



NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 30 No. 2 NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

March - April 2019

NIACOG STAFF

641.423.0491

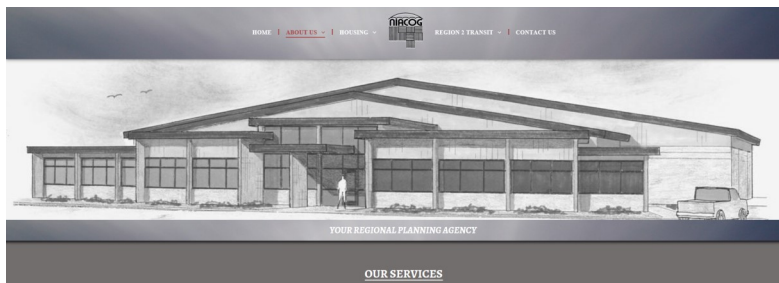
Email— first letter of first name followed
by last name @niacog.org (i.e.
jmyhre@niacog.org)

Joe Myhre — Ext. 11
Executive Director
Jodi Wyborny — Ext. 10
Administrative Assistant
Kris Urdahl — Ext. 12
Fiscal Officer

Chris Diggins — Ext. 15
Local Assistance Director
Myrtle Nelson — Ext. 16
Senior Planner
Matt O'Brien — Ext. 14
Regional Planner
Steve Wendt — Ext. 13
Housing Planner
Caraline Eggena—Ext. 27
Comm. Dev. Planner

Kevin Kramer — Ext. 17
Transit Administrator
Teresa Collins — Ext. 22
Operations Manager
Todd Hull — Ext. 24
Maintenance Supervisor

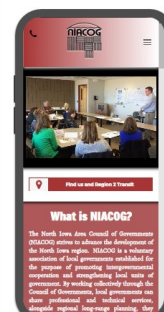
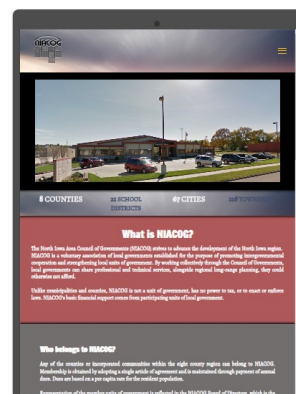
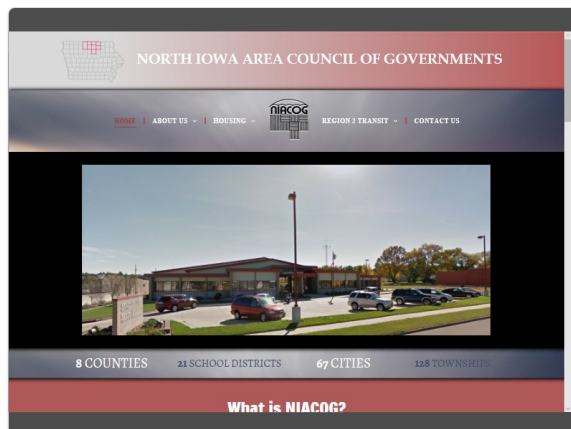
NEW NIACOG WEBSITE



NIACOG staff have designed and constructed a new website that is now ready for viewing by the public at www.niacog.org. Our new website is best viewed by using a mobile device or Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox, or Google Chrome web browsers on desktops.

On mobile devices, North Iowa residents can now easily call or navigate to NIACOG and Region 2 Transit Offices. Also, residents may now easily access NIACOG's Housing Rehab Program requirements and updated transit rates, fares, and contact numbers.

Please take a few minutes to explore our website on both desktop and smart phone. If you have any questions or comments to help us improve our website, you may contact Matt O'Brien at mobrien@niacog.org or 641-423-0491, ext. 14.





HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

If you're in the same boat with many of the community-minded people in our region, you're wondering how to improve the quality of housing in your area. This path of thinking often stems from the impact of the condition of housing on business/jobs and worker recruitment and retention, as well as, the desire to keep our youth in North Central Iowa.



A few tools are currently available to assist with this, but greater tools are in the works and advance preparation will likely be key to obtaining the funding. Readiness will be a key element in securing funding.

Consider your community in light of the following:

1. Does my downtown have vacant upper story spaces that could be remade into apartments?
2. Is my community willing to support a project that is targeted at people who make less than \$40,000 to \$50,000?
3. Do we have a project team that could work together in carrying off a project: builder/developer, banker, architect, grant administrator, city, etc.?
4. Do we have a site currently in ownership or under option to purchase?
5. Would key players be willing to contribute financially – city/county, industrial/business, etc.?
6. Do we understand our current housing needs – single or multi-family, owner-occupied or rental, rehabilitation/retrofit or new construction, cost point for saleable home and marketable rentals

Assembling your project team and basic elements early are critical steps in demonstrating to funding agencies that the project is ready to proceed; this ele-

ment is much more important than it was in past years.

After answering the questions above, consider the tools that may be available in the not-too-distant future:

- The Governor has proposed additional funding for the Workforce Housing Tax Incentive Program. Legislative approval is still needed, but the legislature is primed to make additional investments in housing. The WHTIP program was wildly popular in its initial allocation and the tax credits were quickly devoured in a flurry of first come-first serve applicants who were ready to move with their projects. The next allocation is proposed to be competitively awarded in a round of applications instead of first come/first served, but readiness will still be a key element in being competitive.
- Community Development Block Grant funding has been modified to allow for development of upper story housing in downtowns. These funds come with some strings including income limits, but the income limits are not so low that they exclude: teachers, tellers, other hard-working individuals, senior citizens, etc.
- Iowa Prison Industries is starting the process to build 3-bedroom homes and estimates their first home installation in September of this year. These homes will be built by inmates and then trucked throughout Iowa at an affordable price.
- Historic tax credits can also be a helpful tool, but only for buildings that offer some historic architecture.

The important thing to remember in improving housing is to be prepared. Your first step is to start with answering questions 1 thru 6 above.

NIACOG would love to hear from you, so let Myrtle know if you intend to pursue a housing improvement project.

Calendar of Events

March

1st & 8th	NoRISC	8am—2 pm @ NIACOG Office
11th	NIACOG Brd. Mtg.	7pm @ Bennigan's in CL
14th	TAG Mtg.	10:30 am @ NIACOG Office
15th	City Clerks' Mtg.	9:30am @ NIACOG Office
21st	TAP Mtg.	10:30am @ NIACOG Office
22nd	NoRISC	8am—2 pm @ NIACOG Office
28th	TECH Mtg.	10:30am @ NIACOG Office
29th	NoRISC	8am—2 pm @ NIACOG Office

April

8th	NIACOG Exec. Cmte.	12:00 pm @ NIACOG Office
10th	Haz-Mat Mtg.	1:00pm @ NIACOG Office
10th	Trans. Policy Brd.	2:30 pm @ NIACOG Office
11th	TAG Mtg.	10:30 am @ NIACOG Office



ICOG LEGISLATIVE DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Joe Myhre, NIACOG's Executive Director, participated in the Iowa Association of Councils of Governments' 2019 Legislative Day at the Capitol on Thursday, February 7th. Directors from COGs across the state joined representatives from the Department of Corrections and Housing Trust Funds to highlight the many services COGs provide to their members. The day focused on housing opportunities, specifically on the Homes for Iowa Inc., initiative. Senator Mark Lofgren of Muscatine made a point of order in the Senate Chamber to recognize the COGs followed by brief remarks of his appreciation for everything COGs do which was met with a standing ovation from the Senate floor.



Iowa COG Directors at ICOG's Legislative Day at the Capitol

HUD CONSOLIDATION PLAN

The State of Iowa, through the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and the Iowa Finance Authority, receives millions of dollars each year from the U.S. Department of HUD to invest in projects that benefit Low/Moderate Income (LMI) persons in Iowa communities. As a condition of receiving this funding, the State must present a consolidated plan to HUD every 5 years. The planning process (data collection and input) for the 2020-2024 consolidated plan in Iowa has been underway for several months now. When completed and submitted to HUD later this year, it will describe the needs, resources, priorities, and method of distribution for the various programs addressed in the Plan.

One program included in the State's 5 year consolidated plan is the State of Iowa Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, which is administered by the IEDA. The CDBG Program in Iowa funds projects that help prevent slum and blight, and address urgent needs, in addition to projects that benefit LMI persons. Cities and counties are eligible recipients of CDBG grant funds.

The current method of distribution for the State of Iowa CDBG Program is shown below (proposed and accepted for the 2015-2019 consolidated plan).

The allocations shown below may change significantly in the State of Iowa 2020-2024 consolidated plan. Also the activities within each CDBG funding program may change. For example the Housing Fund Program, which currently receives 22% of the State's total annual CDBG allocation, is presently limited to one activity: owner-occupied housing rehabilitation. However, other housing activities are being considered for the 2020-2024 consolidated plan, such as renter-occupied rehabilitation. This could include rehabilitation funding for downtown upper story rental units (currently a pilot program being funded under the 5% opportunity and threats component), for single family rental units, or for apartment complexes.

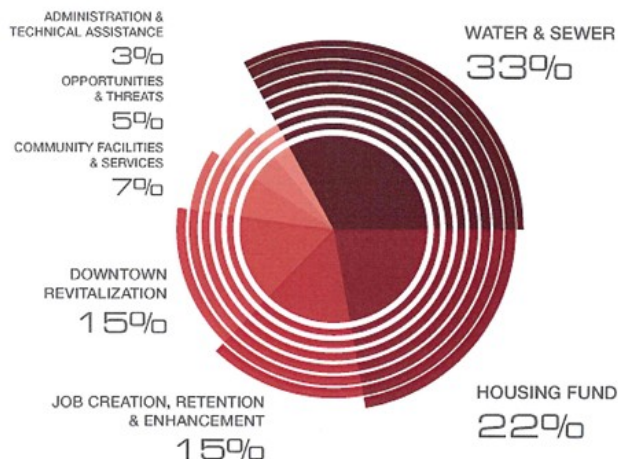
In 2018, the State's total CDBG allocation was approximately \$23.7 million. This is a significant investment in Iowa's cities and counties, so changes in the proposed method of distribution may help fund unmet needs identified by many communities in the state.

For a description of the current CDBG activities available to Iowa's cities and counties, as displayed in the chart below, go to:

www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/Community

Method of Distribution

PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF CDBG FUNDS





TRANSPORTATION SUMMIT

The 2019 Iowa Passenger Transportation Summit will be held on Thursday, May 23 at the FFA Enrichment Center, DMACC Campus, 1055 SW Prairie Trail Parkway, Ankeny, Iowa 50023. The event will begin at 9:30 a.m. (registration opens at 9:00 a.m.) and will end at approximately 3:00 p.m.

Speaking on the topic of *Measuring the Benefits of Transit Services*, Jeremy Mattson, PhD of North Dakota State University will serve as this year's keynote speaker. Participants also will hear about the Iowa DOT's effort to update the *Iowa Public Transit Long-Range Plan*. More topics and panels will be announced soon.

Register at <https://app.tikly.co/events/3426>. Lunch is included. Registration is free and closes May 3.



MASON CITY'S 5-2-1-0 SURVEY

Healthy-Mason City and the 5-2-1-0 steering committee members are diligently working to implement 5-2-1-0: Healthy Choices Count within their community! Part of the implementation involves a survey of parents of children ages 2-18 within Mason City. The survey is anonymous, and should only take about 15 minutes to complete. Only one parent per household--the parent that knows the most about the daily activities of children in the household--should take this survey.



At the end of this survey, instructions for how to sign-up for a random drawing for one of five \$50.00 gift cards will be provided. You may only be entered into this drawing once. Taking the survey more than one time will not increase your chances of winning. The electronic version of the survey is available at: https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6Wn4kK7NgmUTK6h

If you have any questions about 5-2-1-0 and or the survey, please feel free to contact Matt O'Brien at mobrien@niaocg.org or 641.423.0491, ext. 14.

ANNUAL ICOG STAFF TRAINING

On February 14th and 15th members of NIACOG travelled to Grinnell for the annual Iowa Association of Council of Governments (ICOG) staff retreat and trainings. Many presentations and discussions were offered throughout the two day event, some of which are highlighted here.

The general session of the conference was presented by Marty Barnhart from the Omaha Land Bank. Marty discussed what was being done to rehabilitate housing and neighborhoods in Omaha.

Another session was "Writing the Right Grant: Creating a Proactive and Successful Grant Writing Organization," which was a highly insightful session with Lance Noe, the Director of the Center for Professional Studies at Drake University. This session was highly informative towards writing grants for the upcoming cycle. Be cautious with what grants you pursue. If awarded the wrong grant for your community or organization, you are likely stuck with that grant. That is why it is important to flesh out your grant proposal and narrow down the types of projects you want to pursue.

One of the final sessions of the day on the 14th informed conference attendees on a program from the Iowa Prison Industries. The program's goal is to create affordable homes at the prison and then transport them to a foundation. It also allows for the opportunity to provide job training in

high-demand occupations, like those of the vocational trades. The idea is to decrease the demand on the justice system and also build strong communities through reduced recidivism. The long term goal of the program is to build both a long term housing and workforce program that is self-sustaining. The training also allows prison workers the opportunity to acquire marketable skills, positive attitudes and good work habits. It helps teach offenders on how to get and acquire a job once they are released.

The last day of the ICOG conference started with a general session from Healthy Hometowns powered by Wellmark. The session highlighted the Healthy Hometown program in the state of Iowa and South Dakota.

One of the final two sessions was with Iowa Workforce Development and the Iowa Foreign Housing Program. The session went over the effective job the various COGs in the state of Iowa are doing in regards to completing Foreign Housing Inspections and also allowed for inspectors to ask questions directly to Iowa Workforce Development staff.

The final session was a CDBG roundtable discussion with Steve Benne of IEDA, which was a refresher from earlier in November when IEDA held their annual CDBG training.