

Community Matters Now



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

COMMUNITY VISIONING PROGRAM RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE IN TRANSPORTATION DESIGN

By Sandra Oberbroeckling | Program Specialist

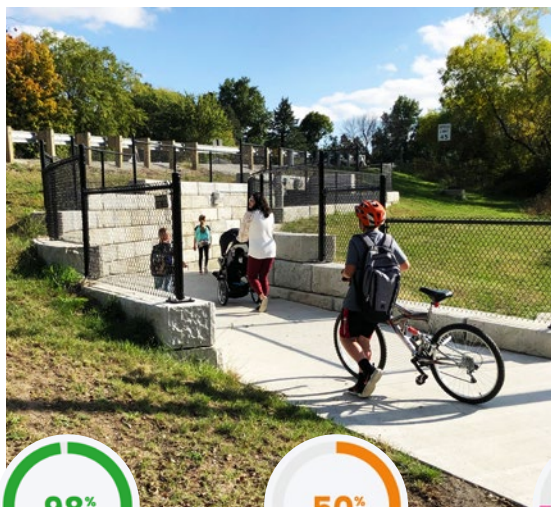
The significant impact of the Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program on small communities was recognized at the 2023 American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Central States Conference held April 19–21 in Fayetteville, AR, where the program earned a merit award for excellence in transportation design.

This award follows on the heels of an honor award the program received from the Iowa Chapter of ASLA in the fall of 2022.

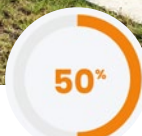
The Community Visioning Program is the collaborative effort of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development (CED), the nonprofit advocacy organization Trees Forever, private-sector landscape architects, and community stakeholders.

Sponsored by the Iowa Department of Transportation since 1996, Community Visioning is a participatory planning process that helps small Iowa communities create plans to improve walkability and bikeability, provide access for all ages and abilities, manage stormwater, and enhance the environment as it relates to transportation infrastructure. The program targets communities with populations under 10,000, which often lack the resources and expertise needed to design and complete these types of projects.

To date, 258 communities have participated, 40 of which have completed the process more than once. Program evaluations, surveys, and interviews have revealed that 98% of visioning communities complete at least one project, with nearly 50% completing four or more projects. Seventy-five percent of visioning communities funded their projects



About 98% of visioning communities complete at least one project.



Nearly 50% of visioning communities complete four or more projects.



Nearly 75% of communities funded projects through local volunteers.



Representatives from 63% of the communities reported that the program had a positive impact on their town.



Left: The underpass along Highway 63 in Hudson allows pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely to and from the school and athletic fields. Right: Volunteers built and maintain the trail in Box Park in Belle Plaine.

through local efforts. Communities also relied on state-funded programs, receiving more than \$27 million between 1996 and 2021 from the Iowa DNR, the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa Great Places, Wellmark, AARP, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and various community foundations.

Applications for 2024 now online!

Information and an online application are available to communities interested in participating in the 2024 program on the [Community Visioning website](https://www.communityvisioning.org) (visit <https://www.communityvisioning.org/apply> or scan the QR code).



ONLINE RESOURCES

[IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS COMMUNITY VISIONING PROGRAM](#)

[DATA SCIENCE FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD YOUNG SCHOLARS PROGRAM](#)

[EXTENSION AND OUTREACH INDICATORS PROGRAM](#)

[MARKETING HOMETOWN AMERICA](#)

GREETINGS FROM OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

This edition of Community Matters Now celebrates the good work Community and Economic Development (CED) faculty and staff are doing with Iowa communities by featuring some of the recognition we have received at the state, regional, and national levels. In addition to noting the quality of the work in CED, these awards highlight the variety of our efforts, from facilitation and planning and design to providing access to and analysis of a plethora of data. While awards are not the be-all and end-all of our work, they are a positive sign that CED is making quality contributions toward meaningful accomplishments for Iowa.

Each awarded project was done in conjunction with many people across the state and we appreciate these

collaborations. So, please join us in celebrating accomplishments in Iowa's communities! If you need inspiration on how or where to celebrate, I encourage you to visit CED community arts specialist Jennifer Drinkwater's blog, The What's Good Project, to see her list of "[100 Community Events in 99 Iowa Counties](https://whatsgoodproject.com/thoughts/100-things-to-do-in-99-counties-of-iowa-in-2023)" (https://whatsgoodproject.com/thoughts/100-things-to-do-in-99-counties-of-iowa-in-2023). Maybe there's an event in your hometown or possibly there's a rodeo, jamboree, or festival in a community across the state you have always wanted to experience. Now's the time!

Rest assured; we will not rest on our laurels. Over the next several months, we will be embarking on strategic planning, based on

feedback from the Hellos and Handshakes tour (see the article below). We will also seek additional input over the summer and fall, and you may be among those we call upon. If you have interest in sharing ideas, don't wait for us to reach out—please drop us a note—let us know your thoughts about how CED can work with you to improve the quality of life in your community, or better yet, invite us to your community to converse with you about your needs.



Erin Olson-Douglas
Program Director, Iowa State University
Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STAFF FACILITATES NEW VICE PRESIDENT'S LISTENING SESSIONS

By Himar Hernández | Assistant Program Director

When Jason Henderson, the new Vice President of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, took office in April, one of the first things that he wanted to do was to get on the road and listen to what Iowans and extension staff had to say. To accomplish this goal, a team representing all the Extension and Outreach program areas met for months to plan for the details and logistics that such an enterprise would require. Every detail—from the name of the tour to the format and venues for the sessions—was important for the success of this venture.

Community and Economic Development (CED) faculty and staff played a critical role in what came to be known as "Hellos and Handshakes"—visits by Henderson to 17 communities throughout the state. Twenty-two CED specialists facilitated 13 sessions with extension staff and five sessions with external partners.

The internal sessions were designed for extension staff to meet the new vice president and to foster trusting

relationships. These sessions gave staff the opportunity to understand what the new vice president is about, learn about paths to communicate with the central administration, and gain perspectives on how campus will support county staff.

For Henderson, Hellos and Handshakes offered a chance to gauge the state of the internal culture of ISU Extension and Outreach and to begin to understand the issues and opportunities that exist in Iowa today.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EARNS NATIONAL AWARDS

By Sandra Oberbroeckling | Program Specialist

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach's Community and Economic Development (CED) unit earned three awards for excellence in teamwork at the 2023 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) conference held April 30–May 3 in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho.

CED's Data and Technology team garnered two awards: Educational Materials for the online, on-demand [Data for Decision Makers](#) reports, and Educational Technology for the [Languages Spoken in Iowa](#) website, a

series of dashboards that maps the diversity of languages spoken in Iowa. Data team members recognized include Lisa Bates, Sandra Burke, Bailey Hanson, Christopher Seeger, Rakesh Shah, and Jay Maxwell. CED specialists Lynn Adams and Mary Weinand were part of a multi-university team that earned the Creative Excellence Award sponsored by the Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) for updating the curriculum of the Marketing Hometown American program, which helps rural communities retain their quality of life and market the value of rural places.

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Community Matters Now is published monthly for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development staff and their clients. Comments, questions, and suggestions regarding the content of this newsletter should be directed to:

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COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STAFF PART OF TEAM EARNING RESEARCH AWARD

By Mary Weinand | Community Development Specialist

Iowa State University's 2023 Interdisciplinary Research Award will be presented to an ISU team working on the Electric Network Disaster Mitigation for Utilities in Rural Environment (ENDURE) project.

In light of the 2020 derecho, Alice Alipour, associate professor in the ISU Department of Civil, Construction, and Environmental Engineering (CCEE), began to question the resources needed for utilities in rural communities across Iowa to respond quickly to natural disasters. She applied for and received a grant with the overarching goal to introduce, test, and establish a novel digital infrastructure that will enable utilities in rural communities in Iowa and beyond to plan for changing climate, minimize the consequences of natural disasters, and recover from them as quickly as possible.

The ENDURE grant is part of the CIVIC Innovation Challenge funded by the National Science Foundation in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security's

Science and Technology Directorate and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"To help design this infrastructure it is important to have a better understanding of the risks, needs, preparation, and readiness of segments of the customer base of rural utilities," Alipour said.

To accomplish that goal, she reached out to Gary Taylor, professor of community and regional planning and extension specialist in the ISU Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development (CED) unit, to help develop Stage 1 of the project—focus groups and surveys for utility customers.

Taylor recruited CED specialists Himar Hernández and Mary Weinand to help organize and recruit focus-group participants. Focus-group feedback is important to determining the clarity and appropriateness of the survey questions. The result will provide a better understanding of challenges and risks

caused by brief and prolonged electricity outages. An initial focus group was held in May with residential customers in Muscatine; this group provided real-time feedback and clarifications to the survey questions.

"We were able to seek clarifications during the session and participants were able to build upon and respond to each other's ideas. The resulting survey questions will provide a better understanding of customers' electrical needs," said Taylor.

Additional focus groups with commercial/retailers and critical facilities managers are planned for July in Muscatine.

If funded, the Stage 2 work will directly contribute to strengthening the resilience of electric-power networks by accounting for climate change and the resulting increased frequency and severity of weather events and by taking into account the risks and needs of electric-power customers.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY RECOGNIZES TWO COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS

By Sandra Oberbroeckling | Program Specialist

Christopher J. Seeger

Professor of landscape architecture and extension specialist Christopher Seeger was nominated for and won the Iowa State University 2022 Outstanding Achievement in Extension or Professional Practice Award, which recognizes a faculty member who demonstrates outstanding performance in statewide leadership in extension and has achieved national recognition for outreach activities.

For nearly 25 years, Seeger has led excellence in extension through efforts such as the Iowans Walking Assessment Logistics Kit (I-WALK), the [Extension and Outreach Indicators Program](#), and the reboot and expansion of *Data for Decision Makers*, all of which provide Iowans access to needed relevant community data. His career has centered around participatory design, client engagement, and information sharing. Seeger was also co-Principal Investigator on two multi-university grants that funded [Data Science for the Public Good \(DSPG\) Young Scholars](#), a program nationally recognized for its interdisciplinary research and innovation. DSPG topics have included alcohol distribution, workforce and economic development, and educational attainment.



Left: Vice President for Extension and Outreach John Lawrence, Christopher Seeger, and ISU President Wendy Wintersteen. Right: Diane Van Wyngarden and John Lawrence.

Diane Van Wyngarden

Diane Van Wyngarden, tourism specialist in ISU Extension and Outreach's Community and Economic Development (CED) unit, earned the 2023 ISU Extension and Outreach award for Originality and Innovation in Programming. In partnership with the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), Central Iowa Tourism, CED, and Iowa communities, Van Wyngarden developed and piloted customer service training and professional guide training and certification programs.

[Customer Service Training](#) is designed to specifically for front line staff of Iowa's



small businesses and teaches both job and social skills. [Guide Training and Certification](#) is comprehensive training specifically for Iowa's attractions and includes a practical workbook that guides can use as an easy reference. This new program is already producing exciting outcomes. Participant surveys indicate greater use of national guide standards, plus the creation of new Iowa tourism products that attract more visitors (and revenue) to communities. Examples include the guided tours at the Des Moines Botanical Gardens, step-on guides at the Iowa Arboretum, and historic neighborhood walking tours in Muscatine, Davenport, and Washington.

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