

january 2026

ecia spotlight

DeWitt Project Fully Funded

The City of DeWitt recently received a \$2,913,196 Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) grant to provide easier access to the new Eastern Iowa Community College's Career Advancement Center (CAC), which opened in 2023, in the existing Crossroads Business Park (CBP). Also, the project will create an additional access point for the CBP, which will not only increase the ability for public safety to serve the park, but also create additional efficiencies for the existing businesses and industries in the CBP.

Specifically, the goal is to extend East Industrial Street and related utilities, approximately 3,000 feet to the east connecting to 300th Avenue. The project also includes improving 300th Avenue from E. Industrial Street to US 30, creating a direct connection with this major east-west 4-lane highway. The project will open up over 120 acres of property for industrial/commercial development. Matt Specht, ECIA Community and Economic Development Director wrote the successful application.

The total project cost is \$5,826,391. Other funding includes a 2024, \$2,913,195 Congressional earmark.

The RISE program is targeted toward value-adding activities that feed new dollars into the economy and provide maximum economic impact to the state on primary or secondary roads, and city streets open for public use. Funding is generally limited to industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and professional office developments, with few exceptions.

If your City is interested in RISE, email Matt Specht, at mspecht@ecia.org.



Students utilizing the DeWitt Career Advancement Center are among those who will benefit from the RISE grant.

ECIA Co-Hosts Legislative Event

On a gorgeous November day, over 20 people gathered to hear from local leaders and discuss legislative priorities at Camp Courageous' Durgin Pavilion. Prosperity Eastern Iowa (PEI), (ECIA's regional economic development group), Jones County Economic Development, and Professional Developers of Iowa (PDI) partnered to host a Legislative breakfast. Derek Lumsden, Jones County Economic Development, and Mae Hingtgen, ECIA's Executive Director, welcomed the group to the event. Nic Hockenberry, with PEI and Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, and also the new PDI President, facilitated the discussion. In attendance were Senators Carrie Koelker and Tom Townsend; Representative Dr. Steven Bradley; Kim Reem, Regional Director for Senator Ernst's office; and economic developers, mayors, and other city officials. PDI's legislative lobbyist, Craig Patterson was also on hand to answer questions about the upcoming session and to discuss PDI's legislative priorities for the year. Prosperity Eastern Iowa also shared recent transformative Tax Increment Financing (TIF) projects in a full-color booklet, reiterating the importance of TIF in the region. PEI understands the importance of enhancing relationships with local legislators and communities and hosting regional events such as this every few years.

"ECIA is grateful to co-host this legislative event with our elected leaders and community partners in our region. These relationships ensure that when the legislature is considering changes and updates to Iowa law that we can respectfully and productively work together to find the best solutions for our cities, counties, and citizens," Hingtgen commented. DeWitt Economic Development also hosted a well-attended legislative event the previous week.



Maquoketa Receives Another CAT Grant

The City of Maquoketa successfully secured a \$628,000 Iowa Economic Development Authority Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) grant in December towards the construction of a new splash pad and in-street parking expansion. The splash pad will be located to the west of the existing Maquoketa Area Family Y building at 500 E Summit St. The design of the project is intended to reflect a scalable amenity that draws both area residents as well as visitors seeking entertainment in combination with Maquoketa Caves State Park (6.77 miles) and Prairie Creek Recreation Area (0.8 miles).

The total project cost is \$2,863,990. The amount raised to date is over \$2,200,000, which includes City, County, Private, Grants, and In-Kind donations. Marla Quinn wrote the successful application.



project rendering

Eligible CAT projects must primarily be vertical infrastructure with a demonstrated substantial regional or statewide economic impact. “Vertical infrastructure” means land acquisition and construction, major renovation and major repair of buildings, all appurtenant structures, utilities, site development, and recreational trails. CAT projects may include but are not limited to the following: museums, theme parks, cultural and recreational centers, recreational trails, heritage attractions, sports arenas, and other attractions. “Attraction” means a permanently located recreational, cultural, educational, or entertainment activity that is available to the general public.

If your community has a recreational project that will attract regional visitors and has a diverse funding package, contact Marla Quinn at mquinn@ecia.org.

Peosta Receives T-Mobile Grant

The Kelly Oaks Park project just got a boost from a nationwide grant program: a \$50,000 T-Mobile award which will specifically go towards constructing a pavilion in the park. ECIA’s Tricia Wagner, Peosta’s Keep Iowa Beautiful Hometown Pride Coach, wrote the successful application.

The Park encompasses 17 acres in northeast Peosta and was donated to the City in 2017 by a local resident. Since then, the City has carefully prepared the land, removing overgrowth while protecting thriving species.

The Park is being developed in phases, with several major components already underway or completed:

- A 3,000 ft. paved, ADA-accessible trail (completed) with lighting, electrical, and internet being added as funds allow.
- A blended nature-scape/traditional playground with pour in place base (installed).
- A paved parking lot connecting to Cox Springs Road (designed for future expansion).
- A double-sided entrance sign recognizing major funders (completed; to be installed in spring).
- Relocated disc golf holes to accommodate the trail (reinstalling in spring).
- Educational signage developed in partnership with the Boy Scouts of America.

The final major component—and centerpiece of the T-Mobile project—is the indoor/outdoor pavilion with restrooms. The total pavilion project cost is \$922,700. Other funding sources include \$400,000 from: Dubuque County ARPA Grant, Iowa DNR REAP Small Cities Grant, and City of Peosta.

T-Mobile helps fund projects that foster local connections, like technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, and community centers. Please email Tricia Wagner at twagner@ecia.org if you have a project that may fit the T-Mobile grant program.

Tools for Smarter Local Decision-Making

Local governments across Iowa are navigating increasing service demands, infrastructure pressures, and long-term fiscal uncertainty. This webinar (February 18, 2026) introduces a suite of practical, Iowa-specific educational resources and tools developed through the Iowa Government Finance Initiative (IGFI) to help city and county leaders move from data awareness to informed fiscal decision-making.

Participants will explore how to use IGFI Fiscal Condition Reports for cities and counties, General Fund revenue and expenditure reports for cities, and the Dollar Bill Tool and Dollar Bill Planning Tool to better understand where public dollars come from, how they are spent, and what those patterns mean for short- and long-term community sustainability. The session will also introduce the new Guidebook for City Officials, designed to support councils, staff, and community stakeholders.

Designed for elected officials, appointed leaders, and practitioners, this webinar is designed to share the array of publications and tools offered through ISU Extension and Outreach, Community and Economic Development. The focus of the session will be to guide the participants on the real-world application potential, helping participants interpret key fiscal indicators, ask better questions of their data, and use evidence to support planning, budgeting, and policy discussions in their communities.

Participants will learn how to:

- Interpret core fiscal condition indicators for Iowa cities and counties
- Assess the impact of state mandated legislation in Iowa
- Understand General Fund revenue and expenditure patterns and trends
- Use the Dollar Bill Tool to communicate how local dollars are allocated
- Apply the Dollar Bill Planning Tool to support scenario planning and trade-off discussions
- Use IGFI resources to strengthen transparency, community engagement, and fiscal conversations

Target Audience

- Iowa city and county elected officials
- City and county administrators and finance staff
- Councils of Governments (COGs)
- Economic development and community development practitioners
- Planners, regional partners, and stakeholder groups

Hosted by: Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Community and Economic Development
Co-Presenters: Biswa Das (bdas@iastate.edu), Erin Mullenix (erin1@iastate.edu)
Julie Robison (robison@iastate.edu)

Webinar Date & Registration

- February 18, 2026, Wednesday, 11 am – 12:30 pm
- Cost: Free
- Registration link: <https://go.iastate.edu/RQK18U>



webinar

Best Wishes!

In March 2026, two amazing women are retiring from ECIA...Debbie Maier, Housing Support Specialist (38 years) and Jennifer Walker, Director of Special Programs (17 years)....In their words, they each reflect on their time at ECIA.

What did you enjoy most about your work?

JW: I enjoyed the fundraising projects – they were all different and it was fun to work with people who were passionate about seeing their projects realized. I was also excited when I first began managing CSEI. It was a time of learning, and I really liked working with our small team. There was so much work to be done and so many problems to solve. I love being in an environment with people who can keep their sense of humor in the face of tough work.

DM: My co-workers – we have all raised families and lost loved ones over the 38 years together. Having that kind of bond makes doing the job enjoyable.

What was your biggest career accomplishment or challenge?

JW: My favorite was the CSEI Photo Voice Exhibit. That project came from our small group brainstorming on ways to bring awareness to the CSEI and the homeless situation. Ashley Noonan, who was working here at the time, came up with the idea and it struck a chord with me. I look at the photos every day I'm in my office; they are a wonderful reminder of the event, the people who participated and attended, and especially of those we serve.

DM: I started my career with ECIA as a secretary, which prepared me to become a housing specialist.

What are you most looking forward to in retirement?

JW: EVERYTHING! I can't wait to travel, to see my family and friends more often, to play tennis and golf again, to take classes and learn new things, to go on big hikes with my dog, to bake and cook more, to learn to play mahjong. I've got a very long list!

DM: Enjoying Sundays, because Mondays won't be so bad anymore! Also, there's a bucket full of stuff that I want to do!

Where is the first place you want to travel?

JW: We've got several trips planned and I'm excited for all of them!

DM: To see family!

What's your favorite memory from your time here?

JW: The things that made me laugh out loud – Gail and I at the People of Walmart photos; Tim Crabb pranks; Road trips with Marla; Inappropriate cookie cakes with Ashley and Shelby; Darwin and I driving back from somewhere, deep in conversation, completely missing our exit and driving miles out of our way.

DM: The Cub's bus trip that we all took! – Bonus – the Cub's won!



Jennifer (middle) with homeless program coordinators at last year's donor appreciation event



Debbie (2nd from right) with fellow housing specialists in 2007

ECIA Anniversaries October – January



Jenny Schrobilgen
32 years



Chandra Ravada
22 years



Denise Hefel
20 years



Sarah Berning
15 years



Amanda Dupont
10 years



Walt Nims
6 years



Caitlin Siemionko
6 years



Angie Koppes
6 years



Roseann Sabers
5 years



Katie Steffensmeier
5 years

Congrats Jack!

Jack Studier, ECIA Planner I, recently passed the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) exam.

AICP certification is a nationwide, independent verification of a planner's qualifications. The AICP credential certifies that a planner has the academic qualifications, relevant work experience, and mastery of essential skills needed to serve their community effectively.

Passing the AICP exam is an important step toward becoming an AICP certified planner. Jack is now an AICP Candidate and will be eligible to apply for full certification after achieving three years of professional planning experience.

Please join us in congratulating Jack on this significant achievement.



A New Way to Find Grants

The last monthly ECIA Fund Alert will be delivered to your inbox in February 2026 because we have changed the format and it now "lives" at the following webpage: https://ecia.org/grant_opportunities/index.php. Grants are categorized by month, then by due date. Check it out, and if you have any questions, email Marla Quinn at mquinn@ecia.org.



East Central Intergovernmental Association

www.ecia.org • 7600 Commerce Park Dubuque, IA 52002 • 563-556-4166