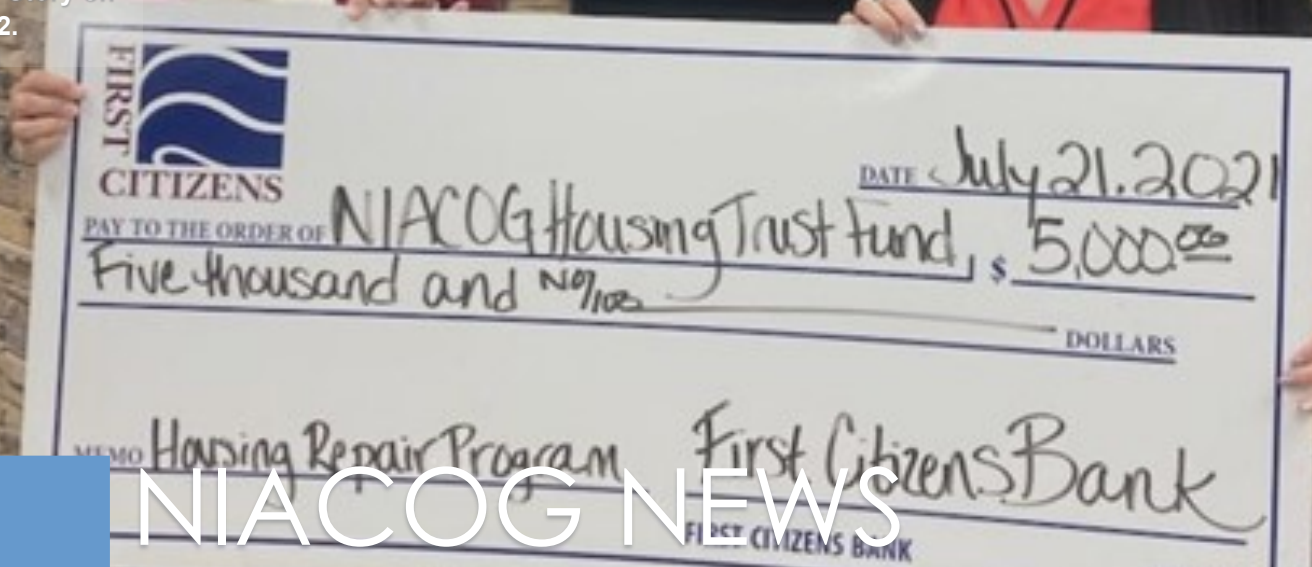


NIACOG
Housing
Planner, Heidi
Nielsen (left),
with Wendy
Rish (right),
AVP, Retail
Banking Office
at First Citizens
Bank. Story on
page 2.



NIACOG NEWS

VOLUME 32 ISSUE 5

September - October 2021

REDOING RETAIL SPACES & PLACES

FREE training on Redoing Retail Spaces & Places is being offered on Tuesday, September 21st from 1:30pm to 3:00pm for part 9 of the International Economic Development Council's training program.

Even before 2020, retail spaces new and old have struggled to maintain occupancy. Communities large and small have tackled the issue of what to do with unused spaces and places, with some interesting results.

NIACOG's counterpart, ECIA has offered an open invitation for anyone to join in developing a plan to revive and re-energize your unused real estate. [Click here to sign up!](#)

A webinar link will be emailed to you prior to start.

CALENDAR

September

- **6th** - Labor Day, NACOG Office Closed
- **13th** - NIACOG Board Mtg., Bennigan's Clear Lake @ 7 pm
- **22nd** - First Day of Fall
- **24th** - North Iowa Area City Clerks Assoc. Mtg., NIACOG Office @ 9:30 am

October

- **13th** - Haz-Mat Mtg., NIACOG Office @ 1:00 pm
- **13th** - Transportation Policy Brd. Mtg., NIACOG Office @ 2:30 pm
- **14th** - NIAOCG Exec. Brd. Mtg., NIACOG Office @ 12:00 pm

FUNDING FROM FIRST CITIZENS BANK HELPS FURTHER NIACOG HOUSING TRUST FUND

With the condition of today's economy coupled with a pandemic, many families find they are unable to maintain their homes and wonder who to turn to. NIACOG's Housing Trust Fund Program may be the answer. Our Housing Trust Fund Program has been fortunate to partner with some excellent organizations to provide assistance to the families in our region. In addition to Iowa's State Housing Trust Fund, other funding sources include: the Federal Home Loan Bank, United Way, USDA Rural Development, and many local donors including the First Citizens Bank Charitable Foundation.

What exactly is NIACOG's Housing Trust Fund? It is a grant program that provides much needed home repairs to low-income homeowners in Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, and Worth Counties. To be eligible a family must own their home, have a gross income under 60% of the area median income, maintain homeowner's insurance, hold under \$25,000 in liquid or spendable assets, and have eligible repair needs. Priority is given to households who are over 62 or disabled. Examples of eligible repairs include: roofing, siding, windows/doors, electrical/plumbing, furnaces/water heaters, ceiling/wall repairs, water line/sewer repairs, and accessibility alterations.

Over the past ten years, we have assisted over three hundred households to make the necessary repairs to provide them with a safe place to live and preserve their homes. As you may assume, this doesn't happen without a lot of help. Our programs are dependent on more than funding. The success of our Housing Trust Fund Programs is dependent on qualified and experienced contractors. We have been fortunate to work with many talented local contractors over the years, but with greater need than ever, we find ourselves searching for more.

Working with our families can be very rewarding by knowing you have made a difference in someone's life. Being a contractor with the Housing Trust Fund also comes with the added benefits of being assured that they will be paid when the job is done and with year-round work. We are asking for your help to spread the word. If you know any contractors, reach out to them and recommend that they call 641-423-0491 extension 216 (Heidi).

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TRANSPORTATION HAPPENINGS

NIACOG accepting public comments on the DRAFT RPA 2 2021-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan

The Regional Planning Affiliation 2 (RPA 2) comprised of Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago and Worth Counties, as well as, all cities within the listed counties, has developed a 20-Year Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Region. The LRTP covers all aspects of transportation including roads, bridges, transit, trails, air, rail, non-motorized, freight, safety, security and funding. The RPA 2 2021-2040 LRTP is a long range planning document that outlines the Region's transportation priorities. This document is not project specific.



The Draft RPA 2 2021-2040 LRTP is available for review at <https://www.niacog.org/rpa-2-transportation> (scroll down to Long Range Transportation Plan and click on the Chapters); it is also available: at the NIACOG office at 525 6th St. SW, Mason

City, IA 50401, at respective Board of Supervisor's offices in the above listed counties during regular business hours, and at City Hall in Algona, Charles City, Clear Lake and Mason City during regular business hours.

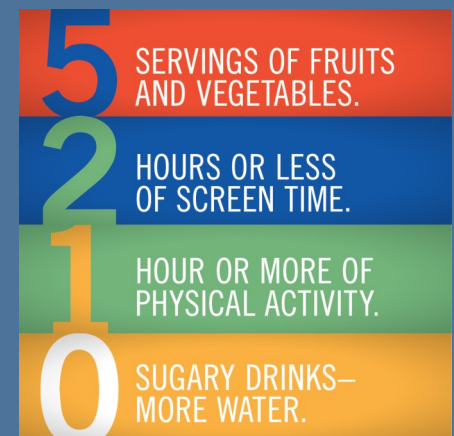
Public comment will be received until October 1, 2021. All comments will be reviewed and included as appropriate. The RPA 2 2021-2040 LRTP will be discussed and considered for adoption at the October 13, 2021 Policy Board meeting.

Written or oral comments must be submitted to the North Iowa Area Council of Governments, 525 6th St. S.W., Mason City, IA 50401, or by e-mail at cdiggins@niacog.org, or by phone at (641) 423-0491 ext. 215.

The RPA 2 meetings are open to all individuals regardless of disability. Any person with a disability requiring a reasonable accommodation to participate in a meeting should contact the NIACOG Office at the above number at least two business days prior to the meeting.

CONGRATS, HAMPTON!

In it's final year of 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices funding, the community of Hampton is receiving \$8,000 to promote the 5-2-1-0 message and implement compatible projects. These projects will increase consumption of fruits/vegetables and water alongside creating new opportunities for physical activity in the community.



GREAT NEWS Regarding City/County ARPA Funds!!!

In previous emails and newsletters, we have recommended to our cities/counties that they take a slow approach in making decisions about how to spend the funding they are recently receiving through the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program. This is the program where cities/counties receive ARPA funds based upon their population. We had concerns about what federal rules might apply to these fund because we were told that some of the typical federal requirements would likely apply, and they could have added a lot of cost to projects. Recently, the U.S. Department of Treasury made a determination regarding this issue. The good news is that cities and counties will **NOT** be required to:

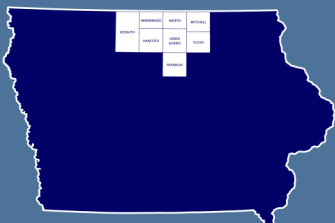
- Implement the Davis-Bacon Act—These are requirements related to wage tracking, employee interviews, and paying workers above prescribed levels. (The notable exception to this waiver is that projects over \$10 MILLION are required to follow the Davis-Bacon Act.)
- Prepare an Environmental Review. Please note that these reviews are quite complex so not needing to complete them .

Keep in mind, though, that, if other Federal funds are also being used for your project, the other funds could trigger the requirements for Davis-Bacon Act and/or Environmental Review.

Additionally, cities/counties are able to keep any interest earned on the SLFRF funds earned while in the account. (Normally, interest earned on federal funds must be returned to the federal government.) The use of the interest funds are also not limited to any specific purpose. This provision is found in the 'Compliance and Reporting Guidance' publication relative to the Cash Management Improvement Act.

And, finally, the funds may be used to satisfy a matching requirement for other grant programs (state, local private) as long as the other grant program requiring the match is not a federal program. The SLFRF funds can be used with other federal funds; they just cannot be used to satisfy a federal matching requirement.

The Iowa League of Cities has developed a resource page for everything ARPA. To access these resources click on the following link: <https://www.iowaleague.org/Pages/American-Rescue-Plan-Resources-.aspx> Here you can find links to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, FAQs, and a wealth of other information you may find valuable in learning more about the SLFRF funds.



North Iowa Area Council of Governments

525 6th St SW

Mason City, IA 50401

