

CARES FUNDING AVAILABLE TO CITIES AND COUNTIES

CDBG-CV CARES ACT Grant Funds

CARES Act grant funds are still available through the State of Iowa for non-entitlement communities/counties (population under 50,000). Eligible applicants are cities and counties in Iowa. Primary funding activities include:

- Public facilities/ public spaces
- Public Wifi/ broadband access
- Commercial façade improvements
- Food bank/food program assistance
- Microenterprise assistance
- Housing conversion
- Daycare assistance

Activities funded with CDBG-CV (Community Development Block Grant / Coronavirus) funds must be determined to be CDBG eligible and meet one of three national objectives:

- Benefit low to moderate income persons
- Meet an urgent need
- Prevention and elimination of slum and blight

All projects must be able to be completed and have all funds drawn down by July 20, 2023.

Please contact Chris Bowers at 641-814-8403 or chris.bowers@area15rpc.com for more information

HOLLY BERG RECOGNIZED FOR SERVICE

Congratulations to Area 15 RPC Senior Planner, **Holly Berg**, this year's recipient of the Iowa League of Cities' Rhonda Wood Smith Award. Holly was presented the award during the annual conference awards banquet in September. The Rhonda Wood Smith Award was created to recognize exemplary work of young city officials and those new to city government. Additional award criteria include: innovation, bold leadership, commitment and sacrifice. Holly was elected to the Ottumwa City Council in 2018, and has been an active volunteer and advocate for the community since moving to the community in 2011. Holly spends much of her free time implementing projects for the many boards she sits on, including: Main Street Ottumwa, Meet Ottumwa (Convention & Visitor's Bureau), and the Ottumwa Area Arts Council.



DIGITAL MARKETING ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESS

"I believe that the work they did with our website will really help to drive traffic as well as increase our presence online. I did not have a very great understanding of SEO and Meta descriptions, and they helped educate me on how they work and how to maintain them going forward."

-Michael Glesener, Wood Iron Grille

Area 15 RPC's Digital Marketing Assistance program is continuing to accept new businesses. The program helps businesses with digital marketing needs such as website development, social media strategies, photography, digital menus, and online ordering. This program is funded by the CARES Act through the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Since October 2020, 30 area businesses are complete, with 17 more in progress, and 11 pending assignment.

Funding for this program will be available through June 2022. For more information, please contact Holly Berg at holly.berg@area15rpc.com -or - 641-814-8402.

AHEAD RHTF FUNDS CONSTRUCTION EDUCATION

In December of 2020, Indian Hills Community College (IHCC) and Ottumwa Community School District (OCSD) approached the AHEAD Regional Trust Fund with a big idea—the creation of a Construction Technology Program at the Ottumwa High School.. Students would gain hands-on knowledge and skills while constructing a new home in Ottumwa.



ABOVE—First home under construction.. November 2021

LEFT—Ground Breaking Ceremony July, 2021

Seeking assistance with initial funding for the project, OCSD applied for a grant from AHEAD RHTF. After a spirited debate, the RHTF Board of Directors awarded **\$100,000** grant to OCSD. The RHTF grant was coupled with a \$100,000 grant from the Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation (ORLF). RHTF and ORLF participation will allow the Construction Technology Program to operate as a revolving fund, using the proceeds from each home built to subsidize the following year's home.

Construction on the 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom single family house began in August 2021. Students who complete the 2-year program will graduate with both a high school diploma and an Indian Hills Construction Technology Diploma.

ELDON AWARDED EMERGENCY CDBG FUNDING

On the evening of June 24, 2021 Eldon received an unprecedented rainfall that resulted in a severe flash flood. Between nine and twelve inches fell across the drainage area in just a couple of hours, causing Chippewa Creek to rise more rapidly than anyone can recall. The flash flood carried a huge volume of water and debris through the deep stream channel, causing significant damages to the City's sanitary sewer system.

Moments after the storm, the City's public works director noticed that the flooding destroyed an aerial sanitary sewer crossing and undermined another aerial crossing 500 feet upstream. The aerial crossing that was wiped out was recently lined as part of the scope of Eldon's ongoing sewer and lagoon improvements project, funded by CDBG and SRF. The upstream aerial crossing was also damaged in the flood, but not to the point of failure. As a remediation plan that reduces exposure to future failures, the engineer proposed installing a new sewer connection beneath approximately 750 feet of streets to connect the existing sewer line that will bypass the washed-out crossing. To prevent failure of the other aerial creek crossing, the engineer has proposed encasing the exposed pipe with reinforced concrete and adding large erosion stone around the affected stream bank to prevent further erosion.

The engineer provided a preliminary scope of work, the contractor working on the CDBG/SRF project provided cost estimates for the work, and Wapello County Emergency Management Coordinator, Tim Richmond, provided photographs of the damage. RPC staff worked quickly with the City and engineer to identify sources of funds to pay for the extra work. Though the Governor issued a state disaster declaration for these storms, it did not trigger a federal disaster declaration. In mid-July the Iowa DNR's SRF team had a meeting to discuss these remedies proposed by the engineer. The SRF team ultimately decided that the new proposed work cannot be funded under the current SRF project due to the level of environmental review completed for the SRF loan.

With this knowledge, the RPC prepared a request for emergency CDBG funding from the Iowa Economic Development Authority's Opportunities and Threats (OT) program on behalf of the City. The request of \$115,200 was approved, in full, in mid-August, and the engineer immediately returned to Eldon to begin final designs on that work. Coincidentally, with that work being in the creek, the engineer and public works director noticed an odor coming from the creek. They traced



PHOTO: Eldon Aerial Sewer Crossing Destroyed
Wapello County Emergency Management

ELDON AWARDED EMERGENCY CDBG FUNDING (CONTINUED)

the creek and found that the flood had completely washed out a sanitary sewer manhole near the creek!

The engineer took some photos and prepared another set of preliminary emergency repairs that would create a bypass to abandon the damaged section near the creek. Using additional cost estimates provided by the contractor, the RPC prepared an amendment to the CDBG-OT contract for an extra \$90,000 in emergency repair funds. This amendment request was approved in September and RPC staff have been working with staff from IEDA, Iowa DNR, and the State Historic Preservation Office to complete a supplemental environmental review. As the “finding of no significant impact” remained the same as the environmental assessment prepared for the original CDBG work, no further publication of a FONSI notice was required for the additional scope of work. The contractor is expected to start on emergency repair work in early November with repairs to be complete before temperatures dip below freezing consistently.



PHOTO: Eldon Aerial Sewer Crossing Damaged
Wapello County Emergency Management

IDNR DERELICT BUILDING PROGRAM

Funding is available for Cities with populations of 5,000 or less to address derelict commercial or public buildings within their jurisdictions. Cities may use the funding to improve the attractiveness of their jurisdictions by renovating or deconstructing derelict buildings that meet the program's criteria. Funding may also be available for assistance with the following activities related to the property: asbestos inspection, asbestos removal, structural engineering analysis, and phase I and II environmental assessments.

The purpose of the Derelict Building program is to reuse building materials and prevent them from ending up in the land-fill. To be eligible: the buildings must be commercial or public buildings that are owned by the city or county, are not on National Register of Historic Places, and have been vacant for six months or more. To have a successful application: cities and counties should have a plan for reusing the site or building and identified reuse opportunities of the building materials of the derelict structure.

The next application deadline is **February 25, 2022** and application materials can be found on the DNR website at: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Land-Quality/Waste-Planning-Recycling/Derelict-Building-Program>

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission has assisted several communities prepare successful applications. If your city or county is interested in the DNR Derelict Building Program and has questions or is interested in assistance preparing an application, please contact Chris Kukla at chris.kukla@area15rpc.com or 641-814-8401.

CITY CODIFICATION SERVICES

Iowa Code section 380.8 requires cities re-codify every five years. This ensures that the codebook is up-to-date and that changes are properly documented. The RPC can provide codification services on a contractual basis. The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission has over 20 years' experience in providing codification services to cities within the region. In the past five years the RPC has helped 19 cities update their city codes.

The Area 15 RPC maintains a model code of ordinances through consultation with an attorney which is current with the Iowa Code. The RPC will work with the city clerk to prepare a new Code of Ordinances. Chapters from the model code may be added or removed from the city's code depending on the individual city's needs, ordinances specific to the city will be added based on the city's latest ordinances and amendments. RPC will provide a draft code to the city for review, and upon completion of review discuss any revisions requested by the city. RPC will then prepare a final version of the code incorporating the revisions and assist with adoption procedures.

If your city is interested in re-codification please contact Chris Kukla at chris.kukla@area15rpc.com or 641-814-8401.

OTTUMWA RAIL STUDY COMPLETED

In June 2019, RPC staff prepared a grant application to the Iowa Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant Program (RRLG) on behalf of the Ottumwa Economic Development Corporation [now known as the Greater Ottumwa Partners in Progress (GOPIP)]. A grant of \$80,000 was awarded with \$20,000 matched by GOPIP. The project is to explore relocating an existing railroad-truck transload facility located between downtown and the riverfront.



PHOTO: Ottumwa Rail Port—Brad Grefe

As downtown and riverfront revitalization efforts have progressed throughout the years, maneuvering trucks through downtown has become more difficult—particularly near the railroad tracks where quiet zone medians are installed. With the City's long-term vision of complete riverfront redevelopment, access to the rail port will become more difficult. The dedicated switching railroad is important to Ottumwa's economic growth, so GOPIP pursued the study to see if it was feasible to relocate the facility to a more industrialized zone away from downtown near Iowa Ave.

The RPC assisted GOPIP to administer the study, procuring consultant services (French-Reneker-Associates, Fairfield, IA) and develop a preliminary list of perceived impediments to trucks accessing the existing rail port.

French-Reneker performed a market analysis to identify customer needs and surveyed companies and development organizations to determine the demand for future rail service. The engineering analysis evaluated the properties near the South Iowa Ave. industrial complex for the most suitable site for re-location.

With the market analysis, French-Reneker prepared several design alternatives and invited the BNSF and BJRY railroads for a site visit to discuss the findings and get input on the designs. The railroads preferred the same design alternative and provided ideas for modification. The report was revised and finalized with cost estimates. GOPIP and Area 15 RPC staff then held meetings with City staff, County engineer, and a property owner to introduce the study's findings and preferred alternative, and discuss next steps for implementation. GOPIP committed funds for Phase 1 environmental and archaeological site assessments and is securing City funds for engineering designs. RPC staff will continue working with GOPIP and the City to provide information on funding for implementation.

REGIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND ASSISTANCE

The AHEAD RHTF has provided over **\$2.9 million** in housing assistance through October 2021! The program has helped homeowners make essential repairs and improve their homes. Habitat for Humanity has built eleven (11) new homes. Rental property developers have constructed or rehabilitated 122 apartments. County assistance offices have provided rent and utility assistance to prevent homelessness to numerous families.

This year the State of Iowa substantially increased annual funding for housing trust funds for 2022. In September the AHEAD RHTF submitted its 2022 application to Iowa Finance Authority for **\$347,525** in grant funds to be matched with **\$52,129** of local dollars. This is compared to the 2021 grant of \$246,599 matched with \$61,650 of local funds. Awards will be announced in December 2021.

This program helps improve our region's housing. Households can earn up to 80% of the HUD median family income. Our primary customers are homeowners that need repairs such as new furnaces, roof, water heater, and doors/windows/insulation. The program helps individuals who may not qualify for traditional bank financing to pay for improvements. Contractors and local officials are our best advertisers for this program, please share this information with your residents! For information please call Matt Naumann at (641) 684-6551 or visit our website at www.area15rpc.com/rhtf.

FUNDING TO ASSIST SMALL AND EMERGING BUSINESSES

The USDA provides funds to cities, counties, colleges, and non-profit organizations to assist small and emerging businesses through the Rural Business Development Grant. The USDA's definition of a small and emerging business for the grant being: a private and/or non-profit business which will employ 50 or fewer new employees and has less than \$1 million in gross revenue; for retail operations: total sales minus the cost of goods sold minus returns, for a service organization: gross revenue minus the cost of providing service, or for a manufacturing organization: the cost of total sales minus the cost of raw materials minus the cost of production. Eligible activities include:

Enterprise uses:

- Acquisition and development of land, easements and rights-of-way;
- Construction, conversion, enlargement, repairs or modernization of buildings, plants, machinery, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utilities, and pollution control and abatement facilities;
- Reasonable fees and charges for professional services necessary for the planning and development of the Project. Professional services are services similar to architectural, engineering or legal. Application packaging cost are not permitted;
- Establishment of a revolving loan fund to provide financial assistance to third parties through a loan; and
- Establishment, expansion, and operation of Rural distance learning networks or development of Rural learning programs that provide educational instruction or job training instruction related to potential employment or job advancements for adult students. This includes but it not limited to workforce development training; or
- Provision of Technical Assistance for Small and Emerging Businesses, including but not limited to feasibility studies and business plans; and/or

Opportunity uses: Note: Limited to 10 percent of state allocation.

- Identify, train, and provide Technical Assistance to existing or prospective rural entrepreneurs and managers;
- Establish Business Support Centers and otherwise assist in the creation of new Rural businesses;
- Conduct local community or multi-county Economic Development Planning; **note: comprehensive area-wide type planning is ineligible.**
- Conduct leadership development training of existing or prospective adult rural entrepreneurs and managers;
- Establish centers for training, technology, and trade that will provide training to Rural businesses in the utilization of interactive communications technologies to develop international trade opportunities and markets; or
- Pay reasonable fees and charges for professional services necessary to conduct the Technical Assistance, training, or planning functions.

If a city, county, college or non-profit is purchasing equipment or improving facilities for a specific business, a lease arrangement is needed. This lease arrangement would not necessarily be needed for access roads to a business (public use). In any situation, the applicant must own the project (land, building, equipment, access roads).

Applications for the USDA RBDG program are due **February 28, 2022**, if you are interested or have questions, please contact the Area 15 RPC at 641-684-6551.

OSKALOOSA 5-2-1-0 HEALTHY CHOICES INITIATIVE FUNDED



The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced that Oskaloosa will be one of five new communities to receive funding for the 5-2-1-0 – Healthy Choices Count! Program. Ottumwa will also receive a second year of funding to continue their 5-2-1-0 initiatives. Area 15 RPC serves as administrator of funds in the region, providing strategic planning assistance to community 5-2-1-0 committees, program guidance, and fiduciary oversight.

The 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count! initiative, brings evidence-based strategies for healthy living into communities, schools, early care and out-of-school programs, health care practices and workplaces. These efforts are designed to reach children and adults where they live, learn, work and play. More information about the program can be found at www.iowahealthieststate.com.

NEW HOMES FOR \$90,000—DELIVERY IN 2022!

Homes for Iowa, Inc. (HFI) is a nonprofit organization aiming to increase the supply of affordable housing in rural areas. In partnership with Iowa Prison Industries, houses are being constructed at a new Housing Production Center at the Newton Correctional Facility which allows inmates to learn trade skills such as plumbing, electrical work, and carpentry. Iowa Councils of Government manage the sale of the homes in coordination with HFI and other community partners. Area 15 RPC is the local contact for HFI inquiries/applications.



1,200 ft², 3 Bedroom, 2 Bath home delivered to Bloomfield in February 2021

Homes are purchased directly from HFI and delivered to the designated site for \$90,000. Eligible households can earn up to \$100,000 per year. Developer/Homeowner are responsible for lot acquisition, site preparation, foundation, utility hook-ups, concrete work and any additions such as a garage.

If you are interested in learning more about HFI, please contact Matt Naumann at matt.naumann@area15rpc.com.

CITY OF OTTUMWA WINS STATEWIDE AWARD



The **City of Ottumwa** was presented with the American Planning Association - Iowa Chapter's Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan at the 2021 APA-Iowa Chapter Annual Conference in October. Ottumwa completed its most recent comprehensive planning process in August 2020. RPC Staff were active participants throughout the multi-year process and are happy to see Ottumwa receive recognition for this dynamic long-range plan. From water/sewer infrastructure improvements to trails to downtown revitalization to housing rehab assistance; most of the work the RPC has assisted the City of Ottumwa were items included in its 2001 comprehensive plan. The RPC is eager to help implement the

visions of the community and are excited to assist the City of Ottumwa as it begins its comprehensive planning process this year! Mark your calendar—the next APA-Iowa Chapter Annual Conference will be held at the Bridge View Center in October 2022.

BUSINESS LOANS FOR JOB CREATION AND RETENTION

Business loans are currently available through the Regional Economic Development Investments (REDI) revolving loan fund. REDI offers loans up to \$25,000 per job created or retained in the following counties: Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lucas, Mahaska, Monroe, Van Buren, Wapello, and Wayne. The maximum loan amount is up to \$250,000 with at least 10 jobs created or retained. Loans may be used to purchase machinery and equipment, furniture, and fixtures, and working capital. Eligible applicants include new and existing for-profit businesses that will create or retain jobs in the region. REDI funds are restricted to industrial and service sector loans (no retail). The REDI RLF program was funded by the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration in 1990 and by the CARES Act in 2020. Interested applicants should contact the RPC or the economic development office in your county. REDI has made 90 loans to businesses since 1990.

CONTACT US

Area 15 RPC
224 E. Second Street
P.O. Box 1110
Ottumwa, IA 52501
(P) 641.684.6551
(F) 641.684.4894
info@area15rpc.com
www.area15rpc.com

STAFF

Chris Bowers, Executive Director
chris.bowers@area15rpc.com
Chris Kukla, Transportation Director
chris.kukla@area15rpc.com
Bradley Grefe, Senior Planner
brad.grefe@area15rpc.com
Holly Berg, Senior Planner
holly.berg@area15rpc.com
Matt Naumann, Program Coordinator
matt.naumann@area15rpc.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike Hadley, Chairperson (Keokuk Co.)
Dale House Vice-Chair (Van Buren Co.)
Bryan Ziegler, Treasurer (SBDC)
Matt Greiner (Davis Co.)
Wayne Hult (Wapello Co.)
Mark Gronendyk (Mahaska Co.)
Dee Sandquist (Jefferson Co.)
Jim Morlan (Sigourney)
John Helgeson (Private Sector)
Donnie Garrett (Private Sector)
Tom Flaherty (Economic Development)

