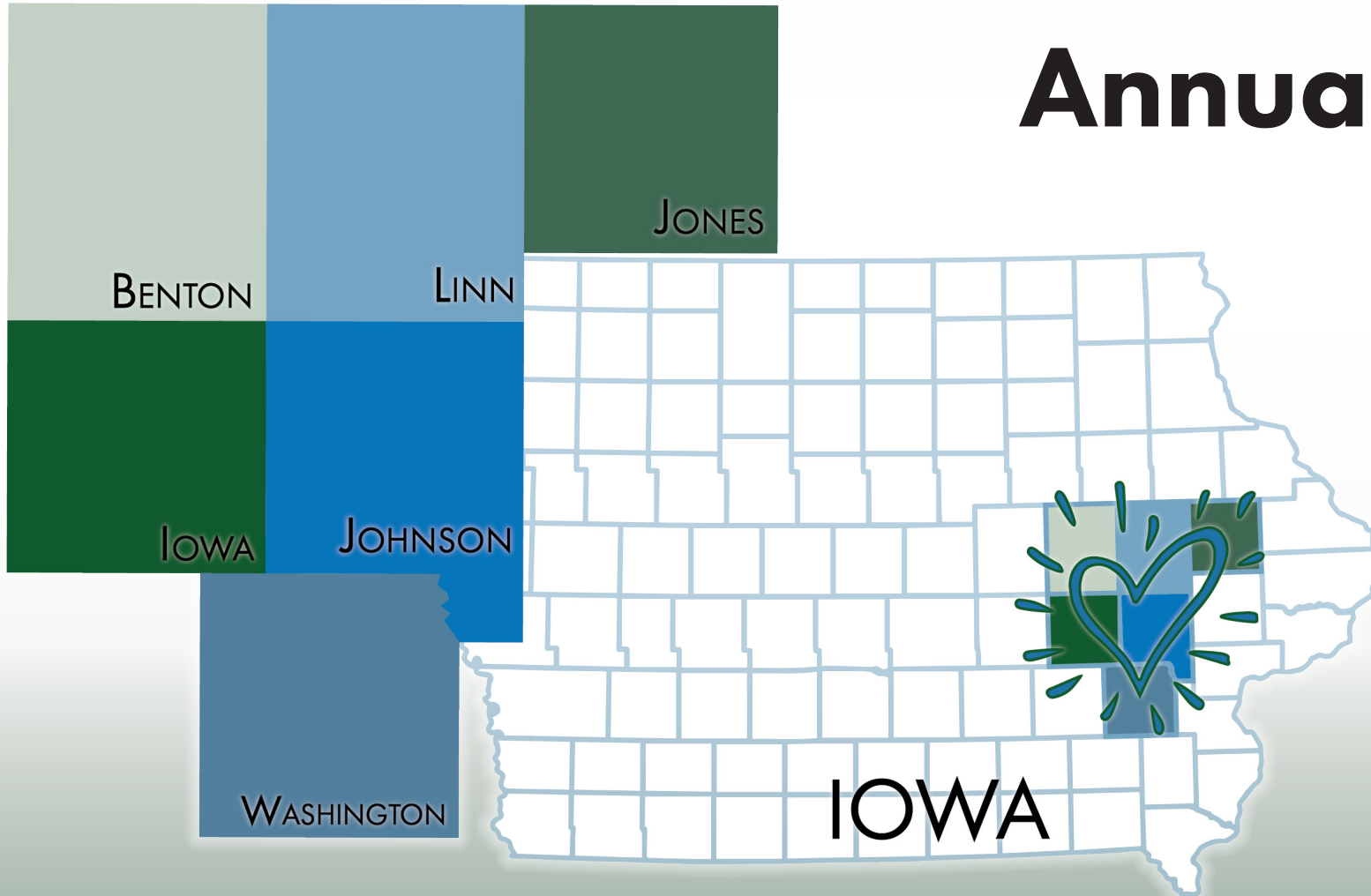




EAST CENTRAL IOWA
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Annual Report 2020



When I am asked what I do, there is no easy 30 second elevator pitch. This annual report highlights some of ECICOG's work during the last year and I hope it gives you a sense of the broad scope of our activities.

2020 dealt some unexpected challenges in the form of a pandemic and unprecedented windstorm. Part of ECICOG's role is to assist with disaster response. Our disaster work often takes the form of problem solving, connecting resources, or accessing federal or state grants. The team at ECICOG worked hard to address these new challenges, while continuing to provide the planning and technical assistance for which we are known.

Like many of you, our staff learned new technologies for remote work, dealt with damage from the derecho, and juggled their ECICOG responsibilities with childcare and home schooling. I can assure you that they were steadfast in their dedication and I couldn't be more proud of their work during the last year.



I also want to extend my deep-felt gratitude to our 2020 board members. ECICOG is dependent on these volunteers who graciously give their time to provide oversight and policy direction to our organization.

We look forward to serving you in 2021 as we continue to build a thriving and resilient East Central Iowa.

-Karen Kurt
ECICOG Executive Director

ECICOG 2020 Board Members

Brent Hinson.....City of Washington
Tracy Seeman.....Benton County Supervisor
Meghann Foster.....Coralville City Council
Les Beck.....Linn County Planning & Development
Jon Zirkelbach.....Jones County Supervisor
Bob Yoder.....Washington County Supervisor
Vicki Pope.....Iowa County Supervisor

Dave Fish.....City of Belle Plaine
Janice Weiner.....Iowa City City Council
Kathleen VanSteenhuyse.....Benton County Citizen
Darrin Gage.....Linn County Policy & Administration
Don Gray.....Linn County Citizen
Randy Laubscher.....Johnson County Citizen
Derek Lumsden.....Jones County Citizen

Rod Smith.....City of Anamosa
Tony Hocamp.....Iowa County Citizen
Kevin Heitshusen.....Iowa County Supervisor
Al Havens.....City of Tiffin
Ben Rogers.....Linn County Supervisor

Honoring former board member David Collins, who passed away in 2020

Did you know that ECICOG now has a virtual platform for gathering feedback? Talkto.ECICOG.org was launched in December of 2020 to allow stakeholders to provide input without attending a meeting in person. The web-based software will assist with ECICOG's planning efforts but is also available to local communities looking for new ways to engage the public. Features include idea boards, survey tools and map-based information gathering.



Derecho Response



Shingles Donation

The Iowa Association of Councils of Governments (ICOG) worked with Good360 and Habitat for Humanity to store and distribute a large donation of shingles for homeowners impacted by the Derecho. – About 4,450 bundles of GAF shingles -valued at \$143,974 - were delivered to the ECICOG region. ECICOG partnered with Matthew 25 to store and distribute the shingles.

The first homeowner received their shingles on December 16, 2020. The donated shingles will cover an estimated 100 homes.



PATCH Program The Housing Fund for Linn County (HFFLC), along with ECICOG and area non-profits, is working to assist low to moderate income homeowners with needed repairs following the August derecho. A new program called Providing Assistance to Community Homeowners (PATCH) was launched in November to provide financial assistance and construction management support. ECICOG, as the staffing organization for the HFFLC, hired a Housing Recovery Specialist to provide case management services for the program. The program is funded by the Cedar Rapids Community Foundation and United Way, with a wide array of Linn County non-profits assisting with service delivery.



// I appreciate the relationship we have with ECICOG around housing. It's more than just a funder-fundee relationship, we can lean on each other. I appreciate ECICOG having the confidence in us that we could get these shingles out. //

**Rev. Clint Twedt-Ball
Executive Director of Matthew 25**

Economic Development & Recovery

EDA Regional Planning Grant

ECICOG received a \$400,000 planning grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the CARES Act. The funds will be used for planning and capacity building to help support economic recovery from COVID-19. A portion of the grant was used to launch the Rural Recovery Challenge. ECICOG is partnering with the following organizations on their challenge projects:

- Daycare study with partner Jones County Economic Development
- Web-based county tours with partner Jones County Economic Development
- Marketing and outreach to recruit immigrant farmers and identify product markets with partners Linn County and Feed Iowa First

Iowa City Business Assistance Program

When the City of Iowa City needed to roll out an assistance program to help businesses impacted by COVID-19, they turned to ECICOG for help. ECICOG was able to provide additional staff support to assist with processing applications and assistance payments. Roughly \$360,000 will be awarded to businesses, funding 20-30 grants.



The Olympic Southside Theatre (left) and Mothers Love Childcare Center (below) were recipients of RLF Funding in 2020.

Revolving Loan Fund Doubles in Size

ECICOG was awarded \$4.25 million in business assistance revolving loan funds from the EDA through the CARES Act, effectively doubling the size of the program. Any new or expanding regional business impacted by COVID-19 can apply for funds through the revolving loan fund (RLF), which has adopted policies designed to help local businesses during the pandemic - including new lower interest rates of 0-2%.



Community Development

The City of Anamosa was awarded a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for a downtown revitalization project in the fall of 2020. Anamosa partnered with ECICOG, Martin Gardner Architecture, and Jones County Economic Development. The grant will fund facade improvements on 10 buildings in Anamosa's Main Street Historic District. The project will include revitalizing store entrances, brickwork, painting, replacing/rehabilitating windows, and more. The project is estimated to cost \$1.049 million, with \$250,000 in match from the City and the remainder coming from the building owners.

Anamosa Downtown Revitalization



Comprehensive Plan

**Newhall
Lisbon**

Zoning Ordinance Update

Newhall

Capital Improvement Plan

Alburnett

City Code Update

**Oxford Junction
Mt Auburn
Riverside**

**2020 Local Technical
Assistance Contracts**

Central City Nuisance Enforcement

Central City entered into a contract with ECICOG to provide nuisance enforcement services. ECICOG staff visit the city each month checking for code violations, sending citations, and working with homeowners on corrective actions. After only two months in action, over 12 violations were corrected as a result of this new partnership.

Council Goal Setting

ECICOG was excited to facilitate a city council goal-setting session for University Heights in June. While originally an in-person event, the session was adapted to a virtual environment. During the 3-hour session, council members discussed community assets, opportunities and threats, current projects, and future goals.

While what you provided is such a simple idea/process, the clarity is phenomenal. Thank you so much for your expertise inspiring this.

**University Heights
Council Member**

Environmental Services

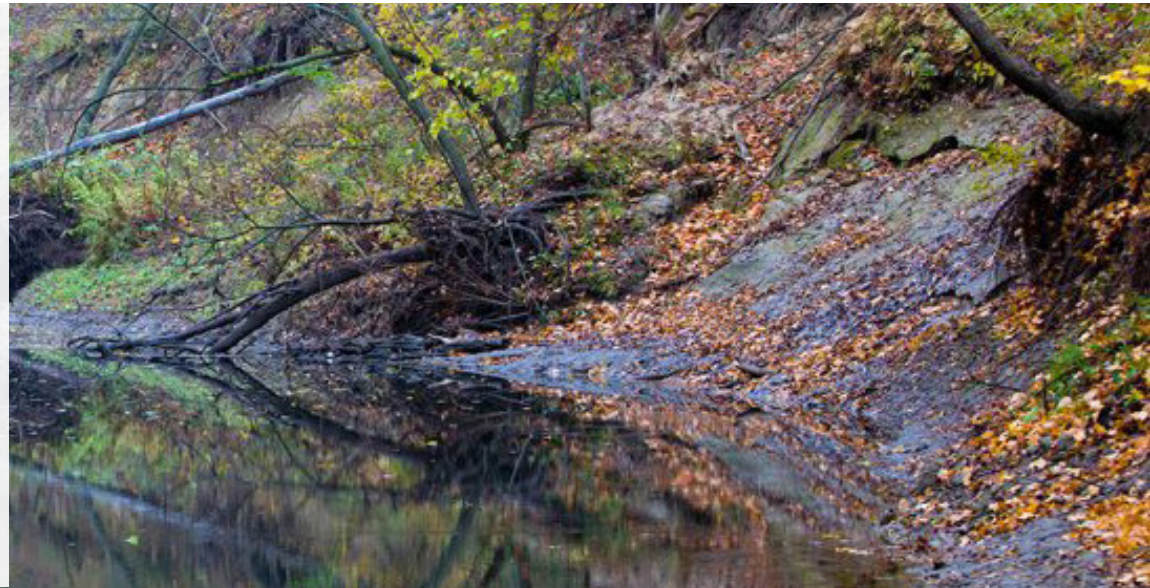
Watershed Assistance

Since 2016, the Iowa Watershed Approach grant, administered by ECICOG, has resulted in over \$20 million of investment to make three watersheds in our region healthier and more resilient to floods.



Clear Creek and Lower Cedar Watershed Plans

ECICOG is an Iowa leader in watershed planning and securing grant funding for watershed improvement projects. Completed watershed plans create opportunities for state and federal grants to improve water quality and mitigate flood risk. ECICOG completed the plan for the Clear Creek watershed in Iowa and Johnson counties in the fall of 2020. ECICOG is partnering with FYRA Engineering to complete the Lower Cedar Watershed Management Plan, which includes Linn, Jones, Johnson, Cedar, Muscatine, Scott, and Louisa counties.



// **ECICOG's planning, organizing, and documenting abilities, along with their grant writing knowledge, have been the key force in obtaining grants and completing goals.**

Diane Yoder
Iowa County Landfill Director

Iowa County Hazard Mitigation Plan

ECICOG worked with Iowa County Emergency Management to update their Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2020. An approved plan makes the cities and schools in Iowa County eligible for Hazard Mitigation grant programs.

Iowa Waste Exchange

ECICOG continued to staff the Iowa Waste Exchange (IWE) for Benton, Linn, Jones, Iowa, and Johnson Counties. The IWE matches businesses with excess waste to those seeking materials in order to reduce waste in our landfill.

16,343.77
tons diverted from landfills

330
assistance connections w/ clients

IWE 2020
41 material matches

In the spring of 2020, staff facilitated a match with Iowa City's Fab Lab that helped them produce personal protective gear for area nursing homes, medical offices, and ambulance services.

Iowa County Landfill Household Hazardous Materials Building

The Iowa County Landfill worked with ECICOG to update and relocate their hazardous materials building. The improvements consolidate programs for staff convenience and keep customers out of heavy equipment pathways. Grants from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Regional Collection Center Innovation Grant Program helped fund the project.



Belle Plaine Organics Recycling

Benton County Landfill and the City of Belle Plaine worked with ECICOG to launch a residential organics management pilot program in October. The goal of the program is to encourage Belle Plaine residents to reduce and properly manage their organic waste, saving money and reducing their environmental impact. This program is funded with the support of a Solid Waste Alternatives Program grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). These grants aim to reduce the amount of solid waste generated and landfilled in Iowa.

Transportation & Transit

Transit COVID-19 Impacts/Adjustments

COVID-19 has had a significant impact among the CorridorRides transit services. In March 2020, ridership for all county dial-a-ride services began to decline, increasing in the fall but ultimately remaining below normal. Likewise, 2020 ridership for the 380Express was lower due to work from home policies and fewer in-person classes at the University of Iowa. The CorridorRides vanpool service maintained steady levels of ridership throughout the pandemic.

This became the new normal: UV lighting, disinfectant wipes and aerosols, distanced riders, and frequent wipe-downs of high-touch surfaces.

Fortunately, the federal CARES Act made over \$2.2 million available to CorridorRides. These funds cover added costs for PPE, cleaning supplies, and reimburse lost fare box revenue. The CARES funding, available through 2022, has allowed CorridorRides to keep transit services accessible throughout the pandemic.

Benton County Transit Facility

ECICOG partnered with Benton County to construct a new bus storage and administrative building in Vinton, which is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2021. ECICOG helped secure a \$318,000 Iowa Public Transit Infrastructure Grant (PTIG) for the new building. At 9,600 square feet, the building will be able to house nearly all Benton County's CorridorRides buses indoors. It will also include office space, a wash bay, and space for light maintenance.



**380 Express has been
a valuable transportation option
for many in the university community.
I am very satisfied
with their services.**

**Michelle Ribble
University of Iowa
Commuter Programs Manager**



New Buses 2020 saw 15 new buses and minivans incorporated into the CorridorRides fleet, twice as many as is typical. The Iowa DOT and Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) brought the need for replacement buses to the attention of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and federal lawmakers, resulting in an increase in FTA funding and the additional buses. A similar number is expected next year.

RPA Projects The Region 10 Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA) is staffed by ECICOG. The RPA is responsible for transportation planning and programming in Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington Counties. The following new projects were funded in 2020:

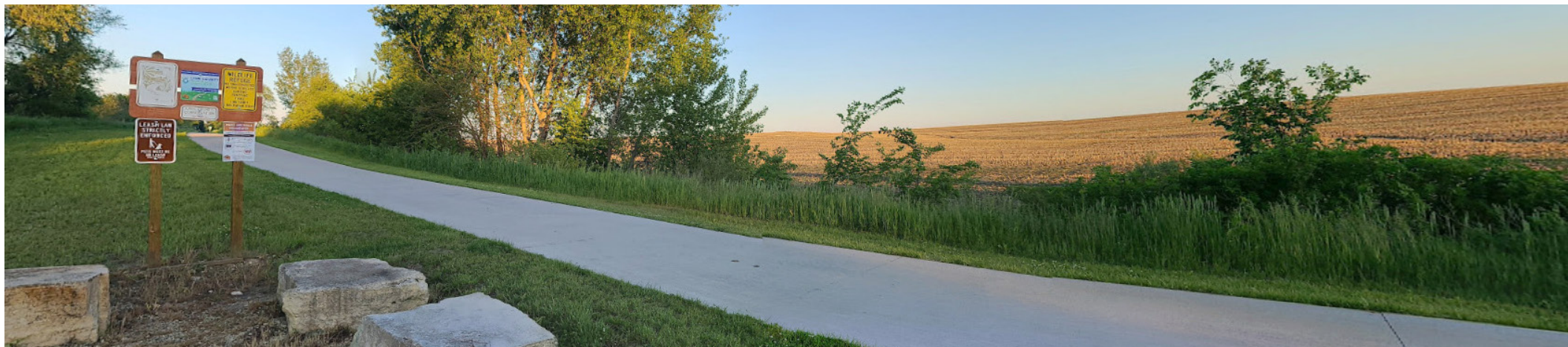
- Linn County Conservation, Grant Wood Trail Gap Connection
- County Road X-54 resurfacing in Cedar County
- County Road V-52 Resurfacing in Iowa County
- 540th Street Rehabilitation in Johnson County
- Burnett Station Paving in Linn County
- Riverside Road, Phase 2 in Washington County

CorridorRides 2020

1,627,328
miles

230,716
rides

15 new replacement buses



Housing

Housing Rehabilitation

ECICOG secured \$704,982 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) housing rehabilitation grants through the Iowa Economic Development Administration (IEDA) for the cities of Coralville, Washington, and Central City. Funds will be used to rehabilitate six homes in each community.



Homes for Iowa

ECICOG assisted AM Management in placing their first of five orders for homes through the Homes for Iowa program. The program trains inmates at the Newton Correction Facility in construction trades while producing affordable houses. These houses are sold and transported throughout the state. ICOCG helped to create the Homes for Iowa program and assists with home placement. AM Management's houses will be in Iowa City.

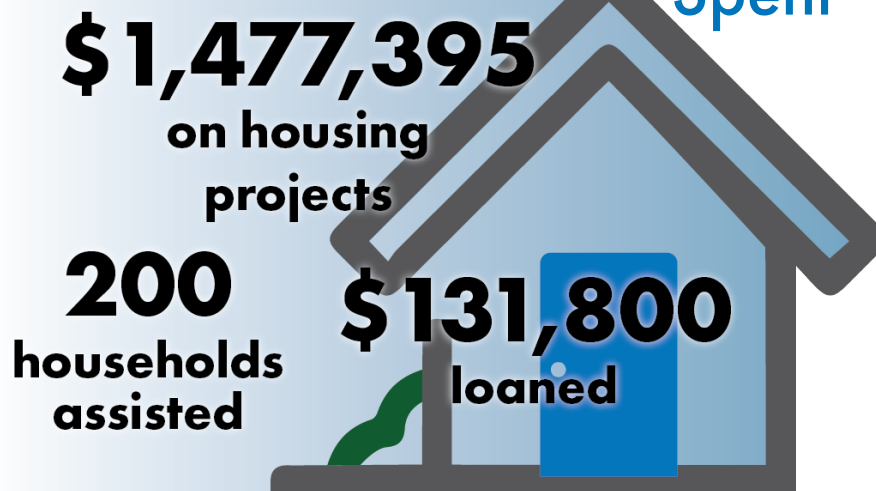
Home Buyer Assistance

ECICOG secured \$540,145 in CDBG home buyer assistance grants for the City of Vinton, City of Coralville, and Washington County. The funds came from the IEDA and will be used to assist five low-income buyers in each community with a home purchase.

FHLB Affordable Housing Grants

Work continued on Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) affordable housing grants on behalf of the region's housing trust funds. In 2020, 38 homes were completed using nearly \$386,000 in FHLB funds. ECICOG staff also prepared applications for each housing trust fund to rehabilitate ten additional homes. Awarded in December, those grants totaled \$445,500.

2020 Housing Dollars Spent



Housing Trust Funds | In 2020, ECICOG continued to provide staff support to the Housing Fund for Linn County (HFfLC) and the East Central Iowa Housing Trust Fund (ECIHTF). HFfLC awarded over \$353,000 in loan and grant funds to nine different entities or organizations in 2020. ECIHTF awarded over \$199,250 for projects in Benton, Iowa, Jones, and Washington counties during the same period.

HFfLC provided gap financing to Woda Cooper Co. for a 44-unit apartment completed in 2020. Because this was also a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit project, the majority of the unit rents will be affordable to those with extremely low income.



Contact ECICOG for:

Housing Studies
Grant Writing & Administration
Solid Waste & Recycling Contracts
Trail Funding
Watershed Planning & Grants

Water / Sewer Zoning Ordinances
Land Use Planning
Citizen Engagement Tools
Gap Financing for LMI Housing Projects
Comprehensive Planning
Capital Improvement Plans

Downtown Revitalization Grants
Facilitation
Nuisance Code Enforcement
City Code Updates
Hazard Mitigation Plans
Council Goal Setting
Hazard Mitigation Grants
Transportation

Business Loans

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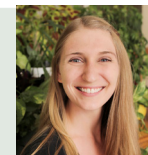
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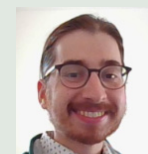
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