

# MOVING FORWARD



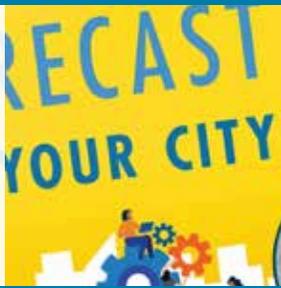
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## MAPA Community & Economic Development Manager retires

If Don Gross, MAPA's Community & Economic Development Manager, had developed any interest in being a lumberjack while growing up in northern Minnesota, he never would have pursued a career in the world of planning and economic development.

Now 44 years later, as **Gross wrapped up his work at MAPA** and headed for retirement, he reminisced about the career field he chose back in college, something very different from his roots.

**"They say opposites attract. I grew up in a forested, rural area," said Gross. "I had a couple of relatives in Minneapolis that I visited and I was fascinated by it: the buildings, activities and people."**

Before coming to MAPA, Gross worked for the Council Bluffs Department of Community Planning for 31 years, 25 of them as the department director.

**"We took some heat for it initially, but in the end it turned out well."**

Don Gross

He helped bring projects such as Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park, Rivers East and the 100 Block to fruition.

**One of the most rewarding projects: creating shelters for homeless men and women.** But they didn't happen without controversy.

"We took some heat for it initially, but in the end it turned out well."

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## MAPA reviewing \$250 million in TIP funding requests

MAPA is reviewing \$250 million in requests submitted for federal transportation funding allocated to the Omaha-Council Bluffs region, a record amount for the agency.



The project selection process is part of MAPA's 2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a six-year plan for implementing transportation projects funded through the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The TIP is updated annually and includes highway maintenance or expansion, bicycle and pedestrian trail work, Metro Transit projects and aviation projects.

We're looking for feedback on these proposed projects. Review the details for each project including maps, cost estimates and funding sources, and complete the surveys at: [tinyurl.com/TIPFundingRequests](https://tinyurl.com/TIPFundingRequests)

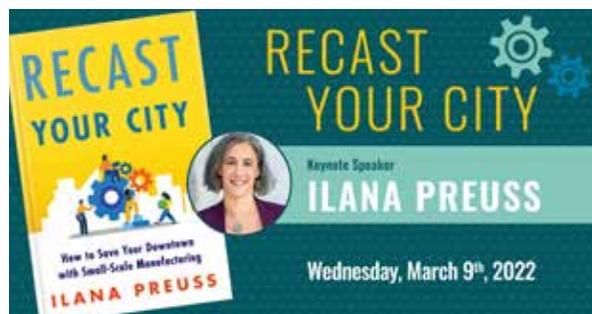
## MAPA & Nebraska APA to host "Recast Your City" workshop

Small-scale manufacturing might be the key to reviving downtowns. The definition of small-scale manufacturing and how communities can leverage it will be the focus of "Recast Your City", a workshop on March 9 hosted by MAPA and the Nebraska Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Keynote speaker, Ilana Preuss, author of "Recast Your City: How to Save Your Downtown with Small-Scale Manufacturing" has spent years working with local leaders to create thriving places full of energy, great-paying jobs, full storefronts and proud residents.

Preuss emphasizes how local leaders can achieve thriving city centers by implementing more local businesses. She works especially within communities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 150,000 people and also within neighborhoods in metro areas.

Other event activities will include a panel discussion on best practices in revitalization in Nebraska and roundtable discussions with community members on leveraging Preuss' ideas in their own areas.



## Broadband Event to help communities compete for funding

Each of Nebraska's Economic Development Districts, including MAPA, are gearing up to help communities secure millions of dollars in federal funding to build out broadband access and increase internet speed and reliability across the state. On March 21, sites across Nebraska, Omaha included, will host "Bridging Nebraska's Digital Divide." This statewide event will help Nebraska residents prepare to compete for this crucial funding.



Having strong broadband access and Internet connectivity is quickly becoming one of life's necessities. Without this access in rural and urban areas, community and economic growth, educational opportunities, access to health-care and business development are all hindered.

This 3-minute video can help you learn more about the importance of Broadband in Nebraska. Register here by March 14 to attend this event.

The Omaha event will take place at Metro Community College's Center for Advanced Manufacturing (CAM) on the South Omaha Campus.

[Click here to watch the NROC Broadband video and learn more.](#)

## Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund announces 2022 Awards recipients

Twelve organizations that serve the housing needs of low-to-moderate income residents will receive funding from the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund's 2022 application cycle. **The Trust is distributing nearly \$280,000 in grants overall.**

All funds must be used for projects which benefit people below 80% of the federal family income limit.

MAPA serves as administrator of the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund.



Neola Betterment Corporation	\$25,000
Peace Haven Retirement Home	\$43,053
Interfaith	\$30,000
New Visions	\$28,084
Connections Area Agency on Aging	\$30,000
Pottawattamie County General Assistance	\$20,000
Carson Lofts	\$20,000
Iowa Legal Aid	\$23,053
Micah House	\$20,000
Habitat for Humanity Down Payment Assistance	\$10,000
Family Housing Advisory Services	\$10,500
Habitat for Humanity Rehabilitation	\$20,000

*continued from MAPA Community & Economic Development Manager retires*

At MAPA, **Gross led numerous community and economic development projects** including the agency's efforts to secure federal funding to assist communities impacted by the 2019 floods, administer COVID-19 relief funds for projects aimed at helping communities move toward recovery as well as several downtown revitalization projects and grant administration for projects which added workforce housing.

As he looked back on his lengthy career what advice did he give to future planners or those just beginning their careers?

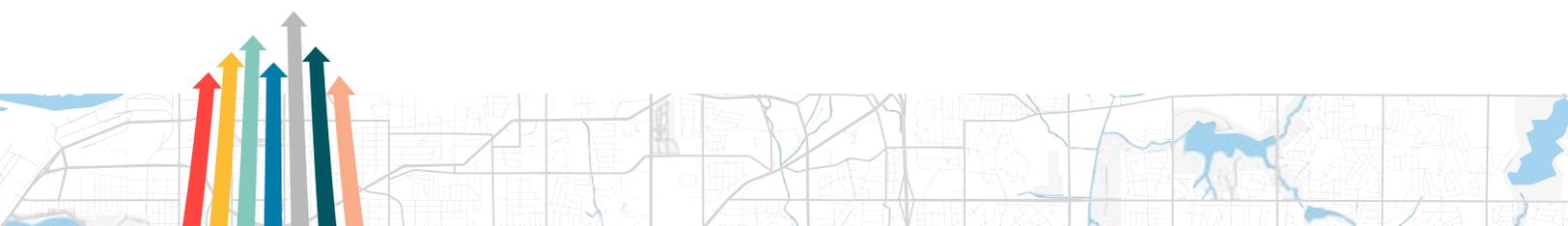
**"The profession has become more design-oriented both in landscape and urban design. Understanding some of those principles is helpful,"** said Gross.

Another key piece of advice: **"Relationships matter. You really don't undertake a lot of projects without some type of partnership. Maintaining those relationship is important even when you have a difference of opinion. If a person is working for a community they need to develop an understanding of its community, its history, how things work."**

Gross's last day as MAPA's Community & Economic Development Manager was Feb. 28. **Grant Anderson, a planner in the department, was promoted to manager beginning March 1.** Anderson began working for MAPA in January 2009. He earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Nebraska Omaha.



**Announcing new Community & Economic Development Manager - Grant Anderson**



## MAPA meets with congressional delegation

Members of MAPA's Board of Directors made the rounds on Capitol Hill in February to share information about the agency's work in the region and discuss priorities in transportation and economic development with Nebraska and Iowa's congressional delegations.

**MAPA has allocated much of the recent federal funding passed by Congress to support flood and pandemic recovery and economic resiliency efforts.**

MAPA's Board of Directors also thanked members of the congressional delegation for supporting the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed into law in November 2021. **It will provide unprecedented levels of funding for transportation and flood recovery projects in the region.**



Pictured L to R: Mike Helgerson, MAPA Executive Director; U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley, Iowa; Supervisor Carol Vinton, Mills County; Mayor Matt Walsh, Council Bluffs



Pictured L to R: Mayor Rusty Hike, Bellevue; Mike Helgerson; Supervisor Carol Vinton; U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, Iowa; Mayor Matt Walsh



Pictured L to R: Mayor Rusty Hike; U.S. Rep. Don Bacon, Nebraska Dist. 2; Mike Helgerson; Mayor Matt Walsh; Supervisor Carol Vinton

# CALENDAR

## MARCH 2022

**09 RPA-18\***  
11:00 a.m.

**Council of Officials\*\***  
*The Living Room @ Mastercraft*

**16 Finance Committee**  
8:30 a.m.

**18 Transportation Committee**  
10:00 a.m.

**24 MAPA Board of Directors**  
1:30 p.m.

## APRIL 2022

**01 Regional Planning (Heartland 2050 RPAC)**  
10:00 a.m.

**13 RPA-18\***  
11:00 a.m.

**20 Finance Committee**  
8:30 a.m.

**21 Coordinated Transit\***  
10:30 a.m.

**22 Transportation Committee**  
10:00 a.m.

**28 MAPA Board of Directors**  
1:30 p.m.

\* meeting may be virtual

\*\*Meetings at MAPA unless otherwise noted

 U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Federal Highway Administration**

The preparation of this publication is financed through planning grants from the U.S. Dept. of Transportation through Iowa DOT and the Nebraska Dept. of Transportation as provided by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration and through local funds from member jurisdictions. The views and opinions MAPA expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Department of Transportation.