

Planning & Development District III Digest

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Design South Dakota Comes to Corsica

The town of Corsica recently had the opportunity to experience being the first Design:SD community in the state. The concept was inspired by a similar organization in Minnesota called the Minnesota Design Team (MDT), which has been providing visionary assistance in smaller towns for several years.

What is this concept? Design South Dakota is a new way to help rural communities envision a better future through design. A team of design and community development professionals spent four days working with the people in the Corsica area to gather and illustrate local development ideas. The event helps to build a shared vision for the future, and to demonstrate ways to turn those ideas into reality in the community.



The Team. The Corsica design team was comprised of 11 people from various professions, ranging from architecture to civil engineering. They worked long hours to help the people of Corsica think about their future.



Visit Recap. The team arrived in Corsica on Wednesday, May 16th to a welcome social. The Corsica Commercial Club sponsored the event and also provided all their meals during the visit.

Thursday morning began with a series of community presentations. The team heard from a dozen local and regional organizations, a panel of local merchants, and a high school student. The morning wrapped up with roundtable discussions focused on topics such as transportation, housing, and recreation. The team jumped on a bus for a tour of the region which included Corsica Lake, a hog operation, and the Vanderpol collection of antique autos. *(Continued on page 3)*

Business Connection Network

Planning and Development District III has successfully secured a \$50,000 Rural Business Opportunity Grant through USDA Rural Development to assist with establishing a "Business Connection Network". The network will encourage local companies to utilize regional suppliers and markets. The ultimate goal of the network is to help build private business and community relationships that will give the region a better chance for economic success.

The need exists for a mechanism to link businesses within the region. Too often larger companies may look past area vendors or service providers in favor of out of state or international suppliers. Likewise, small operations may overlook contract opportunities by not considering neighboring businesses as potential markets. Missed opportunities limit economic diversification and job creation. Even companies that are industry leaders may be unaware of the advantages available by utilizing regional suppliers and markets. Establishing a regional business connection network will promote economic growth and entrepreneurship. Existing companies should realize increases in productivity through lower transportation and processing costs. New companies will gain markets and competitive advantages. Our expectation for the network initiative is five successful business matches.

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

By Greg Henderson

Learning From Peers

Every three years District III is evaluated by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) through a peer review. Our organization, services, and performance are reviewed by EDA staff and a planning district director from another state. Our 2007 peer reviewer was Tim Ostroski from the Southern Iowa Council of Governments (SICOG) in Creston, Iowa.

Part of the review involved sharing ideas and experiences. Tim's district has developed several products that we may utilize in our region. One challenge for all districts is to effectively communicate performance information to member governments. SICOG has user friendly documents ranging from board of directors manuals to annual reports. The District III Executive Board was impressed with the content and expressed an interest in preparing similar materials for our membership. We will follow through with a new reporting format for 2007 performance. □

Disaster Support

Recent weather has reminded us about how quickly conditions can change in the Great Plains. Local governments are documenting damages in anticipation of outside assistance. District III has responded to several requests for Geographic Information System (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) support, associated with mapping damages. (See full article on page 3.) We appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate the usefulness of these technologies in both disaster planning and recovery efforts.

As county emergency management directors use GIS and GPS, they will discover more applications to save time and improve the accuracy of information analysis. If you are curious about how spatial technology can apply to disaster situations, please contact Harry or Travis.

Our staff has been assisting the South Dakota Housing Development Authority in supporting a disaster recovery center. The centers are one stop shops for disaster assistance. Two centers were established in the District III area (Mitchell and Yankton). State agencies tried to accommodate the public by keeping the centers open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. We covered a mid-day shift at the Yankton center. District III has good professional relationships with all state agencies. Anything we can do to help them provide our residents with recovery assistance is a high staff priority. □

(Business Connection continued...)

District III will match the federal contribution through donated staff time and office support. The network will directly complement the work of the region's Small Business Development Center and the Areawide Business Council revolving loan fund.

District III will coordinate the network's activities with local and county-wide development personnel. The majority of communities have either dedicated personnel or some form of local economic development organization. These parties will be asked to participate with District III in identifying potential program participants. Some of these organizations have already been contacted. District III is currently in the process of developing a business questionnaire which is one of the key tools that will be used as we meet with local companies. We recently found that a Council of Governments in southern Iowa is implementing a similar program that they call "Buyers & Suppliers". Lori will be coordinating a majority of this initiative in the District III region.

If you know of a business that may benefit from this assistance or have specific questions about the Business Connection Network, contact Lori at the District III office or email her at abc@districtiii.org.

DISTRICT III ANNOUNCEMENTS & DEADLINES

- JUNE 13:** EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING IN WAGNER
- JUNE 30:** BIRD FLU PLANS DUE
- JULY 1:** CONSOLIDATED APPLICATIONS DUE
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS DUE
- JULY 4:** INDEPENDENCE DAY – OFFICE CLOSED
- JULY 15:** DENR SRF APPLICATIONS DUE
LWCF APPLICATIONS DUE
- AUGUST 1:** COMMUNITY ACCESS APPLICATIONS DUE
STATE WATER PLAN AMENDMENTS DUE
- AUGUST 8:** FULL COMMITTEE & EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS IN WOONSOCKET

Your "one stop shop" for economic development is now easily accessible on-line. For information on...

- Funding Programs
- Planning Assistance
- Marketing Assistance
- Housing Programs
- GIS/Mapping Services
- Areawide Business Council
- Small Business Development Center
- Regional Classified Ads
- Census Information
- Business Support Services
- Tourism
- And Much More



Visit www.districtiii.org

GIS Provides Support After Storm Hits Local Area

May 5th, 2007 brought devastation across South Dakota. Tornadoes, torrential rains and flooding affected ten counties across the state; Beadle, Brown, Clark, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Miner, Sanborn, Spink and Yankton. Monday morning, following the storms, District III GIS staff traveled the region to GPS the damage points located in our service area. District III was able to assist county Emergency Management officers by providing detailed maps which were used to relay specific damage locations to county, state and federal officials in a timely manner. The picture (right top) shows downed power lines in Yankton County.



GIS staff were able to link information to each damage location (address, basic description, etc.) and also take digital images at each point. There was a wide range of damage to homes and property in the area. Buffalo County had extensive damage to the road system due to heavy rains that washed culverts away. (Pictured right bottom)



District III was also called on to provide assistance to flood-devastated Brown County. Harry, the GIS Coordinator for District III, was on site for two days processing photos, training workers, and creating maps for city, county, state and federal workers.

Following the disasters, District III has purchased a GPS-enabled digital camera. This camera can collect a GPS point, hold up to five attributed pieces of information, and seamlessly link digital photos. Photos can be processed as web pages, photos with watermarks, GIS data or memo sheets, just to name a few.

If you have any questions about GIS services, please contact Harry at the District III office or email him at harryr@districtiii.org.

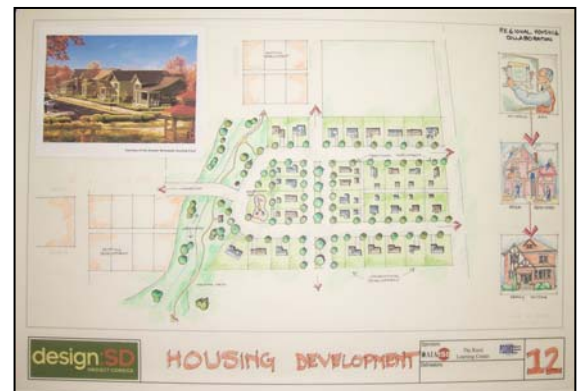
Design:SD continued ...

A Community Potluck was held Thursday evening in the grade school gym. There, the team asked the audience a series of focused questions in order to gather the many dreams and visions of Corsica's future.

Friday was the day that the team got down to work; reflecting on what they had heard and learned from the interaction during the previous two days. The team was able to take all the information they received and narrow it down to a few major issues. Once the major issues were decided, the team split into groups to begin the storyboarding process. The storyboards illustrated how each issue would be addressed and presented to the community. The town was given the opportunity to visit the studio to see how the work was coming along and provide one last bit of input before the final boards were drawn. After that, the team went in to "overdrive" to produce the final boards.

As Friday night spilled over into Saturday morning, the boards were completed and processed for the presentation. The community presentation was held Saturday morning in the grade school gym.

Lots of local people put in tons of time and effort to make the Corsica visit a success. It was truly a mixing bowl, and an experience that neither the town nor the team will forget. The next step in the process will be to discover ways to implement the ideas generated by the team.



To view all of the boards from the Corsica visit, you can go to <http://designsd.wordpress.com/>. **If you would like more information about Design:SD, please contact Joe Bartmann at the Rural Learning Center (605) 772-5139.** □

Fighting Fraud on the Web

Internet fraud has become increasingly rampant in a day and age where just about everything can be sold over the Internet. The following are a few tips on how to avoid being taken for a fool.



- Don't believe promises of easy money. If somebody claims that you can earn a lot of money with very little work or you can get a loan or a credit card even though your credit is bad, it's probably a scam.
- Resist pressure. Companies on the up-and-up will be happy to give you time to think over an offer. It's the ones who demand that you act immediately or won't take no for an answer that are usually no good.
- Think twice about entering contests operated by unfamiliar companies.
- Be cautious about unsolicited e-mails. They are often fraudulent. Responding to them may merely inform them that yours is a working e-mail.
- Guard your personal information. Don't provide your credit card or bank account unless you are actually paying for something.

—Adapted from the National Consumers League web site

No Place Like Home

The number of home-based businesses is on the rise. Here are some statistics that bring home the point:

- There are about 34 to 36 million home-office households in the United States. These include income-generating home offices (18 to 20 million) and corporate telecommuters. *Source: IDC, a national research firm, www.idc.com*
- 53% of all small businesses are home-based. *Source: SBA's Office of Advocacy*
- Over 90% of home-based businesses are sole proprietorships. *Source: SBA's Office of Advocacy*

Taken from Small Business Newsletter, Published by New Ground, Winter 2006, page 1.



Summer in South Dakota

Summer has arrived and so have the tourists! South Dakota's rich natural resources attract many visitors each year. Are we ready for them? One of the South Dakota Small Business Development Center's strategic goals is to provide greater assistance to businesses that generate a significant portion of their annual sales from tourism dollars. In doing so, we have partnered with several tourism associations, including the State Department of Tourism, to reach and assist these businesses.

Recently, the SBDC partnered with the Chamberlain-Oacoma Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Yankton Convention and Visitors Bureau to bring a tourism-based customer service training program to our region. The training was titled *Red Carpet Service* and was developed by the University of Nebraska's Rural Initiative. The program is designed to help front-line employees make a difference in the economic impact of tourism in their communities.

Participants learned how to improve their skills in answering tourism-related questions, discover tourism tools available locally, and promote their communities in a positive way. The goal of the training was to help participants create such a positive experience for visitors to their communities that they want to stay longer or return again and again.

"Statistics show that two or three people, the average summer tourist group, staying two nights in a community, will spend an average of \$400," said Connie Francis, extension educator for the University of Nebraska's Rural Initiative. "If they visit an attraction or attend an event, they usually stay an extra half-day and spend an additional \$92. Those dollars add up in the local economy."

For information about various industries or to find out how you can obtain free business counseling, call Sue at the SBDC in Yankton (605) 665-0751. You can also visit our website at www.districtiii.org/SBDC/. □

"I make the most of all that comes, and the least of all that goes."

-- Sara Teasdale

Municipal Utility Rates

District III staff recently attended a utility rate analysis workshop in Sioux Falls. The individual presenting at the workshop was Carl Brown, who specializes in water and sewer system rate analysis and rate setting. He has completed rate studies for water and wastewater systems all over the country using the Show-me Ratemaker software program he developed while working for the State of Missouri.

According to Mr. Brown, a community needs a utility rate study if:

- It has never had one before, or it's been at least five years since a study was done.
- A big event, like a significant capital improvements project, is planned.
- You don't know whether your current rate structure and fees are equitable for your customers.
- Your utility system reserves drop below a certain level. In general, according to Mr. Brown, a municipality's utility system reserves should be about the same as the utility's total annual operating costs.

The importance of rate analysis is that it can help communities, big and small, set their utility rates at a reasonable and equitable level. It shows where rates should be, and at what rate they should be increasing. Rate analysis is a proactive approach to running a utility system, and in planning and financing future utility improvements.

Communities with a population under 2,500 are eligible to receive a Small Community Planning Grant from the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources to have the rate analysis done. The grant provides a reimbursement of 80% of the costs to have Planning & Development District III conduct the study. *(continued right)*



Harry Redman, GIS Coordinator
Travis Acklin, GIS Specialist

AVAILABLE SERVICES:

Internet Mapping System <http://ims.districtiii.org>
Parcel Mapping
Plat Mapping
E911 Rural Addressing
Global Positioning System (GPS) Services
Geocoding (Address location like MapQuest)
GPS Sign Inventory for Highway/Road Department
Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Mapping
General GPS/GIS Mapping
GIS Training

In the last four years, District III staff have completed several rate studies for small towns in our service area, but many more communities in our area could benefit from having a study done.

If you are interested in having your community's utility rates analyzed, or if you need more information about the process, please contact John at District III. □

Governor's House Program

The following guidelines are effective as of March 2007:

- The price of the home is **\$33,000**
- Households of 2 OR LESS must have an income less than **\$31,980**.
- Households of 3 OR MORE must have an income less than **\$37,310**.
- Households UNDER 62 YEARS OF AGE must have a net worth less than **\$90,000**, of which no more than *\$70,000* may be in liquid assets.
- Households OVER 62 YEARS OF AGE must have a net worth less than **\$175,000**, of which no more than *\$100,000* may be in liquid assets.

To learn more about the Governor's House Program, call Eric at the District III office. □

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ORGANIZATION:

Planning & Development District III is a voluntary association of city and county governments. A committee of elected officials and private citizens govern the agency by setting the work agenda and overseeing the performance of the Director and staff. The office serves a 15-county area that includes the following counties: Aurora, Bon Homme, Brule, Buffalo, Charles Mix, Davison, Douglas, Gregory, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Lyman, Sanborn, Tripp, and Yankton. There are 68 communities and three tribal governments within the service area.

If you would like to receive this publication in full color, digital format via email, please contact our office.

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It's called your checkbook.”