
NIACOG

NEWS

Vol. 20 No. 1 NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS February, 2008

UPCOMING IOWA ARTS COUNCIL WORKSHOP



The Iowa Arts Council conducts grant writing workshops throughout Iowa for artists, educators, communities and organizations who are seeking funding support for arts-related activities that benefit Iowans. The next workshop will be held Monday, February 4th from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Ames Public Library, 515 Douglas Avenue, Ames, Iowa 50100.

At the workshop you will be able to hear directly from grant program managers for the Iowa Arts Council and the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs on what review panels expect to see in grant proposals. Learn about developing powerful grant proposals. Hear about the new E-Grant application system, new granting programs and changes to program guidelines.

Workshops are announced on the Iowa Arts Council Web site <http://www.iowaartscouncil.org/>; in their newsletter, [Iowa Arts News](#); and through direct mailings to targeted individuals and organizations.

NORTHWOOD'S COMMUNITY ATTRACTION AND TOURISM GRANT APPLICATION



Congratulations to the City of Northwood on the recent Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) funding award of \$78,564 for the Northwood RV Park and Shelter development in the Swensrud Park area.

The project was recently awarded over \$180,000 from the FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation 2007 project funds administered through Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division. The project also received a commitment of \$6,000 in cash and \$6,000 in-kind through the use of equipment and labor from the Worth County Board of Supervisors and the County Engineer. NIACOG staff assisted with the FEMA and CAT applications.

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR NEW ENTREPRENEURS



John Smith has always been a great worker, and he has a great idea about a new product that he would like to produce and sell. His business concept is solid and has great potential for growth. Unfortunately, he can't afford to quit his day job because he would lose his

health insurance.

Obviously, John Smith is a fictitious name, but this frequent scenario, observed by North Iowa economic development organizations, led them to develop a solution. They assembled a pool of funds to assist new entrepreneurs with health insurance needs through the financial assistance and efforts of the Iowa Department of Economic Development, the North Central Iowa Alliance (a regional marketing partnership), NIACOG, NIACC, and local governments. NIACOG administers the program, and the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center of NIACC screens the applicants.

The program is called "Helping Entrepreneurs Launch Program at North Central Iowa" (HELP @ NCI). To be eligible the program requires that:

- Principal headquarters and operations must be located in one of the participating counties: Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Mitchell, Winnebago, Worth or Butler.
- The potential company must be a 'for profit,' full time company (no hobbies).
- The company must begin operation within 90 days.

To receive assistance, those interested should contact the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center at (641) 422-4111 or (888) GO NIACC, ext. 4111 or their local economic developer. More information is also available on their websites at www.niacc.edu/pappajohn and www.northcentraliowa.net. Please share this information with potential entrepreneurs in your area.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The NIACOG Board of Directors, at their January 14, 2008, meeting, re-elected the current officers to another one-year term on the Executive Committee. Those members include Worth County Supervisor Dennis May - Chair, Floyd County Supervisor Arlin Enabnit - Vice-Chair, Winnebago

County Supervisor Gorden Anderson - Secretary, private sector representative Dale Reichardt - Treasurer, and the at-large minority representative, Ned Wicker.

Another significant agenda item included discussion about the frequency of board meetings. Although the board has a strong history of having quorums for meetings, many times we are at the absolute minimum number of board members present to make that quorum. The idea of going to a bi-monthly meeting has been kicked around over the years, but never acted upon. It was decided on the 14th of January to try the bi-monthly meeting schedule to see if it would improve attendance and make better use of the board's time. The Executive Committee will continue to meet on a monthly basis, but the full board will not meet again until March 10th at Bennigan's Grill in Clear Lake.

Staff recently mailed survey questionnaires to our cities and counties beginning the process of updating the region's 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy as part of our EDA work plan. A significant element of the 5-year plan involves developing a regional plan of action and identifying investment opportunities. In order to help us identify specific needs, it is essential that we receive input from our membership. If you have not already done so, please complete the survey that was mailed to your city or county and return to our office ASAP.

NIACOG MEMBER SURVEY

Early this year, NIACOG distributed survey questionnaires to the cities and counties in our region. The purpose of the survey is to learn of the specific needs of counties/cities so that we can respond to them better, update our records, and prepare a more inclusive 5-year regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Thank you to the cities and counties who have returned surveys already. Although the deadline for returning the surveys has passed, you are still encouraged to send one in if you haven't done so already. Please note that our fax number is 641-423-1637. (The last two numbers were transposed on the *city* survey form. The corrected city survey is available on our website.) Thanks for your efforts in completing the survey!

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL



Congratulation to the cities of Lake Mills, Mason City and Clear Lake on their recent funding awards from the Safe Routes to Schools program administered by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

The City of Mason City was awarded \$37,388 through the non-infrastructure category to complete a comprehensive bicycle/pedestrian study for six schools in the Mason City area. This study will aid the City in determining appropriate infrastructure projects to encourage walking and biking to school.

The City of Lake Mills was awarded \$131,613 in federal funds for a project that will cost \$306,870. The Lake Mills project is to complete an interior arterial sidewalk route to the school.

The City of Clear Lake was awarded \$135,000 in federal funds for a project that will cost \$163,000 to install a traffic signal at 4th Ave. South and South 12th Street intersection. This project will improve access and safety to the school in an area that sees very heavy traffic.

IOWA LAND USE PLANNING NOTEBOOK

Now available from Iowa State University Extension: Iowa Land Use Planning Notebook.

This notebook is a key resource for community planners, zoning administrators and local officials. The guide offers the following chapters:

Roles and Responsibilities in Planning and Zoning

- The Comprehensive Plan
- The Zoning Ordinance and Common Zoning Procedures
- Subdivision Regulations
- Open Meetings and Meeting Management
- Conflicts of Interest and Ethical Considerations
- Iowa Planning and Zoning Legislation
- Common Planning and Zoning Terminology

This notebook will benefit anyone involved in the land use planning and development process. People who benefit include: city, county and regional planners; city and county zoning administrators; elected and appointed officials; community development and economic development directors; city administrators and clerks; city engineers.

To order your copy of the Iowa Land Use Planning Notebook, call your local county extension office, call extension printing and publications at 515-294-5247 and request ISU Extension Publication PDO 003, order online at www.extension.iastate.edu/store and search for "PDO 003", or mail your order to 119 Printing and Publications Building, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011. Price of the Iowa Land Use Planning Notebook is \$40.00.

HOUSING ACTIVITY

The New Year brought in a flurry of activity to the NIACOG staff in regard to Housing Programs.

Late last year, the Cities of Buffalo Center, Rake, Stacyville, and Swea City all successfully completed their owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs. These programs were awarded Iowa Housing Fund grants in 2005 by the Iowa Department of Economic Development. NIACOG staff provided administrative assistance in all of these programs and last month completed the closeout process for all four communities. The Cities of Buffalo Center and Swea City each complete the rehabilitation of 9 homes, and the Cities of Rake and Stacyville each completed the rehabilitation of 7 homes. The City of Charles City also was a 2005 recipient of an Iowa Housing Fund grant which funded an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program. NIACOG staff assisted the City of Charles City in their program also, which resulted in the rehabilitation of 11 homes. The closeout work in Charles City was completed late last year. Congratulations are in order to these 5 NIACOG communities who all recently completed successful 2005 Iowa Housing Fund grant programs.

The NIACOG staff also continues to work on the administration of 2006 and 2007 Iowa Housing grants that were awarded in the region. The Cities of Algona, Burt, and Titonka were awarded 2006 grants which funded owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs. All three of these programs are progressing well. The City of Algona has a 10 unit performance target and the rehabilitation of 10 homes have been completed or are in process. The Cities of Burt and Titonka have 8 unit performance targets. Both of these communities are close to meeting their performance targets also, as the rehabilitation of 8 homes have been completed or are in process in both cities.

Recipients of 2007 Housing Fund awards in the NIACOG region were slowed in getting their programs underway last year, due to a delay by the U.S. Dept of HUD in getting its final allocation to IDED. NIACOG is assisting 5 recipients of 2007 awards in administering their programs, and all are certainly on their way to making up for lost time. The Cities of Sheffield, Thompson, and Whittemore were each awarded 2007 Housing Fund grants in order to fund the rehabilitation of 8 owner-occupied homes in their respective communities. Initial inspections are underway on the first four projects in each of these communities and the project specifications will be prepared soon. The City of Lake Mills received a 2007 Iowa Housing Fund grant to provide assistance to 5 first time home buyers (rehabilitation in support of home ownership and for down payment, closing costs, and acquisition cost/gap assistance). To date, four home buyers have closed on the purchase of their homes in Lake Mills. Rehabilitation work for two of these home buyers is underway, and the bid openings on the rehabilitation work for the remaining two are scheduled for later this month. Common Ground Duplexes, LLC., received a 2007 Iowa Housing Fund award for the construction of 10 new rental units in St Ansgar. Four units have been constructed and two more will be completed shortly. Seven applicants have been approved for tenancy at Common Ground Duplexes of which three are now occupying their units.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The Iowa Department of Economic Development is moving forward with efforts to increase “green building” in housing and other programs. The Center of Sustainable Communities, www.icosc.com, offers information of sustainable development.

Community sustainability is a growing concern for voters and homes that use less energy have less of an impact on the environment in which we all live. Much of our electricity, still produced by coal burning power plants, emits carbon and mercury that contribute to health hazards for everyone.

Governments on all levels are looking to cut expenses. One of the quickest ways to cut is by reducing energy consumption. Lowering thermostats in the winter and raising them in the summer can save thousands of dollars. Using compact fluorescent bulbs and turning off lights and equipment during off-hours is another easy way to help the budget. Saving energy is much easier than getting the public's permission to build another power plant.

Better built homes are an asset for the tax base. As energy prices keep rising, more and more voters are looking for homes that can save them money on a monthly basis.

A major source of landfill usage is from building waste. Implementing policies on building practices can greatly extend the life of the community's landfill. Expanding or establishing a new landfill is expensive and time-consuming as no voter wants the landfill in their backyard.

Better use of land through zoning. Bringing residential living back to the center of your city will lower traffic levels, raises the tax base, and brings a sense of community. Continuous sprawl requires more streets, electrical lines, sewer lines, and services spread out over an ever-expanding community landscape.

Better use of local resources for energy needs. Instead of relying on coal, nuclear and natural gas for our municipal electrical needs we should focus on renewable power e.g. wind and solar power. Northern Iowa has some of the best wind resources in the U.S., the region as a whole needs to capitalize on this resource.

Educating the public is the best way to get across the idea of sustainable development. An educated public is more willing to go along with the idea of sustainable development if you involve them from the very beginning. The public will ultimately pay the bill so they need to know what they will get out of a sustainable community.

Here is a Top Ten list from the leading newsletter on environmental design and construction:

1. Save Energy – Design and build energy-efficient buildings.
2. Recycle Buildings – Utilize existing buildings and infrastructure instead of developing open space.
3. Create Community – Design communities to reduce dependence on the automobile and to foster a sense of community.
4. Reduce Material Use – Optimize design to make use of smaller spaces and utilize materials efficiently.
5. Protect and Enhance the Site – Preserve or restore local ecosystems and biodiversity.
6. Select Low-Impact Materials – Specify low-environmental impact, resource-efficient materials.
7. Maximize Longevity – Design for durability and adaptability.
8. Save Water – Design buildings and landscapes that are water-efficient.
9. Make the Building Healthy – Provide a safe and comfortable indoor environment.
10. Minimize Construction & Demolition Waste – Reduce, return, reuse, and recycle job-site waste.



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NIACOG Calendar of Events

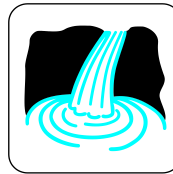
FEBRUARY

- 11- NIACOG Executive Committee Mtg
- 21- NIACOG CEDS Cmte. Mtg. 3:30 pm @ NIACOG
- 29- Top of Iowa Tourism Mtg., 11:30 am @ NIACOG

MARCH

- 10- NIACOG Board of Directors @ Bennigan's, Clear Lake 6:00 pm
- 21- City Clerks Association @ NIACOG, 9:30 am

HAVE A RIVER IN YOUR COUNTY OR COMMUNITY?



New national and state priorities have been directed to Water Trails. Water trails are linear routes on navigable waterways that are marked to the public through signage, maps, kiosks and appropriate access. Currently, in the State of Iowa, there are 750 miles of water trails under development through previous grants.

We encourage communities that have rivers running through their town to capitalize on this asset. The Iowa DNR has available water trail grants for the development of water trails. For the current cycle, DNR provided a total of \$50,000 statewide for the development of water trails. Iowa DNR water trail grants can form the basis of a larger project. Iowa DNR will score an application higher if the grantee has secured other funding sources.

NIACOG would like to encourage counties and communities to start thinking about putting together a water trail committee and get ready for the next funding opportunity next fall.

NIACOG STAFF

Joe Myhre	Executive Director
Kevin Kramer	Transit Administrator
Jodi Wyborny	Administrative Assistant
Chris Diggins	Local Assistance Director
Steve Wendt	Community Development Planner
Dale Moe	Lead Mechanic
Teresa Collins	Operations Manager
Bonnie Lettow	Fiscal Officer
Myrtle Nelson	Senior Planner
Dan Schroeder	Regional Planner