

September 18, 2017**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****PEARLS OF PROGRESS PROJECT CLOSER TO REALITY***Fund raising effort begins to fully fund four critical components of project*

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The Muscatine Pearls of Progress project is a step closer to reality with the announcement of a fund raising campaign aimed at making the project fully funded. The Muscatine Pearls of Progress project is actually four projects rolled into one.

The City of Muscatine announced this week that a fund specifically geared toward receiving public donations for the project has been established through the Finance Department.

The City of Muscatine, Muscatine County, and the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GMCCI) have joined forces to promote, develop, and implement the Muscatine Pearls of Progress Project that is designed to help make Muscatine a more attractive place to live, work, play, visit, and do business.

The Community Improvement Action Team (CIAT), a consortium of public and private individuals, has spearheaded the research and selection of the components to be included in a Community Attractions and Transportation (CAT) grant application to the Enhance Iowa Board. Four components were chosen for the overall project including the HNI Community Center & Musser Public Library, the Westside Trail, the Community Dog Park, and the Deep Lakes Park cabins.

The four selected components represent an \$8.09 million investment into the community. A total of \$7.05 million (87.2 percent of the total cost) has already been raised and the CIAT team has applied for a CAT grant from the state of Iowa which would add another \$500,000 to the total if awarded.

That leaves \$536,005 that still needs to be raised through private donations.

“These are four projects that will benefit the citizens of Muscatine and Muscatine County for years to come,” Rich Dwyer, senior vice president with Kent Corporation and a member of the CIAT, said.

Bundling multiple projects together into one single project has proven to be a successful strategy for Muscatine in maximizing community buy in and support. Strategies learned from the successful completion of the 2002 Pearl of the Mississippi Community Improvement Project were instrumental in the planning of the 2017 Pearls of Progress Project.

The \$9.62 million 2002 project included the construction of the Muscatine Aquatic Center, the Environmental Learning Center, the skate park at Musser Park, the Riverview Center in Riverside Park, and installation of period lighting downtown. Weed Park was also featured in the 2002 project with an extension of the trail network from the riverfront to Weed Park, improvements to the Rose Garden, renovations to the tennis courts, installation of new playground equipment, and enhancements to Weed Park Lagoon. The CAT program ultimately contributed \$1 million to the project.

The CIAT presented the four components of the 2017 Pearls of Progress Project to the CAT committee in July and will have a second presentation in October. The CAT committee will be looking for a fund raising plan and to see the strength of support from the citizens of Muscatine and Muscatine County in judging whether the project receives the funding.

One way that the community can rally behind and show support for the four projects is by sending a tax deductible gift of \$10 or more to the City of Muscatine. A flyer that contains instructions for making a donation to the project is available for download by clicking [here](#).

“We are looking to involve the citizens in this fund raising campaign,” Dwyer said. “It doesn’t matter whether it is \$10 or \$25 or more, the more people become involved in this campaign, the better our chances of receiving the state CAT grant.”

Those who choose to donate can specify which project the money should go towards. A donation to any of the four component project helps to leverage funds for all four projects.

HNI COMMUNITY CENTER & MUSSER PUBLIC LIBRARY

The HNI Community Center & Musser Public Library is a \$6.16 million project that will move the library from its current location into the former HNI corporate headquarters where they will be able to provide greatly enhanced opportunities for the citizens of Muscatine. Two of the biggest pluses for the move is that the former HNI headquarters is 25 percent larger than the present Musser Public Library and there are 109 parking spaces.

“That is 109 more spaces than we have now,” Bobby Fiedler, assistant director at the library, said.

In addition to serving as a gateway to the downtown area, the HNI Community Center and Musser Public Library will offer multiple meeting rooms for organizations, non-profit groups, and individuals to collaborate. An outdoor performance stage was added to the project but the cost was offset by a private donation.

Currently \$5.74 million has been pledged which leaves the project just \$420,000 short of being fully funded.

WESTSIDE TRAIL

A second project that is close to being fully funded is the development of the Westside Trail with an estimated cost of \$795,758. This approximately 1.75 mile trail would run from the Kent Stein Park trailhead to Discovery Park and complete a 15-mile trail network through the City of Muscatine connecting all of the Muscatine area major recreational amenities.

The Westside Trail would link a 3.5 mile network located in northwest Muscatine and a 4.5 mile trail that stretches from Deep Lakes Park along the Mississippi River through downtown to its eastern terminus at Solomon Road. The linked trail would significantly increase bike and pedestrian mobility while providing a big plus in the attraction of business and prospective employees to the area.

Currently \$625,000 has been pledged which leaves just \$170,758 need to fully fund the project.

MUSCATINE COMMUNITY DOG PARK

One of the most talked about projects for the past four years has been the creation of a Community Dog Park. The proposed off-leash dog park would be the first of its kind in the Muscatine area and would be located off of Houser Street across from Kent Stein Park on 14 city owned acres. Four separated fenced areas include a half acre area for senior dogs, a 1.5 acre area for small dogs, a three acre area for large dogs, and a training field attached to the large dog area that will be used for training, other structured events, and as a backup to the other fenced in areas when turf maintenance and recovery is needed.

The Muscatine Community Dog Park had an estimated price tag of \$243,081, but that cost was reduced by when planners decided to go with a phased approach with only the first phase included in the CAT application. The entrance shelter, two water fountains, six benches, trees, a shed, and four shelters were removed from the first phase but the enhancements will be added later. Another cost saving came from using surplus asphalt millings for the trail connector switching from concrete to asphalt for the parking lot.

Currently \$112,268 has been pledged for the project with an estimated price tag of \$134,329 which leaves \$22,061 needed to fully fund the project.

DEEP LAKES PARK CABINS

The fourth component of the Pearls of Progress project will be the building of four rentable cabins in Deep Lakes Park. These would be the first rentable cabins in Muscatine County and a major step in the ongoing development of Deep Lakes Park. The \$1.0 million project would build four cabins on Lake Ivy inside the park off of the Pettibone Avenue entrance and next to the Kent Stein Park to Deep Lakes Park trail that is currently being constructed. The cabins would sleep six to eight people, be open year round, and have all the modern amenities needed.

Currently \$500,000 has been pledged which leaves \$500,000 needed to fully fund the project.

[Pearls of Progress Flyer](#)

[City of Muscatine Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Pearls of Progress web site](#)

ABOUT THE CIAT

The CIAT is a long-standing committee devoted to the enhancement of Muscatine. The committee is comprised of key community stakeholders from the public sector, the business community, philanthropic and community service groups, and community organizations. The CIAT grew out of the successful efforts to revitalize Muscatine's riverfront. The CIAT has worked for several years to create a list of potential projects and then pared down that list to a manageable few. The determination of which components to incorporate into the overall project were based on those that had the greatest value to the community, those that have a grassroots interest that could be clearly documented, and those that best fit the criteria that the Enhance Iowa Board has for the Community Attractions and Transportation (CAT) program.

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