



IARCCOURIER

**Disaster Recovery
Special Edition
Fall 2010**

**GROWING IOWA'S REGIONS
FOR OVER 35 YEARS**

Volume 3, Issue 3

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**Iowa Association of
Regional Councils**

The *IARCCourier* is an electronic publication of the Iowa Association of Regional Councils.

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COGs critical to disaster recovery

In June of 2008, the state of Iowa experienced one of the largest natural disasters on record. Historic rains and storms resulted in severe flooding, damaging homes, businesses and critical infrastructure. Over 80% of Iowa's counties received presidential disaster area declarations.

As the enormous task for recovery began, both state and federal agencies recognized that Iowa's Councils of Governments (COGs) would be critical to any successful recovery effort. Agencies quickly partnered with IARC and its members to implement programs designed to meet the needs of residents, businesses and local governments impacted by these disasters. Those efforts continue today and will be on-going into the foreseeable future.

This special edition of the Iowa Association of Regional Councils' *IARCCourier* focuses on the disaster recovery work of Iowa's COGs over the past two years. Iowa's COGs have spent thousands of hours administering state and federal recovery programs, securing funding for new housing & infrastructure, and working with communities to better plan for future disasters.

IARC is proud of the accomplishments that our members have made in the area of disaster recovery. We want to thank all of our state, federal and local partners, especially Iowa's cities and counties, for their support and assistance. We are proud to have played such an important role in assisting our state during an extremely challenging & difficult time.

For almost 40 years, Iowa's COGs have worked to grow Iowa's communities, businesses, and economy through regional cooperation. We will continue to serve our member cities and counties with the variety of services that COGs have become known for, and strive to help create a stronger Iowa.

Rick Hunsaker

*IARC Chairperson & Executive Director of Region XII
Council of Governments*

Disaster recovery coordinators lead regional recovery efforts

In response to the 2008 disasters, Iowa's COGs have:

- **Assisted 436 businesses**
- **Assisted 1,523 households**
- **Administered \$59 million in state & federal recovery funding**
- **Secured \$81.5 million for disaster recovery projects in Iowa communities**

The disasters of 2008 left thousands of residents displaced and closed hundreds of businesses throughout the state. Recovery efforts began immediately, and the need for regional coordination became apparent. Iowa's COGs needed additional personnel to respond quickly to these disasters. As Iowa's COGs serve as EDA designated Economic Development Districts (EDDs), EDA made the decision to provide economic disaster funding through the COGs. The investment of federal funds allowed COGs to hire staff to serve as disaster recovery coordinators and provide services directly related to recovery efforts within their respective regions.

Disaster Recovery Coordinators have served as a driving force in the State of Iowa for disaster recovery. Coordinators have served local governments by developing recovery plans, providing education and training on recovery programs and services, identifying infrastructure needs, assisting business and industry impacted by the disaster, and establishing partnerships with state and regional organizations to leverage funding assistance. They are involved with recovery programs through IDED, IFA, FEMA, and HUD. The EDA Disaster Recovery Coordinators meet with local, state, and federal agencies to coordinate response and mitigation for future disasters. Coordinators have prepared numerous grant applications to help mitigate current and future damages. Projects funded to date include storm shelters, tornado sirens, water and sewer projects, inflatable dams, early warning devices, water shedding projects, levee improvements, property buyouts, and much more. Through IARC, regional disaster recovery coordinators have met regularly, sharing information and best practices.



Iowa's COG Disaster Recovery Coordinators with Denver Regional Office Economic Development Administration (EDA) staff Ms. Forlesia Willis and Mr. Shirley Marshall.

Rebuilding Iowa's infrastructure

Clean water, safe roads and bridges, and appropriate waste handling are all modern conveniences often taken for granted. Basic infrastructure allows communities to provide residents and businesses with modern conveniences central to daily life. Where would Iowa be without its infrastructure?

Louisa County and the city of Columbus Junction, among others, experienced what it is like to be without basic infrastructure during the 2008 floods. Located just below the confluence of the Iowa and Cedar rivers, the small city witnessed the majority of its businesses inundated by the flood. Primary transportation routes were closed and its water plant disabled.

Rural Louisa County infrastructure was similarly impacted by the record river levels. A primary freight route for agricultural commodities, county highway 99 (formerly a state route) was inundated and rendered useless in several places. The two late 1940s-era bridges on the route spanning the Iowa River at Wapello and Oakville were also impacted by the high water.

Columbus Junction and Louisa County faced difficult decisions in the wake of receding flood waters. Limited local funding sources made it difficult to implement plans made nearly immediately after the flood to replace or improve affected infrastructure.

Fortunately, these local governments were proactive in their approaches to solving their infrastructure issues. The Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC) was contacted immediately after the floods to help develop and implement the infrastructure plans put forth by each entity.

The plans were simple. Columbus Junction decided to move its water plant out of the flood plain and Louisa County needed to replace its two bridges. Not completing the improvements would mean putting a small city in peril of losing its water again, and a county implementing weight limits on two of its most important bridges.

SEIRPC worked with state and federal contacts to begin the implementation process. The projects required initial engineering work and environmental studies. Engineers worked with SEIRPC to develop the appropriate documents to move ahead with funding applications. Funding sources were evaluated and the projects were prepared for application.

Working through competitive processes, SEIRPC secured over \$11 million for Louisa County and nearly \$5 million for Columbus Junction. The Economic Development Administration and Iowa Department of Economic Development provided the resources through federal flood recovery appropriations. The Columbus Junction Water Plant relocation project is underway, and the Oakville Bridge replacement project on highway 99 is in the final stages of environmental review.

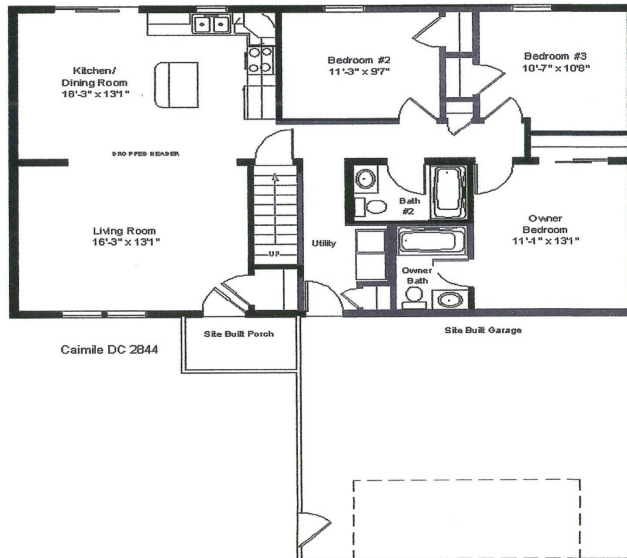
The projects described were able to move forward because of a dedicated team working towards implementation. Federal, state, and local governments, and SEIRPC, state and federal officials all played critical roles during the process.

Infrastructure needs still exist in the wake of the 2008 floods. Success stories are important to the recovery process, yet unmet needs must not be forgotten. Iowa's COGs continue their endeavors with local governments to help address infrastructure needs.



Single-family new production

The role that COGs have played in regional housing development has increased significantly over the years. The work that Iowa's COGs are doing under the Single Family New Production/Construction program compliments other housing activities, and will help meet the needs of families impacted by the 2008 disasters.



SFNP Round 1

In the spring of 2009, the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) made available \$20 million for the Single Family New Production/Construction Program Round 1. This program was designed to stimulate new construction of affordable homes in cities that lost single family housing in the natural disasters of 2008.

SFNP Round 2

In the spring of 2010, an additional \$30 million became available for the Single Family New Production/Construction Program Round 2. NIACOG was awarded \$2.425 million in funds. These funds will be used to stimulate new construction

of affordable homes by offering income and credit qualified families up to 25% of the purchase price for a new home built as a direct result of this program. The sale prices will range from \$150,000 to \$180,000, meaning the grant assistance to each home buyer will be in the \$37,500 to \$45,000 range. Twenty-eight of the homes will be sold to home buyers that have an annual gross household of less than 80% of the HUD income limit, and twenty-six will be sold to home buyers in the 80-100% income range.

The communities of Clear Lake, Forest City, Garner, Osage, Riceville, St. Ansgar, and Stacyville are participating in this program and it is anticipated that 54 new homes will be constructed in these communities by December 31, 2011. At the time of closing, the homebuyer will receive assistance of 25% of the selling price in the form of a no interest forgivable loan secured with a lien against the property. The families must agree to make the new home their primary residence for a period of five years.

SFNP Round 3

IDED accepted applications through October 15, 2010 for a third round of funding for the Single Family New Production/Construction Program. An additional \$25 million has been allocated for this round. All homes must be under construction by December 31, 2012. All three rounds of funding will include Green Streets criteria, promoting energy efficiency and sustainable building practices.

Through on-going partnership with IDED, Iowa's COGs will continue to assist in creating safe, affordable housing for low to moderate income families.



New business assistance programs promote economic recovery

In response to the natural disasters of 2008, COGs continue to administer a number of state and federal recovery programs. Recently ECICOG surpassed the \$5 million mark in awarding business recovery assistance funds. Over 80 businesses in the region have been assisted to date.

One story of business recovery in the region involves the Hunan Chinese Restaurant in Coralville. Like many other businesses located on the “Coralville Strip”, the Hunan Restaurant sustained extensive damage due to the rising floodwaters. Brian and Bessie Ho, owners of the restaurant, sought funding through their regional COG. ECICOG awarded the company funds through the original Jumpstart Program. They also received additional funds to purchase energy efficient items.

In addition to administering state and federal programs, members of IARC received new funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Iowa Department of Economic Development to establish and recapitalize revolving loan funds for area businesses. Since 2008, Iowa’s COGs have been awarded \$6,035,000 in new federal funding through EDA and \$925,000 in new state funding through the Iowa Values Fund. These awards have helped businesses recover from the physical and financial impacts of the disasters of 2008.

To date, ECICOG has made over \$1.4 million in loans to 12 businesses. Here are just two examples:

- AlphaGen Materials Technology, Inc. (Vinton)- While not physically impacted by the flood, this company has suffered significantly in terms of economic loss due to partner plants having to be shut down during the Disasters of 2008. ECICOG’s revolving loan fund provided the company \$60,000 to assist with equipment, inventory, and operating expenses.
- Bochner Chocolates (Iowa City)- ECICOG’s revolving loan fund provided a loan for \$189,912 to purchase two new pieces of equipment that will greatly increase their productivity in regards to conveying, weighing, and bagging product. While flood waters did not enter their facility, overflowing storm drains created problems. The company had to evacuate and dismantle the entire plant to protect the machines from potential damage from the floodwater

Regional revolving loan funds through Iowa’s COGs assist in creating jobs and leveraging investment in Iowa cities and counties. Revolving loan funds serve as an important tool in business recovery efforts statewide, and have allowed COGs to expand their role in regional economic development efforts.



The Hunan Chinese Restaurant in Coralville sustained significant flood damage from the floods of 2008

Hazard mitigation planning prepares communities for the future

Like many of Iowa's COGs, the Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) has spent significant time and effort in the two years since the disasters of 2008 preparing Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) for member cities and counties. These plans are tied to receiving disaster assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), administered by Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (IHSEMD) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). New or updated plans may cover a single jurisdiction or multiple jurisdictions.

An HMP is a five-year plan designed to minimize the impact of future disasters. The HMP also help a community become eligible for specific disaster assistance through FEMA. Funding for preparing HMPs is provided by the federal, state, and local governments after approval of an HMGP grant application. Hazard mitigation plans include an identification and definition of hazards within the community, an



assessment addressing the community's vulnerability to hazards, and measurable goals and specific action steps to implement the plan.

Public input into HMPs is required and is intended to reach beyond a public hearing. Generally, a local ad hoc committee is formed to provide focused input into the hazard assessment, goal development, and action step elements of the document. Once a draft of the HMP is complete, it is strongly suggested that the plan be disseminated in the community in an attempt to garner input from other residents. Prior to approval, the jurisdiction adopting the HMP must also conduct a public hearing. Subsequently, the plan is adopted by resolution of the elected body at a public meeting.

As major natural disasters have occurred that have influenced changes in the HMP process, it is likely that future disasters will impact HMPs development, and role

of the COGs in the process. First, with the nature of disasters, development of plans will increasingly occur in multi-jurisdictional formats. As budgets tighten, local governments will need to continue to collaborate to solve problems and plan. As funding programs are tied to plan development, there will likely be more emphasis on coordination between HMPs and local comprehensive land use plans, economic development plans, and transportation programs. As state and federal governments want to see local HMPs reviewed and updated regularly, it is possible that agencies may require documentation in order to track implementation efforts after the plan is adopted. Residents will also likely take a more pronounced role in how their local governments plan and prepare for disasters. Finally, as local governments seek funding sources for their mitigation projects, the importance of having an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan will quickly become evident as disaster programs require the existence of a plan in order to receive funds.

While many of our post-disaster efforts have focused on providing financial assistance, COGs have continued to stay true to their longstanding planning roots and their role of regional facilitators through their involvement in hazard mitigation planning. We expect COGs will continue to fill that role in the future.

Businesses recognize importance of disaster preparedness

Barry Branson has made assisting small businesses with disaster preparedness his niche after going to work as a disaster recovery coordinator for Region XII Council of Governments in May of 2009. The Region XII area did not sustain the level of devastation experienced in eastern Iowa in 2008. However, the disasters prompted Branson to make local disaster preparedness, recovery, and continuity for small businesses his mission.

With disaster preparedness as his main focus, Branson took information from various web sites. Agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division were very helpful. He also drew on his own experience and education to create a

template for a disaster preparedness, recovery and continuity plan that could be easily adapted to any small business. Branson began visiting with businesses, business organizations, chambers of commerce, mayors and other city officials, insurance agencies, and banks to get the word out about the disaster preparedness template and his availability to work one-on-one with businesses. He has worked directly with numerous businesses to assist them in creating their own disaster plans based on the template.

Terry Axman, a co-owner of Mid-Iowa Insurance and Real Estate in Carroll, has found the planning helpful. "Barry has a very good outlined template for us to go through. Every business is different, but this template gave us a way to start an action plan for our own office." Branson also helped Axman think of specific disaster-related concerns that might have otherwise been overlooked, such as making sure more than one employee knows how to turn off the gas, water and electric utilities when a disaster strikes. Another related item was to encourage that all employees file important papers and documents at the end of the day. Placing these items in a locked file cabinet could save major problems if a disaster were to happen after regular office hours.

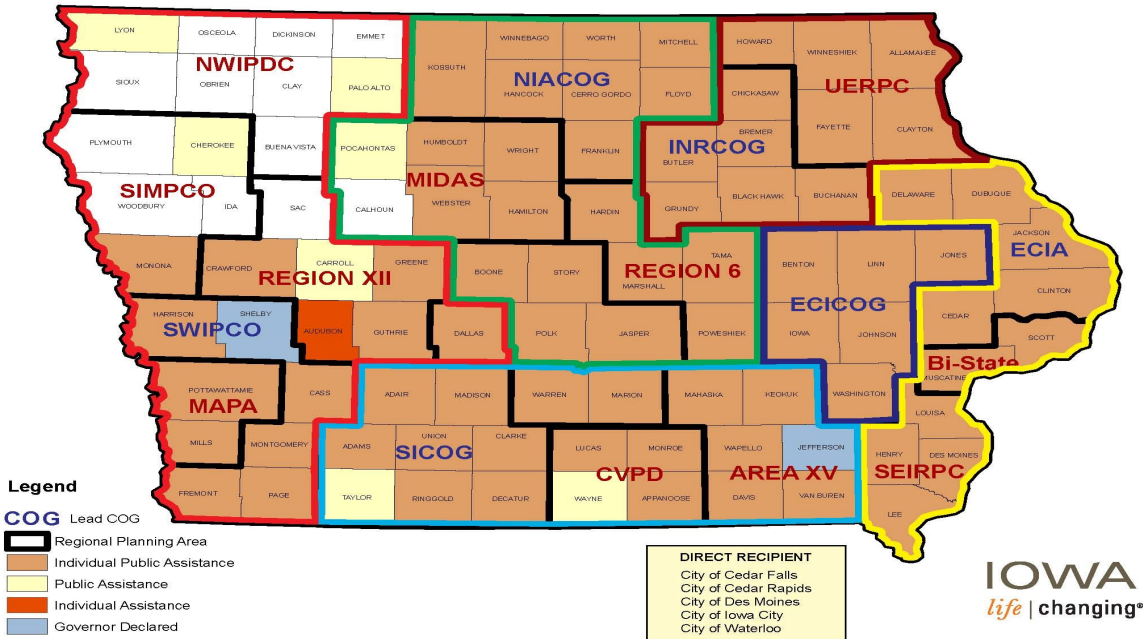
In addition to providing the disaster preparedness template to various businesses and business-related organizations, Branson has shared his booklet with his counterparts at other COGs. Other coordinators have used these plans to assist businesses in their regions. Barry and Region XII were awarded a 2010 NADO Innovation Award. His project: "Writing Business Disaster, Preparedness, Recovery, and Continuity Plans", was chosen as one of fifty such award winners nationwide. Statistics show that after a disaster, 40% of all businesses do not reopen. Of that 60% who do reopen, 25% will close within 2 years. Education, preparation, and efforts such as Region XII's are key to countering those statistics.

"Every business is different, but this template gave us a way to start an action plan for our own office."



Rick Hunsaker, Executive Director at Region XII, receives an Innovation Award at the 2010 NADO conference for the agency's business disaster preparedness plan.

Disaster Recovery Areas and Direct Recipient Cities (Housing)



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www.area15rpc.com

Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
 2222 Cuming
 Omaha, NE 68012
 Phone (402) 444-6866
www.mapacog.org

Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council
 1122 Pierce Street
 PO Box 1077
 Sioux City, IA 51105
 Phone (712) 279-6286
www.simpco.org

Bi-State Regional Commission
 1504 Third Ave., PO Box 3368
 Rock Island, IL 61204-3368
 Phone (309) 793-6300
www.bistateonline.org

MIDAS Council of Governments
 602 First Ave. South
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 Phone (515) 576-7183
www.midascog.org

Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission
 200 Front St., Suite 400, PO Box 397
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Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission
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 Postville, IA 52162
 Phone (563) 864-7551
www.uerpc.org

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Iowa Smart Planning update

After the disasters of 2008, many elected officials, state and federal agencies, and those working in the disaster recovery field discussed how to help Iowa plan for future disasters, in an effort to minimize damages from future events. Senate file 2389, passed last year by the Iowa Legislature, implemented a series of planning principles for local governments to consider as they prepared comprehensive plans for their communities.

This bill also created the Iowa Smart Planning Task Force. The task force is charged with developing goals and recommendations regarding planning efforts at the state, regional and local levels. The task force consists of thirty-three members, and includes legislators, state and local officials, and representatives from a variety of organizations and associations.

Representing Iowa's regional planning organizations, IARC has been very involved in the work of the Smart Planning Task Force. IARC Chairman Rick Hunsaker represents IARC on the task force, and served as a co-chair to a task force workgroup focused on developing a statewide model for regional planning.

The Iowa Smart Planning Task Force must submit a report outlining its recommendation to the Governor and Iowa Legislature by November 15, 2010. Draft recommendations can be found at the Iowa Smart Planning website, located at http://www.rio.iowa.gov/smart_planning/index.html.

