

## ALERUS

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This renovation, celebrated Thursday, included the gutting of 12 meeting rooms, five ballrooms and the 20,000-square-foot prefunction space, she said. It also included new wallcoverings, flooring, furniture and equipment.

The six, main-floor restrooms also were completely gutted and renovated, Rosburg said.

The overall design aesthetic enhances the unified neutral environment. In the 26,000-square-foot grand ballroom, for example, the environment is dominated by a color palette of silver and shades of gray and adorned with modernistic circular lighting.

The project was designed by EAPC Architects Engineers and led by PCL/Community Contractors, the firm that served as the construction manager at risk, or CMAR.

Renovation work on the conference center, which occupies 160,000 square feet, began in early May, the day after UND's spring commencement. It was completed within 120 days, "on time and on budget," Rosburg said.

"They worked a lot of nights and weekends to get it done for us," she said, noting how grateful the center's staff is for the extraordinary effort.

The opening of the renovated center represents a pivotal moment



Community members gather Thursday, Sept. 4, 2025, at the Alerus Center to celebrate the grand opening of the conference center after a recent \$6.4 million renovation.

in the life of the facility, she and other speakers declared during the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

When it opened 2001, the the city-owned Alerus Center "became the gathering place for Grand Forks and the region," Rosburg told those assembled for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. "Today, we step into a new chapter. Every inch of this space has been not only refreshed but reimagined."

In her remarks, she recognized the design team at PCL/Community

Contractors and thanked the partners on the project and the city for its continuing support of the facility that hosts conferences, conventions, special events and trade shows.

In his remarks, Mayor Brandon Bochenski said, "We have the best conference-events center in the state."

The \$6.4 million investment in this project is meant "to keep it a top-notch facility," Bochenski said. "It's a great example of what can happen when you take a risk"

with a goal of enhancing the quality of life in this area.

In his remarks, Jarrod Thomas Spoor, chairman of the Alerus Center Commission, noted that competition among event centers in this region is stiff. "This is the biggest economic engine in the city," Spoor said, praising those who worked on the project. "They had a tight timeline, and they nailed it."

Ryan Richardson, area manager with PCL Construction, noted that the laborers worked

collaboratively, in a quality sense, and safely.

"There were no (injury) incidents," he said.

For Ken Vein, Grand Forks City Council member who serves as the city's representative on the Alerus Center Commission, this is an especially meaningful milestone. He was serving as city engineer when the convention and events center was first proposed more than 25 years ago.

"All I can say is 'wow,'" Vein told the crowd. "This is an amazing facility. It is one of the best in

North Dakota and maybe in the Upper Midwest."

It resulted from the combined efforts of the "OAC – owner-architect-contract – committee," he said. "It is the partnership of those three that makes this successful."

"I love the design," Vein continued, as he went on to laud the Alerus Center leadership which was "essential" to the positive outcome.

He also recognized the roughly 40 subcontractors who worked on the project, which "really aligns with the mission of the Alerus Center to host premiere entertainment and events that stimulate the quality of life in Grand Forks."

In 2024, Vein said, the Alerus Center boosted the local economy with "more than \$21 million in direct spend, more than \$32 million in economic impact, \$744,400 in operating profit, and 357 events held."

"I've had this love for the facility," he told the Herald after the ceremony, noting his past role as city engineer, working with then-Mayor Michael Polovitz to complete the original design and working with contractors, as well as the two elections to secure the sales tax.

Over the past 25 years, "it's been exciting to see all the changes," Vein said, "and the successes we've had."

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## NUCLEAR

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operate constantly, functioning as a consistent source of power, according to Kati Austgen, a public engagement specialist for the Nuclear Energy Institute. The Nuclear Energy Institute is a group focused on promoting the growth of the power source.

Finding ways to store nuclear waste, a highly radioactive byproduct of nuclear energy production, continues to be a major obstacle in getting projects started, she said,

noting most waste is stored on-site.

The United States has 94 reactors and 53 plant sites, contributing to nearly half of all clean electricity generation and 20% of overall generation, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute.

Rigorous regulation standards for nuclear facilities pose a challenge, experts told lawmakers Wednesday, as applications can take years to be reviewed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Austgen said designing the facilities to be safer is one way to get ahead of

the long regulatory process.

Nationally, most advanced facility designers are in the "pre-application" phase of obtaining the approval to build, according to Austgen. A handful of projects are under official review, and a few are in the construction phase or operational.

As such, some lawmakers were hesitant Wednesday about the status of the new technology and its ability to meet the growing power demand.

"Data centers and AI is barreling down on us," said Sen. Janne Myrdal, R-Edinburg. "So are we,

from the policy perspective, way behind the train here, trying to catch up?"

Austgen said nuclear facilities might still be able to meet the massive demand coming into the state if they can be "phased in" to the grid, as major power consumers are often built out incrementally.

She and other experts touted the nuclear energy industry and how it can improve life for people in areas where nuclear energy infrastructure is built, listing high-paying, long-term jobs; relatively low land use; and few emissions compared to other

energy sources as some of the major benefits.

House Bill 1025, which was approved during the 2025 legislative session alongside a bill calling for more nuclear research on the university level, created the committee and directed it to select a consultant to help carry out a study on advanced nuclear energy and its place in the state's energy ecosystem.

The committee on Wednesday heard proposals from nine entities interested in being consultants for the legislative study. Their cost estimates ranged between

\$100,000 and \$300,000.

The final contract award decision has not been made, but the committee recommended to Legislative Management that the state enter an agreement with Nucleon, an Alberta-based nuclear development company that focuses on Small Modular Reactor technology. Nucleon's proposal included a \$275,000 price tag.

The study will be completed within the next year.

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## RRVCA

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staff and ceased daily operations.

The board's vote to dissolve was made Wednesday after Matejcek presented three options: bankruptcy (Chapter 7 or Chapter 11) or dissolution. Under Chapter 7 bankruptcy, the organization would be liquidated, according to the United States Courts website. A trustee would take over any remaining assets, sell them and use the proceeds to repay RRVCA debts. Chapter 11 bankruptcy, on the other hand, allows for reorganization. RRVCA could propose a plan to remain in service and pay its debts over time.

The option the organization ultimately voted in favor of, dissolution, calls for a majority of board members to vote in its favor. With that taken care of, the board now needs to submit documentation with the Secretary of State's Office. During this process, the organization can't carry out any activities other than what is necessary to wrap things up, according to the U.S. Courts website.

North Dakota Century Code says nonprofits are required to file a notice of their intent to dissolve with Attorney General Drew Wrigley. The notice must include information such as a list of assets and their restrictions, debts and anticipated future expenses, including attorney fees. Assets cannot be transferred until 45 days after Wrigley receives the written notice, unless he gives

permission by waiving the waiting period. Wrigley could also call for an investigation into RRVCA's records.

Those are the next steps as far as state statutes; however, RRVCA also needs to make another decision, on which it has opted to consult an attorney before moving forward.

Maria Effertz, director of the state's Division of Community Services, sent a letter to the board Wednesday and also appeared at its meeting. The letter explained three options to consider regarding RRVCA's Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds.

CSBG is a federally funded block grant for entities that support services designed to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Community Services website. RRVCA's Form 990 from the fiscal year ending in June 2024 says the organization uses CSBG funds to pay case management staff who work with low-income clients.

The board can relinquish CSBG funds with the option to remain an active agency and board, dissolve the agency (and therefore also relinquish CSBG funds) or follow steps from a Quality Improvement Plan that requires the agency to provide financial statements and other required documentation collected by a third-party firm.

The deadline to file documentation is Sept. 22, according to the letter. Once the state reviews

this documentation, it would determine whether RRVCA can feasibly continue providing services.

Since the board voted to dissolve the organization, the second option — dissolving and relinquishing funding — seemed to board members like the appropriate avenue, but they expressed concern about making a decision before speaking with an attorney.

Effertz said a decision needs to be made soon, and the board also needs to figure out how to move forward with its two remaining employees and rent being paid with CSBG funds. She said her department will help wherever possible, and plans to do its best to continue providing services, with help from other nonprofit organizations.

There was also discussion about paying for a final audit of the organization, regardless of the CSBG decision. Andrea Olson, executive director for the Community Action Partnership of North Dakota (CAPND), said the lack of a "true financial picture" from a third party is causing other districts to hesitate picking up services and responsibilities from RRVCA.

Michelle Murray, another board member, said the board has no idea what the details of the organization's finances are. Members have been informed of a dollar value of their assets, but don't know how that number breaks down, nor which assets come from specific funds that can affect their ability to be resold.

Some services

— Supportive Services for Veteran Families and HOME-ARP — have already been reassigned to Community Action Region VI, based in Jamestown. The HOME-ARP (American Rescue Plan) initiative assists with securing housing by providing rental, financial and credit repair assistance; housing search and placement; and case management.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families also focuses on housing stability and its barriers. Services includes veteran, community and landlord outreach; individualized case management and temporary financial assistance; and connections to other services including health care and daily living, housing counseling, employment and vocation, income support, legal, personal financial planning and credit counseling.

Matejcek said Region VI will be required to continue providing these services to residents throughout RRVCA's coverage area, which includes Nelson, Grand Forks, Pembina and Walsh counties.

Also during the meeting, the board voted in favor of transferring its Michigan Food Pantry (including operations and any remaining funds) to Region VI. The food pantry is located at 222 State Ave. in Michigan, North Dakota. RRVCA's other food pantry, located in Grand Forks, may be sold or leased to another area nonprofit, according to board meeting discussion.



East Grand Forks Police K9 officer Tyler Hajicek with Raider greet people at Wednesday's Showcase event in downtown East Grand Forks Sept. 3, 2025.

## SHOWCASE

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The event is free of charge for the departments and the visitors, which is one of the appeals for those that see the gathering and decide to participate.

"I think it promotes a lot of stuff," said Jordis Turn of the Campbell Library. "We've seen a lot of community-based businesses, and I think it's really good to see them all close together, so it can open up people to the variety of what we have going on."



Theodore Sackett checks out a SWAT ballistic shield as Regional SWAT team member Nick Korynta assists Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2025, at the East Grand Forks Showcase.