

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

New Federal funding for cities and counties was recently signed into law under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. This legislation will deliver \$350 billion for state, local, territorial, and tribal governments to respond to the COVID-19 emergency and bring back jobs. Allocations to counties is \$65 billion and non-entitlement cities (population under 50,000) is \$19.5 billion. For more information including eligible use of funding and estimated allocations please see:

Iowa State Association of Counties: <https://www.iowacounties.org/2021/05/iowa-counties-leading-recovery/>

Iowa League of Cities: <https://www.iowaleague.org/Pages/American-Rescue-Plan-Resources.aspx>

As more information becomes available, RPC will provide updates on Facebook, website, and email!

REDI MAKES NEW INVESTMENT IN BUSINESS



The Area 15 Regional Economic Development Investments Inc. (REDI) recently awarded investment of \$250,000 to Kelderman Manufacturing Inc. in Oskaloosa, Iowa. Pictured with the check are owners Clint and Jeff Kelderman and Chris Bowers Executive Director of Area 15 RPC. This funding will be used to assist Kelderman Manufacturing to create and retain 10 jobs in the region with pay ranging between \$16.20 to \$48.07 per hour. The company specializes in manufacturing and installing aftermarket parts for Chevrolet and Ford heavy-duty pick-up trucks. Funds will be used for new machinery, equipment, and working capital to begin a new line of products. These REDI loan funds are made available by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration through the CARES Act. REDI Inc. is a non-profit organization formed in 1990 and administered by Area 15 RPC to assist business growth and development in the region. For more information about REDI contact Chris Bowers at 641-814-8403.

HERITAGE VENTURES OF IOWA BRINGS HOMES TO BLOOMFIELD

Heritage Ventures of Iowa has teamed up with Area 15 Regional Planning Commission, the City of Bloomfield, Davis County Development Corporation and Homes for Iowa to deliver the first home in Southeast Iowa as part of the Homes for Iowa Campaign. The home was placed on its foundation located on Rebecca Drive in Bloomfield on Thursday, February 25, 2021.



Homes for Iowa house delivered and set in Bloomfield in February 2021



Homes for Iowa is managed by Iowa Prison Industries and is designed to provide a moderately priced new housing to rural areas to assist in attracting and retaining quality workforce in rural Iowa while providing a opportunity for offenders to develop life skills.

John Hilbert, owner Heritage Ventures of Iowa, is very pleased to have the first home in SEIA as part of this program delivered to Bloomfield and plans to continue providing quality affordable housing options in Southeast Iowa. Upon delivery of this first house, John ordered two more Homes for Iowa houses to be located on Rebecca Drive in Bloomfield.. John Hilbert may be contacted via email at heritageventuresofiowa@gmail.com.

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is now taking orders for 2022 Homes for Iowa deliveries. Please contact Matt Naumann at matt.naumann@area15rpc.com for more info.

"Our goal is to provide a quality product at an affordable price in an effort to address the housing shortage that has been identified in Southeast Iowa. We have a number of building sites available and a great partnership with the City of Bloomfield, DCDC and Area 15 RPC. Their support throughout this process has made this venture a success." - John Hilbert

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AROUND THE REGION

Despite the pandemic's best effort, communities throughout the Area 15 Region have not shied away from investing in downtown improvement projects using the many State and Federal downtown revitalization programs available. As downtowns are the heart of our communities, making investments to buildings, businesses, and infrastructure downtown is a great strategy to strengthen our local economies. RPC staff have been very engaged with the development of a variety of projects over the last year.

Sigourney is being aggressive in pursuing grants to help its small business and property owners. In 2020, they were awarded a \$100,000 Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program grant through the Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Downtown Resource Center. This grant will help rehabilitate an underutilized building on the north side of Sigourney's historic square, making building improvements and adding the first upper-story housing unit downtown in over a decade. The RPC assisted Sigourney with another \$100,000 application to the Community Catalyst program to help make structural and safety improvements to a large building on the southeast corner of the square. The proposed improvements will make this building more accessible, more efficient, and more stable.

The RPC is helping **Sigourney** with development of an application to IEDA's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Upper-story Housing Conversion (USH) fund to rehabilitate a vacant second-floor space into several apartments. Through a locally competitive process, the City selected a site in May and the early stages of design have begun. The CDBG-USH fund is in its second year as an allocated program at IEDA. The RPC is excited to see this program become a regular part of IEDA's housing fund after successfully administering IEDA's first pilot project in **Ottumwa** in 2018.



Sigourney—119 E. Marion—Rendering of improvements



Oskaloosa—214 S. Market St.—Rendering of improvements



In 2020, **Sigourney** and **Oskaloosa** were each awarded \$500,000 grants through IEDA's CDBG Downtown Revitalization (DTR) fund. Oskaloosa is in the midst of its third phase of façade renovations while Sigourney is on its first. Both projects are targeting improvements to several buildings on the south side of their historic courthouse squares. After clearing regulatory hurdles in April, construction bids were received in mid-May. Contract negotiations are ongoing with construction expected to start in July.

Ottumwa has several happening in its Main Street district. The 2018 CDBG Community Facilities (CF) streetscape project is nearing completion. Three blocks of E. Main St. and intersections were torn completely out and rebuilt. This included all new utility infrastructure and connections to adjacent properties, new pavement with a consistent lane configuration throughout, wider sidewalks with ADA-accessibility improvements, LED lighting improvements, and vegetated planter boxes with electrical hookups. Stormwater mitigation practices were included in various parts of the project, including permeable pavers and vegetated biocells. The RPC was able to secure an additional grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) to further offset the cost of these enhancements.



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DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AROUND THE REGION (CONTINUED)

The RPC has helped **Main Street Ottumwa** secure Challenge Grants from Main Street Iowa each of the last two years. The 2020 project is nearing completion and the 2021 project has completed the major demolition piece of its project. The 2020 award is providing for front and rear façade improvements, a new roof, and some interior rehab on a 1920s bank building. The 2021 award is providing for nuisance abatement and structural stabilization via the complete demolition and removal of a collapsing addition to a downtown building. Now that this is removed, a new rear façade will be constructed from the basement to the upper story. The developer will install a sunken patio and some rear parking as part of the project and expects to apply for an upper-story CDBG for three planned apartment units.



RPC staff are also working with a team from **Bloomfield** to plan investments on a multiple-property renovation project. The RPC is helping a developer to strategically phase various parts of construction to allow for the most opportunity to apply for the various rehabilitation grants these buildings are eligible for. The RPC expects to assist **Bloomfield Main Street** with a Main Street Iowa Challenge Grant application for this project later this summer.

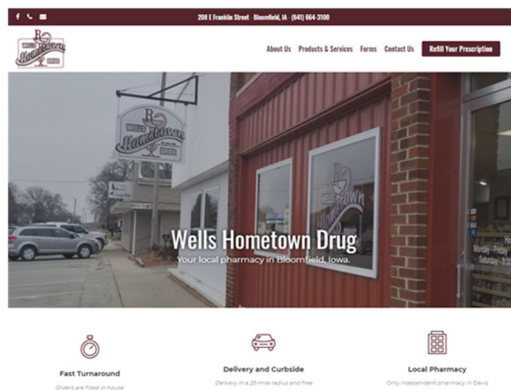
CARES ACT DIGITAL MARKETING ASSISTANCE

In July 2020, Area 15 RPC was awarded funding under the CARES Act through the U.S. Department of Commerce to provide technical assistance and capacity building for cities and counties, local businesses, and other local stakeholders impacted by the coronavirus. Through planning efforts with our 6-county economic development partners, a new program was created to assist businesses with digital marketing needs such as website development, social media strategies, photography, digital menus, and online ordering/sales.

To-date, 19 projects with area businesses are complete, 15 are in-progress, and 34 businesses are signed up to receive assistance. Wells Hometown Drug in Bloomfield is one business who has been helped by this program. Owner Mylo Wells

was able to work with Neapolitan Labs to establish a new website with products and services available such as curbside pickup and delivery, team member information, and how to contact the pharmacy.

Funding for this program will be available through June 2022. For more information, please contact Holly Berg at holly.berg@area15rpc.com or 641-684-6551.



"Working with your team was a great experience. I am impressed by your turn-around time, professionalism and ease of communication. I even told my wife to request you guys for when her business website upgrade was selected by Area 15. I am glad that we now have a professional and fully functional website."

*Thanks for all your help,
Mylo Wells"*

REGIONAL TRAILS PLAN—DRAFT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission has completed work on a regional trails plan for the five-county region, which includes Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren and Wapello Counties. This document provides an overview of the existing trail system and proposed trails for the region. The document guides investment of regional funds by the Regional Planning Affiliation. It also serves as a supporting document to applications for state grants. The document may be viewed online at: <https://tinyurl.com/2021drafttrailsplan>.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Chris Kukla at 641-684-6551 or chris.kukla@area15rpc.com.

FREMONT AWARDED DNR FUNDS TO REMOVE DERELICT BUILDING

Fremont has been awarded \$69,750 to remove a derelict commercial building located on their main street. The City has been awarded \$49,750 through the Iowa DNR Derelict Building Program and \$20,000 from the Mahaska County Foundation for this project. Funding will be used to abate the asbestos and deconstruct the building. After the building has been removed, the City plans to pursue a commercial redevelopment for the site.

In its successful application, Fremont identified several reuse opportunities for materials from the building and had letters providing documentation. The City described its future plan for the site, included a letter from the city describing those plans, and letters of interest from local parties in the property. The city also showed support from residents, area economic development agency, and county board of supervisors.

The DNR accepts applications for the Derelict Building Program annually each February from cities with populations of 5,000 or less to address derelict commercial or public buildings within their jurisdictions. Funding is available to assist with deconstruct or renovate derelict buildings, assistance is also available for: asbestos inspection, asbestos removal, structural engineering analysis, and phase I and II environmental assessments. Cities must own the building, it must not be on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Building must have been vacant for six months or longer.

Successful applicants will have secured three bids for each activity, identified reuse opportunities of the building materials, have a plan using reusing the site or building and have support for their project. The next application deadline will likely be late February 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) 684-6551.



120 E. Main St., Fremont

WAPELLO CO. HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

The multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan update for Wapello County has been completed and is the process of being reviewed by Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management (IHSEM) and FEMA. The plan will be formally adopted by the Wapello County Emergency Management Commission this month following with each city and school district. The plan is available for review on the RPC website—www.area15rpc.com.

It is important that each community remembers that these plans are only as good as the information that is in them. Add newspaper clippings, photos of storm damages, and other notes regarding natural hazard events to the appendix when they happen. Future plan updates are much more accurate and less difficult to complete if they have been reviewed and appended regularly. In addition, any information added to the plan can assist with hazard mitigation assistance (HMA) grant applications. Counties, communities, and schools must have a current, adopted hazard mitigation plan to be eligible for these funds.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEGISLATION PASSED & SIGNED

This year the Iowa Legislature took to work on the Governor's agenda that included addressing the need for affordable housing in Iowa. Senate File 619 included a revision to the amount of money that shall be transferred to the housing trust fund from \$3 million to \$7 million. These funds are distributed annually by the Iowa Finance Authority to the housing trust fund groups that cover the state of Iowa. For the Area 15 Region, the AHEAD Inc. Regional Housing Trust Fund is the group that applies for and receives funding annually to deliver the funds to be used for affordable housing. SF 619 was signed into law by Governor Reynolds on June 16, 2021. AHEAD Inc. is a non-profit organization formed and administered by the Area 15 RPC. For more information about the AHEAD RHTF program contact Matt Naumann at 641-684-6551.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TO IMPROVE CHILD WELLBEING

Last fall, the Wapello County Children's Alliance was awarded funds for a Resilient Communities Project through Prevent Child Abuse Iowa and the Iowa Department of Human Services. The project focuses on raising awareness of the trauma of child abuse and neglect and showcase how community members can do their part to build strong families and prevent child maltreatment.

As part of the project, Area 15 RPC is assisting the Wapello County Children's Alliance through an 18-month planning process by conducting a needs assessment and developing a strategic plan. Area 15 staff have worked with the Wapello County Resilient Communities committee to conduct research as well as develop and distribute surveys related to child welfare to parents, youth, community members, and organizational stakeholders. Results were reviewed and discussed by the committee and serve as the basis for identifying the major issues in the county related to child wellbeing and use this as the basis to identify goals and actions to address these issues. The needs assessment report will be available for review in the coming months and the final strategic plan will be completed by September.



Prevent Child Abuse Iowa's mission is to empower community prevention efforts to provide safe and happy childhoods through collaboration with diverse partners and has partnerships in nearly every county in Iowa. For more information, call 515-244-2200, or visit www.pcaiowa.org. If your board or organization could benefit from strategic planning, contact Area 15 RPC to discuss how we can help!

UPCOMING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

| Please note on DEADLINES to allow several weeks/months for planning to submit a quality/fundable application | | | |
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| Program | Purpose | Deadline | Eligible Applicants |
| IDNR Water Recreation Access Cost-Share Program | Constructing or improving boat access facilities to Iowa's lakes and streams. Projects can include boat launching ramps, loading/off-loading docks and other | September 30, 2021 | Local governments and water body owners |
| IDNR Water Trail Cost-share Program | Infrastructure improvements along state designated water trails or water trails on track for state designation. | Ongoing | Local governments |
| IDNR Water Trail Planning Assistance | Planning for water trail development as navigable waters used by Iowans for boating, fishing, inner-tubing, paddling, wildlife viewing, etc. | October 1, 2021 | Local governments |
| IEDA Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) | Tourism, recreation, and entertainment capital projects, such as museums, libraries, swimming pools, trails, large recreational areas, amphitheaters, etc. | Jan/April/July 15, 2021 | Local governments, nonprofits |
| IDOT RISE Program | Funding to provide road/street access to expand business parks and development areas. | Ongoing | Local governments |
| IDNR Fish Habitat and Wildlife Habitat Promotion | Programs and projects to improve fishing and wildlife habitat. | November 30, 2021 | County conservation boards |
| IDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program | Grants for low-cost systematic safety improvements in the \$10,000/mile range focusing on lane departure crashes | August 15, 2021 | Local governments |
| Wapello County Foundation | Medical care and treatment, scientific research, rec facilities, education, public projects/quality of life | August 31, 2021 | Tax exempt organizations, local governments |
| Keokuk County Foundation | Arts and culture, health, human services, community betterment, historic preservation, etc. | October 29, 2021 | Tax exempt organizations, local governments |
| Davis County Foundation | Arts & culture, community betterment, education, recreation, youth development, health/human services | November 1, 2021 | Tax exempt organizations, local governments |

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