

# Community Matters Now



A monthly publication for Iowa leaders from Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM ISU EXTENSION AND OUTREACH COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As I begin to write this holiday greeting it is 60 degrees outside, with no real chance of snow in the forecast for the next 10 days. Which holiday are we greeting? Columbus Day? Labor Day? This is even warm for Halloween, at least the ones I remember as a child back in the 19[printer\_error].

Should it matter? Why DO we wait until December every year to tell people how much we love them, are thankful for their work, or value their friendship? Does it take the first snow or the first scent of pine in the house to awaken a "gratitude endorphin" in us that lies dormant the rest of the year? I hope not. There's a lot going on in the world, but never so much that overt expressions of appreciation can't improve the lives of those around us.

And yet here I am, writing the once-yearly holiday CED letter. Once again, I want to extend to you our sincere wishes for happiness, love, and friendship throughout the year to come; however, I also want to

extend these wishes to you beyond just this season. Feel free to cut along the dotted lines and attach to your calendars for the coming year!

### April 1, 2022

From ISU Extension and Outreach CED:  
We thank you for all the time and effort you put in to making the places you live better! We know there is much more work to do than people to do it. The work is often thankless, so we want to say "Thank you!"

### July 1, 2022

From ISU Extension and Outreach CED:  
Thank you for making our work better. Thank you for your collaborations, for being patient with us when we ask a lot of questions or try something new that doesn't exactly work out as we'd hoped. Mostly, thank you for asking us to be

a part of the great work you do in your communities!

### October 1, 2022

From ISU Extension and Outreach CED:  
Wow, that was a great summer, wasn't it? And finally, the Cyclones beat the Hawkeyes in football! Whether you are a Cyclone, Hawkeye, Panther, or none of the above, your talent and efforts make this state what it is! Thank you for all you do together to make Iowa one of the best places on earth!

Gary Taylor  
Program Director, Iowa State University  
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# COMMUNITY VISIONING CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF PROGRAMMING IN IOWA'S SMALL COMMUNITIES

By Sandra Oberbroeckling | Program Specialist

On November 19, 2021, more than 150 people from throughout Iowa gathered in Ames to attend the Iowa's Living Roadways (ILR) annual celebration. This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of this collaboration among the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Iowa-based nonprofit Trees Forever, and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, as well as one of ILR's first initiatives, the Community Visioning Program.

Highlights of the daylong event included a keynote address by James and Deborah Fallows, authors of *Our Towns: A 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America*; a tour of the 2021 Community Visioning and Trails Visioning design concepts; and "mini-workshops" on topics ranging from trails and safe routes to placemaking and aging in place to water quality.

The annual celebration also provided the newly selected 2022 visioning communities a glimpse of the possibilities available to them. Trees Forever staff and ISU design interns facilitated local geography mapping sessions during which community representatives identified local landmarks and familiarized themselves with reading aerial maps.



*Members of the Shell Rock visioning committee map destinations and landmarks in their community during the local geography mapping session.*



*Left: Authors James and Deborah Fallows present their keynote virtually from Washington, DC. Right: Deb Sprecker, Woodbine Main Street executive director, showcases the public art on the historical Woodbine grain elevator during the placemaking mini-workshop.*



Finally, the event showcased 25 years of project implementation with a slideshow of nearly 68 projects completed by nearly 50 communities that participated in the Community Visioning Program.

## What is Community Visioning?

The Community Visioning Program integrates technical landscape planning and design techniques with sustainable community action to assist community leaders and volunteers in making sound and meaningful decisions about the local landscape.

The program assists Iowa communities with populations under 10,000 because these smaller communities often lack the resources and expertise needed to design and implement landscape enhancements. It is designed to empower local leaders through a planning process that results in an enhancement plan that reflects the values and identity of the community.

The visioning process is a series of meetings during which a committee of local residents identifies issues, investigates the physical and cultural dimensions of landscape issues, sets goals for change, develops strategies

to meet those goals, and creates an implementation plan.

Throughout the process, the committee receives support from technical experts from Trees Forever, a private-sector landscape architect, and the ISU Department of Landscape Architecture.

## How was Community Visioning started?

Community Visioning is the brainchild of ISU professor of landscape architecture Julia Badenhope, who joined ISU Extension and Outreach as the extension landscape architect in 1993. In this role, Badenhope observed a gap between the demand for design services to rural Iowa communities and the availability of those services. To close that gap, she developed a pilot program that brought local leaders and volunteers together with the design community to create visionary approaches to community betterment.

In 1996, Badenhope approached officials at the Iowa DOT seeking to form a public-private partnership to provide design services to rural communities. When presented with the visioning concept, Mark Masteller, then the Iowa DOT chief

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*Community Visioning continued from P02*

landscape architect, saw an opportunity to combine the design talent and community development approach of ISU with the grant distribution and physical community project approach of Trees Forever.

Masteller facilitated the collaboration between ISU and Trees Forever, which resulted in a grant from ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act), the funds of which are administered by FHWA and the Iowa DOT. The Iowa's Living Roadways programs have since evolved into a partnership with the Iowa DOT.

### **How has Community Visioning impacted Iowa's small towns?**

Since 1996, the Community Visioning Program has provided landscape planning and design assistance for more than 250 Iowa communities, more than two dozen of which have completed the visioning process more than once. Evaluation research shows that 98% of visioning communities complete at least one project, and more than 70% complete four or more projects.

In addition to helping Iowa's small towns, the Community Visioning Program gives landscape architecture students the opportunity to work for a professional landscape architecture firm and to interact with real clients through our internship program. Since its inception, more than 250 students have interned with the program, and several of them have gone on to work with the program as practitioners.

The program benefits practicing landscape architects by introducing them the best and brightest future practitioners, whom they spend a summer mentoring. Firms have often hired their interns as full-time designers once they have graduated because of the experience interns gain through the visioning program. Firms also benefit from exposure to potential client communities that they shepherd through the design process.

### **What keeps Community Visioning going?**

The public participation components of the visioning process, in the form of focus groups, surveys, and community workshops, foster community buy-in, according to visioning committee members.

"We got everybody from senior citizens to high school kids on various committees and we got input from everybody and it made it very successful," said Danny Roehr, former mayor of Shellsburg, which participated in the program in 2013.



*The pedestrian crossing signal and crosswalk proposed for Glidden were completed in 2020, giving pedestrians and cyclists a safer way to cross US 30 to access Northland Park and the trail from the aquatic center (photo by Larry Devine, Carroll Times Herald).*



*The US 30 bridge outside Woodbine over the Boyer River incorporates elements of the design proposed through the 2008 visioning process, including decorative lighting and brick work.*

"What Community Visioning did was not make [the Washington streetscape project] one person's idea, or few people's idea, but made it the community's idea, and that helped us implement it," said Ed Raber, project coordinator for Dubuque County and former executive director of the Washington Economic Development Group. While in Washington County, Raber supported the visioning applications of six communities in the county.

According to Badenhope, program's longevity can be attributed in part to the willingness of program staff to adapt and change, as well as to the ongoing support of the Iowa Department of Transportation.

"We have continuously improved process and introduced innovative design strategies as new science and techniques have emerged," she said. "The continued interest and engagement of Iowa DOT has allowed the program partners to build deeper knowledge and achieve very high levels of impact across rural Iowa."



*The Highway 63 pedestrian underpass proposed though visioning for Hudson in 2010 allows pedestrians and cyclists to cross the highway safely to access school facilities.*

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