

# ECICOG

## EAST CENTRAL IOWA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 2023 Annual Report



# A Letter From The Director

Greetings from the Executive Director,

Can you believe ECICOG celebrated its 50th birthday in 2023? We are bigger and bolder than ever...reaching all time highs in terms of staff, programs and grants leveraged for the region. In fact, for the first time in 20 years, ECICOG has expanded its office footprint – see page 14 for more details. ECICOG successfully applied for over 38 grants from new sources of funding in 2023, resulting in \$23,332,000 of investment in our region. When you add transportation and transit, that number grows to \$29,845,000.



**Karen Kurt**

While the 2020 derecho is in the rear view mirror for many, we have been working hard to take advantage of special CDBG-Disaster Recovery funding made available in late 2022 for new housing construction, emergency generators, and tree planting. We have also been helping our local communities address the lingering repair needs of our most vulnerable homeowners.

**Grants facilitated  
by ECICOG netted  
over \$29,845,000  
for the region in  
2023**

Not all of our energy has been spent on recovery projects... we are a planning agency after all! In September we were awarded two Climate Action planning grants for our region. Completing these plans will open the door to billions of dollars of potential federal funding for greenhouse gas reduction.

We remain grateful for our talented teammates, supportive Board of Directors, and inspirational local partners.

**We are here to serve – let us know how we can help you build a thriving and resilient East Central Iowa in 2024.**

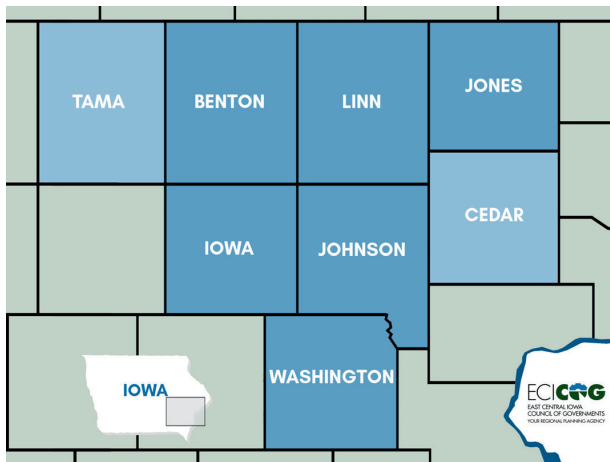
**In Memory of  
Dave Fish**

ECICOG is a better organization as a result of Belle Plaine Mayor Dave Fish's long-term service on our Board of Directors. Mayor Fish passed away on election day in 2023. We will continue to be inspired by his favorite quote:

**“Service to others is the  
rent you pay for your  
room here on earth.”  
~Dave Fish**

# 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, Linn, Johnson, Jones, and Washington counties. Our mission is to help build vibrant, forward-thinking communities in a collaborative and resilient region.



## What we do?

**Promote Regional Collaboration**

**Plan for the Future**

**Share Technical Skills**

**Leverage State & Federal Resources**

## Board of Directors

- Jon Zirkelbach**-Jones County Supervisor (Chair)
- Chris Nosbisch**-Mount Vernon City Administrator
- Adam Griggs**-Mayor of Central City
- Kirsten Running-Marquardt**-Linn County Supervisor
- Dave Fish**-Mayor of Belle Plaine
- Chris Taylor**-Mayor of Swisher
- Kevin Heitshusen**-Iowa County Supervisor
- Tracy Seeman**-Benton County Supervisor
- Eric Van Kerckhove**-Mayor of Palo
- David Connolly**-Linn County Citizen
- Tony Hocamp**-Iowa County Citizen
- Allison Wells**-Johnson County Citizen
- Mary Audia**-Washington County Citizen
- Derek Lumsden**-Jones County Citizen
- Kate Robertson**-Benton County Citizen
- Meghann Foster**-Mayor of Coralville
- Chris Montross**-Iowa County Supervisor
- Jon Green**-Johnson County Supervisor
- Bob Yoder**-Washington County Supervisor
- Deanna McCusker**-Washington City Administrator
- Vacant**-Jones County Representative



# Recovering from the 2020 Derecho Disaster

ECICOG plays an important role in disaster recovery, bringing much-needed federal disaster recovery funding to impacted communities. Our work continues long after the initial emergency response effort has been completed.

## Community Development Block Grants

ECICOG worked with local governments to secure over \$18 million in CDBG Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding for new housing, generators and tree canopy restoration. As a result, 129 new rental and for-sale housing units, 12 fixed generators, and hundreds of trees will be added to our region.

### New Housing Projects

Atkins, Belle Plaine, Center Point, Marion (3), Walker, Rural Linn County

### New Generators

Alburnett, Belle Plaine, Central City, Ely (2) Hiawatha (3), Marion Library, Mt Vernon, Norway, Linn County 3rd Fire District

### Tree Canopy Restoration

Belle Plaine, Hiawatha, Marion, Benton County, Linn County



## Cedar Rapids Housing Rehabilitation

The City of Cedar Rapids was awarded \$2.5 million in CDBG-DR funds for housing rehabilitation for lower income homeowners still dealing with the impact of the 2020 derecho. Cedar Rapids is contracting with ECICOG to provide administration and construction management for the program. Approximately 50 homeowners are expected to qualify.





# PATCH Program

Housing repair emerged as a critical concern following the derecho as many homeowners faced a substantial gap in insurance coverage. Multiple Linn County organizations united to create PATCH (Providing Assistance to Community Homeowners) to provide support for low-to-moderate income homeowners in dire need of crucial repairs. The Housing Fund for Linn County was the recipient of all donated funds and contracted with ECICOG to administer the program along with area partners Matthew 25, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, and Waypoint Services. In total, the PATCH Program received over \$3.4 million dollars from the United Way of East Central Iowa, Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, the City of Cedar Rapids, and Linn County.

212 Homes Repaired

Waypoint Received 670 Calls for Assistance

\$3 Million+ Invested Into Housing

## Atkins Fire Station Rebuild

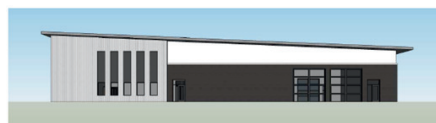
The City of Atkins suffered a devastating loss following the derecho with the collapse of their fire station. In 2021, the City engaged ECICOG to assist with grant administration support for a FEMA Public Assistance grant to construct a new fire station on the same site as City Hall. ECICOG has assisted with FEMA communications, information requests, and federal requirements. The proposed project is in final review with FEMA. Construction bidding can begin upon completion of that review.



EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION

# Transit & Transportation

## Our Team

The Transportation Department supports regional connectivity by providing transportation planning assistance to local governments in the Region 10 Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA 10) and by managing CorridorRides, the regional transit program that improves mobility for those that don't drive.



**Mary Rump**  
Transportation  
Director



**Brock Grenis**  
Transit  
Administrator  
Sr. Planner, AICP



**Justice Inkoom**  
Planner/  
Transportation  
and GIS

## 2023 Programs

Cedar County	Wrote State Recreational Trail grant application for Hoover Nature Trail
Johnson County	Wrote State Transit Assistance Special Project Funding grant to expand employee transportation options
Linn County	Participated in study of low emission transit vehicle options for county use
Regionwide	Completed RPA 10 Public Participation Plan update
Regionwide	Studied new dispatching software for CorridorRides
Regionwide	Launched active transportation planning process
Regionwide	Wrote Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant application to complete safety action plan for all cities in RPA 10

## Surface Transportation Block Grants

<b>Iowa County</b>	\$1,000,000	Resurface V-66 from 240th Street to 200th Street
<b>Linn County</b>	\$1,766,400	Pave Walker Rd from Betty's Grove Rd to Troy Mills Rd
<b>Jones County</b>	\$1,000,000	Resurface E-34 from 230th Ave to Anamosa corporate limits
<b>Vinton</b>	\$1,054,310	Replace W 1st St pavement from K Ave to R Ave
<b>Regionwide</b>	\$174,831	Opt-in to statewide collection of pavement condition data

# CorridorRides

CorridorRides is the Region 10 public transit agency serving Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington counties.

CorridorRides has provided public transit service since 1975 and utilizes numerous transit subcontractors to provide various services across the region. CorridorRides is administered by the East Central Iowa Council of Governments and has provided over 2 million rides in the past 10 years with a fleet of over 80 vehicles.

	State Assistance	Federal Assistance	Capital Assistance
<b>Benton County</b>	\$12,996	\$190,088	\$71,167
<b>Iowa County</b>	\$0	\$212,837	\$21,074
<b>Johnson County</b>	\$0	\$200,490	\$0
<b>Jones County</b>	\$69,312	\$169,187	\$0
<b>Linn County</b>	\$0	\$348,229	\$72,078
<b>Washington</b>	\$0	\$189,898	\$0
<b>Regionwide-Vanpool</b>	\$84,973	\$62,919	\$0
<b>Regionwide-380 Express</b>	\$0	\$1,413,774	\$0

# Wapsipincon Trail Development

RPA 10, staffed by ECICOG, provided \$523,145 in regional Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funds to Jones County to complete the Wapsipincon Trail from the intersection of East 3rd Street and Shaw Road to the Historic Hale Bridge. The 1-mile stretch of trail provides residents and visitors of Anamosa with bicycle and pedestrian access to Wapsipincon State Park. A ribbon cutting was held to recognize the completion of the two-phased project.

Phase 1 of the project had a total cost of about \$1 million, including \$280,000 in regional TAP funds. The region also participated in Phase 2 of the project that cost about \$466,145 including \$243,145 in regional TAP funds.





# Community & Economic Development

## Our Team

The Community and Economic Development team supports communities with land-use planning, zoning, and subdivision regulation; comprehensive planning; downtown revitalization; economic development grants; revolving business loans; council goal setting; capital improvement plans; disaster recovery; and grant writing and administration.



**Karen Kurt**  
Executive Director



**Jessica Walker**  
Community Development Specialist



**Robyn Jacobson**  
Loan Program Administrator



**Tom Gruis**  
Planner, AICP



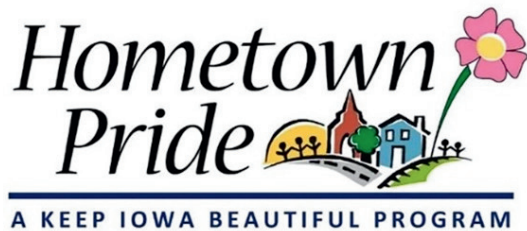
**Zachary Huggins**  
Intern

## 2023 Projects

Atkins	Supported grant administration for fire station rebuild
Center Point	Served as Hometown Pride program coach
Hills	Served as Hometown Pride program coach
Jones County	Implemented 5210 Healthy Choices Count! projects
Linn County	Initiated Ely fringe area agreement update
Martelle	Coordinated city code updates
Morley	Coordinated city code updates
Oxford	Facilitated the comprehensive planning process
Riverside	Wrote CDBG-Downtown Revitalization grant application
Shellsburg	Served as Hometown Pride program coach
Springville	Served as Hometown Pride program coach
Swisher	Completed the comprehensive plan
Victor	Coordinated city code updates
Walker	Served as Hometown Pride program coach
Regionwide	Provided gap financing to grow local businesses

## Hometown Pride Communities Have Busy First Year

ECICOG's Hometown Pride communities (Center Point, Hills, Shellsburg, Springville and Walker) got off to a fast start with their community coach, Jessica Walker. Projects completed or in progress include organizing downtown clean up days; fundraising for murals; starting "Food Truck Fridays"; installing flowerpots, bike racks and bike service stations; hosting a sip and shop event; planning community gardens; adding new park amenities; and creating new community signs.



## Rural Entrepreneurs Receive Free Business Coaching

ECICOG and The Rural Ideas Network received \$412,105 in grants from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to promote Innovation and Business Labs services throughout the state of Iowa. Jones County Economic Development, Iowa County Community Development and Washington Economic Development Group are taking advantage of the grant funding to offer free virtual business coaching and webinars to local businesses in their counties.

## 2023 Grant Administration

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

**Ainsworth** \$39,444 CDBG-CV grant for new playground equipment

**Anamosa** \$650,000 CDBG grant for downtown storefront revitalization

**Coralville** \$100,000 CDBG-CV grant for food pantry equipment

**Jones County** \$53,000 IDPH community grant for the 5210 health program

**University Heights** \$4,200 ARPA business grant program

**Regionwide** \$792,848 EDA grant to remodel hanger for Kirkwood aircraft-mechanic program

**Statewide** \$393,000 EDA grant for Iowa City Area Development Group to advance Ed Tech Collaborative

**Statewide** \$412,105 EDA grant for Rural Ideas Network to expand Innovation and Business Labs

Eventually

WASHBURN - CROSBY

GOLD MEDAL FLOUR

Why  
Not  
Now?



# 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.

## 2023 Programs

Anamosa	Wrote CDBG water/sewer grant application
Hiawatha	Wrote CDBG water/sewer grant application
Marengo	Wrote CDBG water/sewer grant application
Norway	Assisted with CDBG income survey
Wellman	Assisted with CDBG income survey
Benton County	Provided technical assistance to landfill
Benton County	Provided Iowa waste exchange services
Iowa County	Provided technical assistance to landfill
Iowa County	Provided Iowa waste exchange services
Johnson County	Provided Iowa waste exchange services
Jones County	Provided technical assistance to transfer station
Jones County	Provided Iowa waste exchange services
Linn County	Provided Iowa waste exchange services
Tama County	Provided technical assistance to landfill
Tama County	Provided Iowa waste exchange services
Clear Creek Watershed	Served as administrator for watershed
Indian Creek Watershed	Served as administrator for watershed
Lower Cedar Watershed	Served as administrator for watershed
Middle Cedar Watershed	Served as administrator for watershed
Middle Iowa Watershed	Facilitated formation of watershed management authority

# Our Team



**Jennifer Fencil**  
Environmental Services  
Director



**Alicia Presto**  
Sr. Planner  
Environmental Services



**Josh Ventling**  
IWE Resource & Environmental  
Specialist Region 4



**Megan Prestegard**  
Planner/ Environmental  
Specialist



**Jody Bailey**  
Planner/ Environmental  
Specialist



## New Programs Divert Waste from Area Landfills

ECICOG provides technical assistance to landfills in Benton, Jones and Iowa counties. Jones County Transfer Station has increased access to glass recycling, preventing recyclable material from entering the landfill. ECICOG wrote the Solid Waste Alternatives Program Grant (SWAP) application for new glass recycling equipment and funds for outreach. ECICOG is assisting with program implementation, monitoring, and grant reporting requirements. Iowa County Landfill launched a pilot recycling program for clothes and shoes as part of their commitment to continuous improvement. The program promotes recycling and reuse of used clothing, accessories, and other household goods. ECICOG submitted a successful grant application to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for a new to trailer to deliver the textiles to the Linn County Solid Waste Agency's textile diversion program.

## CDBG Grants for Water & Sewer Improvements

Hiawatha and Anamosa will receive additional funding for critical infrastructure projects thanks to two CDBG grants written by ECICOG. The City of Hiawatha was awarded \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to replace aging drinking water mains along Robins Road and Pirie Drive. Anamosa was awarded \$500,000 to make improvements to their wastewater treatment plant. Both grants will help lower rate increases for local residents.

"Thank you to ECICOG for your hard work and persistence in writing the application for the CDBG funds that were awarded to Hiawatha. This will be so beneficial to the citizens, city and water department."

~Marty Recker, Hiawatha Water Superintendent

## 2023 Grant Administration

**Hiawatha** \$500,000 CDBG Water Sewer grant for watermain replacement.

**Anamosa** \$500,000 CDBG Water Sewer grant for wastewater treatment improvements.

**Benton County** \$5,100 DNR Solid Waste Alternatives Program (SWAP) grant application for the backyard compost bin rebate program.

**Jones County** \$7,480 DNR SWAP grant to begin glass recycling at the Transfer Station.

**Iowa County** \$6,618 DNR Environmental Management System grant to begin recycling textiles at the Landfill.

**Regional** \$3,200,000 CDBG DR Derecho Recovery Program grants for fixed generators at critical public facilities and tree canopy replacement.

**Regional** Two \$1,000,000 EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grants to complete the East Central Iowa Climate Action Plan. ECICOG serves as the lead agency for both the Cedar Rapids and the Iowa City Metropolitan Statistical Area awards. The resulting plan will include the entire region.



# 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.

## 2023 Projects

Alburnett	Wrote CDBG-DR new construction grant application
Cedar Rapids	Submitted two Homes for Iowa orders
Hiawatha	Wrote IFA home rehabilitation pilot program application
Kalona	Income-qualified two student build/remodel home buyers
Marion	Income-qualified MEDCO student build/remodel home buyer
Marion	Wrote CDBG-DR grant new construction application
Palo	Administered local housing rehabilitation program
Palo	Wrote IFA home rehabilitation pilot program application
Shellsburg	Conducted building inspections
Vinton	Wrote CDBG upper-story conversion grant application
Johnson County	Wrote FHLB owner-occupied rehabilitation program grant application for Housing Trust Fund of Johnson County
Linn County	Developed housing study including equity analysis
Linn County	Wrote CDBG-DR new construction grant application
Regional	Conducted the ICOG foreign labor housing inspections
Regional	Developed rental Inspection program for cities to utilize
Regional	Wrote IFA Housing Assistance Fund proposal for owner-occupied rehabilitation, including 4 counties outside of region

## Our Team



**Tracey Achenbach**  
Housing Director



**Steve Van Abbema**  
Housing  
Rehabilitation  
Coordinator



**Paula Mitchell**  
Planner/Grant  
Specialist



**Mark Culver**  
Housing Specialist



**Deanna Robinson**  
Planner/Housing  
Specialist



**Nicole Beuc**  
Housing Recovery  
Coordinator



**Lindsey Given Egli**  
Grant Specialist

## Housing Trust Fund Initiatives

Provided Executive Director and administered Housing Fund for Linn County (HFfLC)

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

Wrote 2023 FHLB owner-occupied rehabilitation program grant applications for ECIHTF and HFfLC

Wrote applications to IFA for 2024 Local Housing Trust Fund program grants for ECIHTF and HFfLC

Administered and provided construction management to assist homeowners in need of emergency repair for ECIHTF and HFfLC

## Nuisance Enforcement

Many communities in our region have a zoning ordinance with nuisance regulations, which enable a city to take action to remove dangerous or unsightly conditions. ECICOG assists communities with enforcing these regulations taking a burden off of city staff. The program has a 75% compliance rate without additional legal action required.



### Participating Communities

- Central City
- Newhall
- Olin
- Onslow
- Oxford
- Springville
- Van Horne
- Wyoming

## 2023 Grant Administration

**Atkins** \$620,000 CDBG-DR grant to develop four for-sale owner housing units

**Belle Plaine** \$475,000 CDBG-DR grant to develop five rental units

**Cedar Rapids** \$400,000 for CDBG-DR grant for owner-occupied rehabilitation program

**Center Point** \$5,127,552 CDBG-DR grant to develop 42 rental units

**Marion** \$4,295,000 CDBG-DR grants to develop 50 rental units

**Marion** \$3,269,820 CDBG-DR grant to develop 20 for-sale owner housing units

**Marion** \$530,000 for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program

**Washington** \$400,000 IFA grant for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program

**Walker** \$314,434 CDBG-DR grant to develop two for-sale owner housing units

**Linn County** \$990,000 CDBG-DR grant to develop six owner-occupied housing units

**Linn County** \$3,442,000 for PATCH owner-occupied housing rehabilitation

**Johnson County** \$295,000 for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program



## Thank You For a Job Well Done



Your Program and all employees, contractors have made a Huge difference. My home is so much better, warmer now.  
Laurie Kramer

Laurie Kramer endured a grueling period of over two weeks without power in the aftermath of the August 10, 2020, derecho storm that swept through Eastern Iowa. The Marion resident had siding, skirting, and interior damage on her mobile home. Unfortunately, she had limited insurance coverage to address these repairs. She was referred to the PATCH Program from partner agencies and decided to apply for assistance. Laurie was able to get the remainder of her derecho damage repaired through the program. Following the completion of repairs done by PATCH, Laurie sent the housing staff a thank you letter in response to the work they had completed and to express her appreciation.

## Homes for Iowa

Homes for Iowa is the innovative partnership with the Newton Correction facility to train offenders to build houses which are then transported throughout the state. The Iowa Council of Governments Association has been key partner in developing the program and ECICOG assists residents and developers with the purchasing process. In 2023, contracts were signed for two Homes for Iowa houses, for a total of twelve homes placed in our region since the program's inception in 2020.



# 2023 Notable Moments

## PATCH Receives Third Award

The unique collaboration known as PATCH (highlighted on page 4) was recognized with a Connect for Cause Award from the Corridor Business Journal as the 2023 Non-Profit Collaboration of the Year. This follows a National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Impact Award and Iowa Finance Authority Innovation Award in 2021. When multiple partners come together to solve difficult challenges, it gets noticed. ECICOG was honored to be part of this selfless, forward-thinking group.



## ECICOG Receives NADO Impact Award

ECICOG won a 2024 Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for its rural nuisance enforcement program. Central City, Newhall, Olin, Onslow, Oxford Junction, Springville, Van Horne, and Wyoming have contracted with ECICOG for the service. With the proactive attention the program provides, over 75% of code violations are corrected without legal action.



## Office Expansion and Remodel

After eight new staff members joined the team over the last three years, ECICOG's office space was starting to feel a little cramped. In October of 2023, ECICOG expanded its footprint and remodeled its existing space. The newly revamped space includes enclosed offices for director-level staff, new cubicles, two conference rooms and a small office affectionally known as the "zoom room". With the changes, ECICOG will be able to more easily host meetings and events without disrupting staff.





# ECICONG

