

AREA 15 REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

NEWSLINE

**Ottumwa awarded
“Iowa Thriving Communities” designation**

The Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) and Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) announced the newly designated 2026 Iowa Thriving Communities: Clear Lake, Ottumwa, Sioux Center, Urbandale and Waukon.

“Housing is the foundation of upward economic opportunity, and when all Iowans have access to affordable homes, families, communities and businesses can truly thrive,” said IEDA/IFA Director Debi Durham. These communities have stepped up as leaders in creating housing opportunities for all income levels.

Now in its third year, the Iowa Thriving Communities initiative recognizes forward-thinking communities that are proactively addressing workforce housing needs. Designated communities complete a highly competitive application process, including a live pitch from teams of local partners to a panel from IEDA and IFA.

Selected communities demonstrate best practices in planning, financial support, targeted development, leadership and employer engagement. They also invest in broader community assets like public health and the arts. Communities previously recognized through the initiative are already seeing strong results, with increased developer interest and significant public and private investments in housing.

In addition to valuable scoring advantages for the Federal Housing Tax Credit and Workforce Housing Tax Credits, HOME and Community Catalyst programs (effective through 2026), designated communities will gain statewide and national visibility as models for successful housing strategies.

“Thriving Communities” continued



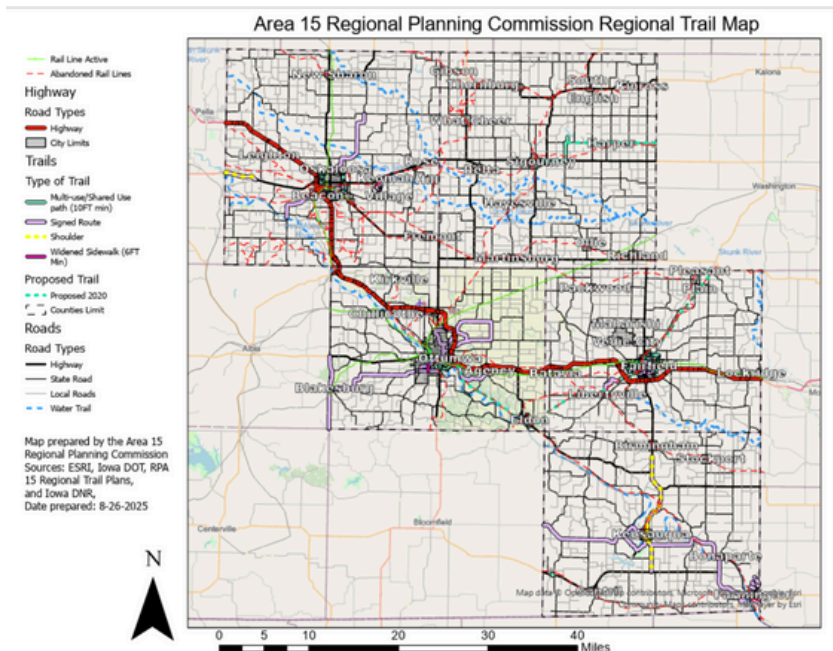
“THIS RECOGNITION AFFIRMS THE POWER OF OUR PARTNERSHIPS AND THE MOMENTUM BEHIND MISSION 500, OUR GOAL TO DEVELOP 500 HOMES BY 2030,” SAID OTTUMWA MAYOR RICK JOHNSON. “WE’RE ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL TO OUR EMPLOYERS WHO’VE CHAMPIONED HOUSING AS VITAL TO WORKFORCE GROWTH. THIS DESIGNATION GIVES US A PLATFORM TO SHARE OUR STORY AND BUILD ON OUR PROGRESS.”

There are 21 designated Thriving Communities in Iowa, including Ottumwa and Oskaloosa in the Area 15 Region.

[Read full article >](#)



GIS MAPPING SERVICES AVAILABLE



GIS mapping can be used to create transportation, routes, radius, zoning, recreational, parks, and many more options. This is an example of a GIS map which is part of the update to the regional trails plan.

Area 15 RPC recently updated our GIS software and would like to provide mapping services for transportation maps or possibly other mapping needs. If you have any questions, please email hector.hernandez@area15rpc.com or call 641-814-8401.



Newly Elected Officials Training

A law passed during the 2025 legislative session requires all newly elected officials and individuals appointed to government bodies—such as library boards, planning and zoning commissions, boards of adjustment, and similar city-level entities—to complete training on the responsibilities and requirements of open meetings and open records laws. This training must be completed within 90 days of taking the oath of office or beginning official duties. For a schedule of training events please go to: ipib.iowa.gov/trainings/ipib-training-newly-elected-and-appointed-officials



2025 HousingIowa Conference

Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) and Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) hosted the 2025 HousingIowa Conference held in Cedar Rapids on September 3-4. The conference focused on how housing is a driver of economic opportunity for Iowa families, communities, and businesses.

The conference began with the 18th annual HousingIowa Awards, a statewide recognition program that celebrates exceptional leadership and innovation in affordable housing throughout Iowa. Homes for Iowa and their affordable single-family homes were honored with the 'Single-Family Development' award. Nineteen (19) Homes for Iowa houses have been purchased and delivered to the Area 15 region since 2021.

RPC Housing Director Matt Naumann participated in several conference sessions, including the Local Housing Trust Fund (LHTF) roundtable, where representatives from housing trust funds statewide exchanged insights and best practices. The session on Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) provided a useful overview of this powerful housing development incentive.

Area 15 RPC to Assist Fairfield with Wastewater Project Planning

Area 15 RPC staff will be assisting the City of Fairfield to complete environmental review and write a grant application for wastewater collection system improvements. The RPC will prepare an application for the Iowa Community Development Block Grant program.

Check this out!

A presentation on the state's 'Iowa Profile' data tool explored how to navigate this new comprehensive data resource is available at www.welcomehomeia.com/iowaprofile/

DEADLINE APPROACHING

CDBG WATER/SEWER GRANT DEADLINE: MARCH 1, 2026

The next deadline for submitting applications to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Water/Sewer Fund is March 1, 2026. This program provides essential funding for communities to complete critical water and sewer infrastructure projects.

If your city is considering improvements such as sewer lining, water main replacement, or other system upgrades, now is the time to begin the application process. These projects require much time to plan and prepare, and early coordination is key to submitting a competitive application.

Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is here to help! Cities in our region interested in applying are encouraged to reach out as soon as possible to begin discussing project scope, eligibility, and next steps.

Contact Brandon Dicks at
brandon.dicks@area15rpc.com
or call (641)814-8404



REAP GRANT APPLICATION SUBMITTED FOR FARMINGTON

Area 15 Regional Planning Commission recently assisted the City of Farmington in preparing and submitting a grant application to the Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program.

The proposed project focuses on trail and erosion control improvements at Indian Lake Park, helping preserve natural resources while enhancing recreational access for residents and visitors.

Area 15 RPC is proud to support local conservation and outdoor recreation efforts through the REAP program, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact this project will have on the community.

D.R.I.V.E (DRIVING REGIONAL IOWA VETERANS EVERYDAY)

10-15 transit is a state and federally funded public transportation system. It serves the Region 15 and 17 which include Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lucas, Mahaska, Monroe, Van Buren, Wapello, and Wayne Counties. All services are open to the public, including people with disabilities, elderly, students, children, etc. Riders may use the bus for nearly any purpose: grocery shopping, medical and dental visits, congregate meals, going to work or school or personal business.

10-15 Transit runs a program D.R.I.V.E (Driving Regional Iowa Veterans Everyday) which provides free transportation services to our veterans for essential services (groceries, medical, human service appointments, etc.). 10-15 Transit is needing support funding the D.R.I.V.E program. This program has been growing in ridership and financial support is needed due to the increase. 10-15 transit philosophy is simple, "they carried us and now we need to carry them", "We don't want any VETERANS forgotten". If you have any transit service questions, please contact 10-15 Transit 641-683-2024 or 800-227-6395 email Jay Transit director jay@1015transit.com.

DONATE TODAY



[Donate](#)

REDI INVESTMENTS APPROVES LOAN TO SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS EXPANSION IN FAIRFIELD, IA

REDI Investments Inc. is pleased to announce the approval of a new loan investment to support the growth of Rev Family Enterprises, co-owned by John and Donald Revolinski of Fairfield, Iowa. The loan will help finance a major expansion of their natural foods business, Spring Sunrise Natural Foods.

The father and son team plans to construct and equip a new 10,000-square-foot production facility adjacent to their current location at 1820 Jasmine Avenue in Fairfield. The new building will be situated on land owned by John Revolinski and is intended to significantly increase the company's production and distribution capabilities.

Spring Sunrise Natural Foods, established in 2010, specializes in producing high-quality ghee (clarified butter) products crafted for both consumer markets and large-scale ingredient use. Ghee, is made by simmering butter to remove milk solids, resulting in a pure butterfat that is free from lactose and dairy proteins.



This process yields a shelf-stable, flavorful alternative to traditional butter that is ideal for cooking and frying. Spring Sunrise Ghee is sold at grocery and specialty food stores (including Hy-Vee) and is the #3 best seller on Amazon.com.

The new facility will be dedicated to the processing and distribution of Spring Sunrise's natural food products. REDI's loan will specifically fund the purchase of production equipment essential for the new site. Spring Sunrise currently employs 11 staff members (6 full-time equivalent positions) and the expansion is expected to create new opportunities for local job growth and economic development.

REDI is proud to support this dynamic and growing Fairfield-based business and looks forward to its continued success in the natural food industry.

Find them online:
www.springsunrise.com
[@springsunriseghee](https://www.instagram.com/springsunriseghee)

Area 15 RPC Staff Member Accepted into Ottumwa Leadership Academy

Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is proud to share that staff member Brandon Dicks has been accepted into the Ottumwa Leadership Academy. This 10-month program, organized by the Ottumwa Legacy Foundation, is designed to cultivate emerging leaders through a structured curriculum focused on community awareness, professional development, and civic engagement.

Participants engage in monthly full-day sessions, local site visits, and team projects that highlight the region's key sectors, including education, healthcare, government, economic development, and nonprofit services. Brandon's participation will help further strengthen Area 15 RPC's ties with local communities while fostering continued leadership growth within the organization.



Regional Housing Trust Fund Celebrates 15 Years!

The AHEAD Regional Housing Trust Fund board met in September to approve application to the State Housing Trust Fund for \$469,254. All six (6) counties in the housing region agreed to provide local cash match, including Davis (\$1,822), Jefferson (\$3,133), Keokuk (\$2,007), Mahaska (\$4,438), Van Buren (\$1,441), and Wapello (\$7,087). The AHEAD RHTF will contribute an additional \$97,386 in cash match. The total project is \$586,568. Awards will be announced in December 2025. If funded, the program will be available to the 6-county region starting January 1, 2026. Eligible projects include owner and rental housing repair and new construction. "The most common use of the program is from individual homeowners for repairs such as roofs, plumbing, electric, heating, and air conditioning" said Housing Director Matt Naumann.

The program benefits Iowa families that meet HUD's low to moderate income limits. To apply go to www.area15rpc.com/rhtf. AHEAD RHTF has been in operation since 2011 and has provided funding to rehabilitate over 500 homes, build 51 new homes/apartments, and prevent over 700 households from becoming homeless. Contact Matt Naumann for more information at 641-814-8400 or matt.naumann@area15rpc.com.



BLOOMFIELD AWARDED ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANT FOR DOWNTOWN LIGHTING PROJECT

The City of Bloomfield has been awarded \$30,000 in grant funding through the Iowa Energy Efficiency Block Grant Program to support the next phase of its downtown revitalization efforts. The grant will fund the replacement of four outdated, high-energy-use streetlights along Jefferson Street, just west of the town square, with new energy-efficient LED fixtures.

This targeted upgrade complements the city's broader strategy to modernize infrastructure while preserving the charm and character of its historic downtown. The new LED fixtures will be thoughtfully designed to blend seamlessly with Bloomfield's historic streetscape, ensuring the aesthetic integrity of the area remains intact.

This project builds on previous improvements, including the successful replacement of 20 streetlights around the square with LED technology. Additional investments in the downtown district have included sidewalk replacements, façade repairs, installation of bio-retention cells, and upcoming plans to resurface key streets — all contributing to a cohesive and vibrant downtown environment.

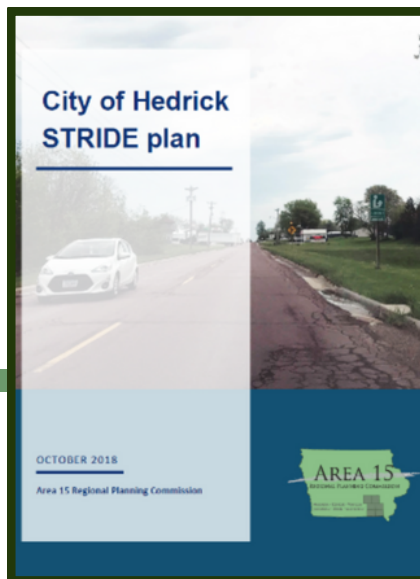
The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission authored the grant application on behalf of the City of Bloomfield and will also administer the project. Funding is provided by the Iowa Economic Development Authority, with the City contributing in-kind local match support.

These ongoing efforts underscore Bloomfield's commitment to energy efficiency, historic preservation, and community-focused revitalization, reinforcing the city's strong sense of place and preparing the downtown for a bright, sustainable future.

SMALL TOWN RURAL IOWA DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT (STRIDE) PLAN

RPC STAFF CONTINUES FEDERAL GRANT TRAINING

Iowa Economic Development Authority is now requiring all grant administrators to receive monthly training on the requirements of the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The CDBG program is a very important source of funding for our communities for infrastructure projects for water, sewer, stormwater, community facilities, and downtown revitalization (up to \$500,000). There are many rules and regulations involved with the CDBG program that must be followed and IEDA will only allow trained staff to administer these grants. Area 15 RPC continues to receive this training so that we can deliver these important programs to our communities!



Sigourney Stride Plan (2016)
& Hedrick Stride Plan (2018)



If your community has fewer than 5,000 residents and could use assistance with transportation planning, Area 15 RPC will soon begin work on the Stride Plan. This program is designed to help small communities create a comprehensive transportation strategy that addresses current and future needs.

The Stride Plan is a program developed by Regional Planning Affiliation 15 (RPA 15) to provide transportation planning assistance to small cities within our region. The goal is to identify transportation projects where Area 15 can assist communities in securing funding.

The plan will review existing transportation infrastructure, identify top priorities for improvement, and outline future projects. It will also evaluate project costs, assess available funding sources, and explore potential opportunities for financial assistance.

Area 15 RPC will coordinate meetings, collect and analyze data, prepare the final plan, and ensure each participating community receives a completed copy. Please note that only one community can be selected for each application cycle.

If you are interested in learning more about the Stride Plan, contact Hector Hernandez at hector.hernandez@area15rpc.com or call 641-684-6551 by December 1st, 2025.



Safe Routes to Schools Funding Available Through Area 15

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission (RPA 15) is now accepting applications for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) projects under the Statewide Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside Program. These projects help create safer walking and biking options for students in grades K–12 by addressing identified hazards within two miles of schools.

It is important to note that not every sidewalk project qualifies as an SRTS project. To be considered, applications must include specific Safe Routes to School information as outlined in Section 5.1.5 of the program guidelines. Eligible projects require close coordination with schools, an understanding of current student travel patterns, and a commitment to measure the project's long-term success. Helpful resources can be found at saferoutesdata.org.

RPA 15 applications are due April 1 and will be reviewed in April or May by the Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Board. RPA 15 receives approximately \$260,000 annually for projects, with a required 20% local match. In addition to SRTS, other eligible TA projects include multi-use trails, water trails, and environmental mitigation activities. Safe Routes to School applications are especially competitive at the state level. Statewide applications are typically due in May, with awards announced in August and funds becoming available in October. These also carry a match requirement.

The most recent RPA 15 Safe Routes to School award was granted in 2016 to the City of Oskaloosa. Collaborative applications such as those between a school district and a city or county engineer tend to be especially strong.

For more information or application assistance, please contact Hector Hernandez at hector.hernandez@area15rpc.com or call 641-814-8401.

Funding Opportunities



The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) has announced the release of several Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) for communities and eligible entities interested in pursuing transportation-related projects. Applications are now being accepted for three programs: **the Federal Recreational Trails (FRT) Program, the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP), and the Statewide Transportation Alternatives (TA Set-Aside/TAP) Program.** All applications are due annually October 1, with award announcements in January. Now is the best time to begin planning for next year's application cycle.

The FRT Program supports the development and maintenance of recreational trails and trail-related facilities. ICAAP provides funding for projects that aim to reduce transportation-related emissions and improve air quality across Iowa. Meanwhile, the TA Set-Aside/TAP Program supports a wide range of community-based projects, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, historic transportation preservation, and Safe Routes to School initiatives.

Communities interested in applying are encouraged to begin planning early and review the application materials thoroughly. More information and links to each program's NOFO and application instructions can be found at the Iowa DOT's website:

TA Set-Aside/TAP

iowadot.gov/transportation-development/local-systems/grant-programs/transportation-alternatives

FRT Program

iowadot.gov/modes-travel/trails/federal-state-recreational-trails

ICAAP

iowadot.gov/transportation-development/local-systems/grant-programs/iowa-clean-air-attainment-program-icaap

Need help?

Hector Hernandez at hector.hernandez@area15rpc.com
or call 641-814-8401



Technology
Manufacturing
Bioprocessing
Renewable Energy
Automation Tech

Low-Interest Loans Available to Support Local Businesses

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is offering low-interest financing to help new and expanding businesses grow and thrive through its Revolving Loan Fund (RLF), established by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration.

These loans are designed to encourage job creation and retention, with a special focus on industries such as technology and advanced manufacturing, bioprocessing, renewable energy, and automation technology.

Eligible uses include the purchase of equipment, furniture, and fixtures, as well as up to 50% of working capital or inventory needs. Funding amounts are tied directly to employment impact, providing up to \$25,000 per job created or retained, with a maximum loan size of \$250,000.

The RLF serves as "gap financing" for projects that may not qualify for full funding through traditional lenders, helping bridge the difference and move projects forward.

For more information or to apply, contact Chris Bowers at 641-814-8403.

Local Foundation Grants Available for Community Projects

Local community foundations are a valuable resource for funding smaller-scale projects that make a big difference in our towns and counties. Area 15 (RPC) staff are here to help communities plan projects and prepare competitive applications for these grant opportunities.

Foundations serving our region include:

- Davis County Community Foundation
- The Greater Jefferson County Foundation
- Keokuk County Community Endowment Foundation (KCCEF)
- Mahaska County Community Foundation
- The Community Foundation of Van Buren County
- Wapello County Foundation

Each foundation offers an annual application cycle and typically accepts proposals from nonprofit and government organizations. We encourage communities to contact Area 15 RPC staff early in the process to ensure the best chance of success.

For more information, contact Brandon Dicks at brandon.dicks@area15rpc.com or call 641-814-8404.



2025 NATIONAL REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE

The 2025 National Regional Transportation hosted by National Association of Development of Organization was held July 15-17 in downtown Des Moines, brought together transportation planners, DOT staff, and local partners for three days of collaboration and learning.

The Transportation Planner of Area 15 RPC, Hector Hernandez, attended the conference. This transportation-focused conference includes a mixture of panels, workshops, and discussion-based sessions, with a range of transportation-related topics open to individuals with years of experience in the field and those who are just beginning their transportation careers.

Topics discussed were Rural Resources + Funding Opportunities, Innovative Public Transit, Regional Safety Planning, Rural Safety Counter Measures, and Bicycle + Pedestrian Planning.

2025 IOWA TRAILS SUMMIT CEDAR FALLS, IA

This month, Hector Hernandez, Transportation Planner, attended the Iowa Trails Summit in Cedar Falls, where planners, advocates, and local government leaders shared strategies and success stories of trail development across Iowa. Sessions covered different topics like the success of Cedar Falls trail network, fundraising strategies, land acquisition, effective committees, and water trail development.

The summit was timely, as Area 15 RPC is currently updating the RPA 15 Regional Trail Plan. The plan outlines existing multiuse and water trails in the region and provides strategies for future trail development.

Information from the Iowa Trails Summit will support the planning process by offering practical guidance on structure, implementation, and coordination.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more, please contact Hector Hernandez hector.hernandez@area15rpc.com or call 641-814-8401.

Thank You for Supporting Area 15 RPC!

Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is grateful to all the cities and counties in our region that renewed their annual membership. This year, we are proud to report a 95% participation rate among our 50 cities and 6 counties—a strong show of regional collaboration.

Your membership makes a real difference. It allows our staff to be available when you call with questions and ensures we can continue providing valuable technical assistance, from project development to grant writing. Together, we're building stronger communities and a more connected region. Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to regional planning!

AGENCY | BARNES CITY | BATAVIA | BEACON |
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COUNTY | KEOKUK COUNTY | MAHASKA COUNTY |
VAN BUREN COUNTY | WAPELLO COUNTY

NEWSLINE

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The preparation of this newsletter was financed in part through federal funds provided by the Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, the Iowa Economic Development Authority and the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.

AREA 15
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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