

**Cerro Gordo**  
County

**Floyd**  
County

**Franklin**  
County

**Hancock**  
County

**Kossuth**  
County

**Mitchell**  
County

**Winnebago**  
County

**Worth**  
County

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027

North Iowa Area Council of Governments Economic  
Development District

[www.niacog.org](http://www.niacog.org)



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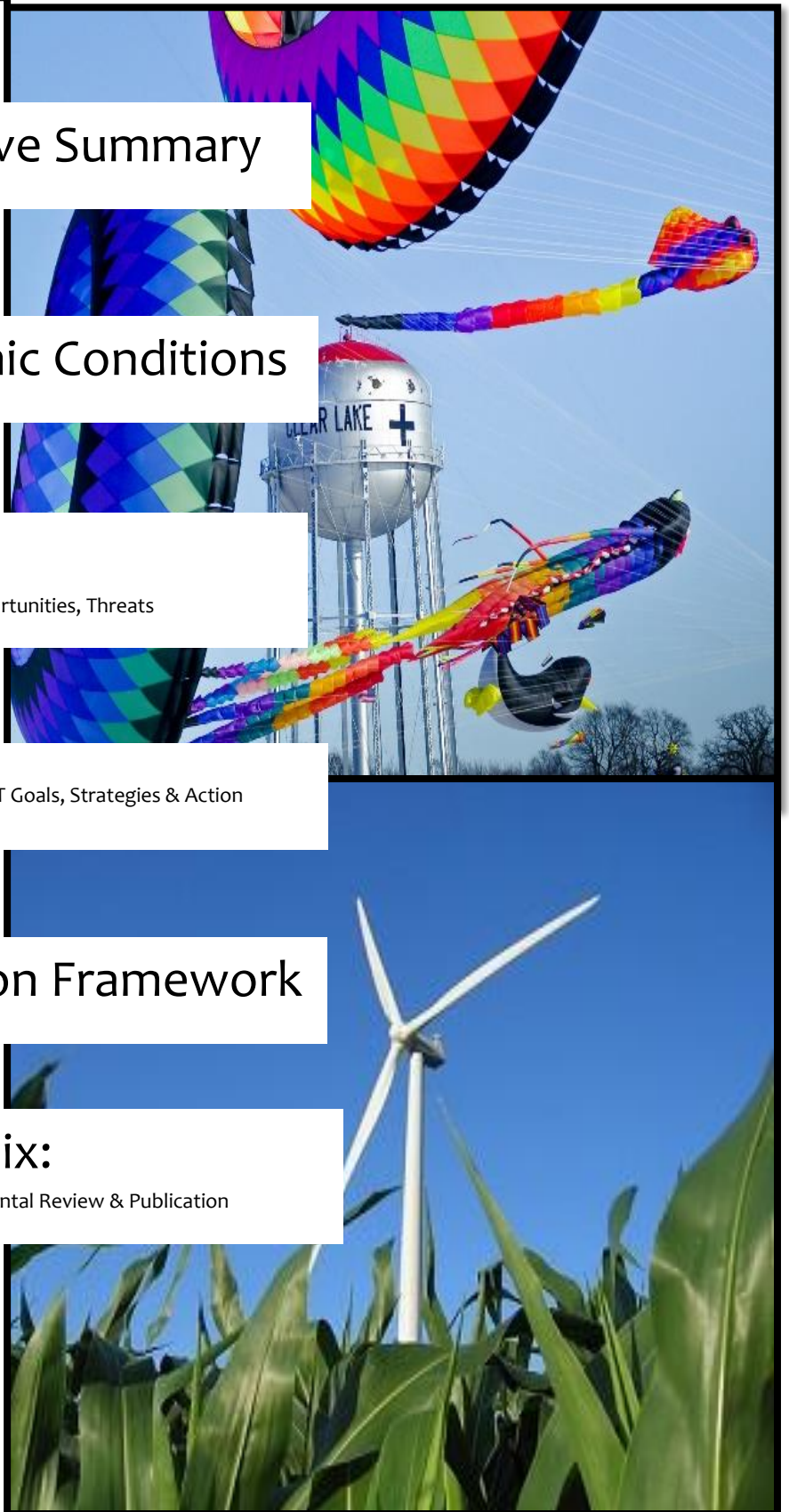
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# Plan of Action

The document is the 2022 Five-Year Update for the NIACOG CEDS. This document show representation of partnership and union between NIACOG and Cerro Gordo, Hancock, Franklin, Floyd, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago and Worth Counties, the local Economic Development Coordinators, and other members within the region.

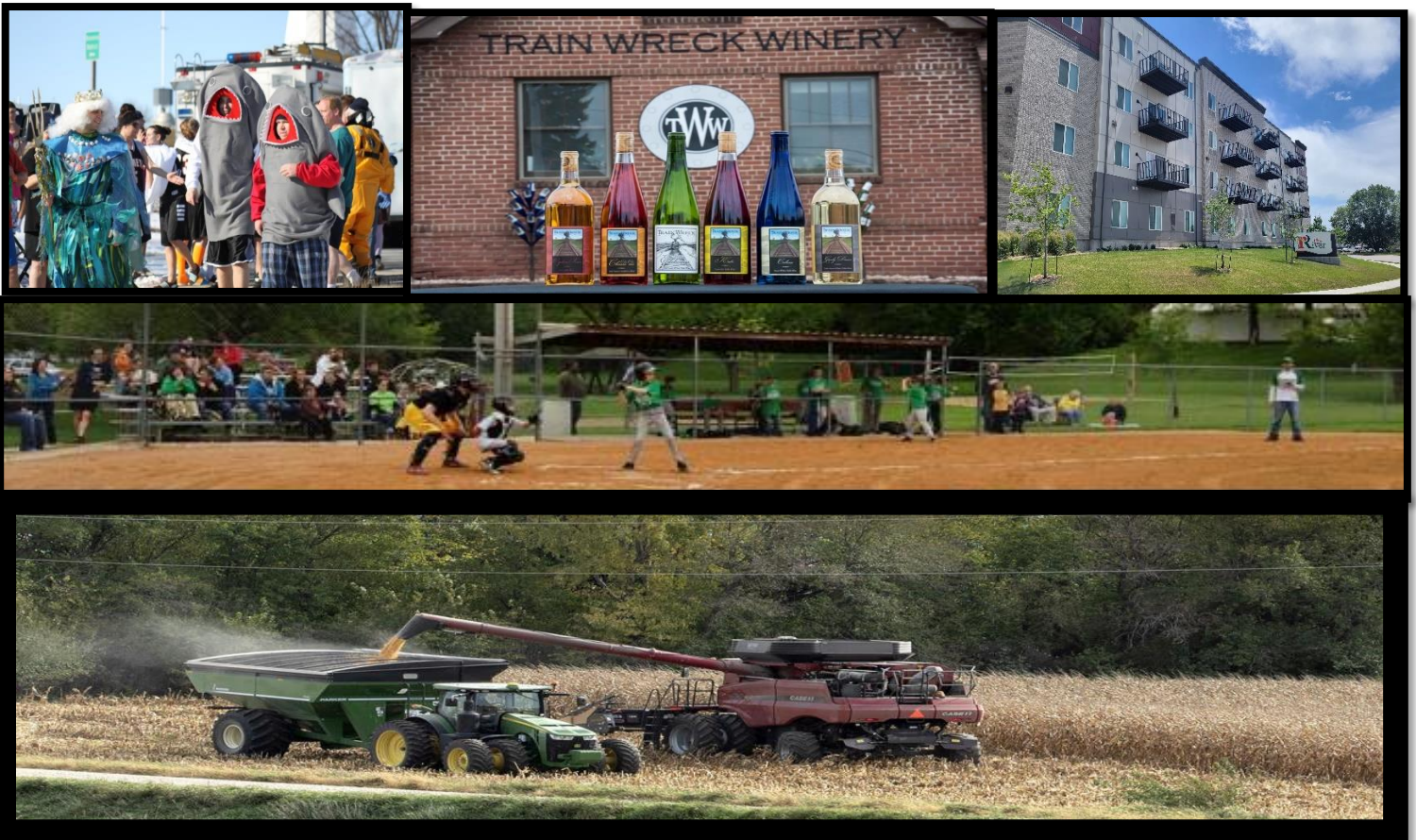
The 2022 CEDS Strategic Plan mirrors the vision of economic development and regional plans in North Iowa. This plan is to serve as a guide for each community. Businesses, students, workers and elected leaders should all find value in the content reported.

The CEDS is a guide set to transform economic development planning, and community participation. The CEDS reflects the specific Opportunities and challenges that North Iowa faces. It contains a region overview, SWOT analysis, oversight of the goals and action plans established by the CEDS Committee.

The analysis assesses the state of the regional economy, the opportunities and threats posed by internal and external forces, and the availability of partners and resources for economic development. The vision and goals set way for a strategic action plan. The action plan establishes the priorities for implementation.

The 2022 CEDS is built on four priorities that serve as the foundation of this plan:

1. Workforce Recruitment
2. Workforce Childcare
3. Workforce Housing
4. Image







Comprehensive Economic Development  
Strategy

# VISION

## Statement

**“Our vision is to have a strong economy in the form of high quality businesses, jobs, workforce, and an engaged community, enjoying a high quality of life.”**

# 1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## a) What is our vision for the economic future of our region?

The CEDS Committee adopted a vision statement that says, “Our vision is to have a strong economy in the form of high quality businesses, jobs, workforce, and an engaged community, enjoying a high quality of life.”



## b) What is the EDD?

The North Iowa Area Council of Governments (NIACOG) Economic Development District (EDD) is located in North Central Iowa and includes the counties of: **Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, and Worth**. NIACOG was awarded status as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the Economic Development Administration. Economic Development Districts (EDD’s) are multi-jurisdictional entities, commonly composed of multiple counties and in certain cases even cross-state borders. They help lead the locally-based, regionally driven economic development planning process that leverages the involvement of the public, private and non-profit sectors to establish a strategic blueprint (i.e., an economic development roadmap) for regional collaboration.

## c) What is a CEDS?

A CEDS is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. It is a key component in establishing and maintaining a robust economic ecosystem by helping to build regional capacity (through hard and soft infrastructure) that contributes to individual, firm, and community success. The CEDS provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity building efforts would best serve economic development in the region. The CEDS integrates and leverages other planning efforts in the region such as the North Iowa Vision plan and benefits from EDA’s guidance.

d) **What Economic Conditions are driving the goals?**

i) **Economic Condition 1 –**

**Workforce Recruitment** - Since 2005/06, the region has experienced a significant decline in net migration. In 2005/06, the

region was at -5%, and in 2015/19, net migration is at -0.19%. Our region is sitting at the lowest unemployment rate in several years at 3%. The region also has twice as many job openings, as it has workers to fill them currently.



ii) **Economic Condition 2 – Workforce Childcare**- Registered and licensed childcare slots (6,447) are available for only half of the children age 0-11 (12,728) in our region. There is also a 10% increase in childcare costs after inflation in the last 10 years. 14 of the cities in our region are considered to be in a childcare desert.

iii) **Economic Condition 3 – Workforce Housing** – Population, financial resources, and natural/built resources are limited. All of these things are needed to stabilize population, grow economically, and maintain resiliency in the face of economic and natural shocks such as past flooding, business closings, and a shift to quality of life amenities to retain workforce.

iv) **Economic Condition 4 - Image- Lack of region-wide image** – The region lacks a region-wide image (branding), which contributes to net migration.

v) **Economic Condition 5 – The Geography** of the area is predominantly flat land and is among the world’s most fertile soil. The region includes the following counties: Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, Worth County.

vi) **Economic Condition 6 - Transportation Access** – The NIACOG EDD region is well served by transportation systems. Interstate 35 runs north to Minneapolis, Minnesota and south to Des Moines. Highway, railroad, air, and pipeline facilities converge near the intersection of Interstate 35 , Highway 18 and the Mason City Municipal Airport, which provides commercial air service.



This provides an ‘opportunity to transfer products from one type of transportation system to another. This makes both imports and exports convenient to the region. The region is served by major rail lines and an airport in every county.

**vii) Economic Condition 7 – Resources**

(1) Funding Resources include the following, which are most effectively used in an integrated fashion of local, state, private, and federal funds whenever feasible:

(a) State – IDOT Transportation Funding, IDNR Recreational Trails funding, Emergency Management Funding, State Housing Trust Fund, University Centers

(b) Local – Revolving loan funds of NIACOG and local development corporations, TIF funding from cities and Counties, and American Rescue Plan Act funding that was provided to cities on a per capita basis

(c) Federal – IEDA Housing Fund, Federal Trails Funding, EDA Funding

(d) Foundations – Community Foundation, Farrer Foundation, Bertha Stebens Foundation, Hansen Foundation

(2) Partner Resources for economic development include the following parties. The agencies a through d will be called upon as stakeholders in response initiatives:

(a) Economic Development Organizations throughout the region / NCIA

(b) John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center

(c) Chambers of Commerce

(d) Cities and Counties in the region

(e) State of Iowa – IWD, IEDA, IDNR, IDOT, SHPO, etc.

(f) Economic Development Administration

(g) Private Sector businesses and individuals

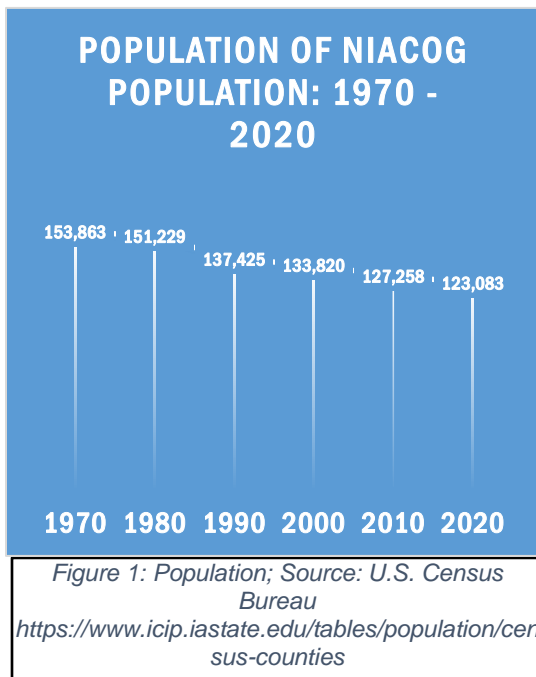


## 2) ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

### a) Region At-A-Glance

8 Counties	65,894 Jobs	704 More Jobs than workers	\$1.3 Billion in Retail Sales
67 Cities	63,140 Labor Force	\$52,544 Per Capita Income	5 Colleges /70 K-12 Schools
123,083 Population	\$56,734 Median Income	\$5.9 Billion Total Income	8,186 Miles of Roads
25,835 People age 65+	3.25 % Unemployment	3,818 Business Establishments	35.7 Miles of Rec. Trails

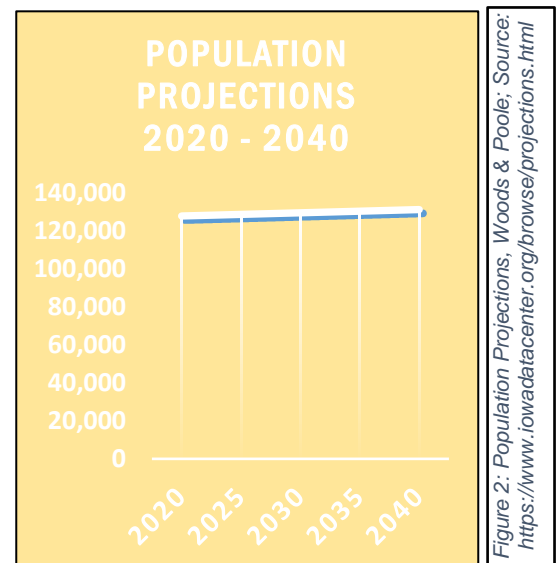
### b) Trends That Affect Economic Development



population declines have been increasingly less severe. According to the U.S. Census, the population loss for the NIACOG EDD region was between 1990 and 2020 was 4.3%

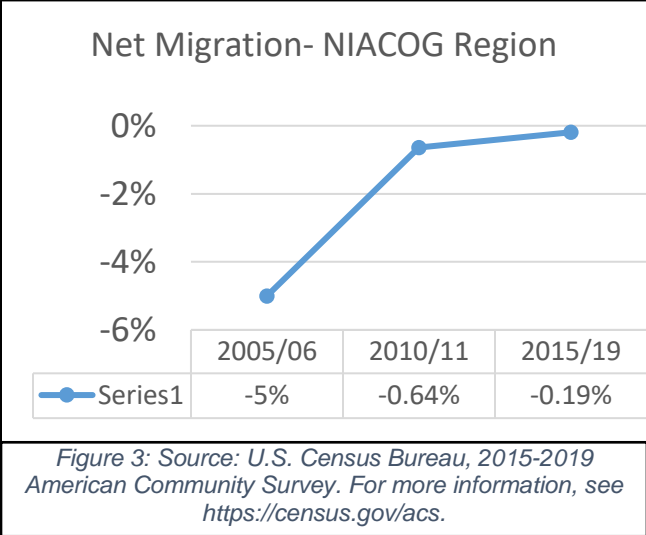
#### i) Workforce Population Trends:

**Population Decline for 50 Years, But Stabilizing:** Population for the NIACOG EDD region has declined with every decennial Census since 1960. Losses for the 5 decades totaled 25%; however, since 1990,





**Population Projections Suggest Tenuous Stability:** Woods and Poole has forecasted very slight net population gains in the coming decades. Although 2018 was the first year to see a population increase (0.68%), every 5-year cohort for youth (0-20) lost population in the past 10 years.



**Outmigration slowed** from 5% in 2005 to an average of 0.19% in the 2015-2019 American Community Survey sample results. Historically losses of 30% of young adults was common, but that pace slowed to 20% in the 2015-2019 American Community survey.

**The Unemployment Rate Is Extremely Low:** Correlating with dwindling population, the unemployment level is quite low. As shown in the graph below (2000 to 2022), the region mirrors the state of Iowa’s very low unemployment level.

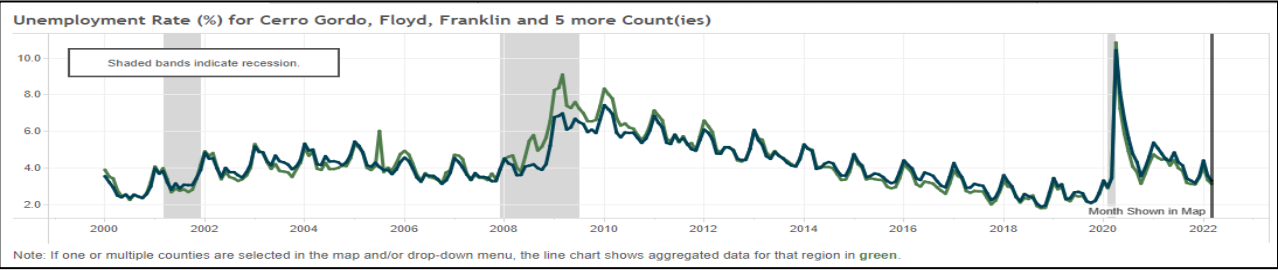
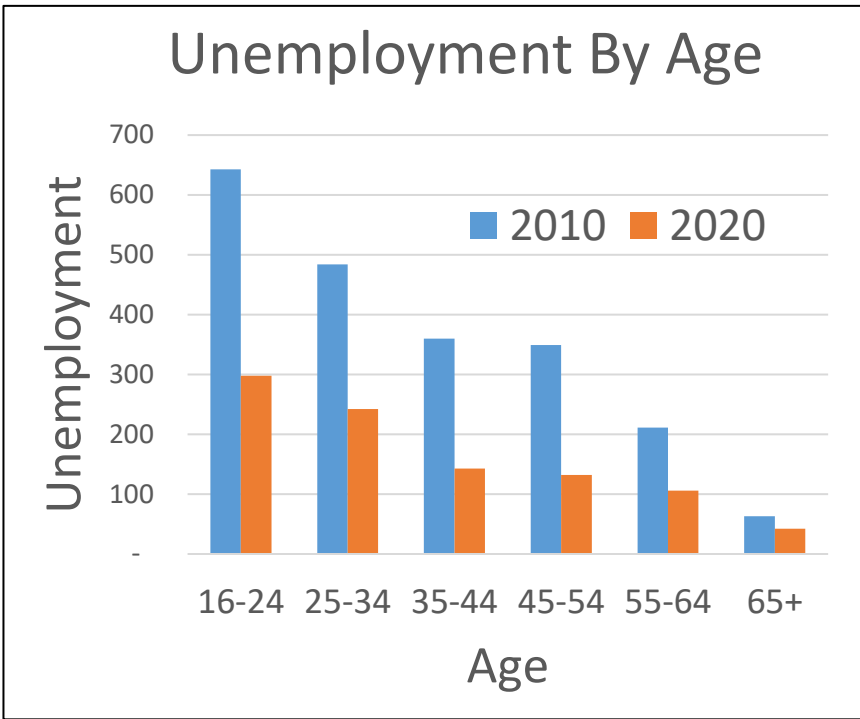


Figure 4: Unemployment Rates; Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/local-area-unemployment-statistics>, not seasonally adjusted



Between 2010 and 2020, unemployment levels shrunk dramatically for each age cohort. Most notable is the 50%+ drop in unemployment for young adults, which may be contributing to the slowed outmigration levels.

According to data received from JobsEQ, in June of 2022, our region had 5,691 and only 2,108 unemployed workers to fill them. In other words, 2.7 jobs are available per person seeking work.

Figure 5: Table 23001, American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=b23001&g=0400000US19%240500000&d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Detailed%20Tables&tid=ACSDT5Y2020.B23001&tp=false>

The number of employees in the region took a hit in 2021, most likely due to COVID and baby boomers retiring, but the number of workers still exceeds the quantity recorded for 2015 and has been slowly recovering in 2022.

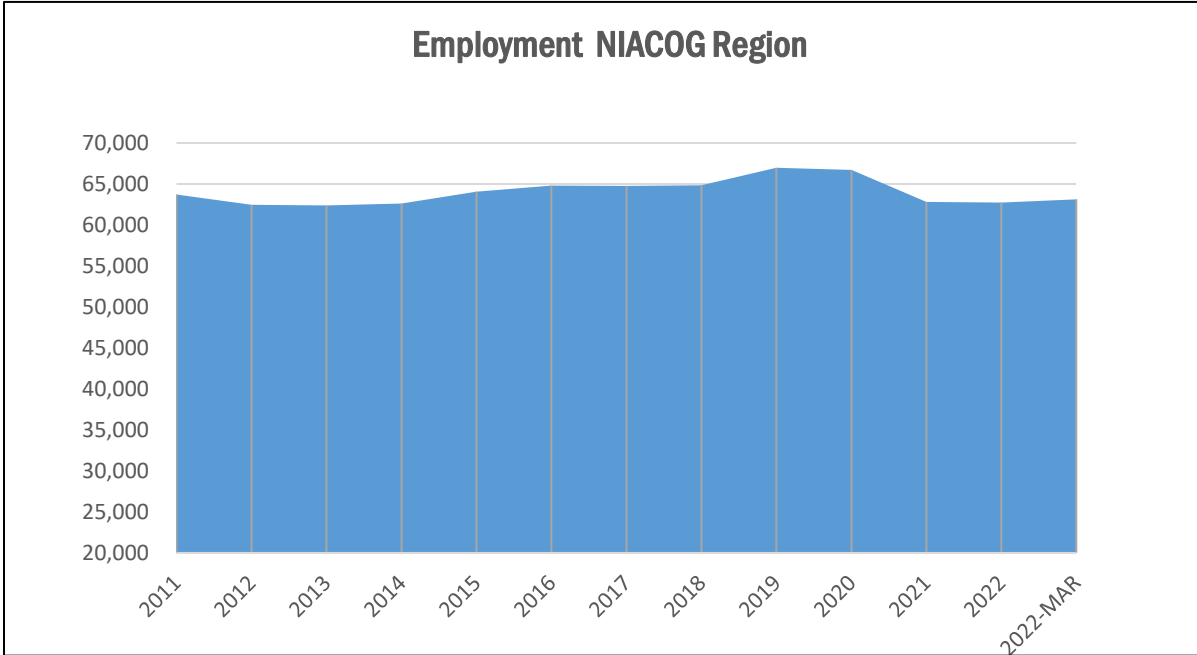


Figure 6: Iowa Workforce Development, <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/local-area-unemployment-statistics>

## ii) Income Trends

**Average Wage Has Been Increasing, But The Gap Between The Region And Both Iowa And The U.S. Has Increased Slightly:** Average Wage has been increasing for the NIACOG EDD region, which is certainly good news, but the region lost ground in trying to close the gap between the region's average wage and those of the State of Iowa (1% increase in gap) and the nation as a whole (2% increase in gap).

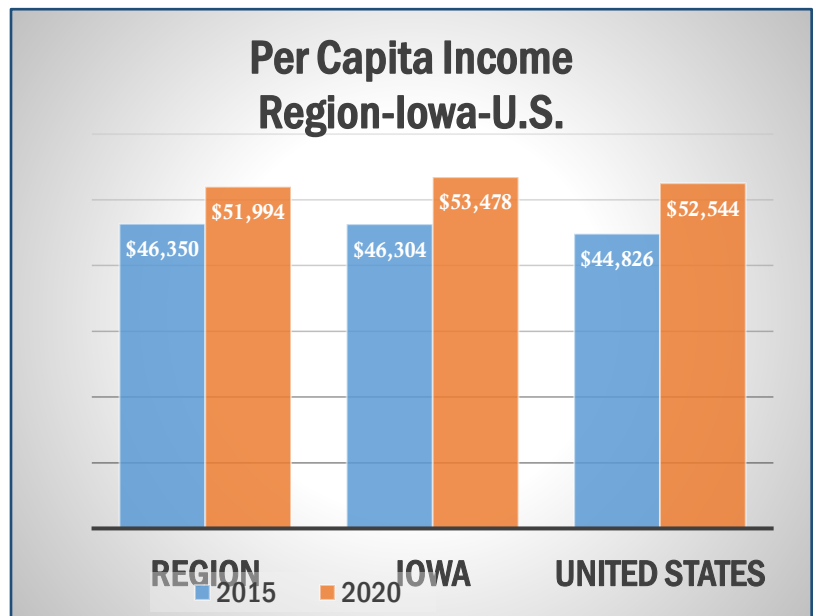


Figure 7: Per Capita Income; Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, <https://apps.bea.gov>

This disparity in wage levels is a primary reason cited by youth for migrating to other parts of the country. Their concern is especially acute for those who have significant college debt to repay as is fairly typical for college graduates.

### Per Capita Income Increased Significantly (by 12%) for the

**NIACOG EDD, But Lost Ground Compared To Iowa And The U.S.:** Per capita income increased by 12% for the NIACOG EDD region in just a five-year period (2015-2020). As illustrated in the chart on the right, in 2020, the NIACOG region's per capita income was lower than the U.S. per capita income by 1% and lower than the State's per capita by 2.8%.

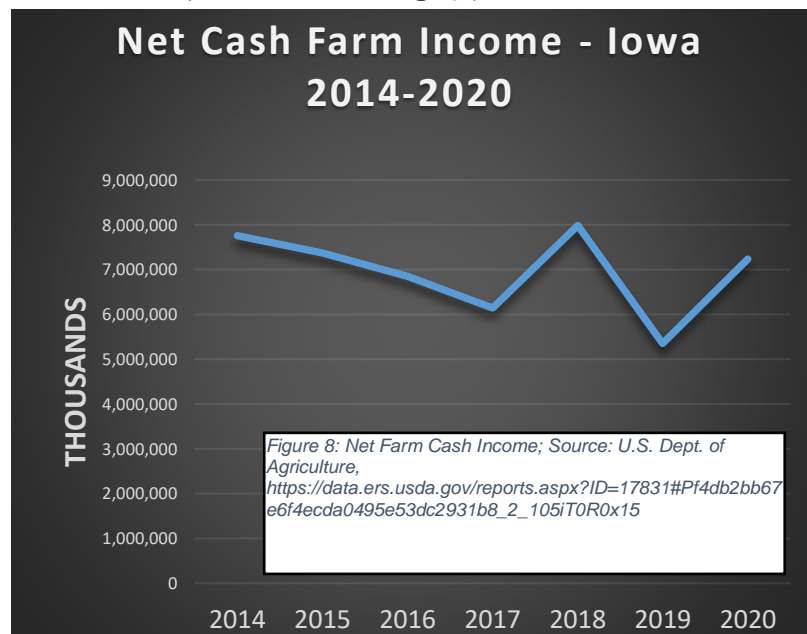


Figure 8: Net Farm Cash Income; Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, [https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17831#Pf4db2bb67e6f4ecda0495e53dc2931b8\\_2\\_105iT0R0x15](https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17831#Pf4db2bb67e6f4ecda0495e53dc2931b8_2_105iT0R0x15)

**The Farm Economy in Iowa experienced ups and downs in 2014 – 2022 due to rising prices for corn and soybeans.** Net Cash Farm income makes up a significant



portion of the per capita income for Iowa. Therefore, net farm cash income plays a major role in Iowa's Economic picture. Both corn and soybeans have seen a trend of increased corn and bean commodity prices per bushel. This has supported the increasing income, but input costs have also risen dramatically to balance the significant gains.

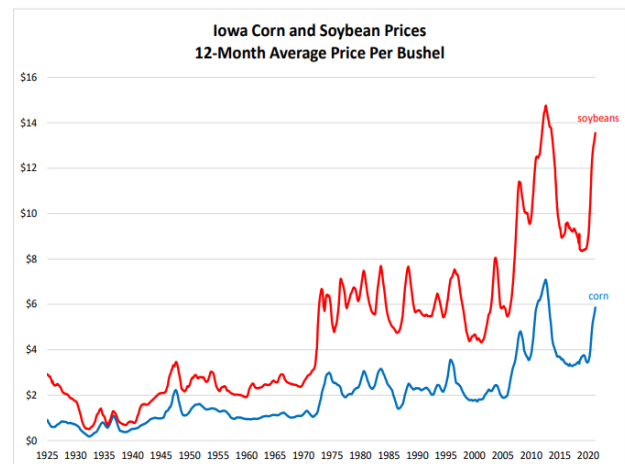


Figure 9: Corn Prices: Macrotrends.net, <https://www.macrotrends.net/2532/corn-prices-historical-chart-data>

### iii) Quality of Life Trends

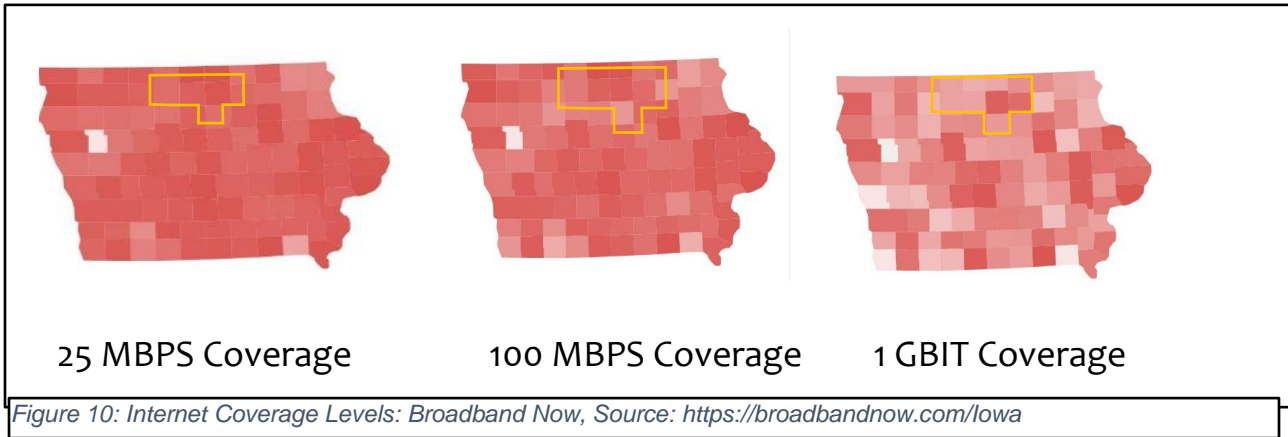
**Broadband Is a Growing Need for Businesses & Individuals:** To be competitive for new development, communities must have high-speed Internet to offer sufficient speed for E-Commerce to operate and compete for jobs related to E-Commerce because of their high level of Internet usage. Copper wire no longer offers sufficient speeds to meet the needs of many businesses.

According to Smart Growth America, a rough estimate of broadband installation cost is about \$10,000 per mile. Their estimate is based upon their experience in coordinating many installations in many small towns in the eastern third of the United States.

In addition to business implications, broadband also affects the ability to retain young adults in the area. In a recent community survey, youth in our region rated economic development initiatives, and they ranked broadband second only in importance to high paying jobs.

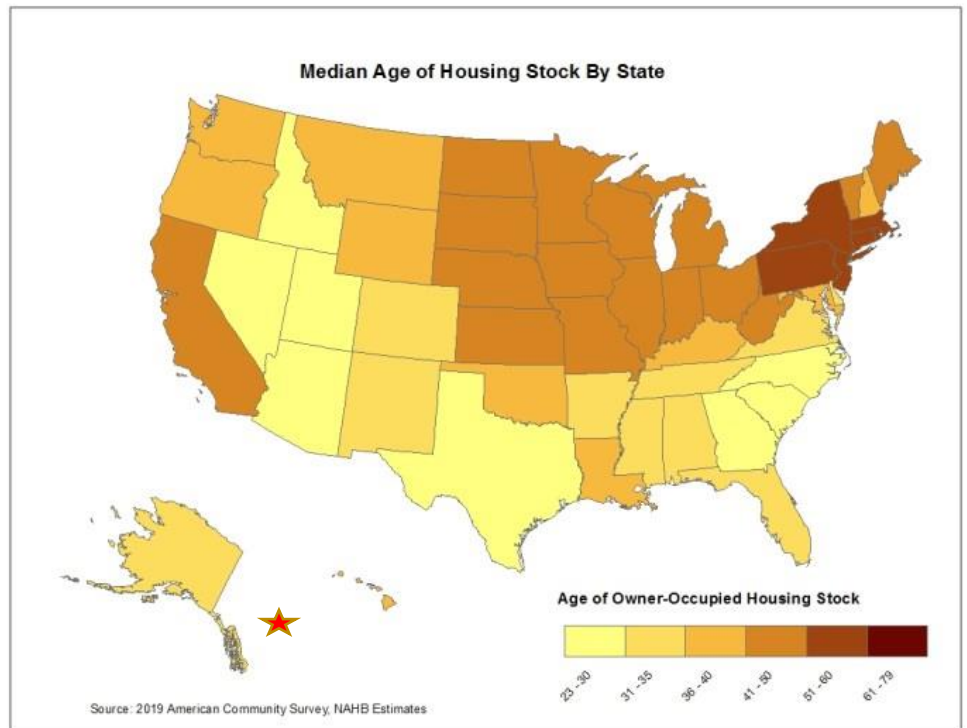
Although broadband is considered any speed above 4 Mbps by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), broadband speeds in our EDD region vary widely based upon the firm providing Internet service. For example, Mediacom and CLtel offer 1,000 Mbps (megabits per second); OmniTel offers 240 Mbps; Century Link, Communication 1 Network, Windstream, and WCTA offer 100 Mbps; several smaller cooperatives offer 5 to 15 Mbps. Mobile broadband is offered throughout the State. With an average speed of 29.5 Mbps, the State of Iowa is 33<sup>rd</sup> in the country for Internet speed. Internet speeds are highly affected by the physical medium through

which they travel. Fiber optic cable offers the highest speeds because light travels more quickly, but it is also quite expensive to lay fiber optic cable especially when a copper line is currently in place and serving customers. Although most of the counties in the EDD region are served by broadband of 25 Mbps or greater. Only a small percentage of the region is served by 1 gigabit service as illustrated below. The State continues to work toward better coverage through its ‘Connect Iowa’ program.



### Housing In The Region Is Quite Old & Often Unappealing To The Workforce:

In 2019, the median age for housing in the United States was 39 years according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. The median age for housing in the NIACOG EDD planning region is 50% older at 62 years old. The housing stock in Iowa averages 50 years of age, which is



about 20% older than the U.S. average. See the map below entitled ‘Median Age of Housing Stock by State’ and chart (‘Housing Built Per Decade’) on next page.

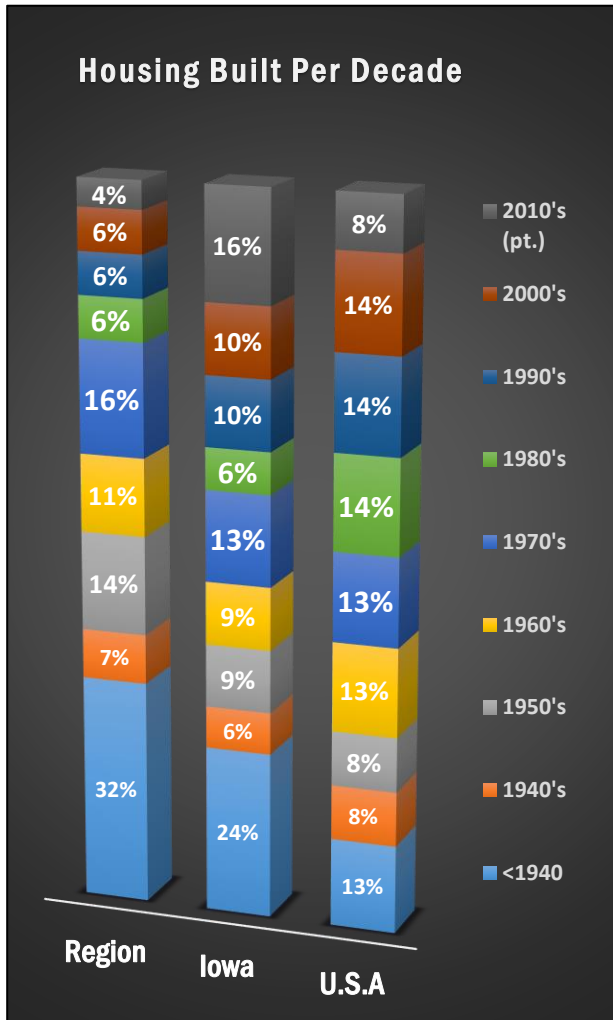


Figure 11: Year Housing Built, American Community Survey 2013-2017

The chart at the left shows the distribution of housing built by decade in the region, in Iowa, and in the U.S. One-third of the housing in the NIACOG EDD region was built before 1940 when indoor plumbing came into fashion and FDR was president. Nearly half came during the 1940’s to the 1970’s during the boom years. Then, construction waned and nearly disappeared as the population plummeted since the 1980’s to present with only 22% of homes built since 1980. These are the reverse of the national percentages for age of homes. Unfortunately, the following examples of real world impact of these factors is playing out in trying to recruit businesses and retain workforce as follows:

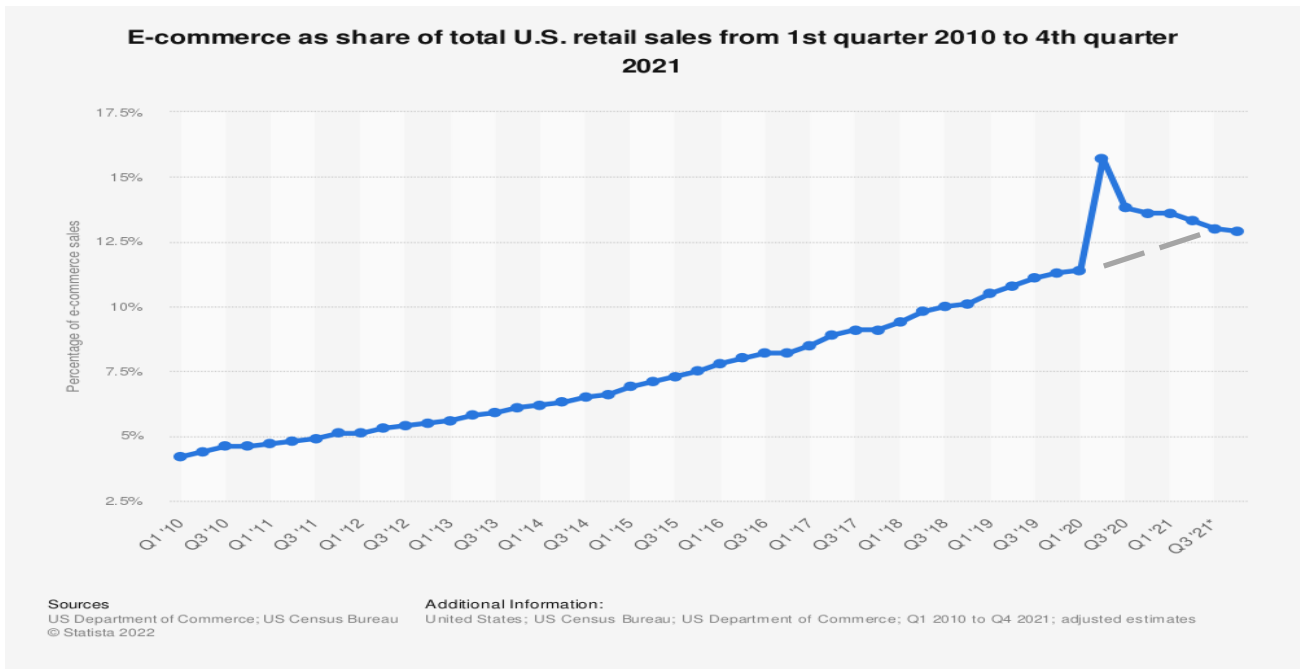
- When asked, “What would help your business?”, Bushel Boy’s president said, “We need housing for employees at all levels and

Renovo’s owner said, ‘... places to house people.’”

- A potential major employer was considering locating a business in our region, but declined because his family would not have been satisfied with the housing.
- The former administrator of Mercy Hospital in Mason City noted that, during exit interviews, housing was the most frequently given reason for people leaving employment.
- A scientist in a local manufacturing facility reported that she and her co-workers are choosing to live outside of our region and commute longer to work because of poor housing choice/quality and lack of things to do.

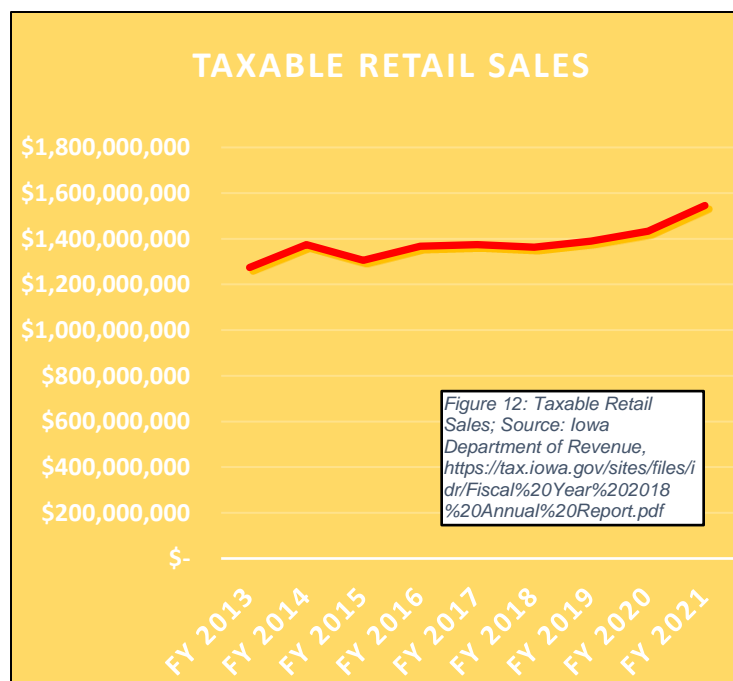


**Big Name Retail Stores Have Been Closing:** Although retail does not tend to offer high wage jobs, typical store clerk jobs are being replaced by e-commerce jobs. As local stores close, this trend affects quality of life in regards to efficient accessibility to goods and in terms of shopping as an entertainment option. On-line purchasing skyrocketed in 2020 during the COVID pandemic, but declined back to its previous trend rate in 2021.



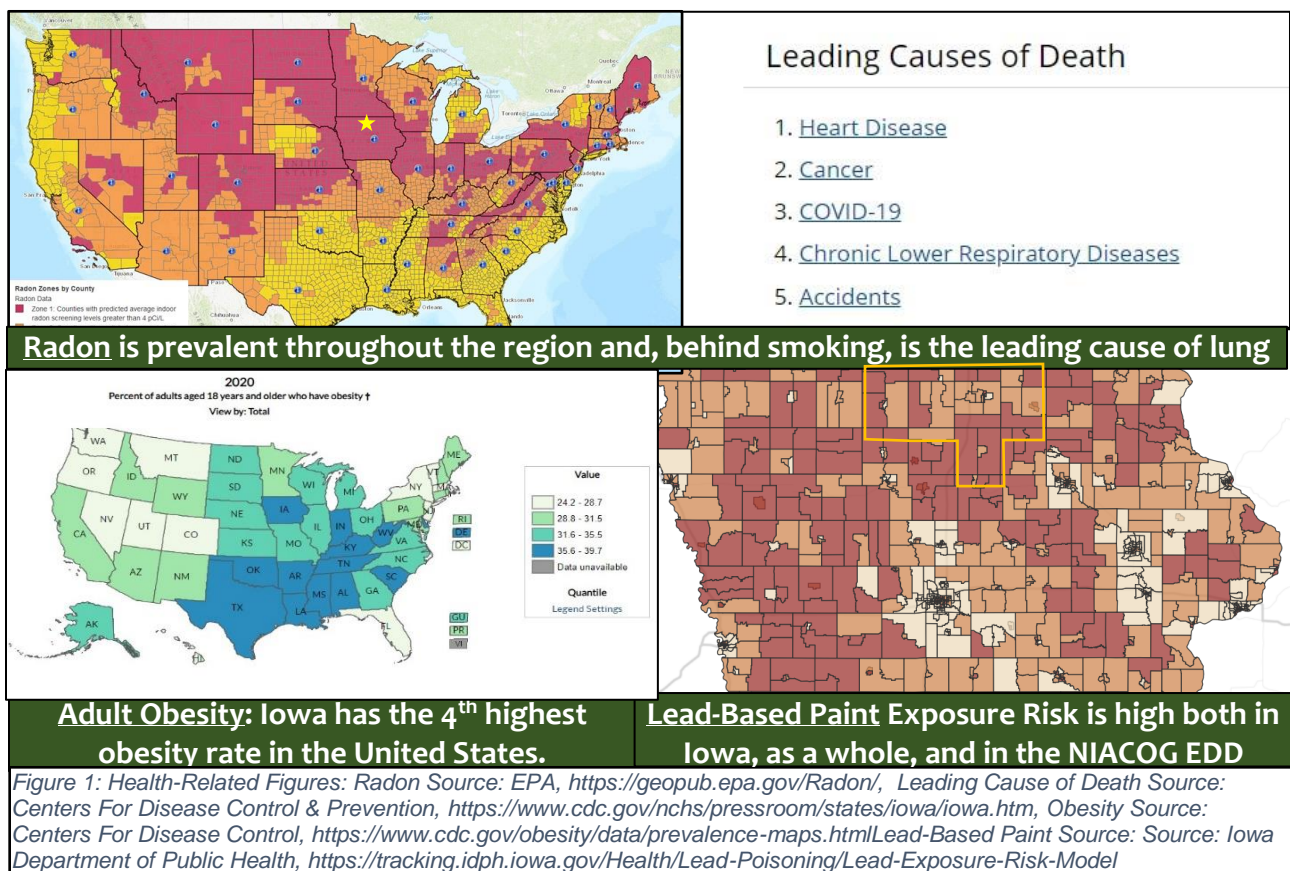
In the NIACOG EDD area, retail sales rose between FY 2013 and FY 2021, even during the pandemic (FY 2019/FY2020). This may be partially due to the number of Minnesotans crossing the border into Iowa to obtain goods and services when Minnesota’s retailers remained closed long after Iowa opened up its retail.

The retail industry has been changing significantly on both a national and local scale due to e-commerce. Since 2002, E-Commerce sales have consistently



increased annually and accounted for 16% of retail sales. Department store sales have diminished as e-commerce takes a larger and larger market share each year. Prior to the pandemic, several national chain stores closed in the NIACOG EDD region including: RadioShack, Younkers, J.C. Penney, American Eagle, K-Mart, Sears (replaced by a small ‘hometown store’ with little inventory), and Shopko. These closings represent the sectors that are most affected by e-commerce including: electronic/appliance (20% e-commerce in 2017) and clothing (10% e-commerce in 2017) according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Workforce Health Has Three Risk Areas Above National Levels – Radon, Obesity, and Lead-Based Paint:** Several health initiatives have been undertaken in the region to address health factors such as Blue Zone, 5210 Healthy Choices Count, and Healthy Hometowns. However, 3 nationally significant factors remain and can affect health and/or mortality of people in our workforce including radon, obesity, and lead-based



paint exposure risk. Notably, Iowa has the 14<sup>th</sup> highest rate of lung cancer in the U.S.

#### **iv) Climate**

The climate of the Region is typical of north central Iowa: warm in the summer and cold in the winter. Average summer temperatures are approximately 70 degrees F, and average winter temperatures are approximately 19 degrees F. This temperature range allows for a frost free construction season of approximately 140 days. Annual precipitation is approximately 30 inches. Of this, 20 inches or 70 percent usually falls in April through September. Thunderstorms occur on about 40 days each year, normally during summer months. The average snowfall is approximately 35 to 40 inches.

#### **v) Top Cluster Advantage Fields**

The top competitive advantage fields for the region reported by StatsAmerica for business development and workforce, include Primary Metal Manufacturing and Skilled Production Workers, respectively on top, followed for both by Agribusiness/Food Process/Technology as first runner up.

#### Ranked Cluster Industries with Location Quotients Above 1

1. Primary Metal Manufacturing LQ 5.93
2. Agribusiness, Food Processing, & Technology LQ 5.19
3. Mining LQ 3.14
4. Glass & Ceramics LQ 2.83
5. Transportation Equipment Manufacturing LQ 2.54
6. Machinery Manufacturing LQ 2.23
7. Chemicals & Chemical Based Products LQ 2.05
8. Transportation & Logistics LQ 1.75
9. Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing LQ 1.23
10. Energy (Fossil & Renewable) LQ 1.18
11. Manufacturing Supercluster LQ 1.18
12. Arts, Entertainment, Recreation & Visitor Industries LQ 1.11
13. Education & Knowledge Creation LQ 1.09

#### Ranked Cluster Occupations with the Most Workers in The NIACOG EDD Region

1. Skilled Production Workers 6,897



2. Agribusiness and Food Technology 6,657
3. Legal and Financial Services, and Real Estate 5,416
4. Managerial, Sales, Marketing and Human Resources 4,228
5. Primary/Secondary and Vocational Education, Remediation & Social Services 4,042
6. Health Care & Medical Science 3,958
7. Technology-Based Knowledge Clusters 3,513



Research for the above figures was funded in part by the Economic Development Administration and conducted by the Purdue Center for Regional Development, the Indiana Business Research Center, and other research partners.

**vi) Resiliency** - The primary area of concern for resiliency in the region lies in two areas.

[Labor Shortage is the First Area of Concern](#) - The number of employees in the region took a hit in 2021, most likely due to COVID and baby boomers retiring. In the Summer of 2022, 5,691 job openings were posted in the NIACOG EDD region, but only 2,108 unemployed workers were available to fill them. In other words, 2.7 jobs were available per person seeking work. Despite the recent drop in workforce, the number of workers in 2022 still exceeds the number of workers in 2015 and has been slowly recovering from the pandemic in 2022. The labor shortage has had several significant impacts on the economy. These include: lost new business development leads for lack of labor force, closings and shortened hours for employers searching for workers to fill positions, a wage war that is driving up the cost of labor, and supply chain issues that cause delays in development and difficulties with day-to-day operations in workplaces. To accommodate workers, employers are having to be more flexible in accommodating workers at a much higher level than normal with flex hours, remote working, etc. Employers are also hiring less than candidates for employment to fill positions. The plan moving forward is to generate more



workers through recruitment from Puerto Rico, enhance image, and encourage entrepreneurship as listed in the goals section.

[Losing A Major Industry Is The Second Area Of Concern](#) - In some parts of the region, one or two major companies employ a large share of the workforce, and losing one of these major employers would be devastating to the region. In order to mitigate this issue, economic development corporations/commissions are working to diversify the type and number of industries/employers in the region.

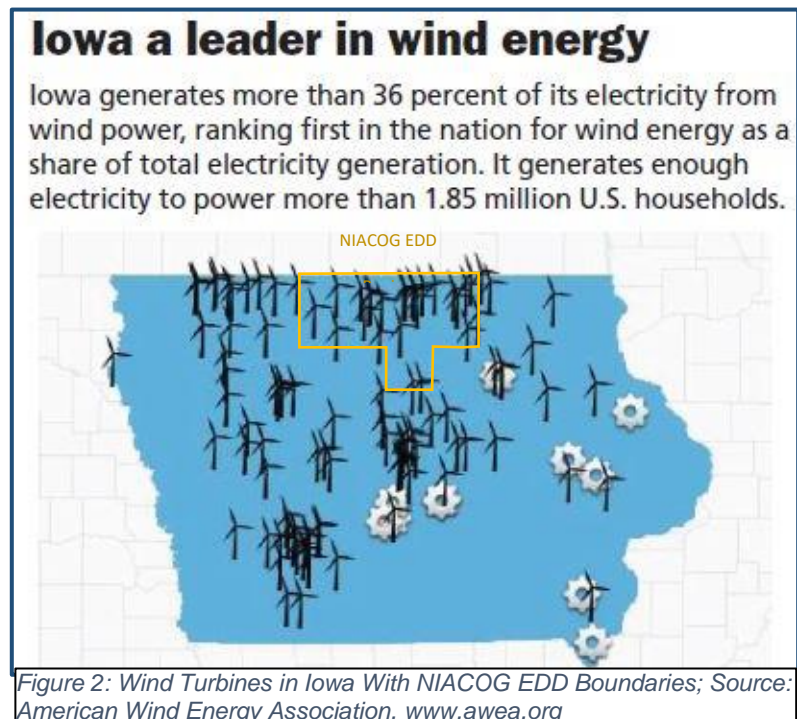
### vii) Vital Projects

The region is currently in the midst of a project that involves recruiting workers and their families from Puerto Rico. Avance USA has been hired as the recruiting firm. This undertaking is helping to mitigate some of the population loss. Many water, sewer, zoning, and planning projects are also taking place to prepare the region for future development.

### viii) Sustainability

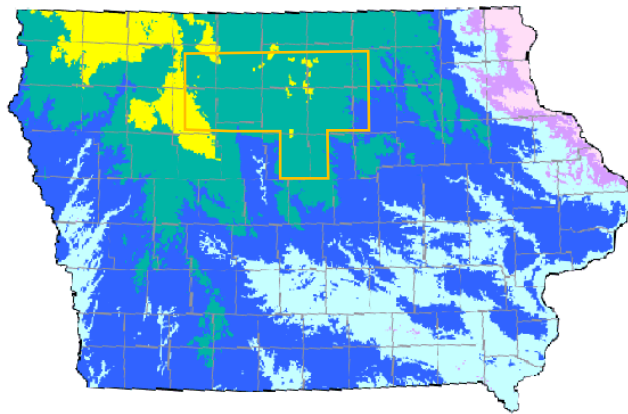
**WIND TURBINES:** A new trend that is boosting income for a few select farmers is leasing land to large wind turbine companies. The average land lease per wind turbine is \$8,000 per year according to Landmark Dividend. And, Iowa is second only behind Texas with the most lease revenues for farmers with over \$10 million in

annual rents according to the American Wind Energy Association. It is further notable that two (2) of the top five (5) counties with the most wind turbines in Iowa are located within the NIACOG EDD (Hancock and Worth).



### Estimated Average Annual Wind Speeds

Typical average wind speeds on well exposed sites at 50 m above ground



MPH	m/s
>19.0	>8.5
17.9-19.0	8.0-8.5
16.8-17.9	7.5-8.0
15.7-16.8	7.0-7.5
14.5-15.7	6.5-7.0
13.4-14.5	6.0-6.5
12.3-13.4	5.5-6.0
<12.3	<5.5

#### Iowa Energy Center

This map was generated from data collected by the Iowa Wind Energy Institute under Iowa Energy Center Grant No. 93-04-02. The map was created using a model developed by Brover & Company, Andover, MA.

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Why is the NIACOG EDD area so popular for wind turbine construction? The answer lies in the higher wind speeds available to power the turbines and the flat, open lay of the land, which facilitates constructing these giant structures. More importantly, the future of

wind energy farming could look as forecasted by the U.S. Department of Energy, with Iowa playing a huge role in the production of wind energy into the future. They believe that wind energy production cost will be on par with conventional forms of energy production, and more friendly to the environment. A challenge to the development of this emerging industry is the timing of phasing out tax credit programs over the coming years.

## WIND VISION

See the projected growth of the wind industry over the next 35 years.

Select a Year

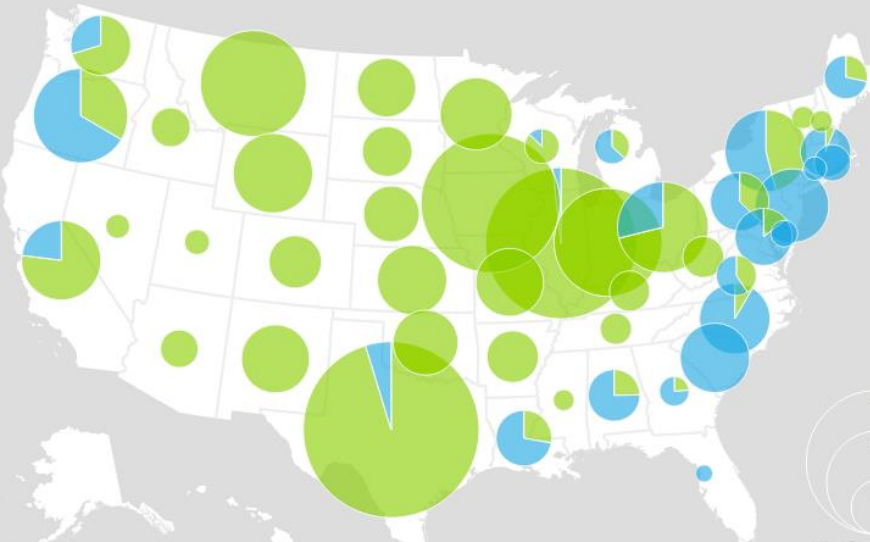
2000 2010 2013 2020 2030 2050 ↺

WIND POWER TYPE

Land Based

Offshore

**TOTAL ENERGY PROJECTED IN 2050**  
**404.25 GW ACROSS 48 STATES**  
 AN INCREASE OF 180.15 GW SINCE 2030



Source: Wind Vision; Source: U.S. Department of Energy, energy.gov

All units are in gigawatts (GW). Only states with total capacity over 0.1 GW are included per year. Find out more about the data by reading the Wind Vision Report. You can download the data used for this graphic directly [here](#).

### 3) SWOT ANALYSIS:

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

The following tables list the highest ranking strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in order of ranking

Strengths
Quality of life, low crime, low cost of living
Major Medical facilities
Quality and proximity to transportation assets- (major highways, rail lines, regional airport)
Organizations/Partnerships - EDC's JPEC, IWD Region 2, NCIA
Work ethic and mid-west pride
Available land for development
Location (midcontinent, I-35 corridor, and relative short distance to two major metro areas)
Quality education and education opportunities
Infrastructure quality and capacity
Economic strength- consistently ranking in the top 20% of 543 Micropolitan Statistical Areas by POLICOM
Agricultural industry- income, generosity, retail spending, locally grown foods
Some of the best farmland in the world

Weaknesses
Workforce shortage
Insufficient amount of childcare for children, esp. babies - also related to the workforce shortage
Limited availability of quality housing at all levels of employment (to purchase)
Population decline
Lower wage than metro areas and US
Lack of available quality rental housing
Limited 1 gig broadband coverage
Unable to compete with metro areas: community facilities, wages, retail, and activities/venues
Limited entertainment and dining options

Opportunities
Leadership programs and volunteer training
Recruit young adult(s) from within, attract former residents back, and recruit workers from other locations (Puerto Rico, ect.)
Expand social connection opportunities to improve quality of life, connection with community, and populations/workforce stability; better market things to do, clubs, etc. Include immigrant families in community events and vice versa.
Image shift through Iowa success stories
Opportunities to replace retiring professionals
Promoting work from home opportunities
Expand recreational opportunities (Outdoor)
Expand entrepreneurial network and funding opportunities



Utilize growing retirement population to train young workers and prepare succession plans  
Pursue measures to ensure economic resiliency (diversification, sustainability, succession plans, pre-disaster mitigation plans, etc.)  
New housing  
Address blight housing

### Threats

Closed minded people against economic growth  
Declining youth and workforce populations (baby boomer retirement)  
Divisive political climate- social media representation  
Growing mental health issues- lack of help- self medicating  
Rising inflation  
Supply chain issues  
Rising gas, materials, and labor prices  
Aging infrastructure, lack of power and utilities  
Barriers to employee recruitment such as: lower level of wages in Iowa, trailing spouse with difficulty finding work in their field, housing in less than desired condition  
Stocks to the local economy that we are unable to control: natural recession, depressed ag markets, loss of major employer, flooding, pandemic, etc.  
Healthcare shortage  
Lack of parenting (home discipline, etc.)



## 4) THE PLANS:

SMART Goals, Strategies, Actions, Responsible Parties, Deadlines, & Costs

### a) Goal #1: Increase the employment level back to 66,000 by 2027

#### i) Strategy: Encourage Entrepreneurship to create resiliency

- (1) Action – Secure funding from federal/state/local resources & create a North Iowa Innovation Center; foster it to develop a digital economy ecosystem

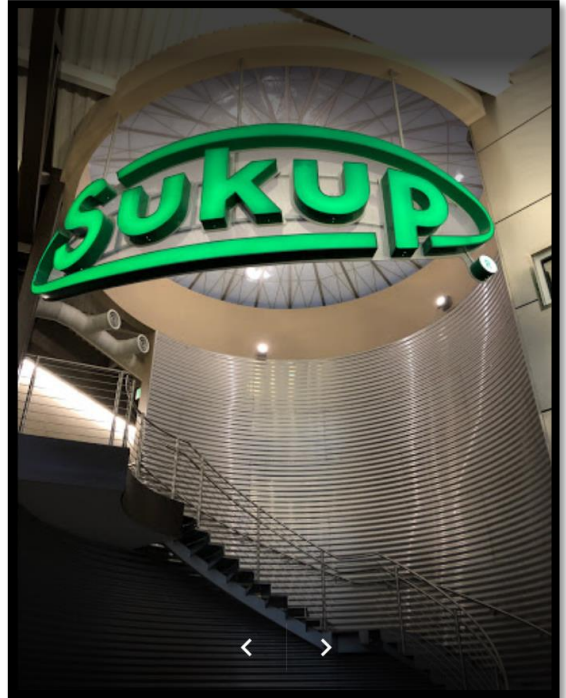
(a) Responsible Party/Deadline: Candi Carsjens, JPEC by 2027. Costs are being revisited with a reduced scale.

- (2) Action – Offer management/ skill development, access to experienced mentors, how-to classes, succession planning, access to capital, etc.

(a) Responsible Party/Deadline: NIACC, ongoing, costs vary

- (3) Action - Complete a study on entrepreneurship for the region to better understand and prepare for growing the entrepreneurial community

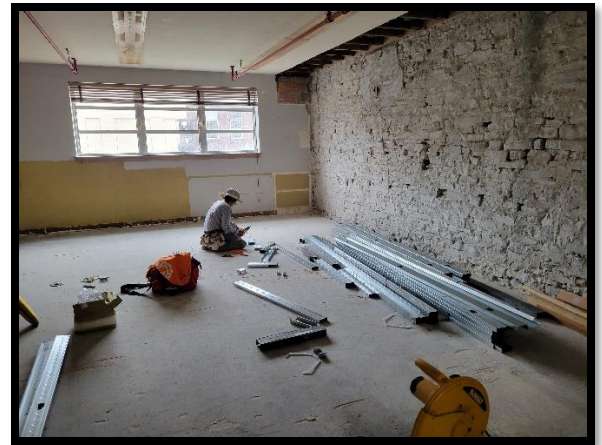
(a) NIACOG with ISU Extension, December 2022. Cost is \$21,667.



### b) Goal #2: Build/Rehabilitate 1,000 housing units by 2027

#### i) Strategy: Educate and/or connect cities, developers/builders, and economic development professionals with federal/state/local financial tools

- (1) **Action** – Develop a list and short description of housing resources and training opportunities
  - (a) **Responsible Party/Deadline:**  
NIACOG by December 2022, \$0
- (2) **Action** - Hold a North Iowa Housing Conference for city councils, developers, and contractors
  - (a) **Responsible Party/Deadline:**  
NIACOG AND NCIA by Spring 2023.  
Cost is to be determined.
- (3) **Action** - Complete a study on Housing that defines the marketplace and identifies needs
  - (a) **Responsible Party/Deadline:** NIACOG with ISU Extension, December 2022.  
Cost is \$21,667.



**c) Goal #3: Increase total licensed childcare capacity by 10% (645) by 2027**

**i) Strategy: Complete a study on childcare in the NIACOG EDD and implement the priority recommendations of the study**

- (1) **Action** – Engage the services of ISU Extension to complete a survey and prepare thoughtful guidance on how to better address childcare in the region
  - (a) **Responsible Party / Deadline:**  
NIACOG with ISU Extension,  
December 2022. Cost is \$21,667.
- (2) **Action** - Develop list of actions after the child care study is completed
  - (a) **Responsible Party/Deadline:** NCIA by December 2023, costs to be determined



**d.) Goal #4: Reach 2% in-migration by 2027**

**i) Strategy: Promote North Iowa Internally & Externally**

- (1) **Action** – Create a regional pride campaign and image shift through Iowa success stories and promote assets and work from anywhere options, using social media and promoting assets
  - (a) **Responsible Party/Deadline:** NCIA,  
ongoing, costs vary





## 5) EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The evaluation framework will involve the bi-monthly review and modification of progress toward meeting the SMART Goals presented as part of this plan with specific consideration given to:

1. Increase the employment level back to 66,000 by 2027
2. Increase total licensed childcare capacity by 10% (645) by 2027
3. Build/Rehabilitate 500 housing units by 2027
4. Reach 2% in-migration by 2027

The evaluation will regularly include CEDS Committee members who are from throughout the region. Progress on these goals will be reviewed as part of the annual CEDS report.





# APPENDIX

## CEDS Committee Roster, Environmental, Inquiries, Publication

### CEDS Committee Roster

First Name	Last Name	Company
Chad	Schreck	North Iowa Corridor
Tim	Fox	Charles City Area Development Corp.
Melissa	Michaelis	Winn-Worth Betco
Tracy	Scharper	Mitchell County Economic Development Commission
Mary	Amsbaugh	Franklin County Development Association
Maureen	Elbert	Kossuth County EDC
Jill	Kramer	Hancock Co. EDC
Kevin	Kolbet	Kolbet Realtors
Beth	Bilyeu	Forest City Economic Development
Brad	Sabin	Manly Terminal
Jennifer	Breister	Crown Point Builders
Candi	Karsjens	John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center
Mark	Wicks	Charles City Main Street
James	Arvidson	Iowa Works
Brittany	Dickey	Corn Belt Power
Patti	Hanson	North Iowa Area Community College

### Environmental Review

#### Environmental Issues Have Been Reviewed as Follows

PARKS. The only designated National Park in Region 2 is the Union Slough Area in Kossuth County near Bancroft. The region contains no National Game Preserves; however, all eight counties have designated public hunting areas administered by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Designated State Parks are located in Cerro Gordo County on Clear Lake (3 parks), Hancock County near Forest City (1 park), and Kossuth County (1 park) near Algona. Numerous county and city parks and conservation are available throughout the region.

WILDERNESS ACT. The region contains no designated or proposed wilderness areas under the Wilderness Act. (Source: IDNR).

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT. The region contains no wild or scenic rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. (Source: IDNR)

ENDANGERED SPECIES. The region has one endangered animal species; the endangered species is the Topeka shiner. It is a type of fish that is located in prairie streams and rivers and has been found in both Hancock County and Kossuth County. No habitat conservation plans have been developed. The Topeka shiner was first listed in 2004. The region also has two threatened plant species - the western prairie fringed orchid and the prairie bush clover. Both of these species are in every county in the region 2 area. The western prairie fringed orchid is found in wet prairies and sedge meadows. The prairie bush clover is found in dry to mesic prairies with gravelly soil. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has developed no habitat conservation plans or published critical habitat rules for either of these species. Both plants were both listed in the late 1980's. PRIME AGRICULTURAL LAND. Approximately 80% of the farmland in the Region 2 area is 'prime / unique agricultural land', although not officially designated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Natural Resources Conservation Service) under the Federal Farmlands Protection Act. Several of the counties utilize a CSR (Corn Suitability Rating) zoning criteria to determine whether or not the land should be allowed to be used for non-agricultural use. The type and location of agricultural soils is monitored by the use of a Soils Survey document prepared for each county by the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experimental Station Cooperative Extension Service of Iowa State University, and the Department of Soil Conservation, State of Iowa. (Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Survey Reports & NIACOG).

SUPERFUND/RCRA/LUST/BROWNFIELD SITES. The two listed sites in the NIACOG EDD region that remain under monitoring include the former site of the Mason City Coal Gasification Plant in Mason City and the Shaw Avenue Dump located on the North border of Charles City. A current listing of sites is available at [www.epa.gov/region07/cleanup/npl\\_files/index.htm#Iowa](http://www.epa.gov/region07/cleanup/npl_files/index.htm#Iowa). RCRA sites are located in 5 of the Region's 8 counties as follows with the number of sites in parenthesis: Cerro Gordo (4), Floyd (2), Franklin (2), Hancock (3), and Kossuth (2). (Source: EPA on their website with the following address: [http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/rcris/rcris\\_query\\_java.html](http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/rcris/rcris_query_java.html).) A list of active Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites changes periodically and is available at: <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/tanks/pages/advanced.aspx>. The region contains at least 4 known brownfields. They include: a) The site of a former Vulcan Iron Works; the land is being recycled for use as open space/park, but could also potentially be used for commercial (but not residential) use according to IDNR. b) Tom Thumb Facility; an active grain elevator owns the land and is recycling it after an ag chemical spill c) Snap-On Tools; the tool company owns the land and is recycling it for their purposes d) Lake Mills Landfill; the City of Lake Mills owns land that was the site of a landfill about 30 years ago, but is buried; it has been used informally as a park for many years and was recently tested for contaminants by IDNR and determined that it was okay for park use as long as no excavation is done. The state offers funding for economic development on brownfield sites to assist with assessment and development costs. Communities may not call certain sites brownfields by name; however, any site where redevelopment interest has been hindered by known or suspected contamination can be called a brownfield.

MANUFACTURERS AND USERS OF HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS / STORAGE OF CHEMICALS. The region has several manufactures and users of hazardous chemicals. Each of the eight counties in Region 2 is served by a local Emergency Coordinator who works closely with the IDNR to monitor these hazardous chemical sites. The Iowa DNR is responsible for the collection and management of Tier II data reported by regulated facilities. The purpose of Tier II data is to provide state and local officials with specific information on hazardous chemicals present at a facility. Source: Steve O'Neil, Emergency Management Coordinator, Cerro Gordo County Emergency Management Agency; Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

MANUFACTURERS/USERS OF PESTICIDES. The region has major manufacturers and users of pesticides. These sites are monitored by the county Emergency Management Coordinators and IDNR. Source: EPA at the web address [www.epa.gov/enviro/html/rcris/rcris\\_query\\_java.html](http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/rcris/rcris_query_java.html) and Steve O'Neil, Emergency Management Coordinator, Cerro Gordo County Emergency Management Agency.

SINGLE SOURCE AQUIFERS. Region 2 contains several single source (drinking water) aquifers in Region 2, such as the Jordan and Cedar Valley aquifers. These aquifers are monitored by the local users in accordance with the IDNR's regulations. (Source: <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/drinkingwater/sourcewater/protection/solesourceaquifer.cfm>).

WELL-HEAD PROTECTION AREAS. The NIACOG region has three cities that have made IDNR's Source Water Protection priority list. There are also three areas where watershed projects are under development in Kossuth County, Hancock/Cerro Gordo County and Franklin County. Future development should be sensitive to the watershed protection areas in the cities listed above.

NONATTAINMENT AREAS. Although the region had a nonattainment area in the last CEDS plan, the cement plant causing the emissions has installed multi-million-dollar filter/scrubbing equipment and is no longer listed. The region now has no nonattainment areas. Source: IDNR staff member Sean Fitzsimmons of the Air Quality Services Bureau and the EPA website with nonattainment area listing Source: (<http://www.epa.gov/oaqps001/greenbk/ancl.html>)

100-YEAR FLOOD PLAIN & AFFECT ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENT. The existence of 100-year flood plains has been determined by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) for participating communities. The 100-year flood plains have been identified and mapped for the cities and counties participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as identified in the following lists as of March 2014. The maps are available at <https://msc.fema.gov/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/FemaWelcomeView?storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&langId=-1>. Development projects will avoid flood plain areas unless essential to the project.

ARCHEOLOGICAL, HISTORIC, PREHISTORIC, & CULTURAL SITES TO AVOID AS A MAJOR CONSTRAINT TO DEVELOPMENT. Archeological Sites are tracked by the Office of the State Archaeologist, and they have mapped every county in the region (Source: Office of the State Archaeologist at website address: <http://ags.gis.iastate.edu/lsitesPublicAccess/>). Historic sites are

also located in every county of the region. Source: National Register listing obtained from the State Historical Society of Iowa website in March 2014 and located at the following web address: <http://www.iowahistory.org/shsi/historic-preservation/national-register-of-historic-places/properties-in-iowa.html>

COASTAL ZONE. The Region has no Coastal Zones because Iowa is not a coastal state.

GENERAL CONSTRAINTS. Significant constraints to economic development in the region include infrastructure barriers for more remote areas especially. The process of installing and repairing/replacing infrastructure is ongoing and requires regular repair and maintenance.

SOCIAL IMPACTS / ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (MINORITY / LOW INCOME POPULATIONS).

Households with lower incomes can be negatively affected when urban renewal seeks to redevelop an area that is currently populated by people of lower incomes. The private sector must pay market rate for these acquisitions and only from willing sellers because they do not have the power to condemn properties. If the government is involved, they do have the power to condemn in some cases, but are required to adequately notify and inform area residents/businesses and pay market rate for properties acquired and for moving expenses as mandated by federal regulations. Because of the prevalence of undeveloped land; however, urban renewal is seldom used in the region.





2022-2027  
**Comprehensive  
Economic  
Development  
Strategy**  
for NIACOG EDD

## INQUIRIES AND PUBLICATION



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For Inquiries and Request of Information contact:

North Iowa Area Council of Governments

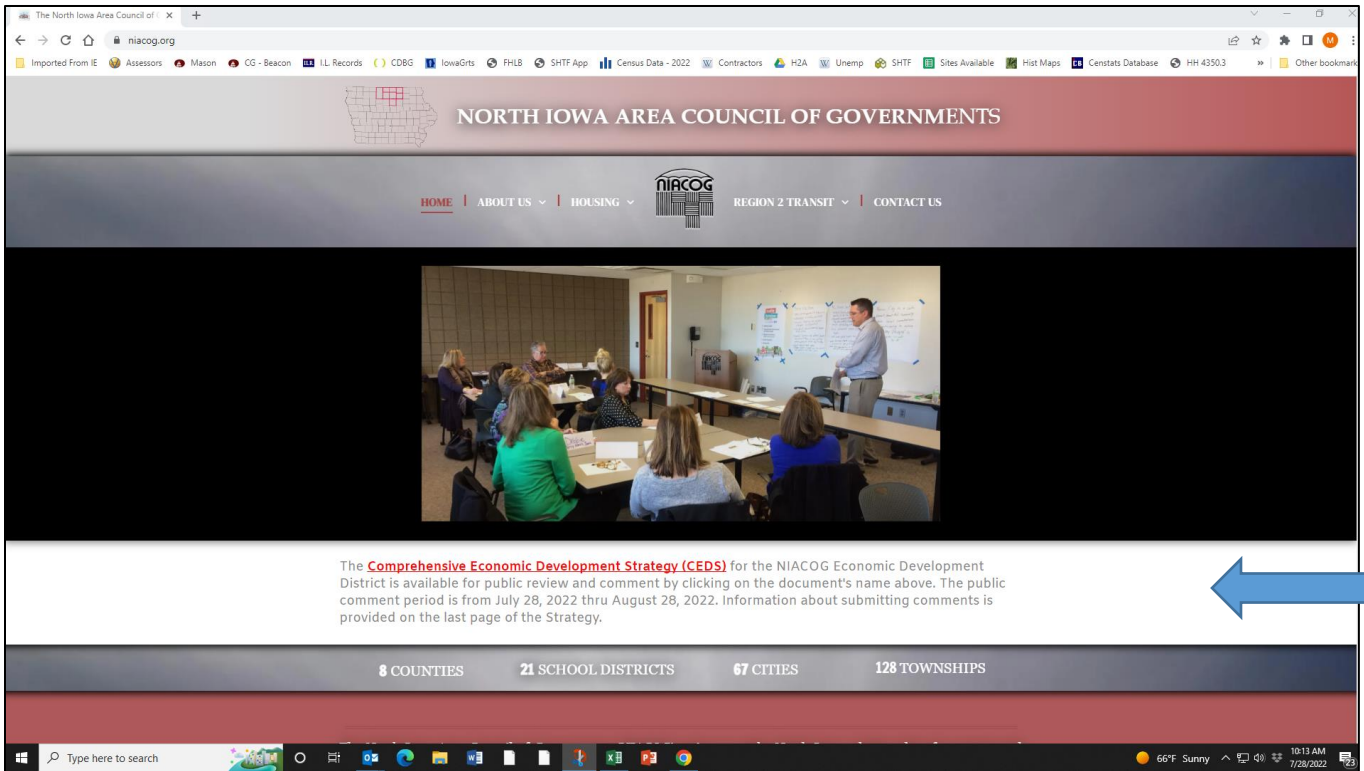
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The **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** for the NIACOG Economic Development District is available for public review and comment by clicking on the document's name above. The public comment period is from July 28, 2022 thru August 28, 2022. Information about submitting comments is provided on the last page of the Strategy.