
Resilient Iowa Communities

2024 RIC-ognition Award Recipients



Center for Energy & Environmental Education (CEEE)
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0293
ceee.uni.edu/resilient-iowa-communities

The RIC-ognition Awards recognize communities that have taken meaningful action across the Resilient Iowa Communities (RIC) Best Practice Categories: Buildings & Energy, Land Use, Transportation, Environmental Management, Economics & Community Development, and Environmental Equity & Inclusion.

Communities earn Bronze, Silver, or Gold status based on the number and depth of completed actions.

This year, four organizations achieved RIC-ognition status across multiple categories:

- City of Ames
- City of Bloomfield
- Linn County
- City of Meservey



RIC-ognition Awards Ceremony at the Iowa State Capitol, January 21st, 2024

City of Ames

The City of Ames has been awarded gold status across all six Best Practice Categories.

From climate action planning and major LEED building upgrades, to a Complete Streets Program and 11 EV stations, establishment of the Ames Pollinator-Friendly Community Plan, and the completion of their Fair Housing Impediments Study, we are excited to recognize the many ways they have prioritized making Ames a more resilient and sustainable place to live.

Buildings and Energy - Gold

- Climate Action Plan accepted by City Council June 2023 based on 2018 GHG Inventory with plans to update spring 2025
- Multiple LEED buildings upgrades
- Rebates offered by municipal electric utility company

Land Use - Gold

- Ioway Creek Flood Mitigation Project
- Flood Watch Program
- Ames 2040 Comprehensive Plan
- Ames Pollinator-Friendly Community Plan 2023-2032
- Participation in Ames Regional Economic Alliance
- Ames Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO)

Transportation - Gold

- Ames Walk Bike Roll Plan (including equity analysis)
- Complete Streets Plan
- ADA Transition Plan, dedicated CIP program "Accessibility Enhancement"
- 11 public EV charging stations
- Reduced parking minimums

Environmental Management - Gold

- Woodland Management Plan
- Annual stream cleanup
- Facility energy use benchmarking in Energy Star Portfolio Manager
- Public Works stormwater utility
- Coal retired in 2016

Economics and Community Development - Gold

- Climate Action Plan
- Climate Vulnerability Assessment
- SolSmart Silver designation

Environmental Equity and Inclusion - Gold

- Ames Human Relations Commission

- Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area
- Fair Housing Impediments Study
- Annual affordable housing community input sessions.

City of Bloomfield

The City of Bloomfield has been awarded silver status in the Buildings & Energy, Transportation, and Environmental Management categories. They received over 5 facade grants to renovate buildings to improve efficiency in their historic downtown, completed a downtown sidewalk project featuring a paver filtration system on three sides of downtown and includes four bioretention cells, and have added several miles of trails for alternative transportation.

Bloomfield was also awarded gold status in the Economic & Community Development category by securing over 5 million dollars in grants for community improvement projects and completely renovated their aging community park.

Buildings & Energy - Silver

- Received five façade grants to renovate buildings in the downtown area, enhancing both their aesthetic appeal and energy efficiency.
- The downtown square holds a place on the National Historic Registry, adding cultural and historic value to these revitalization efforts.

Transportation - Silver

- Systematic resurfacing of Bloomfield's streets over a 5-year period, completing 85% of them so far. The project is on track for full completion in 2026.
- Bloomfield now benefits from over six miles of trails, providing convenient options for alternative transportation.

Environmental Management - Silver

- A wastewater treatment plant was built that uses a bacteria-based system to clean water before it flows into a nearby stream connected to the Fox River. The water is fully treated before it enters the stream, ensuring a clean contribution to the river system.
- Completed a downtown sidewalk project, funded in part by a Water Quality Initiative Grant. This project features a paver filtration system on three sides of downtown and includes four bioretention cells. These additions help slow water

runoff, reducing street flooding and pre-filtering water before it reaches the treatment plant, enhancing the city's flood resilience and water quality.

Economic & Community Development - Gold

- Significant strides in expanding outdoor recreation and broadband access, securing \$1.8 million in grants to bring these projects to life.
- Transformed the aging city park into a new \$500,000 facility, built a state-of-the-art outdoor basketball and pickleball court with a custom surface, extended our trail system by two miles, and renovated our swimming pool with new shade structures, locker rooms, an updated concrete deck, and refreshed pool surface with sandblasting and painting.
- Achieved full fiber optic coverage across our county, becoming the first county in Iowa to provide broadband access to every area. This upgrade has been invaluable for our growing community of remote workers and has greatly enhanced educational opportunities for both local schools and college students studying remotely

Linn County

The Linn County Sustainability Department has been awarded gold status in the Land Use and Economic & Community Development Categories.

Linn County has a land management plan as well as a water bond that allows for establishing additional conservation incentives, is actively involved with the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System, and has developed Critical Natural Resource Areas (CNRA) and environmental impacts are identified in the zoning code to direct development to areas without designated critical natural resources. In Economic & Community Development, Linn County has an established Sustainability and Resiliency Committee, completed a Climate Action Plan and has created a Resiliency Coordinator position jointly shared between Sustainability and the Emergency Management Agency. The county has also created a Renewable Energy Overlay Zoning District that allows the utility-scale-solar to be permitted more easily and a Food Systems Council and various partnerships to grow the program.

Land Use - Gold

- Developing and maintaining strong relationships with ECICOG, the Emergency Management Agency, and local municipalities.

- Actively involved with the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System rated at a 'Class 8'. Linn County maintains drainage channels and keeps culverts free of obstructions and debris. Linn County prohibits swellings to be constructed in the floodplain without a floodplain permit as outlined in an ordinance.
- Linn County has Critical Natural Resource Areas (CNRA) and environmental impacts identified in the zoning code. The intent of the CRNA areas is to direct development to areas without designated critical natural resources.
- Linn County Conservation has a land management plan and a water bond that allows for establishing additional conservation incentives.

Economic Development - Gold

- Sustainability and Resiliency Committee established in November of 2021
- Climate Action Plan completed
- Linn County created a Resiliency Coordinator position jointly shared between Sustainability and the Emergency Management Agency.
- Renewable Energy Overlay Zoning District that allows the utility-scale-solar to be permitted more easily.
- The county has a Food Systems Council and various partnerships to grow the program
- Linn County worked with the Emergency Management Agency to develop an All-Hazard Emergency Template for community organizations interested in assisting their communities during times of disaster.

City of Meservey

The City of Meservey has been awarded Bronze status under the Community & Economic Development category for the installation of their new town well. With a population of only 220 people, new infrastructure for the community has a significant impact on economic stability.

Economic Development - Bronze

- Creating jobs and economic sustainability through the installation of a new well for the city.