



IARCCOURIER

Summer 2008

GROWING IOWA'S REGIONS
FOR OVER 35 YEARS

Volume 1, Issue 2

Inside this Issue:

Local Project Assistance	2
Regional GIS	2
Solid Waste Education	3
New Director	3
Planning Assistance	4
Early Education	4
IARC Contact Information	6
What are COGs?	7

Midwest COGs Meet

Representatives from COGs throughout the Midwest converged on St. Joseph, Missouri, May 5-7, to participate in the inaugural Four-State Professional Development Conference. Hosted by the Missouri Association of Councils of Governments (MACOG), the conference provided an opportunity for COG directors and staff to meet one another, professionally network, and take part in multiple peer-led sessions focusing on the issues important to their organizations.

The Economic Development Administration provided funding for the conference, which was organized by the National Association of Development Organizations (pictures provided by MACOG).



Iowa Association of
Regional Councils

The *IARCourier* is an electronic publication of the Iowa Association of Regional Councils.

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INRCOG Leverages \$4 Million for Local Initiatives

The Cedar Valley TechWorks is a non-profit corporation that has become a reality through the assistance and efforts of a variety of organizations, funding sources, and agencies. One organization's involvement, the Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG), is also a great example of how COGs assist local projects by leveraging and coordinating the utilization of a variety of funding sources. With INRCOG's assistance, more than \$4 million in state and federal funds have been secured.

TechWorks, is designed to advance bio-agricultural production, manufacturing, and marketing through research and development. The ultimate purpose of the organization is to foster the research and educational needs of the ever-growing bio-economy. A TechWorks campus is also being developed as an adaptive reuse of land donated by Deere and Company in the heart of Waterloo. In total, Cedar Valley TechWorks is a \$50 million project, which will utilize numerous buildings spread over forty acres.



"TechWorks" - a rendering of the TechWorks Technology Center, which will be converted from a former Deere and Company building and will house entities whose mission is advancing the use of agricultural products and commodities.

The first element of the facility, which is currently under way, is the Technology Center. Along with the demolition of a number of buildings, the initial construction phase of the Center includes the renovation of the "R" Building in the middle of Deere and Company's downtown site. The Center is a six-story, 155,000 square foot building that will house entities whose mission is advancing the use of agricultural products and commodities.

The total estimated cost of the Center renovation is \$6.7 million. INRCOG has assisted in leveraging \$1.6 million by preparing a successful grant application to the federal Economic Development Administration. The Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) has provided \$3 million through the Grow Iowa Fund and a Brownfield Financial Assistance Program Agreement. In addition, the City of Waterloo has provided Department of Housing and Urban Development funding in the amount of \$350,000. Finally, just over \$1.7 million is coming from private matching sources.

Cedar Valley TechWorks will also include the development of a Manufacturing Cluster and Ag Exhibit Center.

continued on page 5

MIDAS Provides GIS Training

Thanks to a \$108,850 grant from the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative, MIDAS is providing no-cost training to eligible communities in the six-county MIDAS area. This is a three year project, which is designed to accomplish four primary objectives.

First, forty-one government units (cities and counties) will receive training in the use of the ARC View software and layer development. MIDAS anticipates training a total of sixty employees in these skills over the next two years.

Second, MIDAS will develop a regional database of GIS layers. These layers will be placed on the MIDAS server for use by those who have been trained under this program.

Third, a user group will be formed to provide on-going training and support to area GIS users. The user group is critical to maintaining a level of proficiency after the grant funds are used. MIDAS members will be able to participate in the user group to maintain GIS proficiency, ask technical questions, and share databases.

Finally, in the last year of the grant, MIDAS staff will de-emphasize initial training and focus on technical assistance, trouble shooting, and the preparation of more sophisticated overlays. Included in this final year will be instruction on how to perform higher levels of querying and refinement and enhancement of the regional database.

The end results of the project are designed to be increased capability of local governments to apply the GIS techniques to management of city assets, preparation of overlays for grant applications, and a functional regional database accessible to member governments.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Read

In 2004, East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) planning staff was looking for a new way to reach tomorrow's recyclers. The answer was to partner with libraries in the six-county region by creating a solid waste education program that would complement the libraries' summer reading programs. As a result, Kristin Simon, ECICOG solid waste planner, has traveled to an average of thirty-four libraries in the region for each of the past four summers, and made more than 140 presentations to nearly 4,000 adults and children.

Each year, the State Library of Iowa selects a theme, and provides a summer reading program to public libraries. Based on the selected theme, Simon creates an original solid waste education program, which also features a theme-appropriate published children's book. For example, the 2007 theme was "Get a Clue," for which Simon created a program that featured recycled-content products. The program was built around the book, **The Treasure Hunt**, by Richard Scarry.

Generally, each program includes a book reading, a waste reduction lesson, and a fun activity to reinforce the lesson. In addition, each participating library is provided with a copy of the featured book for its collection.

In 2008, the theme is "Catch the Reading Bug." Simon is currently presenting a program about waste reduction and featuring the book, **Hey, Little Ant**, by Phillip and Hannah Hoose.

Coordinating with the summer reading program is just one of the ways that Simon is able to carry the message of reducing waste to the regional citizenry. In the past four years, ECICOG has reached more than 6,500 persons through similar programs presented at such diverse locations as county fairs and 4-H programs, trade shows, community organizations, teacher workshops and conferences, and day cares throughout the region.



Kristin Simon, ECICOG solid waste planner, prepares to lead participants on a solid waste treasure hunt, requiring them to match recyclable materials with recycled-content products.



(l to r): Jane Gilbert, Co-Executive Director, SIMPCO; Joe Myhre, Executive Director, NIACOG; Ted Kourousis, Executive Director, NWIPDC; Rick Hunsaker, Executive Director, Region XII COG; and Cliff Weldon, Executive Director, MIDAS COG.

Kourousis Named NWIPDC Director

In April 2008, Ted Kourousis was named executive director of the Northwest Iowa Planning and Development Commission (NWIPDC). Kourousis, formerly the Community Services Director at NWIPDC, succeeds Dave Horan who passed away earlier this year.

As part of its commitment to professional development, representatives of IARC recently met with Kourousis to better acquaint him with the statewide organization. In addition, colleagues shared their experience and expertise in COG operations such as personnel, budgeting, board Relations, ways to improve services to local governments.

IARC congratulates Kourousis on his appointment, and looks forward to his active participation in the organization.

SIMPCO Planning Assistance Promotes, Prepares Communities

Iowa's COGs provide a variety of planning services to city and county governments, and often assist in securing other public funds to support local planning efforts. Two programs provided by the Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO) serve as good examples of the breadth of planning assistance COGs provide.

SIMPCO's Community Beautification and Economic Development Program is supported by a Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The program provides assistance to communities of 50,000 or less in the development of beautification and economic development strategies and practices. Forty-seven percent (47%) of project costs can be paid for by RBOG grant funds.

Counties and communities eligible for assistance from SIMPCO include Cherokee, Ida, Monona, Plymouth and Woodbury Counties in Iowa; Dakota, Dixon, and Thurston Counties in Nebraska; and Clay and Union Counties in South Dakota.

SIMPCO will also be assisting sixteen Siouxland entities with preparing and updating their local hazard mitigation plans. The plans will ensure these entities will receive the full benefits from the state and federal governments, if a disaster occurs. However, the plan means so much more.

The plan as a document is important, but the planning process is by far the greatest benefit of the planning effort. Through the planning process, relationships are established and fostered, perspectives are learned and shared, and agreements are reached through discussion and collaboration. By approaching the plan by focusing on the process, planning documents reflect the desired goals and direction of the organization rather than the organizations being held captive by the plans. Not everyone involved in the planning process needs to be a planner by formal education or job title. Anyone with a desire to craft a solution while looking for ways to improve upon the process can find himself or herself in the planner's role.

Those cities and counties included in SIMPCO's upcoming hazard mitigation planning processes are Cherokee County, Ida County, Aurelia, Cherokee, Cleghorn, Meriden, Larrabee, Marcus, Quimby, Washta, Holstein, Galva, Ida Grove, Hinton, Kingsley, and Sioux City. Funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant program will support these planning efforts.



Congressman Steve King and Mark Reisinger, USDA Rural Development State Director in Iowa, presented (SIMPCO) with a check for \$150,000 in USDA RBOG funds to be used in 2008 and 2009. The event took place at SIMPCO's new office location, 1122 Pierce Street in Sioux City, IA.

Chariton Valley assists in Universal Preschool Planning and Implementation

Decades of research point to the need for a universal preschool education program in the U.S. to help give our nation's children a sound cognitive and social foundation on which to build future educational and life successes. In addition to enhanced school readiness and improved academic performance, participation in high quality preschool programs has been linked with reductions in grade retentions and school drop out rates and cost savings associated with a diminished need for remedial educational and justice services.

When the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Legislature announced in July 2007 incentives for school districts in the state to begin preparations for implementing voluntary preschool programs, the Centerville Community School District approached Chariton Valley Planning and Development Council to plan for and facilitate a program for implementation in the 2007-2008 school year.



Four-year-old children in the Centerville Community School District may participate in a voluntary preschool program at no cost to their families.

Acting as facilitator and team lead, Chariton Valley initiated community workshops with parents, district staff, preschools, day care providers, and state and local agencies. The goal of the planning initiative was to develop for the school district a voluntary program for four-year olds with the following objectives:

- selection and roll out of a standardized curriculum
- provision of no-cost tuition for all four-year old children regardless of socio-economic background
- installation of a program that would not detrimentally or fatally affect existing preschools or established childcare providers
- initiation of a replicable and sustainable program no later than October 2007.

Chariton Valley, continued from page 4

"Chariton Valley staff stepped in and brokered the development of a voluntary preschool program for the district within the targeted three-month launch period," explains Brad Appler, Centerville Community School District Board Member. "The district is proud of how our community came together to collectively develop a PreK program that reaffirms our high expectations for quality, efficiency and fiscal responsibility."

As a result of the planning process overseen by Chariton Valley, three established preschool providers entered into a contractual agreement with the school district to provide accredited staff, curriculum, and facilities to meet the needs of two-thirds of the district's four-year olds. The district then absorbed the remaining students into its existing classroom facilities and appointed teachers to oversee the standardized curriculum.

The alignment between the district and the private sector providers resulted in a collaboration that afforded a seamless transition for the students and parents. Additionally, the partnerships prevented the closures of preschool and child care facilities that are dependant upon enrollments of four-year olds and removed the perception of the school district as being a competitive threat to private sector providers.

"The early planning objectives set forth by the district appear to have been met, and now all of the preschool classrooms have an accredited teacher working through an approved curriculum," notes Appler.

Periodic meetings and public forums facilitated by Chariton Valley assist the school district in monitoring the effectiveness of the program and determining areas for improvement.



These youngsters enjoy story time at St. Mary's Catholic School, a participating partner with the Centerville Community School District.

"Chariton Valley staff stepped in and brokered the development of a voluntary preschool program for the district within the targeted three-month launch period."

Brad Appler, Centerville Community School District Board Member

INRCOG, continued from page 2

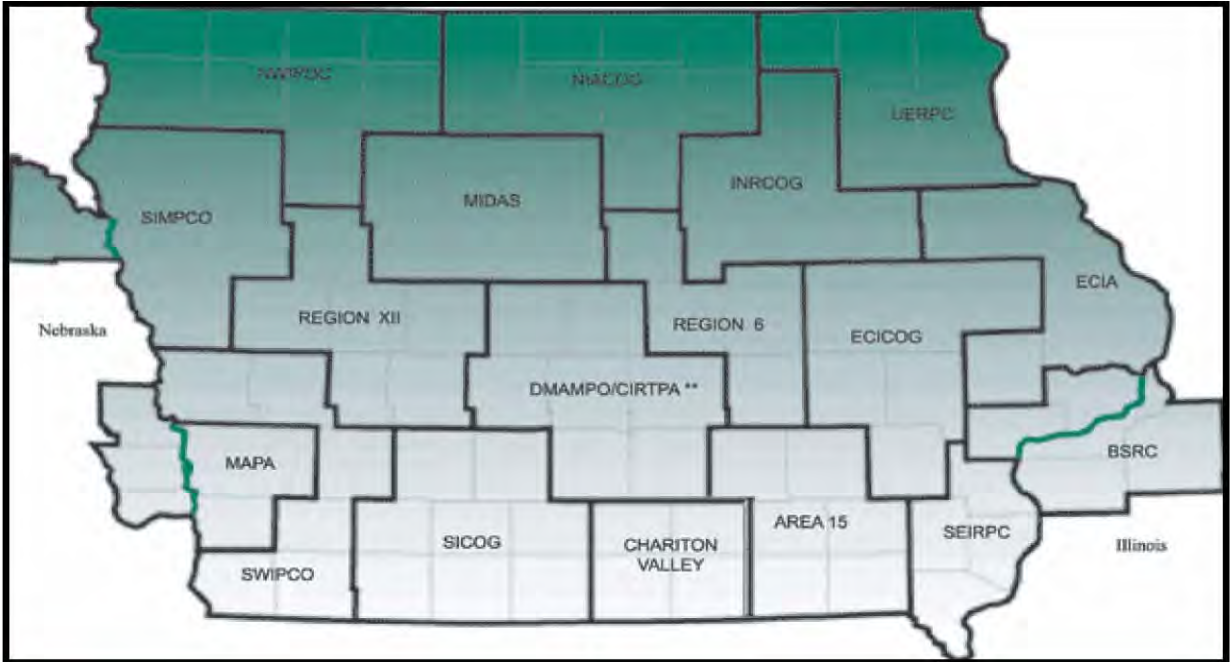
The success of TechWorks is predicated on providing a well-connected, easily accessible surface transportation network. Two projects are underway to meet that objective. The first involves the connection of Westfield Avenue to the U.S. Highway 63/218 Interchange. Currently under construction utilizing federal demonstration funds, this will provide enhanced ingress and egress directly south of TechWorks and John Deere's Westfield facility. The second project involves the extension of Commercial Street from relocated River Road to Westfield Avenue. This project will begin this summer, and was assisted by a successful RISE grant application prepared by INRCOG.

TechWorks will also be connected to the metropolitan area trail network via trails along River Road and Westfield Avenue. This, in turn, will connect to Waterloo's River Renaissance, the revitalization of the Cedar River in downtown Waterloo. A \$20 million project, the Renaissance includes three components: the *Cedar River Plaza and Amphitheatre, Pedestrian Riverwalk Loop and Bike Trails*, and *Cedar River Dam Improvements*. To date, \$18.7 million has been secured for the project, including \$7.3 million from the Vision Iowa Board, \$8.61 million from the City of Waterloo, \$1.02 million from Black Hawk County, \$550,000 from the Black Hawk MPO, and \$1.23 million in Statewide Enhancement funds from applications prepared by INRCOG. The remaining funds will be secured through other grant awards and local support.

Also, the RiverLoop Expo, located adjacent to the River Renaissance Project and the Five Sullivan Brothers Convention Center, creates flexible exhibition space that will attract trade shows and conventions, and draw local residents to downtown Waterloo for community festivals and markets. The cost of the expo is supported by a \$1 million Community Attractions and Tourism grant that was prepared by INRCOG and \$2.6 million from the Black Hawk County Gaming Association.

Additional information is available on the Cedar Valley TechWorks website found at www.CedarValleyTechWorks.com

www.iarccog.com



Area 15 Regional Planning Commission
 651 Indian Hills Drive, Bldg. 17
 PO Box 1110
 Ottumwa, IA 52501
 Phone (641) 684-6551
 Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren, and
 Wapello Counties
www.area15rpc.com

Bi-State Regional Commission
 1504 Third Ave., PO Box 3368
 Rock Island, IL 61204-3368
 Phone (309) 793-6300
 Henry, Mercer (IL), Muscatine, Rock Island (IL), and Scott
 Counties
www.bistateonline.org

Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance
 Merle Hay Centre
 6200 Aurora Avenue, Suite 300W
 Urbandale, Iowa 50322 2866
 Phone (515) 334-0075
 Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Story, Polk, and
 Warren Counties
www.dmampo.org/CIRTPA/CIRTPA_index.html

Chariton Valley Planning & Development
 Historical Courthouse Square District
 205 1/2 N. 13th St.
 Centerville, IA 52544
 Phone (641) 437-4359
 Appanoose, Lucas, Monroe and Wayne Counties
www.charitonvalleyplanning.com

East Central Intergovernmental Association
 3999 Pennsylvania Ave., Suite 200
 Dubuque, IA 52002
 Phone (563) 556-4166
 Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson Counties
www.ecia.org

East Central Iowa Council of Governments
 700 16th St., NE Suite 301
 Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
 Phone (319) 365-9941
 Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, Washington Counties
www.ecicog.org

Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments
 229 E. Park Ave.
 Waterloo, IA 50703
 Phone (319) 235-0311
 Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, Grundy
 Counties
www.inroog.org

Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
 2222 Cuming
 Omaha, NE 68012
 Phone (402) 444-6866
 Douglas (NE), Mills, Pottawattamie, Sarpy (NE), Washing-
 ton Counties
www.mapacog.org

MIDAS Council of Governments
 602 First Ave. South
 Fort Dodge, IA 50501
 Phone (515) 576-7183
 Calhoun, Hamilton, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster,
 Wright Counties
www.midasog.org

North Iowa Area Council of Governments
 525 Sixth St., SW
 Mason City, IA 50401
 Phone (641) 423-0491
 Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell,
 Winnebago, Worth Counties
www.niacog.org

Northwest Iowa Planning & Development Commission
 217 W. Fifth St., PO Box 1493
 Spencer, IA 51301
 Phone (712) 262-7225
 Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Lyon, O'Brien, Osce-
 loa, Palo Alto, Sioux Counties
www.nwipdc.org

Region 6 Planning Commission
 905 E. Main St., Suite A
 Marshalltown, IA 50158
 Phone (641) 752-0717
 Hardin, Marshall, Poweshiek, Tama Counties
www.region6planning.org

Region XII Council of Governments
 1009 East Anthony St., PO Box 768
 Carroll, IA 51401
 Phone (712) 792-9914
 Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Guthrie, Sac, Dallas Coun-
 ties
www.region12cog.org

Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council
 1122 Pierce Street
 PO Box 1077
 Sioux City, IA 51102
 Phone (712) 279-6286
 Cherokee, Dakota, Dixon, Ida, Monona, Plymouth, Woodbury
 Counties
www.simpco.org

Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission
 200 Front St., Suite 400, PO Box 397
 Burlington, IA 52601
 Phone (319) 753-5107
 Des Moines, Henry, Lee, Louisa Counties
www.seirpc.com

Southern Iowa Council of Governments
 101 East Montgomery St.
 Creston, IA 50801 0102
 Phone (641) 782-8491
 Adams, Clarke, Decatur, Madison, Ringgold, Taylor, Union
 Counties
www.sicog.com

Southwest Iowa Planning Council
 1501 SW Seventh St.
 Atlantic, IA 50022
 Phone (712) 243-4196
 Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawat-
 tamie, Shelby Counties
www.swipco.org

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission
 134 West Greene St., PO Box 219
 Postville, IA 52162
 Phone (563) 864-7551
 Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, Winneshiek Counties

** Not a Council of Governments



Iowa Association of
Regional Councils

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What is a Council of Governments?

Created more than thirty years ago by visionary public leaders, Iowa's Councils of Governments (COGs) provide professional planning, programming, and technical assistance to Iowa's cities, counties, businesses, community organizations and Iowans of all ages.

COGs are indigenous organizations formed by counties, cities and towns to serve local governments and their regional citizenry. Their governing boards are made up of local elected officials, business and education leaders, economic development professionals, and individual citizens.

COGs provide regional planning and technical assistance to local governments and the communities in their regions by:

- Providing individualized assistance to cities, counties, businesses, community organizations and community members

- Providing planning services across multiple jurisdictions and
- Providing a forum that combines the elements of transportation planning, housing development, solid waste planning, land use planning, workforce development, and economic development into a comprehensive approach to regional growth and development.

To ensure the vitality and growth of their regions, COGs actively pursue funding opportunities from a variety of local, state, and federal resources. They provide expertise to cities and counties in securing competitive state and federal grants.

As Regional Planning Affiliations, COGs plan for and program the distribution of federal transportation funds within their regions, including highways, transit, trails, and other

enhancement programs. Most COGs also have established and administer regional revolving loan funds targeting housing and economic development.

For more than thirty-nine years, COGs have been growing Iowa's communities, Iowa's businesses, Iowa's leaders, Iowa's regions, and Iowa's future.





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Strategic Planning	2
Housing Trust Fund	2
Transportation	3
Conferences	4
IARC Contact Information	5
What are COGs?	6



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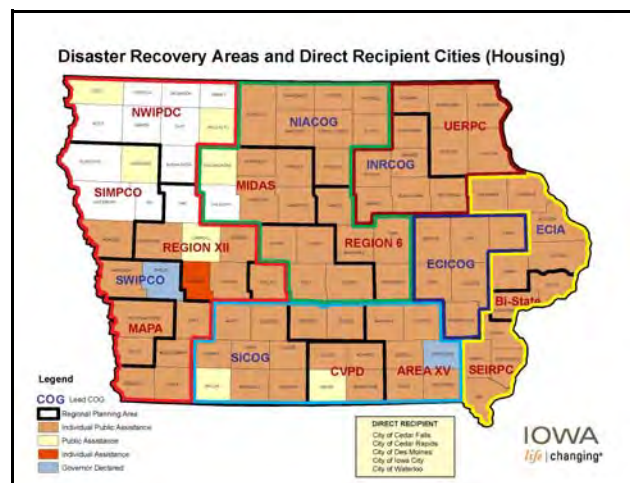
Iowa's COGS Helping Iowa Recover

Reprising a role they fulfilled after the floods of 1993, Iowa's COGs are assisting homeowners, businesses and communities in recovering from the natural disasters of the summer of 2008. In partnership with the Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO), the Iowa Department of Economic Development, the Iowa Finance Authority, and local governments, COGs are providing a statewide network for the administration and distribution of the Jumpstart housing assistance and business assistance programs.

The Jumpstart Iowa Homeowner Assistance Program will help homeowners make a down payment on a new house, repair their current home, or maintain their mortgage while waiting for a potential buyout from FEMA. The maximum award is a \$50,000 loan, plus an additional \$10,000 for energy-efficient appliances, all of which will be forgiven if the homeowner stays in the house for 10 years.

The Jumpstart Iowa Small Business Assistance Program will provide forgivable loans to small businesses. The maximum amount a business can receive is \$50,000. Funds can be used for working capital and to promote sustainable rebuilding efforts. Up to \$5,000 in additional funds is available for energy efficiencies. A loan will be forgiven if an assisted business opens its doors within 12 months of receiving funds.

Eleven Disaster Recovery Areas have been designated for purposes of distributing Jumpstart funds (see map). Five recovery areas are cities of population over 50,000, five areas are a combination of two or more COG regions, and one area is a single COG region. For contact information for your COG, go to www.iarcog.com, and click on "find your COG."



MAPA Assists Communities with Strategic Planning, Infrastructure Needs

Over the last decade, several rural communities in southwest Iowa have experienced population growth and increased demand for housing, as more people seek housing opportunities outside of the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area. New subdivisions are appearing in many of the communities and housing prices have grown rapidly. At the same time, population increases in these communities translate to increased demand for utilities, services, and facilities. As a result, while community leaders continue local economic development efforts, capital improvements projects are becoming increasingly difficult to undertake.

A collaborative effort between cities and counties, local economic development organizations, the Iowa West Foundation, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) has resulted in the completion of a series of strategic plans for rural communities in the region aimed at establishing immediate and long-range priorities for addressing infrastructure and public facilities improvements. Since 2004, twenty plans have been developed and maintained by small communities in Mills and Pottawattamie Counties.



Street improvements are among the projects funded by the CITIES program.



Regional cooperation helps fund local projects like this park facility.

The success of those planning initiatives is evident, as the twelve rural communities in Pottawattamie County have used their plans to establish the Community Improvements To Increase Economic Stability, or CITIES program. CITIES provides a funding mechanism to support infrastructure projects identified through the strategic planning initiatives. Since the program's inception in 2005, these communities have received \$3.945 million in grant funds from the Iowa West Foundation for capitalization of the program, and have used those funds to leverage nearly \$6.5 million in federal, state, and local funds. Forty-two projects have been completed, including street improvements, water distribution and treatment system improvements, sanitary sewer system improvements, storm sewer improvements and construction of city-owned facilities.

Many of these projects would not be completed without assistance from the CITIES Program, given the amount of local funding necessary. Participating cities are taking advantage of project cost savings to complete additional infrastructure projects, and to pursue local economic development projects.

MAPA staff has been actively involved in both the planning and implementation stages of the CITIES program and the associated strategic planning processes, and expects to replicate the planning initiatives in its Nebraska counties in 2009.

NWIPDC to Facilitate the Creation of a Regional Housing Trust Fund

Northwest Iowa Planning and Development Commission (NWIPDC) is assisting with the creation a regional housing trust fund. The mission of the trust fund would be to promote the creation and preservation of affordable housing for low and moderate income persons residing within the region.

A housing trust fund is an independent, nonprofit organization and a legal and financial tool to generate and disburse funds designated for affordable housing. The nonprofit status also provides a financial tool to receive money from a variety of sources. In Iowa, a housing trust fund that is certified by the Iowa Finance Authority is eligible to apply for annual legislative appropriations, including a portion of the monies collected through the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

There is a great need to preserve and/or stabilize the aging housing stock in northwest Iowa. Over half (51.4%) of the housing units in the area served were built prior to 1950 compared to 47.2% in the State of Iowa. Older housing units provide affordable housing to low and moderate income persons; however, most of the low and moderate income homeowners do not have the financial means to make the necessary repairs and improvements. This dilemma has created unsafe and/or unaffordable housing conditions, decreased the aesthetic value and tax base, and eventually eliminates the structure from the community's housing stock—often creating a shortage of affordable housing.

The trust fund can assist with projects such as: owner occupied rehabilitation, homeownership assistance, rehabilitation of affordable rental units, affordable residential lot development, new construction of affordable housing units, and homeless or transitional housing.

NWIPDC, continued from page 2

The Emmet, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, and Sioux County Boards of Supervisors have adopted a resolution indicating their desire to form a steering committee. The committee will assist in the creation of the articles of incorporation, the by-laws, and applying for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, and Palo Alto Counties, also part of the NWIPDC region, are covered under another housing trust fund; however, Buena Vista and Palo Alto Counties have indicated their desire to participate in the Northwest Iowa Regional Housing Trust Fund.

By October 1, 2009, the region hopes to be certified as a regional housing trust fund and to be ready to fund a variety of low and moderate income housing projects throughout northwest Iowa. or questions regarding the regional housing trust fund, contact Carol Keizer at the NWIPDC, at 712-262-7225 Ext. 140, or by email at carol.keizer@nwipdc.org.

SWIPCO Works to Improve Transportation Coordination

The southwest Iowa regional Mobility Action Plan (MAP) Committee's purpose is to improve transit options for people of all ages. In spite of a commitment from committee leaders, finding the time necessary to coordinate services is difficult. Thanks to a \$49,190 Special Project grant from the Iowa Department of Transportation, Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) hired a new Community Connections Representative. This person coordinates with health and human service agencies, employers, educators, etc., to meet the goals of the MAP Committee.

In a short time, this person contributed to a more efficient, coordinated transit system. Recent accomplishments include:

- Member of the Human Advisory Council and its transportation sub-committee in Council Bluffs - The Council is Planning a "decision forum" that will bring together human service agencies, members of the city, and transportation representatives to develop a transportation strategic plan for Council Bluffs
- Working with the Montgomery County Memorial Hospital in Red Oak to shuttle employees to and from the hospital
- Contracting with Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs to start a Saturday route for students
- Working with Oakland Foods to start a commuter route from the Council Bluffs area to Oakland
- Establishing preschool routes in Glenwood, Stanton, Malvern, Missouri Valley, and Red Oak through Boost for Families

The transit needs and opportunities seem endless. However, southwest Iowa accepted the challenge and the expectations for greater service options are high.



Southwest Iowa Transit Agency, a program of SWIPCO, is one of ten public transit systems operated by Iowa's COGs.

Community Development through Brownfields Revitalization

IARC, the NADO Research Foundation, and the US Environmental Protection Agency are offering a conference on brownfields revitalization on November 5-6, 2008. If your community has an abandoned elevator, manufacturing plant, or gas station, the site is potentially contaminated with hazardous substances, and may be eligible for federal or state brownfields funding.

As you'll learn at this workshop, brownfields redevelopment can help create local jobs, and spur downtown revitalization projects by attracting private investment. You'll also learn how to identify brownfields, finance cleanup activities, and turn contaminated property into a source of economic vitality for your community.

Community and economic developers, regional planners, local public officials, non-profits, environmental consultants and private firms involved in community revitalization projects or cleanups are encouraged to attend. The workshop begins at 3:30 p.m., November 5, with registration, a tour of a local project, and an opening reception. Sessions begin at 8:00 a.m., on November 6, and will be completed by 4:40 p.m.

**Brownfields Revitalization
November 5-6, 2008
Hotel Fort Des Moines
1000 Walnut Street
Des Moines, Iowa**

Registration fee (includes continental breakfast and lunch):

\$50 private entity

\$30 local government/public entity

For more information and to register on line:

<http://www.nado.org/rf/innocenters/brownfieldstrain.php>

2008 Iowa Grant Symposium

The Iowa Office of Grants Enterprise Management, in cooperation with IARC and a number of colleague organizations, is sponsoring a one-day workshop on financial and administrative management of federal funding contracts. The workshop will be lead by representatives of the US Department of Labor, and will include topics such as budgeting, cash management, cost principles, cost allocation, procurement, reporting and monitoring, project close out, and more.

**Financial and Administrative Grant Management
Offered by the US Department of Labor
December 16, 2008
Iowa State Center, Scheman Building
Ames, Iowa**

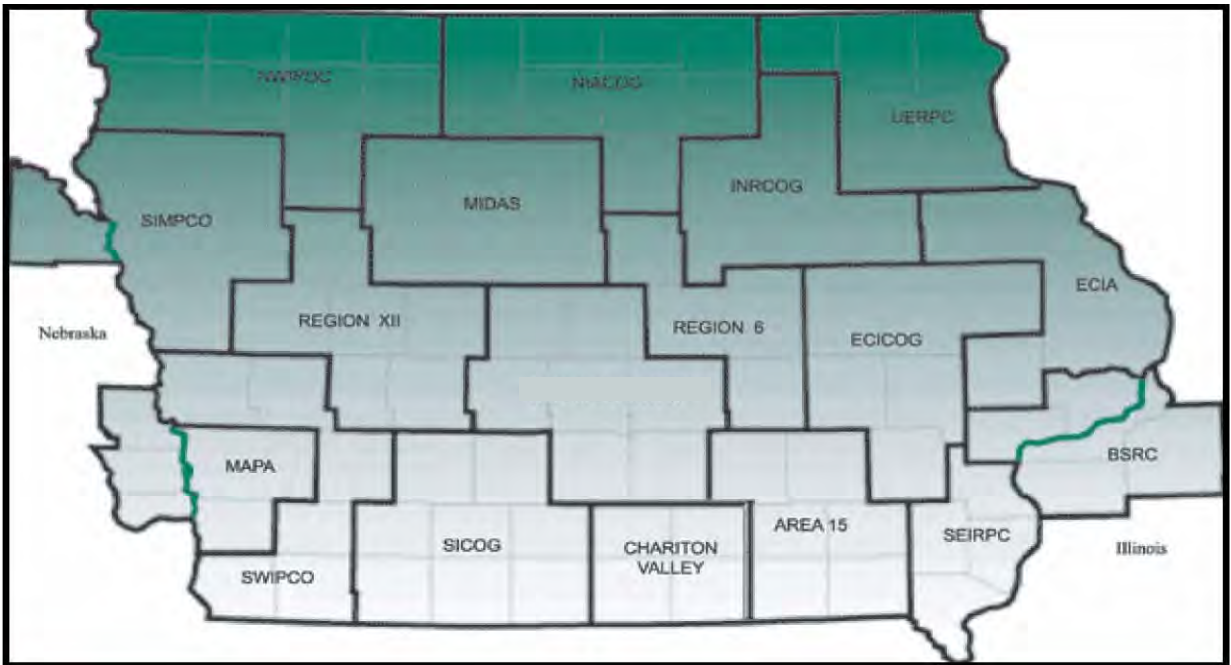
Registration fee (includes deluxe continental breakfast, lunch and breaks): \$75

For more information and to register on line:

<http://www.iagrants.com/index.php?get=symposium>

Offered in cooperation with the Iowa Office of Grants Enterprise Management, IARC, and the: Iowa Association of Counties, Iowa Commission on Volunteer Services, Iowa Council of Foundations, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Finance Authority, Iowa League of Cities, Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center, Iowa Office of Drug Control Policy, Iowa Workforce Development, LT&J Consulting, and State Library of Iowa.

www.iarccog.com



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 Counties
www.bistateonline.org



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www.ecia.org

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www.swipco.org

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Iowa Association of
Regional Councils

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For more than thirty-nine years, COGs have been growing Iowa's communities, Iowa's businesses, Iowa's leaders, Iowa's regions, and Iowa's future.





IARCCOURIER

Winter 2008

GROWING IOWA'S REGIONS
FOR OVER 35 YEARS

Volume 1, Issue 1

Inside this issue:

Revolving Loan Funds 2

Housing 2

Transportation Planning 3

Workforce Development 3

IARC Return On Investment 4

IARC Contact Information 5

What are COGs 6

Regional Councils Continue to Grow Iowa

In the early to mid 70's, city and county officials in the state of Iowa were meeting across city and county lines to discuss the benefits of regional cooperation. The result of those meetings and discussions is the seventeen regional planning agencies known as Iowa's Councils of Governments (COGs). Iowa's COGs have been as dynamic as the state itself over those thirty-some years. People, programs, even boundaries have changed. But the commitment to regional cooperation remains steadfast, and the meetings and discussions continue.

The Iowa Association of Regional Councils is the statewide association serving Iowa's COGs. In this inaugural issue of the association's newsletter, we hope to show you just how far we have come in the last thirty years. We've highlighted recent accomplishments in transportation planning, housing development, workforce development, public transit, economic development, and in expanding opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation.



We'll continue to highlight accomplishments in future quarterly newsletters. More importantly, we hope that the newsletter expands that forum for discussion that COGs so uniquely provide. We look forward to your comments and suggestions, and to the opportunity to continue to tell you the story of Iowa's Council of Governments.

Chairperson
MJ Broomfield



The *IARCourier* is a quarterly electronic publication of the Iowa Association of Regional Councils.

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Region 2 Transit Meets Employers Needs

The North Iowa Area Council of Governments - Region 2 Transit has expanded its service hours to meet a growing demand for evening and weekend transit service for area employers.

With the financial support from the Iowa Department of Transportation, Job Access Reverse Commute Program (JARC), Region 2 Transit was able to expand its hours of service in Cerro Gordo County by offering 6:00 p.m.—10:00 p.m. transit service Monday - Friday and from 8:00 a.m. - noon on Saturdays.

As a result of this service,

Region 2 Transit has seen a marked increase in its ridership. In fact due to the popularity of the service, Region 2 is currently negotiating with area



industries to add another bus to the route.

The goals of the program (JARC) are to improve access to transportation services to

employment and employment related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals, and to transport residents of urbanized areas and nonurbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities. Toward this goal, the Federal Transit Administration provides financial assistance for transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the transportation needs of eligible low-income individuals, and of reverse commuters regardless of income.

ECIA Keeps the Region Revolving



ECIA assisted Mi-T-M Corp. of Peosta, with a \$4,000,000 Loan

Through its subsidiary E.C.I.A. Business Growth, Inc., ECIA set a record in assistance to local businesses in 2007. With the approval of **\$1.9 million** in EDA loans, ECIA Business Growth expanded the total funded loans to **\$6.6 million**. Current programs include:

- EDA Revolving Loan Fund
- Jackson County Revolving Loan Fund (for Jackson County projects only)
- Dubuque County Intermediary Revolving Loan Fund (for Dubuque County projects outside city limits of Dubuque)
- ECIA Regional Revolving Loan Fund



The programs provide similar benefits and include:

providing gap financing, meeting local match dollar requirement for IDED funding, creating jobs and wealth, stimulating and diversifying the local economy, and generating spin-offs.

Projects funded in 2007, which helped set the \$6.6 million record, included five SBA loans and two EDA RLF Loans.

Region XII Builds Housing & Partnerships



Vision Health Care, Inc. of Dubuque, received a \$386,000 loan through ECIA

Traditionally Iowa's COGs were involved in housing either as administrators of regional housing authorities (RHA) or as operators of rehabilitation programs. But as interest in issues facing Iowa's housing stock increased in the 1990s, so did the involvement of its councils of governments.

Region XII COG is a shining example of the COG's expanded role in addressing Iowa's housing needs. The COG founded the RHA in the 1970's, but soon spun it off. It wasn't until 1991 that the COG applied for and received its first housing rehabilitation award - a \$100,000 grant from USDA for small emergency repairs to low-income homeowners.

Since then, Region XII COG has administered \$19.3 million in housing funds for a variety of uses. These include:

- \$9.4 million to

- rehabilitate 1,042 owner-occupied units
- \$1.7 million for flood relief to 138 families
- \$300,000 to rehabilitate 22 rental units
- \$5.3 million to provide downpayment assistance to 290 families
- \$1 million to provide financing for the construction of 37 affordable single-family homes

providing the region with a base for housing endeavors in future years when state and federal funding many not be available. Most projects also have a grant component. In fact, much of the assistance is provided as grant to the homeowner.

While programs are designed at the state and federal level for a specific need or purpose, they do not often meet all client needs.

Region XII mitigates these problems by blending funds from various programs. To the homeowner it is one program meeting their housing needs. To the COG, it can be up to five funding sources coming together to jointly provide safe, decent, and sanitary housing.

As housing continues to be challenging, Iowa's COGs continue to rise to the challenge to provide maximum benefit to Iowa's citizens.



- \$600,000 for the construction of 12 new affordable rental units
- \$425,000 for programs of the regional housing trust fund, assisting 100 families
- \$469,300 to acquire and demolish 28 dilapidated and vacant houses

To the extent possible, Region XII COG loans the funds at low interest rates. Repayments are revolved to new beneficiaries each year,



Region XII is completing three Speculative Homes in Conjunction with DMACC

COGs Grow Coalitions

In Spring 2007, four Iowa planning bodies - the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission, the Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance, the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission - completed the Trans Iowa/Illinois Freight Corridor Study. The study analyzed the potential for the Iowa 163, U.S. 63, and U.S. 34 corridors to provide efficient movement of freight from Interstates 35 and 80 in the Des Moines metropolitan area to Interstate 74 in Galesburg, Illinois. The study concluded that the Trans Iowa/Illinois Freight Corridor would provide a viable alternative to the increasingly congested Interstate 74 and Interstate 80 corridor, particularly for freight shipments between the Midwestern and Southeastern sections of the United States.

After the study's completion, the four planning bodies acted quickly to implement the Trans Iowa/Illinois Freight Corridor Consortium, a primary recommendation of the study. The consortium will foster coordinated decision making along the corridor with regard to land use and access management, will promote economic development along the corridor, will encourage the expansion of the remaining two-lane sections of the corridor to four-lanes, and will market the corridor as an alternative to the interstate system.

The Consortium is just one recent example of Iowa's COGs working across jurisdictional boundaries to address issues important to citizens across the state.



Area XV, SEIRPC, and the Des Moines MPO coordinated efforts for the Trans Iowa Illinois Corridor Study

COG Coalition Assists Workforce

During the last year, Region 1 Employment and Training of Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission assisted 234 Iowans with their employment needs. UERPC is one of four COGs that deliver workforce development programs.

Counties. WIA has three programs: Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker. Eligibility for Youth Programs is based on household income guidelines and meeting at least one other



Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission

Region 1 Employment and Training administers two programs: the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and PROMISE JOBS. These programs are cooperatively delivered to the eight-county area of Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek counties.

WIA is jointly administered with ECIA of Dubuque for Dubuque and Delaware

criteria, high school drop out, pregnant or parenting youth, offender, and basic skills deficiencies are among the eligibility criteria. Eligibility for Adult program services is based on household income guidelines, while the Dislocated Worker Program is based on unemployment status. WIA offers assistance through

classroom training, pre-employment and on-the-job training.

PROMISE JOBS is jointly administered with ECIA and Iowa Workforce Development, and is Iowa's "Welfare Reform" program funded by the Department of Human Services and co-administered by Iowa Workforce Development and the WIA Service Providers statewide. Current Iowa legislation limits cash welfare benefits for families to a maximum lifetime limit of 60 months. PROMISE JOBS assists welfare recipients in the development and implementation of an individualized plan for achieving self-sufficiency.



Numerous COGs provide traffic counting services for their member cities and counties



Various COGs provide workforce assistance to their region

IARC's Return On Investment



IARC Members program more than

\$31 million

In transportation dollars annually



Nearly

2 million

Transit Rides were provided by IARC Members in FY 2007

More than

\$4 million

in loans have assisted Iowa Businesses in the past year



IARC members employ more than

225 Iowans

to grow their regions

IARC Members write & administer more than

\$75 million in grants annually



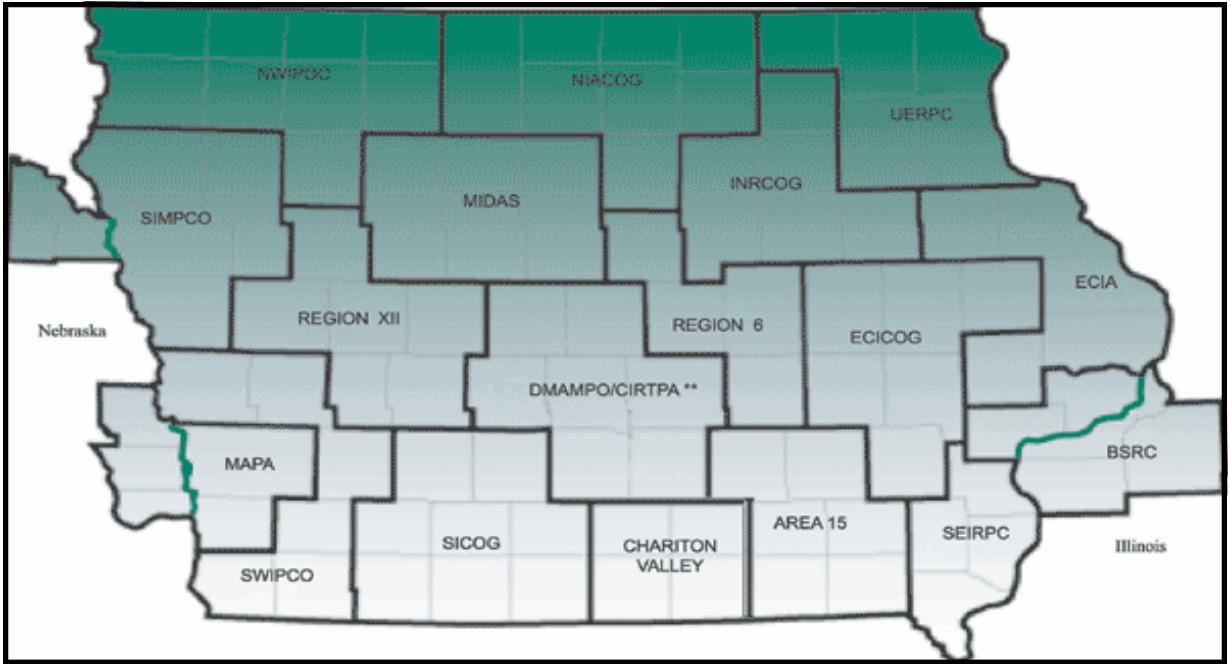
More than

750 housing units

are currently being rehabilitated by IARC members



www.iarccog.com



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Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance

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6200 Aurora Avenue, Suite 300W
Urbandale, Iowa 50322-2866
Phone (515) 334-0075
Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Story, Polk, and Warren Counties
www.dmampo.org/CIRTPA/CIRTPA_index.html

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