

November 2020

East Central Iowa Council of Governments

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Newsletter

[Congratulations to Anamosa on their Downtown Revitalization Grant!](#)

The City of Anamosa, was awarded a Community Development Block Grant of \$500,000 for a downtown revitalization project in the fall of 2020, having worked in partnership with ECICOG, Martin Gardner Architecture, and Jones County Economic Development. The funds will address blighting features with facade improvements on 10 buildings in Anamosa's Main Street Historic District. Project activities 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. This exciting project will provide a visual uplift to Anamosa's downtown while following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation to preserve the historic character of the District. For more information on CDBG downtown revitalization grants, contact Community Development Specialist Tom Gruis at tom.gruis@ecicog.org!

[Belle Plaine Launches Organics Management Program](#)

ECICOG worked with the Benton County Landfill and the City of Belle Plaine to launch a residential organics management pilot program for Belle Plaine residents in October. The goal of the program is to encourage residents to reduce and properly manage their organic waste while saving money and reducing their environmental impact. The program includes a \$50 rebate toward a composting container of the resident's choice or the supplies to build their own. All program information, rebate form, and videos will be available on the [program website](#). This program is funded with the support of a Solid Waste Alternatives Program grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Solid Waste Alternatives Program grant program aims to reduce the amount of solid waste generated and landfilled in Iowa. Through a competitive process, financial assistance is available for a variety of projects such as source reduction, recycling, and education. Local governments, public or private groups, and individuals are eligible to apply for program funds. Applications are due January 2nd and July 1st. Visit the [Iowa DNR's website](#) for more information. To learn more about the Solid Waste Alternatives Program or how organics management can benefit your community, contact Alicia Presto at alicia.presto@ecicog.org!

Central City Takes Proactive Approach to Nuisance Enforcement

Earlier this year, Central City approached ECICOG for assistance with nuisance enforcement. Like many communities, City leaders felt that a few unkempt properties were negatively impacting their town. The City wanted to take a more proactive approach but lacked staffing capacity to do so, which is where ECICOG Housing Specialist Mark Culver stepped in. Based on City-established priorities, Mark spends roughly 6 hours a month checking for code violations, sending citations, and working with homeowners on corrective actions. The program wasn't without controversy as homeowners were not accustomed to being asked to comply with city code. Thanks to a steadfast City Council, 12 violations have been resolved after only two months in action. If you want to learn more about how ECICOG can help you with nuisance enforcement, contact Housing Specialist Mark Culver at mark.culver@ecicog.org!

Watershed Partnerships Lead to Exciting New Projects

Watershed management can be hard to see with its focus on partnerships and investment, but recent construction of water quality projects in our region makes it a reality. Several nutrient-reduction bioreactors are being constructed in the Indian Creek watershed through different partnerships. A bioreactor is a trench filled with specialized woodchips that reduce water pollution by absorbing nutrients from agricultural fields. One project example is a bioreactor on Cedar Rapids-owned farmland adjacent to the Tuma Sports Complex highlighted in [this news story](#). The City of Cedar Rapids partnered with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Indian Creek Soil Health Partnership on design and construction. ECICOG provides organizational management for the Indian Creek Watershed Management Authority. ECICOG also wrote the grant to fund the Indian Creek Soil Health Partnership Coordinator, who provided technical assistance that helped move the bioreactor project forward. For more information about the Soil Health Partnership, visit the [Indian Creek Watershed Management Authority website](#).

ECICOG Welcomes New Staff

ECICOG is excited to welcome two new staff members! Harrison Freund was selected for ECICOG's two-year Planning Fellowship. Harrison graduated from the University of Iowa with a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning. He recently returned from a fellowship with Montana Conservation Corps where he authored a report about two Wilderness Study Areas and prepared an outreach program for children. As the Planning Fellow, Harrison will work on a wide-variety of economic development, community development, and housing projects. Brittany Rempe is ECICOG's new Communications Specialist. Brittany has a degree in Public Relations from Simpson College and worked in marketing for the Herzog Corporation prior to joining ECICOG. Brittany is passionate and knowledgeable about branding and messaging, which she'll use to spread the news about ECICOG's work. Watch for more information on one of her upcoming projects...the launch of ECICOG's citizen engagement platform. Both Harrison and Brittany are looking forward to sharing their skills with the communities in our region!

Funding Opportunities

[Community Catalyst Building Remediation](#)

Pre-applications due: January 1

The Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program assists communities with the redevelopment, rehabilitation or deconstruction of buildings to stimulate economic growth or reinvestment in the community. The maximum grant award is \$100,000 and 40% of funds will be awarded to cities with populations under 1,500. Pre-applications must be submitted by January 1, 2021. [Learn more here.](#) Contact Economic Development Specialist Adam Bentley at adam.bentley@ecicog.org for assistance.

[CDBG Water/Sewer Grant](#)

Due: January 1

This competitive program offers grants to assist cities and counties with water and sewer infrastructure improvements including sanitary sewer system improvements, water system improvements, water and wastewater treatment facilities, storm sewer projects related to sanitary sewer system improvements and rural water connections. Winter applications are due January 1. [Learn more here.](#) Contact Environmental Specialist John Bruce at john.bruce@ecicog.org for assistance.

[Rural Heritage Revitalization Grant](#)

Due: February 1

Iowa DOT has a number of funding programs available for trail projects. Funding programs with October 1 application due dates are the Federal Recreational Trail Program, the statewide Transportation Alternatives Program and Iowa's Clean Air Program. Descriptions of these programs and application details are available on Iowa DOT's website. [Click here for more information.](#)

[Derelict Building Grant Program](#)

Due: February 26

The Derelict Building Program through the Iowa DNR is available for Iowa towns of 5,000 or fewer residents. The program will address neglected commercial or public structures that have sat vacant for at least six months. The Program has two primary focuses: landfill diversion through the recycling and reuse of building materials, and the elimination of hazards posed by empty structures. The application deadline is Friday, February 26, 2021 for applicants seeking: funding assistance with asbestos inspections, asbestos abatement, structural engineering analysis, site assessments, building deconstruction, and building renovation expenses. [Learn more here.](#) Contact Environmental Services Director Jennifer Fencil at jennifer.fencil@ecicog.org for assistance.