

# The Update



Nov/Dec 2023

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

## Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund Earns Two Major Grant Awards

### SWIHTF secures major Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines award for nearly \$1 million

The Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund (SWIHTF), a 501(c)3 organization administered by the Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO), is thrilled to be one of 60 entities awarded funds from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines through their Competitive Affordable Housing Program. The SWIHTF was awarded \$999,970 to support the Regional Housing Rehabilitation Program 2023.

This large grant award will allow the SWIHTF, working through SWIPCO, to rehab approximately 38 homes throughout its 7-county region. Since the program’s inception in 1990, FHLB Des Moines has given approximately \$735 million in Affordable Housing Program awards to help more than 92,000 families and individuals find safe and affordable housing. The grant to SWIHTF was made in partnership with Bank Iowa, which is a FHLB member bank.

The Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines works with over 1,200 member institutions to support affordable housing, economic development, and community improvement. Members include community and commercial banks, credit unions, insurance companies, thrifts, and community development financial institutions. FHLB Des Moines is one of 11 regional banks that make up the Federal Home Loan Bank System.

### SWIHTF also receives Local Housing Trust Fund Award from Iowa Finance Authority

The Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) Board of Directors recently announced more than \$11.2 million in grants to 26 Local Housing Trust Funds. The Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund (SWIHTF) received \$404,149.

The grant funds support a range of initiatives aimed at developing or preserving housing for low-income households. The SWIHTF uses its funds for owner occupied rehab, down payment assistance, and dilapidated housing demolition. The 7 member counties (Cass, Shelby, Harrison, Mills, Fremont, Page, and Montgomery) contribute matching funds to make this program a reality.

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The State Housing Trust Fund was created by the Iowa Legislature in 2003 and Local Housing Trust Fund awards come from this fund. The 2024 awards are the largest collective amount handed out since the inception of the program.



## CDBG Projects Continue to Shape Downtown Revitalization

Atlantic, Iowa – Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding continues to spur downtown revitalization in rural Iowa communities and a recent project in Atlantic is almost ready for tenants.

The building located at 509 Chestnut Street is nearing completion of two one-bedroom upper-story apartments. SWIPCO helped the building owner apply for the Upper Story CDBG in the Fall of 2021 and the project was awarded funding in 2022. The grant is awarded to the City of Atlantic, and the owner is the subrecipient/developer of the project. SWIPCO administers the grant, with funds running through the city.

The upper story housing project received \$199,999 in CDBG funding, with \$243,209 in match funds provided by the owner. The units will soon be finished and will be rented to low to moderate income tenants for at least 5 years, with maximum allowable rents set under the HOME program.

The Upper Story Housing Conversion program is part of a federal initiative to provide more available and affordable housing in geographical areas of need. The program provides assistance for the conversion of existing downtown building space into new residential units.

This building was also one of seven buildings on Chestnut Street, between the Fourth and Sixth blocks in downtown Atlantic, that were assisted with the downtown façade program in 2020. The buildings had their front facades updated, which included tuckpointing, painting, windows, etc, with a collaboration of 50% CDBG, 25% City, and 25% owner funding.

For more information on the Downtown Revitalization or Upper Story Housing Conversion CDBG grants, please contact SWIPCO at 712-243-4196.



Upper story housing at 509 Chestnut Street in Atlantic

## Two Fremont County Projects Receive Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grants

Fremont County, IA – The Iowa Department of Management Division of Information Technology recently awarded \$148,960,000 as part of the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program. Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) helped Fremont County obtain two of the project awards out of 91 completed applications.

This funding will help build out broadband infrastructure in newly established Broadband Intervention Zones (BIZ). 96 zones were created across the state through feedback from 55 public meetings in Iowa communities. SWIPCO nominated 4 of the 96 zones. These BIZ were deemed to be in the most need for broadband infrastructure expansion.

One project award was for \$892,891 that will cover 74 underserved locations in northern Fremont County between Tabor and Thurman. This project will be completed by AMG Technology Investment Group.

The other project receiving award funds is for \$3,526,433 that will provide 513 connections in southern Fremont County covering locations in and around Sidney, Hamburg, and Riverton. This project will be executed by Midwest Data Center.

These broadband projects must meet or exceed data speed rates of 100mbps download and 20mbps upload. All projects must be scalable to 100mbps download/100mbps upload within three years of the completion date, with many projects hitting that mark immediately.

Prior to this round of funding, grants were awarded to broadband providers based on mapping data from the providers themselves that identified areas lacking broadband. This did spur significant infrastructure buildout in the state, but some areas continued to be unserved due to a variety of reasons. This current round of funding identified areas of most need and then providers could submit proposals to serve those areas.

More funding is expected to be released as the effort to cover the entire state with quality broadband access continues. Counties and cities that have identified areas of need and are still searching for funding should stay in contact with SWIPCO to be ready for future opportunities, especially if service speeds are less than 100mbps. You can call SWIPCO at 712-243-4196 or email [swipco@swipco.org](mailto:swipco@swipco.org) for more information.



### SWITA Hosts Fall Driver’s Meeting

Drivers across the region gather for safety training and updates



Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA), Southwest Iowa’s public transportation system serving all residents in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby counties, hosted their Fall Driver’s Meeting on Saturday, October 28th at the Atlantic Golf and Country Club.

Drivers gathered to receive organizational updates and participate in safety training.

The day started with a welcome from SWIPCO Executive Director John McCurdy and Transit Director Mark Lander. Drivers then heard from Human Resources Coordinator Daurine Petersen and Administrative Services Director Karen Mauer about policy and benefits updates. That was followed by a safety presentation from the Transportation Security Administration.

TSA surface security officials have been working with SWITA to create driver awareness of potentially dangerous situations. Part of that training has included an emphasis on pre-trip checks to assure a safe vehicle and identify any issues such as unattended bags or packages left on vehicles. Presenters also discussed what steps to take if there is an issue with a package, rider, or the general public around vehicles or facilities. TSA officials will continue to work with SWITA staff moving forward to make sure proper protocols and policies are in place.



The day also included some updates from transit staff, equipment checks and updates, and a tire pressure check exercise from Safety Coordinator Mike Ballinger.

SWITA would not be able to operate as efficiently and as safely as it does now without the hard work and dedication of all the SWITA transit staff and drivers. To learn more about the services provided by SWITA, visit SWITA.com or call 712-243-2518 or 1-800-842-8065.

### SWITA by the Numbers

	October 2023	YTD (Since July 1)
Total Miles	189,431	711,222
Total Hours	10,607	41,323
Total Rides	50,318	181,521
	<u>October Rides by Service</u>	<u>October Rides by Demographic</u>
Workforce Rides	7,133	Disabled 25,122
Taxi Rides	5,261	Elderly 2,987
Student Rides	7,782	Other Gen. Public 22,209
Other	30,142	Total 50,318
Total	50,318	

### Building addition making big progress

Noticable progress has been made on the building addition in the past couple of months. Construction is on track to finish up on January 31, 2024. We look forward to sharing it with you once finished and having all the staff back in the same building.



# SWIPCO/SWITA participates in 2023 Cass County Festival of Trees

SWIPCO/SWITA had the pleasure of participating in the 2023 Cass County Festival of Trees November 30th through December 3rd. The displays highlighting our Lead Hazard Reduction Program and Transit turned out great and were a big hit with visitors to the event. Thanks to all the staff that helped with our display! Proceeds from the free-will event help support the American Cancer Society.



### Interested in Being Involved?

SWIPCO currently has vacancies on our policy council, housing trust fund, and revolving loan fund boards. Contact Executive Director John McCurdy if you have an interest in any vacancy.

### Upcoming Grant Information:

- CDBG Water and Sewer Fund and Solid Waste Alternatives Program January 1, 2024
- Regional Surface Transportation Block Grant Program. January 26, 2024
- Regional Transportation Alternatives. January 26, 2024
- Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program. January 29, 2024
- Derelict Building Grant Program. February 23, 2024

### SWIPCO is Hiring



### Birthdays & Anniversaries



**Dee Holtz**  
Administrative Assistant  
5 Years of Service



**Nicole Rhodes**  
Grants Specialist II  
3 Years of Service



**Tammy DeBord**  
Grants Specialist III  
16 Years of Service



**Tracy Clark**  
Transit Scheduler III  
4 Years of Service



**Christy Pederson**  
Transit Reporting Coordinator  
Retiring!  
16 Years of Service

#### Council Bluffs and Atlantic Area Drivers

Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) is seeking a part-time driver in Council Bluffs to transport 1st and 2nd shift workers to various job sites in Council Bluffs, Oakland or Shelby IA. SWITA is also seeking part-time drivers in the Atlantic area for a number of shifts. Applicant must possess or be willing to acquire a commercial driver's license class C with passenger endorsement (SWITA will assist with ELDT and drive test), and enjoy working with the public. Starting wage is \$16.00 per hour plus IPERS and PTO. Applicant must be able to obtain a CDL Medical Exam and pass a DOT pre-employment drug screen.

A full job description and the ability to apply for this position is located on the careers page at [www.swipco.org](http://www.swipco.org). For questions contact Daurine Petersen at 800-842-8065. Please apply online or send the application to SWIPCO, Attn: Daurine, 1501 SW 7th St., Atlantic, Iowa, 50022 or email to [daurine.petersen@swipco.org](mailto:daurine.petersen@swipco.org).

# From the Desk of the Executive Director...

**John McCurdy**  
Executive Director

The holidays are an important time to reflect on what we all can be thankful for and what we can do for others. In my role as director here at SWIPCO sometimes I catch myself focusing too much on dollars, rides, houses, pipes and roads that I momentarily forget what those things impact—our friends, families, and neighbors here in Southwest Iowa. We are lucky at SWIPCO and SWITA to be able to provide services that improve the lives of thousands of people in our area. Rarely are we doing that in a vacuum—we are almost always using resources provided by others, whether it's the government agencies and other groups that have made grants to us or if it's the taxpayers that have each in their own way put their hard earned dollars toward helping others. I don't know if many folks when they are pumping gas think about the fact that a fraction of a cent on each gallon helps someone get to the doctor. Likewise, when we all see that chunk being taken out of our paychecks that a tiny bit of that comes back here to make sure a community has a working sewer system. We understand that this vast machinery must exist but in many cases where the rubber meets the road is through agencies like SWIPCO and SWITA to provide services in the communities we all live.

It's an incredible responsibility and an honor to be one small piece of making that happen. There are all kinds of folks around our region doing their best to make life better. We appreciate and thank all of them from hospital staff to snowplow drivers—we are all working toward helping each other.

This month we quietly celebrate an important milestone at SWIPCO. Quietly because she's asked us to be quiet about it, but after 16 years in various roles at SWIPCO, most recently as SWITA's transit reporting coordinator, Christy Pederson is retiring. We congratulate her and recognize that through her career here she's made a huge impact on the lives of every single person in Southwest Iowa, and she's made this organization stronger and all of us better people for having the pleasure of knowing her and working with her. Congratulations Christy!

## SWIPCO STAFF

**John McCurdy, AICP**  
Executive Director

**Mark Lander**  
Transit Director

**Erin Hudson**  
Community Development Director

**Karen Mauer**  
Administrative Services Director

**Rhonda Brown**  
Finance Manager

**Daurine Petersen**  
Human Resources Coordinator

**Kersten Abild**  
Transit Scheduler II

**Ann Anstey**  
Grants Specialist II

**Mary Auten**  
Grants Specialist I

**Michael Ballinger**  
Safety Coordinator

**Barb Boggs**  
Grants Specialist I

**Dani Briggs**  
Lead Planner

**Tracy Clark**  
Transit Scheduler III

**Tammy DeBord**  
Grants Specialist III

**Mark Hansen**  
Fleet Mechanic

**Sandy Hansen**  
Grants Specialist III

**Ashley Hayes**  
Disaster Recovery Coordinator

**Julie Hays**  
Transit Scheduler I

**Dee Holtz**  
Administrative Assistant

**Amy Jones**  
Benefits & Payroll Specialist

**Aaron Koontz**  
Grants Specialist I

**Matthew Lee**  
Building Inspector II

**Chris Parks**  
Communications Coordinator

**Christy Pederson**  
Transit Reporting Coordinator

**Nicole Rhodes**  
Grants Specialist II

**Phil Richter**  
Building Inspector I

**Kristen Templeton**  
Transit Coordinator

**Teresa Wright**  
Finance Specialist