

NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 22 No. 2

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

April-May 2010

NIACOG EMBARKS ON BUILDING EXPANSION

The NIACOG Board of Directors has authorized a 20' x 24' addition to the west end of the NIACOG office. The proposed addition will expand the transit dispatch center and create two additional offices. Eighty percent of the project costs will be paid by a \$140,800 State Transit Assistance Infrastructure Grant that was recently awarded to the agency from the Iowa Department of Transportation with the balance coming from agency reserves.

NIACOG has retained professional services from Waggoner & Wineinger Architects, Inc., the original architects on the NIACOG building. The project schedule anticipates a June 3, 2010 start date with final completion by mid-October, 2010.

The building expansion will also coincide with some technology improvements to place GPS locaters in all 85 transit vehicles and integrate to digital and data radio transmission. The results of the project will create much needed space, enhance radio communication and the overall efficiency of the system.

\$55,000 AVAILABLE FOR HERITAGE AREA PROJECTS

This year, \$55,000 will be available to Heritage Area applicants to help preserve and tell their agricultural heritage. Eligible Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area general grant projects must be located within the Heritage Area and provide a 1-1 match to the grant request.

Projects may include exhibit development, educational programs, interpretation, marketing, signage and event programming. Grant awards may range from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Eligible applicants are non-profit organizations, local or regional governments, or federally recognized Indian tribes located within the Heritage Area.

General grant applications are due postmarked April 30, 2010. The grant application and reporting requirements are available online under the Grant section at www.silosandsmokestacks.org.

To discuss your application in advance of submission, you may contact Candy Streed at 319-234-4567 or cstreed@silosandsmokestacks.org.

COMMUNITY SURVEYS RECEIVED

Thanks very much to all of you who returned your community surveys! We received 40 surveys back. We appreciate your taking the time to let us know about your community's projects. We will be contacting those of you who requested a call in the near future. The surveys will be used for two purposes: to help us better understand your community's needs so that we can serve you and to help us address EDA regulations that require us to report local activities and plans in our region.

The activities listed in your surveys cumulatively illustrate a strong positive future for North Iowa, a future that includes responsibly addressing community needs and progressively seeking growth and development in light of recent national economic woes. While a number of communities listed some unique projects and economic development priorities, many commonalities were also found.

Common projects included: housing construction/rehabilitation, trail development, pool upgrades, construction/rehabilitation of community owned buildings, plan development, Main Street improvements, municipal utility improvements, street/lighting upgrades, and updating City Codes.

Common economic development priorities included: business expansion, downtown improvements, job retention, industrial park expansion/development, and new business development.

Thanks again to all of you who returned the surveys!





2010 IDED HOUSING FUND AWARDS

NIACOG staff members are anxiously awaiting the announcement of the 2010 IDED Housing Fund Awards.

The anticipated announcement date is Wednesday, May 5. NIACOG assisted three communities in the eight-county region with grant applications.

IDED HOUSING FUND ACTIVITY

Since the environmental release of funds last fall, NIACOG staff members have been diligently working on the administration of 2009 Housing Fund awards. These include owner-occupied housing rehabilitation grants in Britt, Fertile, and Kensett. Bid invitations will be sent out soon in all of the communities for the first phase of their programs. The City of Britt intends to award six projects in its first phase, and the Cities of Britt and Kensett will each award three projects.

The City of St. Ansgar was also awarded 2009 Housing Fund grant for a homeownership assistance program and rehabilitation in support of homeownership. Activity in this program has been robust to date, and the City has committed funding to six home buyers. Several additional applications are currently being considered.

The fifth 2009 Housing Fund award being administered by NIACOG is the Common Ground Duplexes, LLC., project in Osage. This project involves the construction of ten new rental units. Construction is scheduled to begin this month.

2011 IDED HOUSING FUND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The IDED Housing Fund provides funding from the U.S. Department of HUD (either CDBG or Home Investment Partnership Funds), in order to expand and preserve the supply of decent and affordable housing for low and very low-income households in Iowa. Only local governments (cities, counties) are eligible to receive CDBG finds.

However, eligible Home Investment Partnership (HOME) recipients include for-profit entities and nonprofit organizations in addition to local governments. Eligible activities under the Housing Fund include owner-occupied housing rehabilitation, rental housing rehabilitation, new construction rental (including transitional housing), home ownership assistance (existing or new construction), and tenant-based rental assistance.

NIACOG has had several inquiries from across the region from interested communities regarding applying for funding assistance for 2011. If your community is interested in discussing future Housing Fund opportunities, please contact Steve Wendt at the NIACOG office.

NIACOG REVOLVING LOAN FUND (RLF)

Do you know of a company in your area that is growing, expanding, and adding employees? If so, they may be eligible for funding through the NIACOG RLF. This is a great gap financing tool for companies trying to finance an expansion plan. First round funding is limited to industrial expansion, and applicants must be from NIACOG's eight-county region. For more information, please contact the NIACOG office.

FIFTY-FOUR HOMES RECOMMENDED IN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

NIACOG recently submitted 54 single family units for construction through its development plan submittal to the Iowa Department of Economic Development for participation in the Single Family Unit Production – New Construction Program Round #2. The agency had an overwhelming response of applications for participation in this program.

The program funding was originally intended to encourage new, replacement housing to be built in communities that lost housing units as a result of the flood and subsequent property buyout activities. However, a second round of funding totaling \$30 million was provided to support new housing throughout the state, with \$2,496,573 allocated to the NIACOG region.

The program funding provides a 25% mortgage down payment or write-down to home buyers with incomes between 80-100% of the county median income. The purchase price of a housing unit is limited to \$150,000 for 80% median income buyers and \$180,000 for 100% median income buyers.

This means a \$150,000 house will be discounted \$37,500 and carry an \$112,500 mortgage; the \$180,000 house will be discounted \$45,000 and carry a \$135,000 mortgage for qualified buyers. Participation in the program requires builders to have the units under construction by December 31, 2011.

Four members of the NIACOG Executive Committee served as the scoring/selection committee for determining which units were to be included as part of the development plan. No one contractor was allowed more than six units per community and based on community size, no one community could be awarded more than nine units.

Points were assigned based upon several factors including: square footage, number of bedrooms & bathrooms, basement, garage, compliance with the State's Green Streets Criteria, lot control, and other sale ability features including selling price.

Sixteen contractors, constructing 54 homes were identified for participation in this program with a total estimated project value of \$8,621,031. Due to the response to this program, NIACOG has asked the state that any uncommitted funds be reallocated to the NIACOG region as 73 units went unfunded.

Region 2 Transit System hosting Transit Operator Defensive Driving Course

The Transit Operator Defensive Driving Four (DDC4) program is based on the National Safety Council Defensive Driving course. Participants will receive certification from the National Safety Council for completing the course.

The course is a fast-paced four-hour driving improvement program adapted to the transit drivers of Iowa, offering practical strategies to reduce accidents and reinforcing the good driving skills your employees already have. Most importantly, DDC shows the participants the consequences of the choices they make behind the wheel, and puts defensive driving in a personal context.

In Region 2, we will be hosting 17 sessions throughout the Region oriented specifically for transit drivers. We anticipate having over three hundred drivers attend this training.

The training is being offered through the Iowa Illinois Safety Council and the Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit.

Session schedule:

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Thursday, April 01, 2010	1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Charles City Public Library, Charles City IA
Friday, April 02, 2010	8:00 am - 12 noon	Charles City Public Library, Charles City IA
Friday, April 02, 2010	1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Charles City Public Library, Charles City IA
Thursday, April 08, 2010	1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Charles City Public Library, Charles City IA
Saturday, April 10, 2010	8:00 am - 12 noon	Access, Inc., Hampton IA
Monday, April 12, 2010	7:00 am - 11:00 am	NIACOG Training Room, Mason City
Monday, April 12, 2010	1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	NIACOG Training Room, Mason City
Tuesday, April 13, 2010	7:00 am - 11:00 am	NIACOG Training Room, Mason City
Tuesday, April 13, 2010	1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	NIACOG Training Room, Mason City
Wednesday, April 14, 2010	7:00 am - 11:00 am	NIACOG Training Room, Mason City
Wednesday, April 14, 2010	5:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Algona Public Library Room A, Algona IA
Thursday, April 15, 2010	10:00 am - 2:00 pm	Exceptional Opportunitites, Burt Iowa
Saturday, April 17, 2010	8:00 am - 12 noon	Senior Citizens Center, Osage
Thursday, April 29, 2010	8:00 am - 12 noon	MaJoPa, Krysils, Forest City IA
Thursday, April 29, 2010	5:00 pm - 9:00 pm	MaJoPa, Krysils, Forest City IA
Friday, April 30, 2010	8:00 am - 12 noon	MaJoPa, Krysils, Forest City IA
Friday, April 30, 2010	1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	MaJoPa, Krysils, Forest City IA



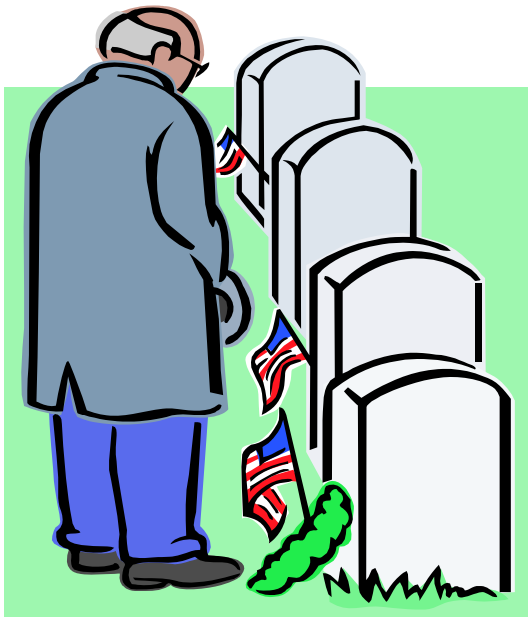
North Iowa Area Council of Governments
525 6th Street SW
Mason City, IA 50401-5058
641-423-0491 fax: 641-423-1637
www.niacog.org

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NIACOG CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- April 12 – NIACOG Executive Committee, 12pm NIACOG Office
- April 14– Haz-Mat meeting 1:30 pm NIACOG Office
- April 14 – Transportation Meeting 2:30 pm NIACOG Office
- May 10 – NIACOG Board Meeting 7:00 pm Garner Country Club
- May 21 – City Clerks Meeting 9:30 am NIACOG Office
- May 31 – Memorial Day Holiday – Office Closed



NIACOG STAFF 641-423-0491		
Joe Myhre	Executive Director	Ext. 11
Kevin Kramer	Transit Administrator	Ext. 17
Jodi Wyborny	Administrative Assistant	Ext. 10
Chris Diggins	Local Assistance Director	Ext. 15
Steve Wendt	Community Development Planner	Ext. 13
Dale Moe	Lead Mechanic	Ext. 24
Teresa Collins	Operations Manager	Ext. 22
Bonnie Lettow	Fiscal Officer	Ext. 12
Myrtle Nelson	Senior Planner	Ext. 16
Dan Schroeder	Regional Planner	Ext. 14
laurel Clement	Disaster Recovery Coordinator	Ext. 27
Dana Heimbuch	Community Development Planner	Ext. 28

Email – first letter of first name followed by last name @niacog.org (i.e. jmyhre@niacog.org)