



Northeast Iowa

History, Art, and Culture

Regional Enhancement Plan

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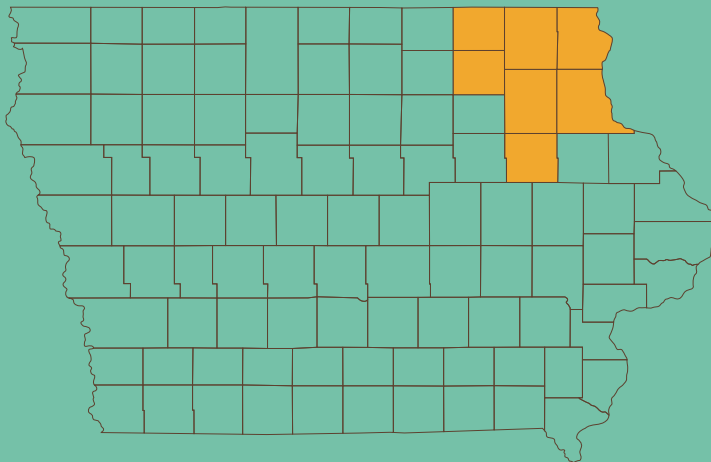
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Introduction

Northeast Iowa is a special place. It is a rare pocket of the world where history, art, and culture collide with a breathtaking natural landscape to inspire and awe visitors and residents. Nestled among the bluffs, next to bucolic farmland, and along winding rivers are unique historical, art, and cultural treasures that shape the Northeast Iowa region's sense of place. These sites and items have been carefully preserved and curated by dedicated local individuals and organizations who understand the intrinsic value of these resources. A great opportunity exists to build the capacity for History, Art, and Culture throughout Northeast Iowa on a regional scale.

Northeast Iowa RC&D is working with partners from across the state to assist in creating, supporting and sustaining an effort to unite the vast array of cultural assets in multi-county regions of Iowa during the next two years. A state-wide planning consortium of Iowa's RC&D's, the University of Iowa, and the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs was developed to bring support and assistance to Iowa's rural communities. This effort is bringing historical societies and sites, artists, and cultural groups together to examine the potential for the region and develop and implement a plan to build the capacity of and enhance history, art, and culture regionally.



Howard, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Chickasaw, Fayette, Clayton, Buchanan



History

Historic resources are the legacies of the past that are associated with physical elements of the landscape. These physical elements can be natural or man-made, reflect the actions of people, and may include buildings, archaeological sites, people, examples of human activity, and themes. Historic features can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. They possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association. These historic resources have shaped the Northeast Iowa region's past, and by doing so, have impacted its present. They educate the viewer, stir an appreciation of the past, and influence our future.

The following table presents historic resource counts thematically by county. This table represents a simplification of detailed inventories of historic resources in each of the seven counties of Northeast Iowa. The inventories were created by speaking to local government, tourism, economic development, and history leaders in each county and by performing research online and in person. Specific resources in the inventories are still in progress and the inventories will continue to be updated as more resources are discovered and created. During this process, themes emerge that can be used to build capacity and partnerships between different individuals and groups and across county lines.

HISTORIC RESOURCES	Allamakee	Buchanan	Chickasaw	Clayton	Fayette	Howard	Winneshiek
<i>Historical Organizations</i>	7	11	4	5	9	1	5
<i>History Museums</i>	5	12	4	13	9	2	7
<i>Historic Buildings</i>	14	11	1	28	16	3	10
<i>Historic Houses</i>	10	8	2	41	2	3	6
<i>Historic Log Homes ♦</i>	1♦	♦	2♦	♦	1♦	1♦	3♦
<i>Historic Barns ♦</i>	4♦	3♦	2♦	4♦	2♦	5♦	16♦
<i>Historic Stone Structures ♦</i>	♦	♦	♦	252	♦	♦	♦
<i>Archaeological Sites</i>	3	0	0	2	2	0	0
<i>Historic Opera Houses & Theatres</i>	3	4	1	7	5	1	5
<i>One-Room & Historic Schoolhouses</i>	6	7	1	11	14	4	15
<i>Historic Mills</i>	0	7	0	2	0	1	2
<i>Historic Bridges</i>	4	5	0	9	14	0	7
<i>Historic Churches ♦</i>	38	48	27	52	63	29	46
<i>Pioneer Cemeteries</i>	59	17	18	31	25	19	39

♦ denotes inventory in progress



Burkhard Riegel Blacksmith Shop, Fayette County – The Blacksmith Shop is one of the last two blacksmith shops in Iowa to exist both structurally in its original building and internally with a century’s worth of blacksmith tools and equipment inside.



The Stone Man, Fayette County – The Stone Man is a weathered chunk of granite brought to Fayette County over 500,000 years ago in a glacier. It marked the boundary of the “Neutral Territory” set by the US Government to separate the peaceful Winnebago from the aggressive Sioux and Fox tribes. It also served as a hub for activity and travel throughout the region and was a popular meeting place.



Norman Bourlag Boyhood Farm and Home, Howard County – Bourlag was an American biologist, humanitarian, and Nobel laureate credited as “The Father of the Green Revolution.” This is the farm where he was born and grew up that inspired his ecological thinking.



Little Brown Church in the Vale, Chickasaw County – The Little Brown Church is a historic country church built piece by piece by donated materials and finished in 1864. It is made famous by the “Church in the Wildwood” poem and song that was written about it.



Effigy Mounds, Allamakee and Clayton Counties – Effigy Mounds preserves over 200 prehistoric Native American burial mounds among breathtakingly beautiful forests, tallgrass prairies, wetlands, and rivers. The National Monument has a visitor’s center with exhibits about the park’s archaeological and natural features.



Wapsipinicon Mill Museum and Bridge, Buchanan County – Located in the heart of Independence along the Wapsipinicon River, this brick mill was built from 1867-1870 initially as a flouring mill and later to produce poultry and cattle feed. Today, the mill is an interactive museum that tells the story of pioneer grist milling through artifacts, interpretation, and experiences.



Porter House Museum, Winneshiek County – Located in the former home of the Porter family, this museum is a collection of history, nature, and art. It displays the collection of butterflies, rocks, and other oddities that Bert Porter collected during his world travels. His wife Grace was fond of art and the décor of the home illustrates her tastes.



Historic Elkader, Clayton County – Elkader is known as a historic community. It’s downtown Historic District includes historic brick buildings restored as storefronts, historic homes, the limestone Keystone Bridge, and the Clayton County Courthouse with its original wooden Clock Tower.

Art and Culture

Cultural resources shape the feel of the Northeast Iowa region and impact its sense of place. Cultural resources are the expressions of customs or traditions of a distinct group of people, including, but not limited to, art, music, festivals, experiences, food, ethnic traditions, and heritage. Artistic resources such as visual art, performing art, public art, opportunities to create art, and live performances are a significant element of cultural quality.

The following table presents cultural and art resource counts thematically by county. This table represents a simplification of detailed inventories of cultural and artistic resources in each of the seven counties of Northeast Iowa. The inventories were created by speaking to local government, tourism, economic development, and culture and art leaders in each county and by performing research online and in person. Specific resources in the inventories are still in progress and the inventories will continue to be updated as more resources are discovered and created. During this process, themes emerged that can be used to build capacity and partnerships between different individuals and groups and across county lines.

ART & CULTURAL RESOURCES	Allamakee	Buchanan	Chickasaw	Clayton	Fayette	Howard	Winnebago
<i>Art and Cultural Organizations</i>	2	4	0	3	3	2	20
<i>Art Studios, Galleries, Shops</i>	23	15	5	27	6	5	40
<i>Murals, Statues, Monuments, Public Art</i>	6	7	7	3	5	1	13
<i>Places for Hands-On Art Experiences</i>	0	0	2	1	0	1	4
<i>Art Supply Shops</i>	3	2	3	2	1	1	3
<i>Festivals and Events</i>	9	14	16	7	5	9	7
<i>Amish Communities & Businesses ♦</i>	2	5	9	♦	♦	♦	0
<i>Other Cultural Sites & Icons ♦</i>	0♦	0♦	1♦	1♦	0♦	0♦	1

♦ denotes inventory in progress



Elgin's Music in the Park, Fayette County – Elgin's Music in the Park event features a fun-filled and entertaining musical revue of favorite Broadway show-tunes and a concert and dance in the Elgin City Park.



Art at The Market, Buchanan County – The Art at The Market is a once a month artist display, sale, and demonstration at the Independence farmers market.



Bronze Statues, Howard County – Scattered throughout the town of Cresco are over thirty bronze statues depicting childhood's simple joys.



Emma Big Bear, Clayton County – A local icon, Emma Big Bear was the last full-blooded Native American to live in Northeast Iowa by traditional Winnebago means.



Steel Cow Gallery and Studio, Allamakee County – The studio and gallery of artist Valerie Miller featuring her original cow paintings and other merchandise all made in Iowa.



Elkader Opera House, Clayton County – This historic opera house was built in 1903 and has been restored to its original grandeur. It hosts shows ranging from children's theatre to jazz bands and performers ranging from the local to the national stage.



Oneota Valley Community Orchestra, Winneshiek County – This ensemble draws musicians from Northeast Iowa and the MN-WI-IA tri-state region to present free symphonic concerts to the public and collaborate with other groups to provide music for events.



Amish & Mennonite, Chickasaw County – The Amish & Mennonite individuals and families that live throughout Chickasaw County have shaped the culture of the area. They operate small businesses such as greenhouses and produce farms.



Nordic Fest, Winneshiek County – Nordic Fest is one example, and the largest, of the region's many heritage-centered festivals and events. Nordic Fest is a three-day celebration of the area's Scandinavian heritage and boasts ethnic food, live music, sporting events, an art show, historical exhibits, and other fun events for the whole family.

Challenges

There are a few noteworthy challenges in common to history, art, and culture organizations, sites, and resources of the Northeast Iowa region. Many of the Regional Goals address these challenges, but they are significant enough to warrant a longer description.

- **Undervaluing History, Art, and Culture:** Some historical, artistic, and cultural resources are greatly undervalued by community members. These resources were once publicly or privately maintained, but over time have become less useful, less valued, fallen into disrepair, or suffered from neglect because of the lack of private or public interest and/or funding. Many of these resources are significant enough to have the potential to positively or negatively impact the region depending on actions taken within the next ten years.
- **Lack of Resources to Draw Residents and Visitors:** Tourism and Economic Development leaders are often held back by the lack of history, art, and cultural resources available locally and regionally to offer to skilled workers, families, and visitors. Economic development and tourism can be enhanced by concentrating resources together creatively both in physical location and human capital. By locating businesses, non-profit organizations, artists, cultural facilities, and historical sites together a multiplier effect can result.
- **Struggling Organizations:** Many history, art, and culture groups struggle with organizational development, specifically board development. Forming high functioning boards who's members have clear responsibilities and roles to support the organization is a challenge. This is further complicated by overlap with staff roles. Additionally, finding funding for organizational and operational needs is difficult, leaving funding gaps. Without strong organizational development and reliable funding streams, organizations are unable to become resilient and sustainable.
- **Historical Site Infrastructure Funding:** Many of Northeast Iowa's historical structures need major site repair work. Unfortunately, the local, state, and federal grants available for such work are extremely limited and very competitive. Often, smaller grants at the local level have low maximum awards that do not cover even half of the cost needed for repairs. Northeast Iowa communities are small, rural towns with few private funding resources. Some of the work, such as roofs, windows, and weather proofing is urgent and if left unfunded could compromise the structures, collections, or sites. If left un-repaired, often well-meaning individuals try to do their own repairs that only further compromise the structure.
- **Endangered Collections:** Many collections do not meet historic preservation standard. Stored in uncontrolled environments, undocumented, uncatalogued, unorganized, and unappreciated by limited volunteer staff that don't have the time or the expertise to care for them properly, some collections have even been harmed by well-meaning individuals. Other collections of value are not understood or appreciated, sometimes locked away in basements or storerooms, stacked haphazardly in boxes, without climate control, protection from mold, or flooding.
- **Retaining Native American Artifacts:** Museum collections provide opportunities to see first-hand evidence of native cultures. However, in 1990, the federal government passed the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act*, which gave Native American tribes the legal authority to reclaim artifacts from federally funded museums. Today museums are asked to return objects that are sacred, meaning they are used in present-day ceremonies, as well as artifacts that have "ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group or culture itself." The law requires museums that receive federal funding to keep an up-to-date inventory of all artifacts that are of Native American origin. Tribes can claim ownership of the objects, and if a review determines their claim is justified, ownership of the artifact is given to the tribes. What happens to the artifacts is then up to the tribes. Because of this Act, it is challenging for museums to keep an up-to-date and sizable collection of Native American artifacts.

- **Outdated Attractions:** Visitors want dynamic experiences, but many attractions in the region, such as museums and interpretive centers, are not as interactive or engaging as they could be. Although some efforts have been made in the to bring history to life with events like Heritage Days at Osborne Nature Center, Old West Reenactments in McGregor, and guided mystery tours of cemeteries and unusual tombstones, there is a lot of work to do to add interactive, dynamic, and engaging elements to area attractions.
- **Public Access to Sites:** Although there are impressive public historic, art, and cultural sites in the Northeast Iowa region that are open to the public, the majority of the sites are privately owned and do not allow visitor access. Tours are typically self-guided and most sites do not have interpretation, even though some of the most compelling attributes of sites are related to stories rather than physical features. Sites that are open to the public typically have very limited hours and very few have personnel available for questions or tours.
- **Site Wayfinding:** While many of the major history, art, and cultural sites and events of the region have adequate wayfinding, many of the lesser resources do not. Rural in nature, navigating the backroads of Northeast Iowa can be difficult for many individuals, so it is imperative that all sites have some form of wayfinding.
- **Certified Local Government:** There is a lack of understanding about the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program. Some communities that are CLG have let their certifications lapse at crucial times, disqualifying themselves for grant funding they might otherwise have been awarded.
- **Aging Human Resources:** Many of the stakeholders that have the most information about history, art, and cultural resources are in ill health or elderly. It is important that these individuals are recorded and as much information as possible is documented in a timely manner.
- **Engaging the Next Generation:** The people taking care of our historic, artistic, and cultural resources are aging and will need support from younger members of the community to continue to maintain the public sites and treasures of the region. Therefore, it is strategic to engage community members of all ages in the development of new interpretation and educational materials so that their interest and appreciation for the historical resources grows and fosters new generations of historic guardians. Unfortunately, field trip funding for schools to visit historic sites, see live performances, or participate in cultural events has become limited or completely eliminated. These students are the next generation of volunteers and donors but are losing the connection to the resources of their region.
- **Preserving Current Resources for the Future:** More recent history, culture and folk lore should be interpreted to add additional depth to experiences. Folk lore and stories about specific places, people or events are difficult to access and not organized in any way. Accounts vary in length, depth, and accuracy, so will need to be researched thoroughly before being used in interpretation. Opportunities for visitor engagement and learning about the cultures in the area in general are extremely limited. Visitors are able to golf next to Indian Mounds, eat authentic Greek or Mexican cuisine, attend German festivals, and visit Amish settlements, yet very little information is available for the public regarding these cultures. Even less information is available about newer immigrants to the area such as Russian, Hispanic, or Somali cultures.

Regional Goals

Orange font denotes a
Priority Project or Action

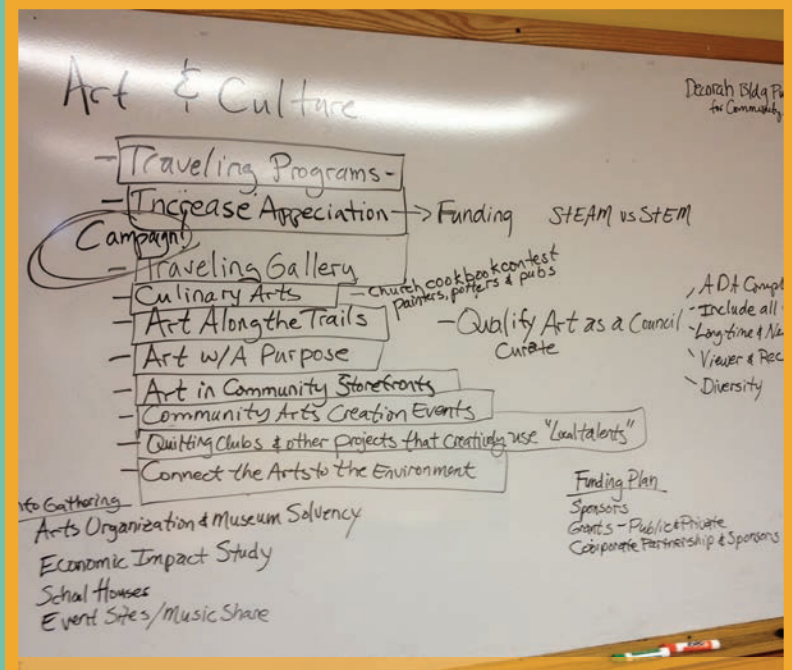
GOAL 1 – Develop a Sustainable Northeast Iowa Regional History, Art, and Cultural Council.

OBJECTIVES

- Sustain an active and engaged Northeast Iowa Regional History, Art, and Cultural Council that is informed, educated, and involved in regional issues over the long-term.
- Serve as the catalyst to bring history, art, and cultural interests together within the region to share information, collaborate on regional projects, and be an engine for economic vitality.
- Assess the needs of the region to preserve, protect, enhance, interpret, and promote the art, history and cultural resources of the region.
- Identify history, art, and cultural-related projects, establish priorities, and find funding for each.
- Work collaboratively to ensure the vision, goals, and objectives outlined in this plan are being met and historic, art, and cultural intrinsic qualities maintained and enhanced.
- Continue to build excitement for history, art, and culture regionally, and work to transfer that excitement into traction for goals and measurable progress and achievements.
- Lead by example and become a model for building the capacity of history, art, and culture on a regional scale.



A Regional History, Art, and Cultural Council meeting.



Notes from a Council brainstorming session.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- **Recruit Diverse Members:** Actively recruit new people to serve on the Council and/or attend Council meetings to keep the discussion active and fresh and ensure all perspectives and ideas are considered.
- **Meet Often:** Meet at least tri-annually or as needed. Continue to hold stakeholder meetings and public forums to discuss regional issues. Create sub-committees as needed to deal with particular issues.
- **Design a Logo:** Design a Northeast Iowa Regional History, Arts, and Cultural Council logo to be used in marketing and projects the Council is involved with.
- **Develop an Online Presence:** Create and maintain a Northeast Iowa Regional History, Arts, and Cultural Council online presence. Update IowaART.org to serve as a hub for regional news and events and promote the region's resources. Develop IowaART as a site that automatically populates events from other regional chamber, newspaper, and event sites. Create and maintain active social media accounts and add new accounts as social media trends evolve.
- **Connect Groups with Funders:** Develop a database of history, art, and culture grants available locally, state-wide, regionally, and nationally. Ensure that local organizations know of the grants available to them and are empowered to write and submit applications or find someone who can help them do so.
- **Leverage Funding Effectively:** End competition for funding by prioritizing needs, forming partnerships, and leveraging funding and resources through collaborative and creative planning and partnerships at the local, regional, and statewide levels.
- **Give Back to the Region:** Pursue options to develop a Regional History, Art, and Cultural fund administered by the Council. This fund would be re-granted to local organizations and sites for specific projects as decided by a simple application reviewed and decided upon by the Council.
- **Maintain the Regional Enhancement Plan:** Work with RC&D personnel to maintain the Regional Cultural Enhancement Plan including needs assessments, prioritization of projects, budgets, timelines, and partners for the counties of Allamakee, Buchanan, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek.



GOAL 2 – Protect and Preserve Northeast Iowa’s History, Art, and Cultural Resources.

OBJECTIVES

- Support and assist in efforts to protect the threatened history, art, and cultural resources of the region.
- Work to restore and preserve resources to ensure they will remain treasures for years to come.
- Ensure programs and projects will not detract from, but rather complement and enhance the region’s intrinsic qualities. Ensure these programs and projects also respect sensitive resources, local resources, and interests, while enhancing and retaining the local quality of life.



Larrabee School, Clermont.



Bily Clocks Museum, Spillville.



Froelich Tractor Museum Old-Time General Store, Froelich.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Create Databases:** Develop and maintain comprehensive regional data bases for the history, art, and cultural organizations, events, and sites.
- **Visit Sites:** Conduct site visits to inspect, document, and photograph the current state, hours, infrastructure needs, and opportunities for improvement and enhancement at history, art, and cultural sites.
- **Survey Visitors:** Implement a periodic, detailed visitor use survey to assess resources' needs and seek feedback.
- **Implement an Infrastructure Improvement Plan:** Develop a Northeast Iowa Infrastructure Improvement Plan to document, prioritize, find funding, and implement the many infrastructure improvements needed to protect and preserve resources throughout the region. Meet with leaders at every history, art, and cultural site to determine their infrastructure needs and create an inventory. Implement these improvements in a way that also improves energy efficiency and economics. Develop a schedule to optimize grant opportunities and secure funds to do these improvements in a timely way.
 - *Example:* The Clayton County Courthouse Clock Tower in Elkader is in need of significant restoration work to this unique all-wood structure. A Preservation Architect is needed to develop documents and make recommendations needed prior to restoration. Restoration and preservation of the clock tower, clock faces, and widow's walk is needed. The current HVAC system is damaging the structure, so a new HVAC system is needed as well.
 - *Example:* Develop a restoration program for pioneer cemeteries and tombstones.
- **Find Funding for Preservation:** Submit a minimum of five Historical Resource Development Program (HRDP) applications from the 7-county Northeast Iowa region per year with at least two of these applications to be specifically for collections.
- **Collect, Protect, and Preserve Collections:** Find the hidden resources and bring them into the spotlight. Send out calls for specific resources, such as old photographs, Native American artifacts, or farming equipment. Connect collection donors with public collection managers. Collect and assemble these resources from local individuals for donation to local historical societies, museums, or genealogical societies to ensure their preservation and safe-keeping.
- **Digitize Records:** Work with county genealogical societies to digitize paper records and ensure that the information will be retained if the physical copies were to be destroyed. Submit 1 Historical Resource Development Program (HRDP) grant per year to fund digitization projects.
- **Document and Collect Current Resources:** Encourage the collection and recording of current and present-day history, art, and culture to expand the presence and availability to be included for future generations.



GOAL 3 – Enhance Northeast Iowa’s History, Art, and Cultural Resources.

OBJECTIVES

- Work with history, art, and cultural sites and organizations to enhance the existing resources of the region.
- Improve the experience traveling to and visiting regional resources.
- Enhance resources by giving them contemporary relevant uses and meaning.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Implement a Wayfinding Improvement Plan:** Complete a wayfinding inventory of the region’s sites. Ensure that all regional history, art, and culture attractions have adequate signage so that residents and visitors can find them with ease without detracting from the scenery. Secure funding to create cohesively themed signage with design standards for wayfinding to points of interest throughout the region.
- **Highlight Unique Collections:** Celebrate the quirky collections throughout the region that go unnoticed and bring these collections out of the corners and highlight them in full exhibits. Add interpretation about the items, their value, and the individual who collected them to increase local respect and appreciation.
 - *Examples:* The barbed wire collection at Gilbertson, the motors in the Lansing Fish Museum, the Dresden Figurines at the Wilder Memorial Museum.
- **Enhance Interpretation:** Improve interpretation at sites. See Goal #4.



- **Restore and Re-Purpose Buildings in Modern Ways to Fit Needs:** Use re-purposing as a theme to guide the preservation and restoration of historical buildings. Save these buildings and give them contemporary relevant uses to fit community needs instead of building a new structure. Contemporary relevant uses can be community centers, art centers, hotels, public spaces, dedicated museums, or non-profit headquarters.
 - *Example:* ArtHaus in Decorah has worked for over a year to realize their concept of turning the old Decorah Creamery into a “Creative Commons” community art center, with non-profit headquarters, classrooms, public exhibit space, stage and auditorium, community spaces, studios for rent, retail space, historical information and displays about the creamery, and clean energy demonstrations.
 - *Example:* Explore restoring a historic building to be re-purposed as a museum dedicated to the Native American history of the area. Work with tribal leaders to ensure that displays and interpretation are authentic and accurate.
- **Restore and Re-Purpose Schoolhouses:** Work with one schoolhouse per year to seek funding, protect, restore, and re-purpose the structure. Expand the inventory of regional schoolhouses to note their needs and prioritize the schoolhouses based on their needs and other factors.
 - *Example:* The three story limestone Old Stone School in Lansing is in need of a TAN evaluation, cleaning, restoration, and re-purposing. It is going to be placed on the endangered building list soon. The Old Stone School could be prioritized first because of its need and Lansing’s 150th in 2017.
 - *Example:* The Dover #4 School, once restored, will serve as the headquarters for a summer tutoring program.



The Old Stone School in Lansing.

Churches and schools were the heart of the earliest settlers' community. They were the first buildings that the community worked together to build.

- Craig White, Executive Director of Main Street Lansing



Dover Schoolhouse #4 near Fayette.

The most environmentally friendly building is the building already built.

GOAL 4 – Create Lasting Memories by Sharing the Region’s Stories.

OBJECTIVES

- Support and develop programs, projects, and publications that educate citizens and visitors about the historic, art, and cultural resources and stories of the region.
- Ensure that all history, art, and cultural resources in the region have engaging, quality, and cohesive interpretation tailored to the resource, yet regionally cohesive.
- Develop a main interpretive theme, sub-themes, and story lines for the region to unite interpretation across site and county boundaries.
- Provide a variety of educational and interpretive facilities and services that are dynamic and provide safe interpretation that interests all age levels, ability levels, and learning styles.
- Develop interpretive and educational opportunities for residents and visitors through informational signs, audio tours, interpretive panels, wayside exhibits, kiosks, thematic art, information hubs, plaques, and place markers.



A Karel “Charles” Andera Grave Marker and Old Headstones in Winneshiek County.



Native American Artifacts in the Maier Rural Heritage Center Museum in Elkader.



Wexford Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Allamakee County.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Implement a Historical Interpretive Plan:** Develop a Northeast Iowa Historical Interpretive Plan. Complete an interpretive inventory for the history resources of the region. This Plan will prioritize interpretive needs and suggest guidelines for interpretive materials, such as minimum theme, content, and design criteria, for example all historic structures having the date built, materials, a historical photo, and a brief description of use. Another guideline will be that all sites have exterior information so the visitor has information even if the site is closed. Develop a schedule to optimize grant opportunities and secure funds to implement the Plan.
- **Share What Makes the Region Unique:** Identify and share “untold stores” with the visitor about the places, people, features, and intrinsic qualities that are unique to the region. Share the quirky stories or bits of folklore that might not be readily shared or tied to a physical location.
- **Create Diverse Interpretive Opportunities:** Develop interpretive and educational opportunities for residents and visitors through dynamic informational signs, self-guided audio tours, interpretive panels, wayside exhibits, kiosks, thematic art, information hubs, plaques, and place markers.
- **Collect Historic Items:** Work with county genealogical societies to put out a call for information, documents, photos, and other historical information and items. Compile and catalog them for use in development of interpretive and educational materials and storage in protected files. This will ensure that treasures are collected and preserved for the future.
- **Collect Oral Histories:** Identify and collect oral histories about regional icons (these icons could be people, places, themes) and use the information or audio/video footage in interpretation.

Riegel Blacksmith Shop Restoration & Interpretation

The Burkard Riegel Blacksmith Shop, located in the heart of Clermont’s historic downtown is a one-of-a-kind historic place. The small but unique structure, on the National Register of Historic Places, a Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area site, and part of the Clermont Historical Tour, is one of the of the last two blacksmith shops in Iowa that exist both structurally in its original building and internally with a century’s worth of blacksmith tools and equipment. Historic tourism is a major tourism venue for Northeast Iowa, so the improvements associated with the Restoration and Interpretation project are important.

Phase I of the project focused on structural repairs: a new roof, interior structural beams, historically accurate windows, lintel above the door, and repair of the exterior brick walls. Phase II goals are divided into work in the main room and back storage area. Main room goals include installing new hidden electrical wiring, boxes, and lighting, and designing move-able interpretive panels to be installed Fall of 2016. The back storage area will undergo significant improvements: installing supports, sealing the room from outside elements, and a cement floor. The storage area is where excess artifacts are stored while not on display, and shelving and pegboard will be developed so that the collection can be organized.

The Clermont Historical Society has unique ideas for interpretation. Ideas include live blacksmithing demonstrations, video containing oral histories and memories of Riegel in his shop, and opportunities for the visitor to try blacksmithing equipment. Riegel was known for making decorative railings for residential use, so a tour of his work still used in today will be developed.



The interior viewing area of the Blacksmith Shop.

Schedule: 2013 - 2022

Estimated Cost: \$60,000

Funding Secured to Date: \$8,585.83

Funding Pending: \$11,493.60

Potential Funding Sources: Fayette County Community Foundation, Iowa

Department of Cultural Affairs, Historical Resource Development Program, Silos and Smokestacks General Grant

Responsible Partners: Clermont Historical Society, City of Clermont, Silos and Smokestacks, Turkey River Recreational Corridor Board, Fayette County

- **Organize Around Theme Years:** Create Northeast Iowa “theme years” that feature different themes in the region. Ideas include agricultural heritage, one-room schoolhouses, stone buildings, or local artists. Oral histories could be collected along these themes, interpretive exhibits could be displayed, and events could be planned.
- **Interpret Native American History:** Create a traveling exhibit on Northeast Iowa’s Native American history. Find the authentic and unbiased story and artifacts to share. This can include information on tribal boundaries, early settlers and boundaries, the Neutral Zone, the Blackhawk War and Blackhawk Bluff, other notable sites, Emma Big Bear, names still used in the region, folklore, stories, and artifacts.
- **Walk Through History:** Develop a historic walking tour for each Northeast Iowa community that has 5 or more historic resources, as well as a regional historic tour.
- **Restore and Interpret Pioneer Cemeteries:** Create a kiosk at each pioneer cemetery telling the story of that cemetery and locations of notable graves.
- **Encourage Visiting Museums:** Develop a museum crawl that encourages people to visit multiple museums in the area.
- **Share Regional Themes via Interactive Timelines:** Create an interactive timeline exhibit made up of large posters representing a timeline. Each poster would have a year or date on it, photos, and information about a historical event or period in the Northeast Iowa region. The posters would be spaced out so viewers could walk through them, and by doing so, walk through the past. The exhibit could travel to area libraries, festivals, and other regional public venues.
- **Interpret Historic Churches:** There are many historic churches throughout the region, but typically these congregations and their leaders are not engaged with local historical societies. Build partnerships to engage historic churches in the historical activities of the region and open discussions about how churches can be preserved and interpreted for the public. Add interpretation at churches, such as information about its heritage, structure, windows, organ, denomination, and congregation.
- **Connect History to Modern Interests:** Connect with diverse interest areas by creatively expanding historical resources to draw in new interest.
 - *Example:* Create a history of Northeast Iowa’s viticulture and wineries and viticulture or a historical tour of trout fishing methods and spots in the region.



St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church and Cemetery, Spillville.



Czech Days Celebration, Spillville.



Motor Mill Historic Site, near Elkader.

GOAL 5 – Support Sites and Organizations.

OBJECTIVES

- Endorse programs and projects, support, and empower the individuals and groups that preserve and promote historic sites, museums, structures, collections, and objects; archaeological settings; artists and their art; and cultural resources and traditions.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Inventory Organizational Needs:** Assess history, art, and cultural organizations in the region and determine how many of them are struggling.
- **Connect Organizations:** Develop an in-person event and/or online system for arts businesses, organizations, and non-profits to network with one another, share ideas, successes, and struggles, form partnerships, and help one another. Encourage cross-promotion among sites and organizations.
- **Develop Maintenance Funds:** Work to develop an endowed funds to ensure that general maintenance and personnel needs are met in perpetuity.
- **Engage Volunteers:** Train regional history, art, and culture groups on ways to effectively engage with volunteers to form and maintain an adequate, reliable, and passionate volunteer base. Focus efforts on engaging younger volunteers who will later be trained to be the next generation of history, art, and culture leaders. Partner young professionals from LinkedIn who are interested in serving on nonprofit boards and volunteering for community groups with local history, art, and culture organizations.
- **Educate Communities about the Certified Local Government Program (CLGP):** Work with communities and counties to help them understand the CLGP how to stay current and in compliance with the program, what funding sources are available to CLGs, and how to access them.
- **Historic Structure Education:** Organize training and education for the preservation of different types of historic structures, such as, but not limited to, historic brick and limestone buildings or gravestones and cemeteries.
- **Inventory Museum Collections Needs:** Inventory the museums of the region to assess collections needs, such as collections in need of protection, management and care, additional items, and/or exhibit interpretation. Develop a timeline and plan for securing funds. Teach historical organizations and untrained staff and volunteers how to carefully curate as needed to eliminate irrelevant items and learn which items to accept. Inventory how many of the small museums without trained leadership are managing their collections correctly, and develop a program for advising historical societies, managers, employees, and volunteers on how to properly care for and maintain collections. Develop continuing education opportunities in conjunction with Iowa Museum Association (IMA) educational opportunities.
- **Educate About Collections Care:** Plan educational programming on collections management, care, and storage for curators, untrained staff and volunteers, and employees to prevent and counteract neglect and poor management. Topics will include controlling humidity and light, storage of extra collections, and care of instruments, guns, garments and fabric, or taxidermy animals.
 - *Example:* The Porter House Museum in Decorah has many butterflies from around the world, many now extinct, stored in boxes in a closet. Work with the Porter House to properly preserve and display these butterflies.

GOAL 6 – Foster the Region’s Art Culture.

OBJECTIVES

- Expand the definition of “art” to include all of the diverse ways to create.
- Develop a regional strategy for unified art collaboration and promotion.
- Increase access to art among rural populations and disadvantaged groups.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Include All Art Forms:** Expand artistic qualities to include all art forms and all individuals, such as dancers, musicians, performance artists, composers, thespians, chefs, crafters, jewelry makers, and up-cyclers.
- **Grow The Culinary Arts:** Develop a reputation as a center for culinary arts and unique foods. Create a regional menu guide featuring local restaurants, retailers with unique food for sale, and promote activities that teach cooking skills.
- **Increase Access to the Arts:** Create a regional “artreach” program to bring visual and performing arts to those who don’t have easy access to art and culture, such as the disabled and elderly.
 - *Example:* Engage local non-profit groups to share their talents at local hospitals, schools, and care facilities in the region.
- **Engage Individuals With Art:** Create exciting activities to get residents and visitors participating in and interacting with art. Work with communities to create at least one space and/or venue for experiential art experiences in each county by 2022. Examples include a clay studio, community theatre, art gallery that hosts classes, shared local art distribution sites, et cetera.
 - *Example:* Develop a public art scavenger hunt or Coloring and Activity Book book for children.
- **Engage with Artists Year Round:** Create an all-inclusive Artist Directory denoting retail locations, experiential activities, and studios that welcome visitors outside of studio tour weekends.



Art Show Wayfinding.



Stephen James Zbornik in his Chairshop in Fort Atkinson.

- **Public Art:** Add art to public spaces and unexpected places, such as along trails, in storefronts, or in city boulevards. Install one place-based, community-developed public art piece in Northeast Iowa community with a population over 500. Art pieces will have a special emphasis on interactive and purposeful art. Restore existing public art pieces that are in poor condition.
 - *Example:* Develop a regional-wide public art campaign to have themed art communities across the region. Local artists decorate large items for display in each community, for example eagles in Decorah or cows in Fredericksburg.
 - *Example:* Develop a travelling Northeast Iowa Regional Art Gallery to display in libraries, public buildings, museums, and other locations throughout the region.
- **Create Art in Rural Areas:** Work with smaller communities to create and maintain arts groups, with the goal of every community over 500 people having at least one arts organization by 2020.
 - *Example:* Create an additional studio tour to include all types of artists in all seven counties in Northeast Iowa. This will be in the summer as to not compete with other regional studio tours.
 - *Example:* Develop an “Artist In Residence (AIR)” program that brings artists from around the world to Northeast Iowa art studios to work with area artists and teach public classes.
- **Bring Art to Rural Areas:** Encourage traveling programs and artists to stop in the Northeast Iowa region for performances, especially communities under 2,000 population. Maintain an emphasis on free or extremely low cost performances and events.
 - *Example:* Plan a traveling music festival that stops at different venues throughout the region and features regional musicians and bands in public spaces.
 - *Example:* Create a pop-up traveling “coffee and concerts” series.

Multi-Functional Public Art Along the Turkey River Recreational Corridor Trail

An Iowa Great Place, the Turkey River Recreational Corridor (TRRC) links the communities of Clermont, Elgin, and Elkader via the scenic beauty of the Turkey River. The TRRC Trail is a popular 4-mile paved trail connecting Elgin and Clermont, with plans underway to extend the trail to other nearby communities and trail systems.

Recognizing the economic value of the TRRC and the TRRC Land Trail, TRRC leaders would like to enhance these resources through the addition of multi-functional public art. The leading idea is to create large native flower sculptures, such as the Iowa wild rose, sculptures that provide both aesthetic beauty, shade, and light. These could be made out of metal and/or durable canvas and will use solar panels to provide lighting emanating from their center. The TRRC has been communicating with Adam Polluck of Fire Farm Lighting in Elkader, Iowa about the initial design of the flowers. Fire Farm Lighting specializes in unique and custom-made lighting solutions made in Iowa. The company will be able to provide electrical and design assistance, and connect with area artisans for different design and fabrication of the project as needed. It is yet to be determined how many of these flower sculptures would be added along the TRRC Trail and what their scale would be; e.g. a few large flowers spaced along the route or a few smaller patio umbrella-sized flowers clustered together in picnic or rest areas. It is hoped that as funds become available and the TRRC route expands that more flowers will be added.

Schedule: 2017 - 2025

Estimated Cost: \$100,000

Funding Secured to Date: \$0

Funding Pending: \$0

Potential Funding Sources: Fayette & Clayton County Community Foundations, National Endowment for the Arts, Upper Mississippi Gaming Corporation, Iowa Arts Council, Private Donations, Fundraising

Responsible Partners: Clayton and Fayette Counties, TRRC Board



Similar functional public art in urban Jerusalem designed by HQ Architects of New York and Tel Aviv.

- **Connect Local Performers with Opportunities:** Develop and maintain a regional database of performers from the Northeast Iowa region with their name, contact information, description, photo, fee, and a brief sound file. This will enable local events to find local talent as performers. Maintain a list of places that are interested in hosting local performers.
 - *Example:* Expand area farmer's markets to include art and crafts booths and serve as a venue for live music.
- **Implement an Art and Culture Interpretive Plan:** Develop a Northeast Iowa Art and Culture Interpretive Plan to encourage and support public art resources and art and culture sites to engage in quality and cohesive interpretation. Complete an interpretive inventory for the art and culture resources of the region. This plan will prioritize interpretive needs and provide guidelines for interpretive materials. Guidelines will include minimum theme, content, and design criteria, such as all public art pieces having the artist, date created, and materials used. Develop a calendar to optimize grant opportunities and secure funds to implement the Northeast Iowa Art and Culture Interpretive Plan.

"Politicians don't bring people together. Artists do."

– Richard Daley, Former Mayor of Chicago



A Live Band at Art Haus in Decorah.



The Cresco Opera House.

- **Organize Venues:** Create a regional network of diverse venues that agree to provide their use for free or very low-cost to regional non-profit art, history, and cultural organizations. Develop an inventory of regional venues for display on IowaART.org. The inventory will include venue name, number of seats, seating space dimensions, chairs and tables available, stage dimensions, technical audio and lighting specifications, history of the venue, photos, and cost.
- **Restore and Expand Venues:** Work with partners to secure funds to restore and re-purpose historic venues as spaces for interactions and performances. Identify potential art, culture, and history venues and work to restore them to working order as buildings that foster community performance and engagement.
 - *Example:* The Volga Opera House has been identified as a priority for restoration and restoration efforts are underway. The Sullivan Opera House in McGregor and the Malek Theatre in Independence also have groups organized to support restoration efforts.
- **Create a Regional Recording Studio:** Explore developing a regional recording studio that provides services for free or low cost and has an educational component for those interested in sound design.
- **Promote Local Products:** Northeast Iowa residents produce and sell a variety of local foods, plants, art and crafts, and other local items at farmer markets, direct from producers/artists, through producer/art groups, and seasonally at local businesses. Unfortunately, the majority of these opportunities to experience or take home local goods are not well coordinated or promoted. Work with producers/artists, groups, and businesses to publicize locations to buy local products.

Bringing Opera Back to Northeast Iowa

Northeast Iowa has a rich performing arts tradition. Once a popular pastime, many of these opera houses have been restored into other uses such as homes or retail stores. Thirteen historic opera houses and theatres are in a state where restoration is possible; 8 are in disrepair, 5 have been restored but are under-utilized. Preservation and restoration is a separate historical project, but if restoration were to occur, these venues could be added to the inventory of functioning opera houses and added to this project at a later date.

The Elkader Opera House is a great example of a historic opera house returning to its roots as a community cultural attraction and being used to host theatre productions, concerts, children's events, and musical other events. Other examples of successful restoration include the Clermont Opera House, Cresco Theatre and Opera House, Fayette Opera House, and Decorah's Hotel Winneshiek Steyer Opera House. However, these are being used as a meeting and event venue more than their traditional use as a fine arts performance space. This is an excellent opportunity to develop programming that brings fine arts to these historic opera houses and rural communities and by doing so, brings visitors to the region and enriches the lives of residents. Ideas include creating an event series specific to each opera house, and/or developing a traveling event series that rotates among corridor opera houses. Events could include theatre productions, Shakespeare recitations, musical concerts, dance programs, opera productions or performances, and experiential events. These events could be collaborations utilizing local and area talent, organizations, schools, or bringing in performers.

Schedule: 2017 - 2022

Estimated Cost: \$150,000

Funding Secured to Date: \$0

Potential Funding Sources: Community Attraction and Tourism Grant, Upper Mississippi Gaming Commission, Iowa Arts Council, Community Foundations, Nat'l Endowment for the Arts ArtWorks, Iowa Tourism Grant, Art Place America

Responsible Partners: Cities and Counties, Luther College, Preservation Iowa Hollywood in the Heartland



The colorful façade of the Fayette Opera House.

GOAL 7 – Encourage Experiences.

OBJECTIVES

- Support artists, galleries, and shops, and encourage them to add hands-on art opportunities.
- Create interactive interpretation and experiential learning at historical sites.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Create Experiences Tailored to Niche Interests:** Develop self-guided tours, complementary publications, and printable information that focus on specific activities, topics, and niche interests.
 - *Examples:* One-room schoolhouses, historic churches and organs, pioneer cemeteries, murals/public art, historic barns, a travel guide for outside city limits.
- **Develop Mobile Websites:** Create mobile-friendly websites tailored to specific interests to help plan and guide trips and serve as self-guided tours.
- **Build Interactive Historical Sites:** Create opportunities for public engagement with historic resources through interactive museums and sites that include music, stories, movies, hands on activities, and demonstrations, and interactive and fun experiences at the resources.
- **Create Interactive Art Experiences:** Create more experiential art opportunities. Create and market more public and private art and cultural learning and teaching opportunities, including, but not limited to classes, artist in residence programs, and community college courses and continuing education, that invite artists, academicians, curators, and all manner of creative people to learn, engage and grow.
 - *Examples:* Ongoing collaborative crowd-sourced art piece in a public space, free/low-cost demonstrations/classes, interactive flash mob-style art event.
- **Engage Visitors Through Technology:** Explore ways to incorporate technology into interpretation and as a way to experience sites.
 - *Example:* Use audio tours via phone, augmented reality through smart devices, or the “Clio-Your Guide to History” smart device application.
- **Develop an Interactive Interpretation Plan:** Include interactive elements on all new interpretation and develop a schedule, system, and content and design standards to add interactive interpretive elements to existing interpretation throughout the region.



“Museums will need to do everything they can to engage with their public, through their displays, education and outreach programs, and by being as open as possible to what their audience wants. Museums are much more than repositories of objects; they are meeting places for people and ideas. Their future depends on remaining a dynamic part of the public realm.”

-Robert Hewison

GOAL 8 – Celebrate Niche Cultural Resources & Create Opportunities to Experience Culture.

OBJECTIVES

- Promote the really unique resources that have shaped Northeast Iowa, even if they are not a major theme.
- Develop opportunities for cultural immersion.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

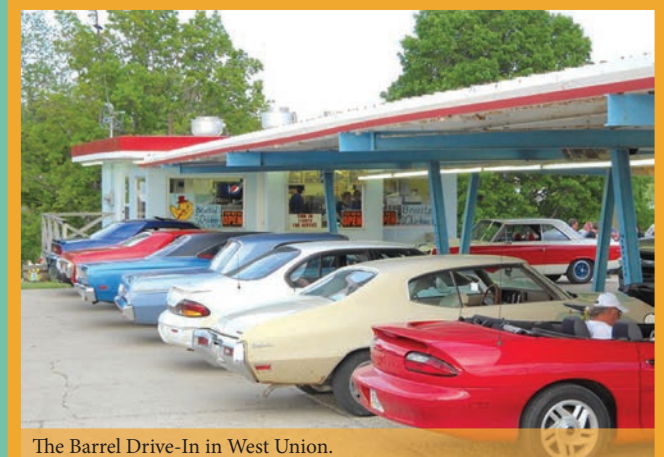
- **Honor the Heritage of Early Settlers:** Preserve the cultural heritages of the earliest settlers of the area. Create a regional map that denotes which nationalities settled in which areas, organized by township within each county.
- **Promote Cultural Events:** Create a guide to the region's ethnic festivals to showcase the diverse heritage of the area.
- **Celebrate Local Through Publications:** Develop information and outreach materials about the unique opportunities for visitors to experience the “local” culture, including but not limited to locally grown foods, local ethnic cuisine, regional foods, local arts and crafts, and other art and culture.
- **Feature the Diverse Flavors of the Region:** Plan a regional ethnic arts festival or food festival with representation from each individual festival in one place.
- **Develop Cultural Interpretation:** Develop site wayside exhibits that engage the public and tell the stories of specific battles, sacred places, cultures or regional persons in a respectful manner and provide accurate and culturally sensitive interpretation of past and current cultures.
- **Honor Agricultural Heritage:** Feature the region's agricultural heritage. Partner with regional historical societies, museum collections, local producers, and farm organizations to present the agricultural history of the region. Collect oral histories, demonstrate where food comes from, or show advances (for better or worse, could have ecological component) in farming.
 - *Example:* Create a historical and current photo archive and inventory of agricultural structures throughout the region and while doing so, talk with owners about protecting, preserving, and potentially restoring these structures.



Scandinavian Heritage in Decorah.



A Traditional Algerian Dish at Schera's Restaurant in Elkader.



The Barrel Drive-In in West Union.

Quilting Cultural Excursion

- **Regional Barn Quilt Tour:** Create a master list with photos to use in developing a website and brochure driving tour for the barn quilts across all 7 counties. Plan a quilter's event that includes visits to barn quilts, stops at quilting stores, and places to buy quilts such as Amish or retail stores.
- **Partner With Amish and Mennonite Residents:** Build a partnership with amenable Amish and Mennonite to build respectful and healthy interactions with English.
 - *Example:* Develop a regional Amish and Mennonite guide denoting families and farms that sell goods on their property and/or welcome visitors.



A Celebration by Jewish Community Members in Postville.

"A concerted effort to preserve our heritage is a vital link to our cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, and economic legacies - all of the things that quite literally make us who we are."

- Steve Berry

The art of quilting is tied to the rural agricultural heritage of the region and has evolved through time to include classic quilt patterns, intricate new designs, and sewing modern items like totes and hampers. There are many talented quilters living in Northeast Iowa who would like to connect with each other across county lines and cultures to market and share the love of their craft. The Regional Council would like to help coordinate a Northeast Iowa Quilting Excursion to connect quilters from the region, Midwest, country, and different cultures. This excursion will be the first step in developing Northeast Iowa's reputation as a quilting destination, inviting individuals to discover or celebrate the craft and drawing tourists to the region. The event will be a day-long bus tour and/or self-guided driving tour that would showcase the quilting-related resources of the area. The tour's itinerary and quilting-related resources will also be made available year-round online and in print marketing and tourism materials. The Quilting Excursion would include visits to the many small local businesses that are quilt shops or sell quilting materials, stops at area barn quilts, opportunities to buy quilts, and meeting with Amish and Mennonite quilters. Places to eat and other points of interest will also be suggested.

Schedule: 2017 - 2018

Estimated Cost: \$7,000

Funding Secured to Date: \$0

Funding Pending: \$0

Potential Funding Sources: Local Community Foundations, Hotel/Motel Grant Funds, Iowa Tourism Grant

Responsible Partners: Cities and Counties along the Excursion, County Barn Quilt Organizations, Amish and Mennonite Leaders, Quilting Clubs and Groups, Local Quilt Shops



A barn quilt provides a pop of color in rural Northeast Iowa.

GOAL 9 – Celebrate the Culture of Vibrant Downtowns.

OBJECTIVES

- Support small local businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Use art and history as themes to guide the renovation, renewal, revival of small town public spaces and community pride.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Support Main Streets:** Continue to support the Lansing, West Union, Elkader, and New Hampton Main Street Districts in their efforts to preserving historically accurate and economically thriving Main Streets.
- **Restore Downtown Buildings:** Often, the historic facades of downtown buildings are covered with other materials or removed. Work with property owners to uncover and restore the historical fronts of their downtown buildings.
 - *Example:* Art-deco style restorations to the Guttenberg Municipal building.
- **Beautify Downtowns in Creative Ways:** Work with local artists to use “tromp l’oeil” optical illusion paintings to beautify abandoned buildings and blighted areas in downtowns, historic districts, and other high traffic areas of the region, use greenscaping to beautify downtown areas, and put public art in community parks.
- **Incubate Businesses:** Create a business generator or incubator in chamber of commerce buildings.
- **Highlight Small Businesses with Targeted Marketing:** Create a small business tour day that promotes small businesses and local entrepreneurs throughout the Northeast Iowa region. Develop a mobile website, brochure, marketing for people to self-drive and direct the tour and/or organize for individuals to take a bus to the locations from in town or neighboring area.
- **Plan Ways to Support Local Businesses:** Organize a regional Cash Mob where residents and visitors surprise a small business by showing up and spending at least \$20. This can be organized via social media events and groups and text alerts.



Tromp L'oeil Art in Quebec.



Downtown Decorah.

GOAL 10 – Strengthen Northeast Iowa's Identity & Promote its Value as a Tourism Destination.

OBJECTIVES

- Build and market the “Personality of Place” for Northeast Iowa communities, drawing on their local resources and unique senses of place.
- Develop a cohesive “brand identity” for the region through the use of universal design standards and logos for signage, publications, kiosks, and all other marketing features in the area.
- Support sustainable visitation and tourism that does not diminish the area's intrinsic qualities and minimizes impacts to public safety infrastructure, residents' daily routines, cultural traditions, and lifestyles.



STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Keep Information Current:** Ensure resources are publicizing current and engaging information. Partner with Travel Iowa, Visit Iowa, and other tourism resources to ensure that art, culture, and history locations are listed in visitor information and guides and the information stays current. Keep the news media informed of activities and events.
- **Engage Visitors Via Social Media:** Work with local organizations, sites, and resources to ensure that each has a robust online and/or social media presence. Create a branded hashtag for social media posts at marquee history, art, and culture attractions. Publicize this hashtag at sites with a sign.

#TasteNortheastIowa
#IowaCulture
#WapsiMill
#IowaCreations
#MadeInNEIowa
#IMadeItMySelfie
#NEIArt
#LIVEfromNEIA
#IowaArt
#RuralRevival
#IowaHistory

- **Keep Visitors Busy Year-Round:** Work with sites within the seven-county region to ensure that there are plenty of engaging interpretation and experiential activities. Plan ways to keep the region interesting for return visitors, such as seasonal interpretation or artwork that are changed out periodically. Promote year-round experiences to visitors in order to spread visitation out and expand economic benefits across all seasons.
- **Encourage Trips of All Lengths:** Encourage short day trips through the creation of a “50 Things to Do” or “If you have X minutes, try...” lists.
- **Engage Residents to Become Tourists:** Invite individuals, families, and groups to discover and rediscover areas in their own backyard and visitors.

Connecting to History, Art, & Culture via Social Media

Many of the sites and organizations in NEIA do not have up-to-date Google listings, modern and mobile-capable websites, or active social media accounts. In today's digital age, individuals rely on information from the internet, so it is imperative that history, art, and cultural resources have an accurate and engaging online presence.

Plan a workshop or meet individually with leaders to train them on how to update Google listings, use Search Engine Optimization to move their website to the top of search results, and create and manage active social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Secure funding to help history, art, and culture organizations and sites create or modernize their websites. Website features will include animated and interactive elements, photographs, and a mobile-friendly design. Also work to make sure sites are listed on TripAdvisor and/or Yelp as relevant and that visitors are encouraged to leave positive reviews.

Schedule: 2017-2020

Estimated Cost: \$70,000

Funding Secured to Date: \$0

Funding Pending: \$11,100

Potential Funding Sources: Rural Business Development Grant, Local Community Foundations

Responsible Partners: Sites and Organizations in the region, County and City Tourism offices



Sample Historical Site Facebook Page.

GOAL 11 – Build Partnerships and Gather Support.

OBJECTIVES

- Build connections and collaborations between different and diverse groups. Engage resources across county lines to work together for preservation, restoration, interpretation, and marketing. Strengthen partnerships through collaborative programs and projects.
- Foster partnerships across city and county lines and on a regional scale.
- Challenge leaders to think outside their organization, city, and county and think on a regional scale.
- Work to unify the disjointed nature of art, culture, and history in the region.

Potential Partners:

- Driftless Art Collective (DArtCo)
- Local/Regional History, Art, Culture Organizations
- Northeast Iowa Tourism Association (NEITA)
- Travel Iowa
- Driftless Area Scenic Byway
- River Bluffs Scenic Byway
- Area Schools, Higher Education Institutions
- Iowa Arts Council
- Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
- Next Generation Iowa
- Northeast Iowa RC&D
- Economic Development and Tourism Offices
- Local City and County Governments
- Iowa's Creative Corridor

Barns, Brews, and Bluffs Tour

Building partnerships and collaborations between diverse local groups in a priority for the Regional Cultural Council. One way to do this is through collaborative events such as a Barns, Brews, and Bluffs Tour. This event would host regional and Iowa breweries in historic barns, such as round barns, barns with barn quilts, or other old barns throughout the seven-county region. Tourists could drive, take a bus tour, or even bike to each location, enjoying the scenery of bluff country and the Driftless Area. Once at the barns, they could try different craft brews, have some light snacks, and enjoy live music from area bands in a relaxed atmosphere. The breweries would serve their beers and could also sell their bottles, growlers, and other merchandise. Individuals would need to purchase a “21+” or “21 and under wristband” to attend the event. The wristband would give entry into the barns and cover snacks and one drink and at each location. Any additional drinks could be ordered and paid for at each site, and, of course, safe driving will be encouraged. The Tour would culminate by bringing everyone together at one large barn to enjoy their drinks while listening and dancing to a lineup of local bands. Those who participated in the Tour would have access to this concert with their wristbands, or individuals could pay a small cover fee to get in to just the concert portion. Drinks at the concert would be an additional expense. Event costs will be met through sponsorships, grants, and wristband sales. The event could be run as a fundraiser with the profits divided among area historical societies.

Schedule: 2017-2018

Estimated Cost: \$15,000

Funding Secured to Date: \$0

Funding Pending: \$0

Potential Funding Sources: Iowa Tourism Grant, Local Community Foundations, Upper Mississippi Gaming Corporation, Corporate sponsorships

Responsible Partners: Travel Iowa and Iowa Wine and Beer App, Local and Iowa Breweries, Iowa Brewer's Guild, Iowa Brewer's Union, Private property owners of the barns



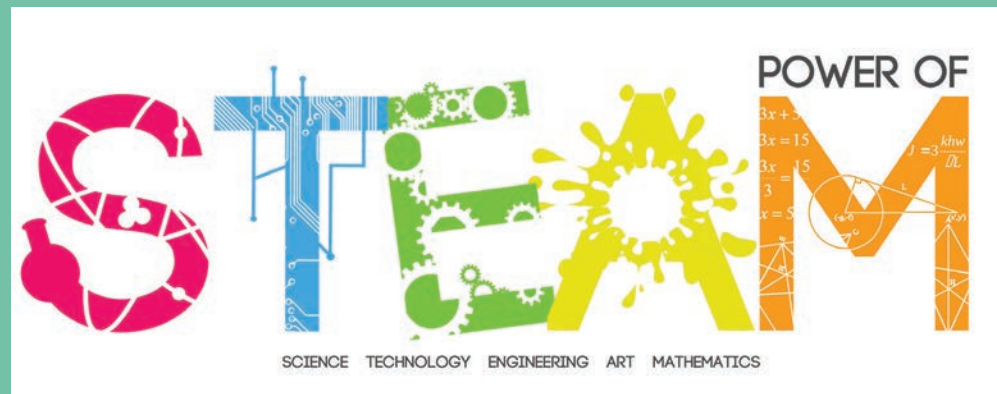
Sample local brews on the Barns, Brews, and Bluffs Tour!

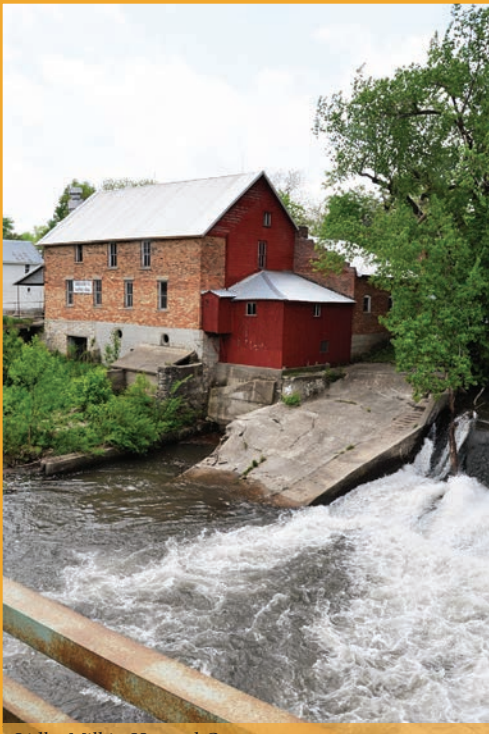
STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- **Connect Diverse Groups in Collaborative Events:** Create connections between historical, art, and cultural sites, organizations, and resources of the region, and include other intrinsic qualities such as recreation, scenic, and natural.
 - *Example:* A Painters, Potters, Pubs event, Music and Monarchs event, or an Agriculture event that includes historic barns, farmers' markets, and heritage sites.
- **Conduct an Economic Impact Study:** Conduct a study of the economic impact of historical and art/cultural resources in the region. Use the results of this economic impact study to focus efforts and gather more public support.
- **Educate the Public:** Develop a campaign to engage citizens and leaders in awareness of their local resources and understanding the importance of history, art, and culture in their local communities and region.
 - *Example:* Create a campaign that celebrates the diverse talents of local professionals. Highlight local individuals who are leaders in their community but also have ties to history, art, and culture as a hobby.
- **Pursue Government Funding:** Engage city and county leaders in discussions about the importance and value of history, art, and culture. Work to translate these discussions into funding for local resources.
 - *Example:* Compile information and create short fact sheets to use as aids when explaining the importance. Approach cities and counties for history, art, and culture funding, and push for legislation that increases arts spending per capita in Iowa.
- **Develop and Coordinate Project Fundraising:** Identify, develop, and help implement opportunities for increased private and public fundraising for historic projects.
- **Promote STEAM:** Encourage the promotion of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, *Art*, and Math) instead of STEM.
- **Build Collaborations With Environmental Groups:** Build collaboration between environmental education and history, art, and culture. Engage clean energy leaders to work with sites to improve energy efficiency, create public art made of recycled materials or with environmental themes, and put art and/or historical interpretation in natural areas.

"Culture is not just a topic of cultural policy; it should inform and be integrated with all other policies. Policies dealing with education, tourism, cultural diplomacy, social policies, and city and regional planning, as well as other areas, can integrate culture in the core of their policymaking to various degrees."

– Katriina Soini, Natural Resources Institute of Finland





Lidke Mill in Howard County.



The Lansing / Black-Hawk Bridge.



An Amish Quilt from Buchanan County.



30

Becky Steines making Goat's Milk Soap.



Weiner Dog Race in Guttenberg.



The Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah.



The St. Olaf Auditorium, built by the WPA of local limestone.



Pedretti's Bakery in Elkader.

Conclusion

This Regional Enhancement Plan is a grassroots living document developed at the local level by citizens, communities, stakeholders, partner organizations, and related experts. Unique to Northeast Iowa, it inventories the history, art, and culture resources and organizations, identifies marquee sites and organizations, and describes vision and goals for region. When describing the vision, the actions that will be recommended and implemented to preserve, promote, enhance, expand, and sustain the region are briefly outlined with a few examples. In actuality, this is only a taste of the many actions that can be taken to build the capacity of organizations and enhance resources in the region. Through creating and executing the goals presented in this Plan, the Northeast Iowa region will develop a shared sense of place, extending pride in one's community to pride in the entire region. This Regional Enhancement Plan is a fluid and living document. It will be reviewed and revised often with new information. It will be used to form partnerships with regional individuals, groups, and organizations, and will be shared and made available to the public. This Regional Enhancement Plan should not sit on a shelf — its words should become underlined, its margins filled with notes and ideas, and its pages dog-eared as it is shared throughout the region. *The goal of the Northeast Iowa Regional History, Art, and Cultural Council and this Regional Enhancement Plan is to become a model region rich in history, art, and cultural resources for the state and the nation.*

"CULTURESHED (kul'cher-shed) n.

- 1. A geographic region irrigated by streams of local talent and fed by deep pools of human and natural history.*
- 2. An area nourished by what is cultivated locally.*
- 3. The efforts of writers, performers, visual artists, scholars, farmers, and chefs who contribute to a vital and diverse local culture."*

— Jay Salinas, WormFarm Institute



Diversity, Equal Opportunity and Accessibility

Making the arts accessible to all Iowans is a priority of Iowa Arts Council programs and services. Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and services of the Iowa Arts Council is provided to all individuals regardless of race, national origin, color, creed, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity or associational preference.

Recipients are required by federal law not to discriminate against persons participating in Iowa Arts Council funded or sponsored activities on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, physical or mental disability. All parties involved in activities funded or sponsored by the Iowa Arts Council must comply with: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Fair Labor Standards under Section 5(j) of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

On the Cover

Top Row (L-R): Clermont State Museum, Clermont; Heritage Train, Cresco; Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum, Burr Oak

Middle Row (L-R): The Cresco Theatre and Opera House, Cresco; An Amish Quilt, Buchanan County; Trout Run Trail Art, Decorah

Bottom Row (L-R): The Puppet Project, Decorah; Montauk Historical Site, Clermont; Story People Mural, Decorah