

# What's Happening

*For Community Leaders*

September/October 2017

## OKC Mayor praises Omaha redevelopment efforts

Some of Omaha's most recent redevelopment projects received high praise for walkability in early October from the man credited with leading the "Oklahoma City Renaissance." That man is Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett, whose efforts to revitalize his city began with a weight loss challenge to residents.

On Oct. 4, Cornett toured parts of the Blackstone and Midtown Crossing neighborhoods in Omaha as part of a visit arranged by the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA).



Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett (second from left) toured redeveloped neighborhoods in Omaha, including Midtown Crossing, which focused on walkability instead of cars.

"The people of Omaha should be very proud of what they've created," said Cornett during the tour.

MAPA invited Mayor Cornett to Omaha to be the keynote speaker for its Annual Council of Officials meeting and 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Cornett's leadership is credited with helping create the "Oklahoma City Renaissance," touted as one of the most remarkable transformations in American history. A key part of the transformation began with redesigning streets for people not just cars, and that started after Oklahoma City appeared on a list of most obese cities in the United States.

"I had to figure out why we had such a problem with obesity," said Cornett. He discovered a lot of streets without sidewalks so there was nowhere for people to walk and get more activity into their daily lives.

That redesign of streets to add sidewalks led to redevelopment efforts on a much larger scale by creating the Bricktown district, improving inner city schools and constructing bike trails and paths. Revitalization included canals, a whitewater center that hosts Olympic trials and even a streetcar project just getting underway. Much of the redevelopment has been funded by sales tax initiatives.

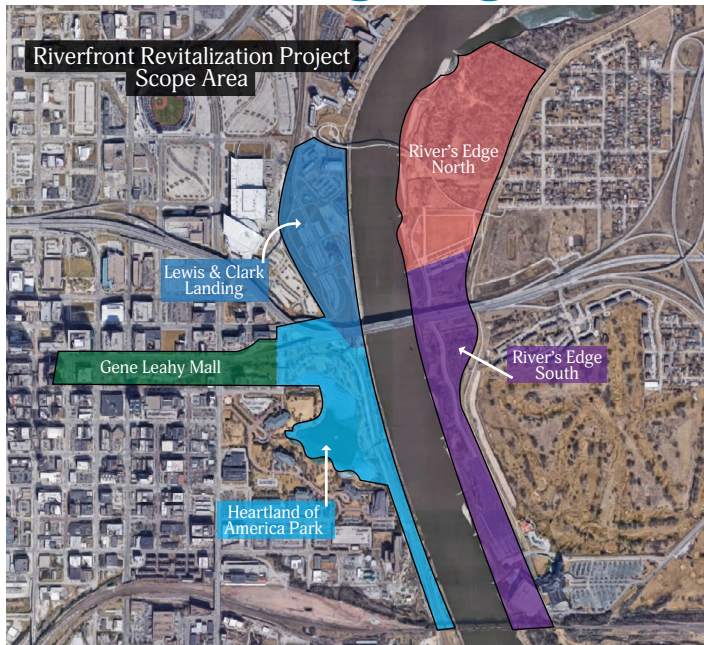
All of these projects have helped Oklahoma City begin to reverse the tide of "brain drain," where 20-somethings leave their communities after receiving a college education.

While Oklahoma City's revitalization efforts have garnered broad praise from across the United States, Cornett acknowledged there are some residents in his city who still are not in agreement with the changes. "I tell them that's OK because we're building a city where your children and grandchildren are going to want to live."



Mayor Mick Cornett spoke to attendees at the MAPA Annual Meeting about the "Oklahoma City Renaissance" that he led to transform the city and reverse "brain drain."

# Public meetings begin for Riverfront Revitalization project



The Riverfront Revitalization Project is looking to unify the Omaha-Council Bluffs community through a thoughtful, amenity-rich open space on the Missouri riverfront. This project is in the early stages of development and is seeking public input before finalizing any further plans.

There have been major renovations already to the

riverfront area including the Gallup facility, the high-rise condominium, town houses along the river, the National Park Service and the Bob Kerry Pedestrian Bridge. This project hopes to continue its growth by targeting five different sections of the Riverfront property: Gene Leahy Mall, Heartland of America Park, Lewis & Clark Landing, River's Edge North and River's Edge South.

At an open house on Sept. 11, attendees learned about the project's current goals and progress. Participants were also able to indicate which amenities, inspired by other major riverfronts, they would like to have along the Omaha-Council Bluffs Riverfront.

The Riverfront Revitalization Project wants the area to become a regional destination. Its main goal is to build on the unique properties of the river by creating a flexible plan for the future, integrating alternative transportation opportunities and developing a variety of active spaces.

The next public meeting will be on Nov. 15 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Omaha Marriott Downtown in the Capitol District.

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## MAPA 2017 Regional Awards recipients named in October

MAPA recognized retiring Council Bluffs Public Health Department Director Donn Dierks, Nebraska State Patrol Lieutenant Kevin Bridges and the City of Bellevue Public Works Department for their outstanding service at its annual Council of Officials meeting Oct. 4.

Lt. Bridges received the Award of Merit, which is MAPA's highest award for service. Bridges heads the



Lt. Bridges received the Award of Merit, MAPA's highest service award, for helping run the Metro Area Motorist program.

Metro Area Motorist Assist (MAMA) program, and has been involved since its formation in 1997. This program recruits committed

volunteers to patrol the metro area's interstate system during peak commuting hours and offer assistance to travelers in need of aid. As of December 31, 2016, more than 83,000 assists were conducted since the program's inception.

As the retiring Director of the Council Bluffs Public Health Department, Donn Dierks is the recipient of the Regional Citizenship Award, which honors an individual who recognized regional problems and initiated and supported policies which require shared regional effort, and contributed to the region's quality of life. Among many accomplishments, Dierks secured the site of the Council Bluffs Recycling Center, now a regional hub for recycling and household hazardous materials collections.

The City of Bellevue Works Department received the Regional Service Award for working quickly to stabilize the city's infrastructure after the June 2017 tornadoes.



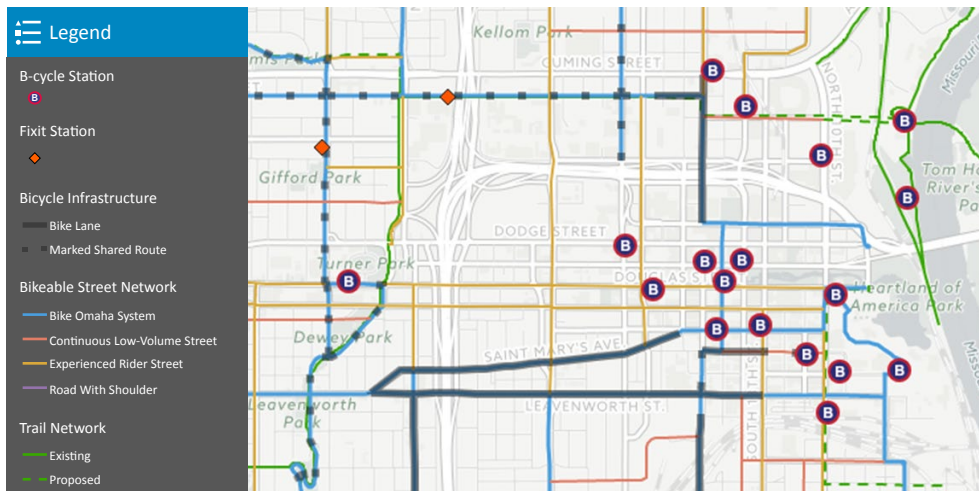
# MAPA introduces interactive bike map

There is a new tool available for bicyclists in the metropolitan area. The Interactive Bike Map makes navigating all trails and streets a breeze. You can plan your trip online by visiting [bikemap.mapacog.org](http://bikemap.mapacog.org).

Bicycling is a great means for recreational activity, commuting, and leisure. Every day more people turn to bicycling. The Interactive Bike Map is a tool designed to help you find routes to take through the city. Trails do not go everywhere and

people use the street system for commuting, access to trails, and recreational trips.

There is also a print version. The new 2017 paper edition was distributed to several bike shops around the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area. Bike Masters, Dundee Cycles, The Bike Union, Xtreme Wheels, and Endless Trail Bike Shops are just a few spots. For a complete list, go to <http://bit.ly/2helBEk>



# Heartland 2050 summit focuses on technology

How do you change the conversation about transportation from it being a problem to a solution? That was the main focus of Heartland 2050's Summit on Sept. 27.

During his presentation, Ben Pierce, Transportation Technology Program Lead for HDR, demonstrated how technology is transforming the transportation field and how it can be used to solve societal problems.



Pierce is one of the key authors and architects of Columbus, Ohio's Smart City application which secured \$50 million

in federal and private funding to help fight a high infant mortality rate in one of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods.

Following his presentation, Pierce facilitated an interactive workshop where attendees separated into groups and selected societal problems to solve. The groups then started a course of action for solving their chosen issues by determining resources and people who should be involved in the work going forward.

# CALENDAR

## November 2017

- Nov. 5th – Daylight Saving Time ends  
Set clocks back one hour
- Nov. 7th – Heartland 2050 Executive Committee  
11:30 a.m.
- Nov. 8th – RPA Policy/Tech Committee  
11 a.m.
- Nov. 10th – Veterans Day observed  
MAPA Offices closed
- Nov. 15th – Coordinated Transit  
10:30 a.m.
- Nov. 23rd – Thanksgiving Day  
MAPA Offices closed
- Nov. 24th – MAPA Offices closed
- Nov. 29th – Finance Committee  
8:30 a.m.

## December 2017

- Dec. 1st – Transportation Technical Advisory Committee  
10 a.m.
- Dec. 7th – MAPA Board of Directors  
1:30 p.m.
- Dec. 13th – Coordinated Transit  
10:30 a.m.  
RPA Policy/Tech Committee  
11 a.m.  
NACO (Nebraska Association of County Officials)  
Annual Conference, Kearney  
Dec. 13 - 15
- Dec. 22nd – Christmas Eve observed  
MAPA Offices close at 12 p.m.
- Dec. 25th – Christmas Day  
MAPA Offices closed

# MAPA receives MAMA certificate of appreciation

MAPA would like to thank the Nebraska State Patrol Metro Area Motorist Assist (MAMA) volunteers for the Certificate of Appreciation and gift we received.

MAMA volunteers patrol the busy Omaha metro area interstates to help drivers get back on the road by offering fuel, tire changes, jump starts and other assistance free of charge. This allows patrol officers to focus on enforcement and emergency responses.

This program would not be as successful without the hard work and dedication of its volunteers. Since 1997, MAMA volunteers have made more than 83,000 roadside assists in the MAPA region.



MAMA program volunteer Dean Bentzinger presented MAPA Executive Director Greg Youell with the Certificate of Appreciation.

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