

Focus on Rebuild Iowa



3rd Quarter 1999 • Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Communities participating in Rebuild Iowa integrate local, state and federal resources to secure the economic and environmental benefits of energy efficiency.

Program Results

Measurable results achieved from 1996 - September 1999:

- 5 communities currently participating
- 243 building owners, with 920 buildings agreeing to implement improvements
- 361 energy audits completed
- \$9.5 million in identified improvements, with the potential to save:
- \$1,072,390 in cost savings annually
- 20,375 tons CO₂ avoided annually
- 52 tons of particulate avoided annually
- 448 tons SO_x avoided annually
- 40 tons NO_x avoided annually
- Create 242 job-years

Notable Achievements

The Center for Energy and Environmental Education (CEEE) at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls has been honored as a 1999 Iowa Energy Leadership Award winner. The awards are given annually by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to recognize outstanding innovations in energy efficiency and renewable energy. Along with its many environmental education initiatives, CEEE is the community coordinator for Rebuild Cedar Falls. Congratulations to CEEE!

Community Profile: Le Mars

Location: Northwest Iowa, approximately 25 miles northeast of Sioux City

Population: 9,435

Community Highlights: Wells' Blue Bunny; Floyd Valley Hospital; Sioux Tools (a division of Snap-On Tools); and the Le Mars Art Center

Goals for Rebuild Le Mars:

- To improve efficiency at a local college campus that was closed and purchased by the town
- To expand Rebuild Le Mars into a community-based program that promotes stewardship and achieves economic and environmental sustainability through energy-efficiency improvements

Coordinator: Scott Langel, city of Le Mars Administrator/Engineer. Langel is a Le Mars native and has served the city for 10 years.

In Progress: Le Mars joined Rebuild Iowa in the fall of 1998. The former Westmar College campus is the community's first focus for improvements. The city acquired the campus in 1997 to help the financially struggling school stay afloat. The college later closed, leaving the city 18 buildings to maintain and annual utility costs of approximately \$260,000 paid by Le Mars taxpayers. To reduce costs and make the buildings more attractive to potential buyers, Rebuild Le Mars is working to improve energy efficiency on the Westmar campus.

An Energy Efficiency Advisory Committee – including the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce executive director, a city administrator, a local bank loan officer, and other city employees – meets regularly to discuss Rebuild Le Mars. The committee has authorized energy analyses for most buildings on campus, as well as a study on the cost of decentralizing the heating plant. The analyses should be completed this fall and the city is investigating ways to finance the identified improvements.

Ensuring building efficiency is part of a larger community effort to redevelop the Westmar campus. The city is currently leasing several of the buildings for various uses, including a studio for a local artist, a new church congregation facility, and a family YMCA. Several housing complexes also have been sold to individuals. The city is actively seeking opportunities for other buildings on campus, targeting groups that can create positive, long-term contributions to Le Mars.

While the Westmar campus is the initial focus of Rebuild Le Mars, the advisory committee is exploring opportunities for the rest of the community. Energy analyses have been authorized for several city facilities, with others expected soon. Rebuild Le Mars will partner with MidAmerican Energy to offer commercial and residential energy-efficiency programs. The committee is also considering a tree-planting program, an Energy Store for local citizens to purchase equipment, a water conservation program, and expansion of the local recycling program.

Recent Events

Peer-on-Peer Exchanges are one way Rebuild Iowa community coordinators share ideas. The coordinators, along with DNR staff, travel to different communities each year for a day of training, community tours and peer exchange. Host communities show off their programs, and visiting coordinators gain insight from each unique situation. In September 1999, Rebuild Le Mars Coordinator Scott Langel hosted a tour on the 44-acre Westmar College campus. After seeing the campus first-hand, the group was able to offer several marketing suggestions and potential uses for the buildings. This type of exchange gives coordinators new ideas on how to eliminate barriers and improve their own programs.

What's Next?

The DNR has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select new Rebuild Iowa communities. The RFP, which was sent to more than 3,750 organizations and individuals across the state, asks interested communities to outline how Rebuild Iowa fits their goals, as well as how the program will be developed and organized locally. Since any local organization can manage a community's Rebuild program, the mailing included: chambers of commerce, main street program managers, county supervisors, school superintendents, local economic development offices, city administrators, municipal and investor-owned utilities, and key stakeholders representing a variety of associations.

The DNR will directly market Rebuild Iowa to potential new communities prior to the proposal deadline. Meetings will be held with key members of target communities to discuss program benefits and how it can be organized locally.

Proposals are due October 29, 1999, and the DNR expects to announce its selection by the end of November.

For More Information

If you would like more information on Rebuild Iowa, please contact Kimberly Baxter at (515) 281-6486, e-mail: kbaxter@max.state.ia.us