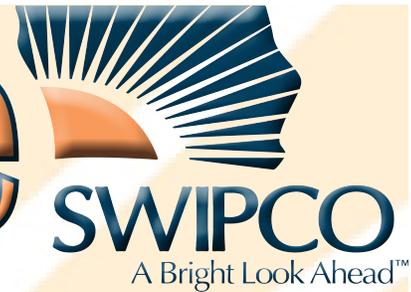


# The Update



**April 2022**

Serving the Counties of Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby

## SWIPCO Secures \$90 million for SW Iowa Flood Recovery

SWIPCO has secured \$90 million in federal flood recovery funds through the IEDA's CDBG Disaster Recovery programs for southwest Iowa communities.

The funds from the grant are being used for property acquisition, new housing construction, and infrastructure development for new housing. Funds for new housing units, which are a combination of owner-occupied and rental properties, are available first for residents who experienced a loss due to the 2019 floods but will also be opened to low- and moderate-income buyers in affected communities.

The \$90 million housing project represents the largest grant package SWIPCO has ever managed. "We've been very fortunate to work with our partners at IEDA and HUD to get the work done on behalf of our member communities," said SWIPCO Community Development Director Alexis Fleener, who worked on the grant applications. "We take a lot of pride in being able to deliver for our neighbors and help build our communities back up after such a devastating loss."

Community leaders in southwest Iowa praised SWIPCO's commitment to their recovery. "When we needed help with residential buyouts and new housing development after the 2019 flooding, SWIPCO was there for us every step of the way," said Hamburg City Clerk Sheryl Owen. "It's been a long few years but seeing the money flowing toward these projects sure helps."

More than 100 housing units damaged in the 2019 floods have already been demolished as part of the grants, and more than 250 new housing units will be built in the impacted communities. As part of the development, more than \$2.5 million in new infrastructure will be constructed to serve the new housing developments.

"There is no denying that the floods were a horrible disaster, but at the same time, these recovery funds represent the largest investment in new housing construction in these communities in at least a generation," said SWIPCO Executive Director John McCurdy. Cities building new housing through the grants include Glenwood, Hamburg, Logan, Malvern, Missouri Valley, Modale, Tabor, and Woodbine. Construction will begin this summer and be completed over the next several years.



Some of the lots available for development at Harvest Hills, the new housing subdivision being constructed in Woodbine as part of the disaster recovery project managed by SWIPCO.

## Mr. McCurdy Goes to Washington



Pictured, left to right: SWIPCO Executive Director John McCurdy, IA-04 Congressman Randy Feenstra, and Region XII Executive Director Rick Hunsaker met in Feenstra's Washington, D.C. office.

SWIPCO Executive Director John McCurdy and other leaders from Iowa's councils of governments recently met with Iowa's congressional delegation to talk about the importance of regional planning and development and to thank them for their investments in rural Iowa and support for our federal partners including the U.S. Economic Development Administration and USDA Rural Development.

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## SWIHTF Receives \$100k Grant from Iowa West Foundation

Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund (SWIHTF), a nonprofit fund administered by Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO), received a grant of \$100,000 from the Iowa West Foundation toward housing rehabilitation in the southwest Iowa region.

“A safe and stable housing situation is a basic necessity for everyone regardless of income,” said Brenda Mainwaring, president and CEO of the Iowa West Foundation. “This grant will allow SWIHTF to extend that opportunity to more southwest Iowans, and act as an additional resource Iowa West is supporting as we continue to address the housing issues in our region.”

Past projects have included replacement windows and doors, roof repairs, upgraded insulation, foundation repair, and health hazard abatement. The funds from the Iowa West Foundation will help SWIHTF complete at least ten more of these projects in the coming year.

“Rehabilitation is a great way for low- to moderate-income homeowners to not only improve the health, safety, and energy efficiency of their dwellings, but to build value in their existing homes,” said Alexis Fleener, SWIPCO Community Development Director. “Improving the safety and energy efficiency of homes in a neighborhood can help lift the value of all homes in the community over time, and the Iowa West Foundation’s grant will help us do more of that.”

The Iowa West Foundation is committed to helping communities achieve their dreams. Letters of Inquiry (the first step in the grant application process) are accepted year-round with deadlines of Jan. 1, May. 1 and Sept. 1 prior to each of the three grant cycles.



Kristen Templeton  
Transit Coordinator

## TRANSIT TALK

### Showing Our Appreciation

SWITA celebrated Transit Driver Appreciation Day last month. The unofficial holiday, observed each year on March 18, recognizes the men and women who ensure safe travel for millions of Americans.

This year’s celebration comes on the heels of the two-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been especially stressful for essential workers due to the increased risk they encounter on the job and their roles enforcing state, federal, and local safety measures to keep their passengers safe.

SWITA showed appreciation for our drivers this year with goodie bags put together by the staff in the transit office. Our drivers go above and beyond daily on their routes getting people to their destinations. Please pause to say thank you when you board or exit a bus or other mode of public transit—today and every day.

During the pandemic, southwest Iowa’s transit drivers assumed risks others were able to avoid—even transporting patients who had tested positive for COVID-19—because despite the pandemic, people still needed to go to important medical appointments or other essential services. Between spring 2020 and summer 2021, SWITA drivers also delivered more than 1,900 meals through a volunteer-run program for homebound or at-risk residents.



Pictured, left to right: SWITA Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton, SWITA Driver Brian Elliott, and SWITA Transit Dispatcher Kersten Abild.

## SWIPCO Helps County Fair Obtain \$25,000

### Grant for Improvements

Southwest Iowa Planning Council recently worked with the Shelby County Fair board to secure a \$25,000 grant for upgrades to infrastructure and amenities. The money comes from Iowa West Foundation, which routinely assists with projects throughout southwest Iowa.

The funding will help make much-needed upgrades to the 40-acre property to attract more people to the area and increase tourism to Shelby County and the surrounding communities.

“Funding through the Iowa West Foundation will allow us to make improvements and additions to the fairgrounds. As a result, we will be able to host bigger events and attract more visitors, which we see as a benefit for all of Shelby County,” said Darren Goshorn, Shelby County Fair Board President.

Goshorn added, “The Shelby County Fair Corporation is extremely grateful for being awarded this grant.”

The funds from the grant will be used toward construction of new public restrooms; providing 14 additional camper hook-ups for electricity, water and sewer; and providing a non-potable water source that consists of a new well and two storage tanks.

“Iowa West Foundation is glad to support the Shelby County Fairground improvements project,” said Tim Galigan, program officer at Iowa West Foundation. “The project is well-planned and will help build on their current success. The increase of amenities and improvements will support not only the community but also area visitors.”



## Destination Iowa Grant Application Opens May 9

SWIPCO can help your community apply for a new “Destination Iowa” grant recently announced by Governor Kim Reynolds.

Destination Iowa is a \$100 million investment to bolster the quality of life in Iowa’s communities and attract visitors and new residents to the state. The new effort will provide grants to help communities move forward on transformational, shovel-ready attractions.

Cities, counties, nonprofits and other organizations can apply for Destination Iowa grants from four separate funds: Economically Significant Development, Outdoor Recreation, Tourism Attraction and Creative Place-making.

Destination Iowa will provide new opportunities to create and invest in attractions that will raise Iowa’s profile, welcome out-of-state travelers, and increase visitor spending while accelerating tourism’s recovery. It will also spur local economies and contribute to efforts to recruit new members of Iowa’s workforce.

Applications will start being accepted on May 9, 2022. Funded projects must be completed by June 30, 2026. Funding is being made available through the federal American Rescue Plan Act.

More details: <https://www.iowaeda.com/destination-iowa/>

## STAFF MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Dee Holtz greets visitors to SWIPCO with a smile. She keeps the office running like a well-oiled machine.

Dee helps complete tasks for the Human Resources department, Finance department, and Transit office. She makes sure everyone has the supplies they need and tools necessary to get the job done!

Dee has worked at SWIPCO since November 2018. She loves that her job provides her with a variety of tasks and that no two days are the same.

Dee lives in Atlantic with her husband, Doug. They have three children together, Aaron, Paula and Dustin. Dee and Doug are blessed to be the grandparents of Karissa, Madison, Peyton, and Faith and great-grandparents of Hadleigh and Bentley. In her spare time, Dee enjoys golfing with family and friends and traveling to the Lake of the Ozarks on long weekends.

Dee Holtz is the administrative assistant in the SWIPCO office. Her top priority is providing customer service to folks who call on the phone or assisting those who walk into the office. She juggles multiple responsibilities and

# From the Desk of the Executive Director...

by John McCurdy

The new housing that will be built as a result of the Floods of 2019 is going to be huge—a real game changer for many of our towns. SWIPCO staff, especially Community Development Director Alexis Fleener and her incredible team have worked tirelessly and aggressively to coordinate resources, rally groups of people, and get the maximum number of players together in what is really a very short period of time and the result will be 250 new homes.

This is the value of having a local council of governments like SWIPCO working for our communities in both good times and bad. We are not first responders in the traditional sense. When the floods happened our part was not the immediate response—our job is the long term. We're members of this community and because we are supported by and responsible to our member cities and counties we are looking at the long haul. When the funding was starting to take shape for flood recovery the state looked at potentially bringing in a private consulting firm to do the work our staff has been central to. We were very insistent to our members that we needed to do this for our community. That was not simply blind protectionism but legitimate care for our community and enough experience on our side to know that any outside firm that would be brought in would first need to learn what happened, then learn who the players are, formulate a plan, and then maybe toward the end of their contract move things forward a bit. We knew that because of our team at SWIPCO we could respond and we wouldn't be two steps behind and these recent grant awards are proof that our instincts were correct and the faith of our membership was well placed.

I think most of us in small town Iowa have that same mindset. There is a place for outside "experts" and we are smart enough to know when we don't know something and need help. But, we're much more inclined to want to learn how to fix our own problems and do it quickly with what resources we have.

Three years after a disaster may not seem like a quick turnaround time to be building new homes for people who lost everything in the Floods, and I get that. However, we have to put things into perspective. I was recently in Puerto Rico and saw more than my fair share of damaged infrastructure and damaged homes from Hurricane Maria—which happened in 2017. The same types of funding that we are using in our region now poured into Puerto Rico then—and continues flowing today. New city halls and fire stations are in abundance, but you can still find blue tarps on people's homes. Millions have been spent on bringing in experts who rotate through regularly and don't ever get much accomplished. So I'm very thankful that we have an organization here that we have built up together over the years to meet our needs in our region, so when disaster strikes we can help each other.

## Birthdays & Anniversaries



**Mark Lander**  
Transit Director  
Birthday on April 4

**Mackenzie Bandow**  
Community Development Specialist  
Birthday on April 19



**Theresa Wright**  
Finance Specialist  
Birthday on April 23

**C.J. Petersen**  
Communications Coordinator  
Birthday on April 28



**John McCurdy**  
Executive Director  
9 Years of Service on April 1

**Kersten Abild**  
Transit Dispatcher  
1 Year of Service on April 1



# SWIPCO STAFF ROSTER

**John McCurdy, AICP**  
Executive Director

**Rhonda Oliphant**  
Finance Manager

**Michael Ballinger**  
Maintenance Assistant

**Mark Hansen**  
Fleet Maintenance Specialist

**Christy Pederson**  
Transit Assistant

**Phil Richter**  
Building Inspector I

**Mark Lander**  
Transit Director

**Kersten Abild**  
Transit Dispatcher

**Dani Briggs**  
Planning Technician II

**Sandy Hansen**  
Grants Specialist III

**C.J. Petersen**  
Communications Coordinator

**Kristen Templeton**  
Transit Coordinator

**Alexis Fleener, AICP**  
Community Development Director

**Ann Anstey**  
Grants Specialist II

**Tracy Clark**  
Transit Assistant - Operations

**Dee Holtz**  
Administrative Assistant

**Daurine Petersen**  
Human Resources Coordinator

**Kristine Stokes, AICP**  
Community Development Specialist

**Karen Mauer**  
Administrative Services Director

**Mackenzie Bandow**  
Community Development Specialist

**Tammy DeBord**  
Grants Specialist II

**Cindy Johnson**  
Transit Dispatcher

**Matthew Lee**  
Building Inspector II

**Nicole Rhodes**  
Grants Specialist II

**Leslie Wright**  
Community Development Specialist

**Teresa Wright**  
Finance Specialist