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# NIACOG

## NEWS

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Vol. 20 No. 2

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

April, 2008

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### IOWA HOUSING FUND AWARDS ANNOUNCED

In March, the Iowa Department of Economic Development announced the Iowa Housing Fund Awards for Program Year 2008. The Iowa Housing Fund provides funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in order to expand or retain the supply of decent and affordable housing for low-income Iowans. Eligible activities under the Iowa Housing Fund include owner-occupied housing rehabilitation, rental housing rehabilitation and rental new construction (including transitional housing), and tenant-based rental assistance.

IDED received 103 Housing Fund applications throughout the State of Iowa for Program Year 2008, and 46 were awarded funds. Although only about half of the applications were funded statewide, all of the applications submitted by NIACOG received funding. The total amount awarded by IDED for the 46 projects was \$17.5 million. Of this total, \$1.8 million (about 10% of the pool) was awarded to the six applicants assisted by NIACOG in the preparation and submission of their applications. These successful applicants from the NIACOG region were:

Greater Bancroft Co., L.C. - \$480,000 (Rehabilitation of two buildings into ten independent living units)

Charles City - \$322,500 (Rehabilitation of ten single family homes)

Forest City - \$277,800 (Rehabilitation of eight single family homes)

Powerhouse, LLC - \$353,100 (Rehabilitation of apartments on the two upper floors of a downtown Osage building)

Riceville - \$279,800 (Rehabilitation of eight single family homes)

Stacyville - \$130,300 (Homeownership assistance for four first time homebuyers to purchase and rehabilitate homes)

For other communities and interested applicants in the NIACOG region who are considering applying for Iowa Housing Fund assistance for Program Year 2008, please contact the NIACOG staff immediately. It's not too early to begin the grant application planning process.

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

Congratulations to the City of Floyd on the recent award of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for water system improvements. NIACOG staff prepared the application, that resulted in Floyd receiving an award of \$300,000. This award will be matched with over \$340,000 of local funds for a total estimated project cost of approximately \$640,000.

The City of Floyd has been very proactive in addressing their water issues. City leaders and residents have been very willing to pay higher rates to be assured an adequate, safe water supply and to address an issue that is seen as not going away.

After a phased improvement program was developed, the City of Floyd was successful in receiving CDBG funds for a water tower and main replacement project in 2004. Water pressure and volume have greatly improved as a result of the City investment at that time. Continued main replacement as well as treatment system improvements were also identified in the phased plan. The City's existing treatment system is very old, has far outlived its useful life and is in dire need of replacement. This award will allow for the treatment project to move forward and make Floyd that much closer to completion of their improvement plan.

### CONGRATULATIONS MASON CITY

Congratulations Mason City and North Iowa for the recent announcement of a \$9 million Vision Iowa grant for downtown Mason City. The cornerstone of Mason City's \$34 million project is the renovation and rehabilitation of the Park Inn Hotel, the only remaining hotel in the world designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Plans call for the hotel to re-open on September 10, 2010, the building's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Also included in the city's plans are renovation and rehabilitation of the City National Bank (also designed by Wright), renovation and addition to the Mason City Public Library, construction of the East Park Performing Arts Pavilion, construction of recreation trails and greenway in the Willow Creek corridor, construction of a Historic Architecture Interpretive Center adjacent to the Wright-designed Stockman House Museum, streetscape development and construction of a parking structure to service the Park Inn Hotel and downtown area.

We commend Mason City for their efforts and look forward to the renaissance of River City!

## SMALL TOWN SIGN REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

In an effort to improve safety, the Iowa DOT initiated a program to replace deficient and obsolete signs and posts in cities with populations of 5,000 or less. Since May 2007, over 60 applicants have participated in the program. Close to 1500 signs and 1400 posts have been replaced. The vast majority of these are "STOP" and "YIELD" signs. Plenty of money remains to fund the program. The program will provide up to \$5,000 of signs and signposts per applying community on a first come first serve basis.

The Iowa DOT is encouraging all eligible cities to apply and take advantage of this program. The Iowa DOT reports that applying is simple and easy:

- City Officials determine which signs and posts are needed. Communities are encouraged to do a night-time review of their signs to identify those that look good during the day, but have poor night time reflectivity.
- The city must pass a resolution to participate in the program.
- The city resolution and the Request Form for signs and posts are submitted to the Iowa DOT.
- The Iowa DOT will ship the signs and posts, free of charge, to the nearest maintenance garage where the city can acquire all materials for installation.
- The city installs all signs and posts according to standards defined in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).



All materials are free of charge to the city; including bolts, washers, and nuts needed to complete the installation. This year the Iowa DOT is also offering the option of using Telespar posts, anchor bases, and hardware. You will find the application materials available on the web at: <http://www.dot.state.ia.us/traffic/smalltownsign.htm>

If you have questions, contact Chris Diggins at the NIACOG office or Jeff Stratton, Program Coordinator, Office of Traffic & Safety, Iowa, Department of Transportation at [jeff.stratton@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:jeff.stratton@dot.iowa.gov) or by phone at (515) 239-1154.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES



Kudos to NIACOG staff for their hard work on several Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) on behalf of our member governments. North Iowa communities assisted by NIACOG resulted in more than \$2M in CDBG funds being awarded in March. In addition, NIACOG was just informed of a \$51,000 grant award from the Department of Commerce

for continued planning and development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) for the region.

One of the key issues that will be addressed in the CEDs is workforce and the population decline that is occurring throughout the eight-county NIACOG region. With newly released population estimates, the NIACOG region averaged a 4.5% population decline. Kossuth County had the greatest decline at 9.1%, while Mitchell and Franklin Counties tied for the least amount of loss at 1.3%. Cerro Gordo experienced a 5.2% change; Floyd 3.5%; Hancock 6%; Winnebago 6.5%; and, Worth 2.8%.

Iowa as a whole is experiencing population growth at a rate of 2.1% since the 2000 census. However, the growth is almost all occurring in counties located in or near metropolitan areas. Twenty-three counties gained population between 2000 and 2007. Of these, only three are not in or adjacent to metropolitan areas.

Between 2000 and 2007, Iowa gained 36,217 residents from other countries, but lost 50,248 residents to other states. Although, Iowa is in its longest period of sustained population growth since 1900 according to the Beth Henning, Coordinator of the State Data Center, north Iowa is, unfortunately, bucking the trend. And in fact, as a region, north Iowa has not seen a population increase since the 1960 census.

It's time we reverse this trend and make north Iowa the poster child for the economic prosperity and population growth. North Iowa has a lot to offer and there are a lot of great things happening in our region, we just need to let the secret out!

## HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

NIACOG staff is assisting four cities in Mitchell County in updating their Housing Needs Assessments. These cities include Osage, Riceville, St Ansgar, and Stacyville. The current Housing Needs Assessments in all four of these cities were completed in 2001. Housing Needs Assessments are considered to be outdated after 5 years. Thus, these cities desire to update their Housing Needs Assessments in order to address new housing priorities that have emerged since 2001. This will allow them to better project their future housing needs and in turn redirect their present strategies or adopt new strategies to meet these needs.

## THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Census Bureau will no longer collect data from the public on their long-form census questionnaire. The questionnaire which was sent out to one of every six addresses in the nation will not occur during the decennial censuses. The Census Bureau will still collect population data on the short-form from every household as stated in the Constitution, but the socio-economic data will now be collected on the American Community Survey (ACS).

The ACS is the cornerstone of the government's effort to keep pace with the nation's ever-increasing demands for up-to-date and relevant data about population and housing characteristics. The new survey provides the pertinent demographic, housing and socio-economic information about America's communities each year. This information was only available once a decade in the past. The ACS will be used to administer federal and state programs to distribute more than \$300 billion a year.

Currently, the ACS publishes single year data for all areas with populations of 65,000 or more. Areas with populations less than 65,000 will require the use of multiyear averages to reach an appropriate sample size for data publication. In 2008 the Census Bureau will release information on areas with populations greater than 20,000. They will release five-year estimates for all areas in 2010. These averages will be updated annually, with data published for the largest areas in one, three and five year formats. Those areas meeting the three year threshold will be released in both three and five year formats.

The ACS expanded to its full sample in 2005 and since then a sample of three million residential addresses throughout the US and Puerto Rico began receiving the survey in the mail every month. 2.5 percent or one in forty households in the United States will represent their community by responding to the survey. Recipients that do not respond will get a reminder mailing and a phone call. A subsample of addresses that do not respond will after the mailing and phone call will be visited by a member of the Census Bureau for a personal interview. Group quarters, correctional facilities, military barracks, nursing homes, college dormitories, etc. will also be included in the ACS survey. For more information on this and other exciting Census data, go to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

## SMALL CITIES WORKSHOP

The Iowa League of Cities in partnership with the Iowa Association of Regional Councils will be hosting several small city workshops across the State for small city elected officials.

The closest workshop for the NIACOG region is Goldfield scheduled for May 8, 2008. The topics for this years workshops are Open Meetings and Small City Budgeting. To register, go to the League of Cities website at [www.iowaleague.org](http://www.iowaleague.org).

## TWO UPCOMING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

### REAP/Historical Resource Development Program

The Historical Resource Development Program (HRDP) provides grants to preserve, conserve, interpret and educate the public about the historical resources of the State of Iowa.

- Funded through the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act (REAP).
- State agency programs that REAP supports are County Conservation, DNR Open Space, Soil and Water Enhancement, City Parks and Open Space, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State land Management and Roadside Vegetation. All programs are directly aimed at preserving and enhancing Iowa's natural and cultural resources.
- People from all over the state benefit from this program.
- HRDP receives 5% of REAP funds each year.
- Grant applications should be postmarked by May 15th or delivered to the grants office by 4:30 pm on May 15th of each year

### Historic Site Preservation Grant Program-HSPG

The Historic Site Preservation Grant provides funds for the restoration, preservation and development of historical sites. For the purposes of this program, "historical site" means a property that is listed on, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places, or a facility in which Iowa's history or the heritage of Iowa's people is interpreted. Historical sites shall relate to the human occupation of Iowa, but may be of prehistoric or historic age. All grants shall be for "vertical infrastructure" which is defined as "land acquisition for construction, major rehabilitation of buildings, all appurtenant structures, utilities and site developments." The HSPG Program has been in existence since 1998. The amount of FY08 money available for HSPG Grants was \$784,000. (A total of \$800,000 was appropriated, but the department is allowed to use up to 2% for technical assistance and administrative costs). The appropriation for Fiscal Year 2009 will be determined this spring, when the Legislature begins its budgeting work. The FY09 funds will become available to the State Historical Society on July 1, 2008. Applications for the FY09 HSPG money will be due on September 15, 2008 and contracts will begin February 1, 2009.

For more information Contact: Kristen Vander Mollen, Grants Manager, State Historical Society of Iowa, Public Trust Division, 600 Locust Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0290, 515-281-4228, email: [shsi.grants@iowa.gov](mailto:shsi.grants@iowa.gov)

Applications and instructions are available at [http://www.iowahistory.org/grants/shsi\\_grants/hspg/hspg.html](http://www.iowahistory.org/grants/shsi_grants/hspg/hspg.html)

NIACOG would like to encourage our members, if they have a project in mind that might fit these two programs to give us a call and we will help you through the process. These two programs are great for preserving our past for future generations.



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## **NIACOG Calendar of Events**

### **APRIL**

- 9- Haz Mat Mtg. @ NIACOG office, 1:30 pm
- 14- NIACOG Exec. Cmte. Mtg. @ NIACOG office, 12:00 pm
- 22- CEDS Cmte. Mtg. @ NIACOG office, 3:30 pm

### **MAY**

- 2- Top of Iowa Tourism Mtg. @ NIACOG office, 11:30 am
- 12- NIACOG Board of Directors Mtg. @ Ridgestone Golf Club, Sheffield, IA 6:00 pm
- 26- Memorial Day holiday, NIACOG office closed

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Regional Planning Affiliation 2 (RPA 2) has recently accepted Surface Transportation Planning (STP) Enhancement funding applications for the FY09-FY12 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Enhancement funds are used for projects that as the name implies, enhance the transportation system. Typically these funds have been used for trail projects, but have also been used for pedestrian/beautification projects as well as street lighting. Enhancement projects must be sponsored by a local government entity, that will make a twenty-year commitment to maintain the project. Applicants must also provide at least, the necessary 20% minimum match for the project. Projects must be constructed to federal specification. Applications are submitted to a committee made up of representatives of the region. Funding recommendations are made by this local committee and submitted to the IDOT. Approval of the project from RPA 2 is conditional upon approval from the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

Applications submitted include: Franklin County Conservation for \$160,000 to support the acquisition of the Coulter to Allison abandoned rail line; Mitchell County Conservation for \$75,000 to support the continued development of the Wapsi Great Western Trail; City of Charles City for \$100,00 for a recreational trail development to serve as an extension of the existing trail system and allow for possible future expansion; City of Manly for \$94,600 for the restoration and beautification of a Railroad Park.

### **NIACOG STAFF**

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