ANNUAL REPORT

Calendar Year 2009

MID-MINNESOTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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

Visit us at: www.mmrdc.org
To Those We Serve:

On behalf of the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC), we respectfully submit this 2009 Annual Report. This report highlights key achievements of the Commission and its staff in carrying out the Commission’s mission. MMDC is proud of offering another successful year of providing valued services to its citizens and working closely with our partners throughout the region. The enclosed year-end financial data is for Fiscal Year 2009 (July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009).

During 2009, the Commission has completely redesigned our website. We hope everyone takes the time to check the new site out. The site has been designed to be more user-friendly. The Commission will update the site on an ongoing basis, with a calendar of upcoming events, and current information about funding opportunities and other useful information. The Commission’s “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy” is posted on the site. The web site location is: www.mmrdc.org.

At the end of 2009 the Commission agreed to a new contract with the Marshall Office of the Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The Commission shall provide business counseling services within the four county Region for the SBDC. This partnership will allow businesses in the region to have better access to the services the SBDC offers. Staff also gave some assistance to the City of Hutchinson during 2009 with the City’s grant application to the federal Economic Development Administration. The City was successful in obtaining the $950,000 grant that will provide funds for putting in needed infrastructure to a new industrial park. Community Development staff assisted a business in New London with taking the lead in preparing a required Environmental Impact Statement. The business was able to save thousands of dollars by working with the Commission. This report will also highlight elderly bone builders’ programs that have been started in all four counties that will allow participants to build strength and dexterity to help prevent injuries through falling. These are just a few examples of some activities highlighted within this report.

The Commission’s 2008 Annual Report provided information about the economic slowdown having a large impact on the amount of new building construction within the region. This resulted in the financial need to close the Commission’s building code inspections program. The losses of this program can be seen in MMDC needing to use some reserve funds for the 2009 Fiscal Year. With the closeout of this program the Commission is able to get back on a more firm financial footing for FY 2010.

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Please let the Commission know of ways we can assist your communities and organizations in the upcoming year. Through the years we have provided the citizens of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties with a wide array of technical assistance. As all local units of government in the region are considered a part of the Commission, we pride ourselves in not calling a project complete until the client is satisfied with the end product.

Respectfully yours,

Roney Kutzke
Chairperson

Donn Winckler
Executive Director
The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission’s Economic Development program is designed to assist local units of government and business 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 $1.4 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.

Activities During Fiscal Year

* Staff assisted the City of Hutchinson with a successful application to the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) for a grant of $950,000 for infrastructure in a new industrial park.
* Provided technical assistance on the State of Minnesota Job Opportunity Building Zone (JOBZ) Initiative.
* Staff served as a member of the Kandiyohi County Economic Development Partnership finance Committee.
* Approval was given to two Commission Revolving Loan Fund loans and the RLF received ongoing management.
* Staff served as an ex-officio member of Kandiyohi County Economic Development Partnership Operations Board.
* As a federal EDA Economic Development District, staff updated the Commission’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Document. Staff contacted local and county economic development professionals for the assembly of a list of possible projects for the federal stimulus package, which were added to the CEDS. Staff prepared the necessary applications and report forms necessary for the operations of the Economic Development District.
* The Renville County HRA was given some assistance with a grant they received to set up a Revolving Loan Fund.
* The Commission has started a process to update it’s Revolving Loan Fund Policies.
* Groundwork was completed and a contract signed between the Commission and the Marshall Office of the State of Minnesota Small Business Development Center for staff to begin offering to provide consulting work to assist entrepreneurs within the Region. (See article on page 14)
* Staff has been involved with Committee assistance of the Willmar Downtown Design Center.
* Staff continues to be a member of the Kandiyohi County Local Food Systems Committee, and attended Congressman Collin Peterson’s Community-Based Food Systems conference held in April.

(Continued on page 10)
**Transportation Planning**— The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) receives an annual grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, matched with the local tax levy, to provide transportation planning services within the Region’s four counties primarily for activities involving the state trunk highway system and to participate in the Southwest Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) process. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) makes recommendations to the Commission on these transportation activities.

The Commission annually participates in the Area Transportation Partnership’s decision-making process of which projects receive Federal funding through the State’s Transportation Improvement Program. MMDC’s voting members on the ATP are Sheldon Nies and Ron Kutzke. Meeker County Engineer, Ronald Mortensen was the Commission’s County Engineer representative. The Commission holds an annual public informational meeting on the proposed Area Transportation Improvement Program. Staff provides assistance for this activity as well as served on the 2009 ATP Committee that makes Enhancement Project funding recommendations.

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 conduct a corridor study to identify specific safety and access needs along the corridor. Mn/DOT has agreed to fund a first phase study to be done in 2010. The Commission acts as the Coalition’s fiscal agent.

The Commission assisted 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 system in 2008 for review. Staff completed its role with the process in 2009.

Staff continued to participate on a Mn/DOT committee for the Western Minnesota Freight Plan. A forum was held in Willmar on March 12, 2009. The Plan is a multi-modal transportation planning effort that includes highway (commercial trucking operations), rail, air cargo, and inter-modal transportation. The plan identified key freight movement concerns that affect the movement of goods throughout Western Minnesota. The complete freight plan is available at the following site:

http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/freightplan/.

Commission staff was also active in the following transportation activities during the 2009 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.
* Assisted the City of Willmar with some trail planning activities on connecting the downtown with the north side lakes and Glacial Lakes State Trail.
* Participated in meetings of the Minnesota Valley Rail Road Coalition. The Commission serves as the Coalition’s fiscal agent.
* Attended a meeting in Wayzata, sponsored by local state legislators, that discussed the Little Crow Transit Way.

(Continued on page 10)
The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging® Inc. (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, and Dorothy Lindstrom and Susan Meyer.

The goals of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) are to enhance service offerings and ensure that needs of the senior population are correctly identified and corresponding services are developed. The 2009 AAA budget for MMDC is $183,765. 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 Developer 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 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 provides a wide variety of technical assistance to various aging organizations and causes. Some of the activities of the past fiscal year include:

* Twenty-three (23) volunteers provided counseling and education throughout the year. Staff assisted volunteers with setting up training and providing information.
* Reviewed Community Service / Service Development grant applications sent to the Minnesota Department of Human Services.
* Worked with all four counties with the implementation of Bone Builders Programs. (See article in Annual Report.)
* Made numerous presentations about AAA services including information on health insurance counseling topics such as Medicare Part D, Medicare Approved Drug Discount Cards and the Senior LinkAge Line™ system.

(Continued on page 10)
The Community Development Department is able to assist with a wide variety 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 funded through service charges that are subsidized by the use of the Commission’s general fund. Many of the projects are also funded through grants.

Each year the staff offers assistance to local units of government on a wide range of services, including comprehensive land use plans, environmental reviews, zoning and subdivision ordinances, ordinance codification, grant and loan writing, community surveys, public facilities planning, housing studies, mapping services, and 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.

Activities During Fiscal Year

* Staff assisted New London Concrete Products prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and also a Conditional Use Permit for the expansion of their aggregate mining operation, both of which were approved by Kandiyohi County.

* Staff assisted the City of Willmar prepare a Comprehensive Plan during 2009.

* Staff assisted the preparation of an overall plan for North Fork Crow River Watershed District.

* Staff assisted the Buffalo Creek Watershed District with the preparation of a Drainage Records Modernization Project Plan, funded through a grant written by the Commission. BCWD was also assisted by the Commission with updating their rules, implementation of their Drainage Records Modernization project and with preparing grant applications.

* Staff began the process of updating the City of Spicer’s Comprehensive Plan.

* Staff assisted the U.S. Census Bureau with helping getting out the word on their 2010 “Complete Count” campaign. Staff also updated a shapefile of the census tracts and block groups for all four counties in the Region.

* Staff reviewed and made comments to the joint plan of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar HRAs, and attended a couple of meetings on their joint plan.

* Staff assisted Meeker County with parcel mapping.
Bone Builders

Bone Builders is a copyrighted program sponsored by Augustana Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Bone Builders is designed to protect against fractures caused by osteoporosis by increasing muscular strength and bone density.

Osteoporosis is a condition in which bone density deteriorates. Bone density peaks at about age 30 and then begins a slow and gradual deterioration, which is a normal part of the aging process.

Studies published in the New England Journal of Medicine and the Journal of the American Medical Association show that elderly women who participated in a weight training program twice weekly for a year gained an average of 1% of bone density. These remarkable results demonstrate the urgent necessity to make this program available in every community across the nation.

In 2009, MNRAAA partnered with RSVP to implement the PrimeWest Community Reinvestment Grant to expand Bone Builders programs in the counties of McLeod, Meeker, and Renville. This opportunity allowed for the addition of physical therapy assessments for participants. Each participant is assessed before they begin the program, and again at six months. Improvement in strength has been seen in most everyone.

With the success of the program, word spread to Kandiyohi County. Currently two programs offer Bone Builders – Willmar Senior Community Network, and Glen Oaks in New London. Both sites invested in physical therapist services and weights needed for participants.

As of the close of 2009, 276 people have participated in the Bone Builders program. Most folks are 76 years or older. Community sites are available in all four counties.

Specialty Inspection Services

While, the Commission ended its Building Code Inspections Program in September of 2008, staff continues to provide several types of specialty inspection services. Some of the services provided in 2009 are:

* Willmar and Hutchinson HRA have been assisted with building rehabilitation projects and led based-paint inspections. The Hutchinson HRA completed 15 housing rehabilitations, with MMDC’s assistance coming to the end.
* Staff assisted the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency with a home inspection in Willmar.
* Provided a Litchfield business with an asbestos inspection.
* Staff attended building code training to maintain their Building Official Certification.
* The closeout of building permits continued for the cities of Atwater, Hector, and Dovre Township.

SBDC Counseling To Be Provided

In December, the Commission finalized a contractual arrangement with the Southwest Region Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to provide them with assistance with consulting services within the four county Region. There is a statewide network of SBDCs that “provide the professional expertise and guidance that every small business owner needs to flourish in today’s competitive and ever-changing business world.” The Southwest Region SBDC is located at the Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall.

MMDC’s Economic Development Director Les Nelson will be one of a number of SBDC counselors available to assist small businesses. The confidential consulting is designed to help clients identify, understand and overcome the challenges of running a successful business. Counselors are available to offer sound advice in the areas of: access to capital and loan packaging, financial analysis and assessment, marketing and research, business plan development, startup assistance, feasibility analysis, business succession, electronic commerce, accounting systems, etc. Different counselors can work with a client depending on what expertise is needed.

To qualify for counseling, businesses must be for-profit, and “small” as defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Individuals who are considering starting a business are also eligible for counseling. There are no costs to participants with working with the counselors. Training programs and specialized projects or services are provided either at no cost or for a nominal fee. Clients must sign a “Request for Counseling” form and must agree to participate in surveys designed to measure the effectiveness of the SBDC Program.

Please contact Les Nelson with the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission if you are interested in the Program.
Challenging Economic Times Will Continue After Recession

While the economic recession may or may not be over, there has been a fundamental shift in both the nation and the state of Minnesota in demographics that will have great economic impact on everyone. This will continue to be the case even when the recession is just a memory. Minnesota State Demographer, Tom Gillaspy, has called this new era which begun in 2008 as the “new normal.” The old normal as, we knew it, is gone. Demographic changes for the nation and the state will have a profound impact on all of us for the next 25 to 30 years. It will create new challenges that must be addressed through planning.

Minnesota will see a large increase in its elderly population with the retirement of the baby boomer generation. Generation X, which has a smaller comparable population, has replaced the baby boomers as the most productive age group in the work force. Last year’s high school class size will be the largest in the next ten years. According to Mr. Gillapsy, by 2020 there will be more persons 65 years old and older than there are school age children.

The smaller populations to follow the baby boomer generation will mean smaller economic growth. With fewer workers, productivity advancements will be the only mechanism remaining to generate growth in the economy. Smaller economic growth means that state revenue growth will also be slow. While the growth of funds available for government services is slowed, at the same time the pressures for spending will accelerate. The growing numbers of elderly will mean an ever increasing demand on health care spending. As a person grows older, their need for medical services, on average, increases. A large cost jump begins at age 55 and continues to increase as a person ages. In 2004, the average U.S. Health spending per person was $3,571. Those 75 and older had an average health care cost of $9,914. In addition, the rate of persons with disabilities dramatically increases as persons become older.

This new structural change of slower growth and higher demand will need to be addressed at all levels of government. The problem will not be fixed through simple approaches of raising taxes and cutting services. This is a structural problem. Minnesota is about in the middle of the states as far as how much a problem this is. It is likely that entitlement spending promises that have been made will not be able to be fully kept. We need to earnestly begin to plan for this “new normal.” It will be important that there are funds for preventative medical care. Services need to be continued to be made available for the elderly to live within their homes, which is far less expensive than nursing home care. Communities will need to be sure they are doing what they can to prepare themselves through the “Communities for a Lifetime” program. Housing choices will change as the population grows older and there are less family households. There will be greater demand for housing units that are low maintenance and are on ground level for example.

The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission is willing and able to assist our local units of government become better prepared for meeting the challenges of this new normal. We will also be looking at this problem on a regional basis as well.
**Area Agency on Aging**  
* (Continued from page 6) 
* Participated on a planning committee for the McLeod County Senior Expo that was held in September. 
* Participated in the Life Connections Expo, MN State Fair, and other area Senior Health Fairs. 
* Provided technical assistance to the Willmar Coalition of African Community Services in the following areas: nutrition services, grant applications, and evaluating the organization’s structure to improve efficiencies. 
* Provided Core Body of Knowledge training for health insurance counselors in Montevideo. 
* Presented Transform 2010 and AAA information to the Spicer Senior Citizens group. 
* Program updates were given to Meeker and Renville County Commissioners, and to the McLeod County Social Service and Public Health staff. 
* Presented a Falls Prevention workshop at the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging Conference held in Minneapolis. Attended “Matter of Balance Master Training” sponsored by the MBA. 
* Presented (8) Long-Term Care Partnership presentations. 
* Assisted the Slayton Call Center by answering SeniorLinkAge Line™ calls. 

**Aging Advisory Council (ACA)** 

The AAA has an advisory council comprised of eight members and chaired by Maureen Melgaard-Schneider from rural Meeker County. The ACA meets up to five times per year and has a responsibility for providing the link between MNRAAA, older adults, and their local communities. An additional function of the ACA is to establish Title III funding priorities, review applications, and make recommendations for funding. 

MNRAAA established a Funding Task Force comprised of Advisory Council members. This committee reviewed applications, conducted interviews, and made final project awards to the MNRAAA Board. Although priorities and projects change, the following list of priority areas and projects funded during calendar year 2006 is representative of a typical year: 
* Transportation: Meeker, Kandiyohi, and Renville Counties 
* Legal Services/Education: Western Minnesota Legal Services 
* Congregate Dining and Home Delivered Meals: Lutheran Social Services (LSS) provided congregate and home delivered meal service through December 31, 2009. 
* Respite Care/Living at Home Block Nurse Program: Counties of McLeod and Meeker (Lutheran Social Services, Grove City CARE) 

**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.

**Transportation Planning**  
* (Continued from page 5) 
* Staff serves as a member of the Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Forum, which was created by Mn/DOT to provide advice for the statewide rail plan and to recommend and coordinate projects for which Mn/DOT should seek Federal Railroad Administration funding. 
* Staff served on a passenger rail committee of the Minnesota Freight and Passenger State Rail Plan. 
* Staff attended a Mn/DOT Innovative Finance Workshop in Shoreview. Staff also was asked to participate in a U.S. DOT conference call seeking input on the process Minnesota uses in making funding decisions for transit and the public involvement process they utilize. 

**Economic Development / Revolving Loan Fund**  
* (Continued from page 4) 
* Staff has continued to be involved with the 38 county Southern Minnesota Regional Competitiveness Project, which has been led by the Southwest and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundations.
### Financial Report

#### Revenues

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#### Expenditures

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Executive Director ............................................. Donn Winckler
Financial Director/Office Manager ......................... Sue Gimse
Aging Program Director ....................................... Kate Selseth
Senior Outreach Specialist ................................. Jeanette Jochum
Senior Outreach Specialist ................................. Ashley Ellingson
Economic Development Director ............................ Les Nelson
Community Development Director ......................... Matthew Johnson
Planning & Administrative Assistant ...................... Terresa Westerman