

# 50 Years ANNIVERSARY 1973-2023

**1973**

The UMRVDC was established on September 10, 1973, by local governments following the RDC ACT.

**1974**

Bylaws were developed, a board was created, the first office site was selected, and the staff was hired on July 15, 1974.

**1975**

In May, EDA designated Region 6W an "Economic Development Provisional District" and the RDC began development of a regional Overall Economic Development Plan.

**1976**

Began providing planning services to the Regional Manpower Advisory Committee who started regionally allocating funds for job training and employment opportunities for disadvantaged, un-employed or under-employed individuals.

**1977**

Began to develop a cooperative agreement with Regions 8 and 6E to establish the Southwest Area Agency on Aging.

**1978**

Developed a Regional Natural Resources Management Plan that used vast amounts of computerized data to detail current land use and established policies for future development.

**1979**

After local concern about state and federal agencies seeking new wildlife lands, the Commission's Wildlife Task Force met to adopt plans that outlined the revenue impacts of converting land to wildlife habitat. These documents were influential in increasing state in-lieu-of payment process.

**1980**

Telecommunications Task Force was formed to examine the telecommunications infrastructure and identify new possibilities. Worked with the Governors Council on Rural Development and KWCM-TV to broadcast a live TV panel discussion on rural issues where home viewers could call in their questions.

**1981**

Due to concern about proposed railroad line abandonment in the region, RDC staff engaged in a study to look at the formation of a short line railroad extending from Madison to Hanley Falls.

**1982/1983**

The UMRVDC's Area on Aging funds home delivered meals and 14 senior nutrition site locations. It serves 14,315 people over 65, or ¼ of the region's population.

**1984**

Developed a regional Small Business Advisory Committee of resource providers who recommended the development of a revolving loan fund to provide long-term, below-market interest rate loans.

**1985**

Working with area growers, shippers, bankers and the Pomme De Terre Sands Irrigators Association on a feasibility study to develop a direct export marketing organization for the area's agriculture exports. The study looked into several innovative approaches to transporting high value and specialty commodities from the Upper Mn Valley to the Pacific Northwest for shipment to the Pacific Rim.

**1986**

Export trade mission to Asia included RDC staff and regional delegates to connect with potential trade partners in Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The region started working with AgVise of Benson to identify area growers who were interested in trail crop development including edible beans, high protein grains, and certain oil seeds. The results of these trails would be presented to buyers in East Asia.

**1987**

After designation as an Economic Development District from EDA in May 1997 the RDC received their first \$50,000 EDA planning grant and developed an EDA workplan focusing on international trade, recreational resources planning and development and infrastructure planning and development.

**1988**

After organizing the region's first regional tourism coalition the year before, the group developed their first regional tourism guide published and branded "Land of the Prairie Waters"

**1989**

Western MN RLF formed as non-profit with Big Stone, Swift, Chippewa as the first eligible counties; UMRVDC conducts inventory and analysis of transit in region with the intent of creating a transit coordination program.

**1990**

A grant from the Legislative Committee of Minnesota Resources will be used to fund some research, through the University of Minnesota, to investigate feedstock cost in the manufacturing of a biodegradable plastic.

**1991**

The UMRVDC's Area Agency on Aging continues to fund and promote services to older persons. Funding supports local transit, chore programs, information and referral services, leadership, and home delivered and meal site options.

**1992**

UMVRDC submitted an application to EDA to expand the WesMN RLF (the original name of the UMRVDC's RLF fund) from Big Stone, Chippewa and Swift to now include Lac qui Parle and Yellow Medicine Counties making the fund cover the entire 5 county region; Prepared an application for the city of Appleton to EDA and the MN Economic Recovery Program for infrastructure improvements to support the development of a 494 bed medium security prison.

**1993**

The UMRVDC worked with MnDOT to functionally classify all roadways in the region as part of a statewide study. This included ranking the economic centers in the region according to classifications identified by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

**1994**

The UMRVDC awarded eight industrial development grants totaling \$40,000 to businesses in Big Stone, Chippewa, and Swift Counties. The money is to rehabilitate and develop vacant and underutilized properties.

**1995**

UMVRDC co-sponsored the Value Added Products conference in Montevideo. The goal was to explore ideas for value-added agricultural products and processing.

**1996**

Submitted a capacity building grant on behalf of local housing and redevelopment authorities for education and training that would support housing needs of the region.

**1997**

Provided significant grant writing and support to communities affected by widespread flooding in the region impacted homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Hired a regional flood coordinator to assist with recovery coordination; The MN River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance was formed and coordinated by the UMRVDC.

**1998**

The UMRVDC was a Minnesota pilot project for developing community-based plans integrating sustainability principals.

**1999**

The UMRVDC formed the Geographic Information Service Bureau for the region to provide maps, data and analysis of geographic information for many local and regional projects.

**2000**

Aging program continues into fourth season of the Senior Linkage TV series, a locally produced TV program about senior issues.

**2001**

Started a fully staffed regional tourism program with funding from local governments.

**2002**

After significant flood and tornado impacts, and loss of jobs due to major employer closures, applied for additional disaster recovery revolving loan funds to assist in the recovery.

**2003**

Began assisting counties with Hazard Mitigation Plans after the passing of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 required plan to access FEMA funding.

**2004**

Coordinated regional application for Job Opportunity Building Zones (JOBZ). Businesses worked with subzone communities in the region to expand or start new businesses with the assistance of the JOBZ program; Coordinated first annual Meander Art Crawl.

**2005**

The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging consolidated aging programs from four regional development commissions in SW MN.

**2006**

The WesMN RLF made loans totaling \$242,000 to new and expanding businesses in the region, leveraging nearly \$2 million in other public, private and owner funds for projects that created new business and job growth. These loans will result in 34 jobs being created and nine retained.

**2007**

Develops outmigration study completed in southwestern Minnesota after ongoing population loss over last 30 years.

**2008**

Conducted a series of renewable energy forums looking at wind energy potential in the region.

**2009**

Started working on broadband in the region: wrote an application to expand broadband in Appleton; completed inventory of regional providers; and established need and use by businesses.

**2010**

Worked with University of MN Extension to develop research paper and marketing strategies to attract newcomers to the region.

**2011**

Developed region's first locally developed public transit human service coordination plan to identify transit needs for older adults, those with disabilities, and people with low income.

**2012**

Assisted five school district with the first Safe Routes to School Plans that outline opportunities to encourage more children to bike or walk to school.

**2013**

UMVRDC created set of demographic summaries for cities, counties and the region that summarize results of the newly available census information.

**2014**

Following the Rural Arts Summit in 2013, the RDC followed up with communities interested in public art in the region and started creating a toolbox of ideas and resources.

**2015**

UMVRDC authored a \$3.9 million grant for fiber to premise broadband development in Big Stone County to the new Minnesota Border to the Border Program.

**2016**

Began providing staff support to the West Central Region's Clean Energy Resource Team to help identify and implement local clean energy ideas.

**2017**

Authored "Charting the Future of Local Foods" study completed with 58 action steps to expand local foods capacity.

**2018**

Began following the childcare issue in our area and started developing childcare case studies to showcase how different communities are collaborating on childcare facilities and programs.

**2019**

Supported multiple efforts to look at housing and redevelopment in the region: hosted a regional forum to share how communities address dilapidation, completed a system for local housing condition inventory, and authored multiple grants for rehabilitation and redevelopment.

**2020**

Developed multiple master plans and grant applications to enhance recreation infrastructure in the region including projects for Swift and Lac qui Parle County, Granite Falls.

**2021**

Completed first inventory of vacant and underutilized properties in the region and worked with five communities to develop conceptual redevelopment at select locations.

**2022**

Wrote successful grants for the City of Appleton and Madison to install broadband infrastructure main fiber lines within city limits.

**2023**

Completed a two year grant to address COVID related recovery in the region. The project included a redevelopment feasibility plan, study business retention and expansion efforts, broadband and childcare work, regional marketing, digital commerce training, developable property inventory updates.



Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper