

# IOWA'S LIVING ROADWAYS

Community Visioning Program

The Next Step:



Making Community Visions a Reality



## Introduction

For nearly 15 years, the Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program has helped rural communities plan transportation enhancements using state funds administered by the Iowa Department of Transportation. To date, 159 Iowa towns have completed the process and successfully collaborated with community visioning design teams to create conceptual transportation enhancement plans.

However, the process for these communities does not end with a plan. The next stage of community visioning is making the plan a reality. According to an evaluation conducted by Iowa State University in 2006, 94 percent of communities that participate in the community visioning program implement at least one project.<sup>1</sup> These communities draw from a variety of funding sources, the majority of which are grants from either public or private organizations.

The purpose of this study is to determine the types of competitive grants awarded to communities that have participated in the Community Visioning Program. Factors examined include the types of projects funded, the geographic distribution of funding and time elapsed between completion of visioning and funding awards.

The information presented here is connected only to projects implemented through state grants. Matches by the community, federal funding, private donations and self-funded projects were not factored into this analysis unless they could be documented.



*In 2002, the ILR Projects Program awarded funding to Parkersburg for the Depot Park and prairie restoration.*

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<sup>1</sup>Badenhop, Julia. 2007. *Community Visioning 2007 Program Impact Assessment: a focus on project implementation*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture.

## Scope and Methodology

The scope of work is limited to competitive awards from five Iowa programs: Iowa's Living Roadways Projects, sponsored by Trees Forever; the Living Roadways Trust Fund (LRTF), sponsored by the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT); Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP), sponsored by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR); Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) program, offered by the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED); and Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino Community Betterment Grants.

Data collected encompass the life of the program, from the pilot communities in 1995 through the communities that participated in the visioning process in 2008. Award information was obtained from the Web sites of the respective funding organizations, which are listed at the end of this narrative.

The projects funded have been categorized as either visioning or non-visioning projects. Visioning projects are those that were proposed as part of the visioning concept plan. Non-visioning projects are those that have been funded since completing community visioning but were not part of the original concept plan. Both visioning and non-visioning projects have been sorted by project type into nine categories:

- Highway corridors
- Streetscapes
- River corridor/wetlands
- Gateways
- Trails
- Historic preservation
- Entrance signage
- Parks/open spaces
- Other

Since 1995, 111 communities that participated in



*The downtown street trees in Fredericksburg were funded by the ILR Projects Program in 2004.*

## Funding Awarded

the Visioning Program received funding from one or more of the five state programs for a total of 250 projects. Of these projects, 194 were visioning projects and 56 were non-visioning projects.

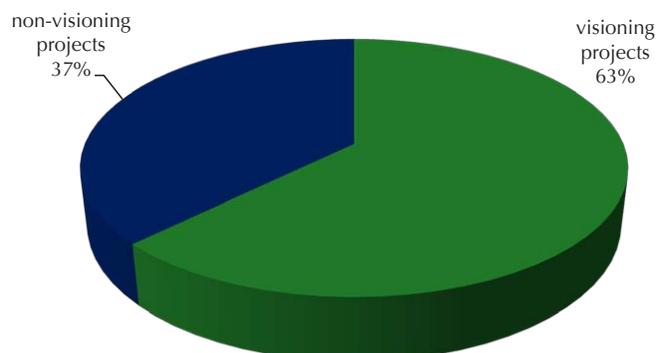
The total amount of funding from the five state programs awarded to communities that participated in the visioning program is \$24,526,237. Of that total, \$15,372,188 or 63 percent was awarded to implement projects resulting directly from the visioning process—that is, projects appearing in some form in the conceptual design plan developed for the community. The remaining \$9,154,049 was awarded to implement non-visioning projects (see figure 1).

In terms of geographic distribution of funding across the state, most of the total funds were awarded to communities in the northwest portion of Iowa. However, there were more projects implemented in northeast Iowa. The highest number of visioning projects were implemented in northwest Iowa, while the highest number of non-visioning projects were implemented in northeast Iowa (see table 1). Figures 2 and 3 show the geographic distribution of funding for visioning and non-visioning projects, respectively. The four quadrants of the state are defined by Interstates 35 and 80.

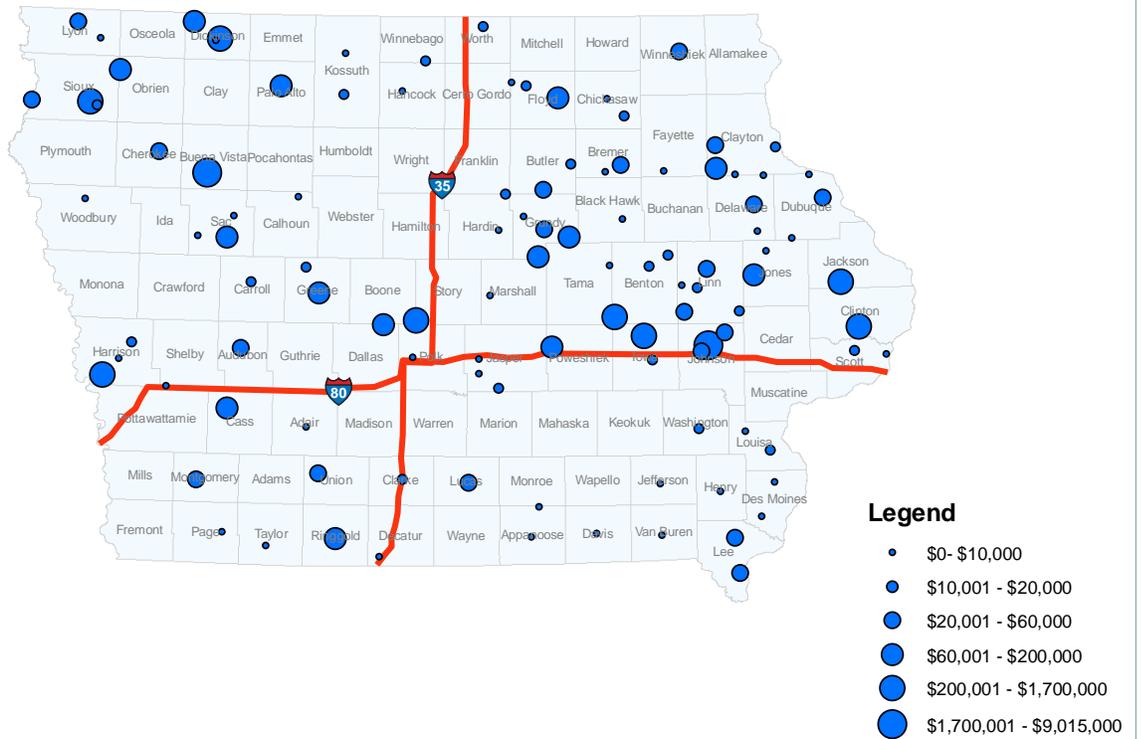
Table 1. Projects and funding by geographic region, 1995–2009.

Region of Iowa	All projects		Visioning projects		Non-visioning projects	
	No. of projects	Funds awarded	No. of projects	Funds awarded	No. of projects	Funds awarded
Northeast	102	\$11,832,309	71	\$5,169,901	30	\$2,967,190
Northwest	89	\$20,079,010	77	\$11,885,896	12	\$1,187,038
Southeast	35	\$2,726,927	19	\$11,885,896	12	\$1,509,671
Southwest	21	\$739,356	12	\$306,762	3	\$124,000

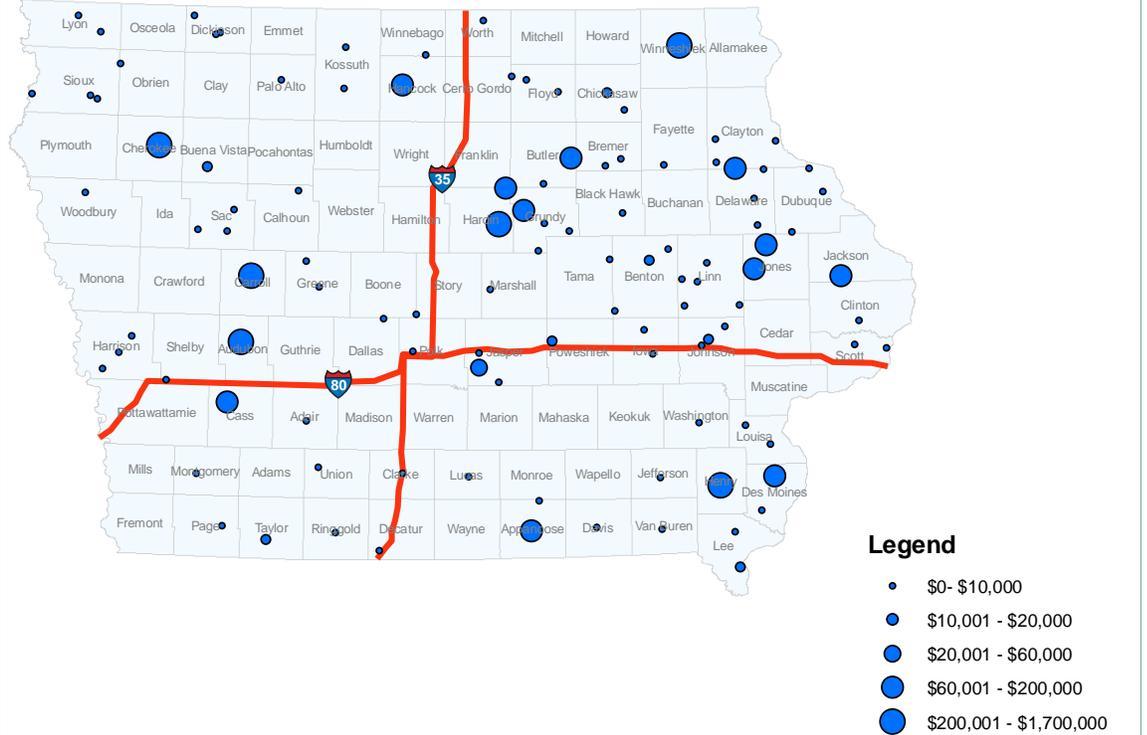
Figure 1. Visioning and non-visioning projects funded, 1995–2009.



**Figure 2.** Geographic distribution of funding for visioning projects, 1995–2009.



**Figure 3.** Geographic distribution of funding for non-visioning projects, 1995–2009.



More than \$20 million of the total \$24,526,237 was awarded as CAT grants by IDED, which is more than seven times higher than the other funding sources combined (figure 4). However, the ILR Projects Program funded the highest percentage of projects (figure 5). Table 2 shows the total funds awarded by funding source, as well as total projects funded, visioning projects funded and non-visioning projects funded.

Table 2. Breakdown of funding and projects by source, 1995–2009.

Funding source	Total funds	Total projects	Visioning projects	Non-visioning projects
CAT	\$20,239,500	35	12	23
ILR	\$1,488,999	153	143	10
LRTF	\$88,300	10	7	3
REAP	\$2,671,938	47	29	18
Prairie Meadows	37,500	5	0	5

Figure 4. Visioning and non-visioning projects funded, 1995–2009.

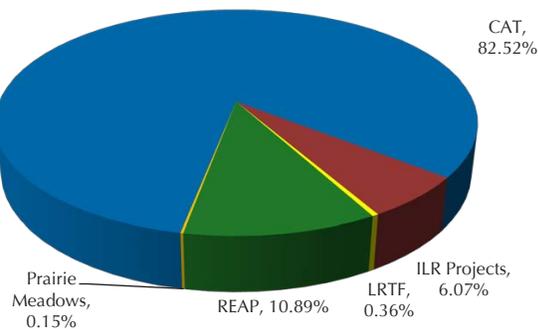
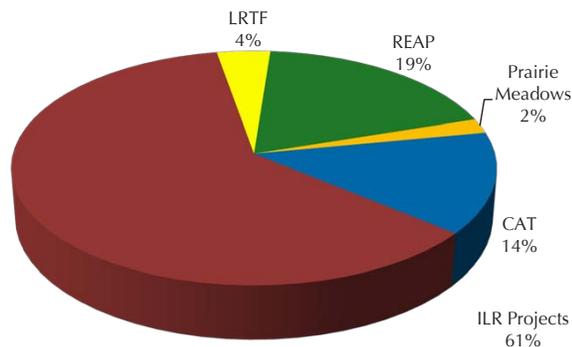


Figure 5. Visioning and non-visioning projects funded, 1995–2009.





The Storm Lake lighthouse and landscaping located along the U.S. 71 corridor was funded in part through the ILR Projects Program in 2000.

Among all funding sources, grants for visioning projects range from \$214 to \$9 million, with the average award at \$80,483. Grants for non-visioning projects range from \$705 to \$1.6 million, with the average award at \$155,153. The average grants for visioning projects from each of the funding sources range from more than \$1 million (CAT) to \$0 (Prairie Meadows). Average grants for non-visioning projects are lower, ranging from \$352,848 (CAT) to \$2,097 (LRTF). Table 3 shows the overall average awards for each source, as well as the average awards for visioning and non-visioning projects.

Table 3. Average award amounts for each funding agency, 1995–2009.

Funding source	Average grant amount	Visioning projects	Non-visioning projects
CAT	\$578,271	\$1,010,333	\$352,848
ILR	\$9,732	\$9,973	\$6,290
LRTF	\$8,830	\$11,296	\$2,097
REAP	\$56,850	\$60,104	\$51,607
Prairie Meadows	\$7,500	\$0	\$7,500

## Funds Leveraged

The award amounts presented in the previous section of this narrative do not include the substantial amount of funding obtained from other sources. In follow-up interviews conducted by Trees Forever field staff, steering committee members from visioning communities indicated that projects have been funded from a variety of sources in addition to competitive grants. Volunteers from local government and other civic organizations such as the Kiwanis Club or the Lions Club contributed substantial labor, and local businesses and individuals donated labor and materials (see figure 6).

In addition, both the CAT and the ILR Projects programs require matches from recipients. CAT requires a minimum match of 50 percent. The Iowa's Living Roadways Projects Program requires a minimum 30 percent match from the applicant. However, according to the Trees Forever 2009 Annual Report, the average cost share by Projects applicants averages 49 percent. Table 4 shows the match amounts estimated for both CAT and ILR Projects and the revised totals for funding generated by the five state programs.

The addition of these documented matches increases the total funding generated to \$35,375,597, with approximately \$22 million for visioning projects.

HOMECOMING — VOLGA CITY  
July 1, 2006

Volga School Reunion & Community Dinner  
Serving begins at 5:30 P.M.  
Free-Will Donation - Proceeds to Volga Visioning Fund  
St. Paul Fellowship Hall

Yes, I/We will attend the dinner.  
 Number of people attending the dinner.  
 No, I/We will not be able to attend.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

*A Celebration...  
A Dedication...  
A Reunion...*



**HOMECOMING VOLGA CITY**  
JULY 1, 2006

**3:00PM MUSIC IN THE PARK**  
Carriage Rides, Games & Sporting Events

**4:00PM DEDICATION CEREMONY**  
Volga City Sign & Waterfall  
White Pine Grove & Volga Memorial

**5:30PM COMMUNITY DINNER**  
St. Paul Fellowship Hall  
**VOLGA SCHOOL REUNION**  
Class Photos on Display

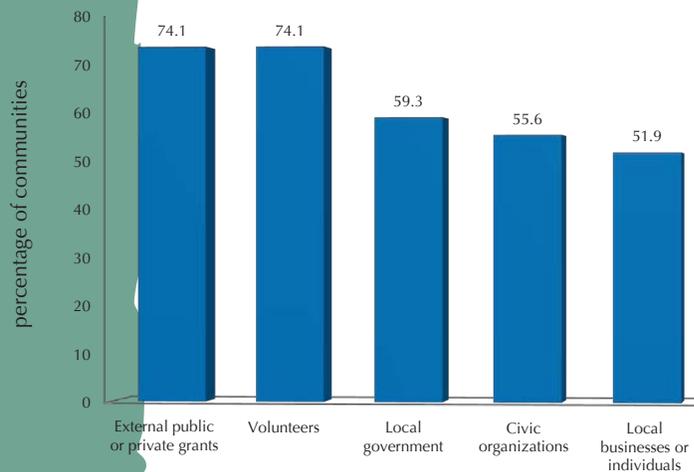


*To implement the concept plan, the Volga visioning committee planned fundraising events such as the 2006 Homecoming.*

Table 4. Total funds generated, including estimated CAT and ILR matches.

	Award total	CAT match (50%)	ILR Projects match (49%)	Total funds generated
Visioning projects	\$15,372,188	\$6,062,000	\$698,789	\$22,132,977
Non-visioning projects	\$9,154,049	\$4,057,750	\$30,821	\$13,242,620
Total:	\$24,526,237	\$10,119,750	\$729,610	\$35,375,597

Figure 6. Sources of funding obtained by communities.



Source: Badenhope, Julia. 2006. *Community Visioning Program Impact Assessment: a focus on social capital, economic influence, and projects completed*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture.



Many communities contribute to project implementation through volunteer labor, such as in Audubon County (left) and Cherokee (right).

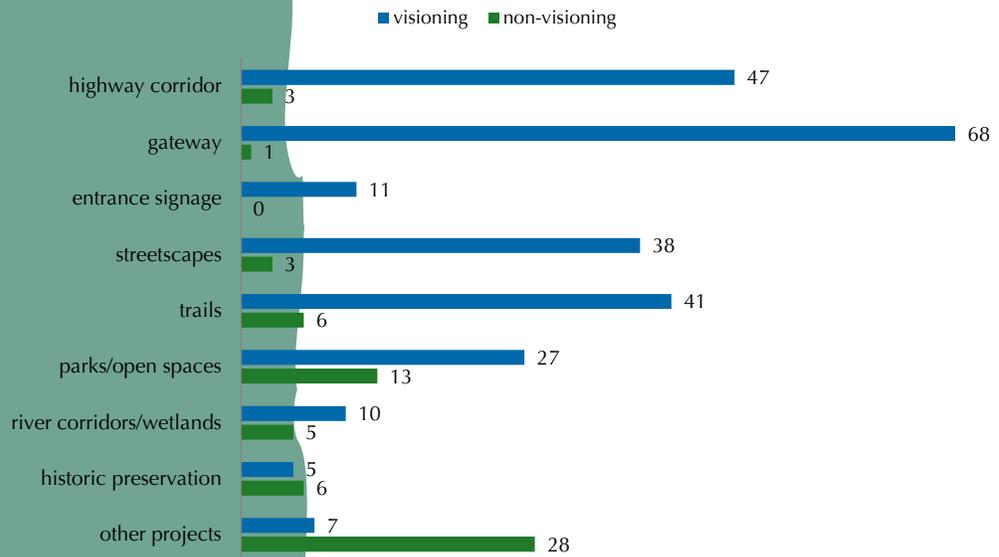
## Project Types Funded

As noted in the methodology, both the visioning and non-visioning projects funded by state competitive grants have been sorted into nine categories by project type, which are defined as follows:

- Highway corridors –roadside planting of trees and/or native vegetation and landscaping on highways and county roads.
- Gateways –planting of trees and/or native vegetation and landscape along highway and county roads corridors entering communities.
- Entrance signage – landscaping and planting of trees and/or native vegetation at the sites of entrance signs (does not include construction of the signs).
- Streetscapes –construction, landscaping and beautification of community streets (downtown, residential, industrial, etc.).
- Trails –construction of trails, landscaping, planting of trees and/or native vegetation, amenities, signage and trailheads.
- Parks/open spaces – city parks, outdoor recreation areas, and natural areas.
- River corridor/wetlands – enhancements related to a river corridors and wetlands, including bridges.
- Historic preservation –town square, historic buildings, museums, railroad depots
- Other projects – water parks/recreation centers, community centers/libraries, schools (outdoor classrooms, landscaping) and miscellaneous projects such as rain gardens, cemeteries and seed.

Figure 7 shows the number of projects funded by type, sorted by whether they were visioning or non-visioning projects.

**Figure 7:** Number of projects funded by visioning projects and non-visioning projects, 1995–2009.  
 Note: In some cases, a single award included more than one project. Therefore, the number of projects funded exceeds the total number of awards.



Landscaping and fencing at Agri-symbol Park in Shelby was funded in 2005, one year after Shelby the completed community visioning process.



*The trees planted along the U.S. Highway 71 corridor into Arnolds Park were funded by a grant from the ILR Projects Program in 2004.*

Most projects funded by the five competitive grant programs involve roadside planting and landscaping, most often at community gateways. These findings are consistent with self-reported project implementation data gathered in satisfaction surveys and interviews, as well as documentation of site visits. In 2002, survey respondents cited that roadside plantings were the most frequently proposed and completed projects.<sup>2</sup> In 2004, interviewees indicated entryway signage projects were completed most often, followed by entryway plantings.<sup>3</sup> Site visits conducted in 2006 support these responses, in that 44 percent of completed projects were roadside planting and 43 percent were entrance signage/signage improvements.<sup>4</sup> A significant number of visioning projects involving trail and streetscape improvements were also funded.

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<sup>2</sup> Badenhop, Julia. 2002. *Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program Follow-up Report*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture.

<sup>3</sup> ———. 2006. *Community Visioning Program Impact Assessment: a focus on social capital, economic influence, and projects completed*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture

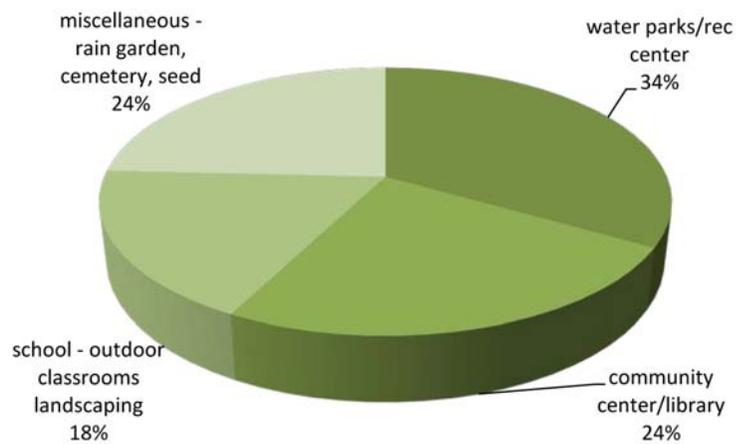
<sup>4</sup> ———. 2007. *Community Visioning 2007 Program Impact Assessment: a focus on project implementation*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture.



*Trees planted along the T-Bone Trail in Audubon County were funded by the ILR Projects Program in 2005.*

In terms of non-visioning projects, the highest number of projects falls into the “other” category. Water parks and recreation centers were funded most often, followed by community centers and libraries. Figure 8 shows the breakdown of projects in the “other” category.

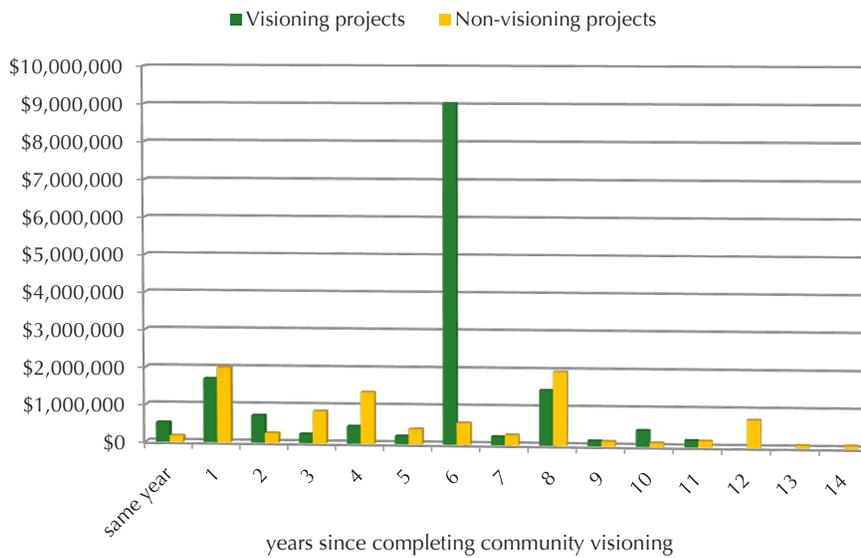
**Figure 8:** Breakdown of projects that fall into the “other category.”



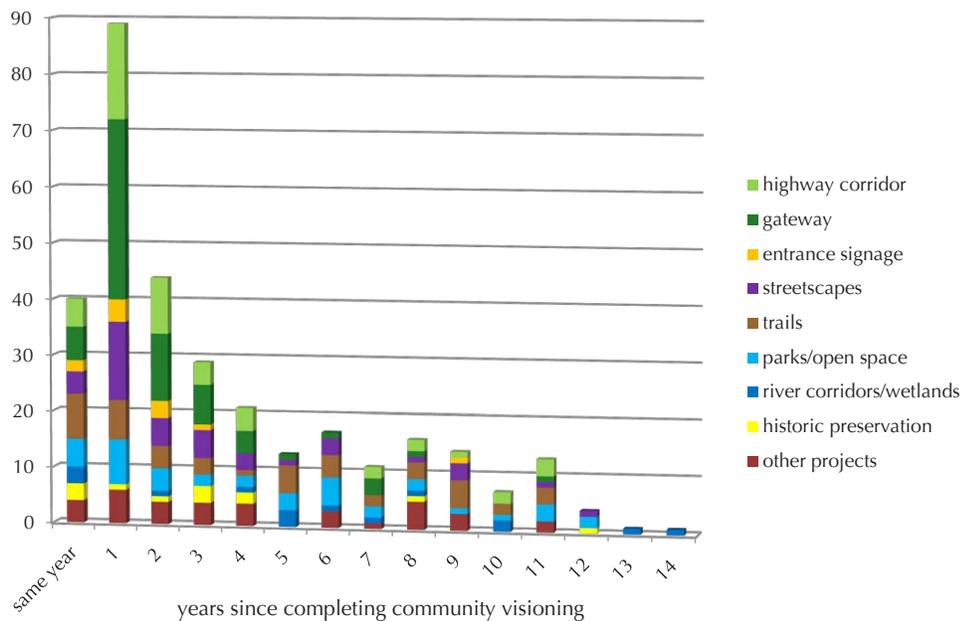
# Timing

Communities received the most funding for visioning projects from the state competitive grants six years after completing the visioning process. For non-visioning projects, most funding was received one year and eight years after completing the program (see figure 9).

**Figure 9:** Distribution of grant dollars awarded per year since the completion of visioning by visioning and non-visioning projects.



**Figure 10:** Distribution of the types of projects funded since the completion of visioning.



In terms of the number of projects, the most projects were funded one year after completing community visioning (see figure 10). The reason for this disparity is explained by the fact that the majority of projects funded one year after completing the program were highway corridors, gateways and entrance signage, which are relatively inexpensive compared to other types of projects such as trails and streetscaping. Furthermore, 96 percent of projects involving roadside planting were funded by the Iowa's Living Roadways Projects program, which has a maximum award of only \$15,000.



*The revitalization of historic McKinley City Park in Creston (above) was funded through REAP. The Luther College gateway prairie in Decorah (right) was funded by LRTF.*



## Summary

The results of this study provide insight into the impact that the visioning program has had on Iowa communities, as well as the nature of the enhancements that are funded. Since 1995, CAT, REAP, LRTF, Prairie Meadows and Iowa's Living Roadways Projects have funded 194 projects directly resulting from community visioning, as well as 56 projects not directly connected to visioning. These 250 projects were executed in 111 communities throughout the state.

The awards for visioning projects, along with the required matches for CAT and ILR projects, shows an estimated \$22,132,977 in funds generated. Non-visioning programs generated an estimated \$13,242,620 in awards and match.

Most of the communities included in this study used their grants to implement roadside planting projects, most of which were carried out in the first year after completing the visioning process. Streetscape and trail projects were also done.

## Implications

While this analysis of funding from five Iowa programs provides tangible evidence of the success of the Community Visioning Program, it only scratches the surface in terms of how much financial and human capital has been invested in project implementation. While it may be possible to identify every source of funding for every project in each participating community individually, such a task would be daunting, as would determining exactly how many volunteer hours have been contributed. However, this study and previous studies have provided a snapshot from which can be derived a better understanding of the overall impact of community visioning on the state of Iowa.

## References

The data used in this study was obtained from the following Web sites, accessed most recently in October 2009.

CAT: <http://www.iowalifechanging.com/documents/documents.aspx?id=28>

LRTF: <http://www.iowalivingroadway.com/Projects.asp>

REAP: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/reap/posters.html>

Prairie Meadows: [http://www.prairiemeadows.com/community\\_betterment.cfm](http://www.prairiemeadows.com/community_betterment.cfm)

## Acknowledgements

The Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program is sponsored by the Iowa Department of Transportation in partnership with Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development and Trees Forever, an Iowa-based, nonprofit organization with a mission to plant trees and care for the environment.



*Downtown streetscape plantings in Bancroft and gateway plantings and landscape in Shell Rock were funded by the ILR Projects Program.*

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