

# What's Happening

*For Community Leaders*

Fall 2020

## Equity advocate receives Regional Citizenship Award

She is a tireless advocate for equity, diversity, inclusion and North Omaha in her position with the African-American Empowerment Network, but Vicki Quaites-Ferris's dedication to these principles and her community involvement started long before she went to work at the non-profit organization where she serves as Director of Operations.

Prior to working at the Empowerment Network, Quaites-Ferris served as a Deputy Assistant to Mayor Mike Fahey. In her capacity, she researched, analyzed and evaluated community initiatives, reports and studies, and advised the mayor on city and community issues, collaborating with city departments.

"I had the opportunity to focus on community initiatives and revitalization efforts in North Omaha. It was during this time I had the opportunity to meet Willie Barney, the Founder and President of the Empowerment Network," said Quaites-Ferris. "After listening to his passion to improve the quality of life for African-Americans, vision to transform North Omaha into a thriving community and plan to collaborate with residents, stakeholder, faith community, elected officials and others, I knew I wanted to play a key role in the revitalization efforts."



In her role at the non-profit, Vicki is responsible for the network's day-to-day operations, participates in strategic planning and community partnership and redevelopment initiatives such as the North Omaha Village Revitalization Plan. She has been instrumental in the Step-Up Omaha! Youth Employment Program which serves to provide job training and work experience to nearly 700 youth and young adults between the ages of 14 and 21 years old.

The success of these projects and knowing the work she and others are doing is making a difference, not only in North Omaha but throughout the city, brings her a sense of accomplishment and enjoyment in her work. "Seeing large-scale investments made over the past 10 years, more entrepreneurs starting their own businesses and opportunities for youth and young adults gain valuable work experience and skills is exciting," said Quaites-Ferris. "Over the past 10 years, we have seen long-standing gaps significantly decrease and trend in the right direction."

Vicki has guided MAPA's work in equity through Heartland 2050. She serves on the Heartland 2050 Regional Planning Advisory Committee and is Chair of the Equity and Engagement Committee with a focus to ensure all individuals, regardless of ability and communities they live in, have full and equal access to the opportunities that will enable them to reach their full potential and participate in the region's economic vitality.

"As a person who once resided in Pleasant View public housing (now 75 North), I am blessed to have the opportunity to wake up everyday and use my gifts to continue collaborating with others to highlight the assets in North Omaha. Improving the quality of life for the next generation and collaborating with others to implement the North Omaha Village Zone Revitalization Plan is what motivates me to strive and do better each day."

For her inexhaustible dedication and work in the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, MAPA awarded Vicki Quaites-Ferris with its 2020 Regional Citizenship Award.

# MAPA recognizes its 2020 Annual Award recipients

MAPA recognized an inexhaustible advocate in equity and empowerment, a Douglas County Commissioner and a metro area healthcare coalition which spearheaded the preparation efforts of the region's healthcare response to the pandemic for their work at its Oct. 7 Council of Officials' annual meeting.

Vicki Quaites-Ferris, Director of Operations for the African-American Empowerment Network, received MAPA's 2020 Regional Citizenship Award, while the Omaha Metropolitan Healthcare Coalition received MAPA's 2020 Regional Service Award and Douglas County Commissioner Clare Duda received MAPA's Award of Merit.

The Award of Merit is MAPA's highest award for service. Through his work as a Douglas County Commissioner since 1993, Duda has overseen many projects including the County's purchase and resale of Aksarben, which led to the UNO Scott Campus and Aksarben revitalization. Duda, a member of the MAPA Board of Directors, serves as president of MAPA's Council of Officials.

The Regional Citizenship Award 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. Vicki Quaites-Ferris has been part of a movement that has shifted many of the negative trends that were affecting

North Omaha.

The Regional Service Award is given to groups that have made a contribution to the metropolitan area to help improve or grow it. The Omaha Metropolitan Healthcare Coalition (OMHCC) exists to coordinate health care providers and promote health care preparedness and response in Douglas, Sarpy, Dodge, Saunders and Washington Counties through sharing information & resources, acting as a liaison between emergency managers, hospitals, clinics, long-term care and home health and coordinating and facilitating planning.

The OMHCC, led by Coalition Coordinator Justin Watson, has played a large role in the region's healthcare response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Douglas County Commissioner Clare Duda, who serves as MAPA Council of Officials President, receives the MAPA Award of Merit at the Council of Officials Annual Meeting Oct. 7. Pictured L-R: LaVista Mayor Doug Kindig, MAPA Board of Directors Chair; Commissioner Duda, Greg Youell, MAPA Executive Director



Vicki Quaites-Ferris of the African-American Empowerment Network accepts the 2020 MAPA Regional Citizenship Award at the Council of Officials Annual Meeting Oct. 7. Pictured L-R: Douglas County Commissioner Clare Duda, MAPA Council of Officials President; Vicki Quaites-Ferris, African-American Empowerment Network; Greg Youell, MAPA Executive Director; LaVista Mayor Doug Kindig, MAPA Board of Directors Chair



Justin Watson of the Omaha Metro Healthcare Coalition and Igor H of the Douglas County Health Department accept the 2020 MAPA Regional Service Award at the Council of Officials Annual Meeting Oct. 7. Pictured L-R: Commissioner Duda, Greg Youell, Justin Watson, Omaha Metropolitan Healthcare Coalition; Igor Hadzisulejmanovic, Douglas County Health Department; Mayor Kindig.

## 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan approved

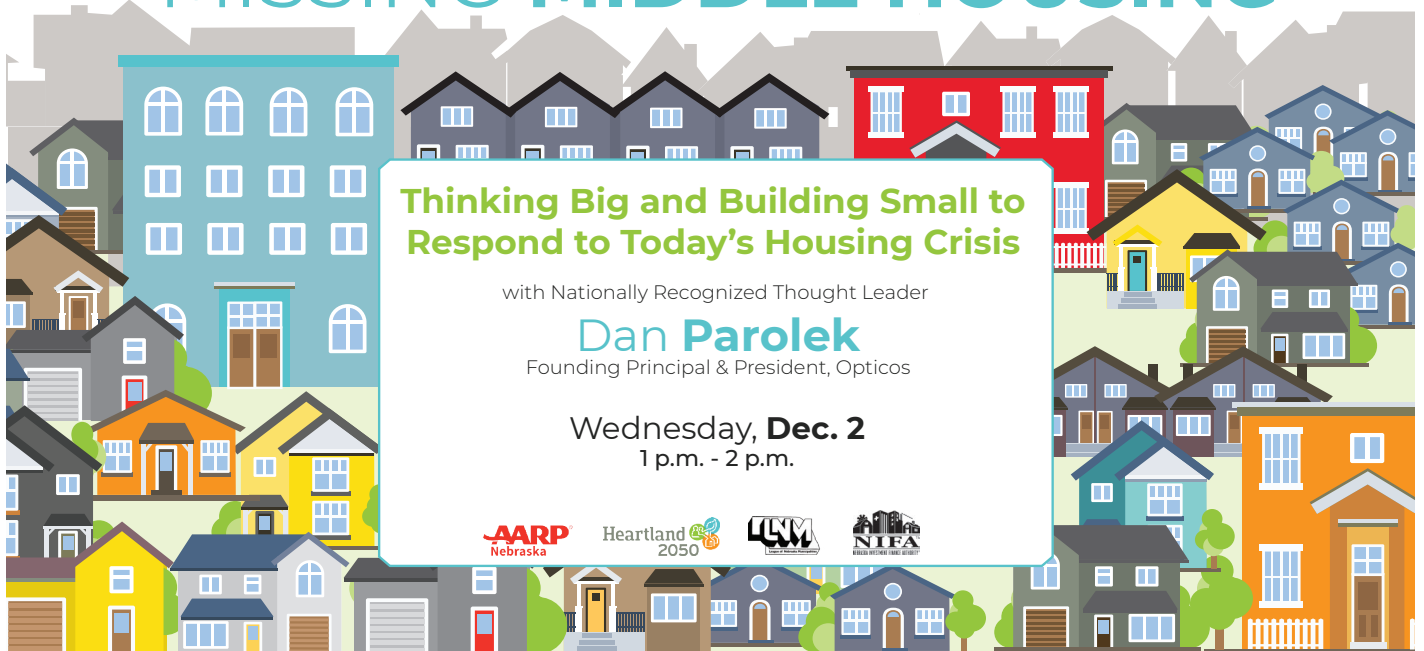
MAPA's 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) receives the final stamp of approval from the Council of Officials. The Council approved the LRTP at its Annual Meeting Oct. 7.

The LRTP ([mapacog.org/reports/lrtp-2050/](http://mapacog.org/reports/lrtp-2050/)) is a 30-year vision of the future of transportation in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. The MAPA 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan is developed in harmony with Heartland 2050, ConnectGO, and the other planning initiatives undertaken in the region in recent years.

The pandemic prevented in-person outreach events during the public comment period. To help boost engagement with stakeholders and the public, MAPA staff created innovative one-minute videos which presented the LRTP information digitally and provided a unique opportunity for engagement. You can watch them here: [tinyurl.com/LRTPVideos](https://tinyurl.com/LRTPVideos)

The videos, which were posted on social media, set engagement records. Overall, they reached 1,064 people through Facebook and 2,029 people through Twitter.





# MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING



**Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis**

with Nationally Recognized Thought Leader  
**Dan Parolek**  
Founding Principal & President, Opticos

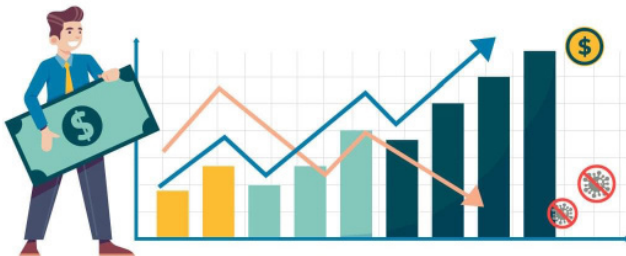
Wednesday, **Dec. 2**  
1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3mZoUId>

## Nebraska awarding 2nd round of CARES Act funding

### CARES ACT FUNDING ROUND 2



Nebraska is awarding a second round of CARES Act funding to help businesses, organizations and industries hit hard by the pandemic.

The list covers several categories of business such as restaurants and bars, hotels and convention centers and movie theaters.

Grant applications are being accepted until Nov. 13, 2020. Apply at: [coronavirus.nebraska.gov/Programs&Grants](https://coronavirus.nebraska.gov/Programs&Grants).

For a complete list of coronavirus relief programs: [bit.ly/3jlqc4N](https://bit.ly/3jlqc4N).

## Iowa DNR awards REAP grant to Malvern Park Board

Malvern moves a step closer to receiving the funding it needs for its Boehner Park Pond redevelopment project. In October, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources awarded the Malvern Park Board a \$75,000 grant from Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP).

REAP invests in projects that enhance and protect the Iowa's natural and cultural resources. Fifteen percent of REAP is set aside for grants to cities. Twenty percent is set aside for county conservation boards for projects that help establish natural areas, encourage outdoor recreation and resource management.

The Boehner Park Pond project will create a connection from the north side of the park to the Wabash Trace

Nature Trail. Additional phases of park improvements include bathroom and shower facilities for campers.

Additional funding awarded includes a \$25,000

Wellmark Foundation grant as well as \$10,000 from the Mills County Foundation towards the trail extension and \$30,500 from the Costello/Mills County Foundation.

MAPA assisted with the REAP and Wellmark Foundation grant applications.



# Virtual Maple Village Block Talk

Join us and our partners in Maple Village for a facilitated virtual Block Talk on Nov. 12 from 7-8:30 p.m. to give feedback on ways to improve walkability and boost pedestrian safety along Maple Street. Participating is as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Register in advance here: <https://bit.ly/2FzDRYg>.
2. Participate in our, interactive survey guiding you along Maple St. and West Maple Rd. from 97th to 108th Streets before Nov. 12. Survey: <https://bit.ly/37a9HpR>
3. Attend the virtual Block Talk via Zoom to provide your input on Nov. 12 from 7:00-8:30 p.m.



## MAPA adds new staff to agency



Brenda Ramirez is MAPA's Administrative Assistant. Brenda started in June, has a background in Human Resources and worked most recently for Hunt Electric as a Safety Administrative Assistant.

She was raised in Sioux City, Iowa. Brenda and her husband enjoy taking road trips. In her free time she also enjoys DIY projects and renovations and dabbles in photography.



Rafael Corrales started in July as an Assistant Planner in our Community and Economic Development Department. He is assisting with the buyout of flood-damaged properties in Pacific Junction.

Rafael grew up in Omaha and earned a Bachelor's degree from UNO in Emergency Management.

He is a dog parent to a Lab and a German Shepherd that keep him busy.



Shawna Silvius is MAPA's new Economic Development Planner and started with the agency in late September after several years as Executive Director of the Montgomery County Development Corporation.

She has two children. Her son is a graduate student at Kansas State University and her daughter is a senior at Stanton High School.

Her interests are bicycling, animal rescue and advocacy for child abuse.

# CALENDAR

## November 2020

- Nov. 1st – All Saints' Day
- Nov. 1st – Daylight Saving Time ends  
Set clocks back one hour
- Nov. 3rd – General Election
- Nov. 11th – Veterans Day observed  
*MAPA Offices closed*
- Nov. 18th – RPA-18\*  
11:00 a.m.
- Nov. 26th – Thanksgiving Day  
*MAPA Offices closed*
- Nov. 27th – *MAPA Offices closed*

## December 2020

- Dec. 2nd – Finance Committee\*  
8:30 a.m.
- Dec. 4th – Regional Planning\*  
(Heartland 2050 RPAC)  
10:00 a.m.
- Transportation Committee  
10:00 a.m.
- Dec. 7th – Pearl Harbor  
Remembrance Day
- Dec. 9th – RPA-18\*  
11:00 a.m.
- Nebraska Association of  
County Officials Annual  
Conference  
(Dec. 9-11)
- Dec. 10th – MAPA Board of Directors  
1:30 p.m.
- Hanukkah Begins
- Dec. 21st – Winter Begins
- Dec. 24th – Christmas Eve  
*MAPA Offices close at noon*
- Dec. 25th – Christmas Day  
*MAPA Offices closed*
- Dec. 26th – Kwanzaa Begins
- Dec. 31st – New Year's Eve

*\*meeting may be virtual*