

Jan. 5, 2021

Media contact: Jeff Morgan, jeff.morgan@iowa.gov

Photos are [available online](#).

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs awards \$1.25 million in community placemaking grants

DES MOINES – Nine communities across Iowa were awarded a share of \$1.25 million in creative placemaking grants to build projects and strengthen communities, the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs announced today.

The funding comes from two creative placemaking programs – Iowa Great Places and Strengthening Communities– which are made possible by the Iowa Legislature’s Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund.

Through the [Iowa Great Places](#) program, the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs recognizes communities that have developed bold visions for the future and formed the plans, partnerships and projects to make those visions a reality.

“These programs help Iowans re-energize their communities, making them more attractive to businesses, families and young professionals who are choosing where to set up shop or settle down to live, work and play,” Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs Director Chris Kramer said. “We appreciate the Iowa Legislature’s ongoing support for these proven strategies to help Iowans boost quality of life and stimulate economic growth.”

With the commitment of the Iowa Legislature, the State of Iowa has invested nearly \$21 million in a total of 44 designated Iowa Great Places over the past 15 years, leveraging millions more in local and private investment.

Rural areas face unique demographic opportunities and economic challenges. Iowa’s fast-growing rural counties, in particular, benefit from strategic programs that will guide their growth and development while improving communities and creating more culturally vibrant places to live, develop our workforce and raise our families.

Creative placemaking combines arts and creativity with community development. Recognizing communities who build upon their unique sense of place, the DCA works with leaders who have developed a vision for the future to enhance cultural vitality and quality of life with infrastructure investments including cultural centers and creative streetscaping that are connected to recreation, entertainment and creative public spaces.

Four designated Iowa Great Places were eligible for, and awarded, grants in the current funding round:

Grant Recipient: City of Grinnell

Project: Grinnell Veterans Memorial Building Campaign - Prairie Star Veteran Artist Residency

Description: This project will transform the Grinnell Veterans Memorial Building into an artist residency program and an updated memorial to veterans. The artist residency program will complement community arts programming and act as an anchor for the existing arts corridor that runs north from the building along Broad Street between 3rd and 4th Avenue. This arts corridor includes the Grinnell Area Arts Council (GAAC) which is home to an after school arts program, performance and gallery space on one side of Broad and the STEW Makerspace which houses art studios and maker space labs.

Grant Amount: \$300,000

Grant Recipient: Mason City

Project: The Willow Creek Riverwalk

Description: A key element of Mason City's "River City Renaissance" vision, the Willow Creek Riverwalk will promote current and future downtown revitalization efforts to highlight the natural gateway and create a public space that connects residents and visitors to the expanding amenities downtown. The project will include a prominent "hearth" gathering location, a new pathway through the mall parking lot, new Sculptures on Parade artwork and trail improvements

Grant Award: \$150,000

Grant Recipient: Sioux City

Project: Sioux City Downtown Riverfront Vision Plan

Description: As one of the top priorities of the Sioux City Downtown Riverfront Vision Plan, the Chris Larsen Park Redevelopment Project has been designed to enhance an area along the Sioux City riverfront that was the site of the former location of a riverboat casino. The project will be constructed in two phases with the goal of providing the community with a natural recreational attraction and destination that will offer open active and passive spaces, connect with the Missouri River, and offer spaces for events and community gatherings.

Grant Amount: \$400,000

Grant Recipient: Grow Cedar Valley (Waterloo-Cedar Falls)

Project: Building a Connection to the Rivers

Project Description: This project will enhance the gateway of the Cedar River Water Trail between Gateway Park in downtown Cedar Falls and the Waterloo Marina site in downtown Waterloo. The project ties directly to the Cedar Valley Visioning Plan and will have a transformative impact on the downtown business districts in both communities by creating new public spaces and recreational opportunities in and along the Cedar River, which is on track to become a state-designated water trail in 2021.

Grant Amount: \$150,000

Meanwhile, [Strengthening Communities Grants](#) provide support for organizations that strengthen communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The

grants help cover costs associated with the renovation and maintenance of facility infrastructure at facilities in cities with fewer than 28,000 residents. Today's grant recipients are:

Grant Recipient: Nishna Valley YMCA (Atlantic)

Project: Racquetball Court Renovation

Project Description: This project will transform underutilized areas of the building into useful program space that would fulfill two community needs: childcare space and expansion of its Healthy Living area, which helps current and future members live healthier and more productive lives.

Grant Amount: \$33,000

Grant Recipient: YMCA of the Cedar Rapids Metropolitan Area/YMCA Camp Wapsie (Coggon)

Project: A Staff Cabin to Meet the Growing Demand of Additional Campers at Camp Wapsie

Project Description: Founded in 1918, Camp Wapsie is the American Camp Association (ACA) accredited camp of the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City areas. This project will support the construction of a new staff cabin that will allow the camp director to live on site, be more available to address onsite needs and more effectively supervise campers and staff.

Grant Amount: \$33,000

Grant Recipient: Rathbun Lake YMCA (Centerville)

Project: Natatorium Dehumidification, Heating and Cooling System

Project Description: This project will install a new dehumidification, heating and cooling system in the natatorium, which houses a sauna, whirlpool and a five-lane heated pool. The current system stopped working years ago, and excess humidity and temperature issues create problems in the pool area and throughout the building. Currently the only heat in the natatorium comes from the heated pool water, which is an inefficient and often ineffective way to heat the area.

Grant Amount: \$84,500

Grant Recipient: YMCA Camp/YMCA of Greater Des Moines (Boone)

Project: YMCA Camp Renovation Projects

Project Description: Y Camp has been a staple of outdoor recreational and learning opportunities since 1919, serving youth and families throughout Iowa by offering camp and outdoor educational opportunities. This project will replace dilapidated doors on nine cabins, the Pioneer Lodge handicap accessible door and two Chase Lodge double doors. It will also mitigate water damage at the Keck Memorial Cabin and Thornton Lodge and renovate the dining hall, which has remained largely unchanged since 1950.

Grant Amount: \$71,500

Grant Recipient: Bedell Family YMCA (Spirit Lake)

Project: Camp Foster Cabin Stabilization Project

Project Description: Established in 1912, Camp Foster YMCA is the longest standing camp in Iowa and serves more than 5,000 youths from all over the world each summer. This project will

provide major maintenance to extend the life of 29 cabins and increase the quality of programming for more than 5,000 youths from around the world who attend the camp each summer.

Grant Amount: \$28,000

The Iowa Great Places and Strengthening Communities Grant programs are administered by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. More information is available at iowaculture.gov.

###

*The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs and its three divisions – the Iowa Arts Council, the State Historical Society of Iowa, and Produce Iowa, the state office of media production – empower Iowa to build and sustain culturally vibrant communities by connecting Iowans to the people, places and points of pride that define our state. **iowaculture.gov***