



# 12 Implementation

While previous chapters of the Bluffs Tomorrow 2030 Comprehensive Plan establish a vision, goals, objectives, and related recommendations, it is imperative that there is also a clear direction for implementation of the Plan. This section includes a series of recommendations and resources that collectively represent an implementation toolbox. Based on the specific issues, concerns and circumstances facing the Council Bluffs community, this chapter includes strategies related to:

- » The City's administration of the Comprehensive Plan and how it can be used to guide day-to-day decisions as well as be updated and amended over time to reflect emerging trends and changing conditions;
- » The role of municipal policies and regulations in implementing the Comprehensive Plan and ensuring that development is aligned with the vision for the community;

- » The City's Capital Improvement Program, which guides the investment of resources in infrastructure and facilities that will continue to support existing and future development;
- » Funding sources for various types of improvements, including municipal funds as well as outside funding sources; and
- » Collaboration in achieving actions that may be under the purview of other agencies or service providers, as well as actions that have impacts beyond the Council Bluffs community.

At the end of the chapter, this material is brought together in an Action Matrix that identifies the specific recommendations included in the Plan, the parties and partners responsible for implementation, relative priorities, and potential funding sources.

## City Administration

As the governing body with regulatory jurisdiction over much of the planning area, the City of Council Bluffs will be the primary entity in charge of implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Even when specific actions or investments fall under the purview of other entities, the City may have an important role in supporting actions through regulation, investment, or advocacy.

## Use the Plan on a Day-to-Day Basis

It is important that the Plan be referenced by all representatives of the City, including elected officials, appointed members of boards and commissions, and staff that carries out duties related to development review and approval, capital improvements, fiscal policy, and others. This continuous use will reinforce the role of the Plan as the "playbook" and official policy guide for the community. In order to ensure the Plan is used as frequently as possible and remains responsive to evolving issues and priorities, the City should:

- » Make copies of the Plan available online for free, provide hard copies at the City Hall for purchase, and have a copy on file at the public library for reference;



- » Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
- » Assist the City Council and City Planning Commission in the day-to-day administration, interpretation, and application of the Plan; and
- » Maintain a list of potential amendments, issues, or needs which may be a subject of change, addition, or deletion from the Comprehensive Plan.

### Update the Plan on a Regular Basis

The Comprehensive Plan is not a static document. If community attitudes change or new issues arise which are beyond the scope of the current Plan, the Plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

Although a proposal to amend the Plan can be brought forth at any time, the City should regularly undertake a review of the Plan at least every three to five years. Ideally, this review should coincide with the preparation of the City's budget and Capital Improvement Program.

Recommendations or changes relating to capital improvements or other programs can be considered as part of the commitments for the upcoming fiscal year. Routine examination of the Plan will help ensure that the program remains relevant to community needs and aspirations. This plan should undergo continual review. When an amendment is being considered the following procedures should be used.

### Measuring and Reporting Success

Updates to the Comprehensive Plan can be warranted by several factors. One important factor to consider is how effective the community is in implementing the Plan recommendations. Challenges to implementing the vision may be caused by policies that do not lead to the intended result, or the use of implementation tools that are not impacting positive change. Appropriate and informed adjustments over time can be measured with general metrics that help assess key trends in the community. Identified trends can be used to diagnose necessary changes in local policy, and should be reported to the community on a regular basis. The monitoring and reporting of trends will depend on the type and frequency of specific types of data. An annual evaluation of the Plan is appropriate in order to allow adequate time to realize the impact of policies over the life of the Plan.

### Impact Analysis & Review

As new policies or development approvals are considered by the City Planning Commission or City Council, they should be weighed against their ability to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. For relatively minor actions that are in-line with the goals of the Plan, this analysis may consist of a simple statement demonstrating the relevant benefits. However, if a decision is being considered that is believed to be more complex or potentially out of line with Plan goals and objectives, City staff and officials may undertake a more thorough examination of potential impacts. This may require a more substantial report issued by planning professionals that outlines ways in which a decision may deviate from Plan recommendations and how resulting impacts may affect other aspects of the community.

### Land Use Proposals

The Comprehensive Plan draws a relationship between several community characteristics. As such, the impacts of a proposed decision should not be assessed in an isolated manner related to a singular topic. Instead, interpretation of the plan should be based on continuous and related analysis, with references to related recommendations. (For example, a significant residential or commercial development will have impacts on transportation and mobility, infrastructure, community services, and the environment. These impacts should be weighed collectively against the vision for the community.) Land use and development decisions should be made based on the following criteria, as well as others that may be specifically relevant at the time:

- » The character of the adjacent neighborhood;
- » The zoning and uses of nearby properties;
- » The suitability of the property for the uses allowed under the current zoning designation;
- » The type and extent of impact on adjacent properties, or the community at large;
- » The impact of the proposal on public utilities and facilities;

- » The length of time that the subject and adjacent properties have been utilized for their current uses;
- » The benefits of the proposal to the public health, safety, and welfare compared to the hardship imposed on the applicant if the request is not approved;
- » Comparisons between the existing plan and the proposed change regarding the relative conformance to the goals and policies; and
- » Consideration of professional staff recommendations.

### **Comprehensive Proposals**

More comprehensive proposals (i.e. Capital Improvement Program, a new zoning ordinance, a subarea plan, etc.) may require a more extensive evaluation to identify potential revisions to the proposal or to the Comprehensive Plan. In these instances, City staff should undertake an evaluation of the proposed action that includes the following:

- » Description of the proposal and identification of Comprehensive Plan elements affected by the proposal;
- » Evaluation of the degree to which the proposal aligns with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan's various chapters. If the proposal is consistent with the plan, the evaluation should so indicate, but if it conflicts, then should be identified; and
- » Identification of adjustments to the Comprehensive Plan or the proposal which would reduce any noted conflicts or negative impacts. If adjustments to the Plan are proposed, they should be undertaken and adopted per the comprehensive plan amendment process before final action is taken on the comprehensive proposal.

### **Annual Review of the Plan**

After adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, opportunities should be provided to identify any changes in conditions that would impact its recommendations. An annual report should be prepared by City staff and transmitted to the City Planning Commission that provides information and recommendations related to potential Plan recommendations that, for one reason or another, may not align with the community vision or priorities. If the Commission finds that policy issues or changes in basic assumptions or conditions have occurred that necessitate revisions to the Plan, they should advise staff to recommend potential amendments to be considered as part of a formal amendment process.

### **Plan Amendment**

Amendments identified by staff as part of the annual review process should be considered as part of a single review and amendment process. This will allow the Planning Commission and City Council to consider the amendments within the context of one another and the Comprehensive Plan as a whole, and will reduce the amount of time spent each year on amendments. However, there may be significant issues raised that warrant immediate changes to the Comprehensive Plan. City staff should identify such potential amendments, and bring them to the Planning Commission with an analysis of the potential impacts of acting on or not acting on such an amendment. Any amendments to the Comprehensive Plan must be adopted through the City's formal hearing and review process.

### **Plan Update**

In addition to regular annual reviews, the Comprehensive Plan will occasionally require a more substantial update. This is typically the result of new data (i.e. the decennial US census) or a major initiative that significantly alters the local opportunities and is not addressed in the current Plan. City staff should monitor the ability of the Comprehensive Plan to address current issues, and seek a Plan update when it is not aligned with current issues, opportunities, or priorities.

## **Regulatory Framework**

The City's regulations and adopted policies are its most impactful tools in Comprehensive Plan implementation. Often, updating these to align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan can entail minor financial cost to the City, yet lay the foundation for the realization of the community's vision.

### **Review of Zoning & Subdivision Regulations**

Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan should be followed by a review and update of the City's various development controls including the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance. It is essential that all development controls be consistent with and complement the Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals, and objectives. Particular attention should be paid to periodically updating regulations regarding issues that are more directly related to economic development, such as emerging industrial uses that may not be specifically referenced as permitted uses, sign controls, and development character. Reviews should also consider the following issues that are specifically relevant to Council Bluffs and discussed in the Comprehensive Plan:

- » Appropriate uses for former public facilities and the means of mitigating impacts on adjacent neighborhoods;
- » Regulatory restrictions in flood areas;
- » The transformation and character of prominent brownfield redevelopment areas;
- » Growth management strategies in undeveloped areas;
- » The preservation of natural resources and ecologies through stream buffers and cluster development; and
- » Localized residential/industrial conflicts in older portions of the City.

### **Stormwater Regulations**

Flooding and stormwater management are major considerations for development in Council Bluffs. In order to maximize the City's long-term resiliency, staff should undertake a review of the current stormwater regulations to ensure that they appropriately address best management practices related to:

- » On-site stormwater detention capacity;
- » Site permeability that reduces the amount of stormwater transmitted through municipal infrastructure;
- » Water quality prior to release back into the ground; and
- » Innovative techniques that may currently be discouraged or prohibited through development regulations.

## Public Works Standards

Public Works standards impact the way the City invests in capital improvements and maintenance. The City should review its standards to ensure that they support various goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Consideration related to the review should include:

- » The development of municipal infrastructure that potentially reduces demand on stormwater and wastewater processing through the integration of emerging design techniques and technologies;
- » An assessment of the City's fleet to explore opportunities for the incremental procurement of more efficient or low emissions vehicles as current vehicles approach their useful lifespan;
- » The adoption of facility and infrastructure maintenance techniques, such as alternatives to salt for snow mitigation or the use of low-maintenance landscape areas on public grounds, that reduce impacts on residents and natural resources; and
- » Modifications to design standards for roadways, sidewalks, and trails to ensure that multi-mobility is considered as new transportation infrastructure is developed.

## Building & Housing Codes

Council Bluffs administers a Building and Construction Code, (Title 13 of the Municipal Code) and Housing Code, (Title 17 of the Municipal Code) in order to protect the health and well-being of its citizens. These regulations aim to minimize the risk of known dangers or hazards in the design, construction, and maintenance of structures in the community. These regulations should be reviewed to determine where emerging best practices that could support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan can be adopted. These may include appropriate allowance of grey water, flood mitigation requirements, energy efficient building and infrastructure design, and safety systems that complement public safety efforts, among others.

## Historic Preservation

Title 16 of the Municipal Code includes regulations related to historic preservation. These stipulate that the Historic Preservation Commission may make recommendations to the Zoning Board of Adjustment on conditional uses involving historic sites. The City should continue to support the Historic Preservation Commission in its role of seeking designation for historic sites, structures, and landmarks, providing design review for projects on designated historic sites, working with the State Preservation Officer to attain designation on the National register of Historic Places, and procuring grants to support the rehabilitation of historic structures, in addition to other designated tasks.

## Capital Improvement Program

The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) represents the fiscal commitment to initiatives aimed at maintaining and improving the community. As a critical tool for Bluffs Tomorrow 2030 implementation, the City should review and update its CIP as needed to reflect Comprehensive Plan recommendations. These might include the restoration and upgrading of existing utilities and infrastructure, and the renovation, expansion, or relocation of City facilities.

## Annual Review

A CIP is essential to the coordinated and efficient implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and should be reviewed annually. The costs and benefits of proposed improvements should be examined relative to Comprehensive Plan priorities. The annual review of the CIP should seek and examine both near-term projects and long-term needs and opportunities.

In reviewing the Capital Improvement Program, the City should first prepare a list of all public improvements within the next five years that are recommended in the Community Plan. All projects should then be reviewed and prioritized and cost estimates prepared along with potential funding sources. The CIP may need to be expanded, condensed, or completely reworked based on the goals set by the Community Plan.

## Project Phasing

The CIP should consider how short-term investments can be part of the community's long-term vision. Priority should be given to projects that represent incremental progress towards a broader community goal. Such projects should be designed to be easily retrofit, expanded, and added to in order to meet a larger objective.

## Coordination with Other Improvements

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will require partnerships and coordination with several entities. The Iowa DOT has jurisdiction over many of the roadways in the community, while local groups like the Iowa West Foundation invest in streetscaping, public art, and other improvements. The City's CIP should consider the initiatives of its implementation partners, and identify opportunities to align municipal investment with other projects supported by these partners. Examples of this approach may include the relocation or upgrading of infrastructure as part of a roadway improvement project, new telecommunications technology as a component to a streetscape installation, or the construction of a new City facility as part of a significant development project, among others.

## Investment in Redevelopment

Even while growth occurs in undeveloped portions of the community, the City must maintain its commitment to existing development areas. The City's CIP should identify and support investment in projects that will positively transform key redevelopment sites and potentially serve as a catalyst for spin-off investment.

## Strategic Investment in New Growth Areas

Providing undeveloped portions of the community with new infrastructure and services can be costly. However, if done so in a strategic and coordinated manner, such investment can provide a positive return on investment and support the long-term implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The City should use its CIP as a tool for guiding development in key development areas that are consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and, to the extent possible, build off existing municipal investment. The City should also consider specific types of investment intended to serve a desired use or initiative, such as a potential high-speed rail terminal, high-tech infrastructure extensions to the I-80 Highway 6 interchange, etc.

## Funding and Incentives

Many of the projects and improvements called for in the Comprehensive Plan can be implemented through administrative and policy decisions or traditionally funded programs. However, other projects may require special technical and/or financial assistance.

The City should continue to explore and consider the wide range of local, state, and federal resources and programs that may be available to assist in the implementation of planning recommendations. For example, initiatives related to economic development, neighborhood stabilization and housing, or sustainability and environment can receive assistance from grant programs established for specific categories of actions or projects.

Funding sources are identified throughout this section as they apply to the implementation of various Comprehensive Plan recommendations. These funding sources are subject to change and do not represent a complete list of all possible grants, incentives, and other available programs. The City should continue to seek ways to fund the recommendations presented in the Plan by researching and monitoring grants, funding agencies, and programs.



## Supporting Business Development & Expansion

Providing needed services in Council Bluffs' growth areas and maintaining adequate capacity to accommodate growing businesses will be crucial to the City's continued economic growth and diversification. The following paragraphs describe a two-pronged approach to local economic development – promoting economic development through local policies and initiatives, and funding key improvements related to business growth and development.

### Economic Development Strategies

This Plan articulates many of the local assets that the City can capitalize on to grow its foundation of industry and commerce. However, economic development must be an effort coordinated among the City and its partners. Fundamentally, economic development requires an approach that

addresses three basic elements; 1) the creation of commercial and industrial activities that support local jobs and municipal revenue, and 2) the growth of a local supply of employees, either through the education of Council Bluffs residents or the attraction of qualified professionals from elsewhere, and 3) the creation of quality neighborhoods, services, and commercial areas that make Council Bluffs an attractive place for business leaders and prospective employees to invest. The following paragraphs describe ways to accomplish these goals.

### Support Target Industries

The City of Council Bluffs Economic Development Strategic Plan identifies six industry sectors that should be targeted for recruitment moving forward. These target industries possess the potential to capitalize on area assets and help the Omaha-Council Bluffs region differentiate itself from others competing for talent and jobs. The following sectors were selected for their ability to serve the dual

purpose of 1) bolstering and diversifying the regional economy over the short-term and 2) providing a pathway to sustained economic vitality over the long-term. Target industries include: Specialty Foods, Packaging, Energy Equipment, Data Centers, Shared Service Centers, Logistics & Distribution, and Healthcare.

### Develop a Strong Workforce

Several recommendations in this Plan highlight ways to provide the education and training necessary to develop a strong local workforce. These include not only the role of public schools and colleges in instilling technical knowledge, but also the relationships with not-for-profits and the private sector to grow local leaders, provide on-the-job training, and establish a network of emerging entrepreneurs.

### Redevelop Brownfields

There are several important sites, especially in older portions of the City, where brownfield redevelopment offers the best opportunity for revitalization of a specific area. In these brownfield areas, the City should invest in remediation and redevelopment in order to not only improve these sites, but to also spur redevelopment of neighboring sites in a coordinated and unified fashion.

### Strengthen Existing Commercial Districts

Council Bluffs already has several active commercial areas, though some are more vibrant than others. While the assessment of market potential contained in this Plan demonstrates a saturation of many retail uses, there is opportunity to improve existing square footage through renovation and rehabilitation, or with new commercial structures that meet contemporary tenant demands. The specific approach should vary based on the existing building stock, market service area, and localized vision for development.

### Ensure a High Quality of Life

Business attraction and retention is often closely related to the quality of life a community offers beyond the businesses. Strong neighborhoods, schools, parks, environment, cultural offerings, and other aspects of the community attract business leaders and professionals who are selecting a community based on what it offers for their family. Other chapters of this Plan identify ways of improving these aspects of Council Bluffs. This is critical, as young professionals are increasingly considering quality of life as a key component in job selection.



## Economic Development Funding Sources

### Targeted Jobs Withholding Tax Credit Pilot Program

The Targeted Jobs Withholding Tax Credit Pilot Program is a pilot program enacted by the State of Iowa in 2006 that permits the diversion of withholding funds paid by an employer to be matched by a designated “pilot” city to create economic incentives that can be directed toward the growth and expansion of targeted businesses located within a pilot city. All designated withholding funds and those pledged by the “pilot” city are required to be used for an urban renewal project related to the employer pursuant to the terms of the withholding agreement. As of FY14, only five cities in Iowa are permitted to participate in the program: Council Bluffs, Burlington, Fort Madison, Keokuk, and Sioux City. Participating employers are required to create a targeted number of jobs meeting a certain minimum hourly wage threshold.

### High Quality Jobs Program

The High Quality Jobs Program administered by the State of Iowa offers tax credits to eligible businesses to off-set the cost of locating, expanding, or modernizing an Iowa facility. Businesses must be a non-retail or non-service business and meet a variety of wage and benefit requirements. Incentives provided include a mixture of tax credits, exemptions, or refunds, such as a property tax exemption of up to 100% of the value added to the property for 20 years or a refund of state sales, service, or use taxes paid to contractors during construction.

### Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Urban Renewal Areas

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) provides the opportunities for the funding of certain kinds of improvements within a specific geographic area as property tax revenue increases. That increase in tax revenue, or increment, over the base year of the TIF can be leveraged for infrastructure improvements, property acquisition, improvements to existing development, and related allocations.

Urban renewal areas are established to promote new commercial and residential development initiatives as well as being utilized for the removal and elimination of blighted properties. TIF funding can be used utilized within some urban renewal areas to facilitate investment. Currently, the City has fifteen designated urban renewal areas that are eligible to receive TIF funding assistance. The City should consider complementary funding sources in order to foster development and redevelopment in its priority growth areas.

### Urban Revitalization Tax Abatement

Tax abatement is a tool used by municipalities to facilitate private investment and job creation by exempting taxes on all or a portion of the increased assessed value resulting from new investment. Tax abatement can be granted on either real or personal property for a period of 1 to 10 years. Unlike TIF, tax abatement is granted on a sliding scale so at least some level of new assessed value is added to the tax role as soon as the second year of the abatement period. Tax abatement is based on an applicant’s ability to achieve development goals such as jobs and new investment.

### State Historic Preservation and Cultural & Entertainment District Tax Credit

The State Historic Preservation and Cultural & Entertainment District Tax Credit provides a 25% state income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. The credit aims at retaining character-defining structures within Iowa’s communities and ensuring the revitalization of neighborhoods. The amount of tax credits that can be awarded is capped at \$45 million per fiscal year. In order to qualify, the property must meet any of the following criteria:

- » Be listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- » Designated as having historical significance to a district listed in the National Register of Historic Places or be eligible for such a listing;
- » Designated as a local landmark by a city or county ordinance; and/or
- » Be a barn constructed before 1937.

### Redevelopment Tax Credit

The Redevelopment Tax Credit is administered by the State of Iowa’s Economic Development Authority (EDA) and is available to investors who want to redevelop a brownfield or grayfield site. A brownfield site is an abandoned or underutilized industrial or commercial facility with real or perceived environmental contamination. A grayfield site is a developed property that is blighted, vacant obsolete, or underutilized. The amount of the tax credit shall be equal to one of the following:

- » 12 percent of the investment in a grayfield site;
- » 15 percent of the investment in a grayfield site if the redevelopment meets the green development standards; or
- » 24 percent of the investment in a Brownfield site.

The credits are offered on a first-come first-served basis, with a maximum tax credit per project of \$1,000,000.

### **IDOT RISE Program**

The Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) program is administered by the Iowa DOT and promotes economic development in Iowa through the establishment, construction, improvement, and maintenance of roads and streets that provide highway access to key economic development assets such as industrial development sites, urban centers, points of shipment or processing of products, trucking terminals and shipping centers, or tourist locations.

Project costs eligible for RISE funding, and which may be counted as part of the non-RISE participation in immediate opportunity and local development roadway projects, include only the following:

- » Roadway resurfacing, rehabilitation, modernization, upgrading, reconstruction or initial construction, including grading and drainage, paving, erosion control, pavement overlays, and shoulder widening and stabilization;
- » Bridge and culvert repair, modernization, replacement or initial construction;
- » Roadway intersection and interchange improvements including warranted traffic signalization when it is integral to the improvement;
- » Right-of-way purchase;
- » Construction or improvement of motorist rest areas, welcome centers, and information centers;
- » Design engineering costs and construction inspection costs associated with RISE-financed projects;

- » County and city bond principal and interest payments associated with RISE projects. No financing expenses incurred prior to funding commitment shall be eligible; and
- » Storm drainage and storm sewer costs to the extent needed for draining the roadway.

### **Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI)**

A Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) is a certified and specialized financial institution that works in areas underserved by traditional financial institutions. They offer a range of financial services and products in distressed areas, such as mortgage financing for low-income and first-time homebuyers and not-for-profit developers, flexible underwriting and risk capital for needed community facilities, and technical assistance, commercial loans and investments to small start-up or expanding businesses in low-income areas. CDFIs include regulated institutions such as community development banks and credit unions, and non-regulated institutions such as loan and venture capital funds.

The CDFI certification is conferred by the U.S. Treasury and is a requirement for accessing financial and technical award assistance from the federal government. The State of Iowa contains 3 CDFIs, however, none are located in Council Bluffs.

### **Transportation Funding**

#### **MAP-21 Transportation Funding**

On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed into law Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), a two-year transportation reauthorization bill. MAP-21 replaces the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which expired in September 2009 and was extended nine times. The goal of MAP-21 is to modernize and reform the current transportation system to help create jobs, accelerate economic recovery, and build the foundation for long-term prosperity. MAP-21 continues funding for numerous programs previously funded through SAFETEA-LU.

Given the recent passage of MAP-21, it is still uncertain how changes in Federal policy will impact existing funding programs. The City should continue to keep informed as to the status of these programs and any new funding sources that may be introduced in the near future as a result of MAP-21.

The following discussion summarizes grant programs covered under MAP-21 that could be utilized by the City to make enhancements to local transportation infrastructure, including roadways, bridges, sidewalks and trail.

#### **Surface Transportation Program (STP)**

In the past, these funds have been allocated to coordinating regional councils to be used for all roadway and roadway related items. Projects in this funding category have required a local sponsor and have been selected based on, among other factors, a ranking scale that takes into account the regional benefits provided by the project among other factors.

#### **Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP)**

Administered by Iowa DOT, the ICAAP funding is awarded on a statewide competitive application basis. The federal funds are awarded to those projects with the highest potential for reducing transportation-related congestion and air pollution. Project applications may be submitted by cities, counties, public transit agencies, and state and federal agencies. Private nonprofit organizations and individuals who wish to apply for funding must have a public agency as a co-sponsor. Typical funding ratio for the ICAAP program is 80% Iowa DOT funds with a 20% local match.

#### **Urban-State Traffic Engineering Program (U-STEP)**

The intent of this Iowa DOT program is to solve traffic operation and safety problems on primary roads in Iowa cities. Qualifications for funding:

- » The City must engineer and administer the project.
- » Improvements must involve a municipal extension of a primary road. The two types of projects eligible are spot improvements and linear improvements (spot improvements are those limited to single locations; linear improvements are those which span two or more intersections).
- » City match is 45% of the construction cost (55% state-funded).
- » An engineering analysis of the problem area is required.
- » Iowa Traffic Engineering Assistance Program (TEAP) can be used for analysis.

The City of Council Bluffs could potentially use U-STEP funds to extend existing roadway and improve connectivity throughout the community.

## Housing Funding

Community Development Block Grant & HOME Investment Partnerships

The City of Council Bluffs is the recipient of Federal funds through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement is Council Bluffs primary source of HUD funding which is received on an annual basis. Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program funding is received through the Omaha-Council Bluffs Consortium. CDBG funds are used for all major housing renovation and new construction programs with an emphasis on benefit to low and moderate-income households and addressing blighted conditions. CDBG funds may also be used for economic development activities and for the provision of public services and facilities.

The City of Council Bluffs received \$866,376 in CDBG entitlement funding for fiscal year 2013. The primary objective of the City's Community Development Program is the development of viable urban communities by providing quality decent housing and a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate income. Typical CDBG & HOME funded projects include the following types of activities:

- » **Housing Development** – The conservation and redevelopment of established neighborhoods and the preservation and expansion of their housing stock.
- » **Economic Development** – The revitalization of commercial properties and job creating projects that benefit low and moderate income people.
- » **Public Services and Facilities** – The development of physical and human service projects that benefit low and moderate income people by non-profit organizations.

## Iowa Finance Authority (IFA)

IFA supports a variety programs that address a multitude of housing needs, including multi-family rental, homeownership, and homeless assistance. Some programs are administered by IFA while others are state and federal programs that the IFA connects citizens with. The IFA was established to assist low and middle income lowans in procuring safe, affordable, and quality housing. Some of IFA's main programs and initiatives, as well as state and federal programs, are:

- » Affordable Homeownership, such as the First Home, Homes for lowans, Military Homeownership Assistance, and Take Credit programs;
- » Affordable Rentals, such as the Community-Based Housing Revolving Loan Fund, HOME Program, Home and Community-Based Services Rent Subsidy, Housing Tax Credit Program, the Main Street Loan Program, and Multifamily Loan Program;
- » Homelessness, including the Emergency Solutions Grant, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS, and Shelter Assistance Fund programs; and
- » Project-Based Section 8, providing administrative services to HUD to monitor performance of owners and management agents participating in Section 8. IFA provides services to 230 rental properties across Iowa.

Several of these programs are explained in greater detail below.

## State Housing Trust Fund

The Iowa State Housing Trust Fund is administered by the Iowa Finance Authority and ensures decent, safe, and affordable housing for lowans through two programs: the (1) Local Housing Trust Fund and (2) Project-Based Housing Program. These two programs are funded through the state's real estate transfer tax.

The State Housing Trust fund provides grants to twenty-five Local Housing Trust Funds across Iowa, which in turn use the monies to address unique housing needs in their communities. Past usages of these grants include the development of new affordable housing units and county-wide furnace replacement programs. The Council Bluffs Housing Trust Fund, Inc. is responsible for Pottawattamie, Harrison, Shelby, Mills, Fremont, Page, Montgomery, and Cass Counties. In FY14, the Local Housing Trust Fund Program had \$7.8M in available funds.

The Project-Based Housing Program assists in the development of affordable single family and multifamily housing units. In FY14, the Project-Based Housing Program had \$500,000 in available funds available to cities, counties, and a variety of other governmental and civic organizations. Eligible uses include new construction, acquisition of property, rehabilitation, adaptive re-use, and foreclosure prevention, among others.

## Economic Development Bond Program

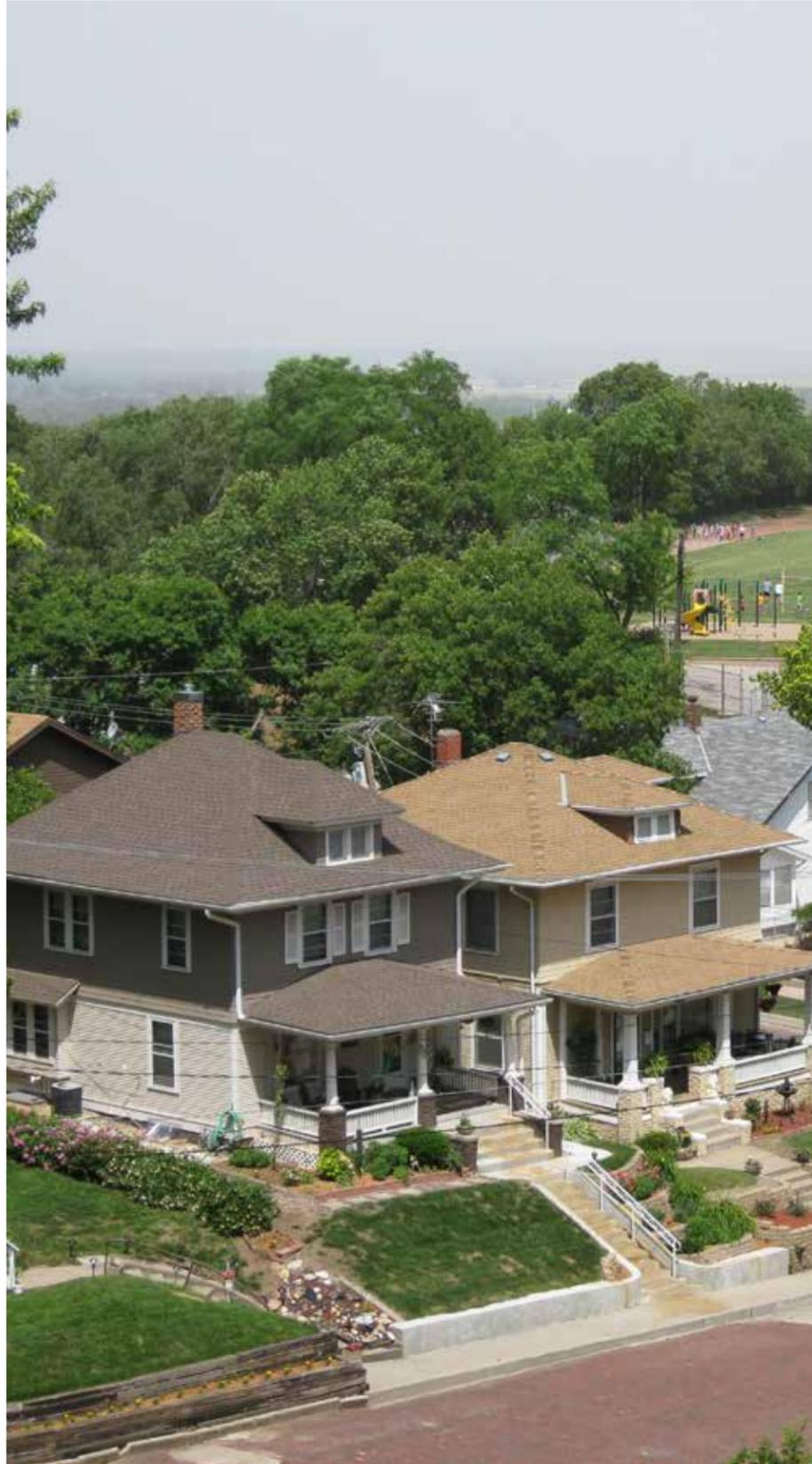
The Economic Development Bond Program is administered by the Iowa Finance Authority and issues tax-exempt bonds on behalf of private entities for a variety of eligible purposes. The IFA does not buy or sell the bonds, and responsibility for payment falls solely on the applicant. A variety of agricultural, commercial, industrial, utility, residential, non-profit, and educational uses are permitted under the program.

## Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program

The federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit was created in 1986 and incentivizes the development of rental housing for low-income individuals and families. Tax credits are awarded to developers of authorized projects based on the amount invested in affordable housing. These credits offer a dollar-for-dollar reduction that offsets federal tax liability on an ordinary income over a 10-year period. Developers are then permitted to sell credits to investors to raise equity for their development projects. The IFA allocates these tax credits on behalf of the federal government in Iowa.

In order to be eligible for obtaining this tax credit, the property being developed:

- » Must be a residential property for rent;
- » May be multi-family, single-family, duplexes, townhomes, or multi-family apartments;
- » May be new construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition; and
- » Must either allocate 20% of the units in the project to individuals/families earning 50% or less of the area's median gross income OR 40% or more of the units in the project be reserved for individuals/families earning 60% or less than the area median gross income. In both cases, units must be rent restricted.



**New Market Tax Credits**

The U.S. Congress established the New Market Tax Credits (NMTC program) in 2000 to encourage new investment in businesses and real estate projects located in underserved areas. Criteria for such areas include census tracts with high unemployment, low incomes, and significant out-migration. Individual and corporate investors receive a tax credit on their federal income tax return in exchange for making investments in federally-designated financial institutions called Community Development Entities (CDEs). CDEs, in turn, develop projects in low-income areas. The credit equals 39% of the original investment and is allocated over seven years. Several census tracts in southwestern Council Bluffs are eligible for NMTC investment.

**Workforce Housing**

Ensuring that Council Bluffs’ workforce has access to safe, quality, and well-connected housing is a key concept in the Plan. Many of the programs and credits listed earlier in this chapter can be used to incentivize or develop units for workforce housing. The City should continue to monitor the needs of its workforce and ensure workers have access to a wide range of housing types at a variety of price points.

**State Historic Preservation & Cultural & Entertainment District Tax Credit**

Please see the detailed description provided under “Economic Development Funding Sources.”

**Environmental Funding**

**Resource Enhancement & Protection (REAP)**

The Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program was created in 1989 and is administered by the State of Iowa’s Department of Natural Resources. The program receives funds annually from gaming receipts and license plate fees, and uses its monies to issue environmental grants and fund specialized projects within state agencies. By law, REAP is required to spend a set percentage of its funds on conservation education, roadside vegetation, historical resources, public land management, city parks and open space, soil and water enhancement, county conservation, and state open space. REAP has been described as “one of the nation’s most responsive and progressive environmental programs.” Between 1989 and 2012, Pottawattamie County has funded 170 projects totaling \$6.4 million. Within Council Bluffs, REAP projects include enhancements at the Big Lake Nature Area, East Manawa Trail, Center Trail, and Fairmount Park.

**State Revolving Fund (SRF)**

The State Revolving Fund (SRF) is the best choice to finance the design and construction of Iowa water and wastewater infrastructure. The Clean Water SRF funds wastewater treatment, sewer rehabilitation, and stormwater quality improvements, as well as non-point source projects. The Drinking Water SRF funds water treatment plants or improvements to existing facilities, water line extensions to existing unserved properties, water storage facilities, wells, and source water protection efforts.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) jointly administer the SRF. The DNR administers the environmental and permitting aspects to get projects ready for financing, while the IFA manages the financing side of the programs. IFA staff works with applicants on loan approvals and disbursements.

These programs represent a real opportunity for the City of Council Bluffs to implement infrastructure enhancements that will have significant and multi-faceted benefits to the local environment, character, and other infrastructure systems. Eligible improvements include:

- » Publicly owned wastewater treatment works, including those owned by cities, counties, districts, and utility management organizations;
- » For non-point source projects, both public and private entities are eligible, including farmers, landowners, water-

shed organizations, landfills and rural homeowners; and

- » Public and private community water systems whether they are for profit or not-for-profit, non-transient non-community public water supplies if they are either publicly owned or are not-for-profit and transient non-community systems if they are owned by government entities are eligible.

**Recreational Trails Program**

The federal “Recreational Trails Program” (RTP), was created through the National Recreational Trail Fund Act (NRTFA) as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and reauthorized by the MAP-21. This program provides funding assistance for acquisition, development, rehabilitation and maintenance of both motorized and non-motorized recreation trails. By law, 30% of each States’ RTP funding must be earmarked for motorized trail projects, 30% for non-motorized trail projects and the remaining 40% for multi-use (diversified) motorized and non-motorized trails or a combination of either. The RTP program can provide up to 80% federal funding on approved projects and requires a minimum 20% non-federal funding match.

The Iowa DOT has been designated as the state agency responsible for the program. Funds are intended for recreational trails and may not be used to improve roads for general passenger vehicle use or to provide shoulders or sidewalks along roads. Eligible applicants include municipi-



palities and counties, schools, and private, non-profit and for-profit businesses. Funds may be used for projects in several categories including:

- » Maintaining and restoration of existing trails;
- » Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages;
- » Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment;
- » Construction of new trails;
- » Acquisition of easements for trails;
- » Educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection related to trails.

### **Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants are available to cities, counties and school districts to be used for outdoor recreation projects. Projects require a 50% match and are taken under perpetuity by the National Park Service and must only be used for outdoor recreational purposes. Development and renovation projects must be maintained for a period of 25 years or the life of the manufactured goods. LWCF grants are managed by the IDNR and assistance ceilings are established by population.

### **Brownfield Assessment Grants**

Brownfield Assessment Grants are administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and provides funding to inventory, assess, characterize, and plan for brownfield sites. Applicants, such as the City of Council Bluffs, may apply for up to \$200,000 to assess sites contaminated by a variety of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, and petroleum. A special waiver can also be granted that allows funding to increase to \$350,000. Three or more eligible applicants can also join together to submit a unified grant proposal for up to \$1 million dollars.

The City of Council Bluffs has 53 contaminated brownfield sites listed with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and US Environmental Protection Agency.

### **Brownfield Cleanup Grants**

Brownfield Cleanup Grants are also administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and allocate up to \$200,000 per site for cleanup activities. No single applicant can seek funding for cleanup at more than three sites, and the Cleanup Grants also require a 20% cost share from the applicant. In cases of hardship, the applicant can seek to waive the cost sharing requirement. The City of Council Bluffs has received Brownfield Cleanup Grants in FY 2009 and FY 2011.

### **Coordination**

The City of Council Bluffs should assume the leadership role in implementing the new Comprehensive Plan. In addition to carrying out the administrative actions and many of the public improvement projects called for in the Plan, the City may choose to administer a variety of programs available to local residents, businesses, and property owners.

For the Comprehensive Plan to be successful, however, it must also be based on a strong partnership between the City, other public agencies, various neighborhood groups and organizations, the local business community, and the private sector.

The City should be the leader in promoting the collaboration needed to implement the Comprehensive Plan. The City's partners should include:

- » Other governmental and service districts, such as the Council Bluffs Community School District, Lewis Central Community Schools, Council Bluffs Public Library, Pottawattamie County, private utility companies, Iowa DOT, etc.;
- » Builders and developers, who should be encouraged to undertake improvements and new construction that conform to the Plan and enhance the overall quality and character; and
- » The Council Bluffs community, since all residents and neighborhood groups should be encouraged to participate in the on-going planning process, and all should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions on improvement and development decisions within the community.



### Intergovernmental Coordination

Council Bluffs includes several governing bodies charged with providing one or more services. The City should continue to partner with and support these entities in order to achieve the shared goals of the community. The City should work with the following groups to maximize opportunities for efficiencies in the delivery of services, share information that will influence how capital investments occur, and encourage alignment between various entities to provide the greatest possible benefit to Council Bluffs citizens.

#### Pottawattamie County

Much of the Comprehensive Plan planning area is under the jurisdiction of Pottawattamie County. The County is an important partner in implementing strategies that achieve common goals. This City should continue to work closely with the County in all aspects of community planning and development, including:

- » The creation, maintenance, and sharing of data, including demographics and growth projections, GIS data, land use, environmental analyses and studies, etc;
- » Coordination of services and, where appropriate, the establishment of service agreements that result in more efficient and seamless services for City and County residents;
- » The creation of an intergovernmental agreement that allows for municipal review of subdivision proposals within two miles of the City's incorporated boundary;
- » Closer alignment of development regulations to ensure that development regional growth is appropriate; and
- » Collaborative planning related to issues that cross municipal borders, such as the environment and economy.

#### Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA)

The Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) was created in 1967 and is an interlocal coalition of five counties, 38 towns, 19 special purpose governmental entities, and one city council. While the organization does not have any regulatory powers, MAPA serves as a forum to more closely integrate the region economically, coordinate a variety of projects and plans spanning various policy areas, and help address issues that are regional in scope and cross jurisdictions. Its primary focus includes transportation, waste management, economic development, air quality, energy, and data sharing. To the extent possible, the City should continue to align its long-term vision with that of the region, continue to engage in cross-jurisdictional partnerships and programs supported through MAPA, and share information on future land uses, demographic projections, and planned improvements with other governments.

#### Council Bluffs Water Works

Council Bluffs Water Works is responsible for the treatment and distribution of drinking water to customers in the Council Bluffs community. As the City considers strategies related to annexation, development, and related infrastructure investment, it is critical that it coordinates with the Council Bluffs Water Works regarding their service footprint and impact on municipal services. The City should establish a coordinated infrastructure program and investment agreement through which different types of infrastructure are installed according to a long-term vision. This agreement should address the potential for a coordinated development review process, coordinated capital improvement programs for upgrades to existing services, and policies related to the expansion of infrastructure to undeveloped areas.

#### Local School Districts

The Council Bluffs Community School District and Lewis Central Community School District are important service providers in the Council Bluffs community. However, the Districts are facing significantly different dynamics. The Council Bluffs Community School District is currently completing a master plan that will consider potential closures and the rehabilitation of several older facilities. The Lewis Central Community School District is preparing to accommodate the potential for residential growth on the fringe of the community with enhanced facilities as enrollment increases. As each district prepares to meet the current and future needs of the community, the City should collaborate with them by:

- » Sharing demographics and growth projections to ensure municipal planning is using a consistent set of assumptions;
- » Ensuring that planned residential growth areas preserve land for school facilities

that enhance access for future residents;

- » Considering community-wide and local impacts of transportation access to and from school sites;
- » Identifying appropriate programs for the adaptive reuse of vacant school facilities; and
- » Fostering coordination among the community's school districts, higher education providers, and industry to create a continuum of education that prepares residents for quality jobs.

#### Iowa Western Community College

Iowa Western Community College is the most prominent higher education facility in Council Bluffs. The College offers a variety of programs related to vocational degrees, technical degrees, and liberal arts. The College enrolls about 5,500 students, and is currently planning to increase its on-site housing. The City should collaborate with the College as it becomes a stronger asset to the Council

Bluffs community by:

- » Identifying potential programs or capital investments that advance the goals of both the College and City;
- » Aligning educational programs with emerging industries targeted for future economic development;
- » Identifying opportunities for the development of shared facilities;
- » Identifying opportunities for the joint development of an educational/research/professional campus;
- » Developing student-oriented activities in other parts of the community, and marketing them through the College’s media outlets;
- » Investing in streetscaping and gateway signage that announce entry to the Council Bluffs region and area around the College; and
- » Enhancing transit opportunities between the College and major shopping, cultural, or entertainment destinations within Council Bluffs.

### City of Omaha

The City of Omaha is Council Bluffs’ western neighbor and the region’s largest municipality, with 427,872 people. The City of Council Bluffs should strengthen its partnership with the City of Omaha, and identify joint-investment projects that will benefit both cities. The Cities of Omaha and Council Bluffs should:

- » Sustain and support on-going commis-

sions, agencies and interest groups that aim to address issues from a regional perspective;

- » Continue to implement improvements include in the Council Bluffs Interstate System Improvement Program;
- » Advocate for high-speed rail services and facilities that would serve as a benefit for both Council Bluffs and Omaha;
- » Coordinate on regional economic development and recruitment activities that build upon the regional assets for potential employers and workforces;
- » Coordinate with other stakeholders to strengthen regional parks and recreational facilities;
- » Continue to coordinate planning efforts;
- » Assess the viability and implement a bike sharing program; and
- » Work to create Metro Blue and Yellow bus rapid transit lines from Downtown Omaha to key points in Council Bluffs.

### Foundation & Non-Profit Coordination - Partner Organizations

#### Iowa West Foundation

The Iowa West Foundation was established in 1994, and has since transformed revenues from casino gaming licenses into grants aimed at improving communities throughout western Iowa. Council Bluffs has been a significant benefactor of Iowa West Foundation funding, including improvements in public art, streetscaping, façade enhancements, property acquisition and development through the Pottawattamie County Development Corporation, and more. This Comprehensive Plan and other local plans should serve as a common vision that helps align the efforts of the Iowa West Foundation with the priorities of the Council Bluffs community. To maximize the potential for benefits to the community, the City and Iowa West Foundation should work together to:

- » Identify short-term incremental improvements that are a part of or set the stage for other long-term improvements;
- » Establish a year-by-year improvement program that considers potential grant funding as a way of supporting local capital investments; and
- » Coordinate key Foundation-funded improvements with other infrastructure or capital investments that collectively achieve broader community goals.

### Economic growth, Business Development, & Tourism

The Council Bluffs community is served by three entities that aim to increase commercial investment in the form of new economic development, local business growth, and tourism. The Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce provides support services and programs to the local business community. These include networking and promotion, legislative advocacy, business referrals, and others. The Council Bluffs Convention & Visitor’s Bureau encourages tourism and markets the area for gatherings, conventions, and other large events. The Pottawattamie County Growth Alliance is the community’s primary coordinate for economic development activities, including the establishment of fully serviced industrial sites and buildings, business recruitment, and retention of existing businesses.

The City should continue to partner with these entities in order to expand the draw of Council Bluffs by:

- » Collaborating on broader multi-media campaigns to expand the reach of local business promotion and marketing;
- » Aligning municipal incentives with other programs aimed at creating opportunities for new investment in local economic development, tourism, and housing that supports industrial growth; and
- » Establishing a “Two Days in Council Bluffs” pamphlet that provides tourist information and itineraries that guide visitors to local businesses, natural resources, historic landmarks, and cultural destinations throughout the community.

### Pottawattamie County Development Corporation

The Pottawattamie County Development Corporation (PCDC) was established in 1997 and focuses on Downtown brownfield redevelopment. The PCDC also sponsors façade enhancement grants, building adaptive reuse and renovation, and other services aimed at supporting local business development and improvements. The City should continue to partner with the PCDC as it undertakes the “nuts and bolts” implementation of key development projects on sites constrained by environmental issues related to former industry and commerce. This may include:

- » Establishing a prioritized list of properties to acquire and remediate based on development potential and benefit to the community;
- » Collaborating on state and federal grant applications and local matching funds to implement improvements that lay the groundwork for brownfield redevelopment; and
- » Establishing local incentives aimed at transforming key brownfield redevelopment sites along prominent commercial corridors.