

# Director and Senior Advisor's Bi-Monthly Report

January 9, 2019

Maquoketa Hometown Pride: The Maquoketa Hometown Pride group continues to meet monthly with many of their subcommittees working in between those times. From their first project, Maquoketa Clean Up Day, the committee has moved on to several additional projects. They have subcommittees working on:

- Spring Clean-Up
- Summer Concert Series
- Downtown Exchange
- Youth Engagement
- Property Beautification
- Dog Park
- Skate Park Improvements
- Maqtoberfest/Taste of Jackson County
- Wayfinding

Stephanie has been an incredibly helpful partner in making their Hometown Pride group move things forward. The committee is also in the process of establishing a Housing taskforce which will include realtors, contractors, City representatives, and our office. Dave will be presenting an update to the Maquoketa City Council at their January 21 Council of the Whole meeting.

Bellevue Hometown Pride: This is another group of passionate volunteers and community leaders. One of the things that makes this group special is their effort to involve high school students. They have 3 active student committee members. Toby Gieseman from Bellevue High School serves as the Vice-Chair, and even recently put his name in for consideration to fill a Bellevue City Council vacancy. We believe this leadership development is one of the many benefits of this Hometown Pride committee.

Their focus has been on the following:

- Cole Park
- School Facilities
- Downtown Storefronts
- Housing
- Marketing-Branding
- Youth Engagement
- Friends of Bellevue State Park

A housing subcommittee, led by Nick Hueneke and Lisa Schiffer (Fidelity Bank), meets monthly with city representatives, realtors, contractors, developers, bankers, and our office to discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with local housing needs. This group helped evaluate short and long term housing options in the area, and brought the recommendation of acquiring the Stamp Farm for future

residential development to Bellevue City Council. A public hearing on including this acquisition in the Urban Renewal Amendment will be held on February 4<sup>th</sup>.

Conferences/Trainings: Dave attended the quarterly Greater Dubuque Development Corporation's "Regional Partners" meeting held in Dubuque to discuss regional best practices and trends.

We all attended the Nuisance Abatement Symposium held in Maquoketa to learn about how Columbus Junction and Muscatine have approach derelict properties and overall property maintenance.

Dave attended the Rural Engagement Summit at Western Illinois University in Moline. The event was summit focused on the role higher education can play in supporting sustainable rural communities.

Economic Development Administration hosted a REDS Summit focused on: Workplace Retention/Workplace Culture, Best Practices for training and education programs, and Workforce Housing and projects related to workforce housing. Tom Meyer, Bellevue CSD Superintendent, presented on the innovative Bellevue BIG program. Clair Kapraun presented on their efforts to develop Sedgwick CMS' workplace culture.

Regional Career Training Center: In late October we were made aware by an economic development colleague that a discussion had begun around a regional Career Training Center for the Eastern Iowa Community College region. We were able to connect with the Jackson County Superintendents to join them at this meeting. The vision described at the meeting was that this center would provide high quality CTE programming to all Jackson/Clinton County students and provide the skills needed in the workforce. This model has been successfully deployed in other community college regions. Heiar visited Kirkwood Community College's CTE Center in Monticello and was impressed by the career focused programming. There seem to be some barriers in our region due to travel time depending on where the CTE Center is located. We will continue to work with our Superintendents and employers to ensure their needs for students and workforce are being heard.

#### Other Industrial/Commercial Prospects:

- We continue to work with two Maquoketa industries that need additional space for potential local expansions. Both of these industries have advanced manufacturing facilities that required a skilled workforce.
- We continue to work with a developer on the 110 S. Main St. (Maquoketa) property rehab, and securing a commercial tenant on the first floor commercial space. This would go a long way to ensuring that project can move forward. Previously the City of Maquoketa was awarded a Catalyst Grant for this project, which they matched with a TIF grant. The developers were awarded the Iowa Economic Development Authority's Redevelopment Tax Credit. This is a critical step forward in the financing package. They also are working through the Part 2 process for a Historic Tax Credit award. These tax credits programs are integral to making this project work.

- We met with a developer prospect and Curt Coleman to discuss possible redevelopment plans for the old JCRHC site. This is very preliminary, but with the size of the potential project and the long transition process for the hospital to a new site, starting these conversations early is important.
- Working with three separate start-ups related to beginning or expanding operations substantially in Jackson County.
- 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.

CDBG Upper Story Housing Pilot Program: We are assisting the Maquoketa Art Experience and the City of Maquoketa as they evaluate a pilot program focused on rehabilitating vacant upper story spaces in downtowns. The Maquoketa Art Experience sees this opportunity as a way to help fully utilize the building, and provide a more sustainable future for their organization. As one of the largest single parcels in the downtown, this property's sustainability is very important to the downtown's viability. Additionally, the ability to leverage both the State and private investment – potentially amounting to \$1 million – for a \$30k to \$50k investment by the City of Maquoketa is a great return on investment. A program that can leverage this level private investment, while helping to address the quality rental housing shortage, is certainly worthy of investigation.

The City of Maquoketa has a public hearing on this application on Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>. If the City decides to move forward with the application, it should be noted that this will be a very competitive grant. The State will only award two \$500k grants statewide.

BUILD Grant Award: Congratulations to Maquoketa on the award of a \$3.8 million BUILD Grant to reconstruct Platt Street from Highway 61 to Highway 62. This funding, along with approximately \$3.5 million from the IDOT, will be part of this \$10 million project.

Our office assisted ECIA, the Maquoketa Chamber, IIW, and City staff in gathering information that was included in this application. Knowing that these awards are based on the information in the application, along with political influence from Federal legislators, we also reached out to Senators Grassley and Ernst and then Congressman Blum, to ask for their assistance. In the end only 3 BUILD Grants would be awarded in Iowa. The other two grants went to Des Moines and Sioux City.

Our office continues to work with City staff and ECIA to put everything in place to implement this federal grant. Dave attended a meeting with District 6 IDOT staff in Cedar Rapids and participated in a BUILD Grant webinar put on by the Federal Highway Administration.

Great Places Grant Award: In 2015 Maquoketa was awarded a \$400,000 Great Places Grant to support many of the downtown and recreational improvements identified in the Vision 2020 Plan, Maquoketa Downtown Plan, and Grant Wood Loop Master Plan. Our office administered that grant on behalf of the

City of Maquoketa. The City was eligible for additional funding for any related projects, but until this year had been unsuccessful in securing additional funding. Our office in partnership with ECIA, the City of Maquoketa, Friends of Goodenow Field, and Jackson County Conservation were successful in securing \$218,200 of funding to support additional trail extensions. The two components of the projects are phase II of the Hurstville Trail to the north and a trail connection next to Goodenow Field on the southend of Maquoketa.

Maquoketa Opportunity Zone: The Opportunity Zone program was created as part of the most recent Federal tax reform legislation. The mission is to revitalize economically distressed communities using private investments. To stimulate private participation in the Opportunity Zone program, taxpayers who invest in Qualified Opportunity Zones are eligible to benefit from capital gains tax incentives available exclusively through the program. Opportunity Zones are census tracts generally composed of economically distressed communities that qualify for the Opportunity Zone program. The State of Iowa sent notification out to eligible communities earlier in 2018 to consider applying for this designation. We assisted Maquoketa in applying as they had the only qualifying census tracts in Jackson County. One of their census tracts was given this designation (east half of Maquoketa).

There will be an informational meeting hosted by our partners Greater Dubuque Development Corporation in Dubuque on January 24<sup>th</sup>. We have invited some of our financial institution and financial advisor partners to attend with us.

Maquoketa Comprehensive Plan: The City of Maquoketa has spent much of 2018 going through a comprehensive planning update with the help of ECIA. The comprehensive plan committee is made up of several Maquoketa residents, including City Council members, business officials and religious leaders. Hockenberry serves as part of the committee established to assist in this process. The committee's goal is to update this document to reflect Maquoketa's goals and opportunities for the future. Committee members helped develop and distribute a community survey that yielded important feedback. Additionally, the Committee recently conducted a public input session on elements of the plan, allowing residents to express their views on what issues city officials should explore. ECIA will use information gathered to prepare a plan that will be presented to Maquoketa City Council members in spring 2019.

Parks to People: The Grant Wood Loop board and our office finished over 70 projects totaling more than \$52 million in investment throughout the region by the end of 2018. \$10.3 million of these projects were in Jackson County with almost \$800k in Parks to People grant dollars directly benefiting those projects. Additionally, \$2.6 million in private funds were raised in Jackson County to support these projects. This effort has garnered much media attention helping to raise our area's profile, but most importantly these efforts have been reinforced by the University of Iowa students' report on strategies to attract and retain young families in Jackson County. Outdoor recreation and the arts were identified as Jackson County's competitive advantages to other adjacent rural counties.

The Board is still working with the Iowa Parks Foundation on a collaborative effort on "Phase II". While the first phase helped leverage public and private investment to enhance our recreation opportunities in the region, phase two should help drive usage in these areas and activity in the adjacent communities. One idea rising to prominence is enhancing [www.GWLoop.com](http://www.GWLoop.com) and developing and implementing an

aggressive marketing plan. The Grant Wood Loop board has approved this concept, and asked the Marketing Committee to propose this project to the Iowa Public Foundation for their approval of a funding partnership.

Again, the Hometown Pride effort is a by-product of Parks to People, and has allowed this regional effort to continue with a slightly different focus. Rather than just a recreation emphasis, the regional Hometown Pride communities focus on community development, youth engagement, leadership capacity, housing, in addition to expanding recreational opportunities.

Because of the pilot projects success and in an effort to formalize continued collaboration with the Grant Wood Loop, the Iowa Parks Foundation invited Hockenberry to join their board.

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.

This project took another major step forward this fall when it was awarded a grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank for \$20k a home, for a total of \$200k.

Urban Renewal Amendments: Our office is working with both Bellevue and Maquoketa on amendments to their Urban Renewal Plans. In both cases Dave has helped city staff gather information from the County Auditor's office, and provided input with his years of expertise on strategies for the use of TIF funds to support eligible activities. Some of the focuses related to Bellevue surround future housing development, downtown incentive programs, and current redevelopment projects like the Button Factory. In Maquoketa there are many potential projects on the horizon, but generally the plan draft is focused on current redevelopment projects, housing development, housing rehabilitation, and major travel corridor and infrastructure improvements. Preston will soon be looking at changes to their urban renewal plan too. We are still waiting for further direction from City Council on their goals.

Manufacturing Month: We expanded this 2018's manufacturing awareness events from a week to an entire month to allow for more flexibility, and to ensure we are able to engage all the Jackson County high schools in student tours. This year we also met first with the Superintendents to begin the planning process, as in the past we have not been able to have each school participate in tours. Happy to say that all 4 schools participated this year. 200+ students attended manufacturer tours. Two businesses participating, including 2 new businesses. We did receive some feedback from teacher's that they'd like

to investigate other ways to engage manufacturers other than just the annual tours. We are having ongoing conversations related to those opportunities.

US Bank: We continue to investigate possible redevelopment or reuse options for this building. It seems that US Bank has completed their real estate assessment, and has retained the services of Cushman & Wakefield to represent their downtown Maquoketa location. The asking price is \$600,000. It has been our intent, in partnership with the City of Maquoketa and ECIA, to investigate possible redevelopment options. With so much progress in downtown Maquoketa, we do not want this property to becoming a blighting influence. We've been contacted by a private for profit party who has an interest in the building, but does not have a use for the entire space. With ECIA's help we are considering some public use focused on business start-up and/or business incubation support, and have done some fact finding on other similar operations.

Other meetings/events that we attended:

- Maquoketa Betterment Corporation
- Hometown Pride presentation to Kiwanis
- CTEAC Meeting
- New Maquoketa Councilmember Horan
- Met with Iowa Public Foundation President in Dubuque
- Met with Jackson County Farm Bureau
- ECIA Council
- Bellevue Downtown Property/Business incentive subcommittee meeting
- Maquoketa Leadership Team (2)
- Hometown Pride Coaches Conference Call (2)
- Prosperity Eastern Iowa
- Parks to People Board Meeting & Projects Committee
- Preston City Council (2)
- Business Growth
- Bellevue City Council (4)
- Maquoketa City Council (5)
- Interviews with Sycamore Media, Telegraph Herald, and KCRG
- Bellevue Housing Taskforce (3)
- Maquoketa Layers Committee (3)
- Preston Housing Taskforce
- Land Bank discussion conference call
- Senator Ernst visit
- Former Congressman Blum visit
- ECIA City Clerk's Annual Meeting
- Jackson County Board of Supervisor meetings (4)
- Bellevue School Board meeting
- Hometown Pride Coaches quarterly meeting in Des Moines
- Meeting with Jackson County School Superintendents (2)

- Maquoketa Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- Career and Hiring Fair meeting (3)
- Workforce Solutions Breakfast in Dubuque
- Meeting with State Representative McKean
- PDI Legislative Forum in Dubuque
- Regional Workforce Investment Board meeting in Davenport
- Jackson County Manufacturer's meeting
- RPA 8 Annual Meeting with IDOT
- Iowa Economic Development Authority Catalyst Grant visit