

## **Mid-Minnesota Development Commission**

### **2016 Assessment of Activities**

*Under Minnesota State Statutes 462.393 (Subd. 2) it states that “In 2001 and every five years thereafter the commission shall review its activities and issue a report assessing its performance in fulfilling the purposes of the Regional Development Act. The report shall address whether the existence of the commission is in the public welfare and interest.”* By the end of 2016, the next assessment report shall be completed.

The Assessment Report covers the period of time from 2012 to 2016. **This document shows the first portion of the report that identifies the major activities of the Commission during this period of time.**

#### **MMDC’s Mission Statement:**

We will administer state and federal programs, coordinate multi-jurisdictional activities, and provide technical assistance to government, businesses, and local organizations to maintain or enhance the quality of life in the Counties of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville.

#### **Highlight of Key Activities Performed within Each Department over the Past Five Years**

The following is a brief listing of some of the key activities undertaken by each of the MMDC’s Departments during the past five years. Many smaller activities are not mentioned. Staff activities regarding the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging ended in 2014, as they are now operating with their own staff as a standalone 501(c) (3) non-profit agency.

#### **Economic Development Activities**

- Staff authored a grant application to the Blandin Foundation. The successful grant provided partial funding to pay for a broadband infrastructure feasibility study for Kandiyohi County. Staff are members of the Kandiyohi County Broadband Taskforce, and gave some assistance in preparing a Border-to-Border State Broadband Application in 2016.
- During the past several years, MMDC, along with its state counterparts, as part of the Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO), has prepared “*DevelopMN*”, which is a Greater Minnesota Economic Development Strategy. MMDC has help reach out to various federal, state, and local partners during this process.
- From 2012 to current, the MMDC’s Revolving Loan Fund made eight business loans within the Region for a total of \$635,000, creating 98 jobs.
- Prepare and annually update the Region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). In the process in 2016 for preparing a new CEDS.

- Keeping current with the necessary reports, etc. with the federal EDA's designation as an Economic Development District.
- Assistance to the Kandiyohi County local Foods System Committee.
- Assistance with the Blandin Foundation's Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC) grant project.
- Staff serving on RLF Committees for Renville County HRA/EDA and for the Kandiyohi County EDC.
- Staff served on the Business Retention and Expansion Committee for the Kandiyohi County EDC and as an ex-officio member of their Operations Board.
- Staff spent considerable time on authoring a grant application to the Federal Economic Development Administration on behalf of the City of Willmar in 2012. If approved, the funds were to be used for infrastructure installation at the new Willmar Industrial Park. Unfortunately, the application was not funded.
- Staff continues to serve on the Renville County Revolving Loan Fund Committee, the Kandiyohi County Business Retention and Expansion Committee, and the Kandiyohi County Revolving Loan Fund Committee.
- In 2013 the Commission sponsored an Agricultural Business Resource Seminar.
- In 2014 a Business Retention and Expansion Program was conducted in Kandiyohi County. Staff volunteered to be on the Leadership Committee and perform site visit surveys to businesses.
- Beginning in 2013 MMDC is participating in economic and community development portions of the Kandiyohi County Vision 2040. This visioning process will provide an outlook for what individuals would like Kandiyohi County to resemble in the year 2040. Staff continue to sit on several active committees as part of this process.
- The MMDC co-sponsored a Business Retention and Expansion workshop held in Hutchinson in 2013. This is a University of Minnesota program that surveys local businesses to determine needs and identify issues they may have.
- Assistance given to the City of Willmar Design Center, currently called Willmar Downtown Development Inc. Staff currently is a member of their Downtown Design Committee.
- Staff gave a number of presentations to area business finance seminars.

### **Community Development and Planning Activities**

- The largest Community Development Department projects during 2012 involved MMDC writing County Water Plans for Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod, and Renville Counties. Local Water Plans are required by the State in order to be eligible to receive funds annually to administer local water planning priorities.
- MMDC worked with both Meeker and McLeod Counties on updating their Hazard Mitigation Plans. These plans are designed to minimize the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and severe weather events. Overall, the plans each identify the County's main hazard-related needs, such as addressing flood prone areas, the need for storm shelters, and the need for

replacing and/or upgrading warning sirens. The plans then develop a list of detailed action steps, referred to collectively as the Mitigation Plan, which specify the County's priority projects over the next five years. Most of the major projects would qualify for as much as 75% cost-share through various Homeland Security and Emergency Management grant programs.

- MMDC worked on the Phase One City of Willmar Parks Plan. The plan includes a complete profile of existing conditions at each of the City's 37 designated parks. The plan provides guidance in the capital investments for the parks in the upcoming years. Staff also assisted the City in preparing an application to have Robbins Island Park be designated by the State as a "Regional Park".
- MMDC assisted the Buffalo Creek Watershed District (BCWD) on developing the District's Overall Plan. Assistance was also given to the BCWD with a number of other projects, including helping write a policy manual and Administrative Handbook. The BCWD's Overall Plan was amended to include the establishment of a Water Management District (refer to Map 1). The new management district will allow BCWD to partially fund the Marsh Water Project, designed to address flooding and water quality concerns along Buffalo Creek near the City of Glencoe.
- City codes updates were completed or are currently underway for the following cities: Pennock, Prinsburg, Franklin, and Lake Lillian. Assistance was also provided to the City of Plato on City Code work.
- MMDC is currently working with the City of Lester Prairie on preparing a Comprehensive Plan.
- Staff was a member of the City of Willmar's Green Step Cities Program committee.
- Staff is a member of the Greater Willmar Area 2040 Housing Committee.
- Provided assistance through meeting facilitation and conducting a survey in 2016 for the City of Willmar considering placing a local sales tax option in the upcoming election.
- Staff will begin assisting the City of Lake Lillian in 2016 with writing a Main Street Design Plan in preparation of having their Main Street reconstructed in FY 2020.

### **Transportation Planning Activities**

- Participation with the Southwest Minnesota Transportation Area Partnership (ATP) which decides how federal dollars are spent in MnDOT District 8.
- Staff is annually on the ATP's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Committee and takes the Committee Chair every 3 years.
- Assistance to a number of TAP Program applicants.
- Assisted MnDOT with helping interview manufacturers as part of their District 8 Freight Study.
- Prepared the City of Willmar's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- Prepared the McLeod County Trails Plan.
- Currently preparing the Kandiyohi County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- MMDC prepared Safe Routes to School Plans for the following School Districts during the past five years: New London-Spicer, Willmar, Glencoe, Hutchinson, Bold (Olivia & Bird Island), and Dassel.
- Currently working with Olivia, and will be working with Bird Island in 2016, on preparing Healthy Living Transportation Plans, funded through SHIP.

- Assistance to the Highway 15 Coalition and acting as their fiscal agent.
- MMDC was the fiscal agent for the Minnesota Valley Rail Road Coalition.
- MMDC provided assistance to MnDOT with local road verification for the state's base map. Local units of government were contacted to discuss various segments of road that MnDOT had questions about.
- Member of the Highway 12 Technical Committees for the MnDOT led studies in both Willmar and Litchfield. Member of the Hutchinson Technical Committee in updating their Transportation Plan. Staff was also a member of the Willmar Downtown Parking Study Committee.
- MMDC assisted MnDOT with their efforts to update the functional classification of all roads within the Region. Staff worked with county engineers and state-aid city engineers to review and comment on MnDOT recommendations for roads to be classified as one of the following: principal arterials, minor arterials, major collectors, minor collectors, and local roads.
- MMDC assisted Dovre Township in Kandiyohi County with a Transportation Study of traffic flow and service roads off of Highway 71/23 just north of Willmar.
- Staff is a member of the Minnesota Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Forum.
- Staff served on the Passenger Rail Committee for MnDOT's Freight and Passenger Rail Plan and several other MnDOT state transportation planning advisory committees.
- Provided a means of citizen input on various transportation projects.
- Work has started for the Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan in 2016, replacing the Plan the MMDC prepared in 2011, that was finalized in early 2012.
- Staff served on the Willmar Downtown Design Center Committees to improve transportation connections to the central business district.
- Staff served on a committee in Willmar that prepared an application to have Willmar named a “bronze level – Bicycle Friendly Community”.
- Helped prepare the City of Hutchinson's Complete Street Ordinance, and gave advice to the City of Olivia on their Complete Street Ordinance.

### **Area Agency on Aging Program Activities (2012 – 2014)**

Area Agency on Aging (AAA) roles are designed to provide information and assistance to persons 60+; and program development assistance to agencies that serve older adults and their caregivers. Two staff positions conducted the functions of the aging program through MMDC. The positions were Program Developer and Senior Outreach Specialist.

- Participate through staffing and board members to the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging®, Inc. (MNRAAA). Board members served in 2015 also.
- Long-term care gaps & regional analysis activities.
- Provided technical assistance to organizations regarding grant writing, grant management, business development and sustainability. This included assistance to two new assisted living providers.
- Conducted Matter of Balance Leader Trainings.

- Health Insurance Counseling services including Medicare Part D Plan comparisons for numerous persons.
- Other Senior Outreach Specialist one-on-one assistance.
- Provides phone assistance by answering the Senior LinkAge Line®.
- Participated in Life Connections Expos and Senior Health Fairs.
- Provided CSSD grant writing assistance for numerous organizations.
- Facilitated Eldercare Development Partnership Long Term Care Coordinating Council.
- Continued partnership with Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to implement Bone Builders Exercise program with physical therapist assessment component throughout Kandiyohi, McLeod County, Meeker, and Renville Counties.
- Coordinated Chronic Disease Self-Management Classes through McLeod County Public Health; Volunteer Leaders provided classes at Club Bethesda.
- Partnered with Lutheran Social Services and Compassionate Care to provide Powerful Tools for Caregivers classes throughout Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties.
- Partnered with West Central Dementia Network to promote community events and Alzheimer's Walk.
- Coordinated Chronic Disease Self-Management Classes through McLeod County Public Health and Matter of Balance classes in Renville and Willmar. Worked on expanding evidence base class promotion throughout nine county area.
- Received ACT on Alzheimer's pilot project grant for Willmar to complete dementia capable community survey. Provided assistance to this project.
- Assistance given to Somali Elders in Willmar.

### **Other Aging Activities**

- Fiscal Host to ACT on Alzheimer's Grant.
- Beginning in 2015, MMDC is the fiscal host to West Central Dementia Awareness Network (WCDAN), and provided assistance in successfully apply for the Board on Aging Dementia Grant.