

# Iowa Thriving Communities

**Iowa Finance Authority**

Special Achievement

**HFA Staff Contact**

Ashley Jared

[ashley.jared@iowafinance.com](mailto:ashley.jared@iowafinance.com)

Iowa Finance Authority  
Iowa Thriving Communities  
Special Achievement

The groundbreaking Iowa Thriving Communities initiative called on communities to showcase how they are a part of the housing solution and how they are proactive in welcoming housing for all – and they answered.

With the goals of proactively connecting developers with communities that have housing needs, combatting NIMBYism, making data driven funding decisions and sharing best practices for innovation in inclusive housing opportunities, the initiative has delivered unprecedented results for all objectives.

Remarkably, Iowa Thriving Communities experienced a surge in developer interest—with some experiencing a **five-fold increase**. In addition, **100% of Iowa Thriving Communities with incentive points received at least one Federal Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) application.**

Communities estimate that the designation will usher in an impressive **\$100 million in housing development investments** and an additional **400 housing units to be developed**, alongside a significant and unexpected ripple effect of additional **private investments totaling more than \$30 million** throughout the eleven designated Iowa Thriving Communities alone, signaling a monumental leap forward in bolstering housing infrastructure across the state.

### **Respond to an important State Need**

It's no secret that housing is the start for upward economic opportunity and that families, communities and businesses will thrive when all Iowans have access to homes they can afford.

Meeting the housing demands of our robust economy is going to require a strategic, proactive and innovative effort, including from Iowa communities and employers to ensure that all Iowans can afford and have the opportunity to live in the communities where they work.

This is why the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) and Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) introduced the Iowa Thriving Communities designation to elevate best practices from communities that are going above and beyond to leverage innovative methods to attract housing opportunities for their workforce.

In its inaugural year, dozens of Iowa communities completed an intensive application process to be designated as an Iowa Thriving Community and 11 were awarded the prestigious designation and highly sought after incentive points for the LIHTC and/or Workforce Housing Tax Credit programs. Iowa Thriving Communities serve as models for other communities on both a statewide and national level in attracting housing development for all income levels, speaking out against NIMBYism and showcasing their innovative policies and partnerships.

### **Innovative**

Innovation often sparks from the most unexpected moments, like a simple conversation among colleagues in a hallway. What began as a casual chat evolved into a powerful proposal, drawing in thought leaders from across the agency. With the Director's support, a dedicated volunteer committee was formed, pouring their hearts into this passion project beyond their regular duties. Today, as we witness the transformation of countless lives in the thriving communities of Iowa, it's a testament to the power of collaboration and dedication. And as our initiative captures the attention of other agencies, it's not just about expansion; it's about spreading housing opportunities for all – across the nation.

IFA had never before recognized communities going above and beyond for “housing for all” through its housing tax credit program, which has historically been a solely developer-driven application process. The Iowa Thriving Communities initiative gave communities a voice and buy-in to support the project through the development finish line and beyond. The incentive points awarded to a development through the Iowa Thriving Communities designation increased the likelihood that a project may be awarded credits.

#### **Timeline | Process:**

- May 15: Application Period Opens
- July 17: Application Deadline
- Week of August 7: In-person finalist pitches
- Week of August 14: Selection announcement to winners
- Sept. 6-7: Iowa Thriving Community representatives attend HousingIowa Conference to present their pitches to developers and other stakeholders.
- Dec.: Iowa Thriving Communities Webinar Series to Showcase their available offerings to developers.

Applications were scored on the following six categories:

- Planning and Assessment
- Financial Support
- Strategic Leadership and Partnerships
- Workforce Attraction and Retention
- Iowa Thriving Community Attributes
  - Promoting health and public safety, fostering cultural vibrancy and transportation infrastructure within communities
  - Access to: Jobs, healthcare, schools, groceries and other essential services, broadband, childcare
  - High school or community college trade program
- Proposed Neighborhood or Site for Housing Development

Applications underwent scoring, leading to the selection of finalists who were then invited to present their communities to the Iowa Thriving Communities committee in person. Each community had the opportunity to bring up to six representatives for a thirty-minute pitch to the Iowa Thriving Community team, advocating why their community deserved selection.

What unfolded was truly remarkable.

Communities assembled a diverse lineup of representatives, including mayors, school board presidents, CEOs of major employers, hospital CEOs, community college leaders, and other key figures, all emphasizing the critical importance of housing. Each presentation resonated deeply, showcasing stories of dedication and innovation.

For instance, one Hospital CEO's job description directly included advancing housing opportunities, illustrating the institution's unwavering commitment not just to its staff but to the entire community.

Another community spotlighted a local employer's initiative to construct a subdivision for its employees, ensuring proximity to their workplace.

In yet another moving example, a determined local business owner ventured into townhome construction, driven solely by the pressing need despite lacking prior experience. And then there was the inspiring gesture of a local farmer offering land for housing, embodying the spirit of community solidarity and bringing tears to our eyes.

### **Provide Benefits that Outweigh Costs | Achieve Intended Results**

The Iowa Thriving Communities initiative has not only sparked unprecedented interest and engagement but has also yielded tangible results in line with its overarching objectives. By fostering dynamic partnerships between communities and developers, the initiative has catalyzed the emergence of innovative housing projects poised to address the evolving needs of Iowa's diverse population.

- **\$100 million** in housing tax credit investments estimated to be invested in Iowa Thriving Communities
- **\$30 million** in additional private investment spurred in Iowa Thriving Communities
- **400 housing units** estimated to be constructed in Iowa Thriving Communities
- **100%** of designated communities with incentives received at least one application for a LIHTC award in their community.
- **72%** of Iowa Thriving Communities saw additional private investments because of the designation.
- **5X** increase in new interest from developers in some Iowa Thriving Communities
- Developed network of communities willing to share best practices and case studies with other communities.

Notably, the initiative's emphasis on connecting developers with committed communities has facilitated meaningful collaborations, paving the way for transformative projects that align with community priorities.

As these initiatives gain momentum and communities continue to harness the resources and support garnered through the Iowa Thriving Communities designation, the stage is set for sustained progress and lasting transformation across the state.

The Iowa Thriving Communities initiative has not only achieved its preliminary results, in its second year, it is growing to be the flagship designation program of the state, with other programs and agencies considering adding incentive points to the resource toolkit to assist designated communities move local priorities forward to meet the needs of their robust workforce and thriving communities.



## Housing developers lining up to build in Charles City?



Conditions are looking favorable for new housing developments in Charles City.

At the Charles City Area Development Corp.'s board meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 28, housing committee co-chair and Charles City Mayor Dean Andrews introduced a proposal to build a new apartment complex in the Southwest Development Park.

Commonwealth Development  
Company, a Woodbury, N.J.-based

Today's News & Local Information

## Raccoon Valley Radio

KDLS • KGRA • KKRF

### ANOTHER HOUSING DEVELOPER EYEING JEFFERSON WITH WORKFORCE HOUSING TAX CREDITS



### Open Forum

Peterson notes the three lots are located at 504 and 508 North Vine Street and 600 West Lincoln Way. However, the city does not own 508 North Vine Street, which has a... on the property...

Jefferson city officials are hoping to cash in on one more housing developer before its special designation expires.

The Jefferson City Council approved at its April 23rd meeting a resolution of support for Origin Homes for a Workforce Housing Tax Credit application by a 4-1 vote, with Council member Chad Sloan voting no. City Administrator Scott Peterson says... developer has selected three

“There’s a stigma about who these people are going to be, but we’re just talking about people with lower incomes. We’re thinking they’re bad people we don’t want. They’re just trying to get a start. I think this is the perfect place for them to make their first home. I urge you to support this project.”

– Pure Prairie Poultry CEO

Today's News & Local Information

## Raccoon Valley Radio

KDLS • KGRA • KKRf

### GREENE CO SUPERVISORS MAKE IT DIRECTOR/DRAINAGE CLERK POSITION AS COUNTY EMPLOYEE JOB



Next, the Board approved to terminate a contract for the Information Technology Director and Drainage District Clerk position, which allows for that to be a regular county employee position. They also

Peterson gave an update on the apartment housing project with KCG Companies. He said the company is applying for low income housing tax credits and will be notified in July if they receive those. Peterson mentioned that there have been other housing developers interested in Jefferson, due to the Iowa Thriving Communities designation. He is hoping for more single family homes to be built, using workforce housing tax credits. Peterson also talked about Tim Heisterkamp looking to make some improvements to the former

## CITY OF KNOXVILLE IN EARLY STAGES OF POTENTIAL NEW KADING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT



The current Kading development in Knoxville consists of 155 homes. A new development would be a continuation of an effort by the city

The City of Knoxville is in the early stages of potentially bringing in another Kading housing development.

At Tuesday's Marion County Board of Supervisors meeting, the board approved annexation of county land into the City of Knoxville to use for this potential new development. The location would be just northeast of the current Kading development that just finished up last year. On April 29th, the City will hold a special council meeting for a public hearing and potential approval of the annexation.

According to Knoxville City Manager Heather Ussery, the annexation is one item within the list of things needing approval for the Kading development. Other items include a development agreement, concept plan approval, and rezoning.



**KCHA**news.com



## Foundation Being Laid for Charles City Housing Projects



Diers adds that with the deadline for developers to apply for affordable housing tax credits approaching in April, the City has seen an increased interest from developers. Still, only one will be

Six months after being designated a "Thriving Community," Charles City officials continue to lay the foundation for new housing developments.

With the "Thriving Community" distinction last August from the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA), Charles City was awarded \$1 million in Affordable Housing tax credits. The City hopes that will pay off soon.

During this week's meeting of the Area Development Corporation, Mayor Dean Andrews unveiled one possible project being proposed.



# City of Muscatine recognized by state offices as a '2024 Thriving Community'



Out of 947 Iowa communities, it's hard to imagine a top list of cities that capture the essence of a thriving environment.

Yet the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) and the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) have declared a top 11 list of the top thriving communities for 2024.

To better understand what qualities the IFA and IEDA looked for when deciding which communities set themselves up for success, here's a

## The Oskaloosa Herald

# Oskaloosa, Knoxville receive Thriving Community designation

**2024**  
**IOWA THRIVING COMMUNITIES**

- Cedar Rapids
- Charles City
- Creston
- Dubuque
- Jefferson
- Knoxville
- Manning
- Muscatine
- Oskaloosa
- Stanton
- West Des Moines

**IOWA THRIVING COMMUNITIES**

IOWA IOWA FINANCE AUTHORITY

Two southern Iowa towns have been named as thriving communities in 2024, a designation that brings with it exciting new opportunities in the housing and business sectors.

The cities of Oskaloosa and Knoxville have been named as two of 11 recipients of the Iowa Finance Authority's "Thriving Community" designation, which is part of a newly-established state grant program with the goal of promoting housing development through tax incentives, including Federal Housing Tax Credits and Workforce Housing Tax Credits.

"The Thriving Community designation gives Oskaloosa what the all program incentives."

**“Thank you, Iowa Finance Authority! Just another great thing happening in Oskaloosa. I'm happy to live, work, and serve here. Let's keep building on this momentum!”**

**– Bob Drost  
Manager of Facilities Development,  
Musco Lighting**

**“Really proud to be part of this new collaborative initiative between IEDA & IFA! Providing communities the opportunity to showcase themselves for developers and tell their story is such an important piece in addressing the housing challenge. Congrats to the designated communities!”**

**– Liesl Seabert  
Program Manager at  
UNI Institute for Decision Making**

**“Muscatine was named a 2024 Thriving Community designation! Thank you Iowa Economic Development Authority and Iowa Finance Authority!”**

**– Dr. Bradley Bark  
Mayor of the City of Muscatine  
President & CEO of GMCCI Jefferson Matters**

**“This has been a fantastic program for the city of Knoxville in attracting interested developers over the past year. We're looking forward to the upcoming tax credit applications and potential projects for our community.”**

**– Heather Ussery  
City Manager at City of Knoxville**

**“So excited for Charles City to be awarded both workforce housing tax credits AND low-income housing tax credits by the Iowa Finance Authority! Housing has been a priority on all levels for Charles City and this award will help address some key areas of housing for the community.”**

**– Steven Diers  
Charles City  
City Administrator at City of Charles City**

**“Our CEO's job description literally includes the call to improve the housing opportunities for his employees and for the members of our community. He's very passionate to make sure that there is a place for them to live and really feel a part of this community.”**

**– Kayla Hoffman  
Greater Regional Health, Creston**

"Our workforce is massive. We have a lot of large employers and housing affordability is really important. There's a lot to the whole puzzle, but housing is so critical."

– Katherine Harrington  
West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce  
President and CEO

"We want our employees to be long-term employees with affordable housing, so there's no incentive to look elsewhere. They want to stay in Knoxville. Those are great things for us and for the city."

– Megan Green  
Weiler, Inc. CFO & General Counsel, Knoxville

"My hope is that developers hear that cry and they come and they meet the need because we have people that are excited and they want to be a part of the community."

– Emily Garden  
Soifer Family McDonald's  
Charles City Housing Task Force

"Great news from the Iowa Finance Authority and Iowa Economic Development Authority! We're proud to be recognized as a thriving community for our work to attract housing opportunities for our workforce."

– City of West Des Moines

"We love calling Knoxville home and this video highlights some of the exciting things that helped earn the Thriving Community designation. Dylan Morse, Commercial Loan Officer, sums it up this way. We see a lot of great things happening in Knoxville now and in the future. It's a good time to live and work in Knoxville."

– Marion County Bank

"In case you missed some exciting news, Jefferson was 1 of 11 communities in the state to earn the honor of being declared an Iowa Thriving Community!"

– Jefferson Matters

**\$185**  
*million*

IN HOUSING TAX CREDIT  
**INVESTMENTS**  
ESTIMATED TO BE  
INVESTED IN IOWA  
THRIVING COMMUNITIES

**\$30**  
*million*

**ADDITIONAL**  
PRIVATE INVESTMENT  
SPURRED IN  
IOWA THRIVING COMMUNITIES

**550**

**HOUSING UNITS**  
ESTIMATED TO BE  
CONSTRUCTED IN IOWA  
THRIVING COMMUNITIES

**100%**

OF DESIGNATED COMMUNITIES  
WITH INCENTIVES RECEIVED AT  
LEAST ONE APPLICATION FOR A  
LIHTC AWARD IN THEIR  
COMMUNITY

**72%**

OF IOWA THRIVING  
COMMUNITIES SAW ADDITIONAL  
PRIVATE INVESTMENTS  
BECAUSE OF THE DESIGNATION

**5x**

INCREASE IN NEW INTEREST  
FROM DEVELOPERS IN SOME  
IOWA THRIVING COMMUNITIES