



## REGIONAL COUNCIL OF MAYORS

February 8, 2010

### **INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION**

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Brian Boyle, [Issue Media Group](#)

#### **Minneapolis – Saint Paul Online Magazine to Target Creative Class**

Issue Media Group (IMG), a Detroit-based publisher, plans to launch a new weekly online publication in the Twin Cities in mid-April. According to co-founder and publisher Brian Boyle, IMG's publications "promote assets and growth and pull together positive news stories in a format that is hip and well-designed, a cross between [Fast Company](#) and [Dwell](#)."

IMG's editorial focus is on what Boyle refers to as "TIDE assets: Talent, Innovation, Diversity, and Environment." Identified by Richard Florida, TIDE assets are seen as the key components for attracting and retaining mobile, young knowledge workers and the creative class—a target audience for IMG's publications.

IMG currently has 12 publications in the US and Canada, each highly customized to the needs of the community. A local editorial team writes frequent and original content focused on thought leadership, growing companies, industry sectors, lifestyle and neighborhood guides. The stories, videos, and photographs on IMG sites are designed to be part of a coordinated effort to attract and retain new talent, tourism and business investment. According to Boyle, IMG's "goal is to tell a new story—to disrupt the traditional media narrative, which can be focused on bad news: like layoffs or crime. We cover things like the opening of a new coffee shop, start ups getting venture capital. We want to inspire our audience."

#### **Getting the Word out through COPE: "Content Once Publish Everywhere"**

Part of IMG's success is that their content doesn't just live on their own website—they syndicate it to partners (most of whom are funding sponsors) who republish it on other websites, helping to enlarge the audience. IMG relies heavily on social media networks such as Twitter and Facebook to push content as well as focusing on search engine terms. IMG "obsesses about how people look for information about a community" and they use terms and tags in their stories that will boost page rankings on Google, Bing, and other search engines. As Boyle pointed out, IMG's model is to write "content once, publish everywhere."

Boyle is working with 14-16 organizations in the Twin Cities (including: the Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Meet Minneapolis, the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, etc.) These organizations are

sponsors that will provide annual funding to support the magazine and who will have a seat at the editorial table.

### **ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE**

John Shardlow reported out on the work of the ULI MN/RCM Environment Committee. Along with the the Green Step Cities pilot program, the Committee hopes to work with two metro area cities to pilot an approach that streamlines the Minnesota environmental review process using the “Alternative Urban Areawide Review” (AUAR) process.

The MN Environmental Quality Board (EQB) has certified the AUAR method as a way to comply with the state’s environmental review law. The AUAR is a substitute for the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) or the larger Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and it allows municipalities to assess different scenarios (as opposed to definitive projects) for larger scale areas over time.

#### **The benefits of the AUAR approach**

By modifying the current comprehensive planning process, local governments can do area-wide analysis up front—detailing possible development scenarios, identifying environmental, traffic and sewer impacts, and developing and legally adopting a mitigation package, which will save time later during the project development stage. Once the boundaries of an AUAR are established, any future development in that area is exempt from future environmental review. AUARs can be updated annually and mayors noted that it easy to do. Without an AUAR, even if a comprehensive plan details specific implementation strategies and identifies environmental issues, the local government will need to complete an EAW or EIS—which can be duplicative, add months to the project, and cost thousands of dollars.

Cities across the metro have adopted AUARs, the Twin Lakes area in Roseville, Twinsville in Minneapolis, the gravel mine in Maple Grove—the process has encouraged municipalities to think about a larger area and how it might be developed in the future.

Shardlow is quick to point out that this is “not circumventing environmental review—it’s committing to better environmental performance.” Additionally, AUARs are something that any local government can do right now, as they are allowed by the EQB and Metropolitan Council. Shardlow adds that an AUAR “could be a real inducement for developers because they’ll know the rules, they’ll know what environmental contamination is there, and it could save lots of time and money.”

### **JOBS/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Updates on Regional Competitiveness Project, Itasca Job Task Force and Brookings Institution work**

Mayor Harpstead reported that the University of Minnesota graduate students have kicked off their Capstone Project focused on the three metro-area clusters (medical devices, financial services, and distributed branded products) three other statewide clusters. These cluster studies will include a diagnosis, vision, and action plan. Students are currently gathering background information and contacting senior company professionals.

On January 28, the Itasca Project hosted individuals from Austin, Texas and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to describe their regional economic development models. The Itasca Project will present their findings to the RCM next month.

On February, 17<sup>th</sup> representatives from the Brookings Institution will be in Minneapolis to hold a stakeholder meeting about the Metropolitan Business Plan project from 7:30- 8:30 at Faegre & Benson. A series of working meetings will be held later that day. Jon Commers, the project manager for the Brookings work, outlined the three products that will be developed: 1) Baseline overview of all of the work that's been done in region to understand and illustrate current conditions, 2) a Detailed Development Initiative— that emphasizes increasing innovation, commercialization and entrepreneurship across industry clusters and 3) a Prospectus: that can be used to show federal and private sector funders what this region has to offer. Draft versions of these products are due in June, final versions in September, and a large summit to unveil the work will be held in December in Chicago.

### **Economic Development Discussion**

Caren Dewar pointed out that while working with Brookings they've noted that the Twin Cities does a good job at "describing the world that we are in, but not where we want to go." Dewar added that we need "a clear, hard edge statement of where the region aspires to be in 10, 20, or 50 years." She pointed out that the culture of a place is important. In Minnesota, we tend to have a risk-averse and populist culture, leading to the idea that we are the "Land of 10,000 pilot projects"—where we don't have a shared voice. Dewar quoted a speaker from a recent meeting who said, "Culture will eat strategy for lunch everyday."

Dewar suggested that anyone with relationships in the business community should reach out and ask them the questions that have been prepared for the regional competitiveness project. Around the table people agreed with the statement that "We as leaders need to become better connected with senior business leaders in this region." The group discussed the need to showcase the strengths that make us strong competitors, identify the policy changes to improve our business retention, attraction, and expansion, and to recognize that these issues are larger than our individual cities.

### **COMPLETE STREETS RESOLUTIONS**

Caren Dewar reported that at the time of the RCM meeting, the following cities had adopted complete streets resolutions: Richfield, Edina, Woodbury, Falcon Heights, Lake Elmo, Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Savage, Rosemount, Apple Valley, and St. Paul. She encouraged others to send their resolutions to her soon and she would forward a package to MN Department of Transportation Commissioner Sorrell.

### **RCM BUSINESS**

#### **Coming Up**

The next RCM meeting will be Monday, March 8, 11:30am-1:30pm, Dorsey & Whitney, 50 S. 6th St., Minneapolis, 15th floor-Minnesota Room.

## **ATTENDEES**

### **Mayors**

Sandy Martin, Shoreview; Terry Schneider, Minnetonka; Stan Harpstead, Arden Hills; Jim Hovland, Edina; Steve Lampi, Brooklyn Park; Doug Anderson, Dayton; Gene Winstead, Bloomington; Chris Coleman, Saint Paul; John Sweeney, Maple Plain; Ken Willcox, Wayzata, Dean Johnston, Lake Elmo, Nick Ruehl, Excelsior, Janet Williams, Savage.

### **Staff and Contractors**

Caren Dewar, executive director, ULI Minnesota; Cathy Bennett, Housing Initiative; Snezhana Bessonov, ULI Minnesota; Mary Kay Bailey, ULI Minnesota Communications.

### **Advisors and guests**

Andriana Abariotes, Twin Cities LISC; Erica Carter, Target; Todd Klingel, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce; Todd Olson, Metro Cities; Jeremy Hanson Willis, City of Minneapolis; Ann Mulholland, City of Saint Paul; John Shardlow, Bonestroo; Kevin Frazell, League of Minnesota Cities; Brian Boyle, Issue Media Group; Scott Strand, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy; Jon Commers, Donjek; Cecile Bedor, City of Saint Paul; Brian Paulson, Greater Twin Cities United Way.