

# TECH NEWS

## TECHNOLOGY NEWS

June-August 2004

### Envisioning a more beautiful community

Is your community facing situations like these?

- a need to protect or enhance natural areas
- entryway planning, design, and beautification
- relocation of highways or gateways to the community
- alternative transportation opportunities
- rapid or declining development and growth

If so, your town or city may be a candidate to participate in the Iowa's Living Roadways (ILR) Community Visioning Program. The Visioning Program is part of a collaboration involving the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT); the Living Roadway Trust Fund (LRTF); Iowa State University; and Trees Forever, a nonprofit environmental advocacy group.

#### What is the Visioning Program?

The Visioning Program provides planning services to Iowa communities with populations of less than 10,000 that need assistance with transportation-related planning issues. Interested communities submit applications and are selected by representatives from Iowa DOT, ISU, and Trees Forever based on a number of criteria (see below).

The program is designed to empower local leaders through a planning process that results in an enhancement plan reflecting the community's values. In each community, a steering committee of local government officials, community volunteers, and other stakeholders works with a Trees Forever facilitator, a professional landscape architect, and a student intern from ISU Landscape Architecture Extension to

- assess local natural, cultural, and aesthetic landscape resources
- identify and prioritize community needs
- develop a conceptual landscape plan
- determine potential funding sources for implementing the proposed projects
- develop a step-by-step plan for implementing the plan as resources become available
- initiate the first phase of landscape development

At the end of the visioning process, communities receive a series of display boards that include conceptual drawing and



Conceptual drawing of Montrose, Iowa bridge section



Conceptual map of Olin, Iowa

images showing the finished projects, plus a feasibility report outlining costs and possible funding sources.

## What it is not

---

Community Visioning is not a grant program for monetary awards. (However, another ILR initiative, the Project Program, provides qualifying communities with funds for planting native grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees as part of community improvement projects.)

## Previous projects

---

Since the ILR Program began in 1996, 101 communities have participated in the Community Visioning Program, and 168 communities have received grants through the Project Program.

The Visioning Program has worked with communities to conceptualize improvements like the following:

- creation of pocket parks in empty downtown lots
- beautification of community entryways through landscaping, signage, and plantings
- screening of unattractive areas and framing views of businesses with tree plantings
- downtown rejuvenations, including decorative pavement and bump-outs, coordinated amenities (benches, etc.) and landscape materials, ornamental lighting, and banners
- creation of boulevards from former highway corridors through towns including landscaped medians with trees and other plantings, pedestrian crosswalks, etc.
- installation of roadside features depicting community characteristics or heritage (signage, gateway posts, etc.)
- improvement of trails by landscaping, adding interpretive and directional signage, and adding amenities like trash receptacles, benches, and shaded areas
- construction of attractive, safe pedestrian walkways

## Application process

---

Community Visioning applications are available at the beginning of September. Completed applications must be postmarked by October 15. Selected communities will be named in November.

In addition to completing the application form, communities must be able to demonstrate the following:  
city council endorsement

- a working committee of at least eight residents, each of whom can dedicate 40 to 60 hours (in a period of about 16 weeks) on the visioning process
- ability to contribute \$1,000 toward implementation of the program

Meeting the following criteria improves a community's chances of being selected to participate in the Community Visioning Program:

- extensive community support and commitment
- strong need for visioning services and a good likelihood that the process will be successfully completed
- a diverse steering committee (youth, elderly, minority groups, new residents, etc.)
- ability to provide \$1,000 cash match
- goals that complement those of the Community Visioning Program

Applications (pdf) and additional information are online, [www.laext.iastate.edu/visioning/](http://www.laext.iastate.edu/visioning/).

You can also receive an application by contacting representatives of the ILR Program, Trees Forever, 770 Seventh Ave., Marion, IA 52302, 1-800-369-1269, or Sandra Oberbroeckling, ISU Department of Landscape Architecture, 146 College of

