dawn and Jacki worked with a group of economic development professionals in Region 6W to test this hypothesis. In collaboration with the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission, this group will experiment with a regional recruitment effort that will specifically market to the demographics identified in research. The goal is to attract and retain more residents in our rural region.

The group is currently finalizing the first element of the regional recruitment strategy, a website for potential residents to get information. The website will be found at www.MinnesotaRural.com and will go online in summer 2012.



www.MinnesotaRural.com

Regional Recruitment partner agencies include:

- Ortonville Economic Development Authority
- Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Minnesota West Community & Technical College - Canby
- Southwest Adult Basic Education

With research provided by:

- EDA University Center, Crookston, Minnesota
- University of Minnesota Extension, Center for Community Vitality



The UMRDC Staff and Board had an opportunity to visit C.C. Diamond, near Clara City, during a tour of the region.

Technical Assistance

Cities-under-500 Project

In the fall of 2011, the UMRDC offered a unique opportunity for our cities with populations under 500. Staff offered to visit any city in the region with a population under 500 to facilitate a one-hour planning session, free of charge, to help city councils prioritize and/or start a future projects list.

Jacki, Kristi and Lindsey visited two cities, Marietta and Maynard. The feedback they received from these cities was that it was valuable to have outside perspectives and the expertise of the UMRDC to keep the planning sessions focused.



Maynard City Council members review and prioritize a list of future projects.

Community Statistics Profiles

Kristi, Jacki and Lindsey have been working with staff and several interns from the Center for Small Towns at the University of Minnesota – Morris to develop community profiles showing demographic and economic statistics for each county and city in the region. These community profiles will be completed by the end of the summer and then made available to all counties and cities in the region.

County Hazard Mitigation Plans

Jacki completed All-Hazard Mitigation Plan updates for Swift and Lac qui Parle Counties. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) deemed the plan updates “excellent.” All five counties and the Upper Sioux Community have had their plans approved by FEMA.

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

Individual City Websites

As a result of a MIRC grant (see page 9 in this report for more info), Kristi and Jenifer helped the cities of Echo and Bellingham create new city websites. Before this project, 19 of our 37 cities did not have a website.

- Echo, population 278, utilized a GovOffice website. Their website has 17 pages, with 25 subpages for their businesses.
- Bellingham, population 205, opted for a Wordpress website, a free platform from which a simple 6 page website was created.

Kristi also helped the cities of Milan and Maynard update their GovOffice websites that were previously created by the UMRDC.

Clara City Comprehensive Plan

Kristi and Lindsey have been working on a new comprehensive plan for the city of Clara City.

- A city survey, with a return rate of 35%, was completed in the summer of 2011 to get public input on various issues.
- The planning commission has met many times over the last year to suggest goals and strategies for their plan, and will continue to meet to review the draft plan.
- The draft plan is complete and will go through a public review process this summer.

Clara City saw the need to create their first comprehensive plan so the city can make informed decisions to guide the future. The plan includes a community profile, chapters on land use, housing, parks and recreation, economic development, transportation and public utilities/facilities, and a section on implementation with goals and action plans.

Regional Public Art Planning

Through a Forecast Grant, Kristi has been able to start conversations around the region on how we can encourage more public art projects. A focus group met in June, and will meet again in July to finalize a plan to outline the next steps.



A mosaic and tiled bench in Riverview Park in Appleton, part of a public art project

Upper Sioux Community Energy Plan

Kristi and Jacki completed a Long-Range Energy Plan for the Upper Sioux Community in the fall of 2011. The energy plan initiated a panel discussion on renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal. The process also incorporates energy audits and data collected by the Upper Sioux Community staff about existing energy usage on the reservation. The results from this innovative project will be used as they make decisions on development and plan their energy future. This energy plan will be the first of its kind in our region.



www.EchoMN.com



www.BellinghamMN.us

Transportation

Transportation Planning

The UMRDC 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 issues for our region. We rely heavily on the existing transportation system to get to work, school, medical appointments, vacation, and to get commodities into and out of the region. The UMRDC would like to assist the local units of government to ensure its people and businesses of this region are adequately served by all modes of transportation. To better serve the local units of government in the region, the UMRDC hosted a Transportation Forum, covering the following topics:

- The process of transportation planning and funding on the national, statewide and regional levels
- Programs and services available to local units of government
- MnDOT's new approach to encourage collaboration among local units of government and the state

Lindsey participated in ATP 4 and ATP 8 meetings to review and rank applications for 2016 federal funds for roads, bridges, trails, public transit, and railroad crossings. The total investment in Region 6W for 2016 is \$13,660,842 and for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program's (STIP) four year period of 2013-2016 is \$74,796,565 in federal funds. Additionally, Lindsey participated in regional Toward Zero Deaths and South West Safe Communities Coalition meetings, both aimed at reducing fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways.



Regional Trails Plan

Lindsey has convened a local steering committee to make updates to the existing 2002 Regional Trails Plan. The Regional Trails Plan identifies priorities and guiding principles for trail development and provides local units of government and groups interested in developing trails with technical support resources and a process to follow for trail development. The major updates to the Plan include updated trail maps and a prioritized list of potential trail projects in the region. The Regional Trails Plan will be completed at the end of the summer and available on the UMRDC website under Transportation 2012.

Local Public Transit - Human Service Coordination Plan

The 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan was completed and adopted on January 24, 2012. The goal of the Plan is to identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provide strategies for meeting those needs; and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation in the region.

After the Plan was adopted, Dawn and Lindsey reconvened transit stakeholders to develop a short-term work plan based on priority projects in the plan, as well as to identify how the projects would specifically impact veterans.

The work plan addendum was amended into the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan on July 24, 2012, and is available on our website.

Safe Routes to School

Lindsey worked closely with five school districts to develop six Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grant applications. All six applications, listed below, were successful in receiving funding.

- Appleton/Milan Elementary School in Appleton: planning assistance valued at over \$10,000
- Benson Elementary and Jr. High Schools: planning assistance valued at over \$10,000
- Stevens Elementary School in Dawson: planning assistance valued at over \$10,000
- MMN Elementary School in Madison: planning assistance valued at over \$10,000
- YME Elementary and Middle Schools in Granite Falls: planning assistance valued at over \$10,000
- Canby School District (including St. Peter's Catholic School): implementation grant to hire a SRTS Program Manager for two years at \$20,000

The goals of SRTS are threefold:

- To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
- To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age;
- To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

All SRTS grants use federal funds and no local matching funds are required from the school or community. The plans will be completed in FY2013.



Best at... Helping Communities Prosper



Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

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

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Alliance (MRVSBA) is a group 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. UMRVDC has been providing staffing and fiscal services to the Byway since 1996.

In the fall of 2011, Kristi was notified that we received a Federal Highway Administration Grant for \$119,712. This grant will be used to update the existing Corridor Management

Plan, create an interpretive plan, and allows for the funding of 10 new interpretive panels. This is an exciting three-year project for the MRVSBA.

Other projects from this past year include:

- Distribution of Byway Guides to Byway businesses and attractions, at the Mall of America, Travel Information Centers on the state's southern borders, as well as fulfilling visitor requests.
- Kristi attended the National Scenic Byway Conference in Minneapolis in August 2011.

- Creation of a new Geocaching project called *Who's Who in 1862*. This program began in June of 2012 and will encourage users to explore eight locations along the byway.

New byway geocaching program coin

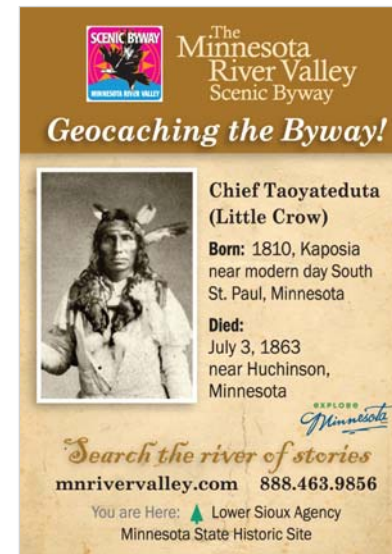


- Collaboration with the Minnesota Historical Society to promote their new oral history mobile tour. For more information, call 888-601-3010.

- Promoted 10 new interpretive signs about the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 along the Minnesota River Valley. The signs are located at Camp Release in Montevideo (pictured at left), Renville County Park #2, Henderson, Milford Monument (near New Ulm) and New Ulm.



Photo courtesy of Montevideo Publishing.



One of eight cards that are part of the *Who's Who in 1862* Geocaching program.

www.mnrivervalley.com
888.463.9856



Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Tourism

The mission of Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is to promote our area as a great place to visit, live and work. Jenifer and Kristi continue to seek out projects that accomplish that mission while taking advantage of a mix of old and new mediums: printed and online.

Following are some of the highlights of what Prairie Waters has been working on the past year:

- Wrote a successful grant to Explore Minnesota Tourism procuring \$4,000 for advertising in our region.
- Promoted the area and highlighted events on our Facebook Fan page. We currently have over 900 fans that we market to with weekly updates, photos, and links to stories about the region.

- Updated and re-printed the Prairie Waters Antiques, Local Shops, Dining and Lodging Guide. This full-color guide is a comprehensive listing of shops, restaurants and accommodations available in the Prairie Waters region. It is a collaborative effort between Prairie Waters and Chambers of Commerce from many of the region's member cities.



- Responded to approximately 2,000 requests for information in 2011.
- Maintained and updated the Prairie Waters website.

- Created and placed numerous ads in our regional papers, statewide, and in out-of-state publications such as Midwest Living, AAA, and South Dakota Magazine.

- Hosted our Annual Gathering at Tokheim Stoneware near Dawson. The event was a great success with approximately 55 people in attendance. Each attendee was treated to a Special Edition Tokheim Prairie Waters mug, a tour of the Tokheim studio and kiln, pottery demonstrations, and a selection of local foods.



www.prairiewaters.com
866.866.5432



- Collaborated with "Have Fun Biking" to promote biking in the Prairie Waters region. "Have Fun Biking" prints an annual guide with maps showing bike trails, routes for road biking, and low-traffic roads that are suitable for biking.

The new guide features a two-page map of the region and a QR code that connects mobile device users to the Prairie Waters website.



Meander Art Crawl

Kristi and Jenifer helped coordinate planning, manage finances, and develop and implement marketing for the 8th annual Meander in October 2011. Forty-five local artists participated.

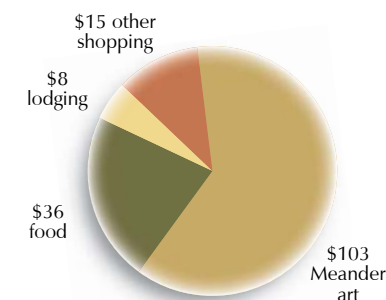
Kristi wrote successful grants to the Southwest Arts and Humanities Council for both Meander 2011 and 2012. Kristi wrote a grant to the Minnesota State Arts Board for Meander 2013 that will be announced in November of 2012. These grants help pay for advertising and organization of the event.

2011 Meander Economic Impacts

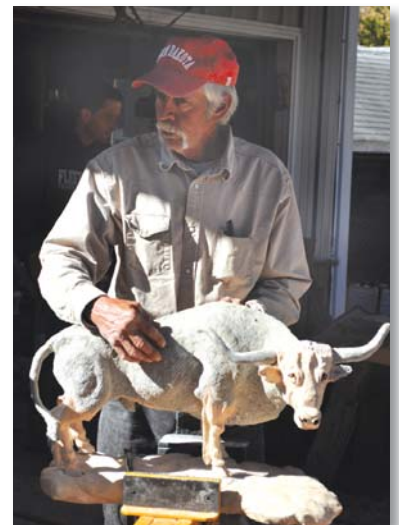
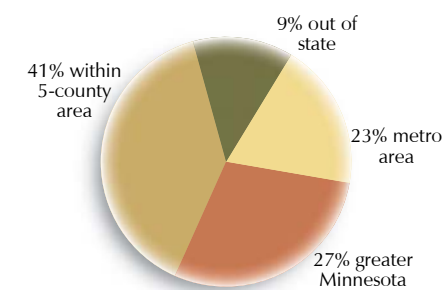
- \$85,357 in Meander art sales was reported by artists during the Meander weekend, an increase of 23% from 2010!
- The average art sales per artist was \$2,134.
- 83% of the money raised to organize the Meander through sponsors and artists was spent on products or services (printing, paper, advertising, graphic design, staffing) in the five county area.
- Customers visited an average of 10 studios over the weekend.
- 78% of customers said the quality of the art was excellent.
- 78% of customers said their overall experience was excellent.
- 85% of customers said they plan to attend the next Meander.



Average Expenditures per Customer: \$162



Where Attendees Came From



Meander artist Darold Bailey of Odessa discusses his process for working on a sculpture.

**Meander 2012 is
October 5, 6 & 7!**

artsmeander.com
866.866.5432





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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Fact

When the lead goose gets tired,
it rotates back into the formation
and another goose flies at the
point position.

Lesson

It pays to take turns doing the hard
tasks and sharing leadership — people,
as with geese, are interdependent upon
one another.

