

Director and Senior Advisor's Bi-Monthly Report

November 18, 2019

Maquoketa Hometown Pride: The Maquoketa Hometown Pride committee did not meet in October but did meet the first week of November. (Subcommittees meet weekly, biweekly, or as needed).

- Spring Clean-up subcommittee did not meet in October. A meeting will be scheduled soon to begin discussions on the Spring 2020 Clean-Up.
- [Summer Concert Series](#) and [Maqtoberfest](#) – The season ended with Maqtoberfest on October 12. The subcommittee met to debrief and plan for next year. If anyone has ideas for bands/performers for next season, please send them to Sagers.
- [Dog Park](#) –Capital campaign continues. To date, the amount of donations and commitments are approximately \$20,000.
- [Skate Park](#)- Students in Craig Burken's class at the high school have been working on refurbishing some equipment with plans of manufacturing others.
- Property Beautification – Still plan to create projects that complement City's efforts regarding property maintenance.
- Youth Engagement – Many student groups assisted with activities at Maqtoberfest. Sagers and Maquoketa Chamber Director Wendy McCartt visited Jennifer Buckwalter's Intro to Business class and talked to them about what the Chamber, JCEA, and Hometown Pride are involved with. The visit was spurred by a request submitted by the Chamber to the [Clearinghouse for Work Based Learning](#) that Mrs. Buckwalter's class proposed to work on.

Housing – Discussion continues.

Bellevue Hometown Pride: The Bellevue Hometown Pride group continues to meet monthly with many of their working groups meeting in between those times. They have been working on:

Housing
Friends of Bellevue State Park
Potential Great Places application
Felderman Park Plan
Welcoming Program

Conferences/Trainings: Heiar and Hockenberry attended the League of Cities Conference held in Dubuque. At the League of Cities award night where Representative and JCEA Board member McKean was being honored as Legislator of the Year, Heiar was inducted into the Iowa League of Cities Hall of Fame. This is due recognition for both Heiar's professional and personal public service. He's done an incredible job setting the course for JCEA and has been an incredible mentor to me. It's great to see his peers across the state recognize all the great work he's done and continues to do in service to his communities.

Heiar attended the Future Ready Summit in Manchester and Sagers attended a Future Ready Summit in Davenport.

With the City of Bellevue, we hosted the Lieutenant Governor and Empower Rural Iowa subcommittee on community vision and leadership in Bellevue, which included a downtown tour and walkthrough of the progress at the Button Factory project.

REDI Grant: The USDA announced that our regional economic development organization, Prosperity Eastern Iowa (PEI), received a Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) grant. PEI is staffed by Holly McPherson from ECIA, who deserves the credit for securing this very competitive nationwide grant. This grant creates a partnership with PEI and the National Association of Counties (NACo) to investigate best practices on improving workforce housing opportunities and quality of life in our region.

As chair of PEI, I am working with Holly and NACo through this grant period to develop strategies to tackle these issues. We have been a part of a number of team conference calls with our NACo partners. The PEI Board is working to develop the action plans for the four goals: Workforce Housing, Access to quality affordable Childcare, Enhancing Workforce Systems, and Enhancing Quality of Life Amenities.

As things develop, we hope to have progress to share as we work through this year long project.

Maquoketa CDBG Façade Program: Bids for this project were opened on September 12th. Although nine companies took out plans for the project, only two bids were submitted. The bids were submitted from Tricon and Cornerstone Commercial Contractors. The architects estimate was \$706,000. The low bid submitted by Tricon was \$714,000. The bid submitted by Cornerstone was \$816,648.

The bid from Tricon was accepted at the October 7th council meeting. We have had two building owners opt out after the bids came in, and as such there is an availability for another downtown property to join the grant program. Construction will begin and be completed in 2020.

Regional Career Training Center: We met with the three superintendents of Jackson County schools in early September to discuss their needs and expectations related to career training opportunities. They have met with Clinton Community College president Karen Vickers on separate occasions to discuss this topic.

The school systems have started to further develop a student exchange program. A few Bellevue students along with Easton Valley students are participating in the welding program offered in Maquoketa. Easton valley is offering computer science programs, and Bellevue is working on an electrical program with hopes of it beginning in the spring.

The Jackson County superintendents hope to build on these collaborative efforts in the coming semesters, and we continue to investigate ways to build further collaboration between the schools and Clinton Community College to better align training to our Jackson County Business and Industry needs and the jobs of tomorrow.

Value Up: Last April, Bellevue Schools sponsored speakers from the Value Up program. The speakers, one who was a Columbine survivor, worked with various student groups during the day and then held a presentation for the community in the evening. The Value Up program is designed to help everyone, particularly students, understand the value each of us offers to our schools/communities. Dave attended the evening presentation, and can attest to it being an extremely powerful program. Following this event, a group of Bellevue students have formed a student group designed to promote human dignity among their peers.

Value Up desires to be more than just a motivational day for schools. Their goal is to have a lasting impact. To do this, they offer the assembly program, student leadership training, staff training, and a community event to engage parents. These events usually have a news media draw and draw a larger evening turnout according to most principals. (There

were about 200 in Bellevue.) Your packet includes a substantial amount of additional support information about Value Up.

Jim Ott, a retired school counselor, is trying to bring the Value Up presenters back to Jackson County (and Northeast Goose Lake). This time, the goal would be to have them work in each school district for a day. This could be tremendously impactful for the students of Jackson County. For this to happen, we are working with Mr. Ott and Bellevue School superintendent Tom Meyer in submitting some grant applications to cover a portion of the cost. Ott has negotiated a discounted rate (from \$35,000 to \$20,000) to have them in the county for a week. Of the \$20,000, a portion (\$5000 of the total) will be coming directly from the school districts. We will also need corporate sponsors. This is where we are asking for your help. We will spend some time at our meeting discussing how we might raise the additional \$15,000 to make this happen for our students, faculty, and parents in Jackson County.

The group was happy to hear they have been awarded a Community Foundation of Jackson County grant of \$2,100 to help fund this initiative. They still need to find about \$13,000 to make this happen.

Catalyst Grant: The application period for the Community Catalyst Building Remediation grant that helped fund the Button Factory project in Bellevue and the 110 S. Main project in Maquoketa is coming back around this year. We are working to identify possible projects within our Jackson County communities. In Preston we have two interested property owners and are helping gather information so the City can determine which project has the best chance of being funded. We have identified a possible project in Maquoketa that would make a compelling application. 563 Design has prepared proposal with costs estimates for two properties in Preston, one in Maquoketa, and one in Sabula, interested in applying for this grant program. We hope to have Cities decide on applicants in the coming month to allow enough time to put together the pre-applications.

The State has changed the period for applications a bit allowing for more time. The pre-application is due at the end of January 31, 2020 and the full application will be due in April 17, 2020.

Manufacturing Month: Local manufacturers including, Blue – 9 Pet Products, Dynamic Tube, PMW, Plastics Unlimited, HUSCO International, A and P Graphics & Signs, and Maquoketa Co./Morrison Bros. participated in this year's events. They hosted students, teachers, parents, job seekers and other local community members at open houses, plant tours and offered presentations designed to showcase modern manufacturing technology and careers.

Over 200 students from the Jackson County high schools – Bellevue, Easton Valley, Maquoketa, and Marquette Catholic - participated in plant tours during the month of October. This year, 50+ teachers from Bellevue Community School District spent of their professional development day October 28th touring Husco, Collins Aerospace, and Plastics Unlimited. The events received positive responses from teachers, students, and industry. As part of the industries' discussion with the students/teachers, they talked about:

- Importance of showing up on time
- Being able to pass a drug test
- Commitment to working
- Willingness to learn
- The multiple job opportunities at your company including floor workers but how that also includes computer programming, etc. Also, how businesses have marketing, HR specialists, accountants/business managers, managers/leaders, etc. and training needed.
- Personal career paths (if applicable or willing to share)

Other events during Manufacturing Month included open houses at the Advanced Manufacturing Center at Clinton Community College – Maquoketa Center and at Plastics Unlimited in Preston highlighting their recent expansion. Blackhawk College held a manufacturing event during the day for 8th graders. The Quad Cities STEM Festival was held at the Waterfront Convention Center, Bettendorf and was open afternoon and evening hours for parents and children to attend.

Other Industrial/Commercial Prospects:

- Met with potential prospects in Bellevue on downtown retail projects and building acquisition to discuss downtown incentive programs. He expressed his appreciating that City has programs like these to leverage private investment.
- Met with prospects in Maquoketa, Sabula and Preston on downtown rehab projects.
- We continue to work with 563 Maq on the 110 S. Main St. (Maquoketa) property rehab, and securing commercial tenants on the first floor commercial space. We've been in contact with 3 different potential tenants. Previously the City of Maquoketa was awarded a Catalyst Grant for this project, which they matched with a TIF grant. 563 Maq were awarded the Iowa Economic Development Authority's Redevelopment Tax Credit. The asbestos remediation and roof reconstruction are nearly complete. There are some obstacles related to the electric service required for one of the possible commercial tenants. Our office, 563 Maq and MMEU have met to discuss possible solutions and it seems that a workable solution has been agreed upon.
- Working with a childcare provider on succession/transition opportunity. We believe that childcare opportunities are critical components in our rural communities, and ensuring the continuation of this business is integral in the sustainability of our smaller communities. With the help of Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque Community Development Coordinator, Jason Neises, we've made connections with First Children's Finance and another childcare center to discuss alternative organization structures that might offer great resource potential. We continue to work on making this a successful transition.
- We continue to work with an existing commercial business who is considering a major business expansion and relocation within Maquoketa to the Mitchell Maskrey Mill building. The City of Maquoketa's Consultant grant has aided in the cost estimating process and we can now announce that the State has awarded \$300k in Redevelopment Tax Credits for this project. There are still some financing gaps, but this is a big step forward on what could be a very impactful project.
- Working with an industry on a development agreement to accommodate an expansion of both physical space and employment. The expansion will total more than \$500,000 in investment and add up to 15 additional employees. This will likely be a multi-phased expansion. Hope to announce publicly soon.
- We replied to a prospect inquiry interested in the Maquoketa Highway 61 Industrial Park and prepared a non-binding letter of intent for the City of Maquoketa's Council to consider as indication of their interest. We have since then had additional contact with the prospect's representatives and are still in contention for the development opportunity.

- We continue to work with Water Street Partners LP on the Old Button Factory. Previously the City of Bellevue was awarded a Catalyst Grant for this project, which they matched with a TIF rebate. This project will be addressing a truly blighted building on Bellevue’s river front on the edge of their downtown. The exterior rehabilitation is nearly fully completed and the interior white-boxing is nearly complete. The Water Street Landing including the parking lot and shoreline stabilization is ongoing and will likely be completed in summer of 2020.

CDBG Upper Story Housing Pilot Program: In January 2019, the City Council approved an application to the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) for a \$500,000 grant to create four apartments on the upper level of the Maquoketa Art Experience building (124 South Main Street). The property owner committed \$450,000 of local match and the City committed \$40,000 toward this project so long as it included an elevator to provide access to the upper story.

On March 15, 2019, the City received notice of award of this grant and a contract from the IEDA which was approved by the City. Since that time, the City Council has approved a contract with ECIA to help administer this federal grant.

Over the past few months, our office has worked with the City’s bond counsel, city staff, and legal counsel for the Osterhaus Trust on a Development Agreement for this pilot program. At the September 16th Council meeting, the Council approved a Development Agreement with Osterhaus Family Trust.

The architect has begun work on final design and project specifications.

Pocket Neighborhood: Our office continues to work with the many partners involved with this proposed project. We have attended Maquoketa City Council, Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility, and Board of Supervisor meetings. We have also met with and talked to many local elected officials to make sure they see the value that this project can offer to Maquoketa and to Jackson County. Based on 2010 census data, 55% of Maquoketa residents are at or below 80% of the median income level. Because of that reality, it is important to investigate these innovative approaches to creating workforce housing targeted to the current population.

We received a message from a local employer expressing his strong support of efforts like this. They said, “This is a smart idea and even without a housing shortage should be looked at in most communities.” They also expressed a willingness to partner on more efforts like this to connect their workforce with quality, affordable housing as a workforce retention and attraction strategy.

Four of the 10 homes have committed buyers, and there are other pending applications.

The groundbreaking happened on September 27th. Infrastructure work is well underway and basements are set to be dug out for a number of the lots, weather permitting, this week.

Downtown Incentive Programs: Our office assisted Bellevue, Maquoketa and Preston on establishment and updates to a suite of downtown incentive programs for property and business improvements. Maquoketa’s programs were updated to include another program. Much of the success surrounding their previous years of programs led to Preston and Bellevue to consider similar grants. It also helped spur successful applications for the State’s CDBG Façade Program and Upper Story pilot program.

The programs available in each community are below:

- Acquisition Assistance (Bellevue, Maquoketa, Preston)

- Signage (Bellevue, Maquoketa, Preston)
- Commercial Interior (Bellevue, Maquoketa, Preston)
- Consultant Assistance (Bellevue, Maquoketa, Preston)
- Façade Improvements (Bellevue, Maquoketa, Preston)
- Upper Story Residential (Bellevue, Maquoketa, Preston)
- Conversion – First Floor Residential to Commercial (Bellevue, Preston)

These programs are modeled after similar programs in Dubuque and Manchester. The first two years of programs in Maquoketa were very successful yielding \$430,000 in private investment by granting \$100,000 through the various programs. In the first few months Bellevue has approved grant applications for 8 properties totaling over \$60,000 of grant funding. Maquoketa has approved grant applications for 6 properties totaling over \$40,000. Preston has approved one application.

School of the Wild: The Iowa Parks Foundation has referred Jay Gorsh, Director of the School of the Wild and Wildlife Camps at State Parks at the University of Iowa, to the Grant Wood Loop. The School of the Wild is a weeklong day camp designed for grade school students. This would be a true summer camp-like adventure. Each of the five days spent at this program has a specific goal of learning that is aligned with curriculum requirements. The school experience serves to help students become more aware of and gain greater appreciation for the natural world.

This program is a required element in the Iowa City school district and has been operating for many years. The program's goal is to expand this program across the State, and our regional collaborative seemed like a great opportunity to aid in this effort.

The pilot program will require continued collaboration and partnerships with our county conservation and state park staff. We will also need to tap into our partnership with all the local school systems. A meeting between Jackson, Jones and Dubuque county naturalist and the School of the Wild team was held to coordinate efforts, and next a meeting between conservation, School of the Wild, and individual schools districts will be held in each county.

We hope to continue this discussion in hopes of establishing this program in Jackson County and the greater Grant Wood Loop region by the Fall of 2020

Coworking/Business Incubation: The concept of a building with flexible office and/or business space has been had in Bellevue, Maquoketa and Preston at different times. Preston has established an innovative approach to assisting business start-ups with their Old City Clerk's office retail space. But other than one instance, there has been little progress to serve this emerging need for resources for start-ups and/or space available for those working from home or telecommuting.

Our office has been in conversation with Creative Adventure Labs in Dubuque, a space that helps serve as a start-up business resource center, to learn about how their organization works and about the concept of rural satellites of their services in Jackson County. We hope this rural urban connection might help serve our county's needs. We invited Iowa Economic Develop Authority Director, Debi Durham, to tour Creative Adventure Labs in August when she was in Dubuque for the Downtown Conference. Creative Adventure Labs and our office pitched this collaborative concept to Debi Durham, Jim Engle (Iowa Downtown Resource Center), and Liesl Seabert (Rural Community Revitalization). It was well received, and we have been asked to prepare a formal proposal for IEDA to consider.

There are still some barriers to this project moving forward related to an agreement between Dupaco and Creative Adventure Labs. Our Board will discuss this in more detail at our board meeting.

Housing: This continues to be a priority issue in Bellevue, Maquoketa, and Preston.

Preston acquired land on contract a couple years ago for residential development. Our office is working with IIW, the City Council, Northland Securities, and the Housing Task Force to look at options for development of this property located near the Catholic Church. IIW is taking another look at the drainage issues in the area before anything else moves forward.

Bellevue has entered into a development agreement, that our office helped prepare, with BETA. They closed on the 50-acre acquisition on April 10. We will work together in developing a request for proposals to prepare a master plan for this property and are investigating funding options. The Housing taskforce with the assistance of our office, is also investigating a couple of other housing initiatives including an urban revitalization program, down payment assistance programs and housing rehabilitation programs. Our office will also be working with the City in an annexation process for this recently acquired land. Additionally, we've begun a partnership with the University of Iowa's engineering department on a preliminary site development plan for the Fall 2019 Semester. We met with City and community representatives on October 22nd to review a preliminary site plan. Feedback and edits have been provided by this group and a revised proposal will be presented with their final report. There will be a community presentation of their final report in December 9th 4:30pm at Bellevue City Hall.

In Maquoketa, we are working on multiple fronts to address housing needs. Much time has been dedicated to working with City staff and ECIA in finalizing the details for the Pocket Neighborhood project. Debi Durham, IEDA & IFA Director, let us know in a recent visit that she continues to promote this project as she travels throughout Iowa.

We have also spent considerable time on the State's Upper Story Pilot Project application to create 4 apartments above the Maquoketa Art Experience. This is exciting for the downtown and is a way to address the quality rental need.

We are working with the purchasers of the recently sold Tubbs Estate parcels on housing development plans, as well as the City of Maquoketa to develop a plan for their parcel across the street. Aligning utility extensions will be critical to the future development of those two sites.

Other meetings/events that we attended:

- ECIA Council
- JCRHC hospital reuse meeting and discussion
- Meeting of Jackson County Financial Institutions
- Bellevue Downtown Property/Business incentive review committee
- Maquoketa Downtown Property/Business incentive review committee (2)
- Maquoketa Leadership Team
- Hometown Pride Coaches Conference Call (2)
- Prosperity Eastern Iowa
- Preston City Council
- Bellevue City Council
- Maquoketa City Council (3)
- Interviews with Sycamore Media, Telegraph Herald, Iowa Public Radio, KMAQ
- Bellevue Housing Taskforce (2)
- University of Iowa student team project meeting
- ECIA Clerks Meeting
- EDA Disaster Recovery Funds conference call– Maquoketa

- Maquoketa Layers Committee
- Jackson County Board of Supervisor meeting
- Maquoketa Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- Bellevue Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- RPA 8 Tech & Policy Board
- Platt St. progress meeting (3)
- Bellevue Great Places Committee
- Anamosa/Monticello Hometown Pride Committee meetings (2)
- Business Growth
- Maquoketa Comprehensive Plan
- Met w/ Representative McKean on Childcare
- Hockenberry testified to the Federal Rural Agriculture, Trade and Entrepreneurship subcommittee in Cedar Rapids
- Attended ribbon cutting for Heartland East apartments (Maquoketa)
- Maquoketa CDBG Façade project property owner's meeting
- Met w/ Tim Cottle, of CCC, about better partnership
- Community and Financial Institution tours of Creative Adventure Lab's entrepreneur space
- GWMRR Leadership meeting
- Met w/ new Maquoketa Council members Holms and Woodward