

NIACOG NEWS

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NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Oct. 2014 – Nov. 2014

RENTAL HOUSING AS A WORKFORCE CATALYST

After seeing rental housing taking a back seat to owner-occupied housing for years, the tide is turning to see it as an important player in the economic vitality of communities. The reason relates to young professionals.

Rental housing is often the front door (or at least temporary abode) for new young professionals in a community as they build up their credit, ‘check out the community’, or simply prefer renting long term. For that reason, rental housing plays a significant role in the willingness of those young professionals to stay in North Iowa.

With very little new or renovated rental housing, much of the rental housing stock is in fair to poor condition in our region or limited to senior citizens. This trend is affecting our workforce leakage.

As James Fitzpatrick, former CEO of Mercy Medical Center stated, “Follow up conversation with... prospects echoed sentiments that they thoroughly enjoyed our facilities as Mercy Medical Center, enjoyed the amenities that Mason City had to offer, but the rental housing that they occupied overshadowed all the positives, and they chose to take on a position in another community.”

The Multi-Family New Construction program, offered by the Iowa Economic Development Authority, is helping to add some new rental housing in North Iowa. With assistance from this program three projects are currently under (or nearly under) construction in Charles City and Mason City (2). The deadline for the final round just passed with 7 applications being submitted from the NIACOG region.

Unfortunately, the MFNC program is ending; however, the Federal Home Loan Bank has a program that can assist with rental construction and rehabilitation projects.

Additionally, the NIACOG Housing Trust Fund has been able to assist with the rehabilitation of some rented homes, as well as, the construction of rental housing in Clear Lake. A second construction project is also on the horizon for 2015.

We hope that these projects will help to enhance the rental housing available to the workforce in North Iowa!

CONGRATS TERESA!

Teresa Collins (right), Operations Manager, is presented the “Friends of the ARC” award from Senator Amanda Ragan (left). She was presented the award for her twenty plus years of providing outstanding service to ARC members and addressing their transportation needs. The award was part of the ARC’s Annual Meeting and Awards ceremony held at the North Iowa Vocation Center in Mason City. Congratulations Teresa!



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CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANS – SHOULD MY COMMUNITY ADOPT ONE

Often times communities and community officials are busy with day to day governmental operations and may not consider the future replacement of physical infrastructure until it is absolutely necessary to do so. This type of planning can cause issues during the budgeting process because a community may not be properly prepared for large expenditures such as for the sanitary sewer system, road system, etc. Smaller communities can be greatly impacted if something major was to fail and the expense was not anticipated. If the community is unable to borrow the necessary funds, then major issues could continue indefinitely and could cause the community to incur fines from State and/or Federal agencies, especially if the sanitary sewer or water system was affected.



One way to combat these problems is for a community to implement a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). A CIP is a plan that creates orderly and systematic planning for the acquisition, financing, and use of capital improvements. An organized CIP provides for a more effective evaluation of alternatives and solutions than the crisis decision-making process, which was mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Some of the other benefits of adopting a CIP are:

- A CIP allows for more in-depth consideration of hidden costs, which affect a community's operation budget.
- A CIP provides for funding of projects on a priority basis and helps keep governments within required financial bounds.
- A CIP can provide for stable payments and tax rates over a period of time.
- Since a CIP requires different kinds of information and involves multiple-fiscal years for project completion, a CIP developed at a different time than the operating budget will provide for a better understanding of needs and alternatives.
- A good CIP will promote better planning and installation or construction since acquisitions will occur before the crisis happens.

Some communities may not think that they are able to create a CIP because it would be too complicated or time consuming of a process. However the CIP is not designed to be an all-encompassing document, such as a Comprehensive Plan, but rather only deals with the planning and budgeting of projects for a community's physical infrastructure systems. Typical examples of physical infrastructure would include the road system, the sanitary sewer system, the storm sewer system, and the water system. The CIP itself does not need to be a long or elaborate document. Rather, it only needs a list of projects and the projected costs per year for each project. The CIP could be completed with a spreadsheet program such as Microsoft Excel and can be changed to accommodate unforeseen issues or changes in priorities.

A CIP would benefit communities of all sizes because every community must undertake the budgeting process each year and would benefit from additional planning. If you or your community would like more information or have general questions, please contact Chris Diggins at 641-423-0491 or at cdiggins@niacog.org

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY GRANT



The Resource Enhancement and Conservation Education Program (REAP CEP) annually awards \$350,000 for conservation education in Iowa. Plan now for the November 3 grant deadline. The average grant award is approximately \$21,000, and mini-grants for \$3,500 or less are also available. For more information about the application process and the types of programs funded,

go to the REAP Conservation Education website (<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/REAP/REAPFundingaWork/ConservationEducation.aspx>).

For a quick overview, go to <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Portals/idnr/uploads/REAP/files/facts.pdf>

PLANNING CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Registrations are now being accepted for the Upper Midwest APA Planning Conference in Mason City hosted by APA Iowa from October 22nd – 24th, 2014. As you'll see by the incredible conference agenda available on the APA Iowa website, this is a conference you won't want to miss! Some of the conference highlights include:

- **Keynote Speakers:** We are pleased to headline the conference with three phenomenal keynote speakers, Scott Sieper, the Iowa Nice Guy on Wednesday afternoon, Ron Sims, former Deputy Director of HUD at Thursday lunch and Paul Trombino, Iowa DOT Director, at Friday's lunch. You won't want to miss any of these inspirational speakers!
- **Progressive Dinner:** On Wednesday evening you can enjoy a taste of Mason City featuring a progressive dinner with stops at three local restaurants – purchase of ticket required for this event.
- **Reception:** On Thursday evening, you can take in the breathtaking renovation of the Historic Park Inn, the last remaining hotel designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, at the conference reception.
- **New Professionals:** A number of sessions geared toward students and new professionals will be available, including the opportunity to be matched with a conference mentor!
- **Mobile Tours:** Including a Downtown Mason City walking tour, Clear Lake Surf District Tour and a Charles City tour – purchase of ticket required for these events.
- **Session Tracks:** Three session tracks are planned covering Planning in Practice, Health in Planning, and Transportation. See the Conference Registration Packet for the full conference agenda and a listing of all of the incredible speakers.

Online registration, with payment by credit card is available at <http://www.iowa-apa.org/events/conference-information.html>. Paper registrations, with payment by check, are also accepted by mailing in the registration form included in the Conference Registration Packet. The packet is available at [http://www.iowa-apa.org/assets/files/Registration-Packet-Final\(1\).pdf](http://www.iowa-apa.org/assets/files/Registration-Packet-Final(1).pdf)

COMMUNITY VISIONING

Iowa State Extension, DOT and Trees Forever offer a program called Community Visioning, meant to be a Transportation Enhancement program. Trees Forever provides facilitators to walk community participants through a visioning process. ISU provides design interns to work with professionally hired landscape architects. Consultants develop a transportation plan, while ISU does community assessments. The community will receive conceptual drawings and feasibility study.

Communities **MUST** have the following:

- Population of 10,000 or fewer
- Location on a state highway or a scenic byway.
- \$2,000 toward implementation of a project identified in the process.
- Steering committee in advance of the application

Applications are due Oct 24 (postmark) to Trees Forever. More information is available at www.communityvisioning.org. If it has been a number of years since a community participated in the program, they can apply again.

GREEN STREETS

The Iowa Economic Development Authority is offering a FREE design consultation service as a resource to help develop high performing community facilities proposals that meet the Iowa Green Streets Criteria and stormwater project proposals that emphasize green infrastructure practices with an emphasis on infiltration. In order to provide these FREE design consultation services to as many perspective community facility and stormwater projects as possible, the Iowa Economic Development Authority needs to know how many cities or counties are looking to submit a community facility or stormwater project proposal and where the potential projects are located.

If you are aware of plans to prepare a community facility or stormwater project CDBG grant proposal and are interested in receiving design consultation services, please contact Chris Diggins at 641-423-0491 or cdiggins@niacog.org



North Iowa Area Council of Governments
 525 6th Street SW
 Mason City, IA 50401-5058
 641-423-0491 fax: 641-423-1637
 www.niacog.org

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Calendar of Events

October

- 8 – Hazmat** - NIACOG Office, 1:00 PM
- 8 – Transportation Policy Board** - NIACOG Office, 2:30 PM
- 13 – NIACOG Executive Committee** – NIACOG Office, 12:00 PM
- 22-24 – Upper Midwest APA Planning Conference**, Mason City



November

- 10 – NIACOG Board Meeting** – Bennigan’s Restaurant, Clear Lake, 6:00 PM Dinner, 7:00 PM Meeting
- 11 – Veteran’s Day** – Office Closed
- 21 – North Iowa City Clerks Association Meeting** – NIACOG Office, 9:30 AM
- 27-28 – Thanksgiving Holiday** – Office Closed



NIACOG STAFF 641-423-0491		
Joe Myhre	Executive Director	Ext. 11
Kevin Kramer	Transit Administrator	Ext. 17
Jodi Wyborny	Administrative Assistant	Ext. 10
Chris Diggins	Local Assistance Director	Ext. 15
Steve Wendt	Community Dev. Planner	Ext. 13
Todd Hull	Maintenance Supervisor	Ext. 24
Teresa Collins	Operations Manager	Ext. 22
Kris Urdahl	Fiscal Officer	Ext. 12
Myrtle Nelson	Senior Planner	Ext. 16
Matt O’Brien	Planner	Ext. 14
Laurel Clement	Planner	Ext. 27
Jennifer Butler	Planner	Ext. 18
Dana Heimbuch	Comm. Dev. Planner	Ext. 28
Email – first letter of first name followed by last name @niacog.org (i.e. jmyhre@niacog.org)		