

# ECIOG

EAST CENTRAL IOWA  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
2024 Annual Report



# A Letter From The Director



Karen Kurt

ECICOG is a unique government agency in many ways. We are one of only a few entities that serve at the regional level. Unlike other units of local government, we have no taxation authority. We receive a small amount of financial support from our founding counties – currently about 10% of our budget. Otherwise, we are a self-sustaining organization. We have to be nimble and entrepreneurial. We are always looking for those projects that advance a community or regional need, match our skill set, and have a potential funding source that can be leveraged.

The last five years have been a wild ride. Between COVID and the derecho (and related recovery funding) and several large federal spending packages (CARES, ARPA, IJA and IRA), we have been scrambling to place and manage these funds in our region. Most of the time we have felt more reactive than proactive. It has also been incredibly rewarding, as we work with new partners and funding agencies and are able to make an impact in new and unexpected ways.

On pages 3-4, you can read about a few of the “firsts” we had in 2024. Keep your fingers crossed, as we also have a couple of exciting grant applications in the pipeline. The first is a regional EPA Brownfields Assessment Coalition application that would provide funding for planning and assessments of brownfield sites. The second application is for the Digital Equity Competitive grant through the Department of Commerce. Written in partnership with the Mid-Iowa Planning Alliance based in Des Moines, this grant would fund projects identified by the Cedar Rapids Library, East Central Iowa United Way, NewBoCo, and the Rural Ideas Network to address the digital divide in our region.

Our work is based on trust. We appreciate the flexibility granted by our Board of Directors as we have pursued this new work. We thank our partners for calling us to the table (or coming to the table) as new opportunities or challenges arise. And lastly, none of this is possible without the passion and flexibility of the ECICOG team members.



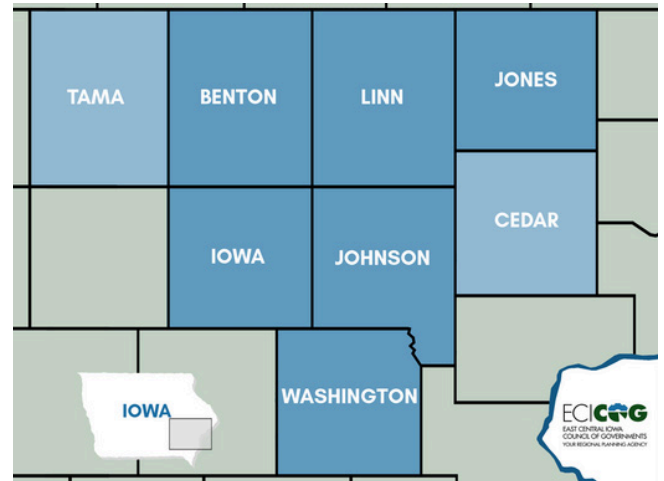
**We are here to serve – let us know how we can help you build a thriving and resilient East Central Iowa in 2025.**

# 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.

## Our Core Mission

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



## Board of Directors

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(Chair)

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Benton County Supervisor

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Linn County Supervisor

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**Chris Hoffman**  
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Anamosa City Administrator

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Mount Vernon City Administrator

**Bob Yoder**  
Washington County Supervisor

**Vacant**  
Washington County

# ECICOG Firsts

## Climate Action Plan

ECICOG received two EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program planning grants on behalf of the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City metropolitan statistical areas. The grants allowed ECICOG to expand staff capacity, build knowledge and expertise in climate action planning, and develop a regional priority climate action plan. The East Central Iowa Priority Climate Action Plan is the region's first plan to identify how existing priorities align with climate action opportunities. In addition, the plan will serve as a basis for a comprehensive climate action plan that addresses all greenhouse gas-emitting sectors in the region.



## Trip Connect

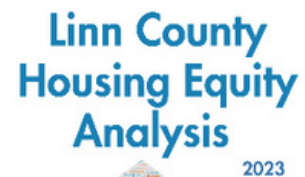
In December 2024, a new transportation service was launched in Johnson County that was partially funded by two grants written and administered by ECICOG. Trip Connect is overseen by the Johnson County Mobility Coordinator and offers rides during the evenings and weekends in the northern portion of Johnson County, including North Liberty, Coralville, Iowa City, and rural portions of the county. ECICOG also assisted the Johnson County Mobility Coordinator in the planning process to develop the service and ensure its compliance with DOT rules and regulations, and as well assisted in the procurement process that selected Neighborhood Transportation Services (NTS) to operate the service.

The Trip Connect service will operate as a two-year pilot to determine its long-term viability. The goal of Trip Connect is to remove barriers for Johnson County citizens seeking to improve their lives and offer a pathway to greater mobility.



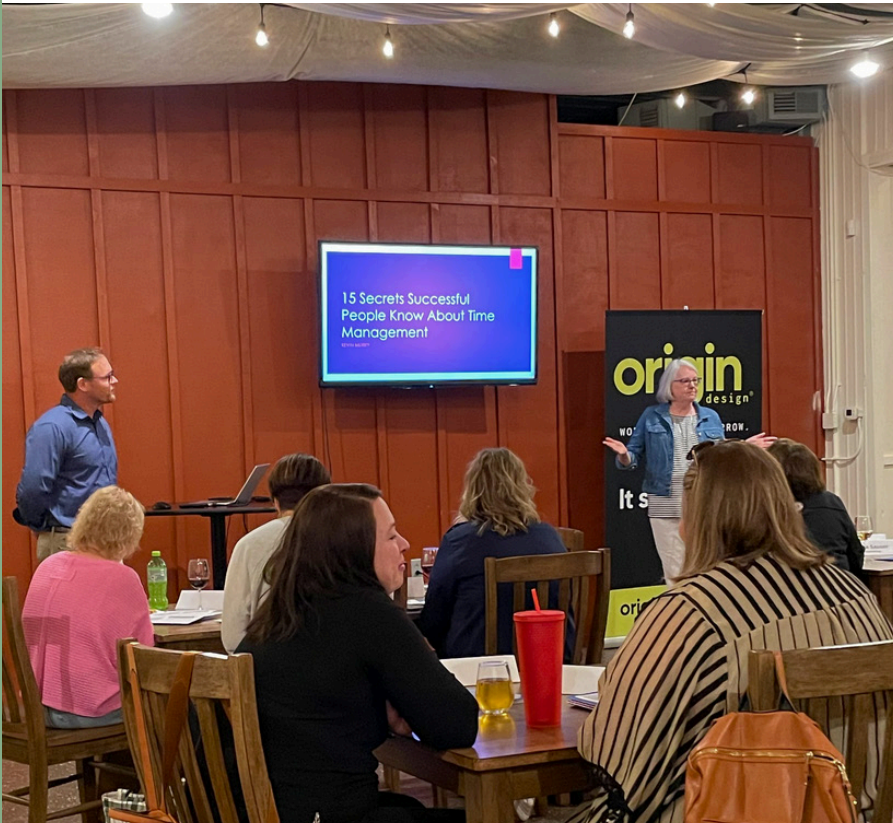
## Innovative Housing Studies

ECICOG is proud to have received the 2024 NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award for work led by Housing Planner Deanna Robinson on two first-of-their-kind housing assessments. The Linn County Housing Equity Analysis for the cities of Cedar Rapids, Marion, and Hiawatha examined housing issues that have different impacts and meanings based on a person's race, ethnicity, gender, age, or disability status. The Linn County Housing Needs Assessment offered valuable insights into the factors influencing housing in 14 often-overlooked rural communities in Linn County, emphasizing their unique strengths and opportunities. The evidence-based findings were translated into user-friendly, action-oriented reports to support effective policy-making and resource allocation.



## Local Government Recharge Day

ECICOG hosted the first annual Local Government Recharge Day at Fireside Winery in Marengo. Attendees had an opportunity to learn about city budgeting, grant funding sources, growing housing stock, community promotion and time management skills... in addition to networking over a glass of wine!



## ADU Ordinance

ECICOG assisted the City of Mount Vernon with updating their city code to allow for accessory dwelling units (ADUs). ADUs are separate and complete dwelling units constructed within a parcel that already has a primary dwelling. ADUs are a great way for communities to add housing without the additional cost of new infrastructure.

## Micro Loan Program

ECICOG launched the first regional micro loan program. Loans through the program can be used for working capital, furniture, fixtures and equipment. Loan amounts can range from \$500 to \$10,000. The program is geared towards new or small businesses and compliments ECICOG's long-standing revolving loan program for established businesses.

## Strategic Doing

ECICOG successfully obtained an EDA grant to accelerate work related to Envision East Central Iowa with funding assistance from Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, United Way of East Central Iowa, Alliant Energy and Greater Iowa City, Inc. Through the grant, regional stakeholders have the opportunity to learn Strategic Doing - a facilitation framework intended to help with cross-organization collaboration. Cohort members will use the training to engage action teams to advance Envision East Central Iowa, our region's comprehensive development strategy.



# 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.

## 2024 Projects

### **Anamosa**

- Began comprehensive planning process
- Began CDBG-DTR application

### **Atkins**

- Supported grant administration for fire station rebuild

### **Center Point**

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach

### **Coralville**

- Facilitated council goal setting process

### **Hills**

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach

### **Iowa City**

- Updated city strategic plan

### **Jones County**

- Implemented 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count! projects

### **Linn County**

- Completed Ely fringe area agreement update

### **Martelle**

- Drafted city code updates

### **Mount Vernon**

- Completed zoning ordinance ADU update

### **Morley**

- Drafted city code updates

### **North Liberty**

- Facilitated council goal setting process

### **Oxford**

- Completed comprehensive plan

### **Riverside**

- Began comprehensive planning process

### **Shellsburg**

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach

### **Springville**

- Served as Hometown Pride program coach

### **Urbana**

- Facilitated CIP and goal setting

### **Van Horne**

- Completed P&Z commission development review

### **Victor**

- Drafted city code updates

### **Walker**

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

### **Wyoming**

- Completed zoning ordinance update

### **Regionwide**

- Provided gap financing to grow local businesses
- Wrote application for Digital Equity Competitive grant
- Launched micro loan program

## 2024 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

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

**Jones County** \$53,000 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 grant for Envision East Central Iowa

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

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

## NewBo City Market Expansion

On September 18th, EDA announced a \$1.3 million grant award to expand and remodel Newbo City Market in Cedar Rapids. ECICOG wrote the grant and will serve as grant administrator. The \$5.5 million project is slated to begin in early 2025. The expansion will include the construction of a mezzanine over approximately one-third of the NBCM ground floor, adding 7,200 square feet to the existing 21,400-square-foot facility. Seating and event space will be moved to the second-floor mezzanine, providing an additional 3,000 square feet of business incubation space. When the project is completed, the Market will have a new neighborhood grocery store, culinary kitchen, meeting rooms, additional business stalls and an indoor stage on the second floor.



## Downtown Revitalization Grants

Riverside is beginning work on its first \$590,000 CDBG-Downtown Revitalization (DTR) grant which will make exterior improvements to roughly one-third of its downtown buildings.

Anamosa is completing the second of two consecutive CDBG – DTR grants. When completed, over \$1,150,000 in grant funds will have been invested to renovate 20 buildings in Anamosa. ECICOG wrote and is administering the grants for both communities.



# 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.

## 2024 Projects

### Anamosa

- Wrote workforce housing credit application for proposed developments

### Atkins

- Facilitated amendment to add two homes

### Belle Plaine

- Wrote CDBG-DR new construction grant application

### Blairstown

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Cedar Rapids

- Facilitated delivery of one Homes for Iowa order
- Administered PATCH program funds

### Center Point

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Central City

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Olin

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Onslow

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Oxford Junction

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Palo

- Administered local housing rehabilitation program
- Assisted with creation of service line replacement program

### Shellsburg

- Conducted building inspections
- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Springville

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Van Horne

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Vinton

- Wrote CDBG upper-story conversion grant application
- Facilitated delivery of 7 Homes for Iowa home orders

### Wyoming

- Provided nuisance enforcement

### Johnson County

- Administered 2023 FHLB owner-occupied rehabilitation program grant application for Housing Trust Fund of Johnson County
- Wrote successful FHLB owner-occupied rehabilitation program grant application for HTFJC
- Administered owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program
- Submitted proposal to complete Housing Assessment Study

### Jones County

- Administered HUD DRGR for Jones County Economic Development

### Linn County

- Administered PATCH program funds throughout Linn County
- Wrote Successful FHLB owner-occupied rehabilitation program grant application for Housing Fund for Linn County
- Completed Linn County Housing Needs Assessment and Equity Analysis

### Regionwide

- Offered rental inspection program
- Administered IFA Housing Assistance Fund Home repair pilot program



## 2024 Grant Administration

**Atkins** \$1,039,457 CDBG-DR grant to develop six for-sale owner housing units

**Belle Plaine** \$475,000 CDBG-DR grant to develop four rental units in the King Theater Bldg.

**Belle Plaine** \$390,000 CDBG-DR grant to develop five rental units in the Moore Building

**Cedar Rapids** \$2,500,000 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

**Benton County** \$231,000 for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program

**Iowa County** \$38,500 for IFA HAF Rehabilitation program

**Johnson County** \$625,000 for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program

**Johnson County** \$269,500 for IFA HAF Rehabilitation for 7 homeowners

**Jones County** \$77,000 for IFA HAF Rehabilitation for 2 homeowners

**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

**Linn County** \$693,000 for IFA HAF Rehabilitation for 18 homeowners

**Washington County** \$115,500 for IFA HAF Rehabilitation for 3 homeowners

## 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, HFfLC and Housing Trust Fund for Johnson County HTFJC
- Wrote 2024 FHLB owner-occupied rehabilitation program grant applications for ECIHTF, HFfLC and HTFJC
- Wrote applications to IFA for 2025 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



## Iowa Finance Authority Housing Rehabilitation



Early in 2024, ECICOG formed an agreement with the Iowa Finance Authority to implement their Housing Assistance Fund (HAF) Home Repair Pilot Program throughout our six county region. At IFA's request, ECICOG expanded the area to include Jefferson, Keokuk, Muscatine, and Scott counties. As part of that agreement, ECICOG assisted homeowners in navigating the application portal, and made project payments to contractors, provided construction management and administered the grant.

As of the end of 2024, all 51 homes assigned to ECICOG (37 in ECICOG's region, and 14 outside the region) had been inspected with contractors hired. Only 15 of the homes remain to be completed. ECICOG worked hard in 2024 to help as many homeowners as possible make improvements to their homes by utilizing this first-time, ARPA-funded opportunity offered by the Iowa Finance Authority.

## Homes for Iowa

ECICOG facilitated an order for nine homes for Matt Johnson, a lender in Vinton who has played a major role in the development of the Anderson Creek Estates in Vinton. The subdivision is close to Vinton High School, located on a recreational trail, and offers a wide variety of purchase price options, types and sizes of homes. In 2024 seven of the Homes for Iowa homes were delivered to Anderson Creek Estates, with two more planned for delivery in 2025. The developer has identified buyers for most of the homes, and four of the buyers have qualified for down payment assistance from the East Central Iowa Housing Trust Fund. Each home has been placed on a basement and has an attached 2-stall garage. Johnson is a big fan of the Homes for Iowa homes, and intends to order more in the future.



# 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.

## 2024 Projects

### Hiawatha

- Wrote CDBG water/sewer grant application for Hiawatha water main replacement project Phase II

### Norway

- Assisted with CDBG income survey

### Oxford

- Assisted with CDBG income survey

### Victor

- Assisted with CDBG income survey

### Wellman

- Assisted with CDBG income survey
- Wrote CDBG water/sewer grant application

### Benton County

- Provided technical assistance to landfill
- Provided Iowa Waste Exchange services
- Wrote DNR grant for new fire suppression system in the landfill household hazardous materials storage building

### Iowa County

- Provided technical assistance to landfill
- 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
- Linn County Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

### Washington County

- Provided Iowa Waste Exchange Services

### Tama County

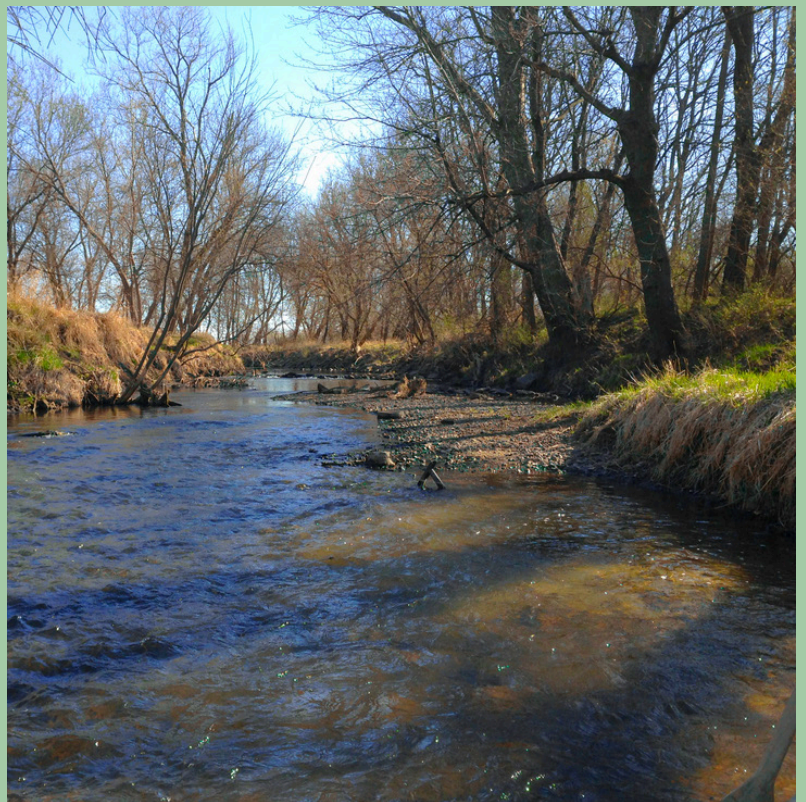
- Provided technical assistance to landfill

### Regionwide

- Wrote the East Central Iowa Priority Climate Action 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



## 2024 Grant Administration

- Alburnett** \$100,000 CDBG-DR grant for generator
- 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 for two CDBG-DR grants for generators in Ely
- 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 generators
- Benton County** \$750,000 CDBG-DR grant for tree canopy replacement in Benton County
- Iowa County** \$6,618 DNR Environmental Management System grant for textile recycling program at the landfill
- Jones County** \$500,000 CDBG water/sewer grant for wastewater treatment plant improvements
- Jones County** \$7,480 DNR Solid Waste Alternatives Program grant for glass recycling program at the transfer station
- Linn County** \$53,000 CDBG-DR grant for generator for 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

## Watershed Programs

ECICOG continued to provide administrative services to the Clear Creek Watershed Coalition, Lower Cedar Watershed Management Authority, Middle Cedar Watershed Management Authority, and the Indian Creek Watershed Management Authority in 2024. This work included board support, website maintenance, grant writing and administration, as well as event planning.



## Iowa Waste Exchange Expansion

In July, ECICOG expanded Iowa Waste Exchange services from a half-time position that served five counties in the ECICOG region to a full-time position that serves an additional nine counties in eastern Iowa. The Iowa Waste Exchange is a free, confidential, and non-regulatory program that provides waste consultation services to businesses, schools, and organizations. The goal of the program is to divert valuable materials from the landfill through reduction, reuse, or recycling.



# IOWA WASTE EXCHANGE

## CDBG Water Sewer Projects

In 2024, ECICOG wrote successful Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications for water and sewer infrastructure improvements in Marengo and Hiawatha (Phase II) and continued CDBG administration for grants awarded to Hiawatha and Anamosa in 2023. Hiawatha applied for funding to replace aging and undersized water mains in two phases. The first phase of the project was awarded \$500,000 in September 2023, and the second phase was awarded \$500,000 in July 2024. The water main replacements are necessary to prevent costly water main breaks and to support the installation of fire hydrants.

Anamosa was awarded \$500,000 in December 2023 to assist with a project to add an equalization basin to its wastewater treatment plant. Marengo was awarded \$500,000 in April 2024 to improve its wastewater treatment facility. The upgrades include replacing aerated lagoon infrastructure, adding UV disinfection, and construction of a new force main to the Iowa River.



# Transportation

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 who can't or don't choose to drive.

## 2024 Projects

### Johnson County

- Assisted with a request for proposal to identify Trip Connect operator

### Regionwide

- Completed purchase of new dispatch software for CorridorRides
- Completed the FY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program
- Completed sidewalk assessments for non-metro communities
- Hosted a pre-application workshop for potential transportation funding applicants



## Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG)

<b>Benton County</b>	\$280,000	Replacement of W14/E44 Curve improvement and widened shoulders
<b>Benton County</b>	\$400,000	Resurfacing E22, from Hwy 218 to Garrison
<b>Benton County</b>	\$1,600,000	Resurfacing H66, from east city limits of Blairstown to W12
<b>Johnson County</b>	\$1,925,000	Resurfacing X14, from Hwy 22 to 520th St SE
<b>Linn County</b>	\$2,460,000	Resurfacing E16, from Center Point to Alice Rd
<b>Washington County</b>	\$159,000	Resurfacing Highway 92 from 2nd Ave to east corporate limit
<b>Washington County</b>	\$120,339	Wellman Road, from IA92 to 190th St.

## Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program (TAP)

<b>Iowa County</b>	\$510,382	Constuction of new Williamsburg Old Man's Creek Trail segment
<b>Johnson County</b>	\$500,000	Extension of Clear Creek Trail, Half Moon Avenue to F.W. Kent Park
<b>Jones County</b>	\$292,000	Anamosa 3rd Street extension project
<b>Linn County</b>	\$750,000	Construction of Grant Wood Trail segment from Paralta Road to Springville Road

## 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 ECICOG and has provided over 2 million rides in the past 10 years with a fleet of over 80 vehicles.

### Funding Allocation

County	State Assistance	Federal Assistance	Capital Assistance
Benton	\$117,517	\$140,941	\$120,915
Iowa	\$36,592	\$169,699	\$0
Johnson	\$124,378	\$137,281	\$0
Jones	\$105,156	\$137,919	\$0
Linn	\$113,279	\$125,030	\$294,588
Washington	\$149,178	\$190,241	\$436,349

## 380 Express Ridership

Since its launch six years ago, ridership on the 380 Express has experienced steady growth. In its first month of service in October 2019, nearly 2,600 passengers were served. In September 2024, monthly ridership grew to 9,500, and average daily ridership surpassed 450 passengers.

The Cedar Rapids-to-Iowa City bus service was initially launched to alleviate traffic during the reconstruction of the I-80/I-380 interchange. That work is complete, but additional construction along the I-380 corridor is expected to continue through 2033. ECICOG has secured funding to operate the 380 Express through fiscal year 2026 and is having ongoing discussions with the DOT about longer-term funding.



## Grant Wood Trail Improvements

Linn County Conservation received Regional Planning Affiliation 10 (RPA 10) Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program (TAP) funding to complete grading and install drainage structures for a grass trail segment of the Grant Wood Trail from Secrist Road to Paralta Road. Hard surfacing will be added later. Future regional segments will extend the trail to the City of Springville, including historical features and completed trail segments in Jones County and beyond.

The \$212,000 TAP award covered approximately 33% of the project costs. The Grant Wood Trail from Secrist Road to Paralta Road project is one of six trail projects funded in RPA 10 within the past three years. The total cost of these six projects is \$7,425,642 and the RPA provided \$2,976,535 in regional TAP assistance.

# Contact Our Team



**Karen Kurt**  
Executive Director



**Tracey Achenbach**  
Housing Director



**Mary Rump**  
Transportation Director



**Alicia Presto**  
Environmental Services  
Director



**Jessica Walker**  
Community  
Development Specialist



**Steve Van Abbema**  
Housing Rehabilitation  
Coordinator



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



**Lindsey Given Egli**  
Iowa Waste Exchange  
Specialist



**Robyn Jacobson**  
Loan Program  
Administrator



**Paula Mitchell**  
Sr. Grant Specialist



**Nicole Beuc**  
Housing Recovery  
Coordinator



**Meagan Prestegard**  
Planner/ Environmental  
Specialist



**Tom Gruis**  
Sr. Planner, AICP



**Mark Culver**  
Sr. Housing Specialist



**J'nae Peterman**  
Homeless Systems  
Manager



**Alyssa Comer**  
Planner/ Environmental  
Specialist



**Adam Bentley**  
Sr. Community  
Development Specialist



**Deanna Robinson**  
Planner/Housing  
Specialist



**Zachary Huggins**  
Planner/ Office  
Assistant



**Gina Peters**  
Office Manager



<https://www.ecicog.org>



700 16th St NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402



(319) 365-9941