

County accepts award for Resilient Communities Project



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Accepting the EPIC Network's Outstanding Community Partner Award for the Resilient Communities Projects are, from left to right, Carver County Commissioner Randy Maluchnik, board chair Jim Ische, Commissioner Tim Lynch, planner Nate Kabat, Commissioner Tom Workman, and vice chair Gayle Degler. (Submitted photo)

The Carver County Board at its April 19 meeting recognized the receipt of a national award for the County's work on the Resilient Communities Project (RCP), a partnership program with the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

"This is the first time the EPIC Network has given out an Outstanding Community Partner Award in the five years it has been promoting university-community partnerships," board chair Jim Ische said. "We are happy to be the first to

accept this award, and in so doing, we want to thank the Planning and Water Management Department for its work on this project. They have done a great job applying for this program, organizing and managing these projects. I would also like to thank our community partners for their support and work on coordinating projects.”

The EPIC (Educational Partnership for Innovation in Communities) Network presented the award to Planning and Water Management Department Planner Nate Kabat at the Fifth Annual Sustainable City Conference in San Diego on March 13 to 16. The county was nominated for the award by University of Minnesota RCP Director Mike Greco.

Greco said previous RCP partners were individual cities. He nominated Carver County for the award to highlight the county’s success working with 20 staff leads from eight organizations to assemble, coordinate, and manage 30 community-university partnership projects for students to work on during the 2015-16 school year. The multi-disciplinary projects relate to housing, human services, alternative transportation, community engagement and education, building community identity, effective administration, and environmental stewardship.

Employees from the county’s Health and Human Services Division, Property and Financial Services, Public Works, and Public Services divisions are involved with 14 projects. The remaining 16 projects involve the Carver County Community

Development Agency, Carver County Historical Society, Eastern Carver County Independent School District 112, SouthWest Transit, and the cities of Victoria, Chaska, and Watertown.

Greco credited the RCP with stimulating new graduate student research opportunities and individual master's degree thesis projects. The projects also provide opportunities for students to gain professional experience beyond their classroom work through presentations to community organizations and governing bodies.

Ische called the RCP "a win-win" for both the community partners and students. He said the program is a cost-effective way for the county and its partners to increase capacity and bring in new ideas and creativity to work on needed projects. For students, it's a chance to delve into real-world issues and come up with solutions communities can use.

"We are going to be seeing benefits from the Resilient Communities Project for years to come," Ische said. "Many of these projects are going to have a lasting effect on local government, the environment, schools, and local communities."

County projects range from efforts to determine options for integrating cost-effective renewable energy sources for county buildings, to the evaluation of storm water re-use

irrigation systems, the identification and assessment of school-readiness and early-childhood programs, and the evaluation of the impacts and outcomes of the County's continuous improvement and innovation programs.

A poster session of student work on all of the projects will be presented from 2-4 p.m. on Friday, May 13, at the University of Minnesota McNamara Alumni Center, 200 Oak St. SE, Minneapolis. Information on the RCP is also available from the county's website, www.co.carver.mn.us, and the University of Minnesota RCP site, <http://rcp.umn.edu>.

<http://sunpatriot.com/2016/05/06/county-accepts-award-for-resilient-communities-project/>