



First District News

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December 2021

First District Celebrates 50 Years of Service

The First District Association of Local Governments and the First District Development Company celebrated 50 years of service on September 23, 2021. The day began with a Watertown Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting and open house with tours of our new building (which we moved into in December 2019). The afternoon event was followed by a picnic. Throughout the day, nearly 200 people visited the First District. One of the highlights was having Lowell Richards, the first Executive Director, provide a historical perspective on the First District then and now.

50th Anniversary & Picnic

1

My Thoughts, Todd Kays

2-3

DOT Annual Project

3



Picnic



Lowell Richards and Staff

Funds Awarded

3

CEDS

Insert

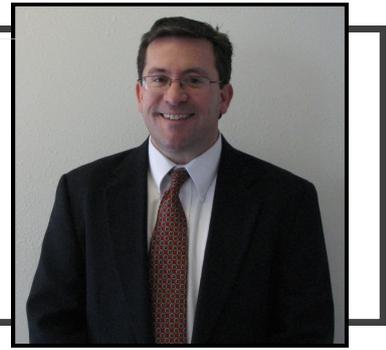
Upcoming Events

4



Ribbon Cutting

MY THOUGHTS... By: Todd A. Kays



2021 was a busy year here at the First District. Covid-19 and new programs developed at the State and Federal level have kept staff very busy. Staff was involved with more than 250 specific projects in the areas of planning, GIS, grant writing/project administration, small business finance and other community/economic development activities. We were fortunate to assist our members in obtaining over **\$8.1 million** in grants and **\$14.1 million** in low interest loans for various community and economic development projects. Since 2008 the First District has helped its members receive **\$94.2 million** in grants resulting in a return on investment of nearly **\$28** for every dollar of membership dues paid.

While many of you took the opportunity to “Meet the District” at our 11 county-wide meetings held between August and November, I would still like to take the opportunity to promote the First District Staff and remind our membership of the myriad of services that we have provided for more than 50 years. I am very grateful and proud of our team as they continue to provide a wide variety of technical services to our members with complete professionalism. Our 15 dedicated employees have over 200 combined years of experience working for our First District members. Your staff’s expertise is in the following areas:

Planning for Community and Economic Development - The First District provides a large variety of planning services including but not limited to - Annexation Studies, Capital Improvement Plans, Utility Rate Analysis, Comprehensive Plans, Emergency Plans, Housing Needs Assessments, Policy Development, Special Purpose Ordinances, Strategic Planning, Tax Increment Financing and Zoning Ordinance Development. Your Community and Economic Development Planning contacts are Todd Kays, Luke Muller, and Payton Carda.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) - Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is an important, inter-related component of all the services provided by the First District. Staff develops and maintains a wide variety of GIS data used for the creation of maps, policy development, project funding, GIS training and GIS webhosting. Your GIS contacts at the First District are Ryan Hartley, Darin Stein, Amy Arnold, and Jackie Erickson.

Grant/Loan Application & Project Administration - One of the most common areas of assistance the First District provides to its members is identifying, acquiring, and administering funding sources for local community and economic development projects. Such projects range from sewer and water infrastructure to community facilities like community centers or fire halls. Your Grant/Loan Application and Project Administration contacts are Greg Maag and Christina Crouse.

Business Development - Our sister organization the First District Development Company is a Small Business Administration Certified Development Company which promotes economic development and job creation by providing long-term commercial loans. Your Business Development contacts are Paula Hulscher, Amy Waite, Shelby Kraemer, Brittany Rost and Grace Tschakert.

Office Management - The person that directs the daily traffic and takes care of us is our Office Manager, Suzie Zirbel.

As you are thinking about your upcoming 2022 projects that involve the expertise listed above, just remember to give us a call.

Thinking about the last half of 2020 and most of 2021, that is now in the rear-view mirror, my first cynical thought was “good riddance”. Covid is still here. It has negatively impacted all of us in some way. Whether it be on a personal, economic, or government/business-related basis. Upon further reflection, I decided that “thankful” would be my mantra for 2021. I was thankful that we are getting a better handle on Covid. Thankful for all of the positive impacts the First District had a part to play with our membership. Thankful for my personal and professional relationships. Most importantly, thankful for the blessings that have been bestowed upon me and my family. So much like the Grinch, this year my heart has grown three sizes and I have further come to realize what is truly important. That maybe establishing and maintaining important professional and personal relationships, much like Christmas, doesn’t need to come from a store. Maybe when you put the time into those relationships, much like Christmas, perhaps it will mean so much more. On behalf of the entire First District Staff, I want to thank the membership for their continued support. It truly has been a privilege serving you, and we look forward to a prosperous new year. Merry Christmas!

Annual DOT Roadway Update Getting Underway

Since 1995, the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) in cooperation with the South Dakota Planning and Development Districts has been collecting city, county, township and federal roadway information using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology. This information is utilized by the SDDOT for several purposes, including reporting mileage to the Federal Highway Administration and county auditors, as well as creating county and city maps.

Annually, on behalf of the SDDOT, First District staff contact individuals with jurisdiction over roads and ask for assistance in updating any changes in an effort to keep this roadway information current.

The assistance of county, city, and township officials is critical to the accuracy and overall success of the SDDOT public road inventory. We believe that we will all benefit through this multi-agency cooperation.



FUNDS AWARDED

City of Brookings Community Food Pantry — CDBG Grant \$1,615,000

City of Lake Preston — Local Infrastructure Improvement Grant \$500,000

Roberts County — SDDANR Solid Waste Grant \$114,250

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The First District is nearing the completion of the development of its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is a plan which is designed to bring together the public and private sectors within the First District in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen our regional economies. The CEDS analyzes the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources.

An integral component of the development of the CEDS is the regional economic development survey. The survey assist in determining the perception of the local and regional economy as well as identifying local and regional needs in cities, counties and economic development organizations in the First District. The survey instrument was provided to over five hundred individuals representing 135 entities, including, economic development professionals, city and county elected officials, city and county staff, state and regional organizations, nonprofits, private businesses and education officials. The survey asked respondents to grade various issues that communities commonly face and assess which of these issues require more attention or the most improvement. The survey focused on local and regional economic issues. While each community, county and economic development entity had specific needs, the following is a summary of the survey results.

Most Important Local/Regional Economic Development Resources/Strengths

- Quality of Life
- Existing Educational Facilities
- Existing Economy (Agricultural, Manufacturing)
- Available Infrastructure
- Leadership
- Business Opportunity
- Workforce (Work Ethic)

Major Challenges/Liabilities to Attracting and Encouraging Economic Development

- Available qualified workforce
- Population base
- Availability of "spec" buildings and/or development property
- Aging infrastructure
- Available retail opportunities
- Distance and isolation from markets (rural setting)
- Available affordable housing

Top Priorities/Opportunities to Improve Local and Regional Economy

1. Attracting new companies and/or skilled workers (#1 in 2016 as well)
2. Improving access and availability to affordable housing opportunities (#3 in 2016)
3. Improving public infrastructure (#6 in 2016)
4. Attracting/retaining youth and young families (#2 in 2016)
5. Developing retail/service businesses (#4 in 2016)
Develop land/buildings for industrial & business parks (#5 in 2016)

Many hours of Staff and CEDS Committee time was dedicated in the preparation of this plan which will guide the First District's efforts for the next three years. A copy of the 2022-2024 CEDS is available for review at:

<https://association.1stdistrict.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/FDALGCEDS2022TO2024-120121.pdf>

The First District Governing Body will be meeting at 1 p.m. on Thursday, December 30, 2021, to review and adopt the CEDS. The public is welcome to attend via Zoom at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86892849298?pwd=M0VpTG53enFLa2xQVnICWEhBZld5UT09&from=addon>

Meeting ID: 868 9284 9298

Passcode: 055964

