

# Director and Senior Advisor's Bi-Monthly Report

May 17, 2019

Maquoketa Hometown Pride: The Maquoketa Hometown Pride group continues to meet monthly with many of their subcommittees working in between those times. The group facilitated a second successful Spring Clean Up Day. The committee is also working on several additional projects. Besides Spring Clean-Up, they have subcommittees working on:

- Summer Concert Series and Maqtoberfest
- Dog Park
- Skate Park Improvements
- Property Beautification
- Youth Engagement
- Housing

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:

- School Facilities
- Downtown Incentives
- Housing
- Friends of Bellevue State Park
- Spring Clean-Up
- Great Places application

Additionally, the committee is helping to investigate efforts to establish more downtown crosswalks, compost site options, informational kiosk, school collaboration, and promotion of Bellevue BIG initiatives.

Conferences/Trainings: Stephanie, Dave and I attended the Rural Summit in Grinnell April 10-12. The conference focused on a number of rural issues. To highlight a few: rural housing development, leadership development, broadband expansion, retail recruitment, childcare solutions, telling your community's story. Additionally, I was asked to present on the Parks to People efforts our office coordinated and how we have utilized the Hometown Pride Program to continue that effort.

Dave and I attended the annual PDI Spring Conference and the SMART Conference. Some topics discussed there were: foreign investment strategy, business succession, site/building promotion, workforce talent attraction, local government financing, and quality of place efforts.

I attended an International Economic Development Council training in Lansing, Michigan on Real Estate Development and Reuse. This training is part of the required coursework to receive my Certified Economic Development (CECD) accreditation.

Career & Hiring Fair: JCEA partnered with EICC, IowaWorks, PEI, and the Maquoketa Chamber to sponsor the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Jackson County Career & Hiring Fair held at the Jackson County Fairgrounds March 20. Over 40 businesses and organizations from Jackson County and the surrounding area participated. This year, sponsorships were available to help offset the costs and vendors were charged a booth fee (\$25 in Jackson County; \$50 Outside Jackson County). PEI was able to help with the marketing costs. Online registrations worked very well.

Survey of attendees (schools and businesses) was overall positive. 90.0% of the businesses said this should be an annual event. The main concern for the past two years was attracting job seekers to the public portion. Feedback from the Army was this was the best career fair they have attended. MSB expressed positive feedback, especially for the high school portion. The City of Maquoketa received three viable candidates for the property maintenance position.

Maquoketa CDBG Façade Grant: Our office continues to assist the City of Maquoketa, ECIA, participating property owners, and 563 Design as we progress on the CDBG Downtown Façade project. We have had one property owner withdraw from the program, and our office brought the Boffeli & Spannagel Law Firm building in to fill that spot. The final construction documents and environmental review process are being completed, so that the City can put the project out to bid. Then after the bids are awarded in July, construction will begin. This program will have a truly transformational impact on the downtown's appearance.

RCTP Grants: The Rural County Transportation Program (RCTP) is designed to help small cities implement non-federal aid transportation projects. Jackson County awards funds to cities every fiscal year through a competitive application process. The Board of Supervisors approved \$70,000 in local funds for FY 2020. The maximum annual award amount provided is \$25,000. All communities in Jackson County except for Maquoketa are eligible for this program.

Regional Planning Affiliation 8 (RPA 8) administers the application process and application ranking process. The application window opened March 1, 2019 and closed April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. ECIA staff conducted workshops with the mayors and city clerks on project eligibility documentation required. ECIA staff worked with cities and wrote their applications. ECIA staff drafted resolutions, letters of support, and other supporting documentation for each application. Staff compiled the final applications and submitted them to the ranking committee.

RPA 8 staff received requests from eight cities with a total ask of \$141,064. The committee recommended awarding \$25,000 to Andrew and Miles projects. \$17,296 to Preston, \$13,000 to St. Donatus, \$9,200 to Springbrook, and \$5,504 to Baldwin. The Committee recommended funding to Baldwin under the condition that the City will be providing 20% match for their 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue Sidewalk project. The Committee suggested moving the left-over funds to next fiscal year if the City of Baldwin is not able to come up with the matching funds. The committee rejected the City of Sabula's application as the project is already completed.

RPA 8 is providing the Jackson County Engineer with the results of the RCTP application ranking. RPA 8 staff will send approval letter and contracts to applicants following approval from the Jackson County Engineer and Jackson County Board of Supervisors.

Legislative Efforts: The legislative session wrapped up a week early, and our office was in close communication with our local legislators, League of Cities, PDI, and other economic development colleagues regarding a number of bills. The first was a collaborative effort between ECIA, University of Iowa and League of Cities on the concept of a Land Bank. This bill would have established a new intergovernmental entity type to create more flexible options in remediating nuisance building and sites. The bill did not progress very far this session, but it received positive comments from both parties, and we hope to be a part of conversations in the next session.

Another bill that was particularly distressing was an effort in both the House and the Senate by the controlling Republican party to limit local control of property taxes at the County and City level. This initiative moved fast, and changed form many times before its passage. Our office appealed to our local legislators and committee chairs sponsoring the bill to reconsider. Some of the more restrictive elements of the legislation were removed. In the end it passed, though it has yet to be signed by the governor.

Lastly, we were tracking the effort to fund the Iowa Water Land and Legacy trust fund (IWILL). The is an opportunity to lower property taxes locally is by utilizing a sales tax increase to fund mental health, and remove that from the county's levy. If partnered with the IWILL 3/8th cent increase, the remaining 5/8th cents would be able to provide much needed funding to mental health. This sales tax increase could be a win-win by providing mental health funding, important water quality and quality of life support, while reducing our overall property taxes. This effort did not make it through this session, but it seems like a potential nonpartisan way to lower property taxes.

The Maquoketa Area Chamber is hosting a legislative wrap up that will be attended by Representative McKean and Senator Koelker on Tuesday, May 21 at 12pm. I would encourage you all interested in learning more about these items and others to attend.

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. 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. There seem to be some barriers in our region due to travel time depending on where the CTE Center is located. Dave attended another meeting about this initiative on April 26<sup>th</sup>. We will continue to work with our superintendents, employers, and community college partners to ensure that the needs of our employers and students are being met.

On a related note, in an effort to learn from existing initiatives focused on workforce skills, we partnered with Prosperity Eastern Iowa to organize a visit to West Delaware High School's Weld Lab in Manchester on March 25<sup>th</sup>. We were happy to see some Jackson County industry representatives take advantage of this opportunity to learn some best practices from our neighboring county.

#### Other Industrial/Commercial Prospects:

- We were made aware of a prospective light assembly prospect from the Maquoketa Chamber, and have made contact and showed an existing building space to the prospect.
- 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 require a skilled workforce.
- 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. 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. 563 Maq has

acquired the property and their development agreement with the City of Maquoketa has been approved. Construction will begin this summer.

- 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. We hope to find resources to support the potential new owner's professional development. We have been working with the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque to get the prospective new owner into a childcare management training program.
- 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 has approved a downtown consultant grant to assist with this effort.
- 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.
- Working with four 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. Work is in full swing, and the developer hopes to be completed at the end of the summer.

CDBG Upper Story Housing Pilot Program: Assisted the Maquoketa Art Experience and the City of Maquoketa application to a pilot program focused on rehabilitating vacant upper story spaces in downtowns. The Maquoketa Art Experience saw this as an opportunity to 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 \$900k – for a \$40k investment by the City of Maquoketa is a great return on investment.

We were notified the City was awarded on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Maquoketa was one of two communities awarded statewide. We are working on a draft development agreement between the City and property owner.

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.

The development agreement between ECIA's nonprofit arm, ECDC, and the City of Maquoketa was approved on March 4<sup>th</sup>. There was an open house on April 4<sup>th</sup> targeted to realtors, employers and then the wider community. Three of the 10 homes have committed buyers, and there are three other pending applications.

The preliminary plat will be reviewed by P&Z on May 22, and ECDC hopes to go before council for bid approval on the infrastructure on June 1.

Urban Renewal Amendments: Our office has been working with Bellevue, Maquoketa and Preston on amendments to their urban renewal plans.

Bellevue, Maquoketa, and recently Preston have approved amendments.

In Bellevue the amendment included funding for acquisition of a 50 acre parcel of land from the Stamp estate for future residential and possible commercial growth. It also included funding for a suite of downtown incentive programs. We worked with an advisory committee to develop the program specifics for these incentive programs which include seven elements:

- Acquisition Assistance
- Blade Signage
- Commercial Interior
- Consultant Assistance
- Façade Improvements
- Upper Story Residential
- Conversion – First Floor Residential to Commercial

These programs are modeled after similar programs in Dubuque, Manchester, and Maquoketa. The Council approved the recommended programs and established a Design Review Committee to review applications. I facilitated an informational meeting for realtors, financial institutions, and other interested property/business owners on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Review committee and City Council approved their first application on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

The Bellevue plan included the matching funds committed as part of the Catalyst grant for the former Button Factory. Our office worked with the City's bond counsel and staff to write the development agreement for this project.

Maquoketa's updated plan includes funding for continuing their downtown incentive program. The City Council approved the proposed revisions to their programs we recommended in an effort to simplify the application process and add a new upper story residential grant. Their review committee and Council have approved their first application under the revamped program as well. The Maquoketa amendment also included matching funds for the Catalyst Grant project (110 South Main).

The Preston urban renewal amendment included funding for downtown incentive programs, assistance for a local industrial expansion, funding for new residential development's infrastructure, and potential funding for reuse of the former middle school property.

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, and the Housing Task Force to look at options for development of this property located near the Catholic Church. The housing task force met on May 2<sup>nd</sup> to go over the estimates on infrastructure expansion and financing options.

Bellevue has entered into a development agreement, that our office helped prepare, with BETA. They closed on the 50 acre acquisition on April 10. BETA and our office are looking into a possible land trade. If that does not materialize, we will work together in developing a master plan for this property and are investigating funding options.

Our office, along with Bellevue City staff, have met with Delbert Jackson to discuss the development of his 16 lot subdivision. The property was previously platted, but never developed. It is our hope that this subdivision could provide available housing lots until the Stamp Farm can be developed.

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. This pilot program was called out as an innovative strategy by IEDA Direct, Debi Durham, when she spoke at the SMART conference.

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.

Preston: The City of Preston has many ongoing projects including a major wastewater upgrade, downtown renovation, reuse of the former school building, a residential subdivision and management of municipal utilities (water, sewer, electric, and gas). Councilmembers and the Mayor do not have the time or expertise to manage all these ongoing needs. Because of this, our office has been working with the City of Preston as they consider hiring a City Administrator. We prepared a job description as they developed this position. A great candidate was identified by our office, and the Council decided to forego advertising the position and interview the candidate. An offer was made by the City and after negotiation was accepted by Teresa Weinschenk. She will begin June 3.

Other meetings/events that we attended:

- ECIA Council
- Bellevue Downtown Property/Business incentive review committee (2)
- Maquoketa Leadership Team
- Hometown Pride Coaches Conference Call (2)
- Prosperity Eastern Iowa
- Preston City Council (2)
- Bellevue City Council (2)
- Maquoketa City Council (2)
- Rep. McKean, Attorney General Miller, and Montana Governor Bullock visit
- Interviews with Sycamore Media, Telegraph Herald, KWLL
- Bellevue Housing Taskforce (2)
- Maquoketa Layers Committee (2)
- Jackson County Board of Supervisor meetings (2)
- PDI Legislative Conference Call (2)
- Conference call with IDOT, Maquoketa, and Federal Highway officials
- Maquoketa Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- Bellevue Hometown Pride meeting (2)

- Preston Growth & Development meeting (2)
- Career and Hiring Fair meeting (3)
- Jackson County Manufacturer's meeting
- RPA 8 Tech & Policy Board
- Rural Community Transportation Program application review
- IISC Downtown Façade meeting
- U of Iowa mural project meeting
- IISC Non-Profit Excellence meeting on grant recommendations (2)
- Presentation to Maquoketa High School class
- Preston Urban Renewal Amendment consultation
- Preston/Maquoketa mock interviews
- Anamosa/Monticello Hometown Pride Committee meetings
- Review committee for Platt Street engineering proposals