

# Director and Senior Advisor's Bi-Monthly Report

September 11, 2019

Maquoketa Hometown Pride: The Maquoketa Hometown Pride group continues to meet monthly. (Many subcommittees meet weekly or biweekly) .

- Spring Clean-up subcommittee will begin meeting again in October.
- [Summer Concert Series](#) and [Maqtoberfest](#) – Remaining Summer Concerts on September 20 (Hot Mess) and 27<sup>th</sup> (The Mat McPherson Band). The committee is meeting weekly to work on Maqtoberfest (October 12). Eastern Iowa vendors are still needed. Forward any vendor names/contacts to Sagers.
- Dog Park –Capital campaign is in full swing. The project recently received \$6000 from Maquoketa Rotary. There is now nearly \$12,000 in donations committed towards the project. The dog park will also be one of the beneficiaries of the Rotary's annual fundraiser event September 12. Committee members continue to reach out to civic groups, corporate contacts, and individuals as well as seeking out and applying for grants. Fundraising efforts on Facebook and PayPal also continue.
- Skate Park-Councilperson Kevin Kuhlman has been leading this project. He recently met with Craig Burken welding instructor for CCC and students regarding renovation and/or fabrication of equipment. The Burken and students are going to renovate a couple pieces of equipment from the park.
- Property Beautification-The committee continues to discuss how they can compliment the City's proposed Corridor Incentives and other property management initiatives.
- Youth Engagement – Sagers reached out to school contacts regarding club sponsors and meeting times. She visited club hOpe's meeting this week and discussed HTP and current projects. Many students in club hOpe have participated in the Spring Clean-Up the past two years. Student groups are invited to participate in Maqtoberfest as well.

Housing – Working to discuss City Codes & Ordinance, Urban Revitalization and incentive tools to promote housing development. The Housing Needs Assessment and housing start data from the last 6 years suggests that Maquoketa is deficient in quality rental, market single family, multi-family, and LMI housing starts.

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  
Felderman Park Plan

The committee is helping to investigate efforts to establish more downtown crosswalks, compost site options, wayfinding signage, school collaboration, local resident welcome program/training, and promotion of Bellevue BIG initiatives. A sub-committee working on a potential Great Places application has been established with representatives from the community and has met on two occasions.

Conferences/Trainings: All staff attended the Iowa Downtown Conference in Dubuque August 27-29.

Stephanie attended the Housing and Downtown Revitalization Training in Cascade organized by ECIA. Jim Thompson, IEDA, presented “Housing Matters for your Community, Downtown, and Historic Preservation”. Stephanie also attended the Iowa Finance Authority’s Housing Iowa Conference in Cedar Rapids September 4 & 5.

I encourage JCEA Board members to consider attending the upcoming Iowa League of Cities Conference being held September 25-27 in Dubuque. More information on the conference [here](https://tinyurl.com/yyyyrp2r6) (<https://tinyurl.com/yyyyrp2r6>). I will be presenting with the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque on collaboration, community development and capacity building.

I attended 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 was focused on many different community and economic development topics, many with a particular focus on a rural context.

I attended the Real Solutions to Workforce Needs conference at Northeast Iowa Community College in Peosta for a discussion on the intersection of technology and labor force.

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 met together for the first time at the NACo national conference on Thursday, July 11th in Las Vegas. We will be having recurring team calls, as well as larger group calls with the other REDI grant teams throughout the country.

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 architect is now reviewing the bids to make sure everything is in order and will then be meeting with the individual property owners to make sure they are still interested in proceeding. We are hoping to have property owner agreements in place prior to the October 7<sup>th</sup> Maquoketa City Council meeting.

Land Bank: ECIA is hosting a legislative dinner on September 18. There will be a special presentation on proposed land bank legislation as well as other pertinent legislative issues.

Regional Career Training Center: We met with the three superintendents of Jackson County schools in early September to discuss their needs and expectations related to career training opportunities. They have scheduled a joint meeting with Clinton Community College president Karen Vickers, themselves, and our office for later this month to discuss this matter.

The school systems have started to further develop a student exchange program. A few Bellevue students along with Easton Valley students are participating in the welding program offered in Maquoketa. Easton valley is offering computer science programs, and Bellevue is working on an electrical program with hopes of it beginning in the spring.

Additionally, we continue to work to align our business and industry's workforce needs with opportunities for internships, apprenticeships and/or job shadowing opportunities.

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. As you will see in the packet, 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.

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 are working to identify possible projects within our Jackson County communities. In Preston we have two interested property owners and are helping gather information so the City can determine which project has the best chance of being funded. We have identified a possible project in Maquoketa that would make a compelling application but have to determine if the timeline works. In Bellevue we hope to meet with a prospective property owner to determine whether their project aligns with the grant goals.

The State has changed the period for applications a bit allowing for more time. The pre-application is due at the end of January 31, 2020 and the full application will be due in April 17, 2020.

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. 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 and roof reconstruction are nearly complete. There are some obstacles related to the electric service required for one of the possible commercial tenants. Our office, 563 Maq and MMEU have met to discuss possible solutions.

- 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. 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 an existing commercial business 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 to allow the prospect to apply for Redevelopment Tax Credits.
- 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.
- 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 will be addressing 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.

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 3rd Council meeting, the Council set a public hearing on this Development Agreement for September 16th.

Following the public hearing and approval of the Development Agreement, the Council will also need to approve an architectural contract with 563 Design which is also on the September 16 Council agenda. Once all these pieces are in place, the architect will begin work on final design and project specifications.

Investors: We have recently secured Imagine the Possibilities' investment in our office and a continued commitment from the Jackson County Farm Bureau with the possibility of an increased level of investment in the coming year. We are very appreciative of both our public and private investors who make the work our office is engaged in possible.

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 bids for infrastructure were approved on July 22<sup>nd</sup> and there will be a groundbreaking September 27<sup>th</sup> at 12pm.

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 applications for 7 properties totaling over \$60,000 of grant funding. Maquoketa has approved grant applications for 3 properties totaling over \$10,000. Preston approved their first application recently.

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.

Jay and his team at the University of Iowa are currently working on grant application to help fund this pilot program. If funding is available, the pilot program will require continue 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.

We hope to continue this discussion in hopes establishing this program in Jackson County and the greater Grant Wood Loop region.

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, and we have been asked to prepare a formal proposal for IEDA to consider.

Empower Rural Iowa: As a follow to our meeting at Creative Adventure Labs, Liesl Seabert, the recently designated Rural Community Revitalization Program Manager, reached out to our office to schedule a visit of one of the Empower Rural Iowa committee meetings focused on community leadership in Bellevue. We are working to provide a brief presentation on the work Bellevue is engaged in around community revitalization as part of this visit on October 16<sup>th</sup>.

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 taking another look at the drainage issues in the area before anything else moves forward.

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've begun a partnership with the University of Iowa's engineering department on a preliminary site development plan for the Fall 2019 Semester. There will be a community presentation of their final report in December 2019.

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 and the City of Maquoketa on housing development plans.

Other meetings/events that we attended:

- ECIA Council
- JCRHC hospital reuse meeting and discussion (2)
- 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
- Bellevue City Council
- Regional Workforce Board Meeting
- Maquoketa City Council (3)
- Interviews with Sycamore Media, Telegraph Herald, Iowa Public Radio, KMAQ, Radio Dubuque and KWQC
- Bellevue Housing Taskforce (2)
- Meeting w/ new regional Small Business Administrative director
- Maquoketa Mural ribbon cutting
- Met w/ new Home Base Iowa coordinator
- University of Iowa student team site visit
- Jackson County Clerks Meeting
- EDA Disaster Recovery Funds meeting – Maquoketa
- EPA district meeting – Maquoketa
- Maquoketa Layers Committee
- Jackson County Board of Supervisor meetings
- Maquoketa Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- Bellevue Hometown Pride meeting (2)
- GDDC Annual Meeting
- RPA 8 Tech & Policy Board
- U of Iowa mural project meeting (2)
- BUILD Grant engineering firm interviews
- Bellevue Great Places Committee
- Anamosa/Monticello Hometown Pride Committee meetings
- Business Growth
- Preston Housing Taskforce
- Maquoketa Comprehensive Plan