



YES! AREA 15 RPC IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

Like most businesses, Area 15 RPC is adapting operations to deal with impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health and safety for our staff and customers is very important. Therefore, some of our staff are temporarily working from home and a limited staff is at the office during regular business hours from 8:00-4:30 M-F. Visitors are by appointment only, and deliveries are kept to the lobby. Videoconferencing, cloud files, email, and phone calls are now our primary method of working. Meetings are by phone and videoconferencing when possible. Loan closings for housing assistance are still conducted in-person, while we try to keep distance for everyone's safety. As new programs and funding become available we will share that information by email, Facebook, and the RPC website www.area15rpc.com. We will adjust as needed to keep you informed and help move your projects forward. If you have questions or need assistance, please call or email. We remain dedicated to serving you!

BUILD GRANT—OTTUMWA APPLICATION SUBMITTED

For those following the RPC's activities in Ottumwa over the last 5-10 years, it's no surprise to hear that Ottumwa has taken major strides to rehabilitate its downtown core and the Des Moines Riverfront. However, recently the RPC helped the city take its most aggressive pursuit yet - completing and submitting application to the U.S. Department of Transportation Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) discretionary grant program. The application is for a proposed \$18 million project, requesting \$15 million federal grant with \$3 million match from the City of Ottumwa.

The proposal is for a major transportation project to address myriad issues within a blighted downtown district anchored by Ottumwa's historic railroad depot, which currently serves as an Amtrak station. A multi-modal hub will be established at the train depot, providing access to local, regional, and national passenger transportation networks. Complete streets [like those being constructed in Ottumwa's Main Street streetscape CDBG project] will provide a corridor of safe, accessible connections for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists to the established commercial core, riverfront, and beyond. Appurtenant utility infrastructure and parking lot improvements will support immediate private infill development opportunities while setting the stage for future private investment on brownfield/grayfield sites on the downtown riverfront. The project also proposes green infrastructure like permeable pavers and biocells. If awarded, the project will begin final design, environmental, and other regulatory hurdles in 2020-2021 and construction beginning 2022 and ending 2026. We wish the best of luck to Ottumwa with this significant proposal to a nationally competitive program!

CENSUS 2020 UPDATE!

Census 2020 is happening NOW and Iowans are responding well! Iowa currently ranks TOP 3 nationally in response rate to the Census! 64.8% of all households in Iowa responded so far, compared to 57.3% nationally. What is next? Here is the schedule:



April 16-June 19 – Census takers work with colleges, senior centers, prisons, and other facilities with large groups of people to make sure everyone is counted

May 27-August 14 – Census takers will interview homes that have not responded to the 2020 Census

December 2020 – The Census Bureau delivers counts to the President and Congress by law

Please continue to encourage your residents fill out their census forms. Information and data are more important than ever as it will determine congressional representation, and impact hundreds of billions in federal funding every year and provide data that will impact your community for the next decade!

CITY OF FAIRFIELD RECEIVES AWARD FOR NEW CHILD CARE FACILITY

Congratulations to the City of Fairfield for being awarded a \$600,000 Community Facilities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to construct the future Jefferson County Kids, Inc. child care center (JCK.) The total project estimated cost is \$2.2 millions. Fund-raising for the 14,000 sq. ft. child care center will make up the remaining cost of this project that will serve up to 185 children at full capacity.



The City of Fairfield, Jefferson County Kids' Board of Directors, Early Childhood Iowa for Iowa/Jefferson and Keokuk Counties (ECI) and Fairfield Economic Development Association (FEDA), partnered with Area 15 Regional Planning Commission for the grant application and the RPC will administer the grant.

Childcare is a continuing economic development issue across the region. A 2018 child care market study identified Jefferson County with a shortage of over 500 child care spaces. The goal of the project is to expand child care access to attract and retain more workforce. Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is proud to partner with the City of Fairfield, FEDA, ECI, Jefferson County Kids, and Iowa Economic Development Authority to make this project a success!

ELDON CDBG AWARD FOR SEWER IMPROVEMENTS

In March, the City of Eldon was awarded a \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant to improve its wastewater collection and treatment systems. The project is necessary to ensure that the city's wastewater treatment plant remains in compliance with its NPDES permit, satisfying Iowa DNR requirements related to effluent water quality. Major activities include lining the primary sewer main and dredging the lagoon. Many rural communities are being faced with major overhauls/additions to their treatment plants, and Eldon is hoping to avoid such a major cost by reducing the load that reaches the lagoons in tandem with restoring the original design capacity of the system. The engineer believes this will eliminate the need for a costly plant expansion.

DOWNTOWN UPDATES—OSKALOOSA & OTTUMWA

Construction remains full steam ahead for many of the RPC's construction projects, including those in downtown Ottumwa and Oskaloosa. Ottumwa's Main Street Green Infrastructure Project (\$800,000 CDBG Community Facilities) has enjoyed great progress through the first quarter of the construction season. Good weather has kept the project on schedule. New water lines are installed through 2/3 of the site and two full blocks and one major intersection are planned to complete by end of July, with full build-out of the 3-block project by November.



Oskaloosa's Phase 2 façade improvement project is nearly 70% complete. The last few weeks have been very productive and the major work has begun on replacing several storefronts along the west side of the courthouse square. This project remains on schedule and is expected to be complete by the end of June. Oskaloosa also is preparing to pursue a third phase of façade improvements, this time along the south side the square. Despite the uncertainty of the COVID situation, building owners are optimistic about the future and excited at the opportunity to apply for funds to rehab their properties. The RPC is assisting the City with a \$500,000 grant request that is due on July 31.

LAKE SUGEMA CAMPGROUND AWARDED GRANT FUNDS

Van Buren County has been awarded \$61,169 by the Iowa Department of Natural Resource's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program for the campground at Lake Sugema pending final approval by the commission. Grant funds will be used replace the access road into the campground, upgrade electrical systems to 22 campsites with a new main breaker box, install new wire and pedestals with new plugs, and install electrical service at six tent-only campsites.

The LWCF grant provides up to 50% funding for outdoor recreation area acquisition and development to cities and counties. Eligible activities include: outdoor recreation and sport facilities and parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, campgrounds and multipurpose trails. Application and eligibility information are available on the Iowa DNR website at: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/about-dnr/grants-other-funding/land-water-conservation-fund>. Deadline for the LWCF application is March 15th or the closest working day each year.

If you may be interested in applying for LWCF funding, please contact Chris Kukla at Chris.Kukla@area15rpc.com or (641) 684-6551.

RPA 15 AWARDS \$2.5 MILLION IN TRANSPORTATION FUNDS

Regional Planning Affiliation 15 has awarded \$2,506,000 in transportation funds to three projects in the region. Some of the activities RPA funds may be used for by local jurisdictions include: road improvements, public transit capital investments, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, safe routes to school projects, and water trail improvements. Information on the application process and eligibility requirements are available on the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission website. Potential applications are strongly encouraged to contact the commission prior to beginning an application to discuss their project and the availability of funds.

This year, the RPA awarded transportation funds to the following projects for federal fiscal years 2021-2024:

- \$176,000 to 10-15 Transit for the replacement of four light duty buses.
- \$430,000 to Jefferson County for a 1.1 mile HMA overlay on H33/32nd Street from Jackpine Loop to Libertyville Road.
- \$1,900,000 to Van Buren County for 5.7 miles of resurfacing of J40 from the Davis County line to V64.

If you have questions about awards, or RPA transportation funding, contact Chris at chris.kukla@area15rpc.com or (641) 684-6551.

OTTUMWA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA STRATEGIC PLANNING



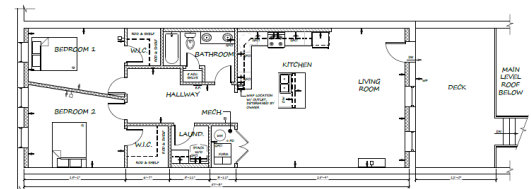
Area 15 RPC staff recently worked with the Ottumwa Symphony Orchestra to develop a five-year strategic plan for the organization. Working with Regional Planner Holly Berg, a scope of work was developed with the symphony's board to improve the organization's operations and identify future goals and projects.

Holly led the Board of Directors through the formation of new mission and vision statements, development of a five-year strategic plan, updates to board by-laws and development of a board handbook to help with orientation of new members. Final recommendations and materials were provided to the board in this month for review and future adoption when meetings resume. If your board or organization could benefit from strategic planning assistance, contact Area 15 RPC to discuss how we can help.

SPOTLIGHT ON SIGOURNEY

The City of Sigourney has been very active recently pursuing infrastructure and community improvement projects. The RPC helped the City apply and receive award for two \$500,000 CDBGs for water and sewer improvements in 2019. The City first was awarded a grant for major wastewater treatment plant improvements and later was awarded a second grant for water system improvements. The water project was bid in April 2020 and construction is expected to begin later in May. The wastewater treatment plant project is expected to go to bid in June 2020 and start late summer.

Sigourney has also been taking note of the downtown revitalization projects in Bloomfield, Fairfield, Oskaloosa, and Ottumwa over the last few years and made it their own priority. In April 2020, RPC staff assisted the city and a local business owner apply for a \$100,000 grant from the Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program through IEDA's Downtown Resource Center. If funded, this project will renovate the vacant second story level into a 2-bedroom apartment and repairs to the exterior, roof, and retail space. The city and RPC are also planning application for a CDBG-DTR grant for façade improvements along the south side of the courthouse square. Like Oskaloosa, this grant request is expected to be for \$500,000 and is due July 31, 2020.



UPPER LEVEL REFLECTED CEILING PLAN

Proposed apartment layout

AHEAD REGIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND GRANT AWARD!

The AHEAD Regional Housing Trust Fund has funds available for housing repair and new construction in 2020! The Iowa Finance Authority awarded the \$246,599 grant to be matched by \$61,650 in local funds for a total program of **\$308,249**. Funding award is made to AHEAD Inc., a local non-profit organization of 6 counties (Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren, and Wapello).

The program is commonly used by homeowners seeking repairs such as roofs, plumbing, electric, heating, and air conditioning. Other eligible uses are for new construction (and rehabilitation) of owner and rental units, and tenant-based rental assistance. This program benefits families at or below Iowa's low to moderate income limits. Applications, guidelines and brochures are available at www.area15rpc.com/rhtf. We encourage you to share this information with your citizens that need home repairs.

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is will soon be conducting our **annual survey** of membership communities. Your responses provide valuable information so RPC can best assist your community or county with project planning and funding. A link to an online survey will be distributed to you soon, or you can request a printed copy by mail. Thank you for your participation!

UPCOMING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Please note on DEADLINES to allow several weeks/months for planning to submit a quality/fundable application			
Program	Purpose	Deadline	Eligible Applicants
IEDA Community Attraction and Tourism	Tourism, recreation, and entertainment capital projects, such as museums, libraries, swimming pools, trails, large recreational areas, amphithe-	July 15, October 15, 2020	Local governments, nonprofits
IDOT RISE Local Development	Funding to provide road/street access to expand business parks and development areas.	September 1, 2020	Local governments
Small Town Sign Replacement Program	Up to \$5,000 of signs and posts per community on a first-come, first-served basis.	On-going	Cities
FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants	Purchase fire equipment, personal protection equipment, training, station modifications, wellness programs, and vehicles.	To be announced	Fire departments and non-affiliated fire and
Alliant Energy Hometown Safety	Grants up to \$2,000 to purchase emergency equipment, such as Jaws of Life, AED's in public buildings, thermal imaging cameras, etc.	September 1, 2020	Communities served by Alliant Energy
IEDA CDBG Water and Sewer Program	Water and wastewater improvements: plants, mains, lagoons, pumps, towers, etc.	July 1, October 1, 2020	Local governments
Solid Waste Alternatives IDNR	Programs to encourage landfill alternatives – recycling, diversion, new technologies, new manufacturing processes, etc	July 1, 2020	Local governments and solid waste agencies
IEDA CDBG Sustainable Community Demon-	Innovative and creative projects to support community sustainability. Projects may include green energy and streetscape.	Open	Local governments
Fish Habitat Program and Wildlife Habitat	IDNR Programs and projects to improve fishing and wildlife habitat.	Last working day in November each year	County conservation boards
IDNR Water Trail Enhancement	Infrastructure improvements along state designated water trails or water trails on track for state designation.	November, 2020	Local governments
Water Trail Planning IDNR	Planning for water trail development as navigable waters used by Iowans for boating, fishing, inner-tubing, paddling, wildlife viewing, etc.	September, 2020	Local governments
Derelict Building Grant IDNR	To address neglected commercial or public structures that have been vacant for at least six months.	February, 2021	Cities under 5,000 population
Davis County Foundation	Arts & culture, community betterment, education, recreation, youth development, health/human services	November 1, 2020	Tax exempt organizations, local governments
Jefferson County Foundation	Educational, cultural and charitable purposes benefiting Jefferson County	June 1, 2020	Non-profit organizations
Keokuk County Foundation	Arts and culture, health, human services, community betterment, historic preservation, etc.	Last working day in October each year	Tax exempt organizations, local governments
Mahaska County Foundation	Arts & culture, community betterment, education, recreation, youth development, health/human services	February 2021	Tax exempt organizations, local governments
Van Buren County Foundation	Arts and culture, health, human services, community betterment, historic preservation, etc.	March 2021	Tax exempt organizations, local governments
Wapello County Foundation	Medical care and treatment, scientific research, rec facilities, education, public projects/quality of life	August 2021	Tax exempt organizations, local governments

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