To Those We Serve:

We are pleased to provide you with the 2008 Annual Report of the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC). This report describes achievements of the Commission and its staff in carrying out the Commission’s mission. The report highlights the programs and projects of the MMDC during Calendar Year 2008. The enclosed year-end financial data is for Fiscal Year 2008 (July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008).

During 2008, the Commission has continued to provide a wide range of technical assistance to the Region’s local units of government as well as to organizations, businesses, and individuals. We hope you will take a few minutes of time to review these activities discussed under the Commission’s Departments.

2008 was a year which saw the nation’s economic crisis take its toll on the Commission’s Building Inspections Services Department. During 2008, the Commission made the difficult, but financially responsible decision to cease providing State Building Code inspection services to local units of government. The dramatic decrease in new building construction activity meant that the permit fees the Commission took in no longer covered the cost of providing this service any longer. During the years of normal construction activity, the Commission could travel to a community and inspect a number of construction projects. MMDC had contracts with 13 local units of government in providing this service up until the program closed on September 30, 2008. These jurisdictions included: in Kandiyohi County: Atwater, Blomkest, Dovre Township, and Pennock; in McLeod County: Brownton and Stewart; in Meeker County: Cosmos, Darwin, and Dassel; in Renville County: Bird Island and Fairfax; in Wright County: Cokato; in Stearns County: Richmond.

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Beginning in January of 2008, the Commission began operating under an expanded Board of Directors, going from 22 members to 27 members. New governance requirements for this expanded Board came from the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) to keep the Commission an Economic Development Planning District. While keeping the majority of Commission Board members as elected local officials, the Commission has created additional governing board member positions that represent private business interests. Board member positions representing higher education, Chamber of Commerce, job training, and private businesses have been added to the Commission’s governing board. The more diverse Board of Directors should positively bring new ideas and insight to the Commission in meeting the Region’s challenges.

While reviewing the Commission’s primary activities in 2008, please let the Commission know of ways we can assist you in the upcoming year and beyond. The Commission wishes to continue to provide the same quality and affordable services, while always looking for new opportunities to meet the Commission’s mission statement in the future.

Respectfully yours,

DuWayne Underthun
Chair

Donn Winckler
Executive Director

State Certified Building Inspection Services

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) has made a difficult, but necessary decision in 2008 to cease operating contracted services for administering the State Building Code. The Region has not been spared by the nation’s housing construction slowdown. The lack of homes being built meant that necessary revenue to meet the Department’s expenses were no longer being met. After providing the time necessary for communities to find new a fully licensed Certified Building Official, on September 30, 2008 the Commission ended this program. As described below, the Commission is continuing to provide specialty inspection services.

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Specialty Inspection Services Still Available

Department staff have received training and provided service with lead-based paint inspections and risk assessments. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations require these inspections in housing projects that they participate in. As few persons have both the training and equipment to provide this service in Southwest Minnesota, MMDC provides this service within and outside of our four-county Region. Analysis of asbestos concerns is another service the Department offers. Lastly, the Building Inspectors provide housing rehabilitation inspection services for both the Hutchinson and Willmar HRAs.

(Continued from page 12)

- Legal Services/Education: Western Minnesota Legal Services
- Congregate Dining and Home Delivered Meals: Lutheran Social Services

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Another principal accomplishment and activity that have been undertaken by the Community Planning/Development Department over the course of the past calendar year are highlighted below:

- Comprehensive Plans were developed for the Cities of Litchfield, Brownston, and Willmar.
- MMDC assisted the City of Litchfield with developing a new Zoning Ordinance.
- The Buffalo Creek Watershed District updated its Drainage Management Plan. The new document has received statewide recognition. Staff also began the process of updating the District’s rules.
- A new Overall Plan for the North Fork Crow River Watershed District was drafted.
- A draft Environmental Assessment Worksheet for a 6000+ dairy operation was created.

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Other principal accomplishments and activities that have been undertaken by the Community Planning/Development Department over the course of the past calendar year are highlighted below:

- Another grant to help update these plans within the next five years.
- MMDC staff also successfully assisted the Buffalo Creek Watershed District and Meeker County in applying for a grant to modernize their drainage records. The final product will display all drainage files and maps electronically on an interactive website.
- The department assists businesses and local governments with various environmental review documents. During 2008, staff took the lead in developing an Environmental Impact Statement for New London Concrete Products. They are proposing to expand their mining operation near Hawick onto the adjacent 280 acres over the next 30 years. As part of the review, additional aggregate materials were discovered below the water table. As a result, the mining and reclamation plan was revised to include mining below the water table, thereby creating a new 12-25 acre lake approximately 20 feet deep!

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GIS Activities During 2008

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• Various hazard mitigation maps were created and being used to help in preparing each of the counties’ Hazard Mitigation Plans.
• Maps have been made for the Meeker County Comprehensive Plan Update as well as for city comprehensive plans the MMDA are assisting with (Litchfield and Willmar).
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**Aging Advisory Council (ACA)**

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In 2008, MnRAAA established a Funding Task Force comprised of Advisory Council members. This committee reviewed applications, conducted interviews, and made final project awards to the Joint Powers Board. Although priorities and projects change, the following list of priority areas and projects funded during calendar year 2008 is representative of a typical year:

- **Transportation:** Meeker, Kandiyohi, and Renville Counties.

The Commission has provided assistance to the Highway 15 Coalition. The Coalition was formed, with MMDC assistance, to work towards raising awareness of the access, safety, and capacity challenges facing the Highway 15 Corridor. One of the primary first goals of the Coalition is to seek a Congressional allocation of dollars to be able to conduct a corridor study to identify specific safety and access needs along the corridor. If funded, this study would likely begin in 2009. The Commission acts as the Coalition’s fiscal agent.

Kandiyohi County conducted a roadway jurisdictional study that was completed in early 2008. The Commission assisted the county with this study. The project involved the examination of each roadway segment and objectively determining which level of jurisdiction should logically own and maintain it. Roadway significance, tax capacity, and spacing, among other variables, are all being examined to make the determinations.

The Commission is assisting Mn/DOT with updating the Roadway Functional Classification System within the Region. Staff worked with County and City Engineers in recommending changes to the system. Mn/DOT developed a statewide draft functional classification early in 2008 for review. Staff has been working with Mn/DOT to complete this task, which should be completed in the first half of 2009.

Commission staff was also active in the following transportation activities during the 2008 Calendar Year:

- Working with Mn/DOT to process functional classification changes on a case-by-case basis.
- Preparing comprehensive plans that include transportation components and issues.
- Attending RDC Transportation Planners meetings during the past year. These quarterly meetings allow the planners to share information and coordinate planning efforts.
- Participating in this past year’s ATP Enhancement Committee project review process.
- Assisted the City of Willmar with some trail planning activities on connecting the downtown with the north side lakes and Glacial Lakes State Trail.
- Staff attended a two day “Advanced Freight Planning Course” through a national educational series hosted by Mn/DOT. Staff began to assist Mn/DOT with a Western Minnesota Freight Plan. Most of this assistance will occur in 2009.
- Staff attended the NADO National Transportation Conference held in Duluth in August of 2008.
- Staff attended a transit workshop in Marshall on the development of a new Greater Minnesota Transit Plan.
The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission’s economic development program is designed to assist local units of government and businesses in the Region with activities that create or support the creation of jobs and investment. Program activities are funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, and the local tax levy. The Commission operates a $1.1 million Revolving Loan Fund program within the Region’s four counties. Two separate advisory committees assist the Commission with the economic development activities. The first committee provides recommendations to the Commission on the priorities and goals of economic development in the Region. The second advisory committee provides review and recommendations on the Commission’s Revolving Loan Fund program.

A major portion of the staff time in economic development is devoted to technical assistance and administering the Revolving Loan Fund. Businesses, individuals, and governmental units can request and receive economic development technical assistance. Requests range from business assistance information to business finance analysis, infrastructure improvements, tax increment financing, and grant and loan writing.

The Revolving Loan Fund was established to assist businesses within the Region with gap financing. Businesses must be deemed viable and involve job creation or retention. Loans are made for working capital, land, buildings, and equipment. The amounts given out as loans range from $5,000 to a maximum of $100,000. The Revolving Loan Fund was originally capitalized primarily through Economic Development Administration funds, but also from funds from the four counties, the State of Minnesota, the Southwest Minnesota Foundation, and from the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission.

Economic Development / Revolving Loan

Activities During Fiscal Year

- Authored the annual update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy as required per the grant agreement with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.
- Assistance provided to the Renville County HRA for rehabilitation projects and Section Eight Audit Inspections.
- Authored the Economic Development Administration Planning Grant Application. The application was approved and funded.
- Staff served as advisory committee member for the Kandiyohi County Economic Development Commission.
- Staff provided administration of the Commission’s $1.1m revolving loan fund. Administration included application re-screening, financial analysis, and management of current portfolio.
- Staff provided presentations within business finance seminars in both Renville and Kandiyohi Counties.
- Staff provided technical assistance to the Hutchinson-Housing Redevelopment Authority and Willmar HRA for home rehabilitation efforts.
- Staff is serving on the Kandiyohi County Food systems steering committee.
- Staff assisted with the transition out of the Building Code Enforcement efforts within the commission.

Everyone Counts...
since 2001 provide a foundation for continued work in 2008. Additionally, results of the Transform 2010 Project launched as a partnership between the MN Department of Human Services and the MN Board on Aging also serve as a platform for service development. The purpose of this partnership is to provide short and long term goals to transform infrastructures and services that will support permanent changes for the age wave in the state’s population. AAA staff provide presentations to community members, businesses, and agencies regarding the goals of Transform 2010.

Other AAA Activities
Staff also provided a wide variety of technical assistance to various aging organizations. Activities of 2008 include:

- Conducted numerous Medicare Part D Plan Comparisons throughout the region for consumers during the annual open enrollment period that began November 15 and ended December 31.
- Participated in the Life Connections Expo, MN State Fair, and other area Senior Health Fairs.
- Participated on the Advisory Committee of the West Central Integration Collaborative.
- Provided grant writing assistance for Community Service Development grants to various organizations.
- Secured Alzheimer’s Demonstration Grant for region; focus on consumer directed model of service and increasing linkages between physicians, family caregivers, and community based services. Project site was funded for the Allina Clinic in Litchfield.
- Facilitated Eldercare Development Partnership (EDP) Long Term Care Coordinating Council for 16 counties. Goals focused on supporting community development of services to support elderly persons living independently. Secured grant funding for SFY 2009 continuation of EDP funds.
- Maintained the Memorandum of Understanding with Rice Memori-ral Hospital Health Insurance Counseling Program to share volunteer and training activities.
- Facilitated 7th annual Kandiyohi County Caregiver Event – Pat Samples was the speaker. Partners included Bethesda Adult Day Services, Atwater Living At Home Block Nurse Program, and Lutheran Social Services Caregiver Respite and Support Program.
- Worked with the Minnesota Arts Council to host “The Creativity of Aging” program. MNCAAN-Minnesota Creative Arts and Aging Network presented the program in Willmar to approximately 55 persons. The goal is to encourage older adults to share their creativity.

The Community Development Department is able to provide a wide array of community development planning projects and miscellaneous activities for local units of government. Typically this particular program area is not tied to any State or Federally funded program, but is funded through service charges that are subsidized by the use of the Commission’s general fund.

Each year the staff offers assistance to local units of government on a wide range of services, including comprehensive land use plans, zoning and subdivision ordinances, ordinance codification, grant and loan writing, community surveys, public facilities planning, housing studies, and mapping projects as well as many other technical services. As one of Minnesota’s State Data Centers, the MMDC regularly provides businesses, non-profit agencies, private citizens, and units of government data from the Census and other informational sources free of charge.

In 2008, the Commission provided a wide variety of assistance to the Region’s counties and cities. One of the largest projects was the continuation of work in developing Hazard Mitigation plans for Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod, and Renville Counties. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, passed by the United States Congress, requires that all states and counties prepare comprehensive All-Hazard Mitigation plans to identify risks and develop strategies to reduce losses. These plans are based on prioritizing the likelihood of damage to life and property from natural or technological disasters and then identifies ways to proactively minimize those risks. In preparing these plans, staff worked with county, city, and township officials, emergency managers, police chiefs, fire fighters, planners, and other emergency management personnel. Grants were received to conduct these plans and all four were finalized and adopted in 2008. MMDC staff will write...
The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging® (MnRAAA) is dedicated to helping older people in Southwest Minnesota, which includes Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties, lead comfortable, independent lives. MnRAAA is governed by a Not-for-Profit Board of Directors comprised of representatives from the 27 county planning and service area designated by the Minnesota Board on Aging. A Board of Directors replaced the Joint Powers Board, although for continuity of business, some of the board members were approved for membership on the new Board of Directors. Other changes in governance included new bylaws and a financial partnership of Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, Region Nine Development Commission, and Southwest Regional Development Commission. MMDC representation includes DuWayne Underthun, Maureen Melgaard-Schneider, Dorothy Lindstrom, and Susan Meyer.

The goals of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) are to enhance service offerings and ensure that the needs of the senior population are correctly identified and corresponding services are developed. The 2008 AAA budget for MMDC is $192,365. This budget supports program development, senior outreach specialist activities, health insurance counseling, and medication management assistance functions. Two staff positions conduct the function of the aging program. The positions are Program Director and Senior Outreach Specialist.

Older Americans Act

The Older Americans Act (OAA) was reauthorized, amended, and signed into law by President Bush in December 2006. This action represents the 16th reauthorization of the OAA. The OAA promotes policy that ensures older American’s full participation in society and fosters the overwhelming desire to choose the homes and communities in which they wish to live throughout their later years. Other provisions to the OAA include:

- Support for State and community planning to address the long-term care needs of the baby boom generation.
- Greater focus on prevention and treatment of mental disorders.
- Outreach and service to a broader universe of family caregivers under the National Family Caregiver Support Program
- Increased focus on civic engagement and volunteerism.
- Enhanced coordination of programs that protect elders from abuse, neglect, and exploitation (AoA website, March 20, 2007).

Long Term Care Activities

Minnesota’s goal to re-balance long-term care continues to be a primary focus for the Minnesota Board on Aging and Area Agencies on Aging. The development of services that support people who wish to remain in their own homes continues to be a priority for policymakers. The Gaps & Regional Analysis activities conducted
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The Commission began offering GIS mapping services back in 1996. Since that time the Commission has made over 500 specialty maps for a variety of clients, including all four counties and most of the cities in Region 6E. By moving into GIS, the Commission offers a much more sophisticated level of computer map making that is tied to databases. This allows staff to quickly and easily update maps, and also make in-depth analysis on land use issues. GIS is a “computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing things that exist and events that happen on earth. GIS technology integrates common database operations such as query and statistical analysis with the unique visualization and geographic analysis benefits offered by maps” (ESRI – creators of ArcGIS).

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⇒ Staff is serving on the Kandiyohi County Food systems steering committee.

⇒ Staff assisted with the transition out of the Building Code Enforcement efforts within the commission.

The U.S. Constitution (Article 1, Section 2) mandates a headcount every 10 years. The U.S. Census Bureau will conduct the next census in 2010. It is vital to your community, the Region, and the State of Minnesota that everyone is counted. Most government programs are distributed on the basis of population. Undercounting the population means a loss of dollars to a wide array of important services such as funding of schools, transportation, Head Start Programs, and programs for the elderly, just to mention a few. The census count determines congressional seats. Minnesota is in danger of losing one of its eight House of Representative seats after the 2010 census results are in. Helping to make sure all persons are counted in your community could make the difference in preserving this congressional seat.

For a strong census count in your community, do not solely rely on the Census Bureau. Communities should strongly consider forming a “Complete Count Committee” (CCC) to help build awareness about the census, why it is important, and to encourage all persons in your community to participate. Such committees work best when they include a cross section of community representatives from government agencies, education, business, religious organizations, and the media. The CCC will be charged with developing and implementing a plan designed to target the unique characteristics of their community. MMDC can assist your community in forming a Complete Count Committee by giving you further information on this topic, and who to contact for helpful materials.

It will be important to remind persons that their Census answers are confidential, under protection of the law. It is illegal for the Census Bureau, or its employees, to share an individual’s information with any other government agency – not law enforcement, IRS, Welfare, FBI, Immigration, etc. No court of law, not even the President of the United States, can access your individual responses.
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- A new Overall Plan for the North Fork Crow River Watershed District was drafted.
- A draft Environmental Assessment Worksheet for a 6000+ dairy operation was created.
The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) has made a difficult, but necessary decision in 2008 to cease operating contracted services for administering the State Building Code. The Region has not been spared by the nation’s housing construction slowdown. The lack of homes being built meant that necessary revenue to meet the Department’s expenses were no longer being met. After providing the time necessary for communities to find new a fully licensed Certified Building Official, on September 30, 2008 the Commission ended this program. As described below, the Commission is continuing to provide specialty inspection services.

MMDC had contracts with 13 local units of government in providing this service up until the program closed on September 30, 2008. These jurisdictions included: in Kandiyohi County: Atwater, Blomkest, Dovre Township, and Pennock, in McLeod County: Brownton and Stewart; in Meeker County: Cosmos, Darwin, and Dassel; in Renville County: Bird Island and Fairfax; in Wright County: Cokato; in Stearns County: Richmond.

Specialty Inspection Services Still Available

Department staff have received training and provided service with lead-based paint inspections and risk assessments. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations require these inspections in housing projects that they participate in. As few persons have both the training and equipment to provide this service, the Building Inspectors provide housing rehabilitation inspection services for both the Hutchinson and Willmar HRAs.

Legal Services/Education: Western Minnesota Legal Services

Congregate Dining and Home Delivered Meals: Lutheran Social Services

Coalition of East African Community Services: Received a grant to provide counseling services to East African elders. The purpose is to address acculturation and trauma needs to facilitate greater immersion into the local population (Kandiyohi County).

ElderCare Development Partnership (EDP)

MMDC received state funds to address market driven community development needs, chronic disease prevention, and expansion of home and community based activities throughout the 6E region and twelve additional counties in the MnRAAA planning and service area. A primary activity of this funding is to provide technical assistance to agencies seeking Community Service Development Grants from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, or other funding sources, and promote coordination among community based providers.

Respectfully yours,

DuWayne Underthun

Chair

Donn Winckler

Executive Director
Mid-Minnesota Development Commission

Serving the People of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties Since 1974.

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