

Director and Senior Advisor's Bi-Monthly Report

May 19, 2020

Maquoketa Hometown Pride: The Maquoketa Hometown Pride committee has met virtually. Some subcommittees met virtually or have postponed meetings.

- **Spring Clean-up Days** – The May dates were cancelled with hopes of developing some assimilation of they days in the summer or fall. There has been discussion of making a bulk item drop-off area available at the Public Works facility. Currently, the group has plans to initiate a campaign to incentivize property maintenance by choosing four homes each month this summer and placing these signs in the yards:

OUTSTANDING HOME



OF THE MONTH

- **Summer Concert Series and Maqtoberfest** – Subcommittee meets virtually every two weeks. The first concert on June 19 will be a virtual concert with Nutsy Turtle and Lori G performing live via Facebook. Maqtoberfest plans are on hold currently.
- **Dog Park** –The subcommittee will resume meeting virtually May 18. The awards of the DRA grants have been delayed.
- **Skate Park**- No updates.
- **Hometown Pride READS!** – The group had a virtual discussion of Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World by Adam Grant. The subsequent events have been postponed with hopes to revive them in a virtual format soon.
- **Community Gathering Space, Grove Street Playground Project, US Census Complete Count Committee, Youth Engagement, and Housing** – No updates.

Bellevue Hometown Pride: The Bellevue Hometown Pride group did not meet in April due to the pandemic but will meet virtually in May. 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. Also working with Delbert Jackson on a public/private partnership to develop the 16-lot subdivision on the north end of the City.

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 June for approval. The new deadline for the application is June 15.

Felderman Park Plan – Working w/ school to engage students on input and get youth representatives on committee. Want the first meeting to be in person.

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

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 has begun and will be completed in 2020. We have two additional properties who are interested in entering the program around April. Cost estimates are being completed this month, and if accepted, they will enter the program.

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. 563 Design is currently meeting with all of these property owners to develop and/or review plans. The application is due mid-July.

Catalyst Grant: We assisted three projects within our Jackson County communities with the pre-apps. All were asked to submit full applications. We worked with Marla at ECIA to complete those applications and were submitted on April 17. The applications included:

- Maquoketa – Mitchell Maskrey Mill
- Preston – Preston Times Building
- Sabula – Former Ackerman Grocery Store

2020 Jackson County Career & Hiring Fair: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Jackson County Career & Hiring Fair scheduled for April 1 at Pearson Hall was cancelled. The committee plans to host the fair again in 2021.

Other Industrial/Commercial Prospects:

- 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. The full reconstruction of the rear masonry is complete. The two upper story units are nearly complete. The front façade reconfiguring to the original historic design is underway. The goal is that all but the finishes will be complete by July.
- 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.
- About ten days prior to the Catalyst Grant application deadline, Moore Family Farms contacted our office to let us know that they could not pursue the renovation of the Mitchell Moksrey Mill at this time. The farm economy has been bad over the past couple of years, but with the COVID-19 Pandemic the situation has gotten worse. In

an effort to save the Catalyst Grant application, Heiar reached out to a few developers he had previously worked with on Dubuque projects. Tom Kelzer and Gary Carner came to Maquoketa for a tour of the building. Because much of the work was already completed on the Catalyst application, and because the project had already secured a \$300,000 Redevelopment Tax Credit award from the State, they agreed to submit a letter of interest for the project. They are also in the process of applying for Workforce Housing Tax Credits since their vision would include apartments on the second and third floors of the building. Obviously, even if the City is successful with the Catalyst Grant and the developers are awarded Workforce Housing Tax Credits, there will still be some funding gaps. Rehabilitation project of this magnitude take layered funding concepts and strong partnerships to be successful. This building has been a Council priority for many years in Maquoketa, so the impact of this rehab would be transformative for the downtown.

- 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. They were planning to visit several Iowa sites in March, however, due to the pandemic those visits have been put on hold.
- 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 complete, 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 late 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. At the September 16th Council meeting, the Council approved a Development Agreement with Osterhaus Family Trust.

The architect began 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. Work has now resumed to develop the final plans.

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.

Three 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 first home is nearly completed with the flooring and finishing work continuing. Two additional lots have the foundations complete and floor systems in program. The Habitat for Humanity home’s purchase agreement with a family will be signed 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)

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 a follow up meeting between conservation, School of the Wild, and individual school districts was 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. They are hoping to establish their own program

without assistance from the U of Iowa. Unfortunately, with the abrupt ending to the school year, their planning has come to a halt. Heiar also attended a meeting with Jackson County Conservation and representatives of all the Jackson County school districts. There is definitely strong interest. Jackson County Conservation is applying for grants to assist and will be working on budgets as they continue move this forward. The friends of Jackson County Conservation has allocated \$4,000 and they have applied for grants from the DRA, KEEN and the Community Foundation of Jackson County. The naturalists at the Jackson county Conservation are going to have a meeting in July with the teachers and schools about how they want to set up the schedules.

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 then 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. Hockenberry presented this opportunity again to both Maquoketa and Bellevue councils and they both have submit a letters of intent.

JCRHC Reuse: We've been working with a steering committee made up of representatives of the Hospital Trustees, City of Maquoketa, Jackson County Board of Supervisors, and our office to begin the planning process for the reuse of the current hospital site. The new hospital construction is on schedule and should be opening in early 2021, making this planning process very timely so that the site can be marketed quickly for redevelopment once it is available. With the help of ECIA, the group was able to retain the services of brownfield experts from the Federal Targeted Assistance for Brownfields program. Through input from our group, targeted focus group meeting, and a large public input meeting, this consultant team completed a planning document giving some guidance on the areas of focus for potential redevelopment.

The next step will be the creation of a request for proposals with the help of the TAB team and input from our steering committee and the Hospital Board of Trustees. Hopefully in the next couple months we will be able to request and review proposals for redevelopment.

Housing: We continue to work with our major communities on trying to address the housing needs of Jackson County.

In Maquoketa, we are working with local developers who have acquired a portion of the former Tubbs estate on Western Ave. Their goals is to build 24 duplexes on that site. We have been working with the City on an urban renewal amendment to assist this project.

Heiar also had a couple of meetings with a local realtor who is trying to revive the preliminary plat for the Bluffs at Prairie Creek next to the Prairie Creek Golf course. We need to schedule a meeting with all parties to discuss next steps.

Of course, we are also working on creating downtown housing with the Mill and the Maquoketa Art Experience projects.

In Bellevue, the Council, Utility Board and BETA have agreed to hire IIW to prepare plans and specifications for utility extensions to the 50-acre site that was purchased a year ago. Once these plans are prepared and cost estimates updated, we will continue to pursue potential funding sources for these extensions.

In Preston, IIW has completed a drainage study of the area surrounding the property they had previously acquired for a housing subdivision. The City is currently looking for funding sources to help address the drainage issues.

COVID-19 Business and Community Assistance: Hockenberry worked with Jackson County Public Health officials to organize a weekly Jackson County Emergency Planning conference call. It has served as an information sharing platform with public health, schools, local governments, hospitals and clinics, and business representatives. Following the Governor and CDC's recommendations JCEA has done its best to conduct work remotely. Sagers has been working remotely from home, while Hockenberry and Heiar trade days in the office. In addition, since the crisis has begun Hockenberry has worked to share relevant information with local business and industry via email as well as check in with many of them via phone. We also make sure that we tune into the Governor's daily press conference as many changes and programs are directly announced there. This outreach is more important now than ever, as many businesses are being impacted at varying levels and in different ways. We promoted the State and Federal assistance programs including the Paycheck Protection Program. Our office also was able to utilize that program through our affiliation with the Grant Wood Mississippi River Region who employs Stephanie. With Hueneke's help we secured a forgivable loan for a portion of Stephanie's payroll.

The closure of Hollander Sleep Products facility in Maquoketa is an example of that. A business that was weakened by unrelated circumstances was forced to close this location because of the hit to their product demand due to the economic slowdown tied to this pandemic. Many businesses have reported lower demand as they supply companies like Deere and Caterpillar, and other businesses report no direct impact from COVID-19.

All of the businesses we've spoken to are implementing the community mitigation strategies like additional cleaning, social distancing in production areas, and even temperature checks. The biggest impact we've heard from businesses is uncertainty, and this will likely delay businesses capital investments as this uncertainty persists. To help during this time we've also worked with ECIA Business Growth (Matt Specht), Jackson County Supervisors, and Roger Stewart to model an emergency business assistance grant off of the program set up by the City of Dubuque and Dubuque Initiatives. The supervisors will consider this program at their Tuesday, May 19th meeting. This type of emergency program is designed to help businesses going forward during this period of uncertainty and lower consumer spending.

We've also been working to address some community efforts surrounding the COVID-19 impacts. The City of Maquoketa, with the assistance of ECIA and JCEA, applied for and received a COVID-19 CDBG from the Iowa Economic Development Authority. The IEDA awarded \$524 million in CDBGs to entities across Iowa to assist communities during the coronavirus pandemic. These grants are designed to meet urgent city and county needs, especially for low- to moderate-income individuals. The \$100,000 grant Maquoketa received will benefit these partner organizations and services in Jackson County:

NE Iowa Area Agency on Aging

Meals on Wheels Food Program
Expand services to areas not served

NE Iowa Agency Area on Aging

Local meal voucher program w/restaurants
in Jackson County to senior citizens

NE Iowa Agency on Aging

Maquoketa Community Cupboard

Rural Jackson County Food Pantries

Bellevue, Preston, Sabula
105 families currently to 135 families

Cardinal Backpack Club

Maquoketa and Bellevue lunches for kids

51 families/week Maquoketa
20 families/week Bellevue

Maquoketa Farmer's Market**

Vouchers for fresh food

Expansion of services

Jackson County door to door
services in Preston, Miles, etc.
900 meals/mo. to 1100 meals/mo.

New Services

Partner with up to 3 restaurants
in Jackson County to
provide hot meals to senior citizens
Additional supplies
Additional gloves/misc.

Expansion of services

1 box per family/week
Current 100 boxes
Increase to 125 boxes

Expanded Services

1 box per family/month
Current 105 boxes
to 135 boxes/month

Expanded Services

\$10/backpack/family
2 meals/backpack
Continue program for 12 more
weeks

Expanded Services

Increasing from 100 to 125

1 voucher/household of Community Cupboard

Partner with Preston and Bellevue Libraries

Expansion of E-Learning Services

Maquoketa Public Library

Book Club Zoom Meetings

Bellevue Community Schools

Easton Valley Schools and Andrew

Maquoketa Community School District

Hot Spots for distance learning

Jackson County Library Association

Mobile Hotspots for patrons to have

internet access to read e-books and online material

Region 8 Regional Transit Authority (RTA 8)

Provide meal delivery for Food Pantry and Maquoketa Cupboard

Provide meal delivery to NE Iowa Area on Aging clients

households in 2020

Expanded Services

Have seen a 25% increase
in checkouts for March, 2020
556 to 994 and expect 1200
Additional E-Books for
Jackson County residents

Expanded Services

Add Capability of electronic
weekly meetings (3 clubs)

Expanded Services

All districts have laptop or tablet
programs but not all students
have access to internet

Expanded Services

Reach patrons no internet

New Services

Other meetings/events that we attended:

- ECIA Council
- JCRHC hospital reuse meeting and discussion (3)
- JCRHC hospital reuse public input session
- Bellevue Downtown Property/Business incentive review committee
- Maquoketa Downtown Property/Business incentive review committee
- Maquoketa Leadership Team
- Hometown Pride Coaches Conference Call (2)
- Bellevue City Council (2)
- Maquoketa City Council (2)
- Interviews with Sycamore Media, Telegraph Herald, KMAQ, KWQC
- Bellevue Housing Taskforce
- Jackson County Board of Supervisor meeting (4)
- Maquoketa Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- RPA 8 Tech & Policy Board
- Platt St. progress meeting (3)
- Met w/ Tim Cottle, of CCC
- Phone call w/ Creative Adventure Lab on entrepreneur spaces
- Met w/ Maq Chamber Director on coordination (3)
- Met w/ potential housing developer in Maquoketa
- Regional Workforce Development Board meeting

- Preston Stormwater discussion w/ IIW
- REDI Project conference call