

# PRIORITY ACTIVITIES PROGRESS REPORT

*FEBRUARY 2021*

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Capital Crossroads is a **bold but achievable vision** pushing Central Iowans to dream big, not settle for good enough, think long term and work together.

## BUSINESS CAPITAL

*Kathryn Kunert, Rick Sanders, Geoff Wood and Brian Crowe*

Central Iowa will remain a regional leader in economic growth.

### HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS

#### ISU Research Park

ISU Research Park has capitalized on many companies' corporate stay at home mandates to streamline operations and implement efficiencies that we believe will impact ISU's business for years to come. We have implemented operational and business development software, sent RFPs for nearly every aspect of capital maintenance, and initiated multiple partnerships across both the community and campus to help ensure future growth. In addition, we have upgraded many of the common spaces in multi-tenant buildings during this time, as the need for little to no traffic during construction has helped expedite these projects.

While the close rate for leases was down from March through December 2020, there were leases of over 25,000 added. ISU has found that activity has remained high and remains optimistic headed into 2021. With the early signing of some new leases and expansions, ISU Research Park is poised for growth the remainder of 2021.

#### The Greater Des Moines Partnership

- **Claim DOC Expansion Project:** Claim DOC, LLC services self-funded health benefit plans for employers located throughout the country. Claim DOC is renovating an existing facility into office space in West Des Moines. This space will house its 54 existing employees and allow the company to double its workforce.
- **Electrical Power Products (EP2) Expansion Project:** EP2 provides complete power management systems for commercial and utility industries in their Des Moines facility. The company is expanding their manufacturing capacity with a 65,000-square-foot addition which will add 4 – 6 new jobs.
- **Mrs. Clarks Expansion Project:** Mrs. Clarks is a 90-year-old beverage, sauce, dressing and condiment manufacturer in Ankeny. The company is expanding their warehouse capacity and capability with a 61,000-square-foot expansion while creating 10 – 15 new jobs.

#### Entrepreneurial Community

- [Next Level Ventures announced a new fund](#) (Des Moines)
- [Gross-Wen Technologies received a \\$2MM grant from the US Department of Energy](#) (Slater)
- [ISU announced a new "Innovation & Entrepreneurship Academy" in the Liberal Arts & Sciences College](#) (Ames)
- [Startup Factory at ISU hired Peter Hong as its new director](#) (Ames)
- [Techstars Iowa graduated its first cohort](#) (Des Moines)
- [Techstars Iowa is now taking submittals for its second cohort, moved up from Fall to Summer for 2021](#) (Des Moines)
- [Global Insurance Accelerator announced a new virtual cohort](#) (Des Moines)
- [The Iowa Agritech Accelerator announced it was dissolving](#) (Des Moines)
- [Bioconnect Iowa, Startup Factory and VentureNet Iowa are taking submittals for a new "Go To Market Accelerator"](#) (Ames)
- [AgStartupEngine raised a \\$2.25MM second fund to invest in early stage ag technology companies](#) (Ames)

## **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- For the ISU Research Park, it is not ideal being in commercial real estate when the product you are selling (Iowa State University) is in a remote work model, and most of the tenant employees have been mandated to work from home for much of 2020. That said, ISU Research Park focused as an organization on what could be controlled during this time. Individuals continued to come to work each day with an eye on creating efficiencies and change that could not have been had otherwise because the ISU Research Park operation runs so lean.

## **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- ISU Research Park maintains partnerships with multiple organizations across the Iowa State campus and with the Ames Economic Development Commission/Ames Chamber. ISU collaborates with each of these groups frequently on both customer facing events, but also on working through steps to make our programs better. One specific example we are working towards on the ISURP campus is with Iowa State's Science Bound students; creating a hub location at ISURP for internship experiences for those students, who need internships in their respective STEM fields, but also represent groups that our tenants are seeking. We see this partnership as win-win and also a way to alleviate some of the transportation issues that might arise for students trying to get to and from a remote work location.

## **NEWS & EVENTS**

- ISU Research Park will begin hosting a series of technical workshops aligned with the work Iowa State University's Chief Technology Officers are doing. The series debuts in May and will focus on three platform areas, starting with Vaccines and Immunotherapeutics. We are hopeful that after our collaboration with Dr. Roof on the first event, that we can roll right into those in the other platforms. These will be free and a great opportunity for both businesses and researchers to showcase ways they might work together.
- [Gravitate Coworking opened its first rural location in Jefferson and acquired a coworking location in Cedar Falls "Mill Race Coworking by Gravitate"](#)
- [Clay & Milk completed the inaugural Startup Iowa Awards with several winners in central Iowa](#)
- [Clay & Milk compiled statistics on total venture investment in Iowa in 2020 \(total tracked investment tripled over 2019, average individual deals were bigger\)](#)
- [Iowa Innovation Corp. has rebranded as Bioconnect Iowa and changed focus to bioscience](#)

## **COLLABORATION**

- ISU Research Park actively partners with the Ames Economic Development Commission and Ames Chamber both for workforce development and for business development. It only makes sense as they represent Story/Boone Counties that we are all aligned in our messaging and approach. We have multiple partnerships across campus that makes the work we do possible, with nearly every college, our VPR office, our other Economic Development partners and our Foundation. We very much operate and live by the belief that a rising tide floats all boats, and we are better together.

## CAPITAL CORE

*Colleen Wittmack, Everett Miles and Scott Sanders*

The urban core of Central Iowa will continue to enhance its role as the region's principal activity, hospitality, and employment hub and benefit from safe, dynamic, desirable and affordable neighborhoods.

### **HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS**

#### **City of Des Moines**

- The City has allocated more than \$8.7 million in federal funds to housing assistance programs in response to the pandemic, including programs that address utility payments, homelessness, eviction prevention, rental assistance, and mortgage assistance.
- The City has allocated another \$5.1 million to programs for food assistance, small business recovery, mental health, and childcare.
- Federal funding sources include Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV), and the US Department of Treasury.
- Housing programs funded by the City were administered by nonprofit partners including IMPACT Community Action Agency, HOME, Inc., and homelessness agencies such as Primary Health Care, CISS, Anawim, and Children and Families of Iowa.
- In late February, IMPACT's web site will open up to accept more applications for emergency rental assistance, which is a program being funded by the City of Des Moines and Polk County's allocations from the US Treasury.
- As of 12/31/2020, the following numbers have been assisted with the federal funding sources:
  - More than 800 households have received housing assistance;
  - More than 50,000 individuals accessed emergency food distribution; and
  - 33 small businesses were assisted with federal funds, which was one component of the City's Small Business Recovery program that assisted 142 businesses total.

#### **Krause+ and the City of Des Moines**

- Krause+ with the City of Des Moines and GDMP has been advancing plans for redeveloping the former DICO site into a USL soccer stadium, playing fields, and mixed use district. The City will be making an application requesting an allocation of \$27M from the State late this month on behalf of Krause for funding through the Iowa Reinvestment Act to support Prolowa's efforts to build the soccer stadium. In addition to the soccer district, Krause+ is proposing significant mixed-use redevelopment in the Gateway area on real estate they assembled while implementing their office building. The total investment for both areas is approximately \$750M over 10-15 years.
- The City of Des Moines launched the Dine Out Des Moines Delivery Assistance program in January to assist local restaurants as they continue to navigate COVID-19 challenges through the traditionally challenging winter months. The program aims to safely promote business activity for local restaurants. \$300,000 of local funding is directed for reimbursement of restaurants' costs of delivery-related supplies in December 2020-March 2021, up to \$7500/restaurant.

## **Great DSM Hot Air Balloon Hunt**

DSM residents found a fun surprise in Downtown DSM during two weekends in January and February. The Great DSM Hot Air Balloon Hunt took place Friday, Jan. 22. Glowing hot air balloons were stationed throughout different business and retail districts from 6 – 7:30 p.m.

## **Operation Downtown**

Opening Brenton Skating Plaza this season was well received by the community. The space hosted over 15k skaters for the shortened season, utilized a new scheduling system, developed a new layout and flow of space, and implemented multiple COVID safety measures.

2020 was challenging for the Operation Downtown ambassador team in more ways than COVID. In addition to increased disinfecting efforts on frequently touched surfaces, ambassadors conducted several large-scale clean-up efforts including Caucus posters and materials, protest litter, vandalism, graffiti and encampments.

## **Invest DSM**

Invest DSM continues to see strong interest in their programs, with approximately 100 homeowners working their way through our Homeowner Renovation Program process. In addition, Iowa State Bank has developed a loan program to pair with Invest DSM grants and created a \$2 million loan pool for this year. There has also been additional developer interest in commercial projects in the Oak Park / Highland Park Special Investment District. An annual report recapping 2020 activity will be available soon at [www.InvestDSM.org](http://www.InvestDSM.org).

## **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- COVID impacts, including many businesses with employees working remotely, curtailed business and recreational travel, and cancelled events straining downtown restaurants, hotels, retailers, arts, culture and entertainment venues.
- The pandemic has made it difficult to build relationships and trust with neighborhood residents.
- Construction costs have increased significantly, and there have been materials delays. This is making work that is already expensive even more so for the Invest DSM projects.
- The City of Des Moines and Capital Core continue to experience ongoing challenges related to the pandemic. From a significantly reduced workforce population in downtown to curtailed events and entertainment activities to reduced business travel have severely impacted downtown restaurants, hotels, and retail. Downtown cultural, sports and entertainment venues are experiencing significantly reduced business, if not shuttered entirely. Property assessments for hotels and restaurants are being reduced by 30%, which will have a significant impact on City revenues into the future.

## **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- Equity and inclusion efforts have been consistently underway in the Capital Core. There are ongoing negotiations for workforce and affordable housing in downtown Des Moines.
- There has been a broad range of outreach to get Dine Out Des Moines Delivery Assistance program information out to diverse restaurants.

- Capital Crossroads hosted a series of roundtables to discuss the Prolowa soccer stadium with outreach/invitations extended to participants with a range of interests, backgrounds, and perspectives represented in our community. The 4 Equity tool was utilized in the planning process.

### **NEWS & EVENTS**

- The DSM Book Festival will make a return in 2021. The Festival will span four Saturdays: March 27, April 3, April 10, and April 17 and will feature nationally acclaimed authors, hands-on learning activities, writers' workshops, children's activities and more. See [more here](#).

### **COLLABORATION**

- Collaboration continues with the Physical Capital on workforce housing and action items from the 2019 study.
- Ongoing collaborations continue between the City of Des Moines, Downtown businesses, Polk County, and Operation Downtown.

## **CULTIVATION CORRIDOR**

*Billi Hunt*

Central Iowa will become the global center for agricultural technology and associated employment.

### **HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS**

- Cultivation Corridor is currently accepting applications and building out curriculum for the first Cultivo Cohort.
- Cultivation Corridor is hosting their 2nd "Insight to Innovation" program, featuring REG, Ruan and Washington DC public works highlight how agriculturally based products can help organizations achieve their sustainability goals faster.
- Cultivation Corridor continues to connect businesses to Iowa's Food and Ag leaderships. New technologies from around the world are connecting with our startups and existing businesses.

### **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- Cultivation Corridor continues to focus on elevating innovators and our corporate innovations. We are working to better understand how to engage media in opportunities to share our leadership stories.

### **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- A top opportunity for equity & inclusion within Cultivation Corridor is to identify stories that show diversity.

### **NEWS & EVENTS**

- The first cohort will be announced mid-March with additional news around Cultivo in the 2nd quarter.
- [Insight to Innovation - February 25<sup>th</sup>](#)

## COLLABORATION

- Natural environment and the Natural Capital – collaborating with the Central Iowa Water Trails project and how agriculture can support it; working to help make connections on both sides
- Collaborating with broadband work and the Empower Rural Iowa Council
- Engagement with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Iowa Economic Development Authority Agriculture
- ISU Administration, Faculty and Staff
- Cultivation Corridor Investors
- Iowa Agricultural Startup Business

## CULTURAL CAPITAL

*Sally Dix, Greg Edwards and Myrna Johnson*

Recommendations emerging from the Regional Cultural Assessment will be effectively implemented to maximize the role of arts and culture as vital contributors to Greater Des Moines' quality of life and economy.

## HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS

### **Catch Des Moines**

- Now that we have finally turned the page on 2020, events are back in the metro. Des Moines has successfully hosted several large-scale events, and pent-up demand is resulting in a lot of RFPs for our destination, especially in the latter half of 2021.
- Catch Des Moines recently launched a landing page and digital campaign for "Des Best" of Des Moines. The page features blog content curating the "best of" categories as nominated by our social media following, such as Best BBQ or Best Pizza in Greater Des Moines. It also features the Des Best video series, highlighting iconic things in Greater Des Moines, such as the Pappajohn Sculpture Park and the High Trestle Trail.
- COVID in 2020 shifted Catch DSM's focus even more towards content creation and content advertising. While people may not be traveling as frequently, we want to inspire them as much as possible to travel in the future and think of Greater Des Moines first. We did that by doubling down on our content efforts, creating more blogs, itineraries, newsletters, and social media posts. This approach resonated with our audiences in 2020: social media impressions were up 41%, social media engagements up 80%, clicks to the website from social media up 79%, and page views to our blogs were up 42.4%.
- Many exciting developments are happening throughout the metro. Trina Flack shared updates on the new facilities in the works. Greater Des Moines is well positioned to bounce back. These many new assets will give us the ability to host great future events.
  - Central Iowa Water Trails
  - Lauridsen Skatepark
  - MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex
  - USL Pro Iowa Soccer Stadium & Global Plaza
  - DMPS/Drake Stadium
  - Grimes Sports Complex



- Johnston Ignit Sports Facility
- USHL Hockey Arena at Merle Hay Mall

## Bravo

- [Let's Hear it for the Arts campaign](#) to build awareness of the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural sector and the value of the sector to the region's recovery.
- 70 cultural organizations applied for funding through one of Bravo's three grant programs. Awards will be made in April and will infuse critical funds into the cultural sector.
- For the last 15 years, on the first Saturday in February, the community has gathered with Bravo Greater Des Moines to celebrate the arts, culture and heritage organizations that make our region vibrant. This year, despite not being able to gather in person, more than 60 corporate partners continued their support for Bravo, contributing more than twice our fundraising goal and increasing our grantmaking capacity by nearly \$150,000 for 2021. [A video was released](#) to celebrate how arts and cultural organizations have responded to the pandemic and create enthusiasm for what is yet to come.

## Iowa Public Radio (IPR)

- In lieu of IPR's annual live holiday show, part of our monthly Studio One Underground series, IPR's Studio One and xBk in Des Moines partnered for [The Holiday Special](#), a fully Iowa-produced, original musical for a pandemic year. This special featured an evil villain who had stolen all the holiday cheer, and a cast of characters who went on the hunt to bring back joy and featured new music by Iowa artists like Ducharme-Jones, Elizabeth Moen, The Finesse, The Surf Zombies, Lily DeTaeye and many more. This multi-media collaboration aired on IPR's Studio One Tracks on December 20 and again on December 25, and had some accompanying video, which can still be viewed [here](#). There were over 40 Iowa creatives and musicians involved with this project!
- IPR Classical's *The Steinway Café* series features artists who would typically be performing live on the air in our Cedar Falls studio on our newly refurbished 1918 Steinway B piano, thanks to a grant from the W.T. and Edna M. Dahl Trust. Until we're safely back in the studio, this series has continued virtually on IPR's Facebook page, YouTube page or at [iowapublicradio.org](http://iowapublicradio.org) from 12-1 p.m. on a monthly basis.
  - December's performance featured [Luther College's Unison Piano Duo](#)
  - January's performance featured [St. Ambrose University's Marian Lee](#)
- IPR officially launched the [Talk of Iowa Book Club podcast](#). Season 1 in its entirety landed in podcast feeds mid-January, and season 2 episodes have begun populating at the end of every month in 2021.
- The [Talk of Iowa Book Club podcast](#) is a product of the monthly on-air book club show on IPR's *Talk of Iowa*, heard on IPR News and News/Studio One signals weekdays at 10 a.m. with host Charity Nebbe. While the goal of the on-air show is to get listeners to read along each month and tune in live for the discussion, the podcast allows readers to read and enjoy these discussions on-demand at their own pace. For book club enthusiasts, IPR has also launched the official [Talk of Iowa Book Club Facebook group](#) to encourage ongoing conversations among readers online. We're at over 850 members so far!

## Des Moines Arts Festival & Artist INC

- The Des Moines Arts Festival® hosted a lunch-n-learn for its "A Seat at the Table" series on "A Conversation About Cultural Equity in the Arts." The focus was identifying and overcoming barriers. This quarterly event is moderated by Kate Hightshoe, Community Impact Chair for Bravo Greater Des Moines. Panelists were Emmitt Phillips (facilitator at Oakridge Neighborhood, hip-hop artist, poet, actor), H.C. Porter



(Visual Artist) and Jason Wells (Double Bass with Des Moines Symphony, music educator). A total of 97 people attended.

- Artist INC welcomed the 2021 fellows for the inaugural session of Artist INC Des Moines. Artists are selected through a competitive panel process that looks at quality of work and readiness for the program. The selection process also looks at the diversity of the seminar cohort to ensure diversity in all its definitions including demographics (gender, age, and ethnicity) and artistic discipline. Applications for the 2022 session will launch fall, 2021. Congratulations to the 2021 fellows: Jenna Brownlee, Sabrina Carper, Brittany Brooke Crow, Kat Darling, Maggie Douglas, Jeremiah Elbel, Ameer Ellis, Autumn Rozario Hall, Megan Hammer, Tobi Hightshoe, Julie Houghton, Allen Jeneau, Juliana Jones, Linda Lewis, Jami Milne, Cynthia O'Hern, Hanna Peipel, Antonio Roddy, Sundie Ruppert, Julie Russell-Steuart, Stephanie Schneider, Laura Travnicek, Andrea VanWyk, and Jill Wells.

### **Mainframe Residency**

- **Alex Brown Foundation Now Accepting Residency Applications for 2021 and 2022:** After more than 18 months of work, the Alex Brown Foundation and Residency Fund is now seeking applications from artists interested in residencies in 2021 and 2022.

Established with funds from the estate of the painter Alex Brown, who died in 2019, the residency aims to provide emerging and established artists of exceptional merit with an experience of the working conditions Brown found in Des Moines—the ability to make the work you want to make, free from the daily influence of being immersed in a major metropolitan scene but without the isolation of a rural residency, in an exceptional studio environment and a relaxed and pleasant living environment. Residency amenities include:

- Dedicated use of a 1400-square foot studio space at Mainframe Studios, a renovated 1970s telecommunications building in downtown Des Moines operated on a 501(c)(3) nonprofit basis to provide permanent affordable workspace to artists of all disciplines.
- A monthly stipend of \$1,000, plus airfare or reimbursement for other travel to and from Des Moines.
- Housing provided or covered by an additional stipend, depending on the length of the residency.

The residency is not for a fixed term—the foundation will accept applications for tenures as short as four weeks and as long as one year, with preference given to applications for longer durations. Applications will be accepted from any artist in any medium. Scheduling and planning is subject to the uncertainties arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic. The studio facility is currently open and operating under customary health and safety protocols, and the foundation is open to applications for residencies as early as spring 2021 but anticipates a more regular operation beginning in the second half of 2021, and thereafter to establish a more regular schedule and process for residencies and applications. For more information or to apply, please visit the [residency's main page](#) or contact the foundation.

### **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- Although hotel/motel taxes have been stronger than expected, they are still well-below pre-pandemic levels which significantly impacts Bravo's investment capacity.

- Many community organizations are still struggling with getting arts to the schools. Organizations have produced amazing virtual content but are having a hard time getting through to school kids.

### **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- As IPR looked for ways to celebrate Black History Month in February, we planned for ways to amplify Black voices on our airwaves and digitally. The talk team rebroadcast their [2020 Iowa Week Series: Listening to Black Voices](#) the first week of February and IPR Classical is airing [Steinway Café specials](#) on Fridays in February that honor Black performers. We also have a dedicated landing page that highlights all of this work digitally on IPR's website [here](#), featuring some excellent reporting from IPR's news team from their annual [Iowa In Focus](#) series.

### **NEWS & EVENTS**

- Des Moines Art Center exhibit: The Path to Paradise: [Judith Schaechter's Stained-Glass Art](#) (February 13 – May 23, 2021)
- In 2019, nearly 14 million annual visitors generated more than \$2 billion in travel spending, supporting more than 19,000 jobs in Greater Des Moines. Not only do visitors and events bring money into the local economy and support your favorite restaurants, retailers and attractions, but they also build city prestige, amplify civic pride, provide tax relief and enhance the quality of life for those that live here. As we look towards the future, tourism will be a critical piece to our economic recovery. Whether you are an individual or a business, it's never been easier to contribute and help elevate the community you love. You can be a champion by leveraging your connections with regional or national associations, organizations and boards to bring their events to Greater Des Moines. If you are a member of any state, regional or national association, board or group who host meetings and events, we'd love to help bring them to Greater Des Moines. Just give us the idea, we'll do the legwork, and you'll get the glory. No group is too big or too small. E-mail Trina Flack, VP of Sales ([trina@catchdesmoines.com](mailto:trina@catchdesmoines.com)) to share your idea or learn more.

### **COLLABORATION**

- The branding process for the Central Iowa Water Trails is making great strides. After an intensive public input process, we are nearing final name selection that intentionally sought feedback from diverse communities.

## GOVERNANCE CAPITAL

*Mayor Bob Andeweg, Mayor Sara Kurovski and Art Wittmack*

Central Iowa governments will sustain partnerships to optimize process coordination and regional governance.

### **HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS**

- Urbandale plans an upcoming budget for Fiscal Year 2022 with a tax levy of \$10.11 which is a 5-cent reduction over the current levy.
- The Urbandale City Council approved the Capital Improvements Program, anticipating expenditures of more than \$22 million in the 2021 construction year.
- Urbandale collaborated with Clive and Johnston to produce an informational video explaining the right-of-way and MetroNet fiberoptic project work to residents.
- The Central Iowa Code Consortium (CICC) is reviewing our foundational documents (Memorandum of Understanding and Rules of Procedure) making updates from what we have learned over the past eight years.

### **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- The Homebuilder's Association (HBA) proposed legislation (addition to Iowa Code 5364.3 and \$331.304 Relating to Authority Of Municipalities and Counties to Regulate Stormwater) that would invalidate all stormwater management ordinances implemented by city's across the state. As of mid-February, the legislation has not been filed.
- Urbandale City Councilmember Matt Blake was placed on federal active-duty orders with the Iowa Army National Guard at the end of January and the military service of Councilmember Blake created a temporary vacancy on the City Council. The Council appointed Adam Kaduce to fill the temporary vacancy which began on January 21, 2021 and will end when Councilmember Blake is relieved from federal active duty.
- As COVID cases decline in Polk County, Urbandale is planning for a limited reopening of city facilities. Urbandale also developed policy to encourage vaccinations and is preparing to be ready when vaccinations are available for classes of city employees (public safety, essential workers, general population).

### **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- To move toward an Urbandale community that is more inclusive and accepting of all, a public hearing was held, and a new ordinance approved (at the December 15, 2020 council meeting), that changed Urbandale's Municipal Code to include the prohibition of biased based profiling. While the policy itself was not new to the Urbandale Police Department, due to current discussion on policing within the nation, it is the first policy the Police Department has recommended for codification—enacting a legal code/law.

### **NEWS & EVENTS**

- Capital Crossroads sent out a survey on behalf of the Central Iowa Code Consortium to over 2,000 design professionals and contractors. It [is linked here](#).

- On February 10, the Taxpayer’s Association of Central Iowa hosted: “Focus: Mental Health – The Landscape in Iowa.” They discussed the following questions: “What does our mental health system look like? Is it working? Is it properly funded? What “innovative solutions” might strengthen the system?” Panelists included:
  - Liz Cox – CEO, Polk County Health Services
  - Kavi Chawla – Partner, Baton Global; Broadlawns Medical Center Trustee
  - Dave Miglin – VP – Media & Digital Services/Principal, Strategic America; Broadlawns Medical Center Trustee
- On February 17, the Taxpayer’s Association of Central Iowa hosted: “How experiences of COVID-19 will affect ongoing funding and operations of public sector organizations.” Property tax funding begins with assessed values, and Polk County Assessor Randy Ripperger will share the latest information. Then hear the perspectives of Polk County Supervisor McCoy, West Des Moines Schools Superintendent Dr. Lisa Remy, Urbandale Mayor Bob Andeweg, and Clive Mayor Scott Cirksena as they look at what 2021 and beyond may look like. Mayors Andeweg and Cirksena will also share the observations of their colleagues on the Metro Advisory Council, the Mid-Iowa Association of Local Governments, and Dallas County Mayors.
- On February 24, the Taxpayer’s Association of Central Iowa is hosting: “[TACI Town Hall #14](#): Let’s Talk Property Taxes.” Questions for discussion will include:
  - Do you share a concern about the increases in property tax bills, vis-à-vis the ability to pay them?
  - What other “predictable and stable” revenue sources might be available?
    - Payment for fire/police and other public services by exempt property owners?
    - User fees?
    - An increase in the state sales tax to offset property taxes.
    - A local income tax?
  - Where are the biggest cost pressures on public budgets and what can be done to mitigate them?
    - Wages and benefits
    - Unfunded mandates
    - Property taxes? (just kidding)
    - Utilities and operating expenses
    - Supplies
  - What possible cost control measures are possible / should be investigated?
    - Shared services (hats off to Clive & Urbandale)
    - Outsourcing to private sector entities?
    - Shared purchasing?

## **COLLABORATION**

- The Governance Capital overlaps with efforts going on in various capitals, including Natural Capital with the stormwater efforts and the Governance meetings ongoing within Central Iowa Water Trails; Physical Capital and various projects at the MPO; and the Capital Core and affordable housing efforts.
- Des Moines and Urbandale are working together to assist in a major revitalization of the Merle Hay campus area into a shopping and entertainment destination (anchored by a new 3,500 seat multi-use arena for the Des Moines Buccaneers, a competition and training center, and a 150-room hotel). The Urbandale City Council approved the signing of an agreement with the City of Des Moines to establish a joint board to support the creation of a reinvestment district for the Merle Hay Mall campus.

## HUMAN CAPITAL

*Elisabeth Buck, Renee Miller, Marvin DeJear and Greg Nichols*

Central Iowa will feature a workforce with the skills and training necessary to support optimal economic development.

### **HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS**

#### **Policy/Advocacy Highlights - Child Care Bills Pass Iowa House**

The week of Feb 8, 2021, the Iowa House took action on a number of childcare bills that help expand quality, affordable and accessible child care statewide. The bills include measures targeting the childcare cliff effect, increasing state investment, regulation-relief, and spur development of new childcare facilities and employer-sponsored benefits.

A key priority is HF 302, a bill creating a gradual phase-out of the state's Child Care Assistance program for families working to grow their incomes toward self-sufficiency. This bill addresses the steep decline in benefits families experience as income increases and eligibility ends, also known as the "cliff effect." This bill passed the Iowa House by a vote of 94-0.

A critical component of the childcare challenge is the provider workforce. For many child care providers, remaining financially solvent long-term can be a challenge given prevailing reimbursement rates. HF 292 works to address this by increasing reimbursement rates for providers accepting state childcare assistance. If passed by both chambers, providers would be reimbursed at 50% of current market rates which would be a substantive increase from the current reimbursement - 75% of the 2014 market rates. The bill passed the Iowa House by a vote of 90-4.

To further support and promote the childcare workforce, HF 301 creates a state-matching grant program to expand the TEACH and WAGE\$ Iowa programs statewide. The programs supplement the salary of child care providers based on their skills and educational attainment in early childhood education. The bill passed 92-2.

HF 230 would expand eligibility of the child, dependent care, and early childhood development tax credit from the current \$45,000 cap to \$90,000 in household income. This will allow more middle-income families to benefit from this state-based tax credit toward childcare expenses. The bill passed the House 90-1.

Also of note, HF 370 creates a business tax credit to encourage employers to provide child care benefits to their employees. Businesses may take this expanded credit up to \$150,000 per year. The bill passed the Iowa House 88-6.

These bills all work to address childcare issues across our state. Next, they move to the Senate, where some companion bills are already introduced and scheduled for action.

#### **Workforce Diversity Highlights**

**Central Iowa HealthWorks:** HealthWorks was awarded a 3-month extension from the Department of Labor and will have through 3/31/21 to help participants finish trainings and certifications. The extension will allow nursing exams and licensure for 25 nursing students who graduated in December to be supported as well as provide three additional months of training for CNA students who have been delayed by the lack of classes available due to COVID.

In total, HealthWorks has supported 545 participants as they trained into the health care workforce, well above the 4-year goal of 380. Of those who are no longer in training, 88% (442 individuals) have successfully completed a training and gained a new credential. 320 participants have gained employment with 88% of the jobs related to their health care training.

**Central Iowa Returning Citizens Achieve (CIRCA) Workforce Training Program:** United Way has completed all enrollment and training for the current CIRCA program and have officially started our final year of the grant which has been focused on supporting individuals who have been incarcerated successfully reenter the community with a priority on training and employment. One major highlight is that all goals of the program have been met or exceeded. 88% of those enrolled completed training and 89.7% of them were employed after completion. The program has also been instrumental in keeping the recidivism rate well below the goal. Additionally, an Alumni Group was launched to keep participants engaged with the CIRCA program to help participants retain employment and keep them from reoffending.

## **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

### **Policy/Advocacy:**

- While United Way has experienced great success in passing child care legislation in the House and the Governor continues to support these efforts, several roadblocks are anticipated in the Senate which put all 6 child care bills at risk. United Way continues to mobilize their child care coalition to advocate for this critical workforce support.

### **Training Programs:**

- As United Way's grants are coming to an end, many public and private funding opportunities are being pursued as they strive to build and diversify the health care workforce in central Iowa, particularly with a focus on people of color and those with a history of incarceration.
- United Way's HealthWorks program has had a high impact on racial diversity of the healthcare workforce – currently only 4% of Iowa's healthcare workforce are people of color while 44% of the HealthWorks program graduates are people of color.

## **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- As United Way plans for continuation of training programs and advocates for policies and funding that support the Human Capital, they are consistently sharing data and stories of the significant disparities that exist across specific populations in the community and state. As part of United Way's employer engagement, they are also collaborating with business on meaningful ways to reimagine training, hiring and retention strategies the work to remove barriers and build greater diversity and equity within the central Iowa workforce.
- As planning continues across programming – the Human Capital relies on the 4 Equity Tool to help in the process.

## **COLLABORATION**

- Ongoing collaboration between the Physical Capital with the Transportation Gaps Analysis work
- Continued collaboration with Social Capital on DEI efforts
- Continued engagement with advocates and employers in policy, training, hiring and retention efforts

## NATURAL CAPITAL

*Hannah Inman, Larry James and Julie Stewart*

Central Iowa will be recognized nationally as a best practice community for its environmental sustainability.

### **HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS**

- In an effort to build upon the work done by the Iowa Soil and Water Future Task Force of finding common ground solutions to effectively fund its soil and water infrastructure through public-private investment, Great Outdoors Foundation has partnered with Capital Crossroads, Iowa Soybean Association, and Iowa Agricultural Clean Water Alliance to work on a defined proposal that catalogues existing water quality efforts and align partnerships and strategies to magnify the impacts.

### **Central Iowa Water Trails (CIWT)**

- CIWT continues work on establishing its new governance structure. After completing several meetings with the Working Group (consisting of all City Managers of the jurisdictions within the water trails network), the group completed a draft 28E agreement that is now being circulated amongst all the City Councils. Our Governance Committee has also put in significant time and effort in establishing the new governing entity's bylaws and board structure. CIWT staff is currently meeting with all elected officials to review both the 28E agreement and bylaws/board structure to receive feedback and make any necessary revisions. The goal is to have the new entity and board established, as well as all agreements signed, by July.
- Three artists have been selected to put forth proposals for the Shoreline Signals campaign. As a reminder, this initiative will be utilizing the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant to use public art to communicate water safety at up to three pilot water trails sites. Artists are currently in the research phase and will be submitting proposals in March.

### **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- CIWT's greatest opportunity right now is to continue to strengthen the DEI efforts. The feedback we received during our branding interviews is providing some incredible guidance for not only our Inclusion Committee, but the project as a whole. We hope to capitalize on this information to ensure diversity and inclusion is baked into the project from the beginning.

### **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- As CIWT worked through the branding process, significant gaps in research and outreach to some of our LGBTQ+ and BIPOC partners in the community was noticed. In an effort to ensure all groups had the opportunity to share their feedback on the water trails and branding process, we made the conscious effort to pause in our creative process to do a second round of research, targeting these underrepresented groups. We extended our research timeline by three weeks for additional survey and interview. The feedback that was collected was not only instrumental in moving forward our branding initiative, but also provided significant insight into the project as a whole and what it will take to truly ensure it is inclusive and accessible to all.



## NEWS & EVENTS

- Great Outdoors Foundation (GOF) Spring Subscription Boxes will be available for purchase on our website.
- Central Iowa Water Trails brand roll out will be occurring in the coming months.
- GOF and CIWT have hired a Marketing Coordinator, Kaitie Hartmann. Kaitie will be splitting her time between both organizations.

## COLLABORATION

- The Natural Capital intersects with most Capitals.

## PHYSICAL CAPITAL

*Todd Ashby, Eric Burmeister and Elizabeth Presutti*

Smart planning, timely infrastructure development, and implementation of state-of-the-art technologies will sustain Central Iowa population growth for the present and future.

## HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS

### **Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART)**

- Ankeny and Urbandale Pilots – DART is considering two new pilot projects, one in Ankeny and one in Urbandale.
  - The Urbandale pilot would replace Local Route 74 with a Flex Connect zone that would allow riders in the zone to use Uber, YellowCabCo. taxi or a DART accessible vehicle to take an on-demand door-to-door trip to destinations within the zone.
  - The Ankeny pilot would replace the current On Call service with a DART-operated, on-demand service. Riders would be able to request a trip using their smartphone or by calling DART Customer Service. DART will receive the trip requests in real-time and provide same-day, door-to-door service to destinations within the City of Ankeny service area between 6 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.— which is an extended service day from the current On Call service that is available weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. DART is seeking input from Ankeny riders and residents now through mid-March. Learn more about the proposed change and how to give feedback at [ridedart.com/Ankeny](http://ridedart.com/Ankeny).
- Reduced Fare Pilot Program – Beginning January 1, anyone receiving food assistance, unemployment benefits or participating in workforce training qualifies for half fare as part of a new Reduced Fare Pilot Program DART is testing through June 30, 2021. To-date, more than 70 people have signed up, most of which qualify through food assistance.
- Property Tax Formula – The DART Commission approved a new property tax formula for DART member communities. The new formula will be phased in over an 8-year period beginning with DART’s FY 2022 budget. DART Commission and staff spent significant time and effort over the past year developing a reaching consensus on a formula that takes into account the regional nature and benefit of DART’s service as well as the level of service provided in each member community. During this process, the Commission

determined that property taxes are not a sustainable option as the only funding source for DART and have asked DART staff to work with the Iowa Legislature to diversify funding sources.

### **Polk County Housing Trust Fund (PCHTF)**

- Polk County Housing Trust Fund and Iowa Legal Aid have just closed the Justice Center Eviction Prevention having spent almost \$2M in rental assistance payments and saving nearly 1,000 families from homelessness.

### **Transportation and the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

- Transload facility completed design and met all FRA requirements. Track right and easements have been acquired. Project to start construction this spring and wrap by the end of 2021.
- Water trails is nearing completion with its NEPA document. Design plans going through reviews at the City and DOT. Various agreements with MPO, DOT, FHWA, CIWT, City of Des Moines and Polk County under development.
- Additional funding will be coming to the metro for transportation projects from the federal COVID relief package. Approximately \$4.9 million.

### **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- With the MPO, given all the projects, there are challenges getting all the agreements in place, timeline, funding.
- COVID has disproportionately impacted the housing stability of our most vulnerable people, especially our public facing service workforce who continue to struggle with few if any work hours at our retail and hospitality businesses.
- A new federal mask mandate took effect on February 2, requiring everyone to wear a face mask covering their nose and mouth while using public transportation. DART has been requiring masks since August and providing disposal face masks on the bus. In light of the new federal mandate, DART is required to ask anyone who refuses to wear a mask to get off the bus or leave DART Central Station.
- Snow removal at bus stops is a challenge for transit agencies across the country and DART is no different. The amount of snowfall in central Iowa this year has brought more attention to this issue. DART ensures snow removal from its several dozen bus shelters within 24 hours of a snowfall. There is not a formal process in place to have snow cleared from the more than 1,600 bus stops throughout DART's service area. DART's outreach to other transit agencies has shown many rely on municipalities and property owners for snow removal while some allocate additional resources to clear stops themselves. DART staff is continuing to research potential solutions to share with the DART Commission in the near future.
- DART is preparing to coordinate a COVID-19 vaccination clinic for DART staff when transit workers become eligible to receive the vaccine. Transit was initially included in Iowa's Phase 1B, per CDC recommendations, but then removed. DART is advocating transit workers be included in Phase 1C.
- There is an ongoing focus on minimizing revenue losses due to reduced ridership as many central Iowans continue to work from home and limit their travel.

## **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- The Broadband study is looking at access to broadband and how to best improve it in areas of need.
- Polk County Housing Trust Fund continues to work on the follow up to Undesign the Redline with engagement going on to craft a community led response to mitigate historical damage.
- DART conducted an employee survey on their culture, policies and procedures related to DEI.
- DART is in the process of facilitating required bias training to all employees.
- DART is using the 4 Equity tool as we develop a public participation plan to solicit feedback this spring and summer on the future of transit services in the region.

## **NEWS & EVENTS**

- Eric Burmeister, Emily Kessinger and Dan Garrett presented to the Mid-Iowa Association of Local Governments (MIALG) in February on the affordable housing effort undertaken by Capital Crossroads and how the proposed 2021 housing legislation could impact the communities across the region.
- The Smart City Roundtable is holding an invitation only meeting on Tuesday, February 23 from 12pm to 1pm. If individuals are interested in attending, they can e-mail [ekessinger@capitalcrossroadsvision.com](mailto:ekessinger@capitalcrossroadsvision.com) to attend future roundtables. Topics and speakers for this event include:
  - Viewshed Presentation and Live Demo with Aaron M Greiner, GISP | GIS Manager | Information Technology with the City of Des Moines
  - Regional Broadband Initiative Update with Stacie LoVan, CEcD, Project Director of Economic Development with the Greater Des Moines Partnership and Ken Demlow, Project Manager with HR Green
  - Presentation on Automated Delivery Vehicles (ADV) & Personal Delivery Devices (PDD): State of the Industry & Iowa PDD Legislation Update with Adam Shell, Automated Transportation Program Manager with the Iowa DOT
- DART is in the midst of a Transit Optimization Study to evaluate how to best meet the current and future transportation needs of the region amidst changing travel patterns and constantly evolving technology and mobility options. There will be two periods of public input to inform the study. The first public input period will take place mid-March through mid-April where individuals will be asked to attend one of several virtual public meetings and/or complete a short online survey. The feedback DART receives will be used to inform the mobility options DART will share for feedback this summer.

## **COLLABORATION**

- Collaboration with the Business Capital and the Greater Des Moines Partnership on the broadband study.
- Collaboration with the Capital Core and the housing committee on affordable housing.
- Collaboration with Greater Des Moines Leadership and the Community Leadership program. The CLP 2021 class will be working on utilizing design thinking to take a look at housing in the region.
- Collaboration with the Cultural Capital: thanks to funding from Bravo, DART is working with its member communities to expand access to public art by adding bus shelters with art throughout the region. The first art shelters will be installed this spring.

- Collaboration with the Human Capital: ongoing work with DMPS to ensure safe, school transportation is available for middle and high school students as well as staff as they return to 100 percent in-person learning in February.

## SOCIAL CAPITAL

*Angie Dethlefs-Trettin, Shaimaa Aly, Daniel Hoffman-Zinnel and Izaah Knox*

Central Iowa will become the gold standard of the successful 21<sup>st</sup> century region.

### **HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS**

- The Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute launched the [Then. Now. When. racial equity program](#); introduced the 2021 Community Leadership Program class project that focuses on more people of color becoming homeowners (in tandem with Capital Crossroads); and launched the next class of Community Connect. Amy Jennings and Kelly Royal are leading this work.
- Within Social Capital specifically, some 2021 goals include:
  - Following up with Feedback 4 Equity participants on the ways in which their recommendations have influenced the Central Iowa Water Trails planning
  - Re-engaging with organizations who have received the 4Equity board presentations on ongoing needs
  - Inviting voices from racial justice and mutual aid groups into Social Capital meetings on an ongoing basis with the goal to elevate voices through the CXR Blog
  - Tracking opportunities for alignment between Social Capital and other community partner initiatives
  - Exploring board diversity programming in partnership with several organizations

### **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- Within the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute, it has been proven that the community believes in their work. They will need to staff and resource up in order to keep up with the interest and demand.
- As the broader community shifts from "awake to woke to work" in the racial equity space, there is a tension between how justice and liberation work is framed along the spectrum of corporate DEI vs. community-based anti-racism. The Social Capital team is committed to approaching this work from an anti-racist lens.

### **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- The premise of the 4 Equity tool is built into most things the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute does. Specifically, it is discussed with the Community Leadership Program class.
- Equity and Inclusion is core to Social Capital's work, goals, and informs all the projects the Social Capital team takes on.

## **NEWS & EVENTS**

- The Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute's Community Leadership Program nominations are open at <https://gdmli.com/CommunityLeadershipProgram>
- The [February Conversations in Color Series - Looking Back to Look Ahead...Reflections on Race in America](#) is February 25, 2021 from 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM. To register to attend, visit the link here.

Dr. Michael McAfee, President and CEO- PolicyLink will join us on February 25 at 1:00 p.m. February is African-American History Month and the focus of Dr. McAfee's presentation will be Looking Back to Look Ahead...Reflections on Race and Equity. Using an historical lens the conversation will be centered on racial and economic equity, systems change and what the future holds for our community and country. Michael McAfee is determined to create conditions that will allow equity to flourish all across America — just and fair inclusion into a society where all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Join us for this important, thought provoking and transformational conversation with Dr. Michael McAfee.

Dr. Michael McAfee became President and CEO of PolicyLink in 2018. During his time at PolicyLink, Michael has played a leadership role in securing Promise Neighborhoods as a permanent federal program and led the organization's growing body of work focused on corporate racial equity which includes the first comprehensive tool to guide private-sector companies in assessing and actively promoting equity in every aspect of their company's value chain. Before joining PolicyLink, Michael served as senior community planning and development representative in the Chicago Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and as the director of community leadership for The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and Affiliated Trusts.

*Conversations in Color, a product of The Director's Council and its One Economy initiative, is dedicated to honest, progress-minded, and educational discussions about the issues of race in Des Moines and Central Iowa. Conversations in Color is sponsored by ITA Group with collaborative production support from the Greater Des Moines Partnership.*

## **COLLABORATION**

- Via the Community Leadership Program, the Youth Leadership Initiative, and Then. Now. When., the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute collaborates with many organizations, but are always looking for more ways to leverage community partners.
- Social Capital consistently looks to collaborate with all Capitals.

## WELLNESS CAPITAL

*Jami Haberl, Suzanne Mineck and Brad Anderson*

Lead in elevating the conversation and giving voice to the vast number of opportunities to improve the overall social and emotional well-being of the community through advocacy and awareness.

### **HIGHLIGHTS, PROJECTS, AND WINS**

- The 2020 Make It OK Annual Report is [linked here](#).
- In addition, Healthiest State Initiative launched their 2020 annual report. You [can view it here](#).
- The Wellness Capital, in tandem with the Greater Des Moines Partnership, launched a monthly speaker series in 2021 titled “Intersections in Health.” It will feature a variety of speakers from numerous disciplines that focus on everything from wellness to social isolation to children’s health to mental health. The January series was [featured in the Business Record](#) and had nearly 50 attendees. The February series, featuring AARP and members of the Polk County Health Department leadership, is [linked here](#).

### **Make It OK**

- 2021 Ambassador trainings:
  - Trained 110 new ambassadors since January.
  - Ambassador trainings [are scheduled](#) through June 12th.
- Mental Health Awareness Month – Make It OK is updating the toolkit for May and are working on a couple new tools including a podcast that will feature lowans along with a mental health professional.
- Outreach/Marketing: Make It OK ran two 2 ½ page ads in the Business Record in January and February. Make It OK was also able to secure several PSA spots for MIO so you may have seen a couple of the billboards that were part of that ask.

### **OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

- An opportunity and challenge Make It OK has is continuing to encourage lowans to share their stories so that we can build our library of videos and written content.
- Another opportunity and challenge Make It OK has is continuing to look for funders to support the growing demand of the Make It OK campaign.

### **EQUITY & INCLUSION**

- Make It OK continues to look at potential opportunities to engage with partners such as One Economy to ensure equity with the Make It OK message and trainings.

### **NEWS & EVENTS**

- Linn County effort: a community call to action virtual event will be taking place on March 11th that is focused on Make It OK efforts. This event will feature a keynote speaker and is open to lowans not just those living in Cedar Rapids. To learn more, [click here](#).

- 2021 Healthiest State Annual Conference is April 29th and will be virtual with two keynote speakers and four breakout sessions. The theme is "Keeping Iowa's Workforce Mission Ready. Ensuring a happy, healthy and productive workforce for the future of Iowa!"

### **COLLABORATION**

- The Wellness Capital consistently overlaps with the Social Capital and Physical Capital, as all three Capitals are engaged in bringing Nikole Hannah-Jones to Des Moines in 2021.
- Make It OK partnered with EMBARC to create MIO videos to reach the populations they work closely with. They should be completed in late February/early March.