



## NEW DATA REVEALS CITY GRANT ELIGIBILITY

Income data released by HUD determines automatic eligibility for communities to apply for the Community Development Block Grant water/sewer and community facilities programs. The 2019 low-to-moderate income (LMI) data shows which cities meet HUD's minimum standard of 51% LMI in order to apply without conducting an income survey. The following cities in Region 15 meet or exceed this standard:

Agency	51.1%	Chillicothe	60.0%	Gibson	63.6%	Rose Hill	86.2%
Barnes City	64.9%	Delta	69.2%	Hedrick	65.9%	South English	59.3%
Beacon	59.1%	Drakesville	54.3%	Keswick	52.0%	Stockport	70.6%
Birmingham	54.1%	Eldon	56.0%	Kinross	87.5%	University Park	53.8%
Blakesburg	55.2%	Fairfield	52.5%	Ollie	55.6%	What Cheer	75.0%
Bonaparte	58.8%	Fremont	51.4%	Ottumwa	55.3%		

Cities not meeting the 51% requirement are required to conduct a household income survey and achieve a 51.1% or greater LMI level. All survey methods must be pre-approved. Please contact RPC staff with questions.

## OTTUMWA STREETScape GROUND BREAKING

A groundbreaking kick-off event was held for the Ottumwa Main Street Improvements Project on the sultry afternoon of May 16. RPC staff [Bradley & Holly] turned a ceremonial shovel of dirt along with many of the project partners after some comments from the President of the Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation, the Mayor of Ottumwa, and Director of Main Street Iowa.

The streetscape project will rehabilitate the 100-300 blocks of East Main Street in downtown Ottumwa. This is a full-depth, full-width reconstruction of the streets, sidewalks, and all utilities. As a qualifier for a Community Facilities CDBG (\$800,000) and an urban water quality initiative grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (\$55,000), the project will incorporate stormwater runoff and treatment features. This includes permeable pavers in the intersections and selected parking areas, as well as vegetated bioretention cells in the intersection bump-outs and mid-block crosswalk areas. This project is administered by Area 15 RPC and construction to begin in July and finish in late-2020.



Ottumwa Mainstreet Groundbreaking 5/16/2019

Photo Credit: Kory McDonald

## NEW INCOME LIMITS FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP LOANS

April 2019—IEDA has announced the new Median Family Income (MFI) guidelines for 2019. These income limits are utilized for the AHEAD Southern Iowa Home Ownership (SIHO) program. SIHO first-time homebuyer loans are available to qualified households with a combined income of less than or equal to 110% of MFI. The following income limits are valid in all 10 SIHO counties:

1 person-\$53,460	2 person-\$61,160	3 person-\$68,750	4 person-\$76,340	5 person-\$82,500
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## RPA 15 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN PUBLIC REVIEW

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission has completed work on the Long-Range Transportation Plan for Regional Planning Affiliation 15 and the document is available for public review and comment until June 26<sup>th</sup>.

The purpose of transportation planning is to develop and maintain a transportation system that will provide a safe, efficient and economic means of moving people and goods. The long-range plan serves as a means for Regional Planning Affiliation to examine the existing transportation system and determine the adequacy for the area’s population and economy. In order to accomplish this, the plan considers all modes of transportation and discusses existing conditions, usage and needs. It also considers available funding sources and projected revenues for improvements. The plan has a horizon year of 2040 and looks at both short- and long-term needs. This document will steer project prioritization and investment of public funds in the region.

Goals of the Long-Range Plan focus on 1) provides a transportation system that is safe and dependable, 2) efficient in meeting the transportation needs of the region and 3) encourages economic development and improves quality of life in the region. Applications for Surface Transportation Block Grant/SWAP or Transportation Alternative Funds should address the goals of the Long-Range Plan and/or be identified as a project within the document. STBG/SWAP and TAP projects will be scored according to how well they address the goals of the plan.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan will be available for review on the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission website. Comments may be submitted using the survey that will also be available on the website or by e-mailing or calling the contact below. Comments will be accepted until June 26<sup>th</sup>. A public meeting for the plan will be held on Wednesday June 12<sup>th</sup> at 3:00pm until 4:30pm at the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission office located at 224 E Second Street in Ottumwa. The purpose of this meeting will be to provide information about the Long-Range Transportation Plan and to answer questions. If you have questions or comments about the plan or the meeting, please contact Chris Kukla at 641-684-6551 or [Chris.Kukla@area15rpc.com](mailto:Chris.Kukla@area15rpc.com).

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROJECT UPDATES

The Downtown Revitalization CDBG fund has been very successful across the Area 15 Region, with projects now complete in Bloomfield, Fairfield, Oskaloosa, and Ottumwa (2 phases). We have seen overwhelmingly positive impacts of the program in each of our communities; most notably, with dozens of new upper-story housing units complete in Bloomfield and Ottumwa. Recently, the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) completed a study on the impacts of the earlier CDBG-DTR projects. The study found an impressive 59% percent increase in property valuations for participating properties in Bloomfield and a staggering 129% increase in Ottumwa’s Phase I project. A story map of much of the study’s findings, including Bloomfield and Ottumwa, is available here: <https://bit.ly/2D2sAeD>.

The Oskaloosa Phase II façade improvement project is nearing construction! The City and architect are in contract negotiations with the general contractor who bid on the project and hope to come to an agreement and start construction sometime in June. This project will rehabilitate eleven façades on six buildings concentrated on the west side of the Oskaloosa City Square. The goal is construction completed within nine months.

The DTR fund is an annual CDBG program with applications for grants due in May. These grants take about a year to develop and require a downtown “slum and blight survey”, proper procurement for architectural work, and often architectural historian services *before* a grant can be submitted. Staff at IEDA have indicated that they will give preference to experienced grant administrators for DTR grants, as they are quite nuanced and require enhanced administrative oversight. If you are interested in the DTR program, please contact Bradley to discuss grant and application requirements!



Oskaloosa before Rehabilitation      Rendering of Improvements



## RPC STAFF DEVELOPMENT

RPC staff were busy attending several training workshops and conferences in April. Bradley Grefe made the farthest journey West to Seattle, WA for the National Main Street Conference. Chris Bowers attended the EDA Revolving Loan Fund training in Denver CO. Holly Berg participated in the Iowa Rural Development Council Conference in Grinnell. Training and networking is important to keep staff informed on national and regional trends and topics to help us deliver the best services to our customers.

Ottumwa Main Street represents in Seattle →



## BERG COMPLETES TERM AS CITR PRESIDENT

Holly Berg, Regional Planner at Area 15, is ending her second two-year term on the Central Iowa Tourism Region (CITR) Board of Directors, this year serving as President of the region. CITR is a nonprofit organization representing 35 counties in Iowa with the mission of enhancing tourism in central Iowa through information, education, and promotion in cooperation with government and business. The CITR Board of Directors includes industry members elected from the Region's membership. Holly was honored to assist the organization through her tenure as the group accomplished several important initiatives, including guide training for attractions, educational opportunities for tourism organizations and advocating the importance of tourism in economic development strategies.

## RPA 15 AWARDS \$4M+ IN TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

RPA 15 has awarded \$4,142,789 in transportation funds to five projects in the region, this includes \$3,841,054 to four Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)/SWAP, and \$301,735 to one Transportation Alternative (TAP) project. Cities and counties generally use STBG/SWAP funds for road improvements and TAP funds are often used by local governments for bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Information on the application process and eligibility requirements for both the STBG/SWAP and TAP funds are available on the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission website. Applications are due early April each year.

This year, the RPA awarded Surface Transportation Block Grant/SWAP and Transportation Alternative Program funds to the following projects in federal fiscal years 2020-2023:

**\$768,000** to **Fairfield** for an HMA overlay, patching and shoulder improvements on 32<sup>nd</sup> Street from Jackpine Loop to Burlington Avenue in **2020**.

**\$447,700** to **Fairfield** for milling patching, curb replacement, HMA overlay and pedestrian improvements on 4<sup>th</sup> Street from Broadway to the BNSF right-of-way in **2020**.

**\$2,055,354** to **Ottumwa** for PCC reconstruction of Mary Street from Ferry Street to Shaul Avenue in **2023**.

**\$570,000** to **Jefferson County** for HMA surfacing of W21 from 167<sup>th</sup> Street to North Walnut Creek in **2020**.

**\$301,735** to **Ottumwa** for construction of 8-foot trail along Milner St. from Mary Street to Richmond Avenue in **2020**.

If you have questions regarding these awards, the Surface Transportation Block Grant or Transportation Alternative Program, please contact Chris Kukla at [Chris.Kukla@area15rpc.com](mailto:Chris.Kukla@area15rpc.com) or (641) 684-6551.

## PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARED FOR IOWA DR-4421

### SEVERE WEATHER/FLOODING ON MARCH 12, 2019 AND CONTINUING

Severe storms flooded Iowa in March resulting in Governor Reynolds seeking federal disaster assistance to aid recovery. On March 23, 2019 President Trump approved major disaster declaration for 56 Iowa Counties, including Mahaska County for Region 15. Although most flooding was away from Region 15 along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, federal and state funding assistance is available to much or all of Iowa. Iowa Individual assistance is available to **Davis**, **Van Buren**, **Mahaska**, and **Wapello** counties; **Mahaska** County is also eligible for the Federal Public Assistance program.

Federal Hazard Mitigation funding is available **state-wide** to conduct hazard mitigation activities to minimize the impact of future disasters. Hazard Mitigation funds may be requested through Iowa Homeland Security by submitting a Notice of Interest (NOI); **RPC staff can assist your city or county with the process.**

Also to help Iowans with recovery, Governor Reynolds launched a new **211 Flood Hotline** and one-stop **2019 Iowa Floods website** [www.floods2019.iowa.gov](http://www.floods2019.iowa.gov). Iowans can call 211 with questions or concerns about the flooding and steps they can take toward recovery. The website offers information on recovery resources, grant programs, housing, travel information, and the latest news.

## OPPORTUNITY<sup>2</sup> HIGHLIGHTING MANUFACTURING IN OUR REGION

As part of an IDEA regional marketing grant, the Opportunity<sup>2</sup> economic development group focused on publicizing the strength of manufacturing in the region. We complete our review of this project with a look at manufacturing in Keokuk County.

### Keokuk County Accommodating Growth

When Duro-Last Inc. was looking to open another plant to manufacture custom-fabricated roofing systems, they were initially drawn to the Sigourney area because of a vacant facility. When this available facility wasn't the correct fit, SADC created the right fit. Paul Ackerman, Iowa Plant Manager for Duro-Last, says "SADC was very instrumental in bringing Duro-Last here. They were able to secure the land, and get a building put up in the timeframe Duro-Last was looking for."



Joyce Bender, Vice President of Bender Foundry Services, echoed the same affection for the SADC. BFS makes sand cores, among other products, in a 69,928-square foot facility, for customers outside of the area. When her and her husband started out, they rented a building for the first three years. "We were sort of on our own. Then we needed more space. SADC stepped up and helped us get a building that would work." Bender says that other communities approached BFS asking them to relocate. At the time, the Benders were happy in Keokuk County. "It is a family-oriented place. Everybody knows you. It is pleasant here, and comfortable." It was where they wanted to raise their children. However, the need for a building was real. SADC did everything they could, and were what made it possible to operate BFS, a growing company, in Sigourney Iowa.



## OPPORTUNITY<sup>2</sup> WORKFORCE ATTRACTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Opportunity<sup>2</sup>, is a nine-county regional economic development organization administered by Area 15 RPC. The group is comprised of county economic developers, utility partners, and a representative from Indian Hills Community College. Opportunity<sup>2</sup> has identified four priority areas for economic development: supporting existing employers, continuing development of the regional workforce, fostering entrepreneurship, and expanding professional development opportunities.

In light of these priorities, Opportunity<sup>2</sup> developed a series of forums related to key issues in the region including workforce attraction, housing, and child care. These forums were held in various locations in the region this spring and were open to employers, elected officials, and community leaders. Content provided resources to organizations and private businesses who can help solve these economic development issues. The forums also featured successful case studies, such as the Lee Container Daycare in Centerville. Watch for additional forums to be held this Fall.

Opportunity<sup>2</sup> will also continue their successful Educators in the Workplace program. In June, approximately 90 local educators will attend one of three. The Educators in the Workplace program is a collaboration between the Opportunity<sup>2</sup> regional economic development group, Indian Hills Community College, and Des Moines Area Community College. This will be the fifth year for the program, which provides K-12 educators the opportunity to tour diverse workplaces in the region, meet industry leaders, and learn about quality

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