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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

COPC grant forges partnership

Summary: A recent visit from the Minnesota Design Team is but one phase of a partnership between Morris residents and the University of Minnesota, Morris thanks to a nearly \$400,000, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

(October 28, 2005)-The recent visit to Morris by the Minnesota Design Team is but one phase of a partnership forged between residents in the Morris community and individuals and resources at University of Minnesota, Morris thanks to a nearly \$400,000, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Community Outreach Partnership Center's (COPC) grant was awarded last spring to UMM, and is being administered by the Center for Small Towns, reaffirming the partnership between the campus and the Morris community under the theme, "Adapting to Change: Managing Urbanization in Rural America."

The project has been guided by a Community Advisory Committee of local citizens, and will include work on issues surrounding housing, economic development, community organizing and neighborhood revitalization. Focus of the project will be to identify areas of opportunity, gather data and suggest a direction toward which the Morris community should move.

Morris is only the fourth Minnesota awardee in the 10-year history of COPC and was one of 14 selected from 144 applicants nationwide. Morris is the smallest community ever to be awarded a COPC grant in the history of the program. Tom McRoberts, interim director of both the Center for Small Towns and Continuing Education and Regional Programs at UMM, said that the UMM-City of Morris partnership can be a model to illustrate what a community the size of Morris can do.

Small communities have some of the same issues that large metro areas do, said McRoberts. "Apart from scale, the problems of small communities need to be addressed too."

"We have a great relationship with the college," added City of Morris Mayor Carol Wilcox, who enthusiastically endorsed the partnership. "This grant enables the City and the college to work together once again, and the end result will be a better community and a better college. We are very grateful that a core group of interested individuals took the initiative to apply for the grant."

The grant process began about a year ago when approximately 30 representatives from both Morris and the UMM campus met in an advisory capacity to help shape the grant proposal. The community advisory group determined that outreach and research activities should focus on three priority areas: housing, economic development, and community organizing and neighborhood revitalization.

Among 13 different projects that will be addressed within the priority areas are: Geographic Information Systems Parcel Mapping the Habitat for Humanity Chapter Energizing Entrepreneurship and Business Mentoring Project Adopt a Grandparent Program and Take Back the Night/Operation Neighborhood Watch, and many others. Smaller teams will

now be formed to implement the work on each of the projects.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to deepen the bonds between the campus and the community through the Center for Small Towns. UMM and the City of Morris keep each other strong, and programs such as this will benefit us both," said UMM Chancellor Sam Schuman.

For more information about the grant and the COPC – Adapting to Change partnership activities, contact the Center for Small Towns at UMM, 320-589-6451, or visit www.centerforsmalltowns.org/.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.