

Director and Senior Advisor's Bi-Monthly Report

July 10, 2019

Maquoketa Hometown Pride: The Maquoketa Hometown Pride group continues to meet monthly (with the exception of July-Summer break) with many of their subcommittees working in between those times.

Spring Clean-up subcommittee will regroup in the Fall.

Summer Concert Series and Maqtoberfest – Summer concerts are scheduled third Friday of June-September. Unfortunately, due to the weather forecast, the first concert was postponed. The next concert will be July 19. Maqtoberfest will be Saturday, October 12 and the subcommittee has extended their theme “Make it, Bake it, or Grow it” beyond Jackson County to Eastern Iowa.

Dog Park – Receiving donations for its capital campaign. MSB was the first corporate sponsor. Additional private donations have also come in.

Skate Park-Councilperson Kevin Kuhlman has been leading this project and been meeting with area youth/individuals and high school welding program regarding improvements to the park.

Property Beautification-With the hiring of Property Maintenance Inspector, Mallory Smith, the committee looks to work with that office for ways expand incentives for beautification through HTP as well.

Youth Engagement – Will be looking at ways to revisit this initiative in the Fall.

Housing – Looking for appointment from the City. Need the City at the table to discuss City Codes & Ordinances and Urban Revitalization Plan.

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
- Friends of Bellevue State Park
- Potential Great Places application

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

Conferences/Trainings: Stephanie took part in a Rural Livability Workshop webinar on June 20th focused on live stream presentations related to intergenerational communities, housing, broadband, transportation, disasters/weather, and how to engage federal and philanthropic partners.

Stephanie attended an Unconscious Bias Training held at Northeast Iowa Community College's downtown Dubuque campus. The training focused on identifying and changes individuals, institutional, and systemic biases and exercises in how to be mindful and interrupt our biased and fearful thinking.

Two upcoming conferences (Iowa Downtown Conference and Iowa League of Cities Conference) that I encourage JCEA Board members to considering attending are being held in Dubuque this year. The Iowa Downtown Conference put on by the Iowa Economic Development Authority will be held on August 27-29, more information [here](https://tinyurl.com/yxjezunh) (<https://tinyurl.com/yxjezunh>). The Iowa League of Cities Annual Conference will be held September 25-27, more information [here](https://tinyurl.com/yyyrp2r6) (<https://tinyurl.com/yyyrp2r6>).

I am attending the National Association of Counties (NACo) conference as chair of Prosperity Eastern Iowa along with Holly McPherson of ECIA to meet our partners in the recently awarded REDI grant. This conference agenda is focused on many different community and economic development topics.

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 will work with Holly and NACo through this grant period to develop strategies to tackle these issues. We will be meeting all together for the first time at the NACo national conference on Thursday, July 11th in Las Vegas. I look forward to updating the Board on the progress of this collaborative effort. These are two issues we have already prioritized for Jackson County.

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. The final construction documents and environmental review process are being completed, so that the City can put the project out to bid. We are still waiting on approval of two building from the State as part of the environmental review process. This has set back bidding the project a couple weeks. After the bids are awarded construction will begin. This program will have a truly transformational impact on the downtown's appearance.

Land Bank: Our office is working collaboratively with ECIA, University of Iowa and League of Cities on the concept of a Land Bank. Land Banks are legal entities that can purchase, manage, and hold properties for redevelopment, while being able to attach special conditions to the redevelopment and more easily clear potential encumbrances. A land bank is a special purpose governmental entity that focuses on the acquisition and management of vacant, abandoned, or foreclosed properties and the return of the properties to productive use. Legislation to allow this did not pass in the previous legislative session, but it received positive comments from both parties. We hope to be a part of conversations in the next session.

Representatives from ECIA have met with many area legislators to discuss this concept and how to present it in the coming legislative session. It was suggested to engage with additional subject matter experts like the Professional Developers of Iowa and the Iowa Bar Association to get their feedback and support. ECIA is taking the lead on this project. Our office is assisting as needed.

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. We have not received any more information related to this effort from the working group since

May. 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.

Other Industrial/Commercial Prospects:

- We were made aware of a prospective light assembly prospect from the Maquoketa Chamber and Sedona Staffing. We worked with these partners and property owners with available space to accommodate this business. We are happy to say that Mallard Manufacturing has located in the east industrial park (Spartan Building) for a portion of their assembly operations. They plan to hire 20 employees with hopes of growing their employment numbers in the future. Sedona is helping the company find employees. Some have already started work.
- 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. The asbestos remediation is approximately 50% complete. The roof reconstruction will begin within a couple weeks, which is a critical step replacing the temporary roof. The State has reviewed and approved the Part 2 portion of the Historic Tax Credit process. It is being reviewed by the National Park Service right now.
- 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 visited other childcare centers to learn best practices and funding opportunities and met with subject matter experts for advice.
- 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. This will likely be a multi-phased expansion.
- Assisted Blue-9 and Precision Metal Works secure financing through the Jackson County Revolving Loan Fund for production expansion and operations support respectively.
- 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. High river levels delayed exterior work a number of weeks, but work is progressing now.

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 11th. Maquoketa was one of two communities awarded statewide. We are working with the City's bond counsel on a draft development agreement between the City and property owner. We hope this agreement will come before Council in August for consideration, and bidding to commence soon thereafter.

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.

The preliminary plat was approved by P&Z on May 22. Final plat was approved by P&Z on July 8, and Council will review on July 15. Bids have been sent out for infrastructure and will be reviewed by the end of July.

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. In the first few months Bellevue has approved grant application for 6 properties totaling \$55,000 of grant funding.

Apprenticeship/Intern Programs: In mid-June our office hosted Bob Snyder with the Department of Labor to meet with three Jackson County businesses to discuss opportunities for developing apprenticeship programs. The businesses included Kunau Implement, Precision Metal Works, and HUSCO International. The meetings included a school superintendent and a high school principal.

A certified apprenticeship program has many steps/requirements. There are other approaches to meet the training needs of businesses that are less cumbersome. In partnership with the high schools and the community college we could develop our own internship or job shadowing programs.

Kunau Implement is interested in a internship or job shadowing program. PMW is considering a certified welding apprenticeship program. HUSCO has not yet formally responded.

Externship: Our office recently became aware that an Easton Valley teacher did a 6-week externship program last summer at Collins Aerospace in Bellevue. An externship is where a teacher goes to work for a business for the summer. The goal is two-fold. The industry gets the benefit of the teacher's output during this program, but the teacher gain insight to the skillsets and other expectations of the local business/industry.

We met the teacher this week to discuss the experience. He indicated that it was a great experience and it changed his understanding of what it meant to work in a factory. He now has a much better perspective of what he needs to teach his students to prepare them for the workforce.

We will try to use this teacher's experience to help promote the externship program with other area educators.

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've invited Iowa Economic Develop Authority Director, Debi Durham, to tour Creative Adventure Labs in August when she is in Dubuque for the Downtown Conference. Hopefully the State sees some value in this concept. We have suggested that our region should serve as a pilot program for this rural satellite concept.

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. The housing task force met on July 1 to go over the estimates on infrastructure expansion and financing options. A joint meeting with the City Council is set for July 24.

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.

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.

We are working with the purchasers of the recently sold Tubbs Estate parcels on housing development plans.

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 worked with the City of Preston as they hired a City Administrator. We prepared a job description as they developed this position. Teresa Weinschenk began June 3 as the City Administrator. We have worked closely with her to bring her up to speed on the many ongoing projects in Preston.

Preston was awarded a CDBG grant in June to assist in their Wastewater Plant Improvements, funding more 60% of the total project cost.

Other meetings/events that we attended:

- ECIA Council
- ECIA Strategic Planning Session
- Bellevue Downtown Property/Business incentive review committee (2)
- Maquoketa 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
- Maquoketa City Council (3)
- Interviews with Sycamore Media, Telegraph Herald
- Bellevue Housing Taskforce (2)
- Maquoketa Layers Committee (2)
- Jackson County Board of Supervisor meetings (2)
- Maquoketa Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- Bellevue Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- Preston Growth & Development meeting (2)
- Jackson County Manufacturer's meeting
- RPA 8 Tech & Policy Board (2)
- U of Iowa mural project meeting (3)
- Maquoketa Planning & Zoning (2)
- BUILD Grant engineering firm interviews
- JCERHC Board of Trustees meeting

- Bellevue Great Places Committee
- Anamosa/Monticello Hometown Pride Committee meetings
- Met with Iowa Business Growth on NMTC's
- Business Growth
- Preston Housing Taskforce (2)
- Maquoketa Comprehensive Plan