

may 2025

# ecia spotlight



## Rickardsville Community Visioning



# ECIA Gets New Executive Director

The ECIA Council appointed Mae Hingtgen as the new Executive Director at the April 8, 2025, special ECIA Council meeting.

Mae is a familiar face in the Dubuque area and has spent her entire career working in the public sector with county governments and educational institutions. These roles have allowed her to gain experience collaborating with government officials, leading teams to successful outcomes while staying within budget guidelines. She most recently served as the Chief Executive Officer of the Mental Health/Disability Services of the East Central Region (a nine-county region) where she managed a \$25 million budget and over 30 employees.

When not working, Mae is a wife, mother, yogi, and avid Cyclone fan. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Master of Family and Consumer Science – Youth Development from Iowa State University.

Mae is excited to work with the ECIA team to continue leading the agency's initiatives for empowering eastern Iowa communities and enhancing the quality of life in the region. If you happen to be at our office, you will begin to see her around and in meetings as she transitions into the Executive Director role which will begin on June 5, 2025.



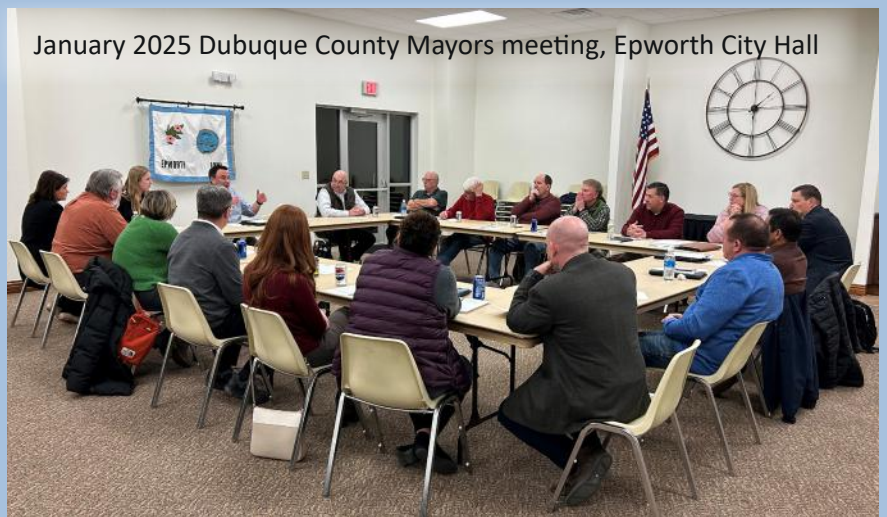
## Calling All Mayors!

ECIA coordinates regular meetings for mayors in each county within our region to encourage idea sharing and networking. For example, the Dubuque County Mayors gather quarterly to support each other in their struggles, celebrate successes, tackle legislative topics, learn about project and funding opportunities, and to enjoy each other's company. County Supervisors, staff, and special guests, including representatives from the State, frequently attend the meetings to participate in the open dialogue. Experts are often brought in to present specific topics that are critical to the success of the small rural governments the mayors represent.

In all the counties, cities take turns hosting the meetings and selecting local restaurants to serve dinner at the beginning of every meeting. The April 2025 meeting was held at the new library in Cascade, and Mayor Steve Knepper showed off his baking skills by bringing his homemade cookies and carrot cake for dessert. The regular gatherings have allowed the group of leaders to form an ever-growing comradery.

The next Mayors meetings are:

- Dubuque County: July 17, Holy Cross
- Cedar County: October 23, Tipton
- Clinton County: October (TBD)
- Delaware County: (TBD)
- Jackson County: Sept. 24, St. Donatus



Please email Tricia Wagner at [twagner@ecia.org](mailto:twagner@ecia.org) if you have any questions.



# ECIA and Clinton Demonstrate Partnering

**Clinton's Historic YMCA to Become Housing Units.** EPA recently announced \$267,000,000 in Brownfields funding awards, with ECIA and the City of Clinton among those selected. ECIA received \$1,500,000 in Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Supplemental funds and the City received a \$1,091,917 Cleanup Grant for the former YMCA property to complete a Regulated Asbestos-Containing Material (RACM) demolition of the multiple additions that were constructed over time.

Earlier this year the City facilitated deconstruction of the addition connected to the original historic building as the project's first phase, financed in part by the City and by a loan from ECIA's Brownfields RLF. The second phase will abate the asbestos in the original historic building which will be financed through ECIA's Brownfields RLF, and the final phase will be the RACM demolition of the remaining additions that include a gymnasium, two pools and an indoor track. The EPA Cleanup Grant will be utilized for the final phase.

The YMCA site has been divided into separate parcels and once the abatement is completed on the original historic building, that parcel will be transferred to a developer. The end use for the remainder of the property after demolition will likely be either housing or mixed-use commercial and housing. The phased approach to abatement, demolition, and redevelopment shows a clear path for transforming the site while being mindful of the historic building.

ECIA's Brownfields Coordinator, Dawn Danielson said, "The EPA's investment in brownfields revitalization is such a vital piece in turning underutilized or contaminated properties into community assets."

**Progress at 1000 Block of 4th Street.** The former Brownfield site at South 4th Street in Clinton is nearing the end of its transformation. Over two years ago, the City partnered with the DNR, EPA, and ECIA to have the abandoned, vacant and dilapidated row of buildings assessed and cleaned up, then sold three of the parcels to BTS Development LLC to build four new townhomes.

The townhomes will be available this summer and will range in price between \$250,000 and \$275,000. All the homes include a 2-car-attached garage, 3 bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms.

ECIA provided technical and funding assistance to the City through ECIA's Brownfield Program.

"The City was honored to receive EPA and IDNR funding for the 1000 Block of South 4th St project. These grants, along with ECIA Brownfield Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs), were critical in the environmental cleanup. It allowed for the safe removal of five multi-story, nuisance, and vacant buildings visible to all traveling to and from our historic Clinton Downtown. This project provides future economic growth and will completely transform the entrance and exit to our downtown." - Matt Brooke, Clinton City Administrator.

To learn more about ECIA's Brownfield program and the Clinton Brownfield projects process, watch this short video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=-AKRICSbhSc>.

Energy efficient items used in the townhomes: LED light fixtures; Energy efficient Pella windows; Spray foam insulation in areas; High efficiency electric furnaces; and, High efficiency water heaters

Original historic Y building post-separation



*ECIA's \$1.5M Supplemental RLF funds will replenish ECIA's Brownfield RLF. Previously ECIA received a total of \$4,960,000 in RLF, which was fully committed through completed cleanups on three properties and two additional projects underway. The additional \$1.5M will enable ECIA to assist with even more projects across the region. For additional information on the RLF program click this link [https://ecia.org/brownfields/revolving\\_loan\\_fund.php](https://ecia.org/brownfields/revolving_loan_fund.php).*

South 4th Street after cleanup and new construction





# Rickardsville Community Vis



ECIA's Amanda Dupont (top right, by flip chart) asks residents, "Why Rickardsville?" in the community's park pavilion where they are hoping to enclose it some day. Dupont is Rickardsville's KIB HP Coach and facilitated the two-day event.

On a chilly spring Saturday morning, Rickardsville area community members gathered to answer one question; "Why Rickardsville?" The community's Keep Iowa Beautiful (KIB) Hometown Pride (HP) committee held a visioning session, spearheaded by their ECIA HP Coach. The committee was curious about why people chose to live in Rickardsville, and what type of projects residents would find valuable and be willing to support. The two-day event held in the park began on Saturday, April 5th with a roundtable forum for an interactive conversation around "Why Rickardsville?" and idea sharing for future projects.

The next day on Sunday, the committee hosted a follow-up open house in the park and shared the comprehensive projects list the community had compiled and people ranked their top three choices. All ages attended the two-day event including 100% of council members and 4-H members, representing the interests of youth in the community.



# visioning Rickardsville

- Small community ✓✓✓✓✓
- Family Roots ✓✓✓✓✓
- Family community ✓✓✓✓✓
- Close to big community ✓✓✓
- School District ✓✓
- Kid activities ✓✓
- Sense of community ✓✓✓✓✓
- Location
- Slower pace - Calm
- Town + County feel
- Everyone knows each other
- Safe for kids

What made you choose  
Small town Iowa to call home?

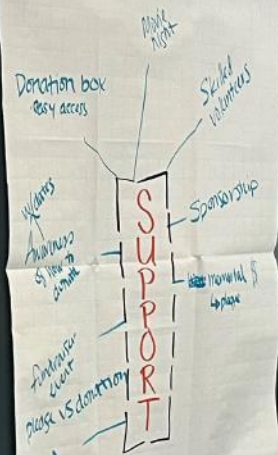
- ✓ Close to larger town
- ✓✓ School district
- ✓✓ quiet
- ✓✓ make impact in a small town community
- ✓✓ friendly community

## IDEA GENERATOR

- Welcome + Wayfinding Signs
- Park Pavilion updates
- Vet memorial
- Ball diamond improve - parking
- Park Equip (Variety of ages)
- Memorial wall
- Work out stations on trail
- Improve trail from ball field
- Paved road to park
- Maint. to current park equip
- City exp
- Gas Station w/ food
- Multi use court - by other pavilion
- Mountain bike trail
- Increase park parking

Projects for Rickardsville

- \*Add to our list and pick your top 3 \*
- Welcome + Wayfinding Signs
  - Park Pavilion updates
  - Veteran Memorial
  - Ball diamond updates - parking
  - Memorial Wall
  - Workout Stations on trail
  - Improve trail from park to field
  - Paved road to park
  - City Expansion - housing
  - Gas Station w/ food
  - Multi use court
  - Mountain Bike trail
  - Increase park parking
  - Playground Equip - variety for all ages; maintenance
  - Railing on walk way to park
  - Walking trail



What activities can be done to support Community Projects? What are your ideas?

- ✓ Food sale/bake sale with more nights
- ✓ Farmers market at the park
- ✓ more fruit sales
- ✓ Ice Cream Social - Binge?
- ✓ Car Show/Donations for

Following the event, an online survey was conducted to capture feedback from those who couldn't attend the weekend visioning session. Between the two-day event, and the online survey, nearly 30% of Rickardsville residents responded. Of the 18 project ideas that were generated, updates to their park pavilion was ranked number one. And the number one reason for "Why Rickardsville?" was 'Sense of Community.'

Mayor Dave Ernzen shared, "We have a great list of project ideas to go from and some priorities from the community. Community input is valuable, and I appreciate everyone who took time to share their thoughts. I'm happy that our 'sense of community' rose to the top for reasons to live in Rickardsville."



# ECIA Hosts Revamped Regional Clerks Meeting

Did you know that ECIA hosts a bi-annual city clerks meeting, filled with a partial day of free training and networking? This meeting, East Central Iowa Clerks Association (ECICA), held in Spring and Fall, has been happening for decades.

At this spring's meeting, the clerks even voted on a new name, and the winner was.....ClerkConnect.

City clerks who attend in person, can receive coveted IMFOA credits, if they are certified or working toward certification.

The meeting is typically hosted at ECIA, and begins between 8:00 and 8:30, but in an effort to mix things up a bit, the spring meeting was held May 15th at Innovate 120, in downtown Maquoketa. Why Maquoketa? Because it's smack dab in the middle of ECIA's five-county region. Nineteen clerks gathered between 10:00am and 3:30pm to learn about or participate in: Artificial Intelligence Basics for Government AND Mobile Device Security; City Council Orientation Packet Interactive Session; Mobile Food Vendors. How to regulate.... and Dos and Don'ts; Record Storage Best Practices and How to go Paperless; and Legislative Updates.

If you have any ideas about topics for future ClerkConnect meetings, email Marla Quinn, ECIA Grants and Municipal Coordinator at [mquinn@ecia.org](mailto:mquinn@ecia.org).



Top, l-r: Tracey Lee, Preston; Sally Hinrichsen, Moticello; Denise Schneider (Speaker), McGregor; Marla Quinn, ECIA; Erin Learn, Delaware/Manchester; Middle: Jan Ketelsen & Jami Ledding, Maquoketa; Adrienne Breitfelder, Dubuque; Shelby Hagan (Speaker), Bondurant; Jean McPerson, Olin; Bottom: Chris Budde, Andrew, Charlotte, Delmar; Teresa Weinschenk, Bellevue (seated); Kelley Brown, JCEA; Sheryl Ganzer, Preston; Jessi Kennedy, Epworth; Marcie Winkelman, Peosta; Korissa Tuegel, Farley; Lindsey Keller, Durango.

# CLERKConnect

# Tips for Addressing Problem Downtown Properties

The appearance, use, and safety of downtown districts impact community image, property values, future investments and ultimately, the long-term vitality of communities. A downtown cannot reach its full potential and thrive as a center for living, working, and entertainment if nuisance buildings, improperly maintained lots, and poor building uses are the focal point.

Community leaders must identify challenges and develop ideas, programs, and procedures to improve those problem properties.

**WHAT TO DO FIRST** - Take an organized walk of your downtown district; Take notes and pictures. Ask yourself, what would a visitor think; Identify red flags and then work to develop ideas, programs, and procedures to address issues; Publicly recognize property owners who take pride in their properties with news stories, pictures, awards, building of the month, and other creative ideas; Communicate with downtown property owners on a regular basis, keeping them up to date on what is happening in the district and possible programs to help them with property upkeep; Organize volunteer efforts to do painting, public art, window washing and displays, obsolete sign removal, murals, and flower plantings that your downtown property owners could take advantage of.

## **INCENTIVES** -

- Develop local incentive programs to leverage state and federal grants. Low interest loan programs and grant programs can leverage funding for downtown buildings. Targeted grant programs for the removal of building slipcovers, uncovering windows and sign improvements have been successful statewide.
- Consider state and federal grant programs. For example, IEDA's Community Catalyst Building Remediation program has helped rehabilitate many underutilized and problem buildings. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Derelict Building Grant is also a good source of funding for nuisance properties.
- Create a local investor group to acquire, rehab, and operate downtown properties.

**ENFORCEMENT** - Develop ordinances and policies to deal with properties. Ideas could include:

- Minimum maintenance ordinance to preserve the structural integrity of your downtown buildings and to assure a clean, safe, and attractive downtown.
- Vacant building ordinance to address current or future vacant buildings that are dilapidated, unsafe, or inadequately maintained.
- Develop a vacant building definition and registry process. Example: Owners would have a deadline to fill out a form from the date the building becomes vacant. If the building is vacant after 6 months, an inspection will be made and a fee charged. Inappropriate uses such as storage will not be considered "occupancy."
- Work with your attorney to utilize Iowa Code, Chapter 657A to address Abandoned or Unsafe Buildings.
- Visit the Downtown Resource Center website for local city ordinance examples.
- Act - and be consistent! Enact the new ideas, programs, and procedures to see change and success for your downtown. It may be difficult to follow through on new procedures due to personal relationships but consistency in enforcement is critical to the success of your downtown.

**LEARN MORE** - Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Downtown Resource Center (IDRC) can help connect communities with resources, visit [iowaeda.com/downtown-resource-center](http://iowaeda.com/downtown-resource-center) or contact IDRC at [downtown@iowaeda.com](mailto:downtown@iowaeda.com).

**REGIONAL ASSISTANCE** - Involve your region's Council of Governments (COG) for guidance in determining your community's next steps. Contact Marla Quinn, Grants and Municipal Coordinator with ECIA at 563-690-5703 to get started.

(The information in this article was taken from a flyer originally published on [www.opportunityiowa.gov](http://www.opportunityiowa.gov))

**Cedar County, Iowa Great Places Site Visit, 2018, downtown Tipton**



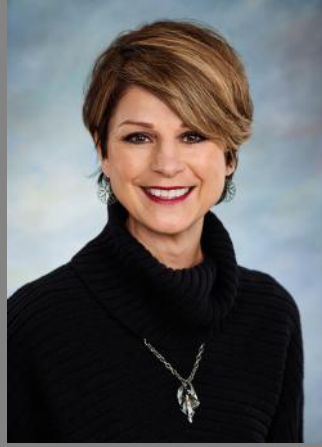


# ECIA Anniversaries in April and May

Congratulations to these staff who recently celebrated work anniversaries. Your dedication and hard work in and for the ECIA region are truly appreciated. 173 combined years of service!



Michelle Schnier  
38 years



Marla Quinn  
23 years



Gail Kuhle  
21 years



Mindy Wiley  
20 years



Leonard O'Connell  
19 years



Stacie Scott  
16 years



Christine Mergen  
16 years



Dylan Michels  
8 years



Shelby Eipperle  
6 years



Dan LoBianco  
3 years



Kyle Finke  
3 years