



IOWA ASSOCIATION
OF COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS

In this quarterly newsletter edition:

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View this newsletter and prior newsletters on the [ICOG website](#).

COG FOCUS AREA: Turning Brownfields into Opportunities

Across Iowa, many communities are revitalizing brownfield sites—properties that were once used for industrial or commercial purposes and may be vacant or underused due to real or perceived environmental concerns. Common examples include former gas stations, factories, and warehouses.

While these sites can present challenges, they also offer significant potential for redevelopment.

The Role of Councils of Governments

Iowa's Councils of Governments (COGs) help communities transform brownfields into productive assets by providing expertise, coordination, and access to funding.

They support redevelopment by:

- **Identifying sites** and prioritizing opportunities for reuse

- **Coordinating environmental assessments** to determine contamination risks
- **Securing funding**, including EPA Brownfields grants
- **Managing cleanup efforts** in partnership with environmental agencies
- **Planning future uses**, such as housing, businesses, or public spaces
- **Engaging residents** to ensure projects reflect community needs

A Path to Revitalization

With guidance from COGs, brownfield sites can move from uncertainty to opportunity—supporting economic growth, improving neighborhoods, and putting underused land back into service.

Redeveloping these properties not only addresses environmental concerns but also helps communities reinvest in themselves and build a stronger future.

See the examples below for real-world stories of how COGs and Iowa communities have successfully transformed brownfields into vibrant, productive spaces.

Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission

Elkem-Carbide Site Cleanup - Keokuk, IA

The 79-acre Elkem-Carbide site, vacant since 2007, is one step closer to cleanup and redevelopment thanks to a long-standing partnership between the City of Keokuk and the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC).

Since 2014, SEIRPC has led efforts to assess environmental conditions, secure funding, and support redevelopment planning. EPA-funded assessments identified contaminants related to historic industrial operations, including petroleum coke, slag, metals, asbestos, lead-based paint, and other hazardous materials.

To facilitate cleanup, the property was divided into three parcels and enrolled in Iowa's Land Recycling Program. This strategy helped secure more than \$8 million in EPA Brownfields Cleanup funding.

At the same time, SEIRPC and City leaders developed a redevelopment vision focused

on sustainable design, natural landscaping, and future employment opportunities. The plan was shaped through stakeholder engagement and community input.

The project continues to advance through collaboration with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, local economic development organizations, community partners, and residents, all working toward transforming the former industrial site into a valuable asset for Keokuk's future.



Participants take a tour of the many abandoned buildings at the Elkem-Carbide site in Keokuk, IA | Photo Credit: U.S. EPA

East Central Intergovernmental Association

1000 S 4th St Block - Clinton, IA

The East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) partnered with the City of Clinton to transform the 1000 S. 4th Street corridor from a blighted commercial area into a catalyst for economic growth. Environmental assessment and planning were supported by **\$53,103 in EPA Brownfields funding** administered by ECIA. Cleanup

and demolition of five hazardous buildings were funded through a combination of a **\$500,000 EPA Cleanup Grant**, **\$24,999 from the Iowa DNR**, a **\$441,501 ECIA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund loan**, and local contributions.

ECIA, the City of Clinton, Iowa DNR, U.S. EPA, Grow Clinton, and the Downtown Clinton Alliance engaged residents and stakeholders throughout the process to develop a community-driven redevelopment vision. Redevelopment efforts ultimately attracted private investment from BTS, Inc., neighboring property owners, and the City, bringing total project investment to nearly **\$2.25 million**.

The project expanded a local business, created **75 jobs**, and added **four energy-efficient townhomes**, demonstrating how Brownfields investments and strong partnerships can revitalize underutilized properties and strengthen local economies.



Energy Efficient Townhouses | Photo Credit: East Central Intergovernmental Association

North Iowa Area Council of Governments

Belmond-Klemme School Asbestos Remediation & Removal - Klemme, IA

A long-vacant school property in Klemme is moving toward a new future through a partnership between the City of Klemme, NIACOG, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Hancock County Economic Development.

In 2025, NIACOG helped the City secure a \$61,933 Iowa DNR Derelict Buildings Grant to address asbestos contamination at the former Belmond-Klemme Community School, which had sat vacant since 2000. Asbestos remediation was completed in fall 2025, allowing the building to be demolished in spring 2026.

The project removed a deteriorating structure that had remained unused for more than two decades and prepared the site for redevelopment. City leaders, with support from Hancock County Economic Development, are now exploring housing opportunities on the property. These efforts align with Klemme's long-term vision outlined in the Comprehensive Development Plan developed with NIACOG in 2021.

The project demonstrates how partnerships and targeted state funding can transform blighted properties into new opportunities for community growth and revitalization.



Belmond-Klemme School before the asbestos remove and demolition | Photo Credit: City of Klemme

Connecting Regions. Strengthening Communities. Advancing the Midwest.

MINK 4-STATE CONFERENCE



MINK
MISSOURI, IOWA, NEBRASKA, KANSAS
PLANNING DISTRICT CONFERENCE 2026

AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 2, 2026

Mid-America Center | Council Bluffs, IA

The MINK Conference brings together regional leaders from **Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas** for one impactful multi-state event.

The conference features expert-led sessions on management & HR, community development, economic development and more!

Attendees will benefit from valuable learning, cross-state collaboration, and networking, while **sponsors and exhibitors** have unique opportunities to connect with councils of governments and showcase their services.

Date: August 31 – September 2, 2026

Location: Mid-America Center, Council Bluffs, IA

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

IMPACT MAP

Check out our impressive impact map!

This map illustrates the significant impact of Iowa's Councils of Governments (COGs), demonstrating the **wide range of projects** we lead and support across the state.



Due to the condensed size of the image, not all COGs are shown.

These initiatives strengthen community well-being, drive economic growth, and address critical needs—especially in **Iowa's rural areas**, where limited staffing and resources often constrain economic and community development efforts.

[LEARN MORE](#)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

COGs are hiring!

Check out the new employment opportunities:

- **Community Development
Director - Fort Dodge**
- **Community Development
Specialist-Planner - Atlantic**
- **Administrative Assistant -
Temp - Atlantic**
- **Deputy Director - Omaha-
Council Bluffs**

COGs offer rewarding careers where professionals work directly with communities, tackle real-world planning challenges, and partner with local leaders to make a difference.

Want to post an employment opportunity with us? Contact us [here](#).

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

HOMES FOR IOWA LUNCH & LEARN

Discover how Homes for Iowa is helping communities across Iowa create attainable homeownership opportunities while changing lives through second chances.

In just one hour, you'll learn about our home ordering process, hear success stories from communities and homeowners, and see how Homes for Iowa can partner with your community, organization, or development project.

Date: Saturday, July 26

Time: 12:00 PM

Details: Virtual & Free

Registration: <https://www.homesforia.com/lunch---learn>

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEMBERS

We greatly appreciate our Partnership Program members for their support. Together, we're creating meaningful impact in Iowa communities.



LEARN MORE

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