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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Central Iowa Growth Partnership Reaps Benefits

(Mason City and Clear Lake, Iowa – February 10, 2004) The countywide alliance announced last September to enhance regional cooperation has been moving forward in forging a singularly powerful identity for the area. **The North Central Iowa Growth Partnership (NCIGP)** brings the economic development efforts of Mason City Economic Development Corporation into much closer cooperation with the Clear Lake Economic Development Corporation, as well as Cerro Gordo County leadership, area businesses and educational resources.

“We have had a very eventful six-months with many organizational and administrative accomplishments,” according to Gary Mrosko, President of the Clear Lake Economic Development Corporation. “Our objective was to explore ways to enhance our development opportunities via closer collaboration with the aim of growing our area and improving our effectiveness. With every completed action, that objective comes closer to achievement.”

Thus far the Partnership has created a combined web site (www.ncigp.com) providing economic development information on the County, Mason City and Clear Lake. Additionally, this site speaks directly to the benefits of the region for businesses in the selected key business targets for the region: Life Sciences, Information Technology, Building Products and Warehousing & Distribution.

An overview brochure for the area has been created. This piece captures the essence of the Cerro Gordo County region for business development opportunities and is being used to promote and respond to inquiries about the County.

Late last fall an inaugural direct mailing effort to 2000 development site selectors and corporate real estate executive was sent to raise preliminary awareness of the newly established Partnership. A postcard mailing to 5000 potential business locators will be sent this month directing them to the NCIGP website.

The Partnership has also created four business target groups to support each of the key business targets, these group recently developed action plans for the remainder of 2004 which were approved in early January by the Partnership Board. Plans call for “Sell” trips to Omaha in March and Kansas City/St. Louis or Minneapolis in September. This approach will be contacting potential target companies and setting business development appointments to be conducted by the EDC staffs of both Clear Lake and Mason City.

Public relations, spreading the word about the Partnership will continue to be a major priority for the group. Each business target group will be identifying story ideas and submitting them to select industry publications communicating why the Cerro Gordo region is ideal for their business growth.

According to Steve Gales, President of the Mason City Economic Development Corporation “The number of things we have been able to accomplish together has been great. Our Partnership is not limited to marketing activities. We also plan to develop an inventory of future workforce needs by working in conjunction with NIACC and Iowa Workforce Development. This will put us in a much more proactive versus reactive economic development mode.”

The County has also enjoyed some initial benefits from the creation of the Partnership. One of the key County requests was for the existing economic development staffs of both Clear Lake and Mason City to provide services to all other communities within the County. “A recent success case in this regard was the assistance jointly provided to Swaledale,” said Cerro Gordo County Supervisor Phil Dougherty. “The community needed economic development expertise to find resources to obtain financial grants for a community based project. The Partnership staff successfully worked in partnership with Iowa State University Extension to secure a USDA grant to conduct a feasibility study for the development of a state certified kitchen and restaurant, which could mean the development of several other projects that would enhance that part of the County.”

“The overall goal,” said Gales, “is to position our **North Central Iowa Growth Partnership** as a clearly superior national location for businesses and industries in our four target groups. The effort and cooperation thus far is a strong indication that we can achieve that and other goals to improve the quality of both our business and personal lives in Cerro Gordo County by working together.

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