

THE 7th 2 INITIATIVE

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



For most of our 20 years as Council Bluffs' lead community development corporation we've done things so well, many of our 60,000 residents think these things 'just happened' either by the private market or perhaps the city. The RISE building just rose up from bare dirt magically on its own, farmers and craftsmen organized themselves and decided, 'Lets meet at a park on Thursdays'. And still we hear from the public and business leaders alike, "will 'someone' do 'something' about building X, house Y". **We've always been and are continually striving to be that 'someone'.**

A new CHI Administrator took us up on an offer this past November to tour our next redevelopment block. Her comment after hearing about our local economy, rent levels, barriers to redevelopment and 5 year timeline was "I had no idea and am amazed how you see the world and a project in 3, 5, 7 year increments." Whereas, she must have to think almost instantaneously in her field of healthcare.

2019 involved a lot a strategic thinking and stumping for our redevelopment arm with projects that will lead to higher impact in 2020-2021. We want to thank the Iowa West Foundation for sharing a vision and trusting us with these strategic moves realizing our pipeline was broken and we should be setting the bar higher than a single storefront grant here or there. *"Remember if you play small, you stay small"* and day 1 we had a bigger vision. We were ambitious to go for three neighboring downtown sites with huge development barriers that no private developer could do on their own: with no New Market Tax Credit tool available as it once was, rents at \$1.20 psf instead of the needed \$1.45 psf, floodplain challenges, and rising construction costs. This site and these challenges are why we exist. It fit the original vision of the Iowa West Foundation when they developed the concept of this merged organization, an organization that could leverage private, local, state, and federal funds to implement community plans in order to make Council Bluffs a desirable place to live, work, and play.

As an organization we were at our peak nearly fifteen years prior when we had a five year commitment of the Downtown Revitalization Fund to keep our development pipeline strong (projects in Acquisition, Financing, Construction). When I was hired two years ago, we had one project under construction and no others in the other two categories. We had to catch up. Now in 2020, we have sites under control to match the mass and scaling success of our 100 Block projected to be completed

in half the time. The Downtown Fund has been recapitalized for much needed gap financing for outside developers. We are following a successful national model to program events around our developments and public engagement.

I also heard, will "someone do something about slum and blighted properties but at a neighborhood single family home level?" We listened. We have always been a very agile organization addressing different community needs at hand and addressing these needs in a creative fashion. After months of collecting data, conversations around that data, and presenting a vision to increase housing revitalization, we were awarded a generous grant by the Southwest Iowa Foundation to cover shortfalls on acquisition and renovation on that 'worst house on the block.' 2019 was not just staying the course and doing 1-2 units here or there, but taking risk and a leap of faith to create a foundation and umbrella for dozens of community partners. We saw this almost immediately with our short-term efforts under our quality of life events and programs with the farmers market, Shamrock Shuffle, and BIKE/BLOCKtober. Our organization created true collaborative partners for CreekTop Gardens, Rock the Block with dozens private and public groups, and the 500 Block with nearly nine different sources of financing.

What I am most excited about is that our brand and program of work have 'woken up' our citizen base here in this community. We've all heard, sometime or another, the criticism that Council Bluffs is a town of 60 instead of 60,000 with only a select few involved with every board and decision. Our mission has now resonated with many and is finding its way into every home, business, school, and even church sermon.

We still have a ways to go to educate on the complexities of this work, to sustain our efforts in a consistent manner, and to keep the pace to engage all 60,000 that already live here. We strive to encourage residents of Council Bluffs to become a 'Yes we can!' community; realizing it all starts with a vision, teamwork, trust, a positive attitude, and strategic framework to keep our long and short term pipeline healthy.

I personally want to thank our incredible network of dedicated staff, Board of Directors, community partners, and funders that enable us to dream and execute on not only making properties and people their best but at large, the Council Bluffs community.



Sheryl Garst, CEO

We had a website redesign! the712initiative.org

Now all three areas of focus (redevelopment, quality of life, and neighborhood activation), and all that goes along with the various events and programs, can be found on our website.

MISSION

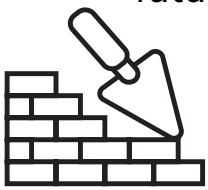
The 712 Initiative is aimed at improving the economic vitality of Council Bluffs through investments in the built environment, activating public spaces and delivering programs that increase social engagement and healthy lifestyles.

VISION

That Council Bluffs is a dynamic healthy community where families and businesses choose to live, work and play.

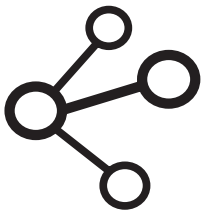
STRATEGIC PLAN

The 712 Initiative will enhance the quality of life for both current and future residents by prioritizing efforts to achieve the following goals:



BUILD

increase the variety of quality housing and commercial stock in Council Bluffs



CONNECT

increase social connectedness of residents in Council Bluffs



INVEST

attraction of new property investment in the community, especially through the introduction of new developers



ENERGIZE

enhance community life and well-being



ATTRACT

attraction of new professionals and residents in the community



ENGAGE

increase and create sustainable civic engagement



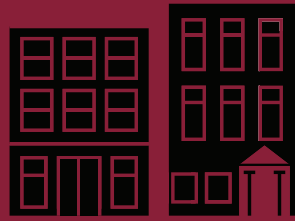
SUSTAIN

increase partnerships with the public and private sector while lessening the burdens of government

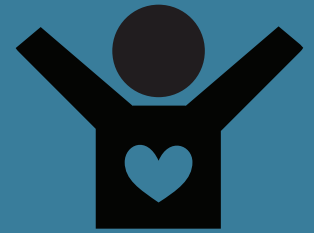
BIG WINS FOR 2019

As Council Bluffs' lead place-making agency, The 712 Initiative focuses on the community's existing assets by amplifying the built environment while eliminating blighted areas in order to stimulate the local economy, activities and wellness.

Redevelopment



Quality of Life



THE 712
INITIATIVE



Neighborhood Activation

Redevelopment

1. Official funding of \$600,000 in Brownfield Tax Credits kickoffs of the redevelopment of the 500 Block
2. Creation and funding of the 712 Housing Revitalization Program which will renovate 25 single family housing units between 2020-2024
3. Assist new developers get antiquated to the community through a dozen on-site visits and inquiry responses
4. Downtown Revitalization Fund gap financing program was recapitalized and projected to leverage at least \$3 million in public and private funds
5. Organized and led community's first Annual Housing Summit with 130 attendees

Neighborhood Activation

1. Led five neighborhood walkability projects and events to being completed
2. 40+ Block Party Reservations
3. Backyard Movie Program Launched
4. 100 one-on-one neighborhood interviews completed and mapped community housing data
5. Over 1,982 volunteer hours donated by community members

Quality of Life

1. A record breaking 3,920 pounds of trash cleared out of the community during Clean Sweep
2. Largest Shamrock Shuffle in history with 450 runners
3. Over 11,000 served at Farmers Market Council Bluffs throughout the season
4. Largest BIKetober event with 175 participants
5. 150 student gardeners engaged at CreekTop Gardens throughout summer

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Secured **\$1.78 million** for
Housing Revitalization Program and Rock the Block

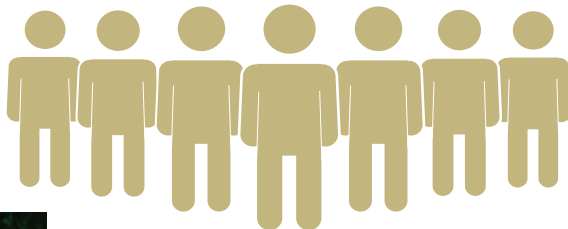


Infused **\$53,831**
back into the community through
Neighborhood Walkability Projects

9,566
total followers
across social
media

citizens engaged through
events and programs:

28,897



\$48,938

saved through volunteer work



740 community members
volunteered their time

Recapitalized
\$1 million
into Downtown
Revitalization
Fund

26%
growth on
social media



+ 1,230
contacts added
to email list

2019 events and programs

Adopt-A-Street
Backyard Movie Night
BIKEtober in the Bluffs
BLOCKtober Fest
Block Party Trailer
Celebrate CB
Celebration at Mile Zero
Clean Sweep
CreekTop Gardens
Farmers Market Council Bluffs
Kanesville Tinley Neighborhood Eggstravaganza
Lincoln Dell Movie Nights
March Into Spring
Shamrock Shuffle
Shoe Recycling Drive
Winterfest Makers Village

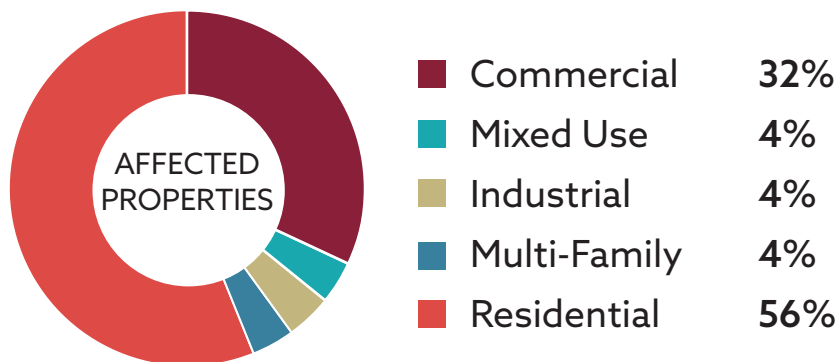
QUARTER 1

Indian Creek floodplain review. In January we engaged FYRA Engineering and HGM Associates Inc. to review the Flood Insurance Study along Indian Creek.

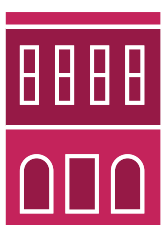
Updated data and modeling methods may significantly reduce the floodplain in many areas, greatly benefiting businesses and residents.

Nearly \$200 million of community property cannot be renovated/improved upon over 50% of the assessed value.

Currently 56% of the properties affected by the Indian Creek floodplain restrictions are single family residential with an average assessed value of \$67,000 leaving little room for improvement allowances.



Due to annual floodplain premiums, anywhere from **\$275,000 to \$2 million** is taken away from our local economy annually.



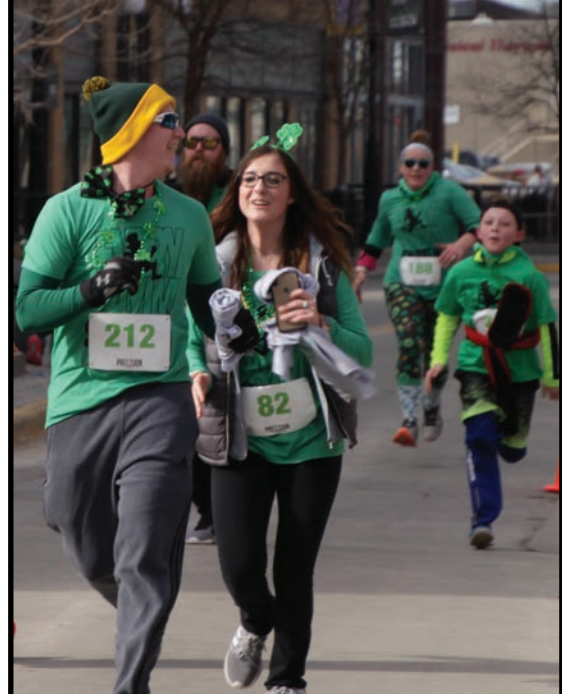
identified
1,100+
properties
impacted by
Indian Creek
flood plain

Record breaking Shamrock Shuffle. Over 450 participants came to the 100 Block to celebrate this fun 5K. This year brought a new addition of a street party; complete with live music, face painting and a photo booth.

Free access to seeds and gardening experts. In partnership with Sherbondy's Garden Center, Master Gardeners of Pottawattamie County, Iowa Prairie Network and many more, over **300 Council Bluffs families** experienced our inaugural seed share and learned more about gardening in a fun environment.

Cut the red tape and costs for neighborhood block parties. In partnership with the city, we've revised the Council Bluffs street closure policy to make it easier for all neighborhoods who use our Block Party Trailer to throw a proper block party.

100 Block completed. The 100 Block became fully built out with the completion of the Rise Building. Jefferson's Lounge filled the vacant gallery space in Hughes Irons building.



62 ZIP Codes
represented at the
Shamrock Shuffle



463 seed
packets shared
with community

Changes to the farmers market. Started the 10th season of Farmers Market Council Bluffs with a big change of a closed 1st Avenue. This allowed a safer place for our vendors and patrons while increasing the ability to engage more people through activities and programming in the park.

Several special events were combined with the market throughout the season to better engage young families. These activities included:

Painting a Pot Superhero Market Dad Nail Art Story Time with the Library	Bike Parade Wellness Bash Abraham Lincoln Orchestra Pumpkin Painting
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The market also hosted some of the most talented musicians in the metro area throughout the market season including four past Omaha Entertainment & Arts Award Winners and three past nominees.

12 local musicians featured at farmers market



3,025 pairs of shoes saved from landfill

3,920 lbs of trash cleaned up



Revitalized neighborhood traditions. With our help, the Kanesville Tinley Neighborhood Association hosted its largest community Easter egg hunt to date. Over **200 new residents** engaged, and our neighborhood coordinator made a eggstrodinary Easter bunny.

712 team complete. Hired Lynn Dittmer, Director of Redevelopment

Cleaned up Council Bluffs. More than **300 volunteers** collected 3,920 pounds of trash from the community during Clean Sweep. The most collected in the history of the event.

Secured funds for van wrap. Through an expanded Pottawattamie Gives! campaign we were able to **quadruple** the donations from 2018, securing funds for a branded wrap for our new van.

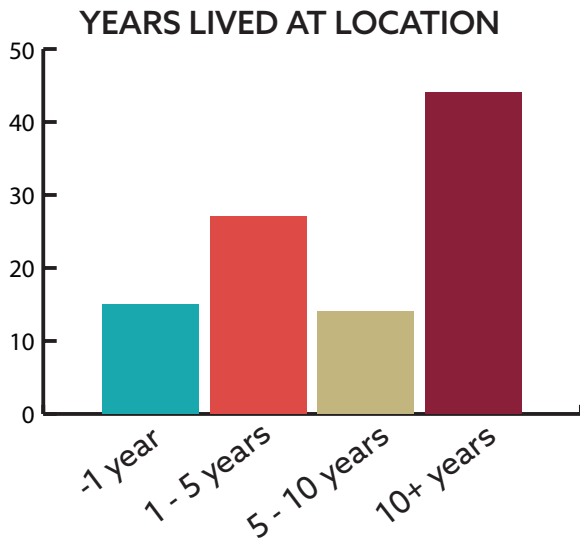
Backyard Movie Night launched. Council Bluffs residents can now check out the equipment needed (except the popcorn) to host a movie night for all their neighbors. Another tool to help neighborhoods build relationships and community.

Legislation to improve housing. The 712 Initiative partnered with Senator Dawson to draft land bank legislation that creates a tool for governmental entities or nonprofits that get vacant, abandoned, and tax delinquent properties back into productive use faster.



QUARTER 3

West CB Interviews complete. We asked 100 residents living in West CB about their feelings on their neighborhood so we can better program around the communities concerns and wants.



The most common concerns were:

- a lack of social connectedness
- property upkeep
- homeownership ratio per block
- flooding

With this information in mind, our team has created a home-improvement program called Rock the Block to infuse \$400,000 back into the community.

Launching in the 2020, the program will aim to build community while assisting residents with needed repairs and maintenance to make their homes safe, accessible, comfortable, and eye-catching.



2,500 residents



celebrated mile zero
at Bayliss Park

Housing conditions mapped. Created a GIS based housing data resource for the community. This guided development of \$1.75 million worth of housing programming around those conditions.

Celebrated 150 years. Partnered with PACE, the UP Museum, Iowa West Foundation, the 100 Block, and City of Council Bluffs to bring to life Celebrate at Mile Zero, an event to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the transcontinental railroad.

Engaging youth at the garden. CreekTop Gardens engaged nearly 150 middle school and elementary students through a summer learning partnership with Council Bluffs Community School District. Students learned about gardening and agriculture through collaborative partnerships with the Master Gardeners of Pottawattamie County, Iowa Prairie Network and The Big Garden.

Art for the people, by the people. Assisted in the installation of the Gibraltar Neighborhood Association mural at South 4th and Worth Street. The mural is a collage of many current and historic people and places of Council Bluffs and designed by a GNA resident.



28
workshops
at CreekTop
Gardens

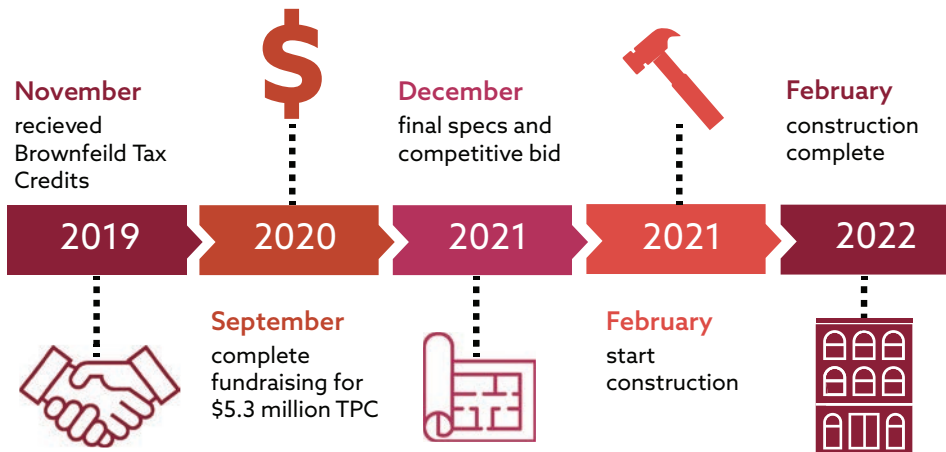
combined **49**
images to make
Gibraltar mural



QUARTER 4

Brownfields award kicks off redevelopment. \$600,000 in Brownfield Tax Credits (State of Iowa) is first committed funding to redevelop 530 W Broadway into **15 residential units** and **6,100 SF of commercial space**, bringing a **313% increase** to tax base.

530 W Broadway, a very visible landmark of the community, has been underutilized for at least the past 30 years. Redevelopment of the building will be the start of bringing life and activity to the west entrance of downtown Council Bluffs.



* The 100 Block redevelopment consisting of 76 units lasted 13 years (2006-2019) and the 500 Block is projected to be done in half that time.

500 Block Redevelopment Projected Impact

530 & 510 W Broadway | 12 Scott St

\$5,352,000
new taxable value

6,178
commercial SF renovated

116
housing units created

113%
potential increase
to tax base through
housing program



New October traditions. Had 175 bike riders join us for BIKEtober in the Bluffs which was followed by the new event BLOCKtober Fest, Council Bluffs first of its kind Bavarian festival.

Housing Summit. 712 and US Bank partnered to brought together 130 regional stakeholders to focus on current housing conditions, market needs, and next steps for home ownership within our community.

Vacant lot transformation. The Bayliss Neighborhood Association officially opened Baldwin Court Commons, re-purposing a vacant lot at South 8th Street and 1st Avenue to become a community space; complete with a walking track, school bus shelter, a little free library and picnic area.

Housing Revitalization Program. Secured \$1 million line of credit from American National Bank to purchase, completely renovate, and sell 5 owner occupied homes in 2020.

Recapitalizing programs. Awarded \$1 million from Iowa West Foundation for Downtown Revitalization Fund to continue to implement the vision of the Downtown Council Bluffs Plan through gap financing for projects. It is projected to leverage at least \$3 million in public and private funds.

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Iowa West Foundation



Kristen Blum
2020 Board Chair

As we enter our 5th year as The 712 Initiative, we are filled with excitement for the coming year, in large part because of the accomplishments and strides made in 2019.

While not all the day-to-day work of The 712 Initiative is visible to the public, we have a tremendous team of bright and dedicated professionals who are passionate about making our community a place where we live vibrantly.

We often have to remind ourselves to take the long view in the work we do. Building relationships, assembling assets and resources, and developing plans with the input of diverse perspectives is both challenging and fulfilling.

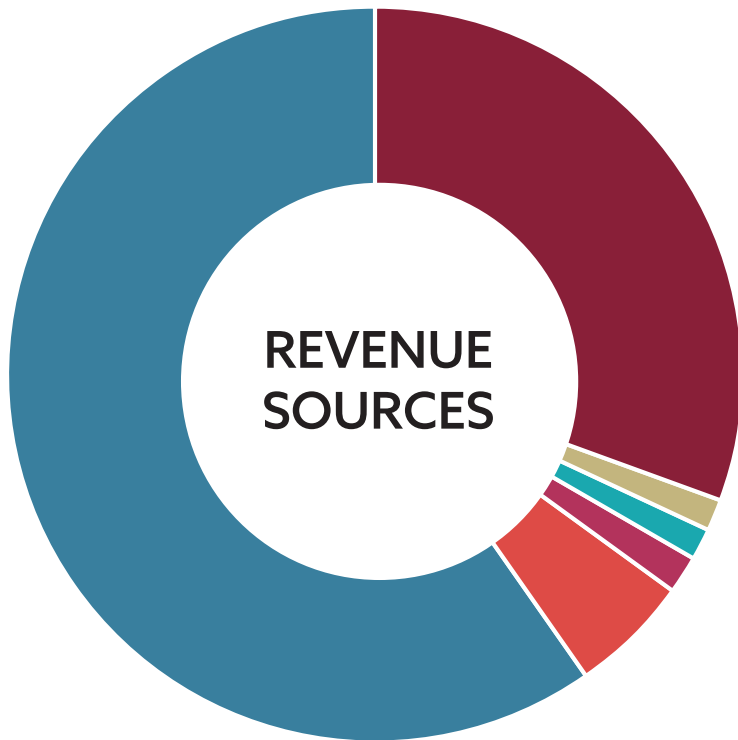
We saw our programs, events and work with neighborhoods gain momentum in 2019; and we continued building critical partnerships, funding and plans to make progress on the redevelopment of the 500 Block of West Broadway: the entry from the west to Downtown Council Bluffs.

We also assembled the final elements to launch our new Housing Revitalization Program. Through this program, we will acquire and renovate deteriorated homes and get them into the hands of single family home owners in order to stabilize and build up our neighborhoods one house, one block at a time.

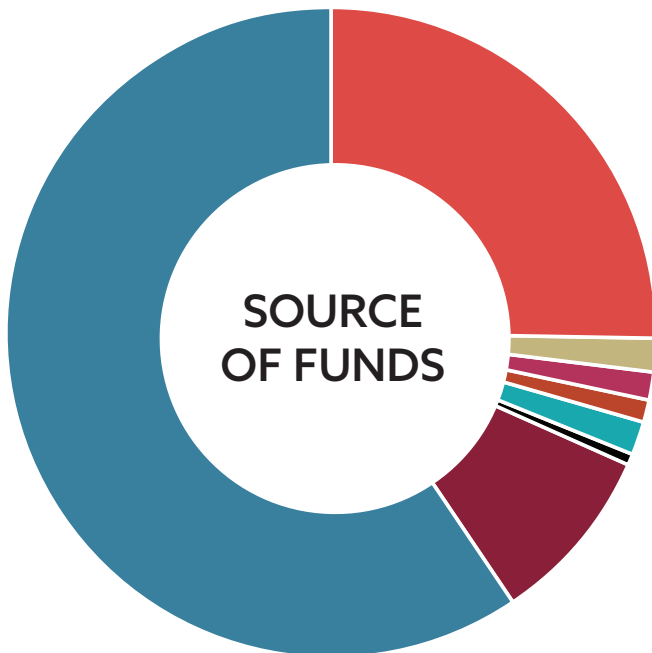
I am so proud to be a part of The 712 Initiative. On behalf of our Board of Directors, I extend our sincere appreciation for the support from our many partners and community members. We look forward to what we can accomplish together in 2020!



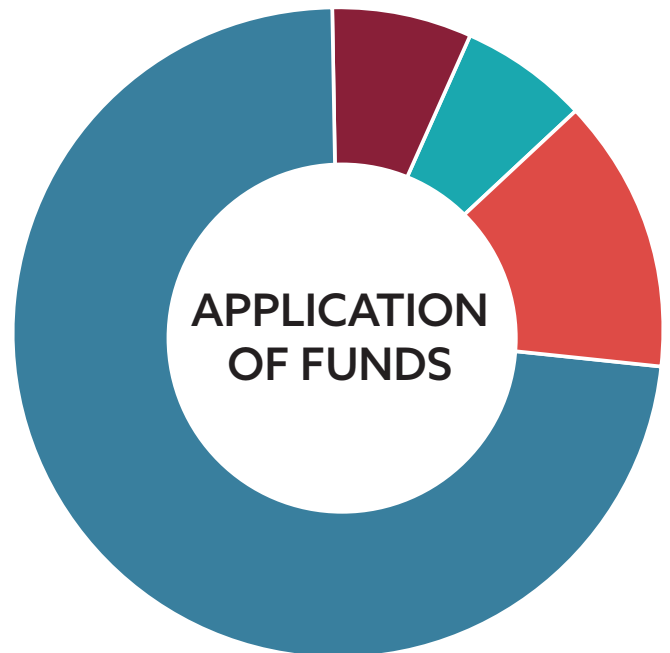
FY 2019 FUNDING



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION	\$1,357,341
GRANTS/DONATIONS	\$702,267
SPONSORSHIPS	\$28,240
EVENT PARTICIPATION FEES	\$31,901
HOUSING/COMMERCIAL RENTAL	\$36,590
LAND SALES	\$125,000



State	59%
Foundations	25%
Rent	2%
Event Participation	2%
Sponsorships	1%
Private Donations	2%
In-Kind	1%
Other	8%



Program Expenses	86%
Redevelopment	73%
Quality of Life	7%
Neighborhood Activation	6%
Administration	14%



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The 712 Initiative is a proud Iowa West Foundation Initiative

