

What's Happening

For Community Leaders

May/June 2018

Heartland 2050 releases updated Equitable Growth Profile

More than \$4.8 billion would have been added to the Omaha-Council Bluffs regional economy in 2015 if several racial disparities including education, transportation, employment and income were closed.

Those are some of the findings of the updated Heartland 2050 Equitable Growth Profile released at a joint event between Heartland 2050 and the United Way of the Midlands on June 6 entitled “Everyone Prospers: The Path to Equity.” The profile was funded by the Sherwood Foundation and the Omaha Community Foundation.

The report is a joint project by the Heartland 2050 Equity and Engagement Committee, PolicyLink, and the University of Southern California’s Program on Environmental and Regional Equity, and follows the first Equitable Growth Profile released in 2014. PolicyLink is a leading national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works®. The updated profile shows the continued impact of racial disparities in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. It outlines recommendations to close the gaps identified.

In his keynote address, PolicyLink President Dr. Michael McAfee, urged attendees to think differently when working to close disparities. He emphasized

government and the business community need to take an active role.

“Create that model of an organization that is the bastion of what equity looks like and develop the programmatic work. Too often we want to do this on the back of non-profits and foundations and that’s not fair,” said McAfee.

The Equitable Growth Profile shows the region is undergoing a major demographic shift. By 2050, people of color will be 41 percent of the population. With that shift, some of the fastest-growing sections of the region’s workforce lack the education required for the jobs of the future.

EQUITABLE GROWTH PROFILE FINDINGS

BY 2050:

- 41% OF POPULATION WILL BE PEOPLE OF COLOR
- EDUCATION GAP FOR FASTEST GROWING # OF WORKERS
- SHRINKING MIDDLE CLASS
- GROWING # OF WORKING POOR

The profile also highlights a shrinking middle class and a growing population of working poor, particularly among Black and Latino workers.

Despite the disparities, there are positive aspects also. More youth of all races and ethnicities are graduating from high school. Local programs, such as the Empowerment Network’s Summer Training Employment Pathway and Urban Pipeline (STEP-UP Omaha), have reduced summer unemployment in 14-21 year-olds by nearly 50 percent.

The full Equitable Growth Profile can be found at heartland2050.org.



Dr. Michael McAfee addresses the audience at the joint event between Heartland 2050 and the United Way of the Midlands on June 6.

Blair receives funding for new workforce housing program

MAPA is joining with the City of Blair to create new workforce housing in the community with an emphasis on the former Dana College campus. In May, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) awarded the MAPA Foundation and the City of Blair a \$351,000 grant from the Nebraska Rural Workforce Housing Fund to assist with the program, and the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) also awarded a \$250,000 grant.

MAPA will administer a revolving loan fund of \$977,000 to build the new housing. Once approved by the DED and NIFA, MAPA will establish an application process that allows area builders to submit proposals for new speculative housing.

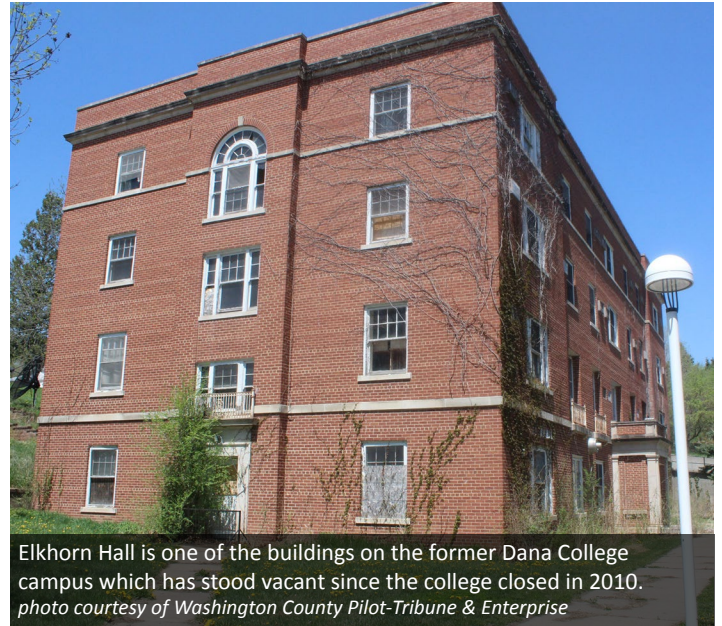
The application for grant funds is a direct outcome of the Blair Citizens Housing Task Force. The task force's report urged the city council to find ways to resolve the need for housing, assist in attracting a growing workforce, help retain existing employees and attract young talent.

"This revolving loan fund is anticipated to allow for the construction of five to seven new spec homes, with the funds being repaid and reloaned as each house sells, to allow for additional spec homes to be built," said City Administrator Rod Storm.

Through the redevelopment plan, the City plans to construct approximately 30 workforce housing units with an approximate market value of \$200,000 each.

The speculative home revolving loan program aligns with the City's efforts to alleviate areas of blight and substandard conditions around the former campus.

The goal is to begin construction on the first speculative homes in the new Transformation Hill subdivision on the former campus by October.



Elkhorn Hall is one of the buildings on the former Dana College campus which has stood vacant since the college closed in 2010. photo courtesy of Washington County Pilot-Tribune & Enterprise

Ralston establishes Complete Streets policy for projects

On June 5, the City of Ralston approved a complete streets policy. Under that policy, the City will look at roadway projects, either new or those being renovated, to determine the need for a complete street. MAPA Transportation and Data Manager Mike Helgerson addressed the City Council about complete streets in the weeks prior to the vote.

A complete street is a safe and convenient facility



street for all modes of transportation and people of all ages and abilities.

In a complete streets policy, construction of a new roadway must provide safety and convenience for all modes of transportation and for all ages and abilities, as well as allowing for pedestrian safety. With this new policy in Ralston, an existing road and/or public sidewalk will be reviewed for the potential of being restored as a complete street.

During the design work for new or restorative public and city projects, staff will inform the city council on how the complete streets principles are being incorporated into the projected plans.

City staff will oversee official documents for compliance to the new ordinance and will make adjustments to relevant projects when needed.

ORBT reaches 60% design completion

Omaha is one step closer to having its first bus rapid transit line, ORBT. Metro revealed some of the final aspects of ORBT on May 10, as the project has reached 60 percent of design completion. This means station locations have been finalized, station elements have been chosen and the final route is set.

ORBT will travel from Downtown Omaha to Westroads Mall on Dodge and Douglas Streets. The system will have 12 station pairs along the corridor to connect with the majority of Metro's other routes. Having fewer stops helps passengers reach their destination faster by cutting down on bus dwell time.

Each of the stops along ORBT's route will have a new station,

designed for riders' comfort and experience. Some of ORBT's station features are:

- Ticket kiosks for prepaid boarding
- Real-time updates for riders
- Bicycle racks and Heartland B-cycle stations
- Conductive concrete to melt snow and ice
- Raised platforms for level boarding
- Free Wi-Fi

Construction for ORBT is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2018 and the system is set to begin in the fall of 2019. For updates about the project, visit rideORBT.com.





NARC
Building Regional Communities
National Association of Regional Councils

53rd Annual Conference & Exhibition
June 9-12, 2019
Omaha Marriott Downtown @ the Capitol District - Omaha, Nebraska

CALENDAR

July 2018

- July 4th – Independence Day
MAPA offices closed
- July 11th – RPA-18
11 a.m.

Council of Officials
11:30 a.m.
- July 18th – Finance Committee
8:30 a.m.

Coordinated Transit
10:30 a.m.
- July 20th – Transportation
10 a.m.
- July 26th – MAPA Board of Directors
1:30 p.m.

August 2018

- Aug. 3rd – Heartland 2050 Regional Planning Committee
10 a.m.
- Aug. 8th – RPA-18
11 a.m.
- Aug. 15th – Coordinated Transit
10:30 a.m.
- Aug. 22nd – Finance Committee
8:30 a.m.
- Aug. 22nd – ISAC Annual Conference
Aug. 24th – Des Moines, IA
- Aug. 24th – Transportation
10 a.m.
- Aug. 30th – MAPA Board of Directors
1:30 p.m.

MAPA Board approves Transportation Improvement Program

MAPA's Board of Directors approved the FY2019-FY2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at its meeting June 28.

With the cooperation of local and state governments and public transit operators, MAPA develops the TIP every year. The document lists all transportation projects for four fiscal years that are funded federally and significant to the region.

The TIP includes roadways, trails and public transit

projects. The TIP, which takes effect Oct. 1, represents federal funding investments of approximately \$250 million in Douglas and Sarpy Counties in Nebraska and approximately \$450 million in Iowa's western Pottawattamie County.

A public meeting for the TIP took place on June 13 at MAPA offices as part of the month-long public comment period.

View the TIP at <https://bit.ly/2sSA0vA>.

MAPA assists with Block Talk event in Avoca, Iowa

MAPA, Avoca Main Street and Golden Hills RC&D hosted a Block Talk in Avoca, Iowa on June 12.

A Block Talk is a walk focused on helping residents assess and provide feedback on the walkability, accessibility and livability of the neighborhood.

The Block Talk began with a 20-minute presentation and overview of the project, with the walk following immediately after and ended with a discussion of potential action steps.



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MAPA is an EOE/DBE employer



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