



## Main Street Iowa to Host Application Workshops

Main Street Iowa's network of 52 designated programs will grow in 2015. Application workshops are being planned on March 23 in Manning, 25 in Ottumwa, and 26 in Cedar Falls. Communities interested in submitting an application in the upcoming round will need to first attend one of these three application workshops. The repeated workshops will provide an overview of the Main Street Approach<sup>®</sup> and Main Street Iowa program, the application, competitive designation process, and strategies to complete the application. Visit [www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/IDRC/MainStreetIowa](http://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/IDRC/MainStreetIowa) to register for an application workshop and to learn more about the Main Street Iowa program.



## 2015 Downtown Forums ... Network with Your Neighbors

Downtown and community leaders across the state of Iowa are invited to attend a Downtown Forum in one of four locations in June. The forums, presented by the IEDA's Downtown Resource Center, give communities the opportunity to talk to each other about their downtown ideas, successes and challenges. You may even steal an idea or two. Iowa Downtown Resource Center staff will facilitate discussions related to downtown business development and downtown appearances.

Participants are encouraged to come ready to share examples from their communities. Upon RSVP, participants will receive a list of questions to consider in preparation for the day's discussion.

The Iowa Downtown Resource Center assists communities around the state in revitalizing their downtowns or traditional commercial districts. The Downtown Forums are hosted by the Chambers of Commerce in each host community and are FREE to attend.

Look for registration information on the IEDA website in the near future.

**Wednesday, June 10 — Emmetsburg**  
Chamber of Commerce  
1121 Broadway

**Thursday, June 11 — Creston**  
Quilts & Other Notions Creative Center  
201 North Elm Street

**Wednesday, June 17 — Manchester**  
Franklin Street Brewery  
116 South Franklin St.

**Thursday, June 18 — Williamsburg**  
Public Library  
214 W. State Street

### Agenda

- 9:00 am Introductions
- 9:30 am Discussion Group: "Downtown Appearances"
- 11:00 am Downtown Resources from the Iowa Economic Development Authority
- 11:45 am Tour of host community's downtown
- 12:30 pm Lunch on your own
- 2:00 pm Constructive thoughts: What did you think of downtown in host community?
- 2:15 pm Discussion Group: "Business Development in Your Downtown"
- 3:45 pm Adjourn



# Welcome Robin Bostrom, Business Specialist



Robin Bostrom joined the Iowa Downtown Resource Center/Main Street Iowa team as a Business Specialist on January 9. Bostrom's work will complement that of Jim Thompson's in providing additional business development, economic restructuring and downtown revitalization assistance to all of Iowa's Main Street communities. In her new position, Robin is looking forward to helping communities gain the confidence to do those things that they didn't think they could do. She believes that you should not shy away from a project because you haven't done something like it before and don't know how to do it. Robin's philosophy is that you have to dream big and then go after it in small steps.

Bostrom has a BA from the University of Northern Iowa, and is also a graduate of the Heartland Economic Development Course at UNI, as well as Fast-Trac Small Business Certification from Main Street Iowa. She has over 10 years of economic development experience on both the county and local city government levels, including historic preservation projects. She also has extensive experience in grant writing, grant administration and real estate project development.

Robin is certainly not new to the world of Main Street. In 2006 she was named as the inaugural program director of the newly formed Main Street program in West Union, where she has served for the last eight years. In that position, she is especially proud of her role as facilitator for the Green Pilot Streetscape project, which included the Downtown

Revitalization Façade Master Plan, Multi-Family Housing projects and a district-wide geothermal heating and cooling system. Robin stated, "Even though we are a small community, we didn't think small. We were able to build capacity and confidence on the local level to take on such a large project. The more you learn, the more confidence you gain to tackle even more projects."

Robin grew up in Hawkeye, Iowa, a community with a population of only 528. After attending college, she and her husband purchased the family business in West Union and became the third generation owners of the family's grocery store, which they operated for four years. She has also served as West Union Chamber Director, Fayette County Economic Development Executive Director and Turkey River Recreational Corridor Project Coordinator. Robin has coached the high school dance team and recently returned from a trip to Florida where the girls performed at the Outback Bowl.

In her free time, Robin enjoys music, quilting, boating and spending time with her family, which includes her husband Mark and two adult children. For her longtime love and devotion to family, friends, neighbors and community, Robin Bostrom was recently named Fayette County Union's 2014 Citizen of the Year.



Entrefest, "the meeting of Iowa's most innovative minds in business, technology, creativity and community building" will be held May 20-22, 2015 in downtown Iowa City. For complete details and registration go to [www.entrefest.com](http://www.entrefest.com).



# Main Street Director Spotlight: Roger Thomas



For eight years Roger Thomas has served as Main Street Elkader's program director. He views that his position is to help bring ideas from the possible to reality and wants Elkader to be

an example to other small towns across Iowa; that if you are determined to always move forward, create and communicate your goals and work endlessly to achieve those goals, the community and people will prosper.

Roger has lived in rural northeast Iowa most of his life. His parents enjoyed farming, so while growing up, Roger helped milk cows until he went into the Service in June of 1969, two weeks after graduating from high school. He joined the Air Force, where he worked on large jet aircraft in Washington for over six years. In 1970, Roger married his high school sweetheart. Rosemary and Roger will be celebrating their 45th anniversary this year. They have three grown children and four grandchildren. After leaving the service and returning to Iowa, he started his own convenience store and repair business in Wadena. After five years in that business, Roger and Rosemary returned to the family farm near Elkader where they have lived ever since.

Roger stated that "the military allowed me to experience the Tacoma/Seattle area. We did consider going back to Seattle in the mid-90s, but after visiting there for several days, we knew we needed to remain in Iowa. Then in 1996, I was asked to run for the Iowa Legislature. After serving 16 years, Rosemary and I decided it was time to start a new chapter in our lives."

"We are now transitioning to a much less demanding schedule and plan to focus on my position here in Elkader. We will spend more time with the grandkids, enjoy some traveling, do projects on our farm and continue remodeling our old farm house."

Roger feels the Main Street program and mission is an easy sell to the community. The accountability built into the program allows for investors and volunteers to

see the value of their commitment to the program. "As a state legislator, it was evident that the Main Street Program has credibility and a positive return on investment. Many legislators are either involved in the program or several are past managers," said Roger. He senses that by bringing all the communities together several times a year and networking with the people involved in the program, a greater sense of caring for what we do is created. Roger believes, "You are not just another town, program or funding source, but a larger community of people who want to make a difference."

Roger has personally experienced the farm crises of the '80s and witnessed the closing of businesses and the loss of families in Elkader and the surrounding communities. The impact of what took place over 30 years ago still seems like it was last month to him. The fact that Elkader leaders saw the need to somehow change the direction of those declines in the community and considered the option to be a Main Street community has proven successful. Elkader is now a leader in retail sales in Iowa, continuing to be a community where entrepreneurial individuals locate. The historic Elkader Opera House is considered a regional cultural center, bringing performers from around the world wanting to stand on its stage. Roger brags that "We have new, large manufacturers in our industrial park — that has now demanded that the city develop more housing, so their employees can be closer to their work. Our main street is filled with cars and the sidewalks are once again active with shoppers visiting a variety of retail and service businesses. And now, we look forward to experiencing a new surge in visitors with the development of our Elkader Whitewater Park and the new family-friendly Founders' Park."

Fun for Roger is watching other people have fun because of the efforts done through the Main Street office. On his home front, he is just starting to figure out what is fun for him and his family, now that the demand of being a public official has ended. He has 120 acres of land to enjoy that keeps him in the outdoors. He says, "I have to admit that having big boy toys like tractors and a mini-excavator gives me the joy of playing in the dirt to build more walking trails— construction tools to

build whatever I might imagine. I will plan to make more time for these activities."

Elkader is fortunate to have the Turkey River flowing through the town, but in 2008 the community was nearly submerged by a record flood. The city lost city blocks of homes and businesses closed for weeks. But, out of devastation comes a new vision and opportunity. Elkader, the community, as a whole is ready for the next phases of growth. The stage is set for that growth because of the new Whitewater Park, restored facades of 14 properties in the Main Street district, a new park with a very nice stage, large playground, flower gardens and soccer fields.

Over the years, Main Street Elkader has assisted in acquiring many state grants and because of Main Street Iowa Challenge Grants the organization has assisted in improving retail properties. They purchased a closed cinema and began to remodel it when a young couple fortunately came to town and loved the idea of having their own business and now they have a state of the art cinema. The success continues with the renovation of buildings through the Challenge Grants: Staw Center now has three businesses and more recently is the Shea property that has a new high end salon and spa with a large upper story loft apartment.

Roger's vision is quite simply; to build on successes and always capture an opportunity when presented to the community in order to help develop and share their vision of sustaining the growth of Elkader. "I am grateful for all the opportunities that have been entrusted to me and my family. I enjoy being involved and hope that I can pass on the knowledge that I have gained through my life and work to help others achieve their successes."

Roger encourages people to contact him at the Main Street Elkader office. His phone number is 563-245-2770, and email address is mse@alpinecom.net. Better yet he says, "Visit Elkader and see our success for yourself and please stop by my office in the lower level of the historic Elkader Opera House. I would be more than happy to give you a tour."

# Economic Development for Main Street Districts

Improving the overall business climate within a designated Main Street District strengthens the community's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding successful businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business owners, and attracting new businesses that the market can support. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district. The goal is to build a commercial district that responds to the needs of today's consumers. All of this can be accomplished while being sensitive to the utilization of historic preservation as an economic development tool. The process is relatively simple. It involves; assessment, retention, expansion, recruitment and finally development.

## Assessment

This happens when a district is fully aware of existing conditions. This is accomplished through data collection. Main Street Iowa provides statistical data annually through ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.). We provide the following reports: Market Profile; Retail Market Place; Tapestry Segmentation; and Housing Profile. Other forms of assessment happen locally — business and building inventories, consumer and business surveys, and finally market analysis training and utilization. We believe a district cannot know what it wants without fully understanding what it has already.

## Retention and Expansion

Once community leaders understand what they have within their district they are better equipped to move to retention and expansion. It's much easier to grow existing businesses. Once district needs are determined, it just makes sense to utilize existing businesses whenever possible. Many times communities recruit a new business only to lose two of their existing business, thus a net loss in businesses. Main Street Iowa provides one on one business counseling, tax increment financing training, incentive development and brings in other contracted consultants when additional training and technical service is needed. Examples would include market analysis, branding, merchandising, community development block grants, etc.

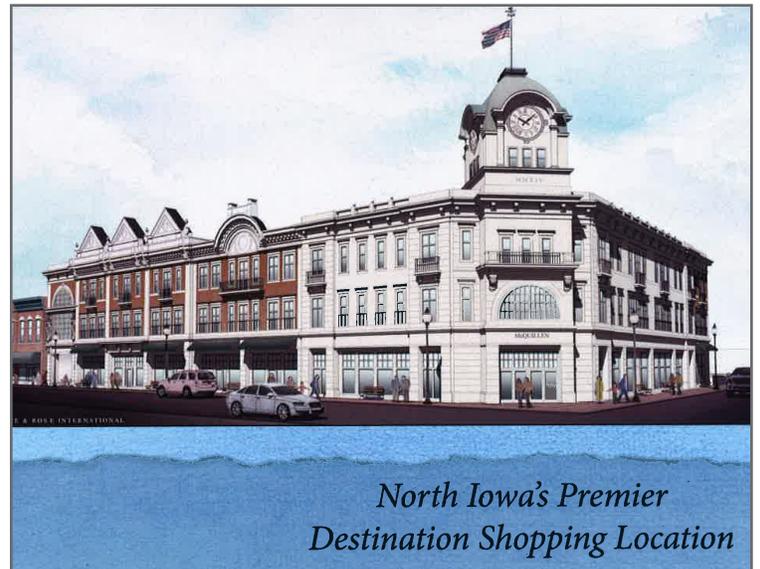
## Recruitment

Retail recruitment is much different from industrial or manufacturing recruitment. Retail recruitment involves being sensitive to what exists while still serving the needs of the community. In many communities there is not anyone with this charge. Recruitment must not be entered into lightly or without the proper amount of training and technical assistance.

## Development

Real estate development will encompass all prior strategies. It will only be successful when identifying the appropriate players at the table and bringing broad based community support. Adaptive reuse and full utilization of vacant or underperforming property must be accomplished to be successful in development.

The Downtown Resource Center is an excellent resource for communities in Iowa who are working to build a commercial district that is sustainable and continues to grow. The numbers clearly state that downtown is valuable and that communities can count on a strong return on investment when they make the historic city center a priority in their long-term development efforts. A broad range of technical services are available to assist local leaders in economic development efforts no matter what size the community may be. For additional information on any of the programs mentioned here, contact Jim Thompson, Business Specialist at [jim.thompson2@iowa.gov](mailto:jim.thompson2@iowa.gov) (515.725.3061) or Robin Bostrom, Business Specialist at [robin.bostrom@iowa.gov](mailto:robin.bostrom@iowa.gov) (515.725.3053).



# Property Assessment Examples

Some of the biggest challenges communities face are its businesses. Whether its recruitment or retention, communities across Iowa struggle to increase revenue and support their economy. But Main Street has an answer! Once upon a time, the Main Street district was the only place to do shopping for groceries, clothes, gifts – you name it. But today communities are filled with shopping centers and box retailers. These stores are built away from the downtown, oftentimes enticing shoppers away from their own community. How do we fix this? How do we show businesses that our district is much more valuable? We see it. We understand it. Why don't they?

What many people see in their Main Street districts is a bunch of old buildings. Some may be barely standing, and some may be newly renovated. People also see their community's history and its heritage. Many have a source of pride in their city centers, but many businesses are not jumping on the opportunity to be in this district. It is our job as Main Street-ers to show them the light – the light that will bring them success in a Main Street district.

Several Main Street communities in Iowa have participated in market analysis. Part of this included a comparison of real estate values throughout the community. Various properties were selected that fell into the following categories: big box retailer, strip shopping center, shopping mall, industrial/manufacturing, luxury home, agricultural land, rehabbed home in historic area, downtown space with an occupied second story, and downtown space with an unoccupied second story. To accurately compare these properties, the current assessed value and lot area were analyzed.

Cedar Falls and Woodbine took part in this comparison. Each of these communities houses a Main Street program and is working to revitalize their downtown district. And it shows.

The numbers clearly state that downtown is valuable, and it is where we should focus for continued economic growth. Who wouldn't want to own property that is valued at \$4.8 million an acre? That sounds much better than only \$650,394 an acre. So what gives?

At some point in history, Americans moved away from the idea of high density settlement. The increased use of automobiles encouraged the need for more and bigger parking lots, which pushed businesses away from one another. The desire to move away from the hustle and bustle of city life and own a large green yard also encouraged many to move away from the city. This is why our city centers were sometimes forgotten – people wanted their own space and large corporations wanted to accommodate as many people as possible. But the money is still in our historic city centers because it's where the community began. It's where the community should be.

Cedar Falls and Woodbine have done their homework. These numbers demonstrate the high return on investment all Iowa communities can count on when we make our historic city centers a priority. Let's do the math. Investing in our Main Street districts pays.

## Cedar Falls Property Assessments

Property Type	Value per Acre
Big Box Retailer	\$650,394
Shopping Mall	\$713,829
Strip Shopping Center	\$1,535,973
Industrial	\$704,812
Luxury Home	\$1,231,011
Farmland (State Record)	\$23,500
Historic Rehab	\$806,450
Downtown, Unoccupied 2nd Story	\$3,167,850
Downtown, Occupied 2nd Story	\$4,888,620

## Woodbine Property Assessments

Property Type	Value per Acre
Big Box Retailer	\$302,450
Shopping Mall (Council Bluffs)	\$255,410
Strip Shopping Center (Council Bluffs)	\$1,294,263
Industrial	\$880,316
Luxury Home	\$528,664
Farmland (State Record)	\$23,500
Historic Rehab	\$534,009
Downtown, Occupied 2nd Story #1	\$3,271,816
Downtown, Occupied 2nd Story #2	\$1,794,393

## Woodbine Property Assessments Before & After Improvements

Property Type	Value per Acre Before	Value per Acre After
Downtown, Occupied 2nd Story	\$157,147	\$1,794,393

# 2015 National Main Streets Conference

The 2015 National Main Streets Conference, which will be held in Atlanta, Georgia March 30 – April 2, is the largest gathering of commercial district revitalization professionals in the country. It is anticipated that the event will draw over 1,300 community leaders from small towns, mid-sized cities and urban neighborhood business districts.

Annually, the conference showcases and celebrates the innovative techniques and practices that make the Main Street Approach™ one of the most powerful economic development tools in the nation. The 2015 National Main Streets Conference will be packed with cutting edge, high-level content addressing a wide range of revitalization issues. With eight conference tracks focusing on issues ranging from Urban Revitalization to Arts and Culture, 48 educational sessions, 38 crash courses, five deep dives and 17 mobile tours, this event will have a little bit of something for everyone. The conference also offers a unique opportunity to engage directly with regional and national community development professionals through activities and one-on-one facetime.

Here are just a few comments from the contingency of Iowans who are looking forward to traveling to the Big Peach for the National Main Streets Conference:



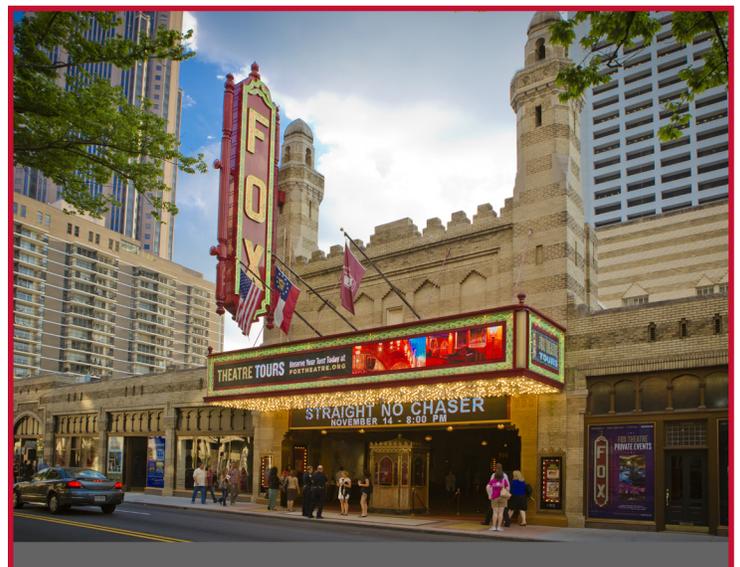
“Once you’ve attended, it becomes evident the time away from office and community is well worth the investment. Brimming with new ideas, interesting networking opportunities, and valuable on-site visuals, the Conference is a distillation of “what’s hot” in the Main Street world.” — Deb Sprecker, Woodbine

“I thoroughly enjoy going to the National Main Street’s Conference. I always get fresh, new ideas from the other states. My board enjoys my director’s report when I get back because of all the class notes and ideas. I love being able to share the expertise that we have here in Iowa at the same time.” — Sarah Sadrakula, Washington

“As a past participant, I know the value of attending the conference. The educational seminars are top-notch. The information I will learn from professionals who understand both the joys and challenges of working in a Main Street environment will provide me with tools I need to help shape our local community into something even greater than it is today. In addition, the chance to network with other Main Street representatives from throughout the country will provide me with resources to call upon when faced with challenges within my community. Participating in the tours will provide an opportunity to see first-hand the positive outcomes the Main Street approach has brought to other communities and will provide a renewed sense of motivation to keep moving forward with historic preservation locally.” — Carol Lilly, Cedar Falls

“The National Main Streets Conference is a great opportunity to grow professional capacity through participating in lectures by national experts. Networking with Main Street programs outside of Iowa allows for sharing of ideas, learning new ways to work through common issues, and discovering brand new trends and program ideas. I get a renewed focus and inspiration from hearing stories about how Main Street has helped impact the success of districts across the country.” — Jennifer Pruden, Cedar Rapids’ Czech Village-New Bohemia

For more information, the conference website is available for viewing at [www.nationalmainstreetsconference.com](http://www.nationalmainstreetsconference.com).



# League of Historic American Theatres **2015 REGIONAL CONFERENCE** “Making the Case for HISTORIC Theatres” **APRIL 15 - 16, 2015 – DES MOINES, IOWA**

We are proud to announce that the League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT) Regional Conference, “Making the Case for HISTORIC Theatres,” will be held at the Renaissance Savery Hotel in downtown Des Moines on April 15 and 16, 2015. This will be the first time the national organization has met in Iowa, and Des Moines joins the ranks of previous hosts: Chicago, Dallas and Seattle.

Founded in 1976 the League of Historic American Theatres, Inc., a non-profit membership association, has grown into a network of more than 300 historic theaters throughout the United States and Canada. Members include theaters of all shapes and sizes in large and small communities including film, live performance and other mixed-use facilities.

If you have a historic theater in your community that is still closed or in need of renovation, or are involved in rescue, rehabilitation and/or management of an entertainment venue in a historic property, the LHAT Regional Conference is your opportunity to learn from the experts in the field. All sessions are presented by members of the League’s National Board of Directors, who will share resources and information to help you preserve, restore, and sustain your historic theater

for the benefit of your community and future generations. Included on the agenda will be sessions on fundraising, marketing, programming, arts research, concessions, customer service, etc. For a detailed conference schedule, visit [www.lhat.org/desmoines](http://www.lhat.org/desmoines).

On the Wednesday evening of the conference the Iowa Downtown Resource Center will host a tour of the Hollywood in the Heartland exhibit at the State Historical Building and a reception and tour of Hoyt Sherman Place. The event will be an opportunity for Iowans to network with national practitioners and professionals with extensive knowledge, experience and wisdom. Tour attendance will be included in the registration fee.

On-line registration for the conference is now available. The registration fee to attend the LHAT Conference is \$185 for LHAT members/\$230 for non-members. Additional attendees from the same organization can register for the reduced rate of \$165 (member rate) / \$200 (nonmember).

For more information on the League of Historic American Theatres, visit their website at [www.lhat.org](http://www.lhat.org).



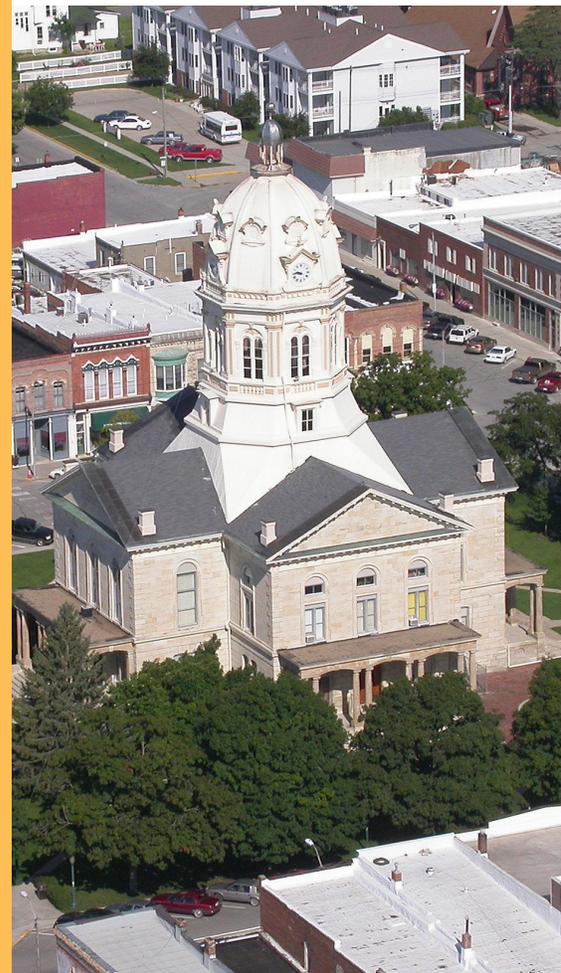
League of Historic  
American Theatres



*Hoyt Sherman Place, Des Moines, Iowa*

## SAVE THE DATE! **Preserve Iowa Summit: The Power of Preservation June 25-27, 2015 Winterset, Iowa**

The setting for the 2015 Preserve Iowa Summit will be downtown Winterset, location of the Madison County Courthouse – one of Iowa’s most beautiful landmarks. Highlights include educational sessions on historic rehabilitation, demonstrations of various preservation trades, grants, and courthouse preservation. Invited keynote speakers are Ed McMahon of the Urban Land Institute and Bonnie McDonald of Landmarks Illinois. Saturday’s session will include a special workshop on the Underground Railroad and several tour options. Please contact Brenda Hollingsworth at [hollingsworthb51@gmail.com](mailto:hollingsworthb51@gmail.com) or Paula Mohr at [paula.mohr@iowa.gov](mailto:paula.mohr@iowa.gov) for more information. We look forward to seeing you in Winterset!



# Drake/Iowa Downtown Resource Center Partnership

Iowa communities have a resource that some have left untapped. Many of our colleges and universities are actively involved in service learning projects. The Iowa Downtown Resource Center is actively looking to match up communities (and specifically downtowns) to colleges/universities to provide real world learning labs for students and faculty, but also to help solve downtown challenges. Many classes and departments can provide assistance to downtown areas. For example, marketing classes can help a downtown with a branding campaign. Business/entrepreneurship programs can assist with business development issues. Art departments can assist with public art planning.

The Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Downtown Resource Center has recently kicked off a pilot program with Drake University that will offer assistance from 4-6 academic departments to offer assistance and solutions to address downtown's challenges. Drake students and faculty in a number of disciplines such as Business, Advertising, Journalism, Art, Economics, Graphic Design, Marketing, Painting, Public Relations, Theatre Arts, and Sociology are potential participants. Recently, proposals were submitted to the IEDA and Drake University by communities looking to be one of two communities selected for this service. The Iowa Economic Development Authority and the selected communities will share the cost of travel expenses and supplies for Drake students.

The first two communities selected to participate are Manning and Perry, Iowa.

In **Manning** (population 1,500), a Main Street community, Drake University will:

- Help develop a plan to market Manning as a tourist and restaurant destination.
- Work to improve the cultural and aesthetic climate.
- Assist in the development of business retention and transition plan as well as a business start-up plan that capitalizes on its current business mix.

In **Perry** (population 7,702), Drake University will:

- Assist with plans for way finding in the downtown for tourists and bicyclists; and making downtown more inviting to bicyclists.
- Perform a feasibility study relating to best uses for empty buildings.
- Study the implementation of a potential arts district in the downtown.
- Research the feasibility of more local entrepreneurs.

Stay tuned for an update on the progress of this very important program and the good things happening in Manning and Perry. Also, the Iowa Downtown Resource Center is always willing to help you with downtown issues through "Downtown Walk Around" visits, "Downtown Assessments," and matches with state colleges and universities.



Downtown Economic Development Pilot Program  
*Sponsored by the Iowa Economic Development Authority in partnership with Drake University*

**IOWA**  
economic development

**Drake**  
UNIVERSITY

# Celebrating Main Street Achievements

Main Street Iowa staff will host the Main Street Iowa Awards to recognize outstanding local Main Street projects, activities and the volunteers who are the backbone of revitalization organizations. The 28th annual celebratory event will be held Friday, May 1, 2015 at the Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center (Iowa Events Center). In January, the local Main Street programs submitted nominations in 19 competitive categories within the five main areas of design, economic restructuring, organization, promotion and overall program. The submissions were scored and winners and honorable mentions will be announced during the event. In addition to the competitive nominations, each program's non-competitive Volunteer of the Year submission will be recognized during the awards ceremony.

If you have questions, please contact Debi Flanders, 515.725.3055 or [debi.flanders@iowa.gov](mailto:debi.flanders@iowa.gov)



2014 Visual Merchandising, Gravy Home Goods, Hamilton County (Jewell)



2014 Special Event, Oktoberfest, Main Street Cultural District, Ames



2014 Main Street Iowa Awards Ceremony, Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center

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Visit [iowaeconomicdevelopment.com](http://iowaeconomicdevelopment.com) and register to receive electronic updates from any of the teams at the Iowa Economic Development Authority.