

# Director and Senior Advisor's Bi-Monthly Report

March 13, 2020

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

- **Spring Clean-up Days** – Scheduled for Friday, May 15 for the bulk item pick up and Saturday, May 16 for the city-wide clean-up activities. Subcommittee now meets bi-monthly.
- **Summer Concert Series and Maqtoberfest** – Summer concerts will be the third Friday of June, July, and August. Maqtoberfest will be Saturday, September 19. Finalizing list of performers. Former sponsors have been contacted. Prospective and former Maqtoberfest vendors were sent save the dates. Subcommittee meets every two weeks.
- **Dog Park** –Capital campaign continues. Completed DRA grant application.
- **Skate Park**- Students in Craig Burken's welding class at the high school still working on equipment.
- **Hometown Pride READS!** – This community -themed book club has met twice. February's book "Hillbilly Elegy" sparked more conversation than time allowed, generating an additional discussion March 13 with guest Julie Furne from the Jackson County Prevention Collation and Area Substance Abuse Council. Sagers will lead the March 27 book discussion.
- **Community Gathering Space** – This subcommittee led by high school senior, Chloe Swanson, has been updated to *Community Gathering Space* Subcommittee and is exploring options for a space in the city.
- **Grove Street Playground Project** – Will be built this spring.
- **US Census Complete Count Committee** – No updates.
- **Youth Engagement** – No updates.
- **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. Have proposal for engineering services from IIW. Working on information needed to apply for USDA grant.

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

**Great Places application** – State assigned a mentor to assist with this application. Working on a draft and plan to submit to the City Council in April for approval.

**Felderman Park Plan** – Working w/ school to engage students on input and get youth representatives on committee. Plan to meet within the next month.

**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

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. We hope to add Entrepreneur Supports as a goal, and ECIA is bringing in a specialist to run a workshop on supporting entrepreneurship.

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 12<sup>th</sup>. 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 two additional properties who are interested in entering the program around April.

We are working with property owners on the east side of Main Street for phase II of the façade program. Some property owners previously expressed interest, and three more have also requested to be a part of phase II.

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 have identified three projects within our Jackson County communities. Preston with help from our office completed a pre-application for the Preston Times building project, and were invited to submit a full application. Maquoketa with help from our office completed the pre-application for the Mitchell Maskrey Mill project and were invited to submit a full application. Sabula submitted a pre-application for the Ackerman grovery building and were invited to submit a full application.

The full application will be due in April 17, 2020. Each community is working with ECIA to complete the full applications.

2020 Jackson County Career & Hiring Fair: April 1 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. Booth fees are \$75 in-county and \$100 for out-of-county (nonprofit organizations are free). Employers can register at [www.JacksonCoHiring.com](http://www.JacksonCoHiring.com). We are currently down on the number of registered employers so please spread the word. 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.

Please stand by for more information on this event, as the COVID-19 situation may require postponement.

#### 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. A lease has been signed with the Maquoketa Brewing Company for half of the commercial space. 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 Moore Family Farms 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. The City of Maquoketa has agreed 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 has addressed 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. 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 adopted 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 27<sup>th</sup>. Infrastructure work is well underway with water, wastewater, and storm sewer stubbed for all units. The first unit is taking shape quickly. Façade is nearing completion and all interior walls are in place, along with layout of all electrical switches and outlet boxes, with rough-in electrical started. Tubs and showers have been set and the rough-in of plumbing will begin soon.

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.

Jackson County Conservation is applying for grants to assist. Dubuque County is actually writing their own curriculum for a program that runs the entire grade school.

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.

As things progressed there were some barriers to this project that developed. Previously we sent a letter to Creative Adventure Lab expressing the concerns we heard from the Board related to one of the requirements of a 24 accessible Dupaco ITM. In turn, Creative Adventure Lab has responded with a new proposal, which is a very different model than originally proposed.

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.

Since then CAL was awarded a grant to support the creation of rural innovation labs, and Maquoketa and Bellevue have the opportunity to sign on as partners to receive \$30,000 over two year for each community's center. We've had follow up meetings with stakeholders in Bellevue and Maquoketa and will be presenting this opportunity to both Maquoketa and Bellevue councils as they must decide on whether to submit a letter of intent or not by the end of April.

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 9<sup>th</sup>. 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. The City of Bellevue has hired IIW engineers to prepare plans/cost estimate for a USDA application.

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.

At a public input session on March 11, the message from the 40-50 participants was clear. The primary reuse of this site should be residential and independent senior housing was specifically identified.

Investor Appreciation Event: Our office held our fifth Annual Investor & Partner Appreciation Event on Tuesday, February 18, 2020. The reception was hosted by the Maquoketa Art Experience and sponsored by River Ridge Brewing, Moore Family Farms, Blue-9 Pet Products, Tri-M BBQ, and Simply Parker's. There were over 65 attendees including Board members, investors, and other partnering organizations.

Thank you to all the board members who were able to attend and help make the night a success. I've attached the Annual Report that was presented at the event. I just want to reiterate that the success of our office depends on private/public partnerships and I can't thank our investors and you as our board members enough for their investment in the future of our county. Economic Development is all about collaboration and partnerships. We have made great strides in the past year and I am excited for the future.

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 City Council
- Bellevue City Council
- Maquoketa City Council (2)
- Interviews with Sycamore Media, Telegraph Herald, KMAQ
- Bellevue Housing Taskforce (2)
- Maquoketa Layers Committee
- Jackson County Board of Supervisor meeting (2)
- 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)
- Met w/ Tim Cottle, of CCC
- Phone call w/ Creative Adventure Lab on entrepreneur spaces
- JCRHC Reuse meeting (3)
- Met w/ Maq Chamber Director on coordination (3)
- Housing Trust Fund meeting
- Jackson County Mayor's Meeting
- Met w/ potential housing developer in Bellevue
- Regional Workforce Development Board meeting

- Preston Stormwater discussion w/ IIW
- REDI Project conference call (2)
- Meeting w/ new CCC president, Brian Kelly