

GOAL 4:

Increase Regional Cooperation and Efficiency at All Levels

The Steering Committee and public discussions point to the need to continue building on an already productive regional framework. Some of the region's best examples of cooperative progress include organizations like the MPO, Metro Waste Authority, and the Wastewater Reclamation Authority. They demonstrate a mix of efficiencies, expanded services, and resilience stemming from these broad-based, thoughtful efforts to cross the boundaries of seventeen communities and four counties to embrace a regional view.

Strategy 4A ○○○●

Leverage the ongoing work of the MPO to serve as the entity to address monitoring and implementation of The Tomorrow Plan

As with all plans, the implementation strategy is a key component of The Tomorrow Plan’s success. Without a realistic implementation strategy, the best conceived plan will be relegated to the proverbial shelf. Key to the implementation strategy is determining who “owns” the plan, What entity is charged with following up on the many recommendations and with coordinating the implementation and update process?

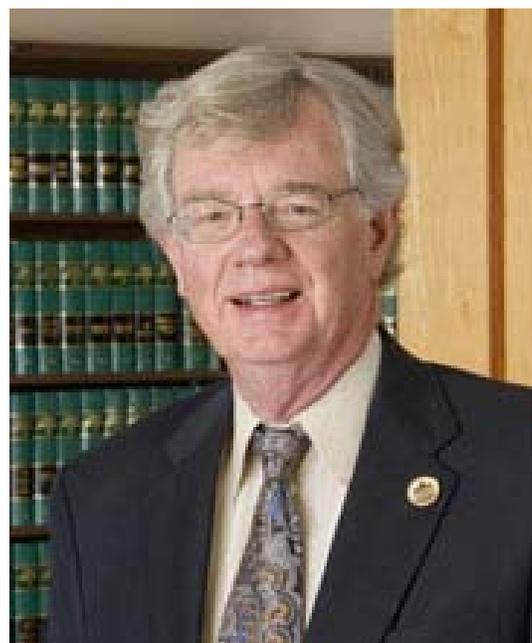
In all other areas of Iowa, this ownership responsibility would naturally fall to the long-established Councils of Governments (COGs) or Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs). However, Greater Des Moines and the surrounding counties are unique in that it is the only area in the state not covered by a regional planning association. While the Central Iowa Regional Association of Local Governments (CIRALG) disbanded in the late 1970s, the core transportation planning activities continued under the purview of the MPO.

The MPO serves the same seventeen communities and four counties involved with The Tomorrow Plan. It is the official metropolitan planning organization for the Des Moines Urbanized Area under Federal Law 23 CFR 450. The organization formed under Chapter 28E of the Iowa Code to do transportation planning for the region, as required by state and federal transportation funding programs. Chapter 28E permits “state and local governments in Iowa to make efficient use of their powers by enabling them to provide joint services and facilities with other agencies and to cooperate in other ways of mutual advantage. This chapter shall be liberally construed to that end.”¹ Federal funds from several programs supported about two-thirds of the 2011 annual budget of approximately \$1.4 million, while local governments funded the remaining third.²

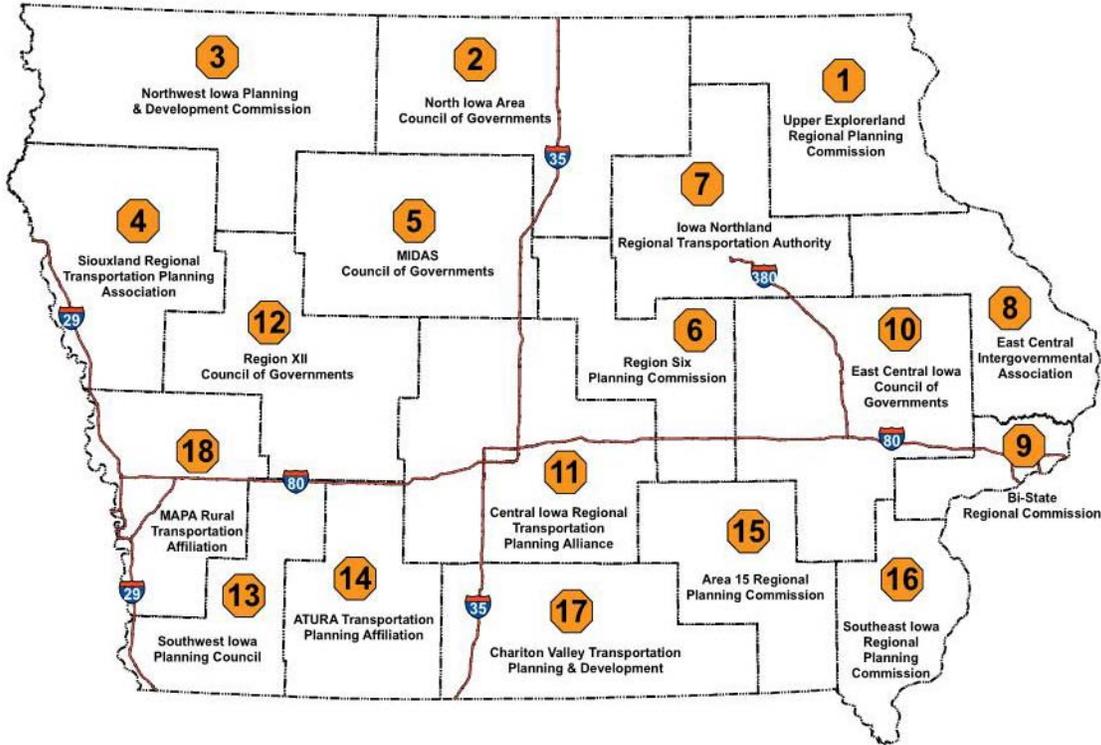
Three designated committees form the primary structure of the MPO. Planners and engineers from MPO member governments comprise the Transportation Technical Committee (TTC). The TTC offers technical guidance and recommendations to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee receives this guidance and offers its recommendations to the Policy Committee. With these recommendations, the Policy Committee takes formal action on transportation issues. The Policy Committee includes city council members, county supervisors, mayors, and city managers. The member governments and participating agencies appoint their own representatives. The organization structure and the stakeholders involved in the MPO enable it to carry The

“Here in central Iowa, we have made significant advances in establishing a regional cooperative framework. However, as time passes, we must pursue and improve local systems. The demand for services will increase in breadth and depth due, in part, to federal and state pressures. The most meaningful way we can maintain the quality we enjoy at reasonable costs, is to **do more together with less.** This is an effort in which all of us must be involved.”

EJ Giovannetti
Former Polk County Supervisor



REGIONAL PLANNING AFFILIATIONS



Tomorrow Plan forward, though a review of staffing and budgeting needs to occur in order to ensure effective implementation of the plan.

The MPO led the effort to apply for and secure the \$2 million grant that supports The Tomorrow Plan from HUD’s Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program. The staff continues to spearhead the effort, working on the plan, building relationships across the region, and navigating the intricacies associated with working across jurisdictional boundaries. To further this type of cooperative approach, the region should:

- Formally recognize the MPO as the body to carry forth the work of The Tomorrow Plan.
- Work with the communities to adopt resolutions of support for The Tomorrow Plan.
- Explore additional funding mechanisms that enable the implementation of The Tomorrow Plan.
- Incorporate data from The Tomorrow Plan into the Greater Des Moines Regional GIS dataset.

- Develop an online resource to provide access to regional datasets in collaboration with the Greater Des Moines Regional GIS group.
- Use The Tomorrow Plan in the development of the MPO’s long-range transportation plan.
- Assist local governments in using The Tomorrow Plan in their own planning efforts.
- Develop annual reports to address implementation progress.

STRATEGY 4A
POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS:
 MPO
 DART
 Communities
 Greater Des Moines Partnership
 Greater Des Moines Regional GIS group

Strategy 4B

Develop a Regional Infrastructure Coordinating Committee (RICC)

Infrastructure coordination is important to Greater Des Moines for several reasons. First, infrastructure forms the backbone of the region’s economy and quality of life. Secondly, continued investment in regional infrastructure is essential to the economic growth of the region. Finally, efficient provision of infrastructure is critical to the sustainability of the region.

Regional infrastructure coordination has occurred in Greater Des Moines for decades and has typically focused on specific infrastructure. For example, the creation of the Wastewater Reclamation Authority (WRA) in 1979 under Chapters 28E and 28F of the Iowa Code established a regional wastewater treatment facility and distribution system. Seventeen local communities — those that are part of The Tomorrow Plan excluding Carlisle, Grimes, and Mitchellville — participate in this regional infrastructure authority today. Other examples of regional infrastructure coordination include Des Moines Water Works, the MPO, DART, and the Metro Waste Authority (MWA).

All of these coordinated efforts are examples of formally established agencies or organizations serving Greater Des Moines. In addition, informal coordination of infrastructure has occurred on a periodic basis, often initiated by the regional utility companies.

Nonetheless, adjacent communities in the region often make decisions about land use and zoning without the benefit of coordination with the aforementioned service providers. At times, this results in inefficient, higher cost infrastructure — or delayed responses to emergencies. Currently, Polk, Warren, and Dallas counties; the City of Des Moines; and Westcom, a collaboration between Clive, Urbandale, and West Des Moines, operate independent emergency communications systems that are neither compatible or interoperable.

While these ongoing infrastructure coordination efforts focus on a single type of infrastructure or service, this strategy challenges the region to begin coordinating across a range of infrastructure types. Further, the inter-relatedness of infrastructure systems and land use must be recognized and incorporated into local and regional land use planning. A step towards accomplishing this more comprehensive — and proactive — infrastructure coordination would be the establishment of a Regional Infrastructure Coordinating Committee (RICC). Steps in this direction would include:

- Develop a Regional Infrastructure Coordinating Committee (RICC) to discuss public infrastructure improvements and to further infrastructure coordination.
- Invite representatives of regional utility companies and other infrastructure/service providers, along with city public works directors, city administrators, and, when appropriate, local planners to the RICC.
- Dedicate MPO staff to facilitate RICC meetings on a quarterly basis.
- Work to consolidate voice and data communications systems so that all emergency response agencies can seamlessly share information.

**STRATEGY 4B
POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS:**

MPO

DART

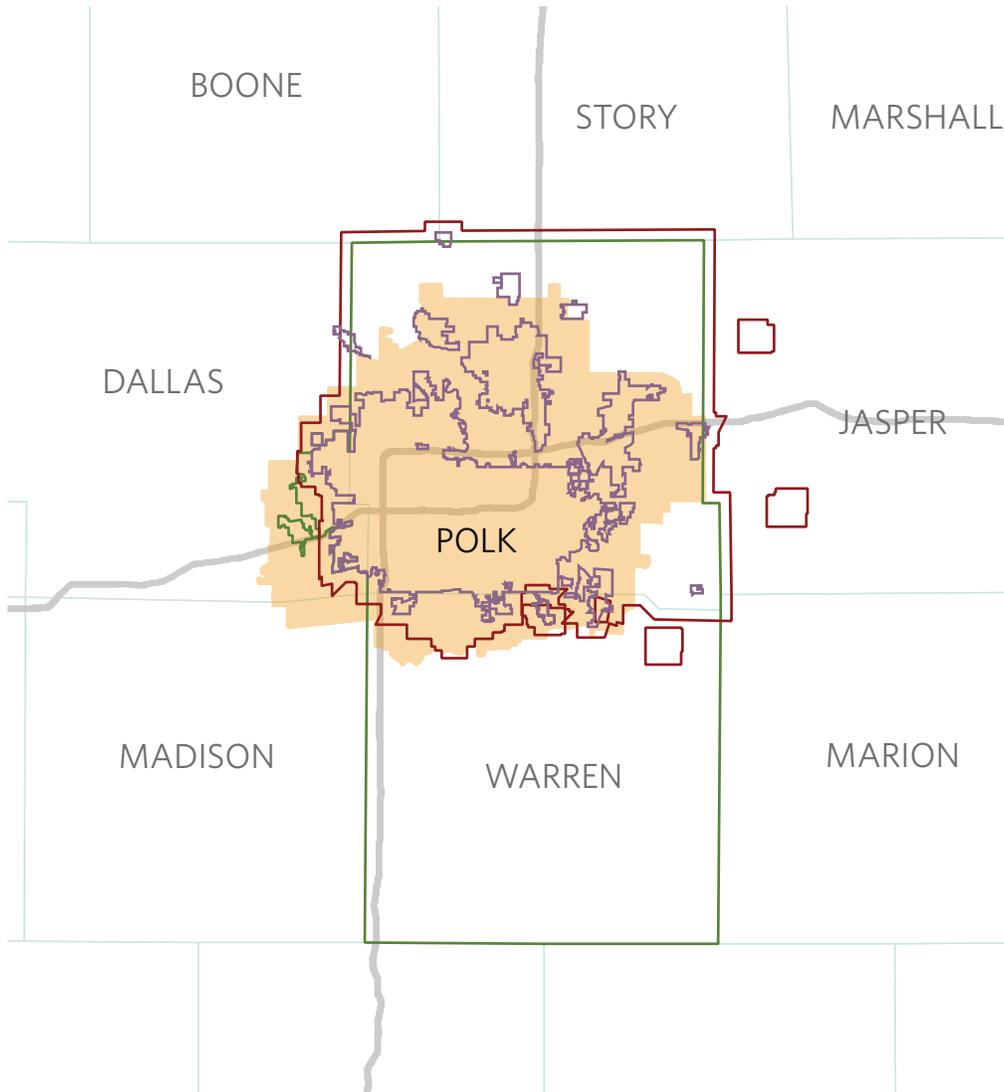
Metro Waste Authority

Des Moines Water Works

Wastewater Reclamation Authority

MidAmerican Energy

DART, DMWW, WRA, AND MWA JURISDICTIONS COMPARED TO STUDY AREA



- DART
- WRA / DMWW
- MWA
- STUDY AREA BOUNDARY
- INTERSTATES

Strategy 4C

Maintain ongoing educational efforts for the development and maintenance of healthy communities

The Tomorrow Plan covers many communities and several counties. The fundamental motivation of this plan is the belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. How we get those different parts to work together effectively is the challenging part of this effort. Coordination requires ongoing and ever-increasing understanding on the part of local residents and decisionmakers at the highest levels of business and government. All of us need to know more about what it takes to create and maintain regions that are economically, environmentally, and socially healthy.

The foundation for this work has been created through the planning process. More than 26,000 contacts were made through the public engagement process. The ongoing work of the numerous committees and working groups has created an ever-expanding understanding of what’s involved in getting multiple constituencies together and working together. In fact, the first component that gave this plan traction was a concerted public education effort about the planning and design principles that lead to healthy communities. This strategy recommends we keep this approach going through the following actions:

- Continue the ongoing educational series about sustainable communities by developing a mechanism for the MPO to expand the reach of speakers coming to the region.
- Provide a quarterly forum for local elected officials, including

planning and zoning commission members, and staff to exchange ideas.

- Select and train a corps of professionals from across the region to speak about sustainability and The Tomorrow Plan.
- In partnership with community partners, develop and maintain a community calendar that provides a one-stop look at sustainability-related events around the region.
- Design a marketing approach and action strategy for ongoing educational efforts. Structure the plan to leverage social media, relationships with community partners, and the best of what has already occurred through this planning process.
- Maintain current web and social media tools, including Facebook and Twitter.
- Create an online toolbox as an up-to-date source on the progress of The Tomorrow Plan, as well as on best practices, examples, and technical resources.

STRATEGY 4C
POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS:
 MPO
 Center on Sustainable Communities
 Greater Des Moines Partnership
 Communities
 Neighborhood associations



Strategy 4D

Leverage The Tomorrow Plan to secure and award funding for regional benefit

A foundational idea underlying The Tomorrow Plan is that, by communicating regularly, the region can address some of its toughest challenges and can create an economy built to last based not on individual projects but on collaboration and a shared vision. Though the planning process has already furthered these efforts, the region will continue to promote a prosperous future for all by leveraging the plan to secure and award funding for regional benefit. While the plan does not dictate specific funding strategies or policy decisions that are within the authority of stakeholder organizations and 28E organizations, the region can leverage The Tomorrow Plan in multiple ways, including for:

- Transportation funding;
- Housing funding;
- State grant programs;
- Integrated Planning and Implementation Strategies;
- Community Challenge grants;
- Preferred Sustainability Status Community grant opportunities; and,
- Other federal sustainable communities grant programs.

Transportation Funding

Surface Transportation Program (STP) + Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Funding

Each year, the MPO allocates approximately \$12 to \$14 million to member governments and participating agencies. This flexible funding is available for projects addressing any federal-aid highway, bridge projects on public roads, transit capital projects, intra-city and intercity bus terminals and facilities, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and streetscape projects.

Currently, STP and TAP funding applications must meet a fifty-point threshold to be eligible for funding. These points are calculated based on technical criteria set by the MPO. If a project meets the fifty-point threshold, it is presented to the STP funding subcommittee, which recommends funding amounts to the MPO Executive and Policy Committees. The MPO Policy Committee makes the final decision on allocations. To further the implementation of The Tomorrow Plan and to better prepare

Greater Des Moines to compete in a global marketplace, the MPO should review its funding process. The MPO's funding process should encourage communities to identify and develop projects and plans reflecting The Tomorrow Plan's guiding principles.

Design Node Assistance (DNA)

STP funds currently available for planning projects should transition to support appropriate node and corridor development. We envision a grant program — Design Node Assistance (DNA) — that addresses walkability, transit-oriented development, and excess automobile use, among other features, in order to shape a future of more resilient and community-oriented nodes and corridors across the region.

Elements of this grant will require a community match. A DNA program that streamlines grant programs will support appropriate visioning activities, strategic direction, master planning, and the creation of an implementation checklist. Funding that can support this effort in at least three to five nodes in the region should be available annually.

The grant criteria should include community, developer, and property owner support for investigating the design possibility of a node and/or corridor.

Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) Funding

The Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) provides flexible funding in support of improved air quality. The purpose of ICAAP is to help finance transportation projects and programs that result in the attainment of national ambient air quality standards. ICAAP funds are awarded to projects and programs with the highest potential for reducing transportation-related congestion and air pollution.

In order to fully leverage these transportation funding sources, Greater Des Moines should take multiple action steps. It should:

- Explore dedicating additional STP funding to transit and prioritizing the implementation of BRT, while ensuring that smaller communities are not disadvantaged due to less transit in their communities.
- Dedicate additional TAP funding to greenways that relate to transportation priorities.
- Work with member governments and participating agencies to identify projects for ICAAP funding.

- Within the Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS), identify preferred design elements, propose amendments, and create guidelines to complement as needed.
- Modify the scoring criteria to give preference to projects that feature the preferred design elements at node locations and along identified corridors.
- Identify a list of prioritized regionally significant projects through the MPO's long-range planning process. Ensure smaller communities maintain their access to funds.
- Fund requests for regionally significant projects in order of the prioritization laid out in the MPO's long-range transportation plan.
- Establish the DNA program, an accessible, streamlined grant program designed for ease of use by communities. Look at programs from the Iowa Architectural Foundation, the American Planning Association, and the American Institute of Architects as models.

Housing Funding

Iowa Economic Development Authority

The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) offers numerous programs that support community development and housing. Since 2008, IEDA has helped improve over 1,100 homes. Through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, IEDA seeks to foster vibrant communities by offering decent housing and suitable living environments. IEDA annually sets aside 25 percent of its CDBG funds for housing. These funds go to owner-occupied rehabilitation of single-family homes used

as principal residences. IEDA uses the following eligibility criteria for these funds:³

- Projects must primarily benefit low- and moderate-income persons (per HUD's definition);
- Projects must incorporate and support Iowa's state sustainable principles;
- Rehabilitation of all houses must be in accordance with any locally adopted building and housing codes, standards, and ordinances. If local building codes do not exist, houses must be in accordance with the Iowa Minimum Housing requirements;
- Projects using IEDA funds must follow rehabilitation standards. Rehabilitation projects have a maximum per unit subsidy of \$37,500, including but not limited to the hard costs of rehabilitation, technical services costs (including lead hazard reduction carrying costs), lead hazard reduction costs, and temporary relocation;
- Rehabilitation hard costs are limited to \$24,999 of the total maximum subsidy of \$37,500; and,
- Applicable technical services costs (including any lead hazard reduction carrying costs) are limited to \$4,500 per unit of the total maximum subsidy of \$37,500.

Furthermore, IEDA offers the Residential Landlord Business Support Program and Jumpstart Iowa, which are housing assistance program distributed through its disaster recovery program; housing enterprise zones; historic downtown resources; the neighborhood stabilization program; and, tax increment financing (TIF) variances for low- and moderate-income assistance.

Iowa Finance Authority

The Iowa Finance Authority (IFA)⁴ offers a diversity of programs that benefit Iowans. The State Housing Trust Fund (SHTF) helps ensure decent, safe, and affordable housing for Iowans. Local housing trust funds receive at least 60 percent of the SHTF provision, while the remaining funds support the Project-Based Housing Program that aids the development of affordable housing. IFA also offers technical assistance to housing-related organizations supporting these programs.

The Main Street Mortgage Loan Program — a partnership between Main Street Iowa, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, and IFA — provides funds for lending to Main Street communities in the state. Loans support the rehabilitation of upper floor housing or commercial properties, along with new construction and infill in downtown areas.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING TIMEFRAME

With the increasing cost of transportation infrastructure, it is important to develop funding strategies that efficiently use the limited funding resources currently available. Suppose a project costs \$1,000,000. Using a standard 4 percent inflation rate, the project cost increases by \$170,000 to \$1,170,000 over a five-year period. Existing funding strategies typically spread federal funds across multiple years, resulting in a decrease in the purchasing power of federal funds. The decrease in purchasing power, coupled with increasing project costs, results in a higher taxpayer burden.

The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) is a HUD program aimed at assisting people in quickly regaining stability in permanent housing after facing a housing crisis or homelessness. IFA manages the state's allocation of these funds, while some cities also manage their own allocations from HUD.

IFA's Shelter Assistance Fund (SAF) uses state funds to back the rehabilitation, expansion, and operation costs of group home shelters for the homeless and victims of domestic violence. City and county governments are eligible for this funding, as are nonprofit service agencies.

Finally, IFA manages the state's federal allocation of the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program. This HUD program aims to assist persons with HIV/AIDS and their families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Polk County Housing Trust Fund

The Polk County Housing Trust Fund (PCHTF)⁵ is the comprehensive planning, advocacy, and funding organization for affordable housing in Polk County. Founded in 1995, the Trust Fund is responsible for allocating state and local funds aimed at increasing and preserving the inventory of affordable units in the county. It is also responsible for funding non-profits that assist low income persons in obtaining and retaining affordable housing. This enables the PCHTF to create and sustain a broad, integrated vision of affordable housing inventory and the supportive services necessary to maximize the impact of that inventory.

The PCHTF is the only organization operating in Polk County whose focus is on the entire continuum of affordable housing – from homelessness to home ownership. Because its view is broad, the PCHTF is able to help the community formulate and execute a unified strategic plan to address affordable housing needs.

The PCHTF also takes a critical, long-range view. Needs, circumstances, and funding opportunities change, and anticipating and planning for these changes is one of the very valuable services that the PCHTF brings to the community.

The broad and long-range vision of the PCHTF makes it uniquely positioned to engage in advocacy activities for affordable housing on the local, state, and national levels. State and local decision makers are members of the Board of Directors. Strategic relationships with government and business groups allow the PCHTF to ensure that good housing policy is included in unified national policy statements that come from the Greater Des Moines region.

FUNDING CATEGORIES

Recognizing that different regions are at different stages of their goals for sustainability, HUD established two funding categories⁶ as part of its Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program:

Category 1 grants like the one received by Greater Des Moines support the creation of a regional plan for sustainable development. These plans address housing, economic development, transportation, energy, water, and environmental quality in an integrated fashion where such plans do not currently exist or where they exist but need to be significantly revised or enhanced.

Category 2 grants facilitate detailed execution plans and programs. They support efforts to fine-tune existing regional plans so that they address the full complement of livability principles in an integrated fashion. Further, these grants support the preparation of more detailed execution plans for an adopted sustainable development regional plan, as well as reduce pre-development hurdles for catalytic projects that are a significant aspect of the regional plan.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers much support related to housing. HUD's website offers assistance in the areas of home buying, foreclosure avoidance, affordable housing, rental assistance, the Real Estate Assessment Center access, housing counselors, grants, fair housing discrimination complaints, Limited Denials of Participation list, local public housing agencies, and jobs. HUD's current priority initiatives relate to the Making Home Affordable Program, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, disaster recovery resources, and the Energy Star program, which is a benchmark of energy efficiency.

State Grant Programs

The State of Iowa maintains an online clearinghouse of grants offered by various departments at www.iowagrants.gov. This site allows interested parties to search for grants available from numerous state agencies, including the DOT, the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Iowa Economic Development Authority.

Integrated Planning and Implementation Grant

In the spring of 2013, President Barack Obama introduced his FY 2014 Budget Proposal that included \$47.6 billion for HUD, \$75 million of which will support a new Integrated Planning and Implementation (IPI) Grant program.⁷ These grants will build on HUD's Regional Planning and Community Challenge grants, help make America a magnet for jobs, and create ladders to opportunity in American communities. The Integrated Planning grants will coordinate housing, land use, and transportation investments to address the growing cost burden faced by working families. It will also allow existing dollars to more effectively increase economic competitiveness, strengthening the American middle class.

Community Challenge Grants

HUD also offers Community Challenge Grants, which “foster reform and reduce barriers to achieving affordable, economically vital, and sustainable communities.”⁸ These grants may support amending or replacing local master plans, zoning codes, and building codes, either jurisdiction-wide or in a specific neighborhood, district, corridor, or sector in an effort to promote mixed-use development, affordable housing, and the reuse of older buildings. All of these activities are done with the goal of promoting sustainability at the local level. This program also supports the development of affordable housing through the adoption of inclusionary zoning ordinances.

Preferred Sustainability Status Community Grant Opportunities

Because of The Tomorrow Plan, HUD designated the MPO and Greater Des Moines as a Preferred Sustainability Status (PSS) Community.⁹ PSS is a special designation provided by HUD to recognize communities taking extraordinary steps toward strategic planning and development for their region in a way that aligns with the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities livability principles.

PSS entitles grant applicants from Greater Des Moines to two primary benefits. First, the region can take advantage of several technical assistance opportunities that will help advance sustainable planning and development in the region. Secondly, a growing number of HUD discretionary grant programs recognize PSS in their competitions, providing additional bonus points for those that have earned the designation. The programs in which this is the case are:

- Asthma Interventions in Public and Assisted Multifamily Housing Grant Program
- Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI)
- Capital Fund Education and Training Community Facilities Program
- Choice Neighborhoods
- Continuum of Care
- Fair Housing Initiatives Program
- Healthy Homes Production
- Healthy Homes Technical Studies
- Hispanic Serving Institutions Assisting Communities (HSIAC)
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program (HBCU)
- HOPE VI Main Street
- HOPE VI Revitalization
- Housing Counseling Program
- Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Program
- Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration
- Housing for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs Technical Assistance
- Multifamily Energy Innovation NOFA
- Rural Innovation Fund
- Section 4 Capacity Building for Community Development and Affordable Housing
- Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly
- Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program
- Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP)

To receive the bonus points, applicants must include a HUD Form 2995 that demonstrates the applicant's relationship to the region. With this in mind, the region should adopt a process for the MPO to participate in the review of any application that seeks HUD

bonus points to assure that they are adequately addressing the goals and priorities established by The Tomorrow Plan.

Other regional planning grant initiatives have implemented this process. The process outlined in the toolbox has been adapted from one created by the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission in Virginia.

HUD also is working with other federal partners that will be unveiling their own plans to recognize PSS.

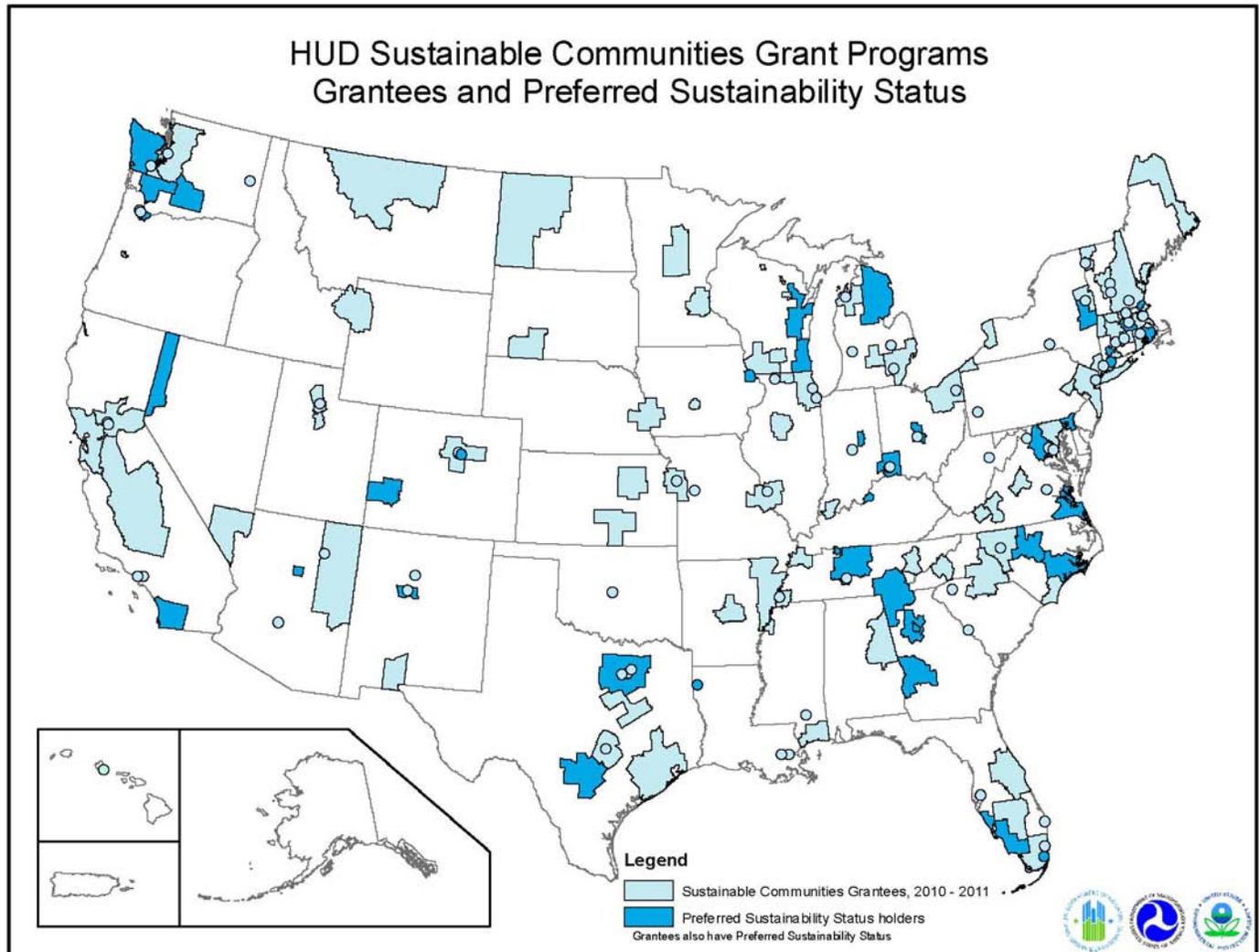
those from regions that have not gone through a similar planning process.

Funding is available for a variety of uses, including community planning, affordable housing finance, technical assistance, research, and capital infrastructure investments. The matrix in the toolbox provides information on potential federal funding opportunities, including eligibility requirements, program descriptions, and deadlines. The list of federal grant programs changes regularly. The MPO will continually update this matrix so that it continues to serve as a resource for the region in advancing

Other Federal Sustainable Communities Grant Programs

The Tomorrow Plan can be a valuable resource for communities in Greater Des Moines seeking federal assistance. HUD, DOT, EPA, and several other agencies have made millions of dollars in funding available to support the planning and implementation of projects that promote sustainable communities. By addressing the goals of The Tomorrow Plan in federal grant applications, federal agencies are likely to look more favorably on these applications than

**STRATEGY 4D
POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS:**
MPO
Communities



Strategy 4E

Explore the merits of regional alternative revenue sources

One of the driving themes behind The Tomorrow Plan is the notion of using limited resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. In a climate of declining funding availability, including changes to the way in which businesses are taxed, fiscal disparity and unhealthy competition are poised to increase in Greater Des Moines.

A look at current area property tax rates reveals a range from under \$8.00 per \$1,000 to almost \$17.00 per \$1,000.¹⁰ Tax abatement programs range from ten-year abatements to 100-percent abatements to no abatements. These fiscal disparities cause hardships for taxpayers in communities with high tax and abatement rates.

Difficulty with raising the gas tax and with passing local option sales taxes compounds the challenge. Implementing new revenue sources in Greater Des Moines, if appropriate, could save taxpayers a significant amount.

Greater Des Moines should explore the merits of regional alternative revenue sources. These could include revenue sharing, a local option sales tax, and a regional asset tax. Specific actions include:

- Review potential revenue sources, including revenue sharing, local option sales tax, and regional asset tax programs around the country.
- Research necessary legislative actions to bring alternative revenue sources to Greater Des Moines.

“GEOGRAPHY HAS MADE US NEIGHBORS... ECONOMICS HAS MADE US PARTNERS.”

– JOHN F. KENNEDY

The Minneapolis-St. Paul region provides a nearby example of successful tax-base sharing. The program, commonly referred to as the Fiscal Disparities Program¹¹ and passed in 1971, provides a way for communities to share in the region’s growth, to reduce competition for tax base, and to work within the existing system of local governments and local decision making. Further, tax-base sharing promotes better planning by encouraging regional cooperation, by making resources available for early development and redevelopment, and by encouraging environmental protection.

In Minneapolis-St. Paul, forty percent of each community’s commercial-industrial property tax base growth goes into a regional pool. Then, the region redistributes this pool based on population and the market value of all property in each community. Thus, communities with relatively low market value per capita (fiscal capacity) receive a larger share of the regional tax base.

Tax-base sharing has proven successful in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. Nearly twice as many cities gain revenue as lose revenue. For cities with population above 10,000, tax-base sharing reduces fiscal disparities from 10:1 to 3:1. In 2012, the shared tax base totaled \$390 million and resulted in \$553 million in tax revenue. Greater Des Moines would be expected to see similar kinds of returns and reductions in disparities if it implemented a similar model.



“WE STAND HERE TODAY, UNITED, WITH ONE VOICE.”

– RON CORBETT

The issue of how to fund infrastructure projects resonates throughout the state. The eastern Iowa communities of Cedar Rapids, Marion, Hiawatha, Robins, and Fairfax banded together in 2009 to collect a local option sales tax. The tax helps these communities fund infrastructure projects.¹²

While the communities don’t always see eye to eye, they all support the extension of the current 1 percent tax for 10 years to help fund infrastructure projects. If passed, Cedar Rapids would use the funds for streets, according to Mayor Ron Corbett. Meanwhile, Hiawatha would fund streets as well as other city departments, including police, fire, water, parks, the library, and City Hall, while Marion would use the funds for streets, a fire station, upgrades to parks and trails, and sewer and water management projects.

A local option sales tax provides a pay-as-you-go approach, meaning that communities have revenue each year without the need to take on debt for street projects. The people who work, shop, dine, and recreate in the area but live elsewhere also pay the sales tax, meaning that everyone who uses the area helps contribute to its maintenance.