

# City FOCUS



## ROOTED IN PARTNERSHIPS

How Collaboration Cultivates  
Community Growth

PAGE 25  
**BRANCHING OUT  
DUBUQUE**

# A Message from the CITY MANAGER



**P**artnerships are not a new concept for Dubuque. “Planning, Partnerships and People” have been the hallmark of success in this community for decades and some say they are the “secret sauce” for Dubuque’s progress.

The following quote from Mayor Brad Cavanagh’s presentation at the December 13, 2024, announcement by the University of Dubuque that they are opening an 800-student new medical school in downtown Dubuque, the John and Alice Butler School of Osteopathic Medicine, illustrates the success that these partnerships have enabled:

“With the Field of Dreams project, Chaplain Schmitt Island redevelopment, over 2,400 new housing units being proposed, numerous industrial expansion projects, redevelopment of the Central Avenue corridor, major expansion projects proposed by the Dubuque Museum of Art, the Dubuque Community Y, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, the Historic Millwork District projects, three new hotels under construction, the recent announcement by University of Dubuque of a major expansion of their aviation program, and now this, our region is experiencing a major renaissance. When, in the 1980s, they asked, ‘Will the last person to leave Dubuque please turn out the lights,’ could they have envisioned this 40 years later?”

The 1980s were when the City of Dubuque experienced the loss of almost 10% of the population and, at one point, Dubuque County had the highest unemployment rate in the country at 24%. This led to the creation of numerous organizations that are partnering with each other, with existing organizations like the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, East Central Intergovernmental Association, Dubuque County, the State of Iowa, and with the City of Dubuque to have a tremendous impact on our region:

- Dubuque Initiatives (Est. 1980)
- Travel Dubuque (Est. 1983)
- Greater Dubuque Development Corporation (Est. 1984)
- Dubuque Racing Association (Est. 1985)
- Dubuque Main Street (Est. 1985)
- Dubuque Area Labor Management Council (Est. 1988)
- Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque (Est. 2001)
- 9 Neighborhood Associations have been created over the years.

I am convinced Dubuque has taken partnerships to a new level and is reaching “escape velocity” thanks to the strength and diversity of a variety of collaborations formed to foster growth and enhance quality of life.

What do I mean by “escape velocity?” When a rocket is launched, a tremendous amount of fuel (energy) is needed during the liftoff stage. As the rocket continues to climb and gain speed, it eventually breaches Earth’s atmosphere and is no longer affected by gravity – it has reached escape velocity and advanced to the next stage of the mission.

I believe Dubuque is approaching the critical point where the community will no longer be affected by “gravitational” forces and is instead in control of its own destiny and ready for its continued evolution as an equitable community of choice. Critical collaborations between the public and private sectors, and among public agencies have taken root and have the community in a great position for sustainable growth and continued improvement.

That growth is evident in the number of building projects in Dubuque last year. In 2024, almost 1,900 building permits were issued by the City for projects totaling over \$254 million in construction value. That represents a nearly 70% increase in overall construction value over 2023.

# Dubuque CITY COUNCIL

I whole heartedly agree with the statement Mayor Brad Cavanagh made at a December 6, 2024, Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce event, when he said, “We are in the midst of a renaissance in the Tri-State region. We’ve got our foot on the gas, and we aren’t looking back at this point.” Under Mayor Cavanagh and the City Council’s leadership, the City organization is focused on the five-year goals for Dubuque, which include “Partnership for a Better Dubuque: Building Our Community that is Viable, Livable, and Equitable.”

Partnerships and initiatives continue to focus on addressing the challenges to reach these goals. An indicator of progress is Dubuque’s decreasing poverty rate (see page 21) as the City’s Office of Shared Prosperity and Neighborhood Support implements the Equitable Poverty Reduction and Prevention Plan.

This publication features a sampling of the partnerships and projects, organized by theme, that are cultivating growth in Dubuque. That cultivation is a community effort and I encourage you to support the efforts under way that are important to you. Community engagement is the fuel for our takeoff to escape velocity and has been recognized with five All-America City designations (the Academy Award of community engagement) by the National Civic League in the last several years.

We know at the City of Dubuque that progress happens at the speed of trust. We also know that one of the key foundations of that trust is for us to practice emotional intelligence to support our efforts at continuous improvement. We can always be better and do things better and we will openly receive constructive criticism and community input as we know we need to always be asking, “How can we get better?”

Dubuque is experiencing a renaissance 40 years in the making, let’s all go together on this awe-inspiring journey!



**Michael C. Van Milligen**  
City Manager



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# NEW AIR SERVICE TAKES FLIGHT



## Daily Flight Returns to the Dubuque Regional Airport

Cheers and confetti filled the Dubuque Regional Airport on Nov. 4 as the first passengers aboard the new daily connection to Chicago made their way off the plane. The inaugural Denver Air Connection flight from O'Hare International Airport to Dubuque marked the return of daily commercial service to a major air hub following months of effort from a variety of local organizations.

“The return of daily flights to and from a major hub is cause for celebration,” said Dubuque Mayor Brad Cavanagh. “We are excited to welcome Denver Air Connection to the Dubuque Regional Airport, and I encourage all travelers, whether for leisure or business, to take advantage of the convenient connections across the country and around the world that this service provides.”

***The new daily service provides over 240 same-day connections to over 200 destinations from Chicago.***

The new daily service provides over 240 same-day connections to over 200 destinations from Chicago. Through Denver Air Connection's ticketing and baggage agreements with American and United Airlines, passengers can enjoy seamless connections beyond O'Hare, without the need for separate bookings, baggage checks, or security screenings.

Flights can be booked at [www.FlyDBQ.com](http://www.FlyDBQ.com), through American or United, or through a customer's preferred travel agency or website.

Denver Air's 50-seat jets offer spacious leather seats to give the feel of a private jet flying experience. Since its founding the late 1990s, the company has built a reputation for reliability with a 98.5 percent flight completion rate.

"You now have one of, if not the most reliable airline in the world flying in and out of Dubuque" said Denver Air Connection Senior Vice President Jon Coleman.

An air service survey conducted in the Dubuque area in the fall of 2023 identified Chicago, and more specifically O'Hare, as the preferred daily connection option of Dubuque-area flyers. Those results prompted months of behind-the-scenes work by DBQ Air, a new non-profit formed to attract and retain air service to Dubuque.

The group's board is chaired by Mayor Brad Cavanagh, while Dubuque County Supervisor Harley Pothoff serves as vice chairperson. Other members include City

and airport staff as well as the representatives of the Dubuque Airport Commission, Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, Dubuque Racing Association, Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, and Travel Dubuque.

***"The return of daily flights to a major hub is great, but our work to expand air service is not done."***

"The return of daily flights to a major hub is great, but our work to expand air service is not done," said Cavanagh. "DBQ Air continues to meet regularly to explore additional partnerships and opportunities for more flight options at our airport."

Funding to attract, operate, and retain the new service was provided through a \$1.5 million U.S. Department of Transportation Small Community Air Service Development grant, which helps small communities address air service and airfare issues. Local partners provided the required \$575,000 local match for the grant, with funding coming from the City of Dubuque, Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, Dubuque County, Dubuque Regional Airport, Greater Dubuque Development, the Iowa Department of Transportation, and Travel Dubuque.

As he closed his remarks in celebration of the inaugural flight, Mayor Cavanagh again urged



Dubuque area travelers to utilize the service.

"The Dubuque region deserves and needs full connection to the rest of the United States and the rest of the world from our local airport."

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# BRIGHT MINDS CAMPUS

**Working Together to Address  
Child Care Shortage**



A wide coalition of Dubuque area organizations and leaders have answered the call to address a shortage of child care services by developing a new facility and supporting existing childcare centers.

The new Bright Minds Campus opened in early 2024 at the site of the former Medline facility on Chavenelle Road in Dubuque's Industrial Center West. This innovative workforce child care facility now houses both the Dubuque Community Y Early Learning Center and the Dubuque Community School District's Seedlings Preschool Center under the same roof.

The Y Early Learning Center offers year-round child care for children as young as six weeks old through preschool age. There is also space for school-age children during the summer months. It has a total of 10 classrooms, with multiple rooms for each of the age levels of the children it serves. Rooms are outfitted with colorful toys, stuffed animals, and musical instruments. A large community room at the center of the facility serves as a gathering place for all the children. Outside, the facility also features a spacious playground with climbing equipment and both sand and water play areas.

Meanwhile, the Seedlings Preschool Center is a state-of-the-art, 18,000 square-foot preschool operated by the Dubuque Community School District. Being located within the same building as the Y Early Learning Center provides seamless access to wrap-around care for children outside of the school day.

In addition to assisting with the construction costs of the new facility, funding was also raised to help support existing area child care providers with staff recruitment, training and retention efforts. The initial round of grants provided more than \$660,000 to 18 eligible providers. Retention for centers has improved and 69 new childcare workers were hired under the effort.

Both projects were spearheaded by Dubuque Initiatives, which provided matching funds to state grants for each effort. Greater Dubuque Development partnered to raise funds through its Business Champions for Childcare program designed to engage employers in strengthening the area's child care system.

This innovative public-private child care solutions effort builds on the strength of each partner to make meaningful progress to expand the availability of quality child care in Dubuque County. The child care provider support in the Dubuque County Child Care Solutions Fund has completed its first year and is set to run for the next two years at least.

***In 2022, it was estimated that Dubuque County had less than half of the necessary child care spaces needed to address local residents' needs.***

The entire effort is meant to address a critical need for child care in the Dubuque area. In 2022, it was estimated that Dubuque County had less than half of the necessary child care spaces needed to address local residents' needs. That same year, a study conducted by Greater Dubuque Development Corporation found that the lack of child care was leading local residents to leave the workforce following the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the Bright Minds Campus serves the Dubuque community's youngest residents, the facility will eventually provide needed support for all the people in the region. A portion of the building is expected to house a combined city/county 911 operations center in the coming years.



## Business Champions for Child Care

- Alliant Energy
- City of Dubuque
- DB&T/HTLF
- Dupaco Community Credit Union
- HODGE
- John Deere Foundation
- Medline Industries, Inc.
- Progressive Processing/Hormel Foods
- Q Casino + Resort
- Rite-Hite
- Theisen Supply, Inc.
- UnityPoint Health-Finley Hospital
- Woodward Communications, Inc.
- Anonymous Donors

## New City-County Agreement Includes 911 Center Relocation

In late 2023, the Dubuque City Council approved a new agreement between the City of Dubuque and Dubuque County for the ongoing operation of the Dubuque County 911 Emergency Communications Center.

The agreement defined funding for the emergency communications center's move from its current location at the Dubuque Law Enforcement Center to a portion of the former Medline building at 7900 Chavenelle Rd. The City will pay \$2.5 million of the estimated \$5 million cost to relocate the center to the new site, which will provide the additional space required for the center.

Operating costs are now evenly split between the City and the County. Previously, the County covered one-third of the cost.

# University of Dubuque Opening New MEDICAL SCHOOL

On Dec. 13, 2024, University of Dubuque President Travis Frampton, Ph.D., announced the university's plans to establish the John and Alice Butler College of Osteopathic Medicine, a four-year medical school to be located in downtown Dubuque.

The proposed medical school will bring needed support to the physician workforce as well as provide an economic benefit to the region. With up to 300 faculty and staff and 800 students, it will have a tremendous positive impact on downtown Dubuque.

The university is moving forward with the required approvals and programmatic accreditation process and plans to open the college in the summer of 2028. The medical school's name is in recognition of a \$60 million gift from John and Alice Butler of Dubuque.

"In communities like ours, whether that's in Dubuque, in our region, in Iowa, or along the rural-urban divide in the U.S., there is a continuing shortage of physicians. This dramatically impacts access to adequate care, which significantly affects healthcare and health outcomes," said Frampton.

"In order for us to change this trajectory, we must educate, prepare, and equip more physicians. By establishing a medical school in the Tri-State region, the University of Dubuque will be able to serve our community and deliver on our mission."

"I want to first congratulate the University of Dubuque on taking this momentous step forward. Not only will the addition of this program be a great boost for UD as an institution, it will also make a real and lasting impact in our city," said Mayor Brad Cavanagh.

"Our community will welcome many more students, strengthen our workforce and healthcare community, and add tremendous energy and vibrancy to the core of our downtown. This is truly wonderful news for Dubuque!"

"With the Field of Dreams project, Chaplain Schmitt Island redevelopment, over 2,400 new housing units being proposed, numerous industrial expansion



*Left to Right: UD Board of Trustees Chairman Doug Horstmann, Mayor Brad Cavanagh, US Senator Chuck Grassley, and Governor Kim Reynolds at the University of Dubuque announcement in December.*

projects, redevelopment of the Central Avenue corridor, major expansion projects proposed by the Dubuque Museum of Art, the Dubuque Community Y, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, the Historic Millwork District projects, three new hotels under construction, the recent announcement by University of Dubuque of a major expansion of their Aviation Program, and now this, our region is experiencing a major renaissance," said Cavanagh.

"In the 1980s when they asked, 'Will the last person to leave Dubuque please turn out the lights,' could they have envisioned this 40 years later?"

Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, commonly known as DOs, use a whole-person approach to help prevent illness and injury across the full spectrum of medicine. They look beyond symptoms to understand how lifestyle and environmental factors impact well-being to help patients get healthy and stay well.

Osteopathic medicine is one of the fastest-growing healthcare professions in the country, accounting for around 11% of physicians in the U.S., according to the American Osteopathic Association.

# City-County Partnership Brings Accessible Voting Hub to Downtown Historic Site

In name, the City and County share Dubuque. In purpose, they share a commitment to serving our area's residents. The two governing bodies have a long history of collaboration and working together to find innovative solutions that benefit both jurisdictions.

The City of Dubuque purchased properties located at 880-890 Central Ave. in 2021 for future downtown parking infrastructure needs. This purchase included the historic buildings that were home to the Hendricks Feed & Seed Co., Inc. for many years as well as the warehouse at White St. and E. 9th St.

When Dubuque County expressed interest in finding a long-term home for county elections operations, the two governments saw an opportunity to assist each other and reached a property exchange agreement, each paying \$1.

The City sold the former storefront at 880 Central Ave. to the County for its future elections home but retained the warehouse site for potential future parking needs. In turn, the County sold the City an adjacent parking lot to supplement land needed for potential development.



# IOWA

## AMPHITHEATER



Imagine standing under the stars in an amphitheater with a nature-inspired heron design. The crowd buzzes with anticipation, and as the lights dim, a national headlining act takes the stage. This vision will soon be a reality as the Iowa Amphitheater on Chaplain Schmitt Island takes shape, becoming the premier destination for entertainment in the region.

With an attendance capacity of up to 8,000, the Iowa Amphitheater is designed to host top-tier performers. The amphitheater also envisions a broader purpose, acting as a versatile space for community events and local symphony, college, and university performances.

Features include an acoustically enhanced stage canopy, ADA-compliant access, and assistive

captioning and listening technologies for inclusive enjoyment. Amenities like parking, food and beverage facilities, and artistically integrated landscaping will further enhance the visitor experience.

But the Iowa Amphitheater is more than just an entertainment venue—it's a catalyst for economic growth, community connection, and dynamic placemaking.

Located adjacent to the Q Casino + Resort, the amphitheater is part of the broader Chaplain Schmitt Island revitalization, which aims to position the area as "Dubuque's gateway to entertainment and the Mississippi River."

The mission is to create a connected island that welcomes visitors and the community to

recreation, entertainment, and the outdoors. By transforming Schmitt Island into a premier destination, this project positions Dubuque to attract tourists, foster local pride, and unlock new economic opportunities.

### **A Collaborative Investment**

The Iowa Amphitheater project is a collaborative investment by the City of Dubuque and the Dubuque Racing Association (DRA), leveraging local resources and state support.

The Iowa Economic Development Authority awarded the project a \$3 million Destination Iowa Grant, recognizing its potential to bolster regional outdoor recreation and tourism. Additional funding for the \$15.4 million project includes a \$3.65 million contribution by the DRA and \$8.7 million in Greater Downtown TIF Taxable Debt.



## PLAY & STAY

### INVESTMENT ON SCHMITT ISLAND

In September, the Dubuque Racing Association announced plans for an \$18 million PinSeekers on Chaplain Schmitt Island. This three-story, 30,000-square-foot facility will feature 40 all-season golf suites with Toptracer technology and access to a 220-yard driving range, a mini golf course, and a bar and restaurant. It will be a central part of the island's revitalization, alongside the Iowa Amphitheater and the upcoming Key Hotel at Q Casino + Resort. Slated for completion in fall 2025, the seven-story boutique hotel will offer 90 rooms and suites, along with a rooftop dining experience and event space. Together, these developments are set to position Chaplain Schmitt Island as a recreational and tourism destination.

**The Greater Downtown TIF**  
Taxable Debt will be paid by the DRA, underlining its long-term commitment to the island's development and financial sustainability. The DRA is also investing in significant upgrades to its surface parking lot to meet the increased demand from amphitheater visitors and tourists exploring Schmitt Island.

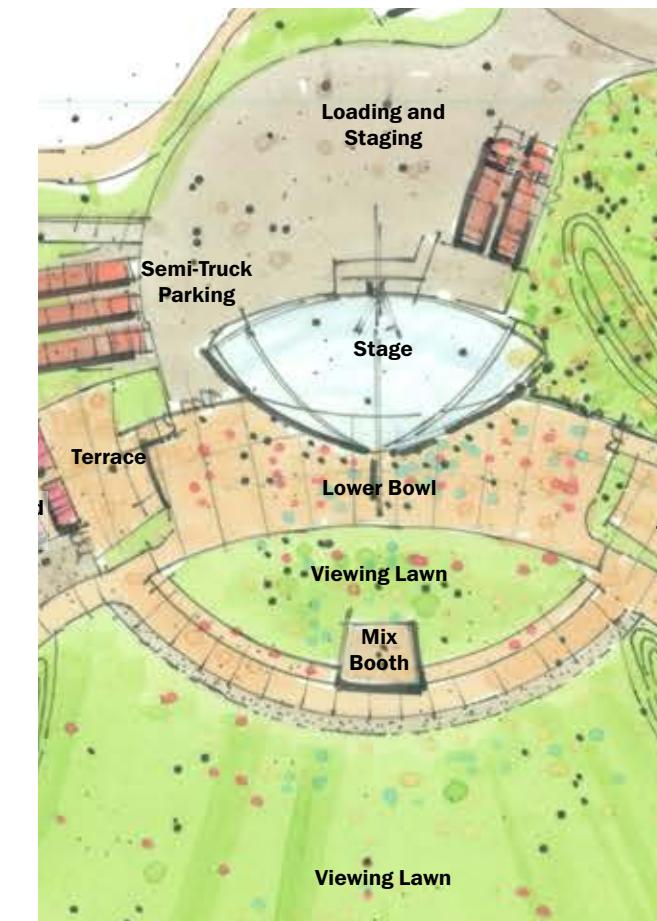
By combining state grants, local investments, and strategic partnerships, the funding framework not only secures the resources needed for construction but also fosters a collaborative effort to transform Schmitt Island into a must-visit attraction.

#### Project Timeline

Construction of the amphitheater began in 2024. The initial phase focused on site preparation, including deconstructing the existing dog track and kennels and mass grading.

Phase two is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2025. Work will include utilities, paving, amphitheater construction, and landscaping with an anticipated completion date of January 2026.

When finished, the Iowa Amphitheater will be more than a venue. It will stand as a symbol of Dubuque's innovative spirit and commitment to creating spaces that enrich lives and strengthen the region.





## A MULTI-MODAL VISION FOR



# CENTRAL & WHITE



Following extensive community engagement and the completion of the Central Ave. and White St. Corridor Traffic Study, the City of Dubuque is embarking on a transformative journey to revitalize this corridor.

As part of the study, the City Council selected in November 2024 a multi-modal focused design alternative for the corridor, marking a major step forward in improving safety, equity, connectivity, and economic development in the area.

The chosen design reimagines Central Ave. and White St. with two lanes of one-way traffic, the removal of parking on one side of both streets, and wider sidewalks. These changes aim to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment, accommodating outdoor dining, street trees, and landscaping. Additional features include enhanced pedestrian safety with improved crossings and a protected cycle track for bicyclists on White St.

This redesign balances the needs of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians while fostering a vibrant streetscape that supports local businesses and community life.

### Building on a Strong Foundation

The multi-modal design follows the January 2023 adoption of the Central Ave. Corridor Streetscape Master Plan, which established a vision for aesthetics and mobility in the area. New amenities added in 2024 include benches, tables, and chairs.

### Housing and Development Incentive Programs

Recently, the City launched the Central Avenue Corridor Housing Investment Pilot Program, offering 10-year forgivable loans of \$10,000 per unit for projects that add or improve quality, affordable housing between 11th and 22nd Streets.

Complementing this initiative, the City also reconfigured its Façade Grant Program into the Downtown Rehabilitation Grant Program, designed to be more accessible and equitable for developers. The revamped program has already spurred three new mixed-use development projects along Central Ave.

### Community-Led Cleanup Efforts

In November 2024, City staff and community volunteers united for a corridor cleanup, collecting 23 bags of trash. This grassroots effort reflects the community's

commitment to maintaining a welcoming and vibrant environment for residents and visitors alike.

### A Vision for the Future

Dave Lyons, strategic initiatives consultant for Greater Dubuque Development Corp., predicts 2025 will be a pivotal year for the Central Avenue Corridor. "The City's decision to support a multi-modal design sets the stage for new public and private investments," he notes. Public investments in green alleys, benches, landscaping, and other amenities will continue, complemented by forward-thinking policies on housing, outdoor dining, and façade renovations.

Private investment, bolstered by support from organizations like Dubuque Initiatives—which already contributed over \$3 million to Central Ave. projects in 2023 and 2024—will further accelerate the corridor's transformation. Local organizations such as Voices Studios, Key City Creative Center, and Dubuque Main Street are poised to play integral roles in this revitalization, ushering in a transformative era for the area.

# Downtown Rehabilitation Grant Program

## Revitalizing Dubuque's Downtown Buildings

The City of Dubuque Downtown Rehabilitation Grant Program is driving transformation in the heart of the city. This initiative, rooted in the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal Plan, provides financial incentives to combat blight, spark revitalization, and promote economic growth.

The program offers a 1:1 matching grant of up to \$35,000 for commercial or mixed-use properties located in the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District.

Eligible activities include:

- **Façade Costs:** Assistance on labor or material costs for front (or occasionally other major) façade renovations to restore a building's historic appearance or eliminate inappropriate additions or alterations to improve overall appearance.
- **Financial Consultant Costs:** Assistance in hiring a financial consultant to analyze the feasibility of a project.

- **Planning & Design Costs:** Assistance on pre-development costs associated with a project.

Over the past two years, the program has made a significant impact. Twelve downtown properties—spanning 10th St., Main St., Bluff St., Jackson St., Locust St., White St., and Central Ave.—have utilized these grants to enhance their buildings and contribute to the district's revitalization.

Whether it's a business owner envisioning a façade transformation or a developer planning their next big venture, the Downtown Rehabilitation Grant Program could be the key to unlocking the project's potential.

To learn more, visit [www.cityofdubuque.org/econdev](http://www.cityofdubuque.org/econdev) or call the City's Economic Development Department at 563-589-4393, ext. 2.





## Incentives Spurring

# HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Access to quality, affordable housing is not only important to the health and well-being of residents, but also for the economic stability of a community.

A 2022 study determined Dubuque had a significant housing shortage, but the private and public sectors are partnering to create more housing and improve existing housing units.

To encourage and support private investment in housing, the City of Dubuque, State of Iowa, and federal government offer a variety of financial resources to encourage developers and property owners to create and maintain quality, affordable housing. Incentive programs exist for a range of housing types and include grants, loans, property tax abatement, and tax increment financing.

With more than 2,400 housing units (including almost 400 affordable units) already constructed or proposed, it's clear developers and property owners are responding to community's housing needs and utilizing incentives to do so.

As of late October 2024, 127 units were under construction in residential subdivisions and 193 multi-residential units were under construction, while another 826 units were approved for development/construction.

An additional 542 units from 11 different projects are currently under review.

Approximately 250 residential subdivision lots are available for purchase in six subdivisions and two new subdivisions are under construction.

Last year, the City of Dubuque increased incentives for housing creation in Dubuque's Downtown Urban Renewal Area, which includes the Central Avenue Corridor, Washington Neighborhood, Main Street, and Kerper Boulevard areas. Projects are currently under review are located on Jackson St., Central Ave., Locust St., Iowa St., Wood St.

### **New subdivision under construction:**

The Farm (Switch Homes) between Northwest Arterial and W. 32nd St: 84 single-family home lots

### **Multi-residential projects under construction:**

Callahan Apartments on Bies Drive: 56 market-rate apartments

Cedar Lake Apartments on Lake Ridge Drive: 42 market-rate apartments

799 Main Street: 36 market-rate apartments

Former St. Anthony's School at 2175 Rosedale Avenue: 22 market-rate apartments

### **Major housing projects expected to begin construction in 2025:**

Union at the Marina at 1860 Hawthorne Street: 201 affordable family housing units

Fox Hills Apartments at the end of Plaza Drive: 390 market-rate apartments

# **TWO NEW MARRIOT HOTELS**

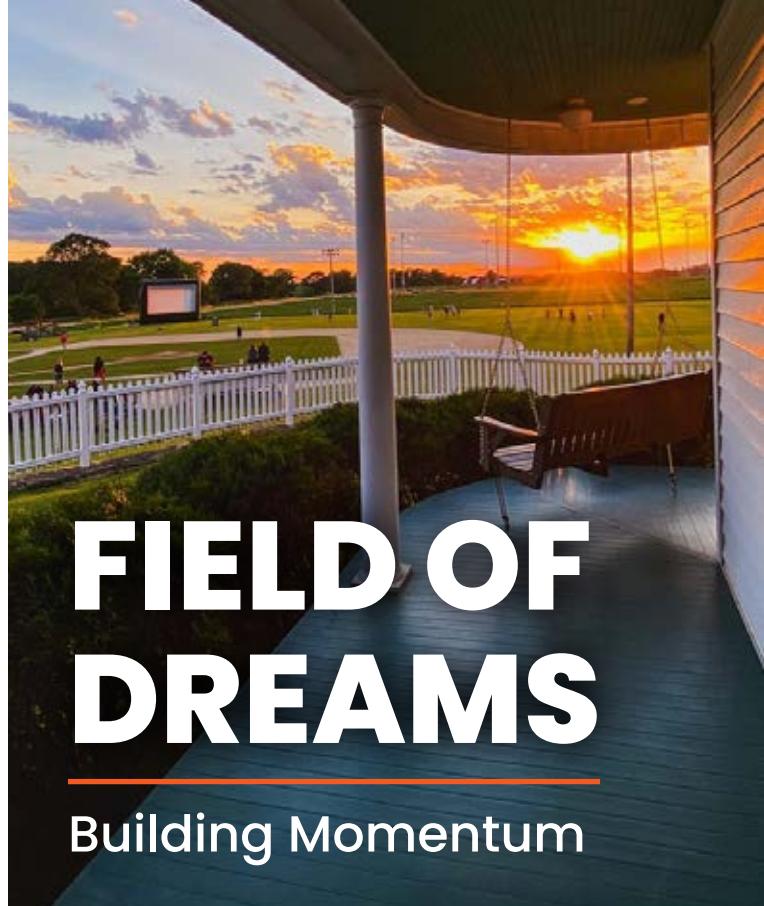
## **Coming to the Port of Dubuque by 2027**

A pair of new Marriott-branded hotels are coming to the Port of Dubuque. The City has entered into a development agreement with Kinseth Hospitality to support their plan to build the two new properties.

Kinseth plans to build a Courtyard by Marriott and a Residence Inn by Marriott at a total cost of approximately \$30 million. The hotels will be built near the intersection of E. 5th Street and Ice Harbor Drive, west of the McCoy Building.

The hotels are planned to have a combined total of 160 rooms within a six-story complex. Kinseth intends to begin construction in early 2025, with the hotels expected to open by July 2026. They will provide lodging for additional visitors to the Grand River Center, National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, and other area attractions including the Field of Dreams which is expected to create a demand for over 60,000 hotel rooms per year.

Kinseth already owns and operates three other hotel properties in Dubuque: the Hampton Inn near Wacker Plaza, the TownePlace Suites in the Historic Millwork District, and the Holiday Inn on Main St.



# **FIELD OF DREAMS**

## **Building Momentum**

The Field of Dreams Movie Site in Dyersville already draws thousands of visitors to the Dubuque area each year, and momentum is building as site improvements continue. Construction is underway on both a 3,500-seat baseball stadium and an expanded youth baseball/softball complex. Both projects are tentatively scheduled to be completed by spring 2026.

Dyersville Events Inc., the non-profit organization that now owns the property, is collaborating with public and private partners to facilitate the site's continued development.

The City of Dubuque is contributing \$1 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding to market Dubuque attractions to teams using the site, which has also received \$24 million from the State of Iowa and commitments of \$5 million from Dubuque County and \$1 million from the City of Dyersville. A \$500,000 contribution from Google was announced in December 2024.

Studies show the expanded Field of Dreams would create \$10.5 million annually in direct spending for the region. The site already generates thousands of hotel stays in Dubuque every year, and the expansion is expected to increase lodgings to more than 60,000 per year. The Field of Dreams expects over 500 teams will use the site in 2025 and anticipates over 1,000 teams in 2026.

# BUILDING BRID TO EQUITY & EMPLOYMENT



Connecting neighborhoods and residents with economic opportunities, recreational amenities, and community resources.

*Preliminary conceptual rendering of the 14th St. Overpass of Elms St. and the at-grade railroad crossing.*



For over 170 years, the sight of trains crossing through the city and the sound of their horns have been a familiar part of Dubuque's landscape. The railroad first reached Dubuque in the mid-1800s. By the 1860s, Dubuque had become a key industrial center, particularly for the lumber and mining industries, which relied heavily on rail for transport. Over the years, the railroads in Dubuque evolved through various mergers and changes in ownership, including recently.

In April 2023, the merger of Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern created an integrated railroad system that spans Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. This expanded network is expected to increase rail traffic across key routes in the Midwest, including Dubuque.

City officials expect train traffic to increase from approximately nine trains per day to as many as 18 per day by the year 2027. Currently, trains block crossings from 9th St. through 16th St. for an average of almost 70 minutes per day.

***City officials expect train traffic to increase from approximately nine trains per day to 18 per day by 2027.***

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The increase in train traffic will lead to even longer and more frequent delays, hindering the efficient movement of people and goods and significantly impacting emergency response and key employment centers.

To avoid potential negative impacts to safety and mobility in the downtown area, the City has secured funding for both the planning and construction of the initial phases of the Building Bridges to Equity and Employment (B2E2) Project.

B2E2 is a multimodal transportation project designed to improve connectivity and safety for all users. The goal is to better connect residents and neighborhoods with economic opportunities, recreational amenities, and community resources on Chaplain Schmitt Island, in the Kerper Boulevard Industrial Park, in Downtown Dubuque, in the Historic Millwork District, and on the west side of the city via the downtown Intermodal Transportation Center.

The construction of an overpass on 14th St. over the at-grade railroad crossing is the project's largest component, providing a safe and efficient route for both vehicles and pedestrians to cross over the train tracks. In addition to the 14th St. overpass, initial phases of the B2E2 project include:

- A roundabout at the 16th St. and Sycamore St. intersection
- A roundabout at the 16th St. / Greyhound Park Rd. / Admiral Sheehy Dr. intersection
- Elm St. corridor “complete streets” improvements
- 16th St. “complete streets” improvements, including installing sidewalks along segments without existing sidewalks and enhancing crosswalks at the 16th St. and Kerper Blvd. intersection
- Bridge sidewalk modifications to the Peosta Channel Bridge, including a pedestrian and bike shared-use path

Planning and design for the improvements is currently underway.

Over the next year, several more public information meetings and stakeholder meetings will be held. These meetings will provide property owners and residents the opportunity



*Preliminary conceptual rendering of Elm St. complete streets improvements.*

to receive information about the project and allow the public an opportunity to provide input and express their opinions regarding the proposed project.

To stay informed about the project and future public input opportunities, sign up to receive B2E2 Project Updates via email and/or text at [www.cityofdubuque.org/B2E2](http://www.cityofdubuque.org/B2E2).

The initial phases of the B2E2 project, including the overpass, are expected to be constructed from 2027 to 2030.

#### **Collaborative Funding**

In 2022, the City received a \$2.3 million Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to assist with the \$4.4 million planning and design costs of the B2E2 project. The Dubuque Racing Association (DRA) provided a \$750,000 contribution as a local cash match to make the planning grant a possibility.

In June 2024, the City was awarded a \$25 million RAISE Infrastructure Implementation Grant to assist with the estimated \$38.7 million total construction cost for the initial phases of the B2E2 project.

In addition to the \$25 million RAISE grant, Dubuque Metropolitan Area Transportations Study (DMATS) will contribute \$9.2 million, the City will contribute \$3.6 million, and the Canadian Pacific Kansas City railroad will contribute \$1 million. With the \$4.4 million dollars in planning and engineering costs, the total expenditure for the project will exceed \$43 million.

***This collaborative approach to funding is key to the success of the B2E2 project.***

This collaborative approach to funding is key to the success of the B2E2 project. By combining resources from federal, local, and private sector partners, the project ensures broad support and maximizes the impact of each investment, ultimately strengthening the community's infrastructure and economic future.

To learn more about the B2E2 project, visit [www.cityofdubuque.org/B2E2](http://www.cityofdubuque.org/B2E2).

# ENSURING ECONOMIC VITALITY

## Sewer Reconstruction Project to Secure Industrial Growth

From the 1950s through the 1970s, the Catfish Creek interceptor sewer system was constructed. It consisted of three main branches along the North, Middle, and South Forks of Catfish Creek. Over the last several decades, significant extensions have been added to the system to support the city's growth and development to the west.

Today, the three interceptor sewers have reached capacity, making the stream vulnerable to sewer overflows and hindering expansion and future growth in the city's Industrial Center West. To address these challenges, the City has initiated a multi-phase project to reconstruct portions of the interceptor sewer system. This infrastructure upgrade is vital for fostering the city's economic development and protecting the local environment.

### Old Mill Rd. Lift Station

The Catfish Creek Sanitary Sewer Reconstruction Project will begin with constructing a new lift station on Old Mill Rd. This facility will pump wastewater from the three sewer branches to the City's Water & Resource Recovery Center (WRRC). The project also involves upsizing portions of the existing interceptor sewers to increase capacity and installing force mains to convey wastewater from the new lift station to the WRRC. The project is slated for completion in December 2026.

Once operational, the new lift station will handle over 80% of the wastewater currently managed by the existing Catfish Creek lift station. This reduction will create capacity for future development along US Highway 61/151, extending south to the Dubuque Regional Airport.

### Project Funding

The City is financing the lift station project through a combination of Iowa's State Revolving Fund (SRF) Loan Program and federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). SRF loans for both phases have been allocated across multiple fiscal years, from FY2022 through FY2027. The total project cost is estimated at \$36 million.



# INVESTING IN SAFETY

## Dubuque Fire Upgrades Fleet and Adds Firefighters

A total of six new vehicles have been put into service by the Dubuque Fire Department over the past year. The newest of the new is Engine 506, added in early November to serve the City's North End and Point areas from Station 6 on Rhomberg Ave.

In September, Medic 551 began ambulance service deployed from Fire headquarters on W. Ninth St. Headquarters is also the home for two new vehicles deployed in August, Command 528 and Ladder 511.

Engine 505 began its duties at Station 5 in mid-February. Station 5 is located on S. Grandview Ave. and serves the southern portion of the city.

Medic 554 was launched from Station 4 on University Ave. in October of 2023, becoming the department's third ambulance. Approximately 80% of the department's calls are for emergency medical services, making these ambulances vital for positive outcomes for residents.

Nine firefighter positions have been added to the Dubuque Fire Department since 2020 for a total of 94 firefighters on staff.

The Dubuque Fire Department has been accredited by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, a division of the Center for Public Safety Excellence, since 2021. It is one of just 311 agencies in the world to be accredited.



# MEET THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY IMPACT

Tackling Barriers &

Enhancing Access

While the City of Dubuque strives to equitably serve our community, the reality is, some people inevitably fall beyond the reach of traditional services and programs. Addressing this gap is the purpose of the City's newly formed Office of Community Impact.

Their work is dedicated to fostering an inclusive, equitable community by tackling barriers and enhancing access, so all Dubuque residents have an opportunity to live and thrive.

"No one person or family is the same, so why would we expect the way they experience life in our community to be," shares Community Impact Director Antonio Mouzon.

A core objective of the department is to identify challenges faced by community members and bring forward solutions through partnerships, programs, and opportunities. Mouzon continues, "We're about providing pathways so that all individuals and, in turn, our entire Dubuque community can embrace upward mobility."

***“We’re about providing pathways so that all individuals and, in turn, our entire Dubuque community can embrace upward mobility”***

The mission is driven by the department’s AmeriCorps Program, the Multicultural Family Center (MFC), Community Service and Outreach Programs (Volunteer DBQ), Equitable Fine and Fee Reform, and Prevention and Diversion Services. Each plays a vital role in cultivating partnerships and advancing equity across Dubuque.

Previously housed within the Leisure Services Department, these programs now have a dedicated focus under Community Impact. The restructuring represents a strategic shift. “Both departments enhance quality of life, but their approaches are distinct. By separating them, each can better refine their priorities and pursue objectives more effectively and efficiently,” says City Manager Mike Van Milligen.

Recently, the office launched the first phase of the Equitable Fine and Fee Reform, a program aimed at helping residents who have fallen into delinquency with their City utility bills for water, sewer, solid waste, and stormwater.

The initiative allows these individuals to “work off” fines and fees through approved service or development programs. Upon completion of service, the program directly pays an earned hourly rate to the participant’s delinquent fines. From engaging with community clean-up activities to enrolling in financial literacy workshops, staff connect with participating residents one-on-one to work on an individualized success plan and discuss local resources. For example, participants may join Opportunity Dubuque to receive job training and earn certifications through Northeast Iowa Community College to upgrade their skills or launch their career.

“We love to see the best versions of people come alive in our community, but they can’t be on that path without essential resources and support,” says Mouzon. With a focus on meeting the needs of the individual, the program’s goal is to restore access to essential resources, address financial hardships, and foster stability.



*In December, City staff visited residents at their homes to talk about the Equitable Fine and Fee Reform program.*

“Right now, some Dubuque residents don’t have water service in their home due to unpaid utility bills. This program helps residents experiencing financial hardship restore that critical service and create more stability in their lives.”

Even in a great city, gaps in service exist. This program meets residents where they are and supports them on their climb to stability and beyond.

The Office of Community Impact will pilot the program with a target group of residents in January 2025. Watch for details on opportunities to participate later in 2025 following the pilot program.

## PROGRESS ON POVERTY

- In 2023, Dubuque’s 5-year poverty rate fell to 12.2% from 16% in 2018.
- Dubuque’s poverty rate decreased by 24% between 2018 and 2023.
- Over that period, poverty rates fell for all race/ethnicity groups except Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander residents.
- As of 2023, women are 44% more likely to live in poverty than men.
- In 2023, compared to the 11 largest cities in Iowa, Dubuque had the 4th lowest poverty rate in 2023 after having the 6th lowest in 2018.

*Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2009-2023), United States Census Bureau*

# 2024 Iowa Community of Character Award

Dubuque was named the Community of Character by the Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University, recognizing the city's resilience and demonstration of the six Character Counts® pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship.

"Dubuque is a great city with a lot of heart and city officials that care. The community has a story of population loss followed by stabilization, recovery, and continued growth," noted Robert Palmer, a Ray Center board member who nominated Dubuque for the award. "Dubuque's city officials are passionate about the wide variety of residents they have and what it takes to meet their needs. Language barriers, employment, and embracing cultural identity are challenges that has Dubuque faced and overcame gracefully."



*Character Counts® celebration event on Aug. 19, 2024.*

Scott Raecker, executive director of the Robert D. and Billie Ray Center, said, "Dubuque is an inspiring example of how communities can work together to promote positive values and make a meaningful impact on the lives of all their residents."

# CITY



## MAYOR CAVANAGH

**Elected Iowa League of Cities President**

Mayor Brad Cavanagh was selected to lead the Iowa League of Cities as the president of its executive board in September. Cavanagh had previously served as the president-elect, and has been a member of the executive board since 2020.

The Iowa League of Cities serves as the unified voice of cities across Iowa, providing advocacy, training, and guidance to strengthen the state's communities. Its executive board is responsible for adopting policies to provide direction to the League, adopting the annual operating budget, establishing membership fees, and providing direction to the organization.

The league's executive board consists of 14 board director positions and five officer positions: president, president-elect, and three past presidents. These positions must be filled by current city officials who represent cities of various populations and geographic locations.

Cavanagh was elected Mayor in November 2021. Previously, he had served as the Fourth Ward representative on the City Council since 2019.

# LEADERS

## Serving Dubuque & Beyond



### **FARBER**

Appointed Vice Chair of NLC Committee

Susan Farber, City Council Ward One Representative and Mayor Pro Tem, has been appointed to serve as vice chair of the National League of Cities (NLC) 2025 Information Technology and Communications Federal Advocacy Committee.

Farber was elected to a one-year term and will provide strategic direction and guidance for NLC's federal advocacy agenda and policy priorities on issues such as broadband, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence.

As vice chair of the committee, Farber will play a key role in shaping NLC's policy positions and advocating on behalf of America's cities, towns, and villages before Congress, with the administration, and at home in Dubuque.

In March 2024, Farber was appointed to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC), which makes recommendations to the FCC on issues related to increasing deployment and adoption of broadband services. The IAC also provides input on how FCC rules and policies can be better communicated to the public.



### **MILLER**

Elected President of NAHMMA

Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency (DMASWA) Administrator Ken Miller was selected as president of the executive committee of the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association (NAHMMA) during the organization's conference in September.

Miller has been with the City of Dubuque since 2011 and assumed his current role as DMASWA Administrator in 2019. In addition to his role with NAHMMA, he has also served as a board member of the Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations and the Iowa Composting Council.



### **SAINCI**

Earns Harvard Certification

Anderson Sainci, director of the City's Office of Shared Prosperity & Neighborhood Support, completed a certification program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Executive Education in September, earning himself the designation as a Senior Executive in State and Local Government.

This three-week, on-campus program is designed to help government leaders develop the skills to implement creative solutions under tight constraints and increased public scrutiny.

Sainci has been the director of Dubuque's Office of Shared Prosperity & Neighborhood Support since its creation in 2021. He has been with the City of Dubuque for a total of 11 years, previously serving in roles in the Public Works, Economic Development, and Sustainability departments.



## BURBACH

### Named a Top 10 Finalist for the Trailblazer Leadership Award

Assistant City Manager Cori Burbach was named one of 10 finalists for the Leadership Trailblazer Award from the League of Women in Government.

The 10 finalists represented a diverse group of female government leaders from all corners of the United States. Burbach was nominated by City Manager Mike Van Milligen, who described her as "tirelessly committed" to improving the City of Dubuque and cited her supervision and mentorship of several young female leaders, both within and outside of the City organization.

### ***"Tirelessly committed to improving the City of Dubuque"***

The honor is just one of many Burbach has received in recent years. She is currently the president of the Iowa City/County Management Association, the organization that named her an Emerging Leader in 2021. The Dubuque chapter of the Women's Leadership Network presented her with one of its Women of Achievement awards that same year.

Burbach has been employed by the City of Dubuque for a total of 17 years. She has served in her current role since 2017.

## JONES

### Saluted for 50 Years of Community Service

City Council member Ric Jones was surprised with a proclamation honoring him for a half-century of service to the community at a City Council meeting in May. Mayor Brad Cavanagh snuck the proclamation in to the meeting agenda without Jones' knowledge.

"It's been a ton of fun the last 50 years working for this wonderful organization," Jones commented following the reading of the proclamation.

Jones first joined the City of Dubuque as a probationary firefighter and emergency medical technician in 1974 when he began what became a 30+ year career with the Fire Department. He rose through the department's ranks to become its first emergency medical services (EMS) supervisor, the role he held when he retired in 2005. That fall, Jones was elected to an at-large representative position on the City Council and he has been re-elected four times since. He is currently tied with James Brady and Roy Buol for the longest tenure on the City Council.

In addition to his roles with the Fire Department and City Council, Jones has also been involved with numerous community and civic organizations, including:

- Iowa Association of Professional Fire Fighters
- Dubuque County EMS Advisory Commission
- Dubuque Kiwanis Club
- American Red Cross of the Tri-States
- Hills and Dales Child Development Center
- Special Olympics Iowa



# BRANCHING OUT

## Partnering to Plant Over 5,000 Trees in 5 Years

Dubuque's Branching Out initiative is taking root with a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Forest Service to plant over 5,000 trees throughout the community.

This collaborative effort, led by Sustainable Dubuque and Dubuque Trees Forever, aims to increase the city's tree canopy from 26% to 40%, advancing one of the goals of Dubuque's Climate Action Plan. It also supports Dubuque Trees Forever's commitment to creating a vibrant and sustainable impact.

"We partner with the City to enhance what the City can do and help meet our mission," said Dubuque Trees Forever Executive Director Laura Roussell. "Our work will leave a green legacy for our entire community."

The initiative kicked off in August with a tree-planting event along the Lower Bee Branch Creek and 16th St. Detention Basin. City staff, project partners, neighborhood leaders, and community volunteers came together to plant 28 trees. Dubuque Trees Forever demonstrated proper planting techniques and tree care.

But that was just the beginning! Over the next five years, volunteers will plant thousands of trees in public spaces and on private properties within the Washington, Point, North End, and West End neighborhoods, particularly in disadvantaged

census tracts. These efforts will bring numerous environmental and economic benefits to the community.

Trees play a vital role in enhancing urban environments. They increase greenspace, provide wildlife habitat, reduce erosion, store carbon, improve air and soil quality, and help mitigate storm surges and flooding. Shade from trees helps lower city temperatures, often by as much as 10 degrees. Street trees extend the lifespan of road surfaces, reducing maintenance costs.

Properly placed trees can reduce annual household energy costs by up to 25%. Trees strategically planted on the south and west sides of a house can block direct sunlight, reducing the need for air conditioning in the summer. Trees planted as windbreaks on the north or northwest side help shield homes from cold winds, reducing heating costs in the winter.

Trees contribute to a healthier and more resilient community. Residential property owners and businesses located in the Branching Out Dubuque tree-planting areas may sign up to receive free trees for planting on their property. Tree planting assistance is also available. To determine if your property is eligible, visit [www.sustainabledubuque.org/branchingoutdbq](http://www.sustainabledubuque.org/branchingoutdbq) or call the City's Office of Sustainability at 563-690-6038.

## Get Involved!

To sign up to help plant trees throughout the city, visit the Dubuque Trees Forever website at [www.dubuquetreesforever.org/get-involved](http://www.dubuquetreesforever.org/get-involved).

# PRECISION POLICING CENTER

## Leveraging Advanced Technology and Real-Time Data

The Dubuque Police Department recently created a Precision Policing Center (PPC) to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. By leveraging advanced technology and real-time data analysis, the PPC is serving as a critical force multiplier and enabling rapid response, informed decision-making, and proactive crime prevention.

The PPC is implementing total system integration software that will link together several technologies including the City's traffic and security camera system, authorized private security cameras, live feeds of body-worn cameras, and automated license plate readers. This will provide officers a more comprehensive view of ongoing incidents and real-time intelligence to better prepare for potential threats.

Additionally, police drones are being updated to include live video stream and expanded response radius. After the software is implemented and additional certification and licensing is acquired, the PPC will be able to deploy police drones to provide real-time information to officers.

**In 2023, Dubuque Police resolved 77% of all Crimes Against Persons committed in the city. The national average for 2022 (the most current on record via FBI data) was 37%.**

The establishment of the PPC ensures the Police Department is fully equipped to make data-driven decisions and is able to meet the demands of modern policing. The PPC is located within the Dubuque Law Enforcement Center and is supported by three technicians, a crime analyst, and a criminal computer forensics position.

## CALEA ACCREDITATION

*The Dubuque Police Department has been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) since 1993 and goes through reaccreditation every four years. To retain accredited status, the department must comply with 459 standards. Accreditation demonstrates a commitment to high-quality service, accountability, professional standards, continuous improvement, operational efficiency, and community confidence. Fewer than 5% of law enforcement agencies in the United States achieve this accreditation.*

## Partnerships for BROADBAND EXPANSION

In addition to water, electricity, and sewer, access to broadband or high-speed internet has become the “fourth utility” that we all depend upon. However, broadband is not a utility the City owns or franchises, so it relies upon partnerships with local providers to meet community needs.

Partnerships between the City of Dubuque and multiple broadband providers continue to improve access to and the affordability of broadband in Dubuque. The City has agreements with eight internet providers that help them quickly deploy new services to Dubuquers. Progress could not have happened without these partners, especially two over the last year.

- ImOn Communications is working to complete a fiber over-build throughout the city. To date, that includes: an investment of \$35 million, service available to over 23,400 households, and nearly 6,000 customers in Dubuque. Additional expansions are planned for 2025.
- MVlink Internet, provided by Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, is adding to its infrastructure on the edge of Dubuque where the city meets the county. These areas are often the last to receive high-speed internet but, thanks to MVlink, nearly 900 Dubuque homes now have direct access to fiber internet.

# STREETS PROJECT

## PAVES THE WAY FOR TRAFFIC ROUTING

Think of all the questions you ask yourself before driving across Dubuque: What route should I take? Would another route be quicker because of school or a shift change? Could the weather affect my route?

While you take time to consider and calculate, the Smart Traffic Routing with Efficient and Effective Traffic System (STREETS), a traffic-control system under development for Dubuque, will have already answered those questions and more, almost instantaneously.

STREETS is an innovative system that manages traffic signals and suggests alternative routes using real-time and predictive data, artificial intelligence (AI) assistance, and support from City staff. This navigation system is the future for Dubuque drivers, and we're progressing toward gradual implementation.

"For the past few years, the system has been in a 'deep learning' mode, says David Ness, a civil engineer in the City's engineering department and the project

manager. "The more data it collects, the more it understands the unique characteristics of Dubuque traffic."

***"The more data it collects, the more it understands the unique characteristics of Dubuque traffic."***

You might be thinking, "Finally, a system that understands Dubuque drivers!" In a way, that's what STREETS is designed to do. By analyzing driver behaviors, patterns, and recurring traffic events, the system continuously improves its performance.

STREETS leverages real-time data to manage traffic disruptions like accidents, dynamically suggesting alternative routes and balancing delays with road capacity. These updates will be displayed on electronic message boards along key traffic corridors. As technology evolves, there's potential for direct updates to be sent to drivers through in-car systems.

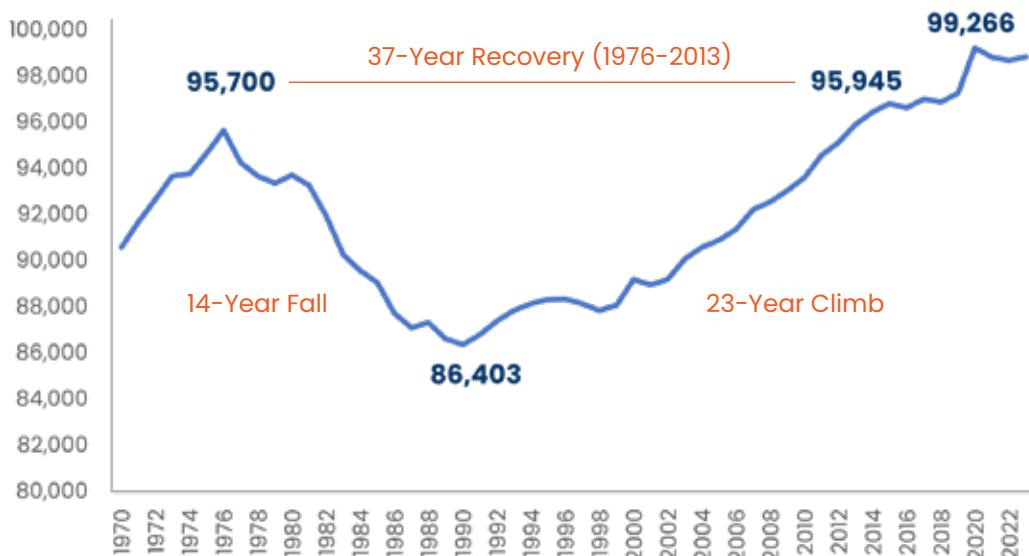
**Dubuque resurfaces up to 10 miles of streets per year, but safe and efficient movement of traffic is about much more than pavement.**

The first phase of implementation begins in spring 2025, starting with the installation of traffic monitoring technology at approximately 40 of Dubuque's West End intersections. During this phase, the public may notice improved traffic signal sequencing, adjusted by the system's AI. Phase two will extend the infrastructure into downtown Dubuque and surrounding roadways.

Subsequent phases will radiate the system outward. Phase three will focus on studying traffic crossing the Illinois and Wisconsin bridges, while phase four will extend the system to Asbury, Peosta, East Dubuque, and into Wisconsin.

The City is partnering with East Central Intergovernmental Association, Dubuque Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, and the Iowa Department of Transportation in the development of the STREETS Project to improve mobility, reduce congestion, improve safety, and better inform travelers.

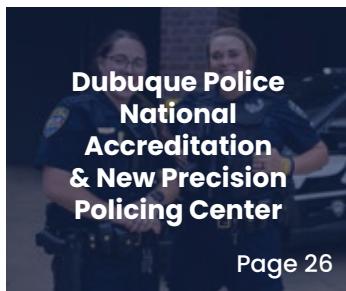
## DUBUQUE COUNTY POPULATION



**YOU can be  
great here.**

*"Critical collaborations between the public and private sectors, and among public agencies have taken root and have the community in a great position for sustainable growth and continued improvement."*

- City Manager  
 Michael C. Van Milligen



*"We are in the midst of a renaissance in the Tri-State region. We've got our foot on the gas, and we aren't looking back at this point."*

- Mayor Brad Cavanagh