

GREATER Council Bluffs

IOWA

EXPERIENCE
COUNCIL BLUFFS'
SCENIC SERENITY

*Imagine
the Future*

Events invite
residents to share
their dreams
for community

Celebrating
CREATIVITY

DISCOVER A THRIVING AND VIBRANT
ARTISTIC COMMUNITY



plus
5 REASONS
TO MOVE TO THIS
DIAMOND IN THE
BLUFF



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Here's what our residents love about our community. We think you will too!



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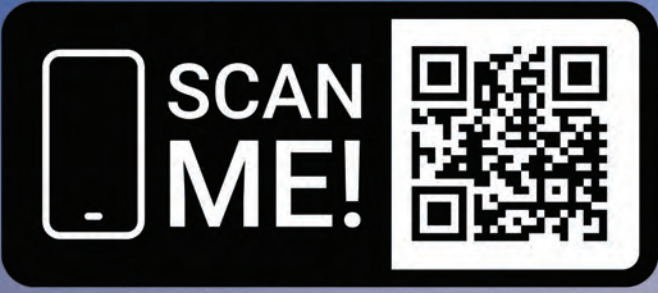
The welcoming feeling

It's a big small town, with a rich history.

Community feel and recreational activities

History & heritage





**UNLIKE ANYWHERE ELSE.
ON PURPOSE.**

Council Bluffs is not just a city; it's a community that cares. With top-notch schools, safe neighborhoods, and a welcoming atmosphere, it's the perfect place to raise a family.



Photo Credit: City of Council Bluffs

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Annual Summerfest at River's Edge
Photo Courtesy of the City of Council Bluffs

livability.com/council-bluffs

See what's happening online



Find Your Place

There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing a new place to live. We have 16 questions you should ask yourself before making this life-changing decision. livability.com/find-your-next-place



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GREATER Council Bluffs

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Diamonds in the Bluff

FIVE REASONS TO MOVE TO COUNCIL BLUFFS ◦ *By Amy Antonation*

From free public Wi-Fi and fun community events to outdoor activities and historic and artistic exhibits, Council Bluffs boasts a long list of positive qualities that retain residents and attract visitors. Eager to learn more? Here are five reasons you should move to Council Bluffs.

1) Free Connectivity

Last year marked a major milestone for BLink, a free community Wi-Fi network for Council Bluffs Community School District (CBCSD) students and city residents. Its coverage area measures more than 20 square miles, reaching more than 40,000 people in all CBCSD buildings as well as many neighborhoods and outdoor spaces. And it's still expanding: It's currently being rolled out to the city's Lewis Central Community School District.

2) Outdoor Offerings

No matter the season, there are outdoor activities aplenty here. Hit the links at one of the handful of local fairways in the spring – there are also courses for mini golf and disc golf – and during the summer, take in a performance at Stir Concert Cove, a 4,000-guest venue that brings in performing acts in a variety of musical genres. Ditmars Orchard & Vineyard is the perfect autumn apple-picking spot, and while there, visitors can enjoy a glass of apple cider, hard cider or wine made with the orchard's fruit. Just 20 minutes outside the city, Mt. Crescent Ski Area offers affordable



skiing, sledding, snowboarding and lessons from December through March. And, throughout the year, explore the region's more than 40 miles of hiking and biking trails.

3) Plenty of Fun

There's always a party happening in Council Bluffs. Celebrate CB, held in May, is a week filled with community events that culminates with a carnival and parade, and the annual Summerfest at River's Edge offers family-friendly activities like face painting, pickleball and an after-dark drone light show. During the summer months, Fire Hydrant Parties, where kids can cool off by running through portable splash pads, are held around the city. In the fall, various Oktoberfest celebrations bring out bier, and Winterfest kicks off the holiday season in November with a lighting ceremony and an appearance by the Clauses.

4) Past Tense Pastimes

History buffs love the city's historic locations and museums. Union Pacific Railroad Museum, which is located downtown, offers tours for school-age

children and adults. (Who wouldn't be intrigued by the Scams, Scandals and Railroad Crime tour or the Bespattered with Blood: Death and Medicine on the Railroad tour?) Railroad pioneer Grenville Dodge's Victorian mansion is also open to the public.

Other great spots to explore include the Lewis and Clark Monument Scenic Overlook, which offers great views of the Missouri River and serves as a tribute to the explorers' 1804 meeting with the Indigenous Otoe and Missouri tribes. Additionally, the region's Historic Squirrel Cage Jail is a rare example of a revolving jail from the late 1800s.

5) All About the Arts

Pottawattamie Arts, Culture and Entertainment is upping the arts ante in Council Bluffs by strengthening, developing and promoting arts, cultural and historical institutions and organizations as well as activities in the region. Plus, it has formed alliances with performance partners like the Chanticleer Community Theater and Kaneshville Symphony Orchestra. [Learn More](#)



No Bluffing

Council Bluffs offers authentic experiences seasoned with small-town charm

It's hard to beat the quality of life in Council Bluffs. The region is buzzing with great job opportunities and plenty of things to do, yet it boasts a laid-back, small-town vibe, where the locals are friendly, the community is safe and the cost of living won't break the bank.

More Homebuying Power

Council Bluffs maintains a diverse and affordable housing stock.

“The community offers a great variety of housing types and price points starting with some small condos or starter homes in the \$150,000 to \$175,000 range,” says Mark Hanwright, partner at Heartland Properties Inc., a real estate developer. “Newer neighborhoods are available in the \$350,000 to \$500,000 range, which include acreage living on the outskirts of town all the way up to palatial

homes and golf course communities.”

The New Zealand native met his wife, Jennifer, while attending Drake University in Des Moines. The couple lived in Chicago for a while, but in 2010, they moved their family to Council Bluffs, Jennifer's hometown.

“We now live on Jennifer's family farm (it has been in her family for over 175 years) in the original farmhouse, which we restored in 2018,” he says.

Hanwright's employer is actively adding to the region's housing inventory.

“Currently, we are working on several development projects that include multifamily, single-family and commercial uses within the Council Bluffs area,” he says.



Excellent affordability and great job opportunities are among the key reasons people choose Council Bluffs.

COST OF LIVING IN COUNCIL BLUFFS

\$199,302

Average home value (July 2023)

25,282

Number of households

27,262

Number of housing units

64%

Owner-occupied units

36%

Renter-occupied units

Source: Zillow, Census Reporter

Great Careers

In addition to being friendly on your wallet, Council Bluffs also offers plenty of ways for residents to make a living. The region is home to several industries, like advanced manufacturing, gaming, education, health care, pork and beef packaging, and technology. Plus, the area is a great place for people to launch and grow a business, as it boasts community support and plenty of helpful resources.

“Council Bluffs and the surrounding metro areas offer endless opportunities for employment, including Fortune 500 employers as well as local family-owned businesses,” Hanwright says.

Companies in the area include a Google data center, Conagra Brands, MidAmerican Energy, Black Hills Energy and American Games.



Vivian Kvam (right) and Machaela Clark are co-founders of Tandem Works.

PHOTOS: FROM TOP: BILL WHITE; TANDEM WORKS

“*The community offers a great variety of housing types and price points starting with some small condos or starter homes ...*”

– Mark Hanwright, Heartland Properties Inc.



“You can earn a great income while also enjoying an affordable cost of living,” he says.

Ample Activities

After work and on weekends, residents can find plenty to do in Council Bluffs.

In fact, the city always has something on the calendar, hosting special events and festivals throughout the year. The region is home to three casinos (Harrah’s Council Bluffs, Ameristar Casino Council Bluffs and Horseshoe Council Bluffs), and Stir Concert Cove at Harrah’s is a popular venue to catch live music. Plus, Mid-America Center, a multipurpose venue, hosts concerts as well as sporting events and other entertainment options.

The Historic 100 Block, located downtown, is home to plenty of nightlife and locally owned dining

options. Hanwright says a few of his local favorites include 712 Eat + Drink, Barley’s bar and Lincoln’s Pub.

“Special events occur regularly on the 100 Block, like Bike Night, where hundreds of motorcycles gather for outdoor entertainment,” says Vivian Kvam, who is the co-founder of local marketing firm Tandem Works and a transplant to the region.

Kvam was born in Nevada and has lived in many places around the Midwest. She says she came to Council Bluffs to start her own business, and it’s a move she doesn’t regret.

“I love the area and the community here,” she says. “It’s friendly and supportive with room for involvement.”

Sports & Rec

Speaking of involvement, Council Bluffs has much to offer by way of sports and recreational assets.

The Iowa West Sports Plex provides a variety of indoor and outdoor sports facilities for youth and adults. This 75,000-square-foot indoor turf facility regularly hosts youth and adult league soccer, baseball and softball, with potential for flag football, rugby, lacrosse and ultimate Frisbee.

Hanwright says the area’s parks and outdoor recreation options – like the splash pad at Fairmount Park – are not to be missed.

“Our county recently purchased and revamped a local ski hill, and there are a lot of hunting, hiking and camping areas, plus Lake Manawa [State Park] and four golf courses,” Hanwright says.

Kvam adds that the city is working to further enhance the community.

“The city continues to develop and expand its offerings to cater to the diverse interests of its residents and visitors,” Kvam says.

– Val Hunt Beerbower



Fairmount Park
Splash Pad

Cost of Living *Diaries*

A RESIDENT SHARES HER INSIGHTS ON LIVING IN COUNCIL BLUFFS ◦ *By Rebecca Treon*

Council Bluffs is a city in Southwest Iowa that offers the best of the Midwest at an affordable price. Here, you'll find fun community events, plenty of outdoor recreation, superb shopping and dining options, great jobs – the list could go on and on. To learn more about Council Bluffs and why locals love to call it home, Livability chatted with lifelong resident Trisha Beccard. Here's what she had to say about living and working in Council Bluffs:

How would you describe Council Bluffs?

Because we're so close to Omaha, we have the luxuries of a bigger city. Council Bluffs has [over 62,000] residents, and the Omaha region has about a million, so we have a smaller, hometown-type feel. We have an agricultural emphasis here – it's a real Midwest, feel-good type of community.

What free/low-cost outdoor entertainment options are here?

We have lots of trails and free recreational areas, like the Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park, where there are constantly summer festivals, free music and kid activities that bring families together and give them something fun to do.

How affordable is housing in Council Bluffs?

We just did a huge renovation on a historic building that added some affordable housing options, so on the low end, if you qualify, your rent will be about \$650, and on the higher end, it's \$1,400 a month for a two-bedroom apartment. Mortgage wise, you're looking at between \$180,000 on the low end and all the way up to multimillion-dollar homes.

What is grocery shopping like in Council Bluffs?

We're really lucky because we have Hy-Vee, which are employee-owned stores, and they do a great job of supporting small businesses. Each store has its own nutritionist/registered dietitian and puts out a monthly magazine that has recipes in it created by the staff, so if you have an article about how to grill the perfect steak, it will be written by the butcher at one of the stores.

What's your favorite restaurant in Council Bluffs, and how much would it be for two?

We recently opened the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center in a historic district. They renovated the historic Harvester building and put in farm-to-table



pop-up restaurants that run out of the Kitchen Council. They invite the public to come in once a month with no charge. They host live bands, and a different chef is featured.

I also love Legends Café for breakfast. It's been around forever, and it's kind of a hole in the wall, but it's always busy. It's probably under \$25 for two people for breakfast. My order is usually

bacon, eggs, hash browns and toast. I have a lot of meetings at a bar called Barley's. It's truly a staple of Council Bluffs. It's like [the television sitcom] "Cheers" – you go there, and everybody knows everybody. 🍷🍺

find more online

Learn more about the vast amenities this city has to offer at livability.com/council-bluffs.



IMAGINING *the* FUTURE

Events invite residents to share their dreams for community

What do you love about your community? Where do you spend your time? How could the place you call home be better?

These are questions the Iowa West Foundation asked Pottawattamie County residents during its recent Imagine Hours sessions. The organization uses these sessions to help set its priorities, and the community's responses are already positively impacting the region.

"Going into any public listening sessions, there's always a risk of unleashing a flood of criticism about irritants like potholes, but that didn't happen," says Iowa West Foundation President and CEO Brenda Mainwaring. "Instead, we asked, 'What do you love about

your community?' The response was remarkable. Our community has so many points of pride. When we asked what would make this place even better, we heard recurring themes relating to housing and workforce education."

Stronger Communities

"We all want to live in a community where we are included and appreciated. The best ideas for how to make a community a place where people love to live are going to come from the people who already call it home," Mainwaring says. "[The Iowa West Foundation] can expand and develop those ideas to strengthen our communities' love of Southwest Iowa."

The foundation, which provides grants for community projects

by government entities and nonprofit organizations, is one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the Midwest. It is funded by investment income and the Iowa West Racing Association, which receives contracted fees paid by local casino operators – Ameristar, Harrah's and Horseshoe. Mainwaring says the foundation is already implementing residents' ideas and suggestions.

For example, Iowa West retooled its support for education to focus on job readiness to meet the needs of rural and urban students.

"And we have convened local experts to help us understand housing needs across the spectrum of near-homeless to comfortably housed," Mainwaring says. "Those conversations have already led to two new programs

that we hope will address some of the gaps that our experts identified.”

Talent Pipeline

Matt Mancuso, the executive director of business and community education at Iowa Western Community College (IWCC), immediately recognized the importance of Imagine Hours and was one of the first people to request the results.

During the Imagine Hours sessions, employers and individuals expressed what they wanted in workforce development programs, like those offered by the college.

“When I saw the process, it was so unique getting ideas from the community,” Mancuso says.

IWCC plays a vital role in developing the talent pipeline for the region’s businesses. The college has around 7,000 students enrolled in credit-oriented classes and up to 9,000 noncredit students taking career training classes or personal interest leisure classes.

“What is a community requesting, from truck driving classes to classes for credit? They were throwing out ideas of what they would like to see. We used it as a roadmap,” Mancuso says.

IWCC is fine-tuning its classes and hired a part-time marketing coordinator to spread the word about what’s available.

Classes for commercial driver’s licenses or medical technicians are examples of workforce programs. Plus, IWCC is adding life and leisure classes, such as photography and cooking.

“Things you would do not necessarily to improve your work position but your life position,” Mancuso says.

Moving forward, the Iowa West Foundation plans to keep listening and imagining a bright future.

“Our core mission is to support communities where families love to live. We can only do that if we



know what people love about their hometowns and what they think would make it even better,” Mainwaring says. “The Iowa West Foundation can be an ingredient in successful communities, but the energy and commitment come from the community. By understanding their priorities, we can help build the hometowns they want.”

For more information about the foundation’s Imagine Hours sessions, visit iowawestfoundation.org/about-us/imagine-hour-results.

– Bill Lewis

“The best ideas for how to make a community a place where people love to live are going to come from the people who already call it home.”

– Brenda Mainwaring,
Iowa West Foundation

9 MUST-TRY OUTDOOR



Enjoy a variety of outdoor activities
at Lake Manawa State Park.

ACTIVITIES

Step outdoors and into Council Bluffs' scenic serenity



The great outdoors is calling in Council Bluffs, and residents and visitors can't get enough. The region is overflowing with a variety of ways to have fun in the sun, and there's a little something for everyone. Here are nine outdoor activities you need to check off your list.

1) Explore Loess Hills at Hitchcock Nature Center

Though Iowa is known for being relatively flat, it contains the Loess Hills, or wind-deposited soil formations that rise roughly 200 feet above the Missouri River. The hills are often cited as providing one of the most beautiful hikes in all of Iowa. In the heart of the Loess Hills is Hitchcock Nature Center, which is open year-round, offering activities like hiking, camping and snowshoeing. For miles and miles of great views, go for a drive along the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway.

2) Shop the farmers market in Bayliss Park

There's no better way to find fresh, local produce than purchasing goods from the vendors at Farmers Market Council Bluffs. Held on Thursdays in Bayliss Park, the market features live music, wellness activities and a play area for children.

3) Walk across the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge

This scenic 3,000-foot walkway allows for one-of-a-kind views of the Missouri River and the Omaha skyline. There's even a line on the bridge where visitors can put one foot in Iowa and one in Nebraska, providing a perfect setting for that coveted multistate selfie. Access the bridge in Council Bluffs from the beautiful Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park, which features a 5-acre lawn.

4) Hit the links at one of four area golf courses

You can say "fore!" at four golf courses in Council Bluffs. Have your pick of three public courses, including Bent Tree, Fox Run and Dodge Riverside, and a private course, Council Bluffs Country Club.

5) Ski at Mt. Crescent Ski Area

Outdoor adventure doesn't stop in the winter. In fact, the cold weather brings new adventures. Mt. Crescent provides plenty of downhill thrills. Its ski runs can reach up to 2,400 feet, and there are a variety of slopes to accommodate beginners through advanced skiers. Sledding is also popular, as the run stretches roughly three football fields in length. Need a break or not in a "thrills" mood? The Mountain Cafe & Bar is the perfect spot to rest or unwind after a day on the slopes.



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COLIN CONGERS; THE 712 INITIATIVE (2,3); CITY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS (3,4)



2

6) Enjoy outdoor activities at Lake Manawa State Park

Lake Manawa is an outdoor lover's paradise, as it boasts a 700-acre lake (perfect for water activities) as well as hiking trails and camping spaces. Youth love the Dream Playground, which is the largest ADA-accessible playground in Iowa. After visiting this beautiful park, you'll realize why the word "Manawa" comes from the Native American term for "peace and comfort."

7) Catch a sunset at Fairmount Park's Lookout Point

Situated in central Council Bluffs, this park offers sweeping views of the city from Lookout Point, making it a great spot to take a step back and enjoy the setting sun. However, you can also take advantage of the park's beautiful trails, and kids can cool off at the splash pad during warmer months.

8) Hike at Lewis & Clark Monument Park

It might be named after those famous explorers who passed through the area in 1804, but now, the land is yours to explore. Lace up your sneakers or boots because this area is perfect for hiking. Plus, the park's scenic overlook provides stunning views of the nearby Eppley Airfield and Omaha skyline.

9) Jump on the pickleball train

Pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports in the nation, and Council Bluffs is keeping pace. Play (or watch) this exciting sport at Cochran Park, which has four courts, or Kimball Park, which has two. Iowa West Pickleball, which is located in Iowa West Field House, is an indoor, six court facility that offers reserved courts and open drop-in play sessions.

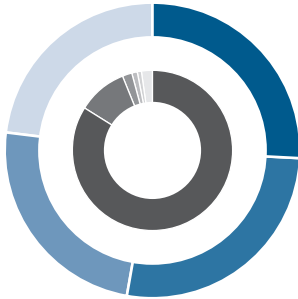
– Andrew Potter



3

Community Profile

DEMOGRAPHICS



AGE

■ Under 19	26%
■ 20-39	27%
■ 40-59	24%
■ 60+	23%

ETHNICITY

■ White	84%
■ Hispanic	10%
■ Black	2%
■ Asian	1%
■ Other	1%
■ Two or more races	2%

DISTANCES TO NEARBY CITIES (in miles)

Omaha	4
Lincoln	63
Des Moines	128
Kansas City	182
Minneapolis	371

TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

COMMUTE
19.2 minutes

Average travel time

Drives alone	82%
Carpools	9%
Public transit	1%
Walks	1%
Other	2%
Works from home	5%

TRANSPORTATION ADVANTAGES

- » Council Bluffs residents are well served by Interstates 29 and 80, U.S. Route 6 and Loess Hills National Scenic Byway.
- » Freight railroads that connect in Council Bluffs include BNSF, Canadian National, Iowa Interstate and Union Pacific.
- » Council Bluffs Municipal Airport serves general aviation, corporate and military aircraft.
- » Residents can fly commercial via Eppley Airfield in Omaha, which is about a 15-minute drive from Council Bluffs.

COMMUNITY OFFERINGS

22

K-12 schools

1B+

Cumulative local philanthropic spending

93

Registered child care facilities

40+

Miles of trails

2

Hospitals

14

Health care clinics

28

Number of parks

HOUSING

\$199,302

Average home value (Zillow, July 2023)



■ Owners	64%
■ Renters	36%

Sources: Census Reporter, U.S. Census, Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce

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THREE GREAT UNIVERSITY OPTIONS

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IOWA

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

WIRRC.ORG

WIRRC

WESTERN IOWA REGENTS RESOURCE CENTER
Located on the campus of Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs



At *Home* in COUNCIL BLUFFS

Google celebrates being part of this vibrant community

Council Bluffs is much more than an address for Google – it’s a place the technology leader truly calls home.

Since breaking ground on a new data center in 2007, Google has invested more than \$5 billion, created hundreds of jobs and become a deeply engaged corporate citizen in Council Bluffs.

“We’re committed to being a good neighbor in Iowa, both through our investments in the data center facilities and the community work we do beyond the data center walls,” says Allie Hopkins, Google site lead for Iowa and Nebraska.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Google employees are devoted to their community, volunteering hundreds of man-hours to local

organizations, boards and committees to support Council Bluffs as a great place to live and work.

Additionally, Google has awarded more than \$3 million to local schools and nonprofits in Iowa. Whether creating coding events or collaborating on the high-flying fun of the annual Anti-Gravity Games, the company actively engages the next generation of technologists by promoting STEM education.

The company also strives to level the playing field through connectivity.

“Our Google team is passionately working to bridge the digital divide and help Iowans and small businesses get access to the training they need for economic opportunity,” Hopkins says. “Whether it’s free skills training like Grow with Google or helping increase access to the internet through initiatives like BLink, Google is dedicated to

addressing barriers to upward mobility for the community.”

Building on a Strong Foundation

Recently announcing another \$350 million investment in the data center, Hopkins notes the tremendously successful partnership between Google and the community comes as no surprise.

“From the start, Google saw Council Bluffs as the right home for one of our largest data center facilities,” Hopkins says. “Not only does it provide access to a highly skilled regional workforce, we love showing the city off when we recruit from outside the area.

“Great schools, a friendly community and a wonderful place to raise a family – Council Bluffs was a great place for Google to plant roots in Iowa, and we can’t wait to see how we continue to grow together,” she concludes.

Celebrating CREATIVITY

Discover a thriving and vibrant artistic community



Pottawattamie Arts,
Culture and Entertainment

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: STACIE KINNEY PHOTOGRAPHY (1,2); COLIN CONCES

The region's growing arts scene isn't just a feature of Council Bluffs; it's a testament to the city's vibrant spirit and dedication to creativity. Over the years, the arts have become a vital part of the community's makeup, creating jobs, relationships, entertainment and opportunities. Serving as the city's creative beacons are the Iowa West Foundation; Pottawattamie Arts, Culture and Entertainment (PACE); and the Arts Center at Iowa Western Community College.

Iowa West Foundation

In 2006, Council Bluffs set its sights on revitalizing its cultural landscape, and the Iowa West Foundation emerged as a key component in that effort. The organization was instrumental in transforming the historic International Harvester site into what is now Harvester Artist Lofts. This 36-unit artist-focused apartment building provides 5,320 square feet of space for arts-friendly commercial use.

However, the Iowa West Foundation didn't stop there. In 2020, the organization embarked on a collaborative effort with PACE to construct the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, a beautiful architectural gem that houses a state-of-the-art theater.

"The Iowa West Foundation is committed to making Southwest Iowa a place where families love to live and businesses thrive," says Brenda Mainwaring, president and CEO of the organization. "We want to strengthen communities for current and future generations by supporting programs and projects that enhance financial stability, opportunity, belonging and well-being."

The Iowa West Foundation is laying the foundation for future artistic growth, as well, thanks to its school outreach initiatives that include engaging field trips and enlightening school visits.



Kanesville
Symphony Orchestra



The Arts Center at Iowa
Western Community College



PACE

An evolution of Bluffs Arts Council, PACE embodies the city's dedication to all things artistic. The nonprofit has worked hard to fortify, cultivate and champion the arts, culture and history throughout the region.

"PACE believes that when our community – young and old – connects with the arts, everyone's lives are enriched," says Danna Kehm, CEO of PACE. "We know the arts can help to fuel a community, and together, we're committed to building a robust cultural environment to make that possible."

PACE is the driving force behind the much-beloved Hoff Center.

Within its walls, patrons find professional theater productions, mesmerizing youth performances, the enchanting melodies of the Kanesville Symphony, and the graceful moves of the American Midwest Ballet. The center also hosts the innovative Kitchen Council, a launchpad for food entrepreneurs, as well as a gallery that proudly showcases rotating exhibits.

First and foremost, PACE is a community-focused organization, which is reflected in the various events and programs it spearheads, such as Hoff Fourth Fridays and Music in the Park, not to mention education-focused efforts like its pottery, photography and painting classes. PACE also helps subsidize five resident artist studios, where artists are encouraged to create

and participate in art exhibitions and workshops.

"Council Bluffs is a great place to live as an artist or as an art consumer," Kehm says. "It is wonderful to see the truly collaborative spirit which exists here."

Kitchen Council



KITCHEN COUNCIL

3,000

square-foot facility

Offers

- » commercial grade equipment
- » production space
- » storage options



Pottawattamie Arts,
Culture and Entertainment



“Council Bluffs is a great place to live as an artist or as an art consumer. It is wonderful to see the truly collaborative spirit which exists here.”

– Danna Kehm, PACE

The Arts Center at Iowa Western Community College

The Arts Center at Iowa Western Community College is all about providing affordable entertainment for everyone. This center isn't just for highbrows; it's a place where the local community can come together to appreciate and support the arts. Since 2001, the Arts Center has

focused on bringing professional nationally touring artists and entertainers to the Council Bluffs area. It hosts about eight shows a year that feature widely acclaimed artists and entertainers. And when the spotlight isn't on the pros, the stage belongs to students who showcase their musical talents and theatrical flair. The theater can hold up to 655 people, and the Arts Center offers flexible

subscription packages to make it accessible to all.

“It's important to have a vibrant performing arts scene,” says Tim Dickmeyer, director of the center. “One major component of that is to have those entertainment offerings locally, easily accessible and affordable – that's why we do what we do.”

– Kelly Rogers



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SCHOOL DISTRICT**



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POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The community works to prepare students for future careers

A skilled and readily available workforce is at the heart of Council Bluffs' economic development strategy. Partnerships between public school districts, Iowa Western Community College (IWCC) and other community organizations ensure students are prepared for jobs in growing industries once they graduate.

A HEAD START TO COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Council Bluffs Community School District's commitment to career readiness is reflected in its robust menu of programs and partnerships, including dual enrollment and Career Academies. Through a partnership with IWCC, students can simultaneously earn high school and college credit in courses like college algebra, statistics, literature and public speaking.

"We have a huge dual-enrollment program through which we offer credit classes in high schools. We have more than 2,000 high school students who come to Iowa Western's campuses or centers each year to take credit classes, and there is no cost to the student or their families, so that is a huge benefit for them," says Matt Mancuso, executive director of business and community education for IWCC. "If they are looking to attend a four-year program, this gives them a good head start on



Iowa West Foundation

their general education requirements. We actually have quite a few students who earn an associate degree before they even graduate high school."

The district also partners with IWCC for its Career Academies, which allow students to earn college credit and certifications in areas such as welding, automotive technology, construction, culinary arts, advanced manufacturing, health sciences and agribusiness. Through hands-on training,

students gain employable skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and problem-solving – all essential for success in an evolving job market.

"We have an intermediary network, which helps connect high schools to companies so high school students can start to develop an idea for a career and start their career paths hopefully sooner than later," Mancuso says. "We actually start in eighth grade, starting to give them career exploration ideas and working with

them to identify a possible pathway. We show them what a mechanic would do, what a welder would do, what an engineer would do to give them exposure to the various components of that career.”

FUTURE-FOCUSED

The community continues to invest in preparing a future workforce. For example, the Iowa West Foundation, an organization that works to strengthen the region’s communities, awarded more than \$1.1 million in grants through its ASPIRE initiative to groups dedicated to education and workforce development.

“Each Pottawattamie County high school receives funding that is tailored to their workforce development programs,” says Nicole Lindquist, director of communications for the Iowa West Foundation.

“For example, Council Bluffs Community Schools will expand their Plus One Pathways, which allows students to take classes at the local community college and receive work credentials or even an associate degree along with their high school diploma. Rural schools are working with IJAG (Iowa Jobs for American Graduates), Avenue Scholars of Southwest Iowa, and Iowa Western Community College to prepare their students for the workforce.”

For its part, the Council Bluffs Community School District helps prepare students for an ever-evolving marketplace through its Plus One Pathways, which give students opportunities to earn college credit and skills certifications in addition to a high school diploma.

One of its pathways, the Early College Academy, allows up to 25 juniors and 25 seniors to take free courses at IWCC that count toward both a high school diploma and an associate degree.

TradeWorks Academy, another pathway, provides sophomores and juniors with hands-on training that prepares them for future apprenticeships.

BETTER TOGETHER

Organizations within the community are also highly involved in preparing students of all ages for their futures. In addition to the ASPIRE initiative, the Iowa West Foundation also gave \$350,000 to the Council Bluffs Schools Foundation for adult education.

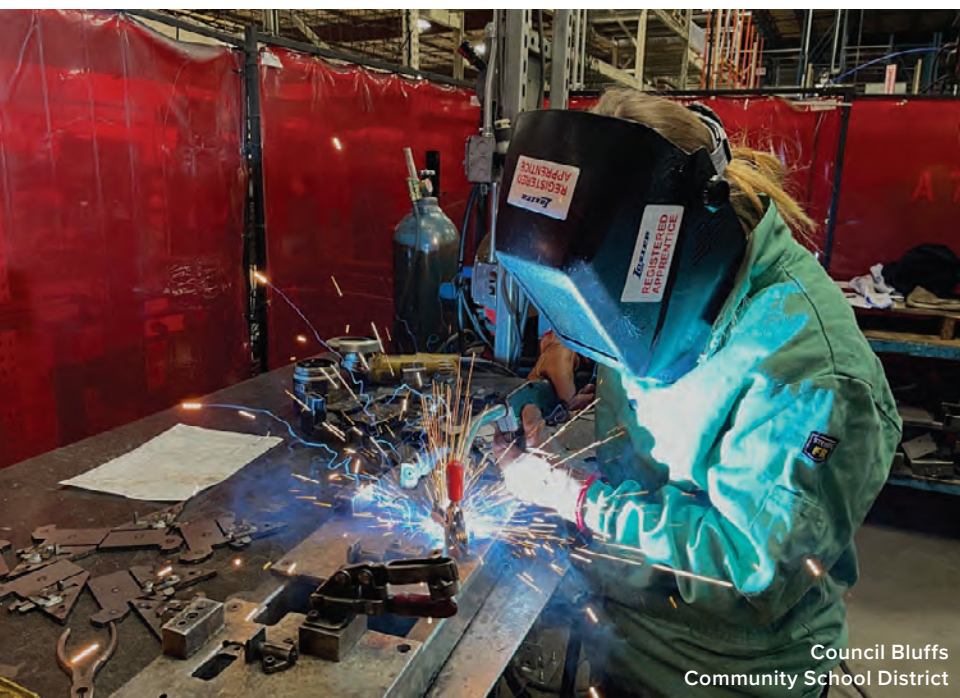
Additionally, Avenue Scholars Southwest Iowa assists students with career exploration, selecting a career, and the education and training necessary for success in that career. The program is part of a nationwide effort to help young people secure local jobs that will both aid their upward mobility and grow the workforce and economy.

Cara Cool-Trede, executive director of Avenue Scholars Southwest Iowa, says Avenue Scholars follows students from high school into the workplace with wraparound services, like mentoring, training, work-based learning and financial assistance.

“We connect businesses with schools and students to make sure that students have the ability to go to these businesses and take a tour or job shadow,” she says.

“Ultimately, we place them in paid internships with our business partners, and that really gives them that work-based learning experience that exposes them to the hard skills. They also learn those soft skills – what it takes to be a good employee and successful in their future career.”

– Teree Caruthers



In Honor of Anne

Early childhood center opens in Council Bluffs

Council Bluffs Community School District recently opened the Anne E. Nelson Early Learning Center to provide early education opportunities to area infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

The center, which is located on North Eighth Street, opened in August 2023 in time for the 2023-24 school year. The center's namesake, Anne E. Nelson, died in December 2022 at the age of 81 and was a longtime educator, community volunteer and philanthropist. She made her home in Council Bluffs in 1965 after marrying her husband, John Nelson.

Anne's professional academic career included a long stint as a teacher at Lewis Central High School in Council Bluffs, plus she taught English at Iowa Western Community College to adults who were preparing to take the GED. Prior to arriving in Council Bluffs, Nelson graduated from Carleton College in

Minnesota and taught high school English and French at Minnetonka High School.

The Anne E. Nelson Early Learning Center can accommodate an enrollment of up to 200 children every school year, and the curriculum is aligned with Iowa Early Learning Standards. According to a press release from Council Bluffs Community School District, the center's program focuses on the "social, emotional, cognitive, language, physical and academic skills of the whole child."

Enrollment fees range from \$450-\$750 per month. For more information, visit cb-schools.org/domain/282.

— Kevin Litwin



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/POPLASEN

Inspire Excellence at Lewis Central



@LewisCentralCSD

Lewis Central Community School District is a growing K-12 public school district, proudly serving students from Council Bluffs and southwest Iowa.

Baking Up BUSINESS

The Kitchen Council helps aspiring food entrepreneurs

The food industry is heating up in Council Bluffs – and it’s not just big ag (Tyson Foods and Conagra Brands both have a presence in the area). Smaller companies helmed by locals are finding success here. Once someone has a business idea, a lot goes into moving from whipping up a batch of gluten-free brownies for friends and family to selling their wares to the public.

This is where the Kitchen Council, a program of Advance Southwest Iowa Corporation, comes in. Its

mission: Dismantle barriers to entry for food startups and help entrepreneurs navigate the process.

Help Wanted

The Kitchen Council officially launched in 2018, says managing director Holly Benson Muller, but its genesis was way back in 2015. That was the year it “was just getting off the ground and was bringing players together, fundraising and talking vision,” she says.

Benson Muller, who has a background in project management and spent eight years working at Google, was thrilled to join the Kitchen Council team in 2017.

“It’s important, exciting and incredibly needed,” she says.

A boom in Council Bluffs’ food businesses fueled the need. Benson Muller cites the intersection of “amazing” local farmers markets, large area food corporations, and a burst of creativity in food and restaurant industries as factors in the surge.

“There was this takeoff in food startups and people needing help,” she says. “It’s daunting to start up. Especially in food, you can’t be an

expert in everything. ... We needed to make entrepreneurs feel like they were being lifted up and help them get licensed.”

Food With Benefits

The Kitchen Council provides a range of resources for small food businesses. It provides 3,000 square feet of shared commercial kitchen space in the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, which is run by Pottawattamie Arts, Culture and Entertainment, to its resident members, as Benson Muller calls them. The storage, freezer and production space; specialized commercial equipment; kitchenware; and even an area for client tastings are often the first things that attract prospective members.

Lindsey Richards owns Primal Indulgence, a gluten-, grain- and soy-free bakery that she began with her sister in 2017, and says the shared space has been indispensable in running and growing her business (Richards is now the sole owner). She says the best thing about the Kitchen Council is “the ability to have





The Kitchen Council supports small businesses like Bella Bread and Primal Indulgence (pictured left).



STRONG & STEADY

Council Bluffs has a sturdy and diverse economy

Council Bluffs boasts a strong economy made up of everything from small startups to well-known companies – and they fall under several different sectors. In fact, it's the region's diverse industries that play a key role in keeping the economy running smoothly.

Here, you'll find sectors like dairy, plastics, railroading, technology and gaming. A few major players in the gaming industry include Ameristar Casino & Hotel, Harrah's, and Horseshoe. Also related to gaming is American Games, whose 1,000+ employees produce instant pull-tab and scratch-off tickets for lotteries played around the world.

Another key sector here is education, which boasts employers like Council Bluffs Community School District, a satellite campus of Buena Vista University, and Iowa Western Community College.

Representing the region's successful food manufacturing industry are companies like Bunge North America, Conagra Brands, Swift Prepared Foods and Tyson Foods. As far as advanced manufacturing, the region is home to employers like Future Foam, Omaha Standard Palfinger and U.S. Pipe.

Health care is another key sector in the region, and its top facilities include CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs and Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital.

A few other successful companies you'll find in Council Bluffs are Amazon, MidAmerican Energy, Union Pacific, Walmart and Highline Warren.

– Kevin Litwin

commercial kitchen space. Neither of us had a home that would be conducive to being a cottage bakery. ... You can't wholesale to Hy-Vee [grocery store]" – one of Primal Indulgence's first big clients – "without having commercial kitchen space. It just comes across to the public more legitimately."

Resident members rent kitchen space for just \$350 to \$450 per month and receive one-on-one mentoring and education that's equally crucial to the Kitchen Council's mission.

"We'll get them talking to advisory board members and bring in consultants [for members]," says Benson Muller.

In addition, the Kitchen Council regularly puts on Food Startup

101 workshops targeted toward prospective business owners and covering topics like startup costs, business planning, health department and licensing regulations, and marketing. It has also offered food photography workshops and a series of classes on scaling and growing existing businesses; a social media class is currently in the works.

"Every day, we're fielding questions or providing assistance," Benson Muller says.



The Kitchen Council is the perfect place for food startups to learn how to navigate the entrepreneurial process.

She estimates the Kitchen Council assists between 100 to 125 businesses per year, many of which are not even members. “We’re not going to do the work for them, but we help them understand what’s needed. We’re being their teammate.”

Teamwork Triumphs

Then there’s the less formal benefit of having a Kitchen Council membership: collaboration. Resident member Hannah Smith, owner of catering company

Fig and Honey Charcuterie, says, “The other food entrepreneurs we’ve met through Kitchen Council have been an absolute surprise and delight in terms of learning, referrals and even social media. At first, we were looking at this beautiful space ... but these [connections] have been more instrumental for us.”

Smith says fellow Kitchen Council residents have directed her toward online groups she should be joining and tagging as well as introduced her to their own connections and

referred customers to her. “The collaborative aspect is definitely No. 1,” she says of the Kitchen Council. “It’s the knowledge base of the leaders there. They’ve been through it, already started their businesses and have been able to help us along so much quicker than it would have been otherwise.”

– Amy Antonation

For more information about the Kitchen Council, visit kitchencouncil.org.



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- Orthopedic Specialists
- Complete Diagnostic Imaging
- Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapy



METHODIST
JENNIE EDMUNDSON

CHI Health Mercy
Council Bluffs

Health Haven

Five things you need to know about Council Bluffs' medical facilities

Council Bluffs is home to high quality health care providers dedicated to meeting the health and wellness needs of the entire community. It boasts two award-winning hospitals, CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs and Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital. Additionally, All Care Health Center is a Federally Qualified Health Center providing accessible, comprehensive primary care, dental care and more.

ALL CARE HEALTH CENTER

"All Care Health Center provides integrated family health care, including primary medical, dental and mental health care as well as a patient pharmacy, dietitian and X-ray services all under one roof at our main clinic," says Kerri Wede, All Care's development and marketing director. "Our mission is to provide affordable, comprehensive and high-quality health care to the entire community, including vulnerable populations."

Here are five things you need to know:

1. All Care Health Center offers the option of telehealth for medical and mental health services.
2. Bilingual staff provide interpretation and translation services to non-English speaking patients.
3. The access services team can help the general public and current patients with insurance enrollment and navigating complex Medicare options. This team can also help patients sign up for food stamps and provide resource referrals for housing, food, transportation and other emergency assistance programs.
4. An on-site pharmacy at the Sixth Street location allows patients to pick up medications the same day as their medical, mental health or dental appointment. All Care offers free pharmacy delivery to patients within Council Bluffs.
5. All Care offers free accessible transportation to and from

health care appointments for its patients in Council Bluffs.

CHI HEALTH MERCY COUNCIL BLUFFS

"Founded in 1887 by the Sisters of Mercy, we have expanded into a full-service facility for cardiology, cancer, maternity, orthopedics and behavioral health," says Ann Schumacher, president of CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs. "We're proud of our 136-year legacy and look forward to continuing to care for the people of Southwest Iowa."

Here are five things you need to know:

1. CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs has the only Level III trauma center in Iowa accredited by the American College of Surgeons, providing emergency assessment, resuscitation, surgery, intensive care and stabilization 24/7.
2. The newly remodeled maternity center has a Level II neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) to care for premature babies and state-of-the-art labor and delivery

Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital



equipment. It received Blue Distinction from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Iowa as a Top Center of Specialty Care for Maternity.

- 3. The hospital has robotic surgery capability and the region's only Joint Commission Advanced Hip and Knee Joint Replacement certification, along with Blue Distinction as a Top Center of Specialty Care for Hip and Knee.
- 4. The cath lab teams and cardiologists beat the national average response time when receiving heart attack patients with complete blockages. Door-to-balloon time averages 78.2 minutes, the best in the area.
- 5. The hospital's footprint is substantial, including two integrated family health clinics

in Council Bluffs and two outlying clinics, all with direct access to the hospital. This creates a better flow of communication, referrals, treatment and follow-up.

METHODIST JENNIE EDMUNDSON HOSPITAL

David Burd, president and CEO of Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital, says, "Whether you are receiving services or working here, you'll find this is a special place because of both the high-quality care we provide and because we care about each other. We are a family."

Here are five things you need to know:

- 1. A growing organization, Jennie Edmundson has made significant investments in facilities and

equipment to ensure the highest quality of care to serve Council Bluffs and the surrounding region far into the future.

- 2. The hospital is committed to increasing access to care, so there is no reason to go anywhere else. The newly renovated emergency department will serve approximately 21,500 patients this year, and Methodist Physicians Clinic continues to grow in terms of specialties available.
- 3. Top-notch surgeons with access to state-of-the-art equipment, including robotics, mean the volume of surgeries and procedures continues to grow.
- 4. Jennie Edmundson is committed to being the provider of choice for women's and newborn services, such as those in the hospital's Level II NICU and the newly renovated Anne Elizabeth Nelson Women and Newborns Center. The Methodist Jennie Edmundson Medical Plaza's second floor is home to women's outpatient services, including a specialty practice in adolescent gynecology.
- 5. The hospital is the only nationally accredited cancer center in Western Iowa, thanks to exceptional facilities and equipment like the linear accelerator for radiation oncology.

– Karen Vernon

PHOTO: METHODIST HEALTH SYSTEM

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Economic Profile

INCOME

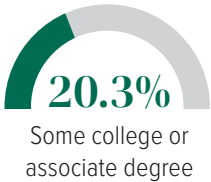
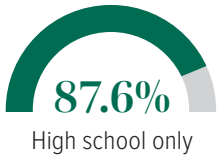
\$29,169

Per-capita income

\$57,683

Median household income

EDUCATION



HIGHER EDUCATION

*Iowa Western
Community College*

*Buena Vista University-
Council Bluffs*

MAJOR INDUSTRIES

- » Advanced manufacturing
- » Gaming
- » Dairy products
- » Education
- » Electrical products
- » Frozen foods
- » Health care
- » Plastics
- » Pork and beef packaging
- » Railroadng
- » Technology

TOP OCCUPATIONS

- » Advanced manufacturing/food production
- » Gaming
- » Health care
- » Information technology
- » Transportation/logistics
- » Warehouse/distribution

40,843

Local labor force

RESOURCES

For information on resources for employers, visit councilbluffs.iowa.com/employer-resources.

BUSINESS PERKS

- » Tax incentives
- » Professional support
- » Land development opportunities
- » Labor-ready workforce
- » Economic development partners
- » Pro-business environment
- » Diverse business space

MISCELLANEOUS

- » Council Bluffs is the largest city in Southwest Iowa.
- » The city is on the east bank of the Missouri River across from Omaha, Nebraska.
- » The annual West Pottawattamie County Fair arrives in Council Bluffs for one week every late July/early August.
- » John James Audubon wrote about viewing black squirrels during a visit to Council Bluffs in 1843, and today, the black squirrel remains the city's mascot.



Sources: Census Reporter, U.S. Census, Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce

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