

Director and Senior Advisor's Bi-Monthly Report

January 17, 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 Days** – Select subcommittee members met and scheduled Friday, May 15 for the bulk item pick up and Saturday, May 16 for the city-wide clean up activities. A brief meeting of the subcommittee is scheduled for January 20.
- **Summer Concert Series and Maqtoberfest** – Subcommittee members met recently and discussed entertainment and dates for the Summer Concert Series. They also discussed setting Saturday, September 19 as Maqtoberfest.
- **Dog Park** –Capital campaign continues. Donations and commitments are now approximately \$30,000. Maquoketa High school Student Senate will be hosting a fundraiser between the doubleheader basketball games with Mt. Vernon January 21.
- **Skate Park**- Students in Craig Burken's class at the high school have been working on refurbishing some equipment with plans of manufacturing others.
- **Hometown Pride READS!** – Maquoketa Hometown Pride and Maquoketa Public Library have partnered to develop Hometown Pride READS, a free community-focused book club whose main topic is just that – building community. Each month, beginning January 2020, the Hometown Pride READS Book Club will read a different community-themed book. The first five books have been chosen. Additional titles will be added throughout the year.
- **Green Space/Cmty Gathering Space** – a subcommittee led by high school senior, Chloe Swanson, as met twice to discuss the topic of a community gathering space.
- **Grove Street Playground Project** – Through grants and city support, a much-needed playground will be built at the Grove Street Ball Fields
- **US Census Complete Count Committee** – Members of the HTP committee volunteered to be on this committee. The purpose of the committee is to help spread the word to the community about the importance of completing the US census and help identify underrepresented sectors of the community.
- **Youth Engagement** – Sagers and Maquoketa Chamber Director Wendy McCartt, have been asked to work with instructor Jennifer Buckwalter's marketing class to help identify marketing ideas for HS club activities.
- **Housing** – No updates.

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 – Housing Taskforce continues to work on concepts related to the Stamp property based on the U of Iowa students work. Also working with City on annexation

Friends of Bellevue State Park – Working w/ attorney on organizing documents

Potential Great Places application – No update

Felderman Park Plan – Working w/ school to engage students on input and get youth representatives on committee

Welcoming Program – Working w/ Bellevue High School student on survey to engage new residents and learn how best to align their interest's w/ community activities and initiatives

Conferences/Trainings: Stephanie attended a training related to the Pictometry mapping software. Dave attended the Rural County Transportation Program grant put on by Marla Quinn at ECIA on the funding available to Jackson County communities to assist with transportation projects.

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. We have three separate prospects who are interested in entering the program as part of a possible property acquisition.

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.

In a recent email from Mr. Ott, the group is still working on the funding, but has pushed back the actual timeline for this program to coincide with the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. This will give them more time to get financial commitments and to get all the school districts to be totally on board.

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. Preston Council has approved completing a pre-application for the Preston Times building project. We will be asking Maquoketa Council for approval to complete the pre-application for the Mitchell Maskrey Mill project. We have identified a possible project in Sabula, and in communication with the Mayor of Sabula it appears they are preparing a pre-application for that building, but we have not confirmed that.

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.

2020 Jackson County Career & Hiring Fair: Plans are underway for the third annual Jackson County Career & Hiring Fair. This year's event is will be held April 1 again at Pearson Hall, Jackson County Fairgrounds. 1:00 - 2:30 PM will be open to area school students; 2:30 - 6:00 PM will be open to the public. There will be an informational luncheon for vendors at noon. There was an early-bird discount of \$25 off your booth fee if registered by January 17. After January 17, booth fees will be \$75 in-county and \$100 for out-of-county (nonprofit organizations are free). Registration for vendors is open at www.JacksonCoHiring.com. Sponsorship opportunities are also available. The Fair has grown each year with over 40 businesses and organizations represented last year. Among these, EICC programs were well represented with plans for more this year. The 2020 Jackson County Career & Hiring Fair is a partnership of Jackson County Economic Alliance, IowaWORKS, Maquoketa Area Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Iowa Community Colleges, and Prosperity Eastern Iowa.

Other Industrial/Commercial Prospects:

- Had multiple phone calls with potential prospects in Bellevue and Maquoketa on downtown projects and building acquisitions to discuss downtown incentive programs. They each expressed their appreciation that the cities have programs like these to leverage private investment.
- 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. There is an agreement in process with an anchor tenant. 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, and the final piece of financing are State and Federal Historic Tax Credits. The asbestos remediation and roof reconstruction are complete. While there had been some obstacles related to the electric service, our office, 563 Maq and MMEU have determined an agreeable solution. The full reconstruction of the rear masonry is complete. The two upper story units have been fully framed out and mechanicals and drywalling will be

completed in next week. The front façade reconfiguring to the original historic design is the next big step in the project. The goal is that all but the finishes will be complete by this summer.

- We continue to work 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, and we will be asking the City of Maquoketa to apply for a Community Catalyst Building Remediation Grant from the Iowa Economic Development Authority on behalf of this project to help close those gaps.
- Happy to announce the \$2 million Maquoketa Company expansion in Maquoketa. The expansion is underway and will include a 14,000 sq/ft addition to be completed by the end of 2020. There will be an immediate addition of 3 employees with potential for adding more. The expansion includes a new shipping and receiving area and warehouse to accommodate increased production demands. The Maquoketa Company's expansion and investment in this community underscores the importance of our existing business and industry in the area and ensuring they're doing well.
- 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 (IDEA) 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. During this process, it became obvious that some of the City’s rental ordinances needed to be clarified and updated. The architect has worked with Mallory Smith, the Property Maintenance Inspector, the Fire Chief and the Chief of Police to make recommendation on these changes. The public safety committee met and agreed with the proposed changes. The City Council has approved the 1st reading of the ordinance to incorporate these changes into the City of Maquoketa’s code.

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. Due to timelines on some of the funding sources, the homes in this development need to be completed by the end of 2020. ECIA put out an RFP to find a realty firm to help market these homes. Nemmers Realty provided the only response to the RFP. Heather Hafner and Leslie Caven will be the realtors focused on helping market these properties.

The groundbreaking happened on September 27th. Infrastructure work is well underway with water, wastewater, and storm sewer stubbed for all units. The first unit is taking shape quickly with the framing almost completed.

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. Bellevue has approved grant applications for 11 properties totaling over \$95,000 of grant funding. Maquoketa has approved grant applications for 6 properties totaling approximately \$40,000. Preston has approved two applications totaling approximately \$50,000.

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 will continue this discussion in hopes of establishing this program in Jackson County and the greater Grant Wood Loop region by the Fall of 2020. In December, Dave had a couple of meetings with Dubuque County Conservation and the Dubuque Community School District to discuss how this could work. He also attended a meeting with Jackson County Conservation and representatives of all the Jackson County school districts. There is definitely strong interest in both counties. They will be working on budgets and continue to look for potential grants to make this happen.

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.

At our last Board meeting we discussed some barriers to this project related to an agreement between Dupaco and Creative Adventure Labs. We have attached the letter that was sent to Creative Adventure Lab expressing the concerns we heard from the Board. In turn, Creative Adventure Lab has responded with a new proposal, which is a very different model than originally proposed (attached).

In the new proposal:

- Dupaco is no longer a local investor and will not have a presence in each community
- Community or local organization would contract with Creative Adventure Lab (CAL) – they will license new sites

- Allows more flexibility, but this model also places more of the cost and responsibility on individual communities/sites
- License fee is annual cost of \$20,000
- Community responsible for set up/starting costs - \$30,000
- And annual estimate operating costs of an estimated \$17,000
- Local communities responsible for developing funding of the sites
 - Local partners (public/private)
 - Grant applications
 - CAL will facilitate programs and pay local site \$500 each time that they do paid innovation services at the site from other organizations

Dave and I shared this proposal with local leaders in both Bellevue and Maquoketa. These discussions raised many follow up questions. On January 15, we met with CAL to ask these questions and discuss potential adjustments to the revised proposal. The doors are open to further discussion.

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 working with the City to better solve stormwater challenges and assist in securing funding for these improvements from different public sources.

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 worked with the University of Iowa’s engineering department on a preliminary site development and stormwater plan. The students final plan was presented at Bellevue City Hall on December 9th. From here the Housing Taskforce and our office is working with the City to secure additional funding for the utility extension and phase 1 on site infrastructure for the development from other public sources.

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 (3)
- Bellevue Downtown Property/Business incentive review committee

- Maquoketa Leadership Team
- Hometown Pride Coaches Conference Call (2)
- Prosperity Eastern Iowa
- Preston Downtown Incentive review committee
- Preston City Council
- Bellevue City Council
- Maquoketa City Council (3)
- Interviews with Sycamore Media, Telegraph Herald, WQAD
- Bellevue Housing Taskforce (2)
- University of Iowa student team project presentation
- Maquoketa Layers Committee
- Jackson County Board of Supervisor meeting
- Preston Growth & Development meeting
- Maquoketa Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- Bellevue Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- RPA 8 Tech & Policy Board
- Platt St. progress meeting (3)
- Anamosa/Monticello Hometown Pride Committee meetings (2)
- Business Growth (2)
- Maquoketa Comprehensive Plan
- Iowa Parks Foundation Annual Meeting
- Maquoketa CDBG Façade project property owner's meeting
- Met w/ Tim Cottle, of CCC, about better partnership
- Met w/ Creative Adventure Lab on entrepreneur spaces
- JCRHC Reuse meeting (3)
- Conference call w/ University of Iowa on continued collaboration on projects
- Attended Business Leaders roundtable hosted by State Senator Koelker
- Me w/ Des Moines Area Community Foundation to present on Grant Wood Loop
- Met w/ Maq Chamber Director on coordination (3)
- Housing Trust Fund meeting
- Community Foundation of Jackson County Appreciation Event
- Jackson County Mayor's Meeting (2)
- Met w/ potential housing developer in Bellevue
- Met about school resue in Preston
- Met w/ new Bellevue Council member Tom Roth
- Regional Workforce Development Board meeting
- Workforce Solution Breakfast
- University of Iowa Stamp Property development presentation to Bellevue community
- Preston Stormwater discussion w/ IIW
- REDI Project conference call