

ECICOG

EAST CENTRAL IOWA
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
2025 Annual Report



A Message From The Director



Karen Kurt

**ECICOG Executive
Director**

As Executive Director of the East Central Iowa Council of Governments, I am proud to share this annual report and reflect on the work accomplished across our region over the past five years. ECICOG's work is rooted in responsiveness, practical solutions, and respect for local decision-making. It is also defined by relationships. We believe that building bonds between stakeholders makes us all stronger and more resilient. This work isn't easy and it is never done.

As I prepare to exit from my role as Executive Director in April of 2026, I have been reflecting on what it takes to build trust on a regional level:

- **Deep Listening** - Taking the time to understand context, constraints, and goals before offering solutions.
- **Showing Up** – True commitment isn't possible without reliable participation.
- **Transparency and Honesty** - Being upfront, even when the message is difficult. Relationships are strengthened when information is shared openly, decisions are explained clearly, and limitations are acknowledged.
- **Accountability** - Following through on promises, as well as owning mistakes.
- **Collaboration, Not Competition** - Demonstrating a growth mindset focused on advancing the collective whole... versus a zero-sum thinking (i.e., your win is my loss).

I hope that ECICOG is viewed as a trusted regional partner—an organization that listens first and then rolls up its proverbial sleeves to get the work done. That isn't to say that there haven't been times when we have fallen short. You can trust that we have learned and improved because of those challenges.

On a personal level, I am grateful for those who welcomed me, spent time educating me about our organization and region, who listened to ideas and took risks alongside us, and who shared in our successes and challenges. This is especially true of the ECICOG staff and board – it truly takes a village to raise an Executive Director! Thank you for your passion, hard work and dedication to bettering the lives of East Central Iowans.

**We are here to serve – let us know how we can
help you build a thriving and resilient
East Central Iowa in 2026!**

ECICOG 101

The East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) is an intergovernmental council established in 1973 under Chapter 28E and provided for under Chapter 28H of the Code of Iowa. ECICOG provides professional planning, programming, and technical assistance to local governments and communities within our region: Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington counties. Our mission is to help build vibrant, forward-thinking communities in a collaborative and resilient region.

ECICOG Board of Directors

*Members served partial terms

Mary Audia Washington County Citizen (Chair)	Jon Green Johnson County Supervisor (Treasurer/Secretary)	Kevin Heitshusen Iowa County Supervisor (Vice-Chair)	Jeremiah Hoyt Anamosa City Administrator
Don Gray Mayor of Central City	David Connolly Linn County Citizen	Derek Lumsden Jones County Citizen	Bruce Visser Mayor of Atkins
Joe Gaa Washington City Administrator	Nick Herbold University Heights City Council	Chris Hoffman Mayor of North Liberty	Tracy Seeman Benton County Supervisor
Chris Montross Iowa County Supervisor	Jon Zirkelbach Jones County Supervisor	Eldy Miller Ely City Administrator	Kate Robertson Benton County Citizen
Bob Yoder Washington County Supervisor	Chris Nosbisch Mount Vernon City Administrator	Brandy Meisheid Linn County Supervisor	Sarah Thompson* Johnson County Citizen
Tony Hocamp* Iowa County Citizen	Allison Wells* Johnson County Citizen	Aaron Sandersfeld* Iowa County Citizen	

Our Core Mission:

- Plan for the Future
- Leverage State & Federal Resources
- Share Technical Skills
- Promote Regional Collaboration

Our Team



By the Numbers 2020-2025

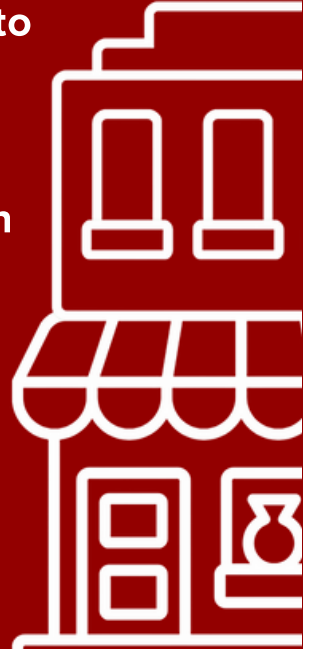


\$3,000,000 awarded for
6 CDBG water/sewer projects

\$2,390,000

awarded to
improve

40
downtown
building
facades
using
CDBG
funds



55 businesses
received loans
totaling
\$9,147,000
to grow regional
jobs



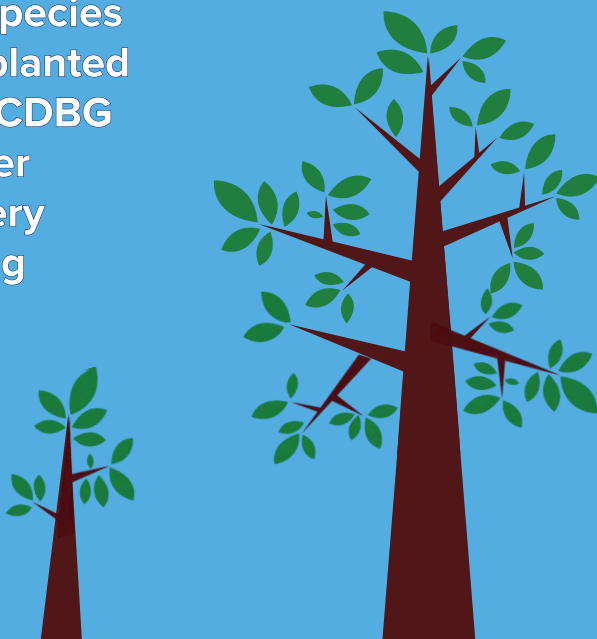
77 summer reading
programs educated
820 students on
environmental topics



99,544 tons of waste diverted
from landfills through the Iowa
Waste Exchange program



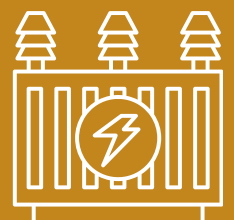
1,292 trees featuring
35 species
were planted
using CDBG
disaster
recovery
funding



303 volunteers gave
12,024
hours to support
Hometown Pride
projects



12 backup generators, funded
through CDBG disaster recovery
grants will provide
866 KW
to critical facilities



By the Numbers 2020-2025

9 EDA grants totaling **\$8,465,499** supported regional economic development



56 new housing units were partially funded with CDBG disaster recovery grants



21 *Homes for Iowa* houses were placed in **4** communities



11 communities participated in ECICOG's nuisance enforcement program



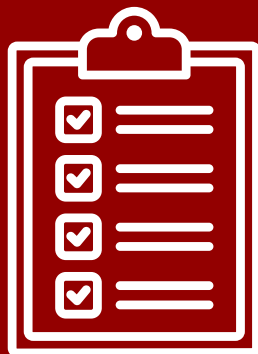
553 homes were rehabilitated using a variety of grant resources



4,434,199 pounds of CO₂ emissions were reduced by CorridorRide van pools



9 local comprehensive plans were completed or are in progress



897,031 passengers took trips covering



5,408,433

miles using dial-a-ride bus service

427,759 passengers used the 380Express bus to travel between Linn and Johnson counties



30 emergency home repairs were made to keep homes habitable



Housing

The Housing team partners with cities, counties, developers, local housing trust funds, and other organizations to address housing needs in the region. Services include identification of potential funding sources, grant writing and administration, housing rehabilitation program development and implementation, new home construction programs, building inspections, and nuisance enforcement.

2025 Projects

Anamosa

- Wrote workforce housing tax credit application

Blairstown

- Provided nuisance enforcement

Center Point

- Provided nuisance enforcement

Central City

- Provided nuisance enforcement

Monticello

- Facilitated the order and delivery of 1 Homes for Iowa home built by Newton Correctional Facility inmates

Olin

- Provided nuisance enforcement

Springville

- Provided nuisance enforcement

Van Horne

- Provided nuisance enforcement

Vinton

- Facilitated the order and delivery of 2 Homes for Iowa homes built by Newton Correctional Facility inmates

Johnson County

- Submitted 2025 HOME application that was awarded to serve 5 homebuyers
- Submitted 2025 FHLB Affordable Housing Program grant application

Linn County

- Submitted 2025 HOME application that was awarded to serve five homebuyers
- Submitted 2025 FHLB Affordable Housing Program grant application
- Assisted with food systems strategic planning for Linn County
- Provided emergency repair assistance to 8 households within Linn County through the Housing Fund for Linn County

ECI Region (Benton, Iowa, Jones, and Washington)

- Provided emergency repair assistance to 3 households within the East Central Iowa Housing Trust Fund (ECIHTF) region
- Submitted 2025 HOME application that was awarded to serve 5 homebuyers through the ECIHTF
- Submitted 2025 FHLB Affordable Housing Program grant application through ECIHTF

Regionwide

- Provided construction management and housing rehabilitation for the Iowa Finance Authority Housing Assistance Fund to assist 10 homeowners in 2025, in a total of 9 counties
- Applied for a \$3.1 million dollar HUD Lead Hazard Reduction Grant and was awarded in December 2025



2025 Grant Administration

Anamosa \$650,000 CDBG Downtown Revitalization Grant to improve 12 buildings

Atkins \$1,045,131 CDBG-DR grant to create six new for sale housing units

Belle Plaine \$485,738 CDBG-DR grant to create five new rental units

Cedar Rapids \$2,530,000 CDBG-DR grant to assist 53 homeowners with housing repairs

Center Point \$5,052,914 CDBG-DR grant to create 42 new rental units

Marion \$530,000 administer and provide construction management to assist a minimum of 25 homeowners.

Marion \$3,280,687 CDBG-DR grant to create 20 new for sale housing units

Marion \$2,595,000 CDBG-DR grant to create 55 new rental units

Marion \$2,040,000 CDBG-DR grant to create 24 new rental units

Riverside \$590,000 CDBG Downtown Revitalization Grant to improve 6 buildings

Walker \$345,286 CDBG-DR grant to create two new for sale housing units

Washington \$456,000 IFA grant to assist 15 households with housing rehabilitation

Johnson County \$694,112 provide construction management for home rehabilitation repairs to assist 62 households

Jones County \$500,000 HUD grant for downpayment and home rehabilitation repairs

Housing Trust Fund Initiatives

- Provided Executive Director and administered East Central Iowa Housing Trust Fund (ECIHTF) in Benton, Iowa, Jones and Washington Counties
- Administered FHLB owner-occupied rehabilitation program for ECIHTF, Housing Fund for Linn County (HFfLC) and Housing Trust Fund for Johnson County (HTFJC)
- Administered and provided construction management to assist homeowners in need of emergency repair for ECIHTF and HFfLC
- Funded rehabilitation for 24 units at Monticello Senior Housing and 12 units at Wyoming Senior Housing.
- Wrote 2025 FHLB owner-occupied rehabilitation program grant applications for ECIHTF, HTFJC and HFfLC
- Wrote applications to IFA for 2025 Local Housing Trust Fund program grants for ECIHTF

Linn County Community Food System Assessment

A Linn County Community Food System Assessment was completed as part of the strategic planning process for the Linn County Food Systems Council in fall of 2025. The assessment provides a comprehensive, systems-level analysis of how food is produced, processed, distributed, accessed, and managed within Linn County, while identifying structural barriers and strategic entry points for strengthening a resilient local food economy.

The assessment also underscores that food systems are a core component of community and economic development, closely tied to land use, transportation, housing, and environmental outcomes. Food system decisions influence farmland preservation and zoning, transportation and distribution costs, workforce stability and housing affordability, and water quality and climate resilience. Looking forward, the assessment establishes a framework for integrating food systems thinking into everyday planning and policy decisions.



Cedar Rapids Housing Disaster Recovery Rehabilitation Program

The Cedar Rapids Disaster Recovery Rehabilitation Program was created to assist homeowners with critical repairs following the August 2020 derecho, with a goal of helping 50 low to moderate income households return their homes to safe, habitable conditions. Administered by ECICOG on behalf of the City of Cedar Rapids, the program initially focused on derecho-related repairs but expanded in February 2025 to include general housing rehabilitation needs. Eligible repairs encompass essential health and safety items such as roofing, siding, windows, lead hazard reduction, radon mitigation, drywall and structural repairs. The program is supported by \$2,500,000 in CDBG-DR funding from the Iowa Economic Development Authority.

Since the first applicant was approved on October 17, 2023, the program has made substantial progress in addressing community needs. To date, 54 households have been approved across the city. The program is on track for completion in June 2026.



Zero Energy Ready Homes Transform Atkins

ECICOG partnered with the Iowa Economic Development Authority, the City of Atkins, and Ralston Eco Homes, LLC, to bring six new homes to Atkins. Intended to replace housing units in the region that were damaged or lost due to the 2020 derecho, the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program through IEDA provided the funding to develop the homes at an affordable price point. Because of grant funding, buyers were able to purchase these homes at \$175,000 with up to \$35,000 in down payment assistance. Those impacted by the derecho received first priority to purchase. All of the homes incorporated resilient and energy-efficient building practices, including stormwater management practices, soil restoration, Department of Energy Zero Energy Ready, and solar-ready pathways. Some units were equipped with solar panels.

The projected reductions in energy usage are expected to save homeowners \$1,400-\$1,700 annually according to independent home energy raters. This in turn, helps to keep home ownership affordable beyond just the initial purchase. ECICOG wrote the grant application and administered the grant on behalf of the City of Atkins.



Transportation

The Transportation Department enhances regional connectivity by offering transportation planning support to local governments within Region 10 Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA 10) and overseeing CorridorRides, a regional transit program designed to improve mobility for individuals who cannot or choose not to drive.

2025 Projects

Central City

- Wrote Safe Routes to Schools grant application

North Liberty

- Coordinated with Iowa DOT to complete a feasibility study to expand the 380 Express to serve North Liberty

Urbana

- Wrote State Recreation Trail grant application

Johnson County

- Administer State Transit Assistance Special Projects grant for Trip Connect

Regionwide

- Began Passenger Transportation Plan update
- Completed Active Transportation Plan
- Completed FY 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program
- Began work on the Eastern Iowa Tri-Region Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) plan
- Executed agreements with county providers for regional dial-a-ride transit services
- Renewed service contract with Windstar Lines to operate 380 Express Service

Surface Transportation Block Grants

Benton County	\$1,600,000	Improvements on E22, from Hwy 218 to Garrison
Johnson County	\$2,800,000	Improvements on X14, from Hwy 22 to 520th St SE
Washington County	\$2,337,162	Improvements on Ginko Avenue, from 170th Street to Wellman

Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program

Jones County	\$160,000	Dillons Military Bridge trail project over Wapsipinicon River
Linn County	\$39,753	Wapsi Bluff Trail over Highway 13 in Central City



380 Express Route Changes

Since October 2018, the 380 Express has shuttled commuters between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City. Operated by Windstar Lines on behalf of CorridorRides, the service provided approximately 94,000 rides in 2025. Due to ongoing road construction on the Interstate 380 corridor, Iowa DOT will continue to provide operating assistance through 2029, although local funding support will also be required.

In the coming year, ECICOG will pursue a service upgrade to offer new stops at the University of Iowa Health Care Medical Center North Liberty, and the Kirkwood Regional Center at the University of Iowa, both located in North Liberty.

Corridor Rides

CorridorRides is the Region 10 public transit agency serving Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington counties. Since 1975, CorridorRides has delivered reliable transit services.

These 50 years, we have partnered with multiple subcontractors to meet diverse transportation needs across the region. Administered by ECICOG, CorridorRides has provided more than 2 million rides over the past decade and operates a fleet of over 80 vehicles.

2025 Funding Allocation			
County	State Assistance	Federal Assistance	Capital Assistance
Benton	\$0	\$122,591	\$0
Iowa	\$0	\$266,628	\$46,452
Johnson	\$38,940	\$200,470	\$0
Jones	\$40,387	\$146,103	\$0
Linn	\$72,353	\$143,538	\$2,176
Washington	\$79,035	\$198,944	\$167,559

Active Transportation Plan

The Regional Planning Affiliation 10 (RPA 10) completed the region’s first Active Transportation Plan (ATP) in May 2025. The Plan focuses on the non-automobile transportation network, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and is designed to allow people to move independently within their community and to experience the landscape between communities for travel or recreational purposes. In addition to identifying a regional network of interconnected bike and pedestrian facilities, the ATP also provides a framework for future investments in trails, pedestrian facilities and bikeways.

An additional component of the plan is sidewalk assessments for each city within RPA 10 (Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington counties). These assessments have also been used to help communities that are developing comprehensive plans to understand how they might prioritize sidewalk investments to improve walkability.



Environmental Services

The Environmental Services team supports a healthy environment in East Central Iowa through planning, facilitation, grant writing and administration services to solid waste commissions, watershed management authorities, cities and counties in our region.

2025 Projects

Coralville

- Wrote CDBG water/sewer grant application

Olin

- Wrote Wastewater and Drinking Water Treatment Financial Assistance Program application

Norway

- Wrote CDBG water/sewer grant application

Benton County

- Provided technical assistance to the landfill
- Provided Iowa Waste Exchange services
- Administered compost bin rebate program
- Wrote Regional Collection Center Improvement grant program to update the household hazardous materials building's fire suppression system

Iowa County

- Provided technical assistance to landfill
- Wrote a grant for Regional Collection Center Improvement Grant
- Provided Iowa Waste Exchange services

Johnson County

- Provided technical assistance to landfill
- Provided Iowa Waste Exchange services

Jones County

- Provided technical assistance to transfer station
- Provided Iowa Waste Exchange services

Linn County

- Provided technical assistance to landfill
- Completed Linn County Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan update
- Provided Iowa Waste Exchange services
- Facilitated additional signage for Indian Creek Watershed area waterways

Washington County

- Provided Iowa Waste Exchange Services

Tama County

- Provided technical assistance to landfill

Regionwide

- Wrote the Pathway to Resilience plan
- Wrote EPA Brownfields Assessment Coalition Grant for the region

Statewide

- Provide Iowa Waste Exchange Services for the following counties: Cedar, Clinton, Des Moines, Henry, Jackson, Jefferson, Lee, Louisa, Muscatine, Scott and Van Buren (in addition to the ECICOG region)



2025 Grant Administration

Alburnett \$100,000 CDBG-DR grant for one generator

Anamosa \$500,000 CDBG water/sewer grant for wastewater treatment plant improvements

Belle Plaine \$40,000 CDBG-DR tree canopy replacement

Belle Plaine \$100,000 CDBG-DR grant for generator

Central City \$53,000 CDBG-DR grant for generator

Ely \$126,000 CDBG-DR grants for two generators

Hiawatha \$400,000 CDBG-DR grants for four generators

Hiawatha \$225,000 CDBG-DR grant for tree canopy replacement

Marengo \$500,000 water/sewer grant CDBG for wastewater treatment facility improvements

Marion \$100,000 CDBG-DR grant for generator

Marion \$900,000 CDBG-DR grant for tree canopy replacement

Mt Vernon \$100,000 CDBG-DR grant for generator

Norway \$53,000 CDBG-DR grant for generator

Wellman \$500,000 CDBG for water main replacement in Wellman

Benton County \$750,000 CDBG-DR grant for tree canopy replacement in Benton County

Benton County \$4,095 Iowa DNR Regional Collection Center Improvement Grant for the fire suppression system in the household hazardous materials storage building.

Iowa County \$9,774 Iowa DNR Regional Collection Center Improvement Grant for fire suppression system and exhaust fan in household hazardous materials storage building.

Linn County \$53,000 CDBG-DR grant for a generator for the Linn County 3rd Fire District

Linn County \$200,000 CDBG-DR grant for tree canopy replacement

Linn County \$40,500 FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant for hazard mitigation plan update

Regional Two \$999,845 EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grants to complete a regional climate action plan and provide technical assistance to communities in the region for four years

Regional Administered Iowa DNR signage grant for the Indian Creek Watershed Management Authority

New Generators Support Disaster Preparedness

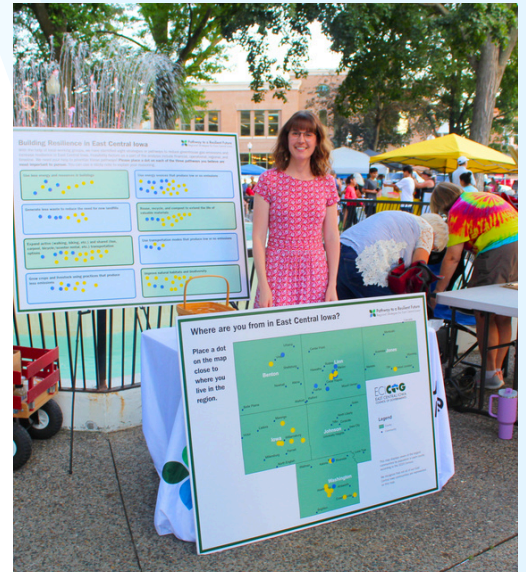
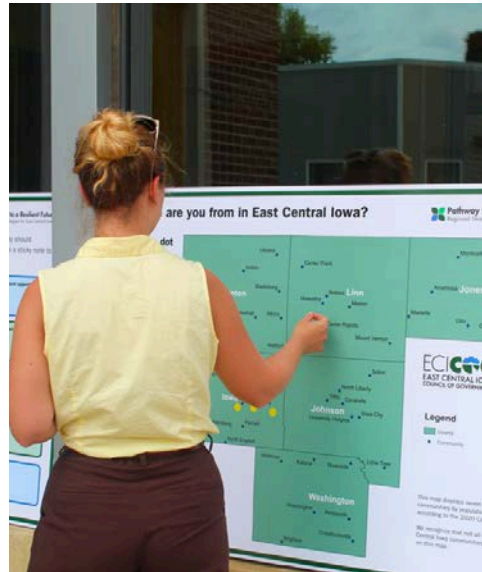
To help communities in Linn and Benton counties prepare for natural disasters after the 2020 derecho in August 2020, Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds were made available through the Iowa Economic Development Authority to purchase and install generators in critical facilities. ECICOG helped nine communities apply for grants to install thirteen generators. The generator locations include community centers, fire stations, libraries, lift stations, and wellhouses.



Pathway to a Resilient Future

In 2023, ECICOG received two planning grants from the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program on behalf of the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City metropolitan areas. The purpose of CPRG is to advance local capacity and knowledge to support the development of plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, and build more resilient communities.

Over the four-year grant period, ECICOG will focus on completing grant deliverables at the regional level. Completed in 2025, the second and most significant grant deliverable was the Pathway Plan. To develop the plan, ECICOG and its advisory committee worked with KERAMIDA, Inc. to convene technical working groups made up of local experts with expertise in energy efficiency, transportation, waste management, and conservation.



The technical working groups helped identify realistic targets and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the six-county region. Combined with utility provider efforts to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, the plan shows how implementation of the pathways could reduce greenhouse gas emissions 48% by 2050 compared to business as usual in the region.

Local Landfill Assistance

ECICOG wrote and administered Iowa DNR Regional Collection Center Improvement grants for the Benton County Landfill and the Iowa County Landfill. Both landfills have aging hazardous materials storage buildings to store the chemicals collected from residents through their household hazardous materials program. The grant for the Benton County Landfill was for \$4,995 to update the building fire suppression system, and the grant for the Iowa County Landfill was for \$9,774 to update the building fire suppression system and replace an explosion proof exhaust fan. Grant writing is one of many services provided by ECICOG to assist county landfills and transfer stations, who often have limited staff. ECICOG also provides staff training, environmental education, administrative policies and assists with recycling program development.



Community & Economic Development

The Community and Economic Development team assists communities with a wide array of services. Examples include comprehensive planning, zoning ordinance review, city code updates, council goal setting and grant writing/administration. In addition, the team supports economic growth through revolving loan programs, the Hometown Pride program and Envision East Central Iowa – the region's comprehensive economic development strategy.

2025 Projects

Anamosa

- Facilitated comprehensive planning process

Cedar Rapids

- Administered the City of Cedar Rapids revolving loan fund
- Administered the Czech Village/New Bo revolving loan fund

Center Point

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach
- Completed fringe area agreement

Hills

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach

Iowa City

- Updated Iowa City Fire Department strategic plan

Johnson County

- Facilitated 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count! plan and began implementation

Marion

- Administered City of Marion Water/ADA loans
- Administered the MEDCO revolving loan fund

Mount Vernon

- Began writing the CDBG-Downtown Revitalization grant

Riverside

- Facilitated comprehensive planning process

Shellsburg

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach

Springville

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach
- Facilitated capital improvement process

Urbana

- Facilitated comprehensive planning process

Van Horne

- Reviewed development project for the Planning and Zoning Commission

Walker

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach
- Began zoning ordinance update

Regionwide

- Provided gap financing to grow local businesses through EDA revolving loan grants

2025 Grant Administration

Atkins

\$643,000 FEMA grant for the Atkins Fire station rebuild

Anamosa

\$650,000 CDBG-DTR grant for downtown storefront revitalization

Cedar Rapids

\$1,300,000 EDA grant for NewBo City Market Renovation

Johnson County

\$25,000 IDPH grant for the 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count!

North Liberty

\$100,000 CDBG-CV grant for community pantry

Riverside

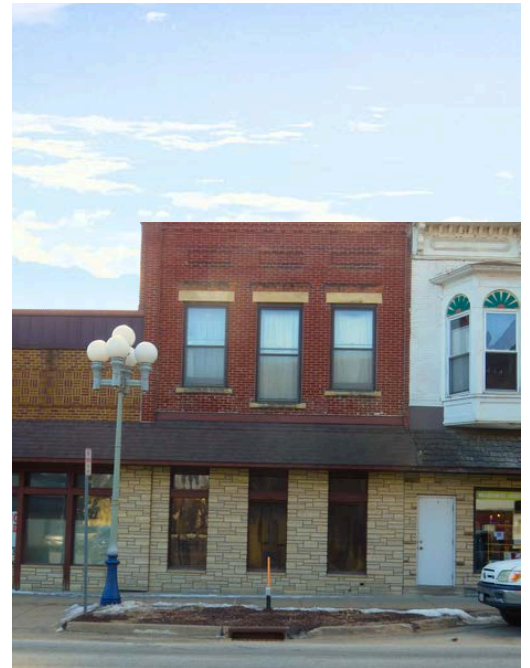
\$590,000 CDBG-DTR grant for downtown storefront revitalization

Regionwide

\$72,300 EDA technical assistance grant for Envision East Central Iowa

Regionwide

\$210,000 EDA planning grant



Community Planning

ECICOG staff firmly believes that the more that is known about a community, the more helpful ECICOG can be! That is why comprehensive plans, capital improvement plans and council goal setting work is so important. During these projects, staff try to identify potential grant funding sources to help each community achieve their unique goals.

During 2025, ECICOG worked on four comprehensive planning efforts for the communities of Anamosa, Riverside, Walker and Urbana. These plans usually take a full year and require extensive community outreach, like the visit to Riverside's Trek Fest featured in the adjacent photo. In addition, over the last two years, ECICOG has completed (or facilitated) capital improvement plans and/or goal-setting sessions for the communities of Iowa City, North Liberty, Coralville, Urbana and Springville.



On a smaller scale, ECICOG planners can also help with reviewing individual development projects. Community Development Specialist Tom Gruis assisted the Van Horne Planning and Zoning Commission by providing an outside review of a proposed project relative to existing city codes and planning best practices.

Three Years of Success in Hometown Pride

Five communities in East Central Iowa—Hills, Springville, Walker, Center Point, and Shellsburg are marking their third year of participation in the Hometown Pride Program, a statewide initiative led by Keep Iowa Beautiful in partnership with the Iowa Economic Development Authority. In our region, the program is administered by ECICOG, which provides a dedicated coach to guide communities in implementing physical, cultural, and economic improvements that foster community pride. Hometown Pride directly supports Pillar 5 of the regional development plan, Envision East Central Iowa, which focuses on creating vibrant, connected communities where people feel a strong sense of belonging.

Community Development Specialist, Jessica Walker, who serves as the Hometown Pride Community Coach, works with each participating community over a five-year period, helping them achieve long-term, sustainable improvements. The program is tailored to fit the unique needs of each town, ensuring local leaders play a key role in shaping and executing projects.

In 2025 alone, these communities completed 16 Hometown Pride projects, engaging 107 volunteers who collectively contributed 4,248 hours of service. Through a combination of grants, fundraisers, and sponsorships, the communities raised \$65,550 to support these initiatives.

These projects highlight the power of cross-sector collaboration and demonstrate how the Hometown Pride Program helps cultivate local leadership, enhance community amenities, and boost economic vitality.





Karen Kurt
Executive Director



Paula Mitchell
Housing Director



Alicia Presto
Environmental
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Mary Rump
Transportation
Director



Jessica Walker
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