DECISION INNOVATION SOLUTIONS

Prepared for:

IOWA LEAGUE of CITIES

Economic Contribution of Local Communities to the State Economy

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Contents

1 Executive Summary

While it may be possible to calculate the "average" city in Iowa across a variety of metrics, in reality no city is truly average. In fact, Iowa is home to an incredibly diverse set of cities. Just in terms of population, the 938 cities in Iowa range from 11 people in Leroy to more than 210,000 in Des Moines as of the 2020 U.S. Census. As a part of this study, all cities in Iowa were categorized into four groups based on their demographics, economy, workforce, amenities, housing, and size.

This analysis evaluated all incorporated cities in Iowa to classify communities into four development categories:

- **Robust**: Economically diverse cities with strong education and housing indicators
- **Maturing**: Balanced cities with steady economies, moderate diversity, varied industries, and reasonable access to amenities
- **Developing**: Emerging showing improvement or mixed performance across key indicators
- **Foundational**: Cities facing increased economic headwinds across key indicators

Eight cities (two for each category) were chosen to showcase the geographic, economic, and demographic variety of cities in Iowa. These cities and their categories are:

- Bennett (Cedar County) – Maturing City
- Corydon (Wayne County) – Developing City
- Council Bluffs (Pottawattamie County) – Maturing City
- Dallas Center (Dallas County) – Robust City
- Decorah (Winneshiek County) – Foundational City
- Kimballton (Audubon County) – Foundational City
- Mason City (Cerro Gordo County) – Robust City
- Spencer (Clay County) – Developing City

The selected case study cities reflect the diversity of Iowa communities across size, geography, and development trajectory. Together, they highlight how communities with different economic bases, demographic profiles, housing markets, and levels of amenity access can fall into distinct typologies. While larger regional centers tend to score strongly on employment, amenities, and regional connectivity, smaller communities often exhibit strengths tied to housing affordability, community stability, or proximity to natural and cultural assets. These case studies illustrate that no single factor determines a community's classification; rather, it is the combined interaction of economic conditions, demographic trends, housing characteristics, and access to services that shapes a city's overall contribution to Iowa. Furthermore, the uniqueness of each of the cities included as case studies, and presumably the other 930 cities not included as case studies, is indeed a large part of the draw to live, explore and work in Iowa.

As might be expected from such a diverse group of cities selected as case studies, the economic contribution of this group is extremely varied. Referring to the table below, the total economic contribution (which includes further impacts on each city's county and the state as a whole) ranges from 136 jobs, $7 million in

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labor income, $13 million in value added (equivalent to Gross Domestic Product), and less than $1 million in property taxes in Kimballton all the way to nearly 46,000 jobs, $2.9 billion in labor income, $5.1 billion in value added, and $113 million in property taxes in Council Bluffs. Combined, the economic contribution of the eight cities selected for case studies represents around 4.2% of jobs in Iowa, 4.0% of the state's labor income, and 3.7% of the state's value added. A detailed breakdown of each city's economic contribution, including contribution by sector of the economy, is shown in Section 3.

Economic Contribution of Selected Iowa Cities

City	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Property Taxes ($ Million)	State and Local Taxes ($ Million)
Bennett	370	$ 26.8	$ 43.9	$ 1.1	$ 3.2
Corydon	906	$ 47.6	$ 91.1	$ 2.6	$ 7.4
Council Bluffs	45,839	$ 2,865.0	$ 5,116.3	$ 113.2	$ 420.5
Dallas Center	1,606	$ 119.4	$ 217.3	$ 3.9	$ 13.0
Decorah	6,108	$ 336.6	$ 541.7	$ 15.9	$ 45.9
Kimballton	136	$ 7.2	$ 12.8	$ 0.4	$ 0.9
Mason City	25,510	$ 1,859.1	$ 3,148.9	$ 67.4	$ 258.6
Spencer	8,920	$ 533.4	$ 916.6	$ 19.4	$ 82.1
Total	**89,395**	**$ 5,795.0**	**$ 10,088.6**	**$ 223.8**	**$ 831.7**
Percent of State	**4.2%**	**4.0%**	**3.7%**	-	-

Value added generated by cities (normalized to property taxes collected or number of workers) generally is strongest with robust and maturing cities. However, developing and foundational cities still maintain strong ratios of value added generated per dollar of property tax collected, especially after accounting for activity occurring outside of the city itself. Cities of all types in Iowa contribute positively to the overall economy.

Economic multipliers (calculated as the total value of each indicator divided by the value produced directly in each city) show that, while robust cities tend to have the farthest-reaching indirect and induced effects, cities of all types are interconnected in the broader state economy and support businesses and industries both inside and outside of their boundaries. To illustrate this point further, while robust and maturing cities, which are generally larger than developing and foundational cities, tend to be more economically self-reliant (wide diversity in types of goods and services available locally), many Iowa residents in robust and maturing cities quite often will find themselves traveling a short distance to enjoy Iowa's wide-open spaces and varied landscapes (i.e., the Loess Hills which are near to Council Bluffs). Conversely, developing and foundational cities, often in rural areas, are typically within one hour of a neighboring city which offers goods and services not broadly available locally.

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Comparison Indicators of City Categories				
Category	Direct Value Added per $ of Property Tax	Total Value Added per $ of Property Tax	Total Value Added per Worker	Total Output per Worker
Robust	$ 104	$ 176	$ 131,407	$ 253,837
Maturing	$ 135	$ 229	$ 112,808	$ 261,191
Developing	$ 78	$ 127	$ 95,248	$ 221,286
Foundational	$ 68	$ 110	$ 82,900	$ 171,468

Economic Multipliers by Category				
Category	Employment Multiplier	Labor Income Multiplier	Value Added Multiplier	Output Multiplier
Robust	1.72	1.58	1.69	1.64
Maturing	1.61	1.50	1.64	1.53
Developing	1.53	1.52	1.64	1.54
Foundational	1.46	1.46	1.60	1.55

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2 Introduction

There are 938 cities in Iowa, ranging from just 11 people in Leroy (Decatur County) to 210,381 in Des Moines (Polk County). A large number of cities with such a wide range in population means local strengths, needs and contributions to the state's economy and wellbeing vary considerably. In other words, while the "average" city or town in Iowa can be statistically estimated, the "average" city or town in Iowa does not really exist.

As state policy is debated, passed, and implemented throughout the state, the impacts are felt differently and can cause disparate impacts to these municipalities. To better understand and to communicate the unique contributions these municipalities make to the state, the Iowa League of Cities, which represents nearly 90% of all municipalities in Iowa, has commissioned research to study the contribution of eight cities in Iowa to the state's economy. The selected cities are shown below in Figure 1.

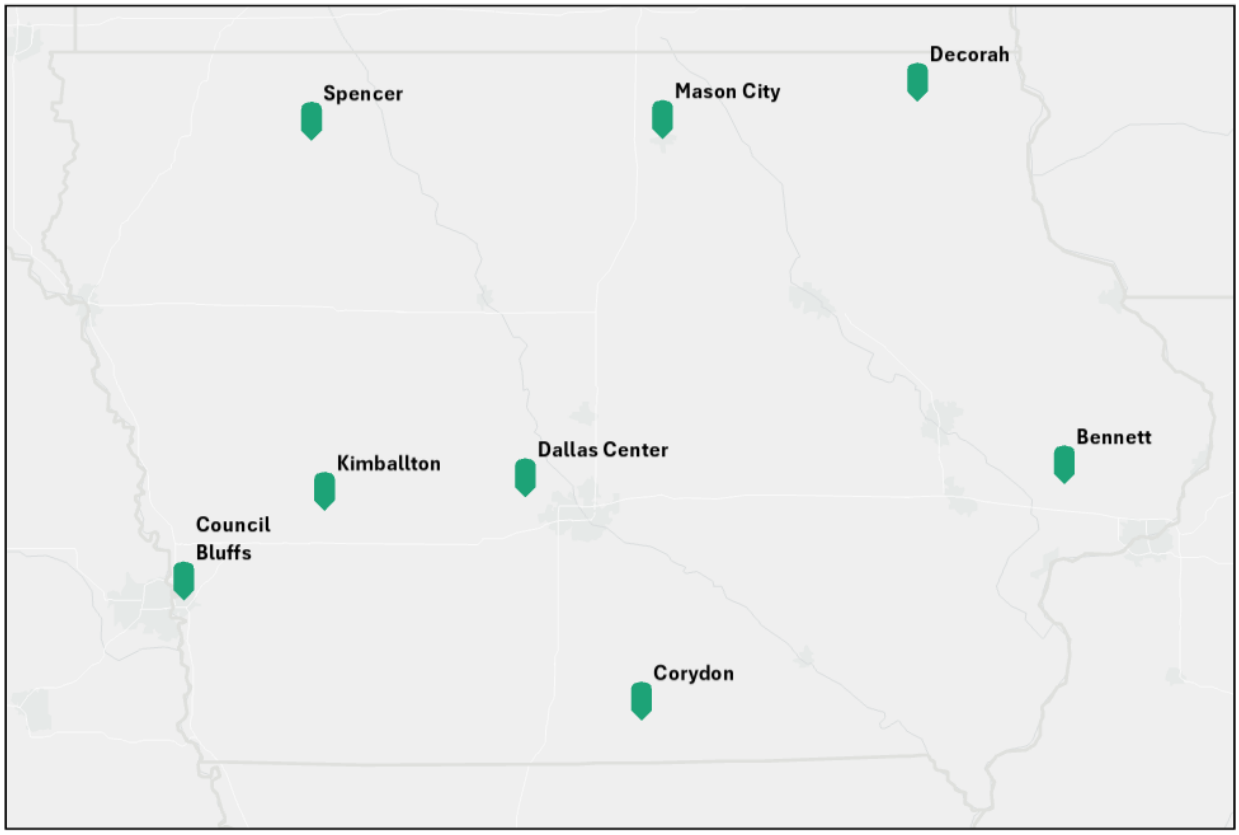

Figure 1. Map of Selected Case Study Cities

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2.1 Summary of Selected Case Study Cities

2.1.1 Dallas Center

Dallas Center is designated as a Robust Community due to its economic conditions, growing housing indicators, and proximity-based access to regional amenities. The city benefits from its location within the Des Moines metropolitan area, which contributes to relatively high labor force participation, low unemployment, and access to a diverse employment base. Housing indicators show a stable owner-occupied market and a higher share of newer housing stock compared to many similarly sized communities. Demographically, Dallas Center exhibits characteristics typical of growing suburban communities, including a relatively younger population and higher educational attainment. While the city itself is small, its proximity to major healthcare, higher education, and cultural amenities significantly enhances overall accessibility, supporting its classification as a robust community despite modest population size.

2.1.2 Mason City

Mason City is classified as a Robust Community because it functions as a major regional employment and service hub in north-central Iowa. Mason City also demonstrates strong amenity access, with local healthcare facilities, cultural institutions, and higher education presence supporting both residents and surrounding rural areas, including some areas in Minnesota. Housing indicators reflect a balanced mix of ownership and rental options, and while some housing stock is older, vacancy rates remain moderate. Collectively, Mason City's economic scale, service concentration, and regional role justify its placement in the robust category.

2.1.3 Bennett

Bennett represents a Maturing Community due to its moderate economic stability. Bennett has a smaller population, but benefits from access to regional employment centers and nearby amenities, which strengthens its economic and amenity scores. Housing indicators show stability but limited new housing development and demographic measures reflect a relatively homogeneous population with moderate educational attainment. The city does not exhibit the economic diversity or scale of robust communities but performs consistently across most categories, placing it solidly within the maturing category.

2.1.4 Council Bluffs

Council Bluffs is classified as a Maturing Community, reflecting its role as a large city with substantial economic activity but mixed performance across other indicators. Its size and employment base—supported by transportation, logistics, and proximity to the Omaha metropolitan area—drive strong size and economy scores. However, housing indicators such as higher vacancy rates and a smaller share of newer housing stock moderate its overall performance. Demographically, Council Bluffs shows greater variability in income and educational attainment compared to robust communities. While access to regional amenities is strong, the city's mixed housing and demographic indicators place it in the maturing, rather than robust, category.

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2.1.5 Corydon

Corydon falls into the Developing community category due to its smaller size and limited economic diversity, offset by its role as a county seat and local hub for basic services and civic functions for its surrounding rural areas. Employment is concentrated in public administration, healthcare, and local services, providing stability but with limited growth. Housing factors reflect modest vacancy rates, but little new construction, and demographic characteristics indicate an older population profile. While Corydon lacks the scale and amenity access of some higher ranked cities, it demonstrates the resilience and growth that smaller cities can still attain.

2.1.6 Spencer

Spencer is classified as a Developing community because it serves as an important local employment center, especially in manufacturing and healthcare, which contributes positively to its economic/employment and amenities scores. However, housing indicators such as older housing stock and limited recent construction constrain overall performance. Demographic factors suggest an aging population and moderate income levels, which further differentiate Spencer from robust or maturing cities.

2.1.7 Decorah

Decorah is classified as a Foundational community despite a strong economic/employment and amenity score, largely influenced by the presence of Luther College and the rich Norwegian-American culture. Decorah's housing units are characterized as older homes with a lack of new development. Demographic factors show an aging population outside of the college presence. These factors position Decorah as a foundational city with important localized assets but limited regional economic influence.

2.1.8 Kimballton

Kimballton is designated as a Foundational community, representing a small, rural community with a strong cultural identity rooted in its Danish heritage. Despite its limited population and economic scale, the city benefits from community cohesion, local cultural assets, and proximity to larger employment and service centers in western Iowa. Kimballton's classification reflects its foundational economic base, modest housing and employment capacity, and reliance on nearby regional hubs for higher-order services, while highlighting the role that rich culture and local quality-of-life play in sustaining small rural communities in Iowa.

3 Case Studies

3.1 Dallas Center

3.1.1 Background

Dallas Center is classified as a Robust community due to its strong economic/employment, housing and amenity scores. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year average, Dallas Center has a population of 2,058. The city benefits from its location within the Des Moines metropolitan area, which contributes to relatively high labor force participation, low unemployment, and access to a diverse employment base. Dallas Center's strong housing score is due to less than 10% of total housing units being vacant and nearly 15% of housing units being built since 2010. Dallas Center's amenities

include attractions such as Brenton Arboretum, numerous parks and trails, and its proximity to higher education and healthcare. Therefore, its proximity to major employment centers, combined with residential and commercial development in Dallas County, positions Dallas Center as a city with strong household income, expanding amenities, and increasing economic diversity.

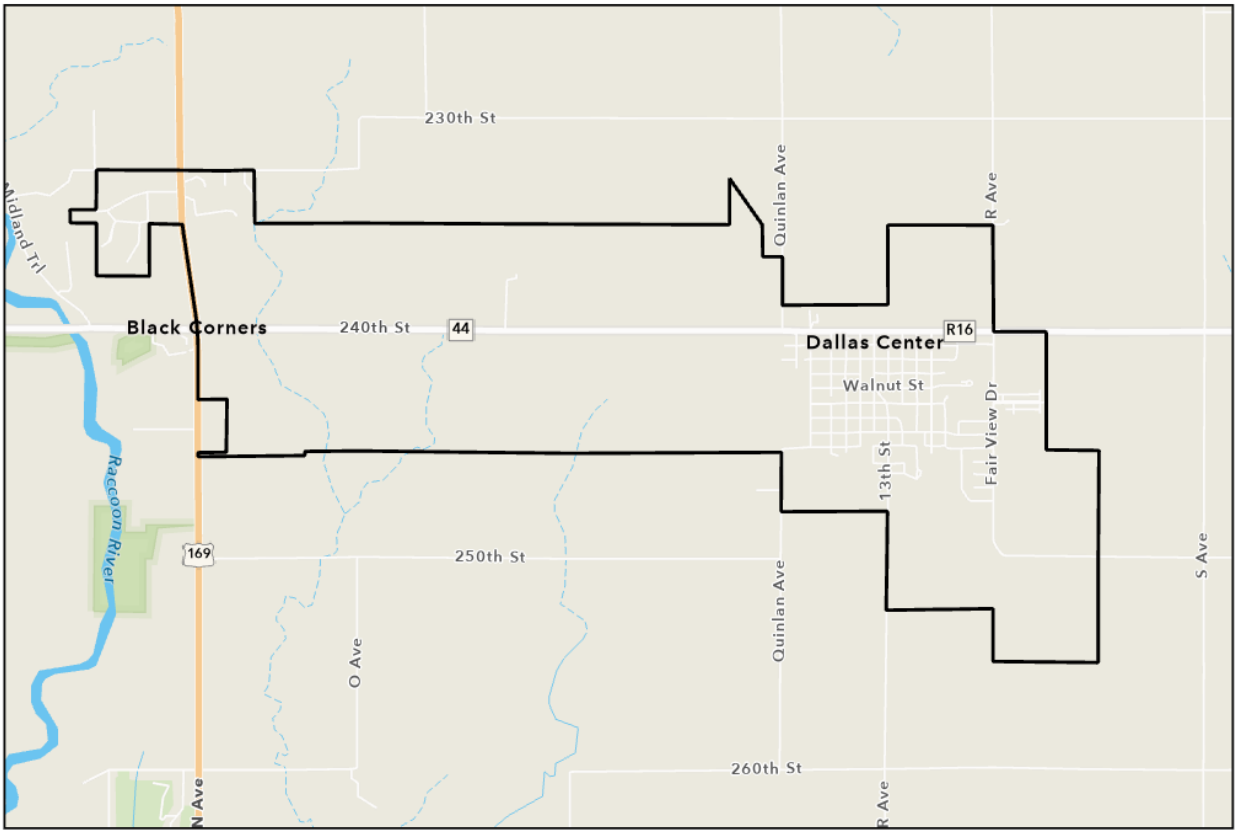

Figure 2. Map of Dallas Center

3.1.2 Economic Contribution[1]

Economic activity in Dallas Center, Iowa is estimated to be $130.6 million in value added, resulting from $229.7 million in sales (output). An estimated 971 employees in the city earn a combined $76.5 million in labor income, for an average labor income of $78,796 per worker. Purchases from Dallas Center businesses and residents result in additional economic activity in Dallas County, estimated at 350 jobs, $24.8 million in labor income, $53.3 million in value added, and $87.1 million in output. Additional spending in the other 98 counties in Iowa results in an additional 284 jobs, $18.1 million in labor income, $33.4 million in value added, and $61.6 million in output throughout the rest of the state (Table 1).

[1] See Section 5.3 for definitions of economic terms utilized here and in remaining portions of Section 3.

Table 1. Economic Contribution of Dallas Center, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Dallas Center, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	971	$ 76.5	$ 130.6	$ 229.7
Rest of County	350	$ 24.8	$ 53.3	$ 87.1
Rest of State	284	$ 18.1	$ 33.4	$ 61.6
Total	**1,606**	**$ 119.4**	**$ 217.3**	**$ 378.4**

Economic activity in Dallas Center is estimated to generate $1.3 million in property tax revenue to the city, with an additional $1.4 million of property taxes paid in the rest of the county and $1.2 million generated in other cities in Iowa. Approximately $0.6 million in other local (city and county) tax revenue is raised, with $0.3 million of this total occurring within Dallas Center. An estimated $8.5 million in state tax revenue is generated, with $4.6 million tied directly to activities within the city and $3.9 million generated as a result of indirect and induced effects outside of the city (Table 2). For every dollar in property tax collected by Dallas Center, $103 in value added is generated in the city and $171 in value added is generated in Iowa.

Table 2. Tax Contribution of Dallas Center, Iowa

Tax Contribution of Dallas Center, Iowa			
Geography	Property Tax ($ Million)	Other Local Taxes ($ Million)	State Taxes ($ Million)
City	$ 1.3	$ 0.3	$ 4.6
Rest of County	$ 1.4	$ 0.1	$ 2.3
Rest of State	$ 1.2	$ 0.2	$ 1.6
Total	**$ 3.9**	**$ 0.6**	**$ 8.5**

Dallas Center's value added contribution of $217.3 million is around 0.081% of Iowa's total value added. Figure 3 shows the total contribution (including activity in the rest of the county and in Iowa) in terms of value added for each sector of the economy. Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing is the largest sector in Dallas Center with an estimated value added contribution of $64.1 million. Three sectors (professional services, education and health care, and manufacturing) each contribute around 13% of Dallas Center's value added with $27.3 to $28.2 million.

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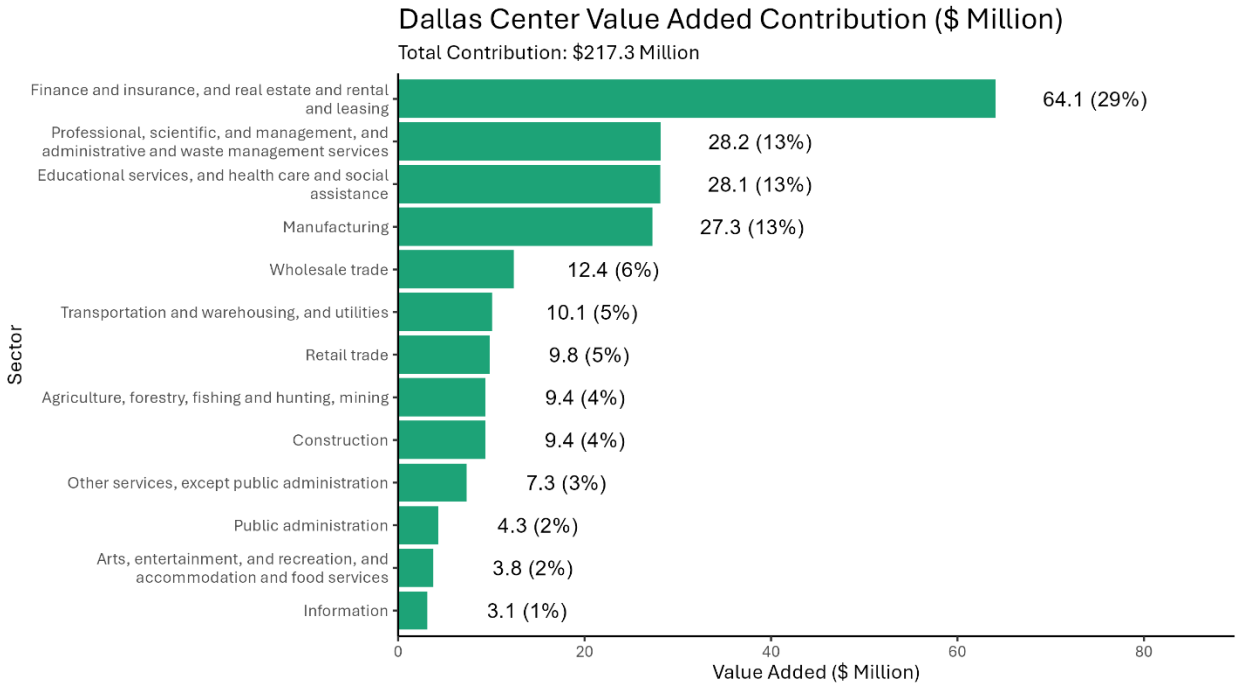

Figure 3. Dallas Center Value Added Contribution by Sector

Dallas Center's amenities include attractions such as Brenton Arboretum, numerous parks and trails, and its proximity to higher education and healthcare. These amenities and cultural attractions in Dallas Center are estimated to contribute 8 jobs, $0.2 million in labor income, $0.4 million in value added, and $0.6 million in output to the city. After including effects from the rest of Dallas County and Iowa, the total estimated contribution grows to 10 jobs, $0.3 million in labor income, $0.6 million in value added, and $1.1 million in output (Table 3).

Table 3. Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Dallas Center, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Dallas Center, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	8	$ 0.2	$ 0.4	$ 0.6
Rest of County	1	$ 0.1	$ 0.2	$ 0.3
Rest of State	1	$ 0.0	$ 0.1	$ 0.1
Total	**10**	**$ 0.3**	**$ 0.6**	**$ 1.1**

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3.2 Mason City

3.2.1 Background

Mason City is designated as a Robust community because it functions as a regional employment and service hub in north-central Iowa with a diversified economy and strong cultural institutions. Mason City was recently named a 2025 Iowa Thriving Community by the Iowa Finance Authority and Iowa Economic Development Authority. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year average, this city has a population of 27,135. The city's relatively large population base, diversified employment sectors – including healthcare and manufacturing – and strong labor market indicators contribute to its high overall ranking.

Factors that contribute to Mason City's strong housing score include less than 10% of total housing units being vacant and significant housing development, specifically with single-family homes and condominiums. Housing indicators reflect a balanced mix of ownership and rental options. Its high amenity score is supported by recent investments in bike trails and parks to provide residents with an outlet and act as a tourist attraction for residents of neighboring communities. Mason City has also begun revitalizing Southbridge Mall to serve as an attractive shopping center for the surrounding areas. In addition, Mason City is home to numerous museums and historical sites which bolster the strong sense of community and overall quality of life. Mason City's established infrastructure, variety of amenities, and continued economic relevance reflect strong performance across demographic, economic, housing, and amenity-based categories.

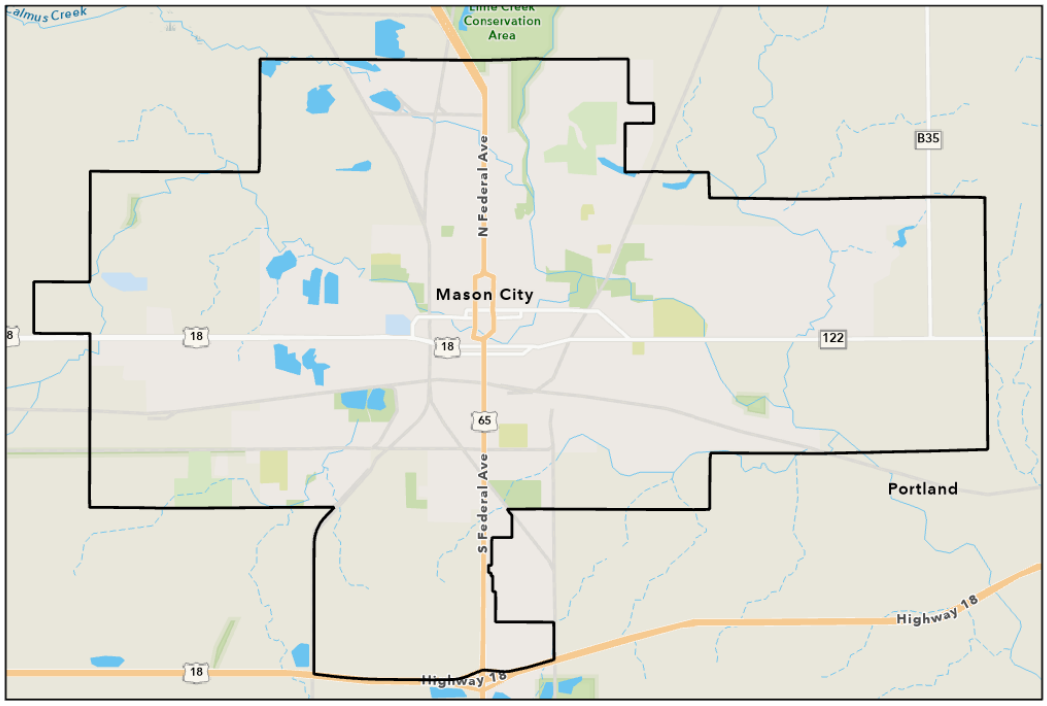

Figure 4. Map of Mason City

3.2.2 Economic Contribution

Economic activity in Mason City, Iowa is estimated to be more than $1.8 billion in value added, resulting from nearly $3.9 billion in sales (output). An estimated 14,262 employees in the city earn a combined $1.2 billion in labor income, for an average labor income of $81,836 per worker. Purchases from Mason City businesses and residents result in additional economic activity in Cerro Gordo County, estimated at 8,734 jobs, $534.7 million in labor income, $1.0 billion in value added, and $1.8 billion in output. Additional spending in the other 98 counties in Iowa results in an additional 2,514 jobs, $157.3 million in labor income, $317.5 million in value added, and $646.9 million in output throughout the rest of the state (Table 4).

Table 4. Economic Contribution of Mason City, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Mason City, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	14,262	$ 1,167.1	$ 1,830.1	$ 3,866.5
Rest of County	8,734	$ 534.7	$ 1,001.2	$ 1,761.3
Rest of State	2,514	$ 157.3	$ 317.5	$ 646.9
Total	**25,510**	**$ 1,859.1**	**$ 3,148.9**	**$ 6,274.7**

Economic activity in Mason City is estimated to generate $17.4 million in property tax revenue to the city, with an additional $40.7 million of property taxes paid in the rest of the county and $9.3 million generated in other cities in Iowa. Approximately $17.8 million in other local (city and county) tax revenue is raised, with $9.3 million of this total occurring within Mason City. An estimated $173.5 million in state tax revenue is generated, with $94.2 million tied directly to activities within the city and $79.3 million generated as a result of indirect and induced effects outside of the city (Table 5). For every dollar in property tax collected by Mason City, $105 in value added is generated in the city and $181 in value added is generated in Iowa.

Table 5. Tax Contribution of Mason City, Iowa

Tax Contribution of Mason City, Iowa			
Geography	Property Tax ($ Million)	Other Local Taxes ($ Million)	State Taxes ($ Million)
City	$ 17.4	$ 9.3	$ 94.2
Rest of County	$ 40.7	$ 7.0	$ 65.5
Rest of State	$ 9.3	$ 1.5	$ 13.8
Total	**$ 67.4**	**$ 17.8**	**$ 173.5**

Mason City's value added contribution of $3.1 billion is around 1.17% of Iowa's total value added. Figure 5 shows the total contribution (including activity in the rest of the county and Iowa) in terms of value added for each sector of the economy. Manufacturing is the largest sector in Mason City with an estimated value added contribution of $1.2 billion, which makes up 38% of the city's total. This is followed by education and healthcare with $539.7 million, retail trade with $258.3 million, and wholesale trade with $240.3 million.

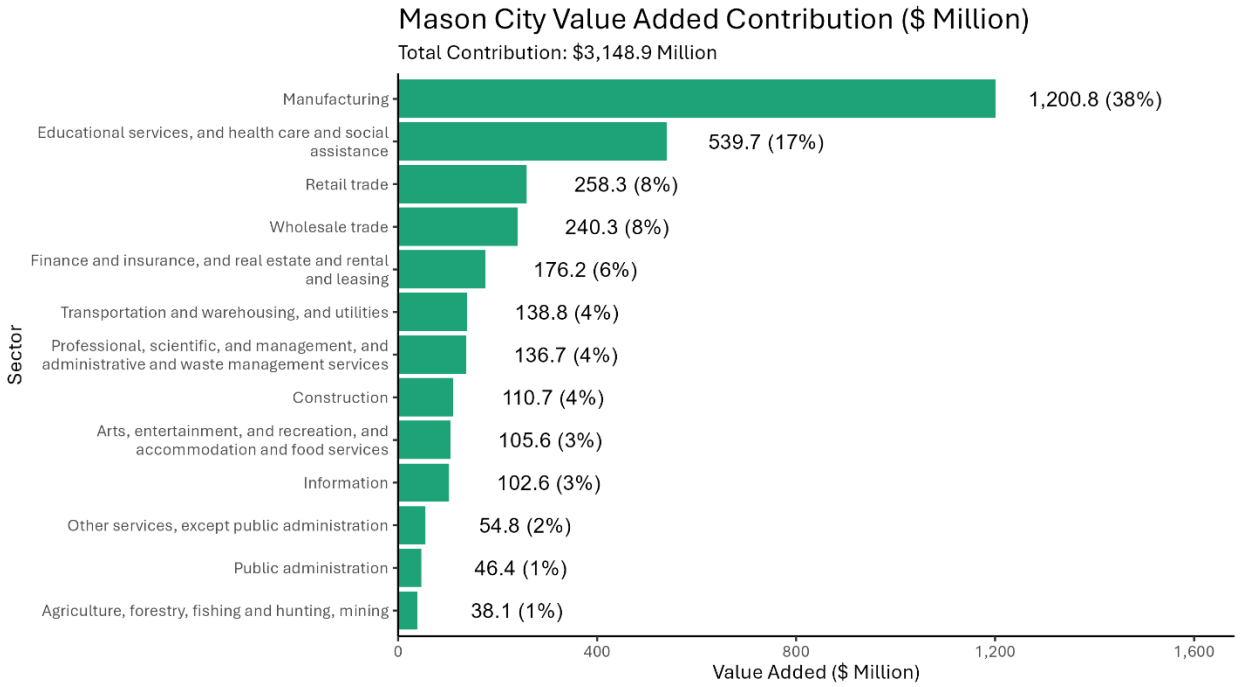

Figure 5. Mason City Value Added Contribution by Sector

Mason City is rich in cultural attractions, featuring unique sites like Music Man Square, the Frank Lloyd Wright Stockman House, and the Charles H. MacNider Art Museum. Additionally, Mason City has an extensive collection of parks and trails which allows residents to take advantage of the natural landscape. These amenities and cultural attractions in Mason City are estimated to contribute 131 jobs, $3.6 million in labor income, $7.1 million in value added, and $14.3 million in output to the city. After including effects from the rest of Cerro Gordo County and Iowa, the total estimated contribution grows to 179 jobs, $5.9 million in labor income, $11.4 million in value added, and $23.1 million in output (Table 6).

Table 6. Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Mason City, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Mason City, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	131	$ 3.6	$ 7.1	$ 14.3
Rest of County	39	$ 1.9	$ 3.5	$ 7.2
Rest of State	9	$ 0.4	$ 0.9	$ 1.6
Total	**179**	**$ 5.9**	**$ 11.4**	**$ 23.1**

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3.3 Bennett

3.3.1 Background

Bennett represents a Maturing community due to its moderate economic stability and transitional community profile. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey five-year average estimates that Bennett has a population of 418. While smaller in population, Bennett benefits from its location in eastern Iowa which provides residents with reasonable access to larger commercial and employment centers while maintaining an affordable cost of living. Bennett's placement in the Maturing category reflects steady demographic patterns and a local economy that functions reliably, though at a smaller scale, with opportunities for incremental growth.

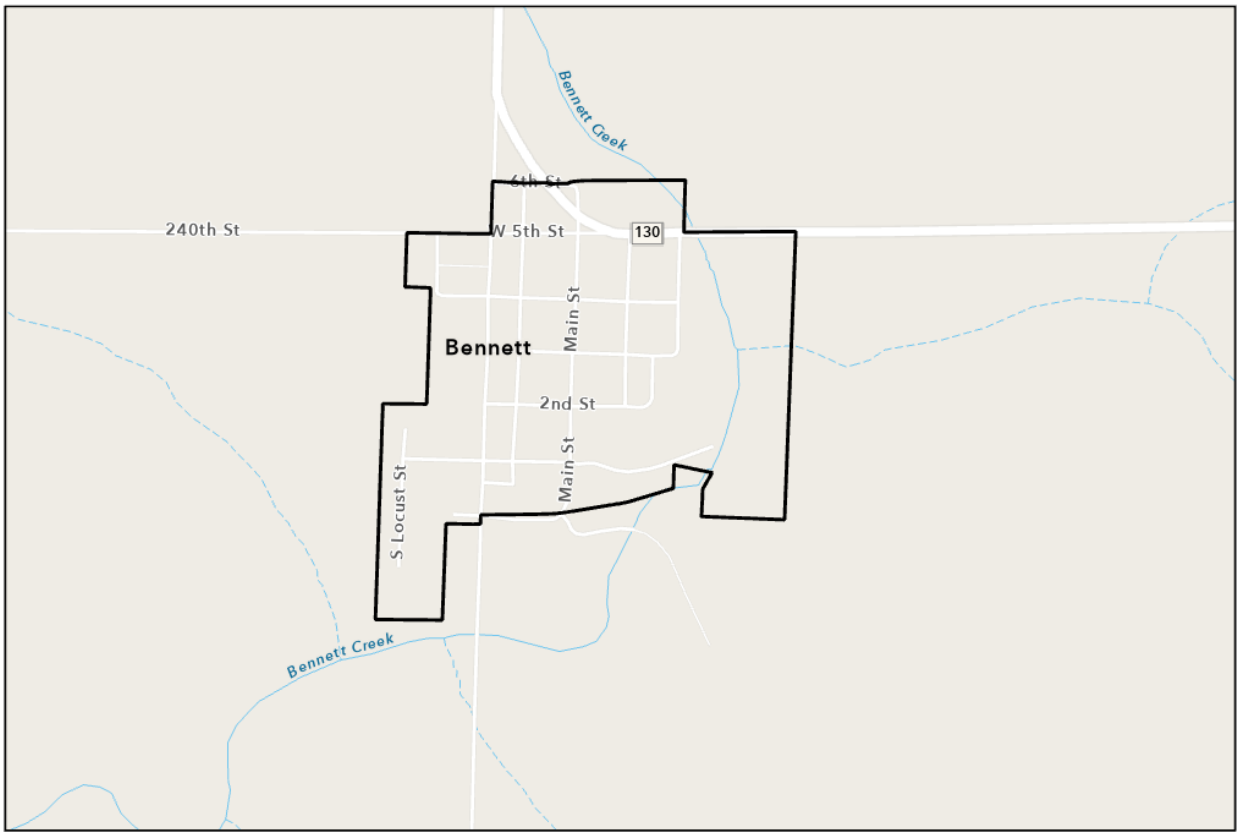

Figure 6. Map of Bennett

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3.3.2 Economic Contribution

Economic activity in Bennett, Iowa is estimated to be $25.4 million in value added, resulting from $61.8 million in sales (output). An estimated 215 employees in the city earn a combined $17.5 million in labor income, for an average labor income of $81,620 per worker. Purchases from Bennett businesses and residents result in additional economic activity in Cedar County, estimated at 95 jobs, $5.2 million in labor income, 10.9 million in value added, and $21.3 million in output. Additional spending in the other 98 counties in Iowa results in an additional 60 jobs, $4.0 million in labor income, $7.6 million in value added, and $14.8 million in output throughout the rest of the state (Table 7).

Table 7. Economic Contribution of Bennett, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Bennett, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	215	$ 17.5	$ 25.4	$ 61.8
Rest of County	95	$ 5.2	$ 10.9	$ 21.3
Rest of State	60	$ 4.0	$ 7.6	$ 14.8
Total	**370**	**$ 26.8**	**$ 43.9**	**$ 97.9**

Economic activity in Bennett is estimated to generate $0.1 million in property tax revenue to the city, with an additional $0.7 million of property taxes paid in the rest of the county and $0.2 million generated in other cities in Iowa. Approximately $0.2 million in other local (city and county) tax revenue is raised, with $0.1 million of this total occurring within Bennett. An estimated $1.9 million in state tax revenue is generated, with $0.6 million tied directly to activities within the city and $0.9 million generated as a result of indirect and induced effects outside of the city (Table 8). For every dollar in property tax collected by Bennett, $211 in value added is generated in the city and $365 in value added is generated in Iowa.

Table 8. Tax Contribution of Bennett, Iowa

Tax Contribution of Bennett, Iowa			
Geography	Property Tax ($ Million)	Other Local Taxes ($ Million)	State Taxes ($ Million)
City	$ 0.1	$ 0.1	$ 0.9
Rest of County	$ 0.7	$ 0.1	$ 0.6
Rest of State	$ 0.2	$ 0.0	$ 0.3
Total	**$ 1.1**	**$ 0.2**	**$ 1.9**

Bennett's value added contribution of $43.9 million is around 0.016% of Iowa's total value added. Figure 7 shows the total contribution for Bennett (including activity in the rest of the county and Iowa) in terms of value added for each sector of the economy. Manufacturing is by far the largest sector in Bennett with an estimated value added contribution of $26.9 million, which makes up 61% of the city's total. None of the

other sectors provide more than 10% of Bennett's value added. Manufacturing is followed by transportation and warehousing, and utilities with $3.4 million and retail trade with $2.8 million.

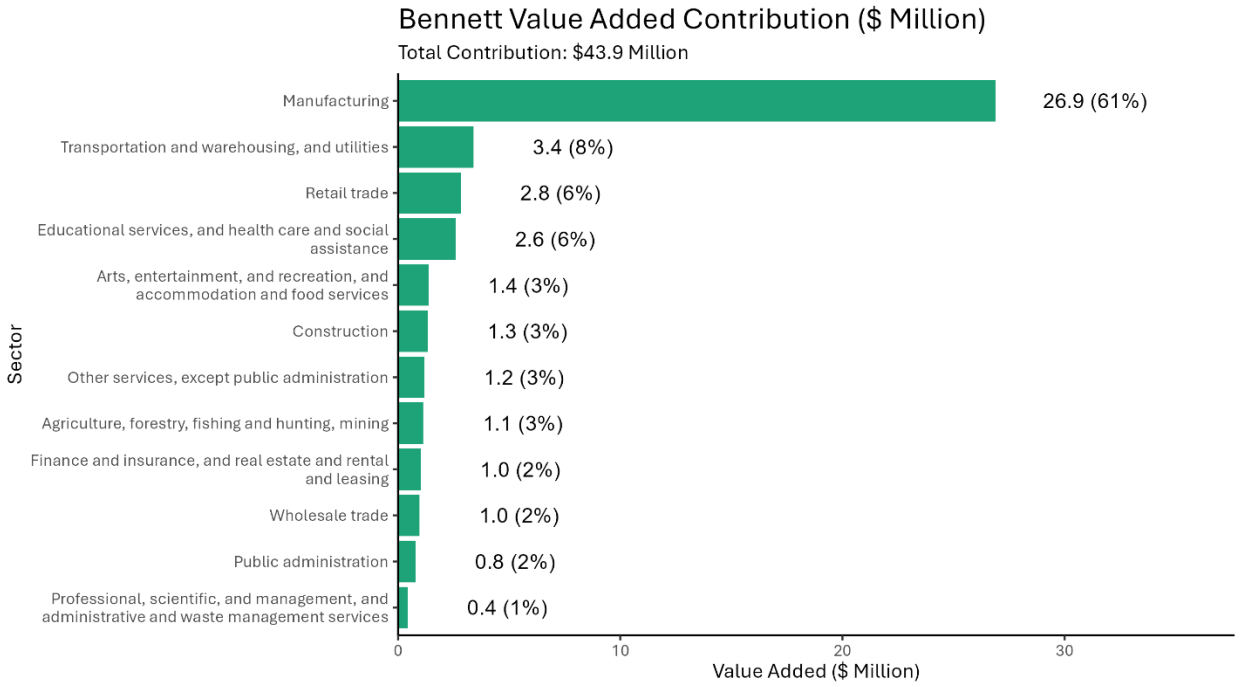

Figure 7. Bennett Value Added Contribution by Sector

Amenities and cultural attractions in Bennett are estimated to contribute 2 jobs, $47,993 in labor income, $100,711 in value added, and $179,653 in output to the city. After including effects from the rest of Cedar County and Iowa, the total estimated contribution grows to 3 jobs, $68,843 in labor income, $141,830 in value added, and $264,609 in output (Table 9).

Table 9. Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Bennett, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Bennett, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
City	2	$ 47,993	$ 100,711	$ 179,653
Rest of County	0	$ 12,855	$ 25,406	$ 57,319
Rest of State	0	$ 7,995	$ 15,712	$ 27,637
Total	**3**	**$ 68,843**	**$ 141,830**	**$ 264,609**

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3.4 Council Bluffs

3.4.1 Background

Council Bluffs is a major urban center directly across the river from Omaha, Nebraska, giving it a unique position as part of a large multi-state metropolitan area. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year average reports that Council Bluffs has a population of 62,564. The city has a diverse economic base that includes logistics, transportation, retail, and hospitality, as it serves as a key anchor city in southwestern Iowa. The Iowa Finance Authority and Iowa Economic Development Authority announced Council Bluffs as a 2025 Thriving Community, and according to the Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce, the city continues to undergo redevelopment and reinvestment efforts aimed at strengthening neighborhoods and improving community amenities. Council Bluffs boasts a low housing vacancy rate of 6% and a strong mix of ownership (64.1%) and rental (35.9%) options, but slower housing development with 4% of units being built since 2010. As a "Maturing" community, it represents a city with strong assets that are improving its housing, economic diversification, and amenities.

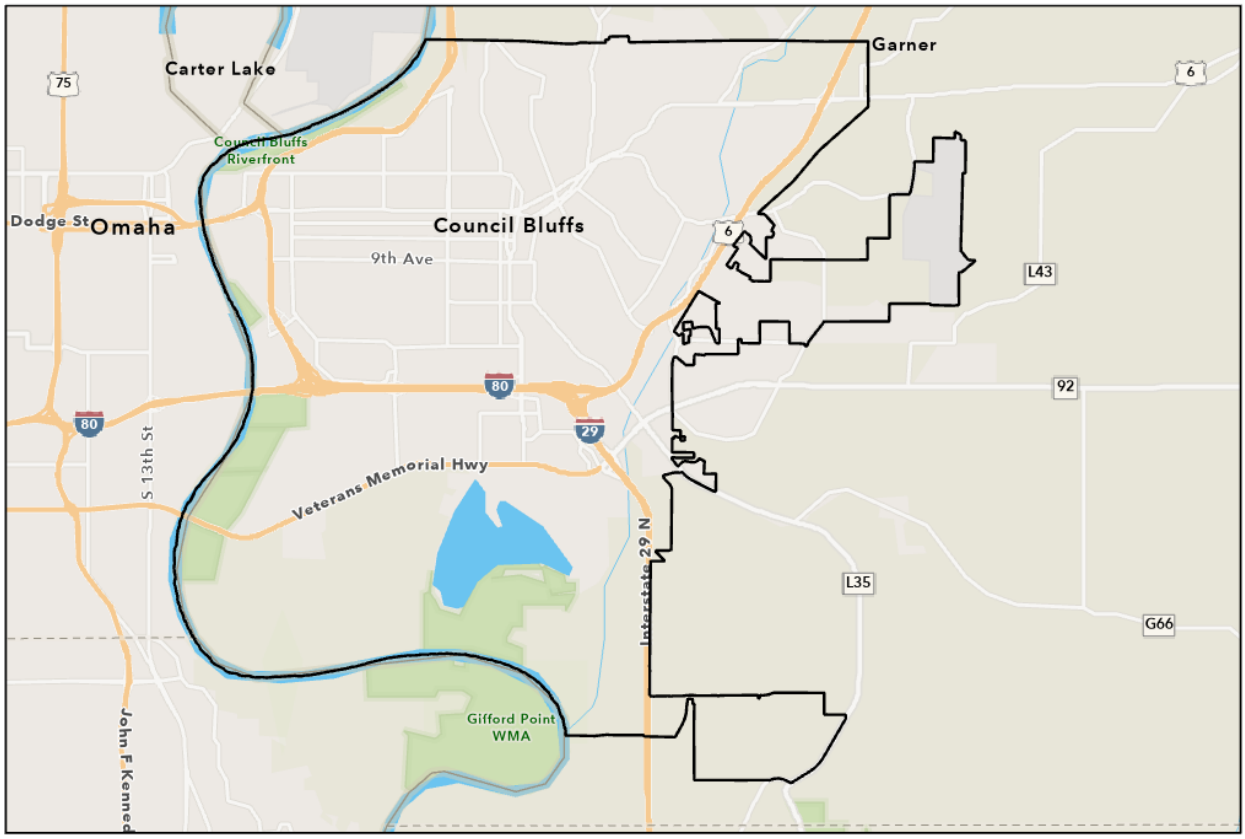

Figure 8. Map of Council Bluffs

3.4.2 Economic Contribution

Economic activity in Council Bluffs, Iowa is estimated to be nearly $3.3 billion in value added, resulting from $7.2 billion in sales (output). An estimated 30,561 employees in the city earn nearly $2.0 billion in combined labor income, for an average labor income of $63,948 per worker. Purchases from Council Bluffs businesses and residents result in additional economic activity in Pottawattamie County, estimated at 12,729 jobs, $747.6 million in labor income, $1.5 billion in value added, and more than $2.7 billion in output. Additional spending in the other 98 counties in Iowa results in an additional 2,549 jobs, $163.1 million in labor income, $330.9 million in value added, and $687.5 million in output throughout the rest of the state (Table 10).

Table 10. Economic Contribution of Council Bluffs, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Council Bluffs, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	30,561	$ 1,954.3	$ 3,289.9	$ 7,182.9
Rest of County	12,729	$ 747.6	$ 1,495.5	$ 2,725.5
Rest of State	2,549	$ 163.1	$ 330.9	$ 687.5
Total	**45,839**	**$ 2,865.0**	**$ 5,116.3**	**$ 10,596.0**

Economic activity in Council Bluffs is estimated to generate $55.4 million in property tax revenue to the city, with an additional $50.6 million of property taxes paid in the rest of the county and $7.3 million generated in other cities in Iowa. Approximately $73.4 million in other local (city and county) tax revenue is raised, with $46.2 million of this total occurring within Council Bluffs. An estimated $233.9 million in state tax revenue is generated, with $147.0 million tied directly to activities within the city and $86.9 million generated as a result of indirect and induced effects outside of the city (Table 11). For every dollar in property tax collected Council Bluffs, $59 in value added is generated in the city and $92 in value added is generated in Iowa.

Table 11. Tax Contribution of Council Bluffs, Iowa

Tax Contribution of Council Bluffs, Iowa			
Geography	Property Tax ($ Million)	Other Local Taxes ($ Million)	State Taxes ($ Million)
City	$ 55.4	$ 46.2	$ 147.0
Rest of County	$ 50.6	$ 23.9	$ 72.9
Rest of State	$ 7.3	$ 3.3	$ 14.0
Total	**$ 113.2**	**$ 73.4**	**$ 233.9**

Council Bluffs' value added contribution of $5.1 billion is around 1.90% of Iowa's total value added. Figure 9 shows the total contribution for Council Bluffs (including activity in the rest of the county and Iowa) in terms of value added for each sector of the economy. Council Bluffs has a balanced economy, with no sector making up more than 25% of the city's value added contribution. Manufacturing is the largest sector in Council Bluffs with an estimated value added of nearly $1.2 billion, which makes up 23% of the city's total.

This is followed by education and healthcare with $762.5 million, finance and insurance, and real estate with $607.0 million, retail trade with $409.7 million, and transportation and warehousing, and utilities with $379.8 million.

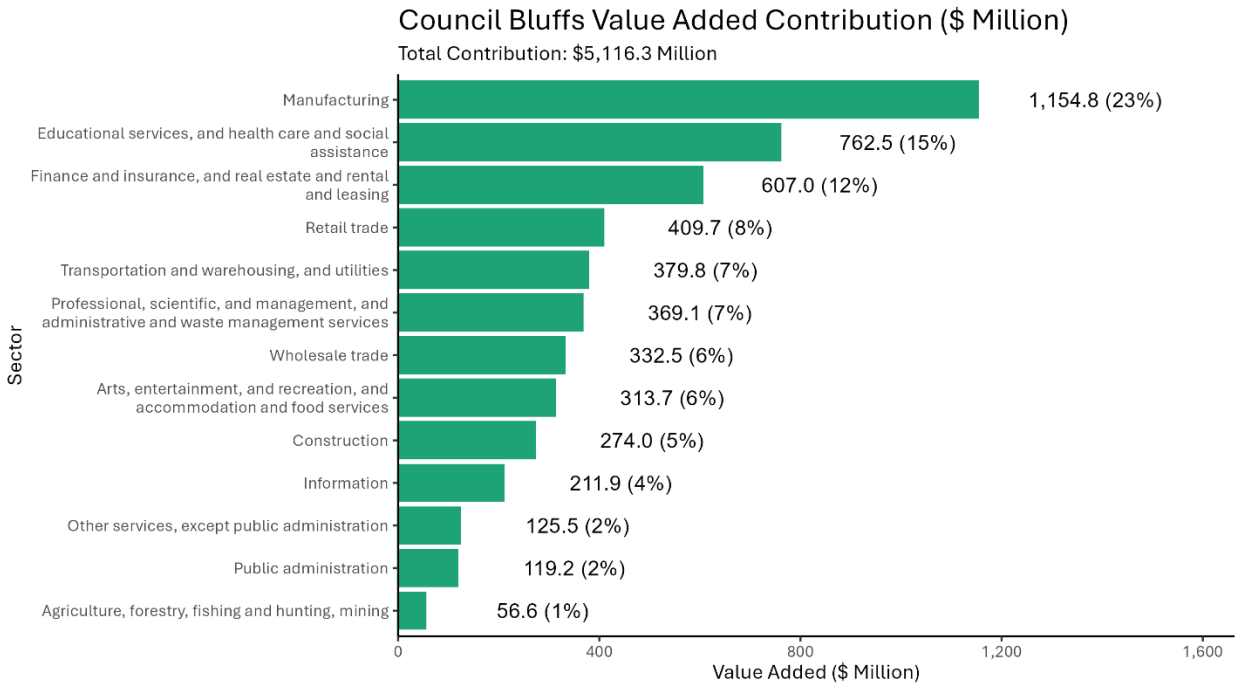

Figure 9. Council Bluffs Value Added Contribution by Sector

Council Bluffs had an extremely strong amenities score, with attractions such as the Union Pacific Railroad Museum, Lewis and Clark Monument, numerous parks and trails, and three casinos to enjoy. Council Bluffs provides accessible healthcare and childcare options, while also being near higher education opportunities such as Creighton University. Amenities and cultural attractions in Council Bluffs are estimated to contribute 345 jobs, $9.3 million in labor income, $18.4 million in value added, and $33.8 million in output to the city. After including effects from the rest of Pottawattamie County and Iowa, the total estimated contribution grows to 422 jobs, $13.1 million in labor income, $25.7 million in value added, and $48.4 million in output (Table 12).

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Table 12. Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Council Bluffs, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Council Bluffs, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	345	$ 9.3	$ 18.4	$ 33.8
Rest of County	70	$ 3.3	$ 6.5	$ 13.1
Rest of State	7	$ 0.4	$ 0.9	$ 1.5
Total	**422**	**$ 13.1**	**$ 25.7**	**$ 48.4**

In addition to other amenities and cultural attractions, Council Bluffs has several casinos that generate substantial economic activity. Due to Council Bluffs being the only city included as a case study that included casino activity, combined with the significant economic activity generated by casinos in the city, a separate analysis was conducted to break out casinos from other amenities for proper comparison. Casinos in Council Bluffs are estimated to employ a total of 358 workers and generate $17.8 million in labor income and $58.1 million in value added from $90.3 million in output in the city. After accounting for effects occurring in Pottawattamie County and the rest of Iowa, the total contribution of casinos in Council Bluffs grows to 529 jobs, $27.9 million in labor income, $76.0 million in value added, and $122.8 million in output (Table 13).

Table 13. Economic Contribution of Casinos in Council Bluffs, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Casinos in Council Bluffs, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	358	$ 17.8	$ 58.1	$ 90.3
Rest of County	156	$ 9.1	$ 16.0	$ 29.1
Rest of State	15	$ 0.9	$ 1.9	$ 3.3
Total	**529**	**$ 27.9**	**$ 76.0**	**$ 122.8**

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3.5 Corydon

3.5.1 Background

Corydon serves as the county seat of Wayne County in southern Iowa, with the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year average estimating that it has a population of 1,566. It embodies the characteristics of a small-town regional hub, providing essential public services, local retail, and healthcare access as it is home to the Wayne County Hospital. Corydon's housing situation is highlighted by a vacancy rate of 10% and a balanced mix of ownership (61.8%) and rental (38.2%) options. Corydon's placement in the Developing category reflects strong local amenities, while facing challenges related to population trends and economic diversification.

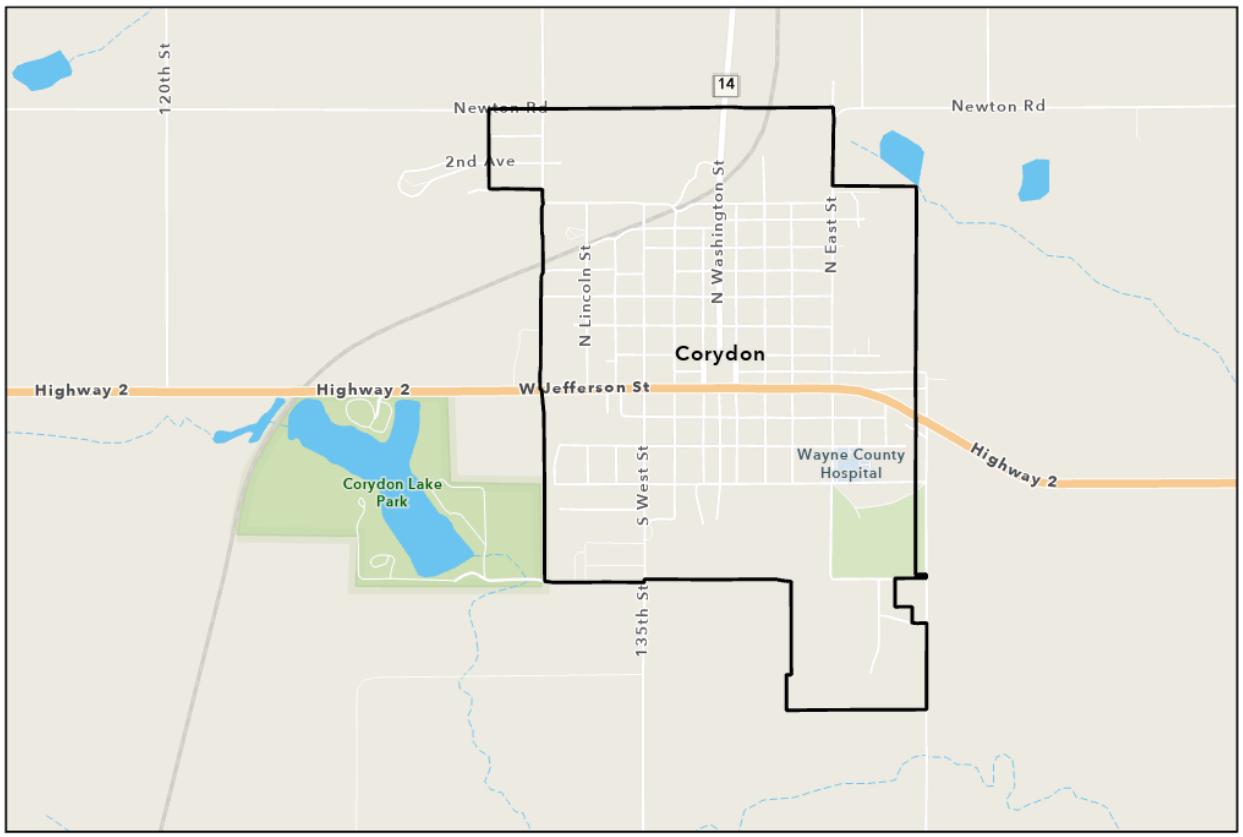

Figure 10. Map of Corydon

3.5.2 Economic Contribution

Economic activity in Corydon, Iowa is estimated to be $58.2 million in value added, resulting from $152.5 million in sales (output). An estimated 617 employees in the city earn a combined $31.9 million in labor income, for an average labor income of $51,663 per worker. Purchases from Corydon businesses and residents result in additional economic activity in Wayne County, estimated at 152 jobs, $6.3 million in labor income, $14.7 million in value added, and $30.8 million in output. Additional spending in the other 98 counties in Iowa results in an additional 137 jobs, $9.4 million in labor income, $18.2 million in value added, and $35.4 million in output throughout the rest of the state (Table 14).

Table 14. Economic Contribution of Corydon, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Corydon, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	617	$ 31.9	$ 58.2	$ 152.5
Rest of County	152	$ 6.3	$ 14.7	$ 30.8
Rest of State	137	$ 9.4	$ 18.2	$ 35.4
Total	**906**	**$ 47.6**	**$ 91.1**	**$ 218.7**

Economic activity in Corydon is estimated to generate $0.7 million in property tax revenue to the city, with an additional $1.3 million of property taxes paid in the rest of the county and $0.5 million generated in other cities in Iowa. Approximately $0.7 million in other local (city and county) tax revenue is raised, with $0.4 million of this total occurring within Corydon. An estimated $4.2 million in state tax revenue is generated, with $2.4 million tied directly to activities within the city and $1.8 million generated as a result of indirect and induced effects outside of the city (Table 15). For every dollar in property tax collected by Corydon, $82 in value added is generated in the city and $128 in value added is generated in Iowa.

Table 15. Tax Contribution of Corydon, Iowa

Tax Contribution of Corydon, Iowa			
Geography	Property Tax ($ Million)	Other Local Taxes ($ Million)	State Taxes ($ Million)
City	$ 0.7	$ 0.4	$ 2.4
Rest of County	$ 1.3	$ 0.2	$ 1.0
Rest of State	$ 0.5	$ 0.1	$ 0.8
Total	**$ 2.6**	**$ 0.7**	**$ 4.2**

Corydon's value added contribution of $91.1 million is around 0.034% of Iowa's total value added. Figure 11 shows the total contribution for Corydon (including activity in the rest of the county and Iowa) in terms of value added for each sector of the economy. Manufacturing is the largest sector in Corydon with an estimated value added contribution of $41.3 million, which makes up 45% of the city's total. This is followed

by educational services and health care with $12.5 million, retail trade with $9.0 million, and wholesale trade with $5.1 million.

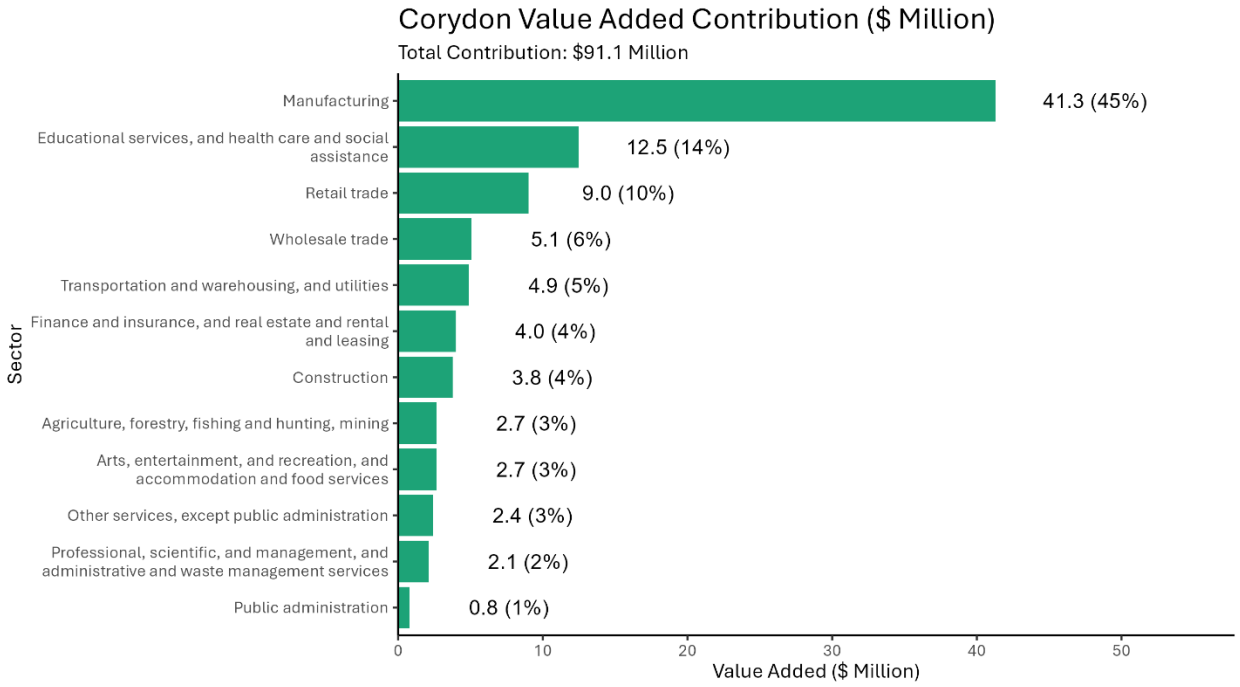

Figure 11. Corydon Value Added Contribution by Sector

Corydon Lake Park embraces the natural beauty of Corydon and is a great place for camping, fishing, trails, and other hobbies such as disc golf. Corydon also offers the Corydon Golf Course, Prairie Trails Museum, and Movies at Wayne Theatre. Amenities and cultural attractions in Corydon are estimated to contribute 4 jobs, $0.3 million in labor income, $0.4 million in value added, and $0.5 million in output to the city. After including effects from the rest of Wayne County and Iowa, the total estimated contribution grows to 5 jobs, $0.3 million in labor income, $0.5 million in value added, and $0.7 million in output (Table 16).

Table 16. Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Corydon, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Corydon, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	4	$ 0.3	$ 0.4	$ 0.5
Rest of County	1	$ 0.0	$ 0.1	$ 0.1
Rest of State	0	$ 0.0	$ 0.0	$ 0.1
Total	**5**	**$ 0.3**	**$ 0.5**	**$ 0.7**

3.6 Spencer

3.6.1 Background

Spencer is a notable regional hub in northwest Iowa, acting as a service center for surrounding rural counties. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year average estimates that Spencer has a population of 11,393. Its mix of retail, agriculture-related businesses, and small manufacturing positions it as a developing community. A brief interview with the Spencer Chamber of Commerce provided insight into the overall economic climate of the city as well as some challenges and development goals. Although the official population is less than 12,000, the chamber of commerce estimates that nearly 78,000 people use Spencer to conduct business, displaying its economic importance to northwest Iowa. Spencer's main challenges are ones that other small cities share, which are: childcare, healthcare, and housing. Housing is a major issue, with about 65% of the housing stock impacted in some way by recent flooding. Though healthcare is seen as a challenge, the Spencer hospital just finished an $18.5 million investment.

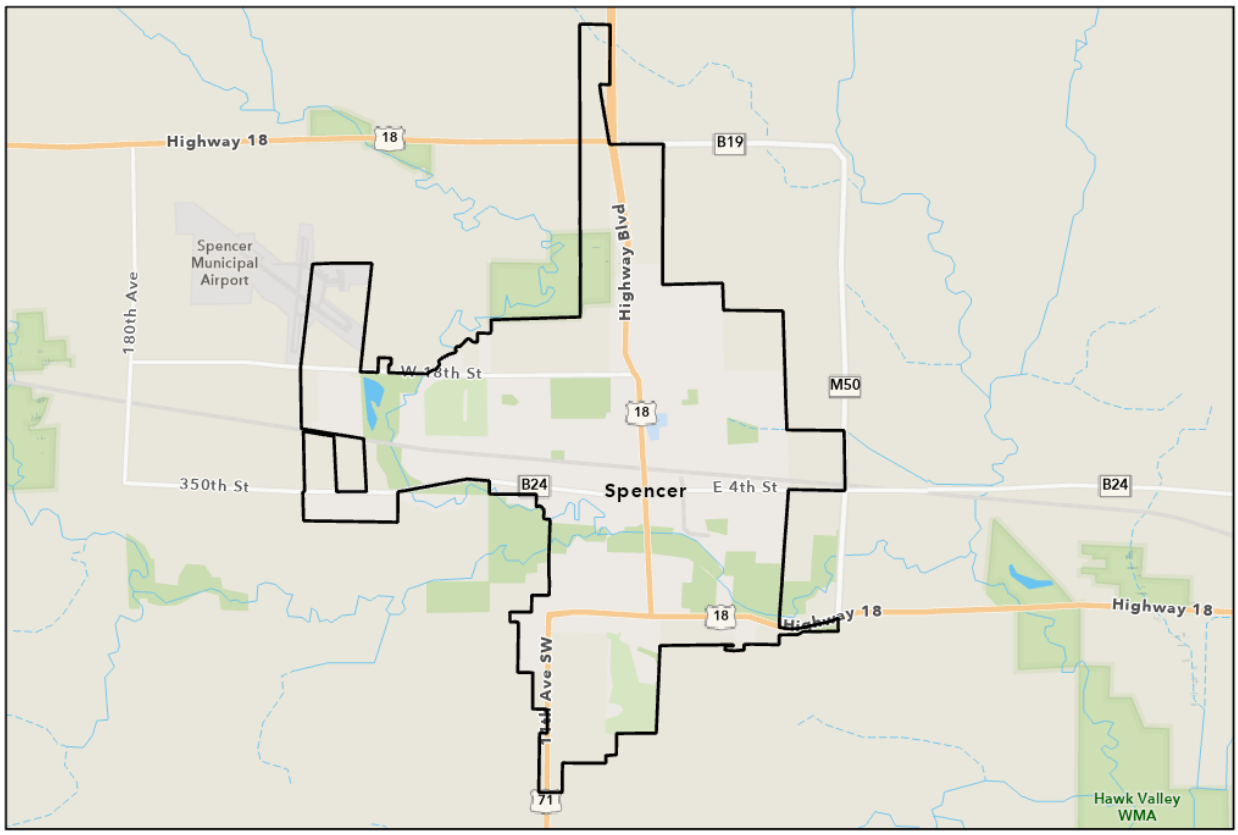

Figure 12. Map of Spencer

3.6.2 Economic Contribution

Economic activity in Spencer, Iowa is estimated to be $536.5 million in value added, resulting from nearly $1.1 billion in sales (output). An estimated 5,581 employees in the city earn a combined $344.8 million in labor income, for an average labor income of $61,780 per worker. Purchases from Spencer businesses and residents result in additional economic activity in Clay County, estimated at 2,522 jobs, $138.8 million in labor income, $282.5 million in value added, and $527.9 million in output. Additional spending in the other 98 counties in Iowa results in an additional 817 jobs, $49.8 million in labor income, $97.6 million in value added, and $186.0 million in output throughout the rest of the state (Table 17).

Table 17. Economic Contribution of Spencer, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Spencer, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	5,581	$ 344.8	$ 536.5	$ 1,090.3
Rest of County	2,522	$ 138.8	$ 282.5	$ 527.9
Rest of State	817	$ 49.8	$ 97.6	$ 186.0
Total	**8,920**	**$ 533.4**	**$ 916.6**	**$ 1,804.2**

Economic activity in Spencer is estimated to generate $7.3 million in property tax revenue to the city, with an additional $9.0 million of property taxes paid in the rest of the county and $3.0 million generated in other cities in Iowa. Approximately $4.4 million in other local (city and county) tax revenue is raised, with $2.4 million of this total occurring within Spencer. An estimated $58.4 million in state tax revenue is generated, with $33.2 million tied directly to activities within the city and $25.2 million generated as a result of indirect and induced effects outside of the city (Table 18). For every dollar in property tax collected by Spencer, $73 in value added is generated in the city and $125 in value added is generated in Iowa.

Table 18. Tax Contribution of Spencer, Iowa

Tax Contribution of Spencer, Iowa			
Geography	Property Tax ($ Million)	Other Local Taxes ($ Million)	State Taxes ($ Million)
City	$ 7.3	$ 2.4	$ 33.2
Rest of County	$ 9.0	$ 1.5	$ 20.8
Rest of State	$ 3.0	$ 0.5	$ 4.4
Total	**$ 19.4**	**$ 4.4**	**$ 58.4**

Spencer's value added contribution of $916.6 million is around 0.34% of Iowa's total value added. Figure 13 shows the total contribution for Spencer (including activity in the rest of the county and Iowa) in terms of value added for each sector of the economy. Spencer has a balanced economy, with 4 sectors making up at least 10% of the city's value added and no sector making up more than 25%. Educational services and health care is the largest sector in Spencer with an estimated value added contribution of $195.6 million, which

makes up 21% of the city's total. This is followed by manufacturing with $151.5 million, retail trade with $119.9 million, and transportation and warehousing, and utilities with $94.4 million.

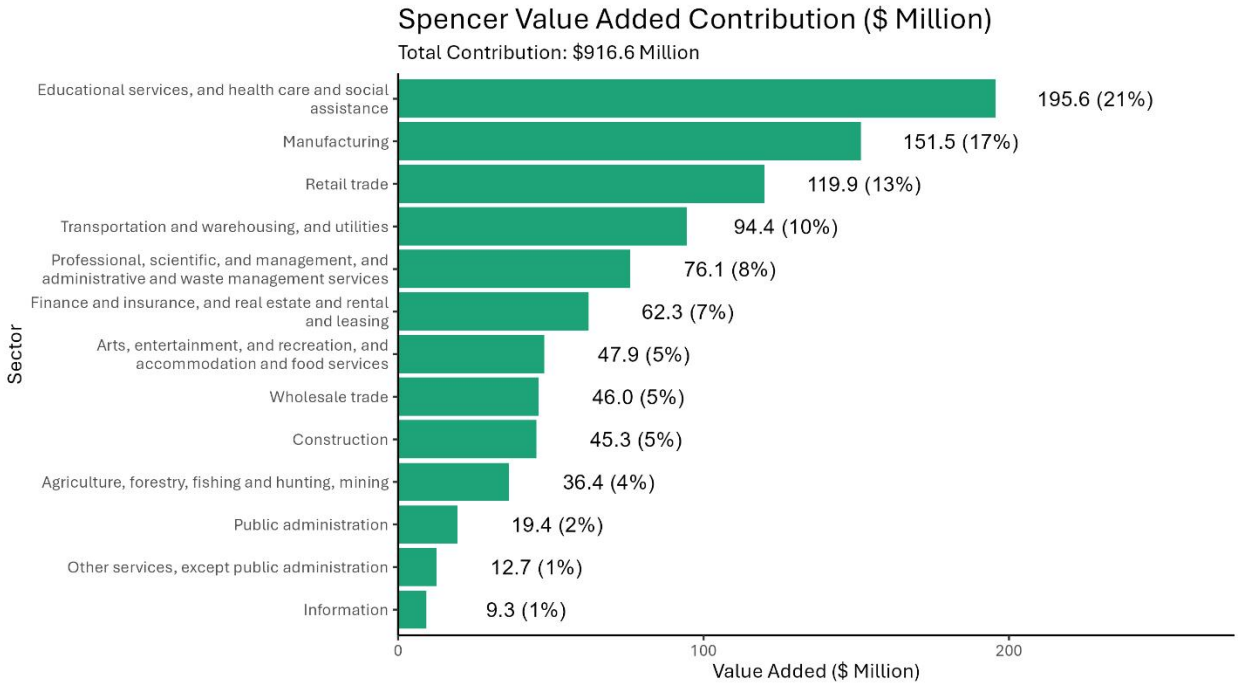

Figure 13. Spencer Value Added Contribution by Sector

The cultural attractions in Spencer are headlined by Arts on Grand, a vibrant art gallery that showcases artwork from both local and regional artists, and the Clay County Heritage Center, which highlights the rich history of Clay County. In addition, East Leach Park and West Leach Field provide an opportunity for Spencer residents to enjoy the natural landscape of the area. Amenities and cultural attractions in Spencer are estimated to contribute 97 jobs, $2.2 million in labor income, $5.7 million in value added, and $11.9 million in output to the city. After including effects from the rest of Clay County and Iowa, the total estimated contribution grows to 134 jobs, $3.8 million in labor income, $9.0 million in value added, and $19.0 million in output (Table 19).

Table 19. Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Spencer, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Spencer, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	97	$ 2.2	$ 5.7	$ 11.9
Rest of County	30	$ 1.2	$ 2.5	$ 5.7
Rest of State	7	$ 0.4	$ 0.8	$ 1.3
Total	**134**	**$ 3.8**	**$ 9.0**	**$ 19.0**

3.7 Decorah

3.7.1 Background

Decorah, located in northeast Iowa, is the largest city in and county seat of Winneshiek County. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year average estimates that Decorah has a population of 7,597. Over 46% of Decorah's residents have attained at least a bachelor's degree which shows the community is comprised of educated workers. Decorah's housing stock is predominantly older, with only 4% of total housing units built since 2010. Decorah is known for its amenities, and recognized for its strong cultural identity, tourism activity, and presence of Luther College. As the home of the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, Decorah attracts visitors and new residents looking to enjoy its natural amenities, vibrant downtown environment, and community institutions. While Decorah benefits from the presence of Luther College and cultural amenities, its overall production size, limited labor market scale, and housing constraints contribute to it being included as a foundational community.

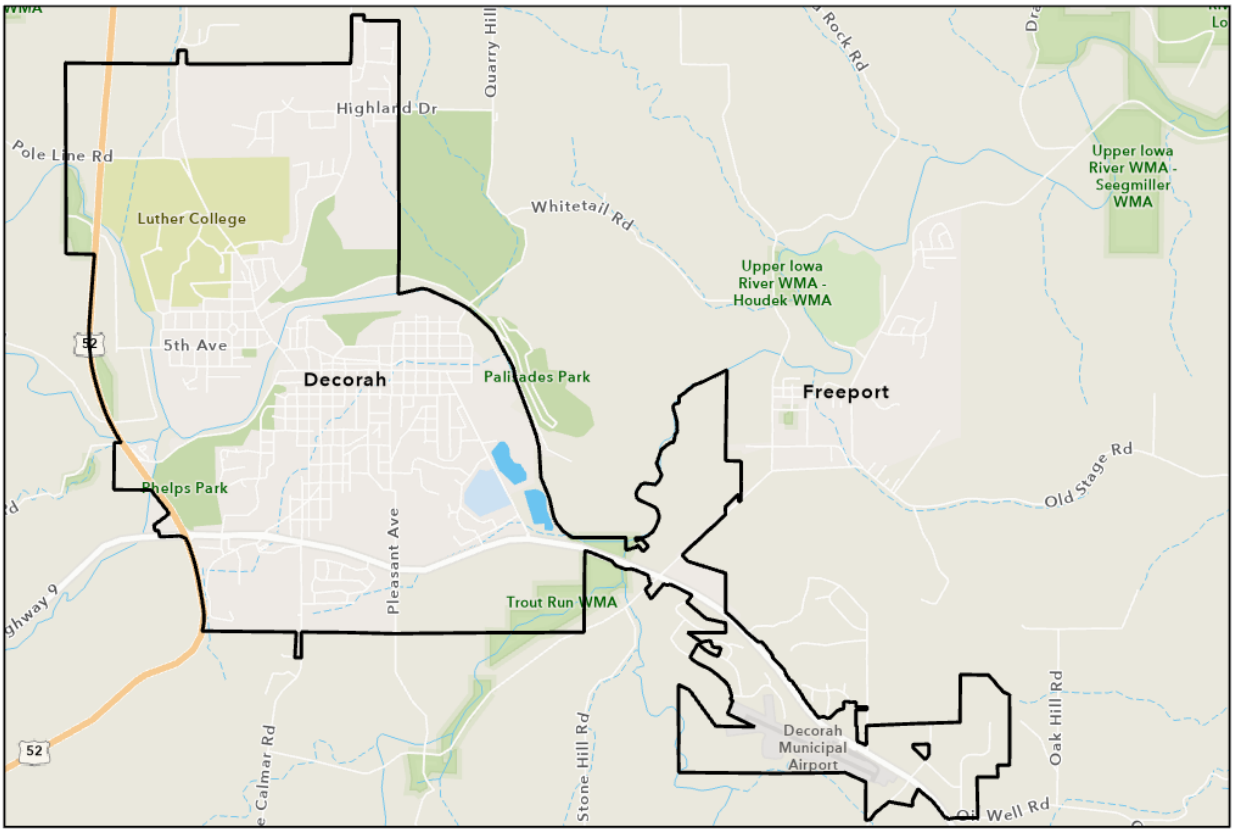

Figure 14. Map of Decorah

3.7.2 Economic Contribution

Economic activity in Decorah, Iowa is estimated to be $349.8 million in value added, resulting from $676.8 million in sales (output). An estimated 4,224 employees in the city earn a combined $241.6 million in labor income, for an average labor income of $57,185 per worker. Purchases from Decorah businesses and residents result in additional economic activity in Winneshiek County, estimated at 1,572 jobs, $75.1 million in labor income, $151.2 million in value added, and $280.5 million in output. Additional spending in the other 98 counties in Iowa results in an additional 312 jobs, $19.9 million in labor income, $40.6 million in value added, and $79.4 million in output throughout the rest of the state (Table 20).

Table 20. Economic Contribution of Decorah, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Decorah, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	4,224	$ 241.6	$ 349.8	$ 676.8
Rest of County	1,572	$ 75.1	$ 151.2	$ 280.5
Rest of State	312	$ 19.9	$ 40.6	$ 79.4
Total	**6,108**	**$ 336.6**	**$ 541.7**	**$ 1,036.7**

Economic activity in Decorah is estimated to generate $6.7 million in property tax revenue to the city, with an additional $7.9 million of property taxes paid in the rest of the county and $1.4 million generated in other cities in Iowa. Approximately $2.7 million in other local (city and county) tax revenue is raised, with $1.5 million of this total occurring within Decorah. An estimated $27.2 million in state tax revenue is generated, with $15.5 million tied directly to activities within the city and $11.7 million generated as a result of indirect and induced effects outside of the city (Table 21). For every dollar in property tax collected by Decorah, $52 in value added is generated in the city and $81 in value added is generated in Iowa.

Table 21. Tax Contribution of Decorah, Iowa

Tax Contribution of Decorah, Iowa			
Geography	Property Tax ($ Million)	Other Local Taxes ($ Million)	State Taxes ($ Million)
City	$ 6.7	$ 1.5	$ 15.5
Rest of County	$ 7.9	$ 1.0	$ 9.8
Rest of State	$ 1.4	$ 0.2	$ 1.9
Total	**$ 15.9**	**$ 2.7**	**$ 27.2**

Decorah's value added contribution of $541.7 million is around 0.20% of Iowa's total value added. Figure 15 shows the total contribution for Decorah (including activity in the rest of the county and Iowa) in terms of value added for each sector of the economy. Educational Services and Health Care is the largest sector in Decorah with an estimated value added contribution of $188.3 million (35%), followed by manufacturing

with $103.1 million (19%). Retail trade, construction, and finance and real estate each make up around 7% of the city's total with a value added contribution of $37.7 million, $37.1 million, and $36.2 million respectively.

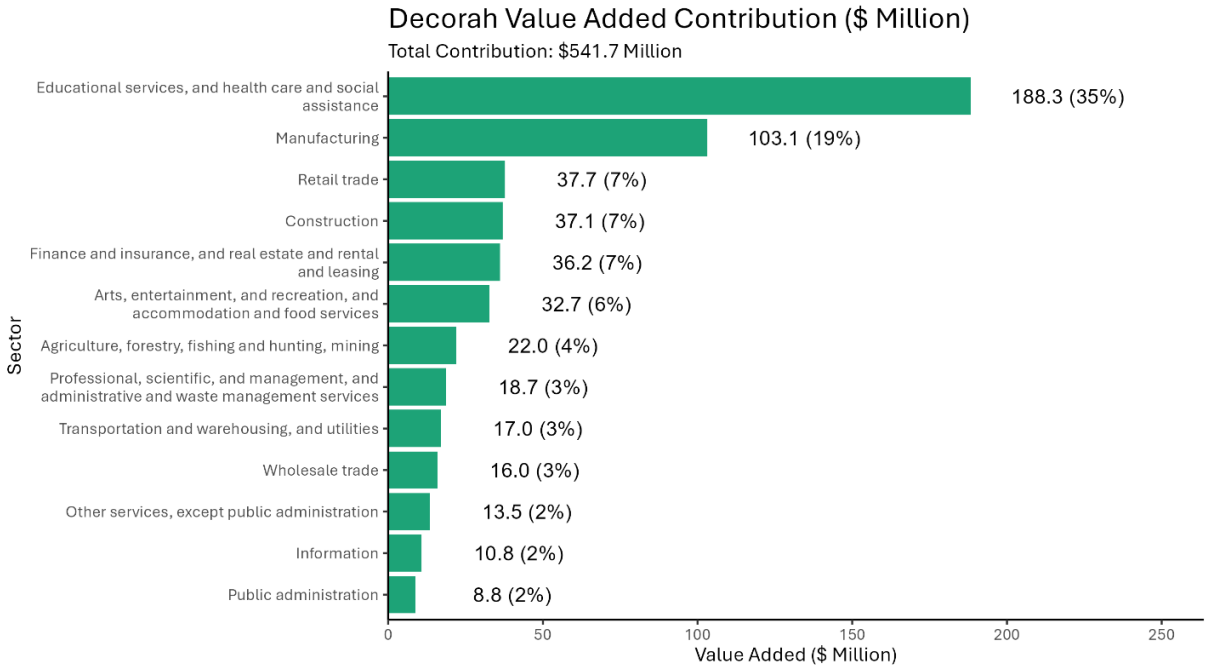

Figure 15. Decorah Value Added Contribution by Sector

Decorah is a treasure trove of cultural attractions that focus on celebrating the Norwegian-American heritage and the natural beauty of the region. The Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum is popular for those interested in learning about their culture and immigrant journey. Dunning's Spring Park is home to a scenic waterfall and Trout Run Trail offers a great way for bikers, hikers, and birdwatchers to take in Decorah's rivers, forests, and rolling hills. Amenities and cultural attractions in Decorah are estimated to contribute 122 jobs, $1.8 million in labor income, $3.3 million in value added, and $8.8 million in output to the city. After including effects from the rest of Winneshiek County and Iowa, the total estimated contribution grows to 172 jobs, $3.2 million in labor income, $5.9 million in value added, and $14.5 million in output (Table 22).

Table 22. Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Decorah, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Decorah, Iowa								
Geography	Jobs		Labor Income ($ Million)		Value Added ($ Million)		Output ($ Million)	
City	122	$	1.8	$	3.3	$	8.8	
Rest of County	43	$	1.0	$	1.9	$	4.4	
Rest of State	7	$	0.3	$	0.6	$	1.3	
Total	**172**	**$**	**3.2**	**$**	**5.9**	**$**	**14.5**	

3.8 Kimballton

3.8.1 Background

Kimballton is a small, rural town in western Iowa. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year average estimates it has a population of 294. Kimballton exemplifies a Foundational community due to its small population, limited employment base, restricted housing stock, and constrained access to amenities. Kimballton has a high vacancy rate of 21% with very few homes built since 2010. Its size and location contribute to its limited local services, with residents often relying on other cities in Audubon County or the surrounding area for employment, healthcare, and retail activity. Kimballton's placement in the "Foundational" category reflects the structural challenges common to very small rural communities, including limited population growth and constrained local markets, while still retaining the strengths and identity that define rural Iowa communities.

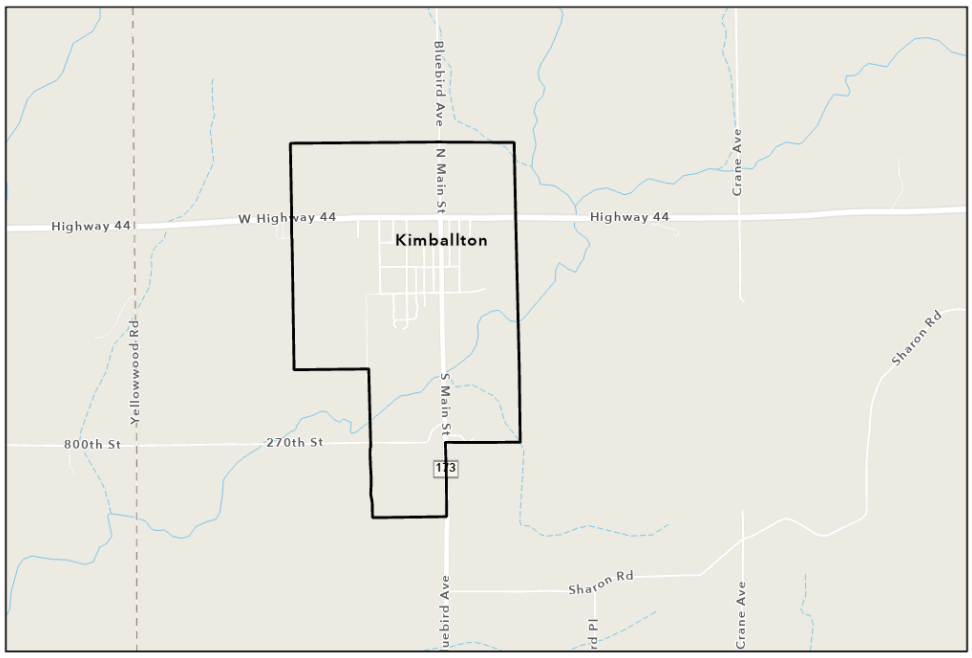

Figure 16. Map of Kimballton

3.8.2 Economic Contribution

Economic activity in Kimballton, Iowa is estimated to be $7.7 million in value added, resulting from $17.0 million in sales (output). An estimated 93 employees in the city earn a combined $4.7 million in labor income, for an average labor income of $50,746 per worker. Purchases from Kimballton businesses and residents result in additional economic activity in Audubon County, estimated at 25 jobs, $1.2 million in labor income, $2.7 million in value added, and $5.0 million in output. Additional spending in the other 98 counties in Iowa results in an additional 18 jobs, $1.2 million in labor income, $2.4 million in value added, and $4.6 million in output throughout the rest of the state (Table 23).

Table 23. Economic Contribution of Kimballton, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Kimballton, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income ($ Million)	Value Added ($ Million)	Output ($ Million)
City	93	$ 4.7	$ 7.7	$ 17.0
Rest of County	25	$ 1.2	$ 2.7	$ 5.0
Rest of State	18	$ 1.2	$ 2.4	$ 4.6
Total	**136**	**$ 7.2**	**$ 12.8**	**$ 26.6**

Economic activity in Kimballton is estimated to generate $0.1 million in property tax revenue to the city, with an additional $0.2 million of property taxes paid in the rest of the county and $0.1 million generated in other cities in Iowa. Approximately $0.1 million in other local (city and county) tax revenue is raised. An estimated $0.5 million in state tax revenue is generated, with $0.3 million tied directly to activities within the city and $0.2 million generated as a result of indirect and induced effects outside of the city (Table 24). For every dollar in property tax collected by Kimballton, $84 in value added is generated in the city and $140 in value added is generated in Iowa.

Table 24. Tax Contribution of Kimballton, Iowa

Tax Contribution of Kimballton, Iowa			
Geography	Property Tax ($ Million)	Other Local Taxes ($ Million)	State Taxes ($ Million)
City	$ 0.1	$ 0.0	$ 0.3
Rest of County	$ 0.2	$ 0.0	$ 0.1
Rest of State	$ 0.1	$ 0.0	$ 0.1
Total	**$ 0.4**	**$ 0.1**	**$ 0.5**

Kimballton's value added contribution of $12.8 million is around 0.005% of Iowa's total value added. Figure 17 shows the total contribution for Kimballton (including activity in the rest of the county and Iowa) in terms of value added for each sector of the economy. Kimballton has a balanced economy, with 5 sectors making up at least 10% of the city's value added and no sector making up more than 20%. These 5 sectors are: manufacturing with a value added contribution of $2.1 million, professional services with $1.5 million, educational services and health care with $1.5 million, construction with $1.4 million, and agriculture with $1.4 million.

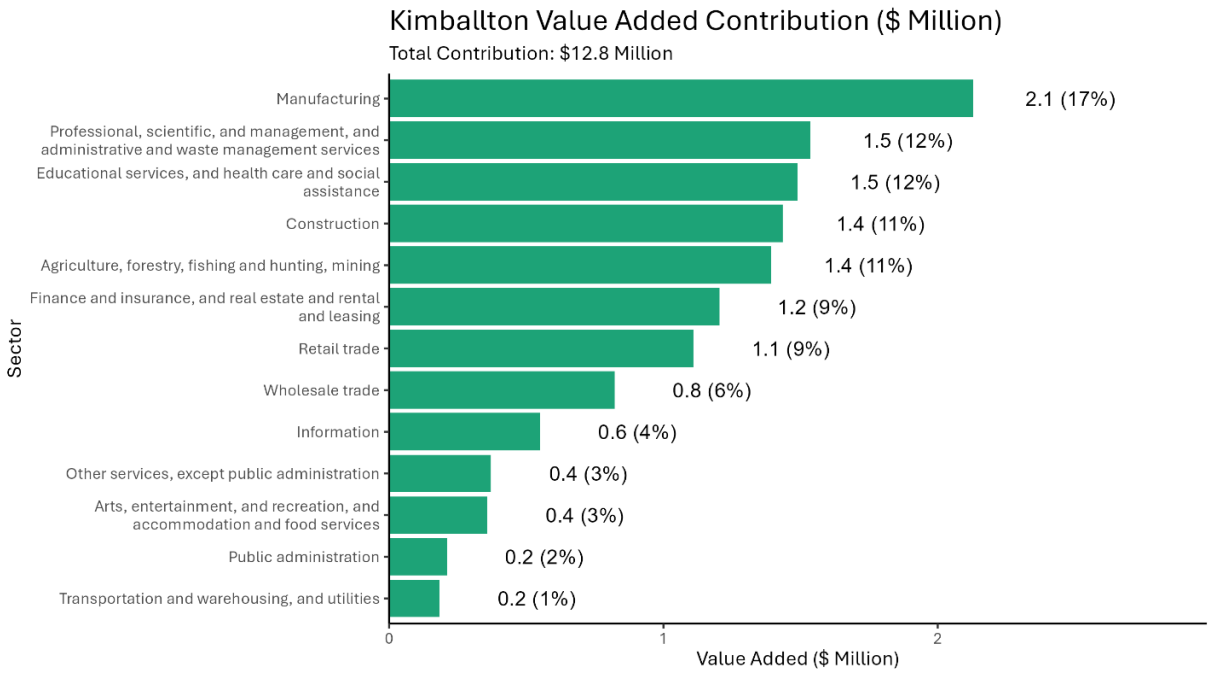

Figure 17. Kimballton Value Added Contribution by Sector

Much of Kimballton's cultural attractions celebrate Danish heritage. The Little Mermaid Statue Garden is in Kimballton, but nearby Elk Horn offers the Danish Windmill Museum, Museum of Danish America, Bedstemor's House, and Danish Countryside Vines and Wines to residents. Amenities and cultural attractions in Kimballton are estimated to contribute 1 job, $20,068 in labor income, $36,999 in value added, and $66,836 in output to the city. After including effects from the rest of Audubon County and Iowa, the total estimated contribution is 1 job, $25,201 in labor income, $47,887 in value added, and $89,711 in output (Table 25).

Table 25. Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Kimballton, Iowa

Economic Contribution of Amenities and Cultural Attractions in Kimballton, Iowa				
Geography	Jobs	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
City	1	$ 20,068	$ 36,999	$ 66,836
Rest of County	0	$ 3,788	$ 8,078	$ 18,025
Rest of State	0	$ 1,345	$ 2,810	$ 4,851
Total	**1**	**$ 25,201**	**$ 47,887**	**$ 89,711**

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4 Conclusion

As demonstrated in the case studies, Iowa cities vary greatly across many characteristics (geography, size, strength of economic sectors, and much more) that may make absolute comparison ranking difficult. Table 26 shows some calculated statistics (normalized to property tax collected or number of workers) that allow for some comparison among the selected cities. The first two values are the value added generated directly by the city and the value added generated across the state by the activities in each city divided by that city's property taxes. The average value added generated per property tax dollar is $96 directly and $160 total. Bennett is a notable outlier due to its low city property tax compared to the other cities, even after controlling for population. There is less variation in the total value added generated per worker in each city, which ranges from just under $83,000 in Decorah and Kimballton to more than $134,000 in Dallas Center. Total output (sales) per worker ranges from $160,218 in Decorah to $287,347 in Bennett, with an average value of $226,945.

Table 26. Comparison Indicators of Case Study Cities

Comparison Indicators of Case Study Cities				
City	Direct Value Added per $ of Property Tax	Total Value Added per $ of Property Tax	Total Value Added per Worker	Total Output per Worker
Bennett	$ 211	$ 365	$ 117,966	$ 287,347
Corydon	$ 82	$ 128	$ 94,362	$ 247,209
Council Bluffs	$ 59	$ 92	$ 107,651	$ 235,035
Dallas Center	$ 103	$ 171	$ 134,493	$ 236,571
Decorah	$ 52	$ 81	$ 82,823	$ 160,218
Kimballton	$ 84	$ 140	$ 82,977	$ 182,718
Mason City	$ 105	$ 181	$ 128,321	$ 271,103
Spencer	$ 73	$ 125	$ 96,133	$ 195,362

Table 27 shows the same indicators as above for each development category (calculated as the average of the two cities in each category). All of the calculated indicators generally increase as the cities move from foundational to robust, with the exception of property taxes in the maturing category due to the outlier in Bennett. However, the values below show that all types of cities generate significant value added relative to the tax dollars they collect, and workers in all categories generate notable economic activity.

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Table 27. Comparison Indicators of City Categories

Comparison Indicators of City Categories				
Category	Direct Value Added per $ of Property Tax	Total Value Added per $ of Property Tax	Total Value Added per Worker	Total Output per Worker
Robust	$ 104	$ 176	$ 131,407	$ 253,837
Maturing	$ 135	$ 229	$ 112,808	$ 261,191
Developing	$ 78	$ 127	$ 95,248	$ 221,286
Foundational	$ 68	$ 110	$ 82,900	$ 171,468

The economic multipliers calculated from each city's economic contribution are shown in Table 28. Multipliers are calculated as the total contribution divided by the direct contribution for each indicator in each city. For example, Bennett's employment multiplier of 1.72 means that for every job in Bennett, an additional 0.72 jobs are supported outside of Bennett[2]. Similarly, Council Bluffs' value added multiplier of 1.56 means that for every dollar of value added generated in the city, $0.56 of value added is supported in the rest of the state through indirect and induced effects. Generally, the multipliers of the selected cities are consistently around 1.45 to 1.70, with the smallest multiplier at 1.39 (labor income in Decorah) and the largest multiplier at 1.79 (employment in Mason City).

Table 28. City Economic Multipliers

City Economic Multipliers				
City	Employment Multiplier	Labor Income Multiplier	Value Added Multiplier	Output Multiplier
Bennett	1.72	1.53	1.73	1.58
Corydon	1.47	1.49	1.57	1.43
Council Bluffs	1.50	1.47	1.56	1.48
Dallas Center	1.65	1.56	1.66	1.65
Decorah	1.45	1.39	1.55	1.53
Kimballton	1.47	1.52	1.66	1.57
Mason City	1.79	1.59	1.72	1.62
Spencer	1.60	1.55	1.71	1.65

The multipliers by category (calculated as the average of the two cities in each category) are shown in Table 29. Robust cities tend to have larger multipliers than maturing cities, which tend to have larger multipliers than developing cities, and foundational cities tend to have the smallest multipliers. Output multipliers are the exception, with maturing, developing, and foundational cities all having a similar value.

[2] Note that, while some of this external activity occurs in rural areas outside of any city, some also occurs in other cities, meaning that these values cannot be generalized to a statewide multiplier effect.

Table 29. Economic Multipliers by Category

Economic Multipliers by Category				
Category	Employment Multiplier	Labor Income Multiplier	Value Added Multiplier	Output Multiplier
Robust	1.72	1.58	1.69	1.64
Maturing	1.61	1.50	1.64	1.53
Developing	1.53	1.52	1.64	1.54
Foundational	1.46	1.46	1.60	1.55

These relatively large multiplier values show that cities in Iowa are highly interconnected and rely on each other, with even small cities having a notable impact outside of their boundaries. The density and diversity of Iowa's cities, along with their variety in amenities, means that weaknesses or deficiencies in some cities can be compensated by strengths in neighboring cities. The diversity of Iowa's cities in terms of demographics, economics, and amenities contributes to statewide stability. It takes all of Iowa's cities to make the state what it is today.

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5 Methodology

Below is an outline of how the estimation of economic contribution from selected Iowa cities to the Iowa economy was undertaken.

5.1 Characterization of Iowa Cities

A large number of cities with such a wide range in population means local strengths, needs and contributions to the state's economy and wellbeing vary considerably. To enable a meaningful analysis, the 938 cities in Iowa have been characterized, which has allowed the remaining elements of this to take place. We have worked with the Iowa League of Cities to characterize Iowa's cities and using the following criteria:

- Population
- Geography
- Diversification of local industry
- Prevalence of and proximity to key infrastructure resources
- Presence of cultural attractions
    - Public parks and recreation
    - Commercial recreation
- Prevalence of and proximity to higher education opportunities
- Proximity to a larger metropolitan area
- Presence of uncommon amenities

To characterize Iowa's cities, we have utilized publications and datasets from the following sources:

- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
- Iowa Department of Workforce Development
- Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Iowa Department of Revenue
- Communication with Iowa League of Cities
- Iowa Department of Transportation
- Spatial imagery (i.e., Google Earth, ArcGIS, etc.)
- IMPLAN modeling software and dataset(s)

The objective of this analysis has been to develop a typology of Iowa's 938 cities to better understand how local demographic, economic, education, healthcare, housing, and childcare characteristics, as well as cultural attractions and recreational activities vary across the state and how these factors impact the economic contribution of cities to the state of Iowa. After initial review, all unincorporated cities and census-designated places (CDPs) were removed to ensure comparability among incorporated cities. This analysis evaluated all incorporated cities in Iowa to classify communities into four development categories:

- **Robust**: Economically diverse cities with strong education and housing indicators
- **Maturing**: Balanced cities with steady economies, moderate diversity, varied industries, and reasonable access to amenities
- **Developing**: Emerging showing improvement or mixed performance across key indicators
- **Foundational**: Cities facing increased economic headwinds across key indicators

Data was compiled primarily from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 2019-2023 5-year Estimates[3], using the following detailed profile and subject tables:

- DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics
- DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics
- DP05: Demographic and Housing Estimates
- S1501: Educational Attainment
- S2405: Industry by Occupation for the Civilian Employed Population

Each ACS dataset was cleaned and merged in Excel using Power Query, with duplicate cities removed. To facilitate cross-variable comparison, all continuous variables were normalized, placing all values on a standardized scale from 0-1. Additional variables such as proximity to higher education opportunities, access to healthcare, availability of childcare, cultural attractions, and recreational activities were obtained through SalesGenie[4] queries using related NAICS codes.

To capture a multidimensional view of community characteristics, variables were grouped into five primary domains:

1. **Demographics**
    a. Median age; Percent under 18 years of age; Percent over 65 years of age
    b. Racial and ethnic make-up
    c. Educational attainment
2. **Employment and Economy**
    a. Unemployment rate
    b. Median household income and poverty rate
    c. Percent employed by industry
3. **Housing**
    a. Total housing units
    b. Vacancy rate
    c. Median home value
    d. Median gross rent

[3] https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

[4] https://www.salesgenie.com/

e. Percent owner-occupied and renter-occupied
f. Percent of units built after 2010

4. **Size**
    a. Total population
    b. Total employed population
5. **Amenities**
    a. Proximity to higher education
    b. Access to healthcare
    c. Availability of childcare
    d. Access to cultural attractions and recreational activities

Five primary category scores (based on the numbered items above) were constructed, each representing a distinct aspect of community conditions. The **Demographics** variables were directionally aligned, meaning each metric was oriented so that higher values consistently represented stronger community performance. For example, a variable like educational attainment was kept in its natural positive direction, while variables such as poverty or unemployment-where higher values represent challenges-were reversed so that lower rates improved a community's score. By standardizing the direction of all inputs in this way, the index avoids contradictory signals and ensures comparability across communities.

The **Employment & Economy** category includes variables such as labor force participation, unemployment rate, median earnings, industry diversity, and job accessibility. Each variable was first directionally aligned so that higher values consistently represented stronger economic performance. Metrics where higher values indicate challenges (e.g., unemployment) were reversed. After alignment, all variables were converted to z-scores[5], a statistical measure that indicates how many standard deviations a data point is from the mean of its distribution. A z-score of "0" is the mean, while a positive z-score represents values above the mean and a negative z-score represents values below the mean. This allowed each indicator to be measured relative to the statewide distribution. Individual z-scores were then averaged to produce a single composite Employment & Economy score for each community.

Similar to the other categories, each metric for the **Housing** category was directionally aligned so that higher values reflected stronger housing conditions. All indicators were standardized using z-score normalization, placing each on a comparable scale. These standardized values were averaged to generate a single Housing category score. This approach ensures that no single metric dominates the category simply due to measurement scale or natural variance.

The **Size** category measures a community's scale using core population metrics, such as total population and total employed population. Because these variables have large numerical ranges and a positively-skewed distribution, they were normalized using a min–max standardization approach rather than z-scores. This method rescales each metric to a uniform 0–1 range based on the observed minimum and maximum values

[5] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5614-7_3826

across all communities. Min–max standardization is well-suited for size-related variables because it preserves proportional differences while preventing larger cities from overwhelming the composite index. The normalized size indicators were then averaged to produce a final Size score for each city.

The **Amenities** category is designed to capture how well each community supports residents' daily quality of life through access to essential services and cultural opportunities. The Amenities category integrates one count-based variable (childcare) and three distance-based measures (higher education, healthcare, and cultural/recreational attractions). Childcare availability was modeled using a count of providers per capita because parents often use childcare near where they live or work and because childcare shortages stem from insufficient slots, staffing challenges, and limited facility space so using a count of providers per capita captures local capacity constraints directly. Higher education, healthcare, cultural attractions, and recreational activities were measured using a distance-based approach because residents are still likely to take advantage of these services if they are in a nearby or neighboring city. The Haversine[6] formula was used to calculate each city's distance to its nearest amenity location. These distances were normalized so that shorter distances translated into higher scores. To combine the childcare count-based approach and the distance-based approach used for the other variables, each metric was standardized using z-scores then averaged to generate the final Amenities score.

5.2 Selection of Case Studies

Once Iowa's cities were characterized into the appropriate "buckets", the DIS team worked with the Iowa League of Cities to select the cities best suited for inclusion as case studies. Eight cities were selected as case studies according to the criteria in Section 5.1.

All five category scores were standardized using a weighted composite score to reflect the relative importance of each variable. The variables received the following weights:

- **Demographic: 0.5**
- **Employment/Economy: 2**
- **Housing: 1**
- **Size: 1**
- **Amenities: 1**

Employment/Economy received the highest weight given its direct connection to economic contribution, while housing, size, and amenities had the same weight due to a similar level of importance. Demographics received the lowest weight because it has the smallest direct impact on the economy but is important when accurately characterizing each city.

The four city development categories were separated using a standard deviation based on the weighted composite z-score with the ranges being:

[6] https://www.math.ksu.edu/~dbski/writings/haversine.pdf

- **Robust**: 0.79-2.7
- **Maturing**: -0.0091-0.78
- **Developing**: -0.78- -0.0092
- **Foundational**: -4.3- -0.79

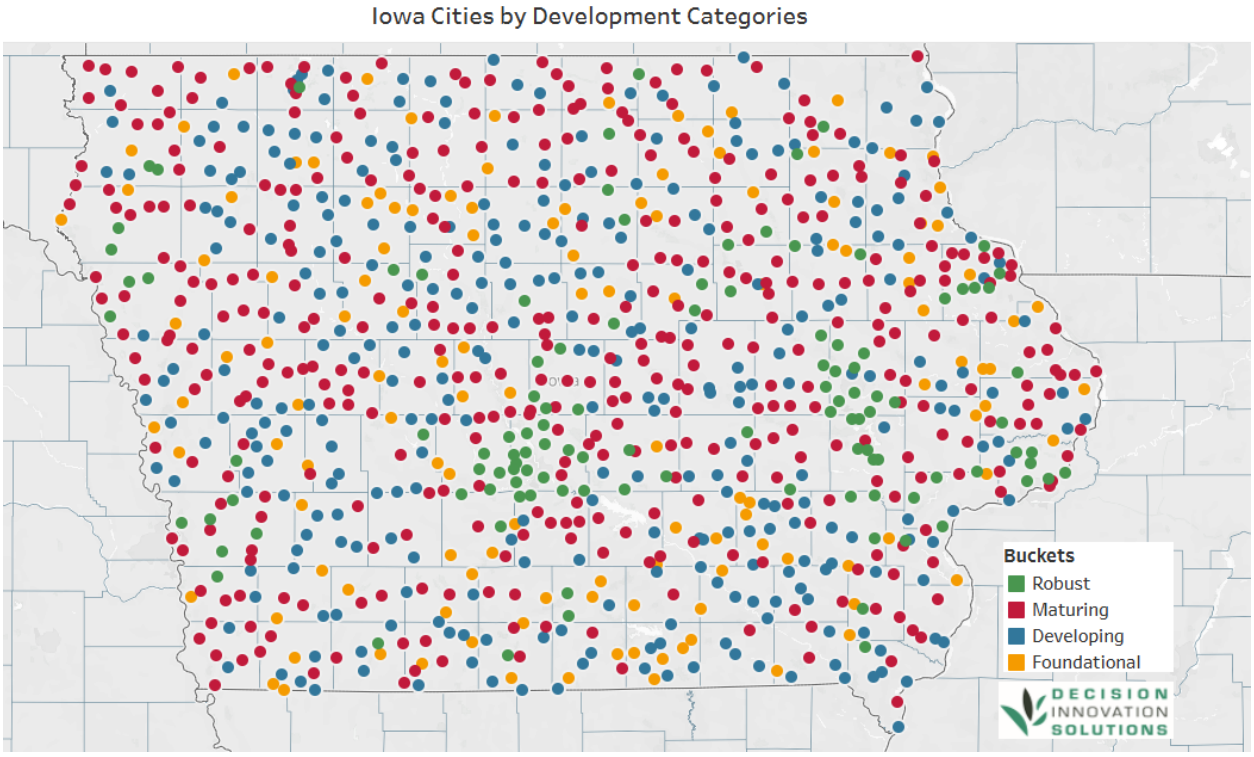

Figure 18. Iowa Cities Separated into Development Categories

After sharing the full list of cities and their associated composite scores with the Iowa League of Cities, the following cities were selected as case studies for each of the four categories:

- **Robust**
  - Dallas Center
  - Mason City
- **Maturing**
  - Bennett
  - Council Bluffs
- **Developing**
  - Corydon
  - Spencer
- **Foundational**
  - Decorah
  - Kimballton

5.3 City Economic Contribution Methodology

5.3.1 Economic Impact and Contribution Modeling Terms

This study was conducted using a combination of IMPLAN and Microsoft Excel. IMPLAN is an input-output model used to understand industry relationships and conduct economic assessments for specified local economies. IMPLAN datasets are constructed annually and are derived from many different sources, including the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Benchmark Input-Output Account of the U.S., the BEA output estimates, the U.S. Census Bureau's economic censuses and surveys, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's census, and more.

Within IMPLAN, the effects of an economic impact or contribution event are expressed in terms of direct, indirect, and induced effects. These different effect types are defined as follows:

- **Direct Effects:** The economic activity directly attributable to the industry under analysis; in this study, the operations of all businesses and other organizations present within each studied city
- **Indirect Effects:** The effects of local inter-industry spending throughout the supply chain, for example, the equipment, energy, and other inputs used by a local business to produce their goods and services
- **Induced Effects:** The results of employees of the directly and indirectly affected industries spending their income throughout the local economy
- **Total Effect:** The sum of direct, indirect, and induced effects

In this study, the contribution of each city was modeled across three geographies: the chosen city, the city's county excluding activities taking place within the city ("rest of county"), and the state of Iowa excluding activities taking place within the city's county ("rest of state"). This was accomplished using a multi-region input-output (MRIO) model for each city consisting of two regions. For each city, the first region is that city's county, and the second is an aggregated region of the other 98 counties in Iowa. The reported contribution values by geography correspond to the effect types detailed above in the following way:

- **City:** The direct effects of the county model, which equal the estimated city-level employment and output for each industry used as model inputs
- **Rest of County:** The indirect and induced effects of the county model
- **Rest of State:** The indirect and induced effects of the "rest of state" MRIO region

The 2024 IMPLAN data package, which is the most recent data available, was used for this analysis. Using inflation factors inherent in the IMPLAN modeling system, all dollar-denominated numbers within these sectors have been brought forward from 2024 to 2025. The results of this analysis are presented using the following common economic modeling terms:

- **Output:** The broadest measure of economic activity – also commonly referred to as "sales." Output refers to the total value of all sales of an industry within a study area without any deductions for the cost or origination of inputs that were used in the production process.
- **Value Added:** A component of output, this measure includes the total sales minus the costs of inputs. Alternatively, value added is calculated as the sum of labor income (further defined below), taxes on production and imports, and other property-type income. An industry's value added is equivalent to its contribution to GDP.
- **Labor Income:** A subset of value added, includes the sum of employee compensation (i.e., wages and benefits) and proprietor income (i.e., income of self-employed workers).
- **Employment (Jobs):** A measure of part- and full-time job positions, including contract workers, without regard to their full-time equivalence. Since it is not representative solely of full-time positions or full-time equivalents, care must be made when drawing comparisons to other measures of employment.

5.3.2 Model Inputs

The value of economic activity occurring within each city was estimated using a combination of IMPLAN county data and employment estimates by industry provided by the 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Census industries directly correspond to aggregated 2-digit NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) code industries available within IMPLAN, with some Census industries broken out into 2 or 3 IMPLAN industries according to Table 30 below. For example, the Census Industry of "Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining" is represented by IMPLAN 2-Digit NAICS Industry codes of 11 and 12.

The Census employment estimates for each city were used as an input employment value for their corresponding IMPLAN industry. For industries where a single Census industry is represented by more than one IMPLAN industry, this employment value was distributed among the IMPLAN industries according to their employment value in the county data. For example, if the city employment value in the Census data was 50 in the "agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining" industry and the county IMPLAN data had values of 90 for "agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting" and 10 for "mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction", then the employment values used as model inputs for the city contribution were 45 and 5, respectively. The city output values for each 2-digit NAICS industry were calculated as the county-level output in each industry multiplied by the city's share of county employment within that industry. The city employment and output values estimated in this manner were used as the inputs for each city's economic contribution analysis.

For tax results, the property tax collected by the studied city shown in the tax results table is each city's property tax revenue in fiscal year 2024 as reported by the Iowa Department of Management. All other tax results are derived from IMPLAN model output.

The American Community Survey estimates include a margin of error for each estimate. As an example, the margin of error for overall employment values in each city range from 49 in Kimballton to 442 in Council

Bluffs with an average value of 182. As a share of each city's employment estimate, the margin of error ranges from 0.9% to 26.6% with an average value of 9.4%. Note that smaller cities tend to have a larger relative margin of error as a natural consequence of survey method of acquiring the data. IMPLAN does not publish margin of error statements.

Table 30. IMPLAN 2-Digit NAICS and U.S. Census Industry Concordance Table

IMPLAN 2-Digit NAICS Industry	Census Industry
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining
21 - Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining
22 - Utilities	Transportation and warehousing, and utilities
23 - Construction	Construction
31-33 - Manufacturing	Manufacturing
42 - Wholesale Trade	Wholesale trade
44-45 - Retail Trade	Retail trade
48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing	Transportation and warehousing, and utilities
51 - Information	Information
52 - Finance and Insurance	Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing
54 - Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services
55 - Management of Companies and Enterprises	Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services
56 - Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services
61 - Educational Services	Educational services, and health care and social assistance
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	Educational services, and health care and social assistance
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services
81 - Other Services (except Public Administration)	Other services, except public administration
9A - Government Enterprises	Public administration
9B - Administrative Government	Public administration

5.3.3 Amenities and Cultural Attractions Breakout

A breakout economic contribution estimate of amenities and cultural attractions was also conducted for each city. This was done because cities are often expected to provide or incentivize private businesses to provide amenities to attract a broader and more populous workforce. For this analysis, "amenities and cultural attractions" is defined as the following IMPLAN[7] industries:

- Motion picture and video industries
- News syndicates, libraries, archives and all other information services
- Amusement parks and arcades
- Performing arts companies
- Other amusement and recreation industries
- Fitness and recreational sports centers
- Museums, historical sites, zoos, and parks
- Bowling centers
- Racing and track operation
- Commercial sports except racing

For each of these industries, the city-level input value was estimated as the county-level employment and output for each of the above industries multiplied by the city's share of the county employment of each industry's related 2-digit NAICS industry as calculated above. Each city's industry values were reviewed, and in some cases were adjusted to reflect the share of that industry actually present within the city. For example, if the chosen city had the only bowling alley in the county, then 100% of the "bowling centers" industry value was used as the city contribution input.

Additionally, the economic contribution of casinos was considered for Council Bluffs. As all casinos in Pottawattamie County exist in Council Bluffs, 100% of the "gambling industries" industry was used as the input for the city contribution estimate.

[7] These industries belong to the default, 528-industry detailed specification within IMPLAN, not the aggregated 2-digit NAICS specification used above.

6 Appendix

List of Figures

List of Tables

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