

# Dakota County Project Summaries - May 2024

## American Rescue Plan (ARP)

### State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF)

## Directly Funded Projects

### Byllesby Dam

**Expenditure Category:** 5.7 Clean Water: Energy Conservation

Dakota County owns the Byllesby Dam and operates its high-hazard hydroelectric facility under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) safety regulations. The County is in the process of completing turbine and powerhouse upgrades for the Byllesby Dam Water-to-Wire Redevelopment Project to modernize and maximize production of clean energy from the Dam.

Overall project goals include:

- Preserve the clean energy generation capability for at least another 50 years.
- Replace century-old original head gates, draft tubes, overhead crane rails, generators, and turbines.
- Remove flood damaged concrete and bedrock chunks from river channel.
- Address dam safety issues like cracks in the Ambursen buttress dam and a stormwater pipe penetration through the north embankment.
- Restore the historic character of the façade by replacing blocked-up windows and repairing walls and roofs.
- Replace the 20- to 40-year-old stop logs, interior ventilation system and electrical switchgear.
- Upgrade to generating units that are more efficient and are matched to site head and flow conditions.
- Address worker safety concerns by relocating the maintenance and operator entrance out of the icy spray zone.

### River to River Greenway – Thompson Oaks Segment

**Expenditure Category:** 2.22 Strong Healthy Communities: Neighborhood Features that Promote Health and Safety

The project is located on the former Thompson Oaks municipal golf course property and converts 10 acres of the former municipal golf course to a regional stormwater treatment system and restores a former wetland and creek complex which was destroyed via filling of construction waste and other debris in the 1980s. The project is located within qualified census tract number 601.05.

The River to River Greenway Master Plan identified this new greenway alignment, which will connect to the Robert Street Underpass east across the former Thompson Oaks Golf Course owned by the City of West St. Paul. The project will directly work to lower TSS (Total Suspended Solids) and TP (Total Phosphorus) levels by targeting a highly urbanized sub watershed for regional stormwater treatment. The project combines stormwater treatment, drinking water protection, and contaminated soil remediation with economic redevelopment, recreational opportunities, and shared green space amenities while fostering community

education and public engagement on surface water and groundwater quality issues and solutions.

## Mental Health Crisis Follow-up

**Expenditure Category:** 1.12 Mental Health Services

In this model, a Dakota County mental health professional social worker partners with one or more dedicated Community Engagement/Mental Health officers at participating police departments. The officer and mental health professional review calls for service that may indicate an underlying mental health issue and follow-up with people who have experienced a crisis. The main goals of follow-up include offering and facilitating connection to on-going services and supports, as needed, and providing immediate short-term therapeutic intervention. This often helps mitigate future crisis situations. There are currently 12 FTE social worker positions available in the Crisis Follow-up and Stabilization Unit, plus one FTE supervisor. Eight of the 12 positions are dedicated to the Embedded Social Work model.

## Mental Health Crisis Response

**Expenditure Category:** 1.12 Mental Health Services

Dakota County's Crisis Response Unit (CRU) was established in 1993 to respond to increasing County costs related to child placements by law enforcement. The County was later required by Minn. Stat. § 256B.0624 and Minn. Stat. § 256B.0944 to have its own mental health crisis response, and CRU evolved to also meet that requirement.

In response to high demand for crisis mental health services and changing community expectations, the Board approved adding 9.0 FTE social workers (SWs) and one FTE supervisor to Dakota County's Crisis Response Unit. Additional social workers focus on mobile crisis response, responding in pairs and/or with public safety partners. Following a mobile crisis assessment or intervention, social workers will connect residents with crisis follow-up or other ongoing services.

Staff respond to calls to provide crisis planning, develop coping strategies, and refer to outside resources. This can be face-to-face or by phone. The CRU is also the after-hours entry point across all County social service programs, including vulnerable adult protective services; child protection; parent/child conflict; and many others.

## Crisis and Recovery Center

**Expenditure Category:** 1.12 Mental Health Services

The Crisis and Recovery Center will be a regional resource for mental health crisis assessment, stabilization, and treatment services as an alternative to, or transition from, hospital level care. This new center, located in West St. Paul, MN, will provide 16 bedrooms, with private bathrooms, group and living space for residential treatment level of care. The center will also include a place to go for assessment, support, and connection to resources. The 15,000-square-foot, two-story center will accommodate people with physical disabilities, which is a limitation of the current buildings. The center will include three service concepts:

- Crisis assessment and support services that will be an alternative to more intensive or restrictive settings. This was an identified need and a gap in Dakota County's existing crisis services continuum.
- Intensive Residential Treatment Services (IRTS) are typically a 90-day stay with a specific focus on recovery and it is usually individuals who were recently discharged from a hospital.
- Crisis Residential Services (CRS) are short-term services for those in acute crisis that include a stay from 1-5 days.

## Nicols Pointe

**Expenditure Category:** 2.15 Long-Term Housing Security: Affordable Housing

Nicols Pointe is a 24-unit (all one-bedroom/one-bathroom units) apartment building in Egan that will be affordable to persons aged 55 and up, with a preference for Veterans. All units will be income-restricted for households at or below 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The project will be developed, owned, and operated by the Dakota County Community Development Agency (CDA).

## South St. Paul Library

**Expenditure Category:** 2.37 Economic Impact Assistance - Other

The library construction project created the County's tenth branch library location at 131 7th Ave. N. within the City of South St. Paul. This new library, part of the Dakota County Library system, will respond to critical needs in the community, including the areas of health care, employment, and workforce development. The new building will also provide public access to the internet for purposes including work, education, and health monitoring. This library will support and provide educational and other resources for a community with a median income among the lowest in the county.

## Law Enforcement Center Integrative Health Unit

**Expenditure Category:** 1.12 Mental Health Services

Over the past decade, there has been a demonstrated and growing need to provide medical and mental health services to county residents, including inmates housed at the County jail. Despite the fluctuation in inmate population during the COVID-19 pandemic and over-arching changes in the judicial system created by it, a consistent need for dedicated medical and mental health services remains inside the jail. The pandemic increased isolation, stress, and anxiety across the general population, which further highlighted these needs in the jail population. It is now estimated that 15% or more of jail inmates would benefit from dedicated medical or mental health services. Additional research has documented the benefits of providing program and treatment spaces for use by inmates to aid in their active recovery and ongoing treatment. The 30-bed building addition will add capacity to the existing County Jail and will help to meet the demonstrated needs for dedicated medical and mental health spaces.

## Revenue Replacement

- **Communities of Color Outreach:** This program established contracts with community organizations to address the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and related hardship on communities of color, with a focus on Black and Latino communities. Contracts focused on the following goals: inform community members about COVID-19 and available resources; assist County residents in navigating support programs and gaining access to services; slowing the spread of COVID-19; supporting recovery from the pandemic; and advising the County's communication strategies to improve reach and effectiveness with communities of color. Work was completed with six community agencies, and ongoing efforts are now folded in the Public Health department's work on health equity.
- **Criminal Courts Backlog:** As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a significant backlog of criminal cases in the Dakota County District Court. The project includes hiring two full time equivalent (FTE) entry-level Assistant County Attorneys and one Legal Administrative Assistant to assist with the backlog of criminal cases and to reduce caseload numbers for criminal prosecutors. The overall goal is a 20% reduction of the criminal court backlog each quarter and ultimately to attain and maintain lower prosecutorial caseload numbers to ensure better public services for victims, witnesses, law enforcement and defendants.
- **Customer Relations Management:** Dakota County Employment and Economic Assistance (EEA) has a long-term strategy of providing self-help features for clients to obtain status information about their cases and update changes in household information. The first step of this strategy, and the focus of this project, is to replace an outdated and no longer supported interactive voice response (IVR) software, with a more versatile solution that not only provides IVR features but also call center features that will provide efficiencies for the EEA staff. Current state call flows have been developed for the entire department. These flows will be used to develop the initial IVR design. EEA also worked with Dakota County Information Technology on a related communications project that will provide the contact center solution for this project.
- **Emergency Shelter:** In 2020, Dakota County Social Services significantly increased non-congregate emergency shelter capacity for people experiencing homelessness in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, Social Services sustained this capacity through a variety of funding sources, including federal grant funds, state grant funds, and county levy funds. The focus is to provide emergency shelter for youth ages 18-24 and their children through The Link (a non-profit for youth) and single adults ages 21+ through Dakota County in a hotel shelter environment.
- **Law Library Grant:** Funding is being used to support staffing and expand access to residents. The pandemic effects on society and constriction of access to courts has exacerbated the need for supporting residents navigating the judicial system. This is happening at the same time as primary revenues through court fees have fallen considerably and staffing levels have been cut. The Dakota County Law Library has stepped in to fill the legal assistance void for those who are unable to afford a private attorney but make too much to qualify for free legal assistance.
- **Mental Health Civil Commitment Screening:** Funding for 1.0 FTE Social Worker in the pre-petition screening unit to respond to high demand for mandated civil commitment services including screening, court processes, family and collateral engagement, service

coordination and case management. Dakota County and other counties continue to experience high demand and high acuity in mental health and substance use services. Referrals for civil commitment screening increased 30% since the start of the pandemic and continue to hold at that level.

- **Municipal Wastewater Connection:** The Municipal Wastewater Connection program is designed for low-income homeowners with failing septic systems who are eligible to make a connection to a municipal wastewater treatment system. The program was designed to accommodate the City of Randolph's unique situation as the city moves from onsite septic systems to a community solution. The City of Randolph will be constructing the city sewer system in the summer of 2023 with connections to be made in 2024.
- **Pre-petition Screener Social Workers:** Hire 2.0 FTE Social Workers in the pre-petition screening unit to respond to high demand for mandated civil commitment services for clients who may also be involved in the Rule 20 process through the criminal court. Dakota County and other counties continue to experience high demand and high acuity in mental health and Substance Use services. Referrals for civil commitment screening and Rule 20 referrals increased 30% since the start of the pandemic and continue to hold at that level.
- **Financial Assistance Specialists (Time-Limited):** A fully trained Financial Assistance Specialist can manage public assistance programs for 200-450 households. Due to the COVID Pandemic, public assistance caseloads increased by 35.1% (May 2022). These additional positions aid in the management of increased public assistance caseloads and help people get the critical services they need in a timely way.
- **Workforce Mobility Program:** The Dakota County Technical College and Inver Hills Community College collaborated with the Dakota County Employment and Economic Assistance, the Dakota-Scott Workforce Development Board, and area CareerForce Centers on a pilot program to provide free tuition in credit or non-credit training for Dakota County residents in key identified in-demand industry sectors. The program launched with training offered for occupations such as certified nursing assistant, emergency medical technician, phlebotomy technician, Class A commercial truck driving, boiler operations, welding, and early childhood and youth development. The program was marketed to low-income Dakota County residents through direct mailings.
- **Aspen House (Youth Shelter):** Following the closure of the shelter in Hastings in 2019, Dakota County and Washington County began partnering to fill this gap in the continuum of safe housing options for youth. Dakota County purchased a 12-bed residential facility located in Mendota Heights to provide temporary emergency housing and support services for youth ages 12 to 18 who do not have a safe place to stay. Washington County contributed \$400,000 of its ARP funding to the purchase and to have priority access to this resource with Dakota County. The facility, named Aspen House, provides 24-hour on-site supervision and support services.