



# Main Street Messenger

2016 volume one



## Celebrating 30 years of Main Street in Iowa

Many times when discussing a major Main Street Iowa program anniversary, the numbers that drive economic development are specifically highlighted.

IOWA'S MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES HAVE REALIZED A NET GAIN OF OVER

**4,447**

**NEW BUSINESSES** SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE PROGRAM



**12,974**

**NET GAIN NEW JOBS** IN MAIN STREET DISTRICTS



**10,926**

**BUILDING IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS** IN MAIN STREET DISTRICTS



**\$1.6 Billion**

**PRIVATE DOLLARS INVESTED INTO DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS**



**2,838,045**

**DOCUMENTED VOLUNTEER HOURS** DEDICATED TO MAIN STREET DISTRICT REVITALIZATION



(Figures from 1986 to December 31, 2015. Download the full statistics report at [www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/IDRC/MainStreetIowa](http://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/IDRC/MainStreetIowa))



These numbers are the core of who Main Street Iowa is as a program and movement. They demonstrate Main Street's significant local economic impact. They illustrate Iowa's commitment to downtown revitalization. They express a growing confidence in downtown renaissance throughout the state. They track a movement that continues to mature, become more sophisticated and evolve to meet the times.

While these numbers do tell a story, it's only half the story. Each number has a real business, an entrepreneur, a developer, a personality or partnership behind it. Most importantly, none of these numbers were reached all at once. It has taken 30 years of incremental impact in communities throughout the state to reach this point.

As Iowa celebrates 30 years of Main Street in Iowa this year, communities, downtowns and traditional commercial districts are encouraged to use this milestone as a means to reflect on their own community. Reflect on challenges that have been overcome, successes that have occurred and the areas of opportunity that exist on the horizon.

Throughout the year, the Iowa Economic Development Authority will celebrate 30 years of Main Street at work in Iowa. This celebration will include a number of different elements throughout the year to build a stronger awareness of local efforts, encourage travelers to visit Main Street districts, enhance partnerships for revitalization and applaud the work of local Main Street programs. The festivities will be highlighted by our 30th Anniversary Celebration which will take place on Friday, April 29, 2016. Save the date and get ready to celebrate!

## 2016 NATIONAL MAIN STREET NOW CONFERENCE

Over 70 Iowans are planning to make the trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for Main Street Now, a conference of the National Main Street Center.

The May 23-25, 2016, conference will be packed with cutting edge, high-level education content presented by speakers with an impressive wealth of knowledge and experience to share on a wide range of revitalization issues. The city and surrounding community will also serve as a living laboratory of Main Street revitalization success in action through a variety of tours. In addition, the conference offers a unique opportunity to engage directly with regional and national community development professionals through networking activities and one-on-one facetime.



Main Street Now is the largest, nationwide gathering of commercial district revitalization professionals. Held in the spring, this annual event draws community leaders from small towns, mid-sized cities and urban neighborhood business districts. The conference brings together over 1,500 dedicated professionals, boards, municipal staff and other key decision makers together to share successes and challenges and foster new ideas and solutions for preservation-based revitalization.

For more information, visit the conference website at [www.preservationnation.org/msconference](http://www.preservationnation.org/msconference)

# National Main Street Center

## Enhancing National Movement

Main Street has been a successful national model for commercial district revitalization since its beginning 35 years ago. What sets it apart is the powerful network: the unique combination of grassroots dedication to comprehensively improving quality of life at the local level, integral support and expertise provided by coordinating programs at the city, county, and state level, and leadership and direction from the National Main Street Center (NMSC). Through the course of the last three decades, the community development field has changed dramatically. In many ways, new trends in planning, development and preservation build off principles that those in the Main Street network have long understood:

- Revitalization must be inclusive and representative of the community.
- A place's distinctive characteristics and older and historic buildings are its greatest assets.
- Fostering a strong local-business environment creates enormous rewards.



In order to ensure the continued success of the Main Street model in revitalizing older and historic business districts, the NMSC is working on a number of initiatives that will impact the way we—the Main Street movement—do our work, talk about our cause and position ourselves within the community revitalization field. In 2016, the NMSC rolled out results of these processes: The Refresh of the Main Street Approach and a new brand for Main Street's national presence: Main Street America™.

Much more than simply a new logo and updated revitalization framework, the goal with these changes is to reinvigorate the collective look, feel and strategy to position Main Street as a leader locally, regionally and nationally. Since the early 1980s, Main Street has been at the forefront of the community revitalization movement. Main Streets should be proud of and acknowledge its important role in the downtown renaissance we enjoy today, characterized by significant numbers of people and businesses moving to be near vibrant commercial corridors, the shop-local movement becoming mainstream, and adaptive re-use projects being viewed as economically viable and attractive to developers, residents and business owners alike. These changes reflect the critical role that Main Streets have played, and will continue to play, in this era of thriving cities and towns.

In many ways, Iowa's Main Street efforts have reflected these changes through program evolutions, especially in the last 10 years. These changes nationally provide an opportunity to fine tune what Main Streets do, achieve and strive for as well as a point of energy to rally around to build the network.

For more information about the National Main Street Center's new initiatives visit [www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/main-street-america/announcing-main-street.html](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/main-street-america/announcing-main-street.html)

## Welcome Kelsie Ring

The Iowa Downtown Resource Center welcomed a new Graphic Design intern in November. Kelsie Ring will assist the team with graphic design related tasks, a position most recently held by Shelby Eckardt who accepted a job in the private sector.



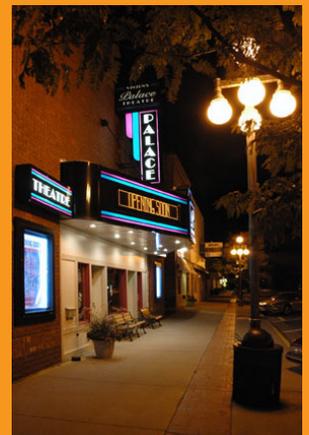
Kelsie lives in Pleasant Hill and is currently a student at Grand View University. She has consistently been on the Dean's list and expects to graduate with a B.F.A. in 2017. She also works part time at Hy-Vee as a convenience store clerk, and in her spare time enjoys reading and playing video games.

Graphic Design was a natural choice for Ring, whose father is also a graphic designer. Her goal is to design video games, but for now she is excited to be working in her very own cubicle on a variety of projects including the development and implementation of materials for the 30th Annual Main Street Iowa Awards event and the Iowa Downtown Conference.

## 2016 Downtown Forums ... Network with Your Neighbors

Downtown and community leaders across Iowa are invited to attend a downtown forum in one of four locations in June. The forums, presented by IEDA's Downtown Resource Center (IDRC), give communities an opportunity to network about downtown ideas, successes and challenges. Attendees may even steal an idea or two. IDRC staff will facilitate and give brief presentations related to downtown development. The focus will be on downtown design issues such as building rehabilitation, incentives, maintenance programs and streetscape projects.

Participants are encouraged to come ready to share examples from their communities and are encouraged to bring photos of projects, marketing pieces or other visual examples of successes. Once registered, participants receive a list of questions to consider in preparation for the day's discussion.



# Keep the Downtown Fire Lit

Does this sound familiar? Your downtown organization captured community and perhaps statewide attention with impressive success stories. A group of committed (rock star) volunteers teamed up to establish a momentum, teamwork and a new outlook for downtown.

Wait a second. Do we still look and feel like that? That burst of activity with façade rehabs, new events and business success was at its peak five years ago. Things seem to be getting stale. We are losing volunteers or our pool looks the same as it did ten years ago. It's even more difficult to raise money. What can we do to put pizzazz back into our downtown efforts and clear up our focus? How can we reenergize? We need a downtown revival. Consider this.



- Avoid lack of direction by developing a strategic plan and an annual action plan (two different documents). The action plan must clearly and specifically define projects for a one-year period with steps, delegations, budgets and deadlines. Summarize the action plan and send the summary out to everyone. Be focused and accountable.
- Ask people to recommit (maybe on an annual basis). Perhaps you have volunteers/ board members eager to leave their volunteer positions or change their involvement. Welcome that change. This is an opportunity to recruit fresh talent.
- Stick to term limits. It is not healthy for an organization to avoid board and committee turnover. Keep bringing in new people with new ideas.
- Develop a young professionals group or leadership development training with buy-in from local businesses and organizations. This kind of program can help develop new (and sometimes young) community leaders that are interested in working for organizations like Main Street, the chamber of commerce, etc.
- Take a close look at your meetings (format, length, tone, etc). Two hours is too long. Who wants a two-hour meeting?
- Have FUN. Make a conscious attempt to develop meeting components for this purpose only. Always include something that is lighthearted, positive and perhaps has nothing to do with your downtown revitalization work. Put someone in charge. Be willing to budget for this.
- Take a road trip. Arrange for small groups of board members and/or committee members to travel to other communities to interact with their leaders, pick up ideas for projects and network. Encourage board/committee attendance at events like downtown workshops or conferences. These events tend to fire up board members.
- Hold an annual board retreat. Get day-long commitment (far in advance). Strategic planning (reviewing) is important, but also concentrate on other issues such as board development, big issue discussion, developing partnerships, consensus building, development of volunteer programs, having fun, etc.
- This kind of board/committee revitalization work doesn't just happen. Make sure to include activities like this in your action plan. Using this list, brainstorm specific activities that will help avoid burnout, have a good time and bring new people aboard.

## Downtown Forums, continued...

The IDRC assists communities around the state in revitalizing downtowns or traditional commercial districts. The forums are free to attend. Watch for registration information on the website in the near future.

**Tuesday, June 7 – Clear Lake**  
City Park Bandshell Lakeview Rm  
10 North Lakeview Drive

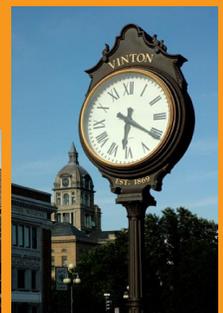
**Wednesday, June 8 – Vinton**  
Kirkwood Community College  
111 W. 3rd Street

**Tuesday, June 21 – Albia**  
Chamber of Commerce  
18 S. Main Street

**Wednesday, June 22 – Carroll**  
Chamber Community Building  
407 W. 5th Street

## Agenda: Downtown Forums: Keeping Up Appearances

- 9:00 am Introductions
- 9:15 am Community Share: What's Going On in your Downtown?
- 10:00 am Presentation: "Appropriate Rehabs to Save Your Downtown"
- 10:45 am Tour of host community's downtown
- Noon Lunch on our own (attendees encouraged to go in groups)
- 1:15 pm Constructive Thoughts: What did you think of host community's downtown?
- 1:30 pm Downtown Resources & Incentives
- 2:30 pm Discussion Group: "Downtown Appearances"
- 3:30 pm Questions & Comments
- 3:45 pm Adjourn



# Director Spotlight — Stacie Hull, Greenfield



Greenfield Chamber/Main Street and Development Executive Director, Stacie Hull, has close to ten years' experience and has worked in three Main Street communities. Born in Greenfield and growing up in rural southwest Iowa near Corning makes her roots in the Iowa communities she's served run deep.

Stacie's volunteer work led her to apply for her first position in the Main Street world for the Adams Community Chamber and Development organization. She worked part-time as the chamber of commerce executive director and part-time as the economic development director managing the Main Street program. "The Adams Community and Corning was a great place to learn the Main Street program," says Stacie. "Being a program since 1990, they had experience and a "can do" attitude with dedicated volunteers." During her tenure, the Adams Community applied for and received designations as a MyEntre.Net community and an Iowa Great Place. Her application to Main Street Iowa for CDBG funds paved the way for the façade improvement project that left an undoubtedly, positive, visual impact on how the district looks today.

In 2010, Stacie received a call encouraging her to apply for a full-time Main Street position in New Mexico. After much deliberation, she accepted the position in an emerging community to broaden her horizon. During her tenure, the community received designation as an Arts & Cultural District allowing them to create a community Cultural Plan, receive grant funds for a Cultural Trail and pull 15 organizations together to market and promote Raton.

Raton Main Street also excelled in design implementation, receiving a Façade Squad grant from New Mexico Main Street to launch a community-driven, façade improvement program rehabilitating two to three buildings at a time over a course of two weekends.

Another major project launched was the redevelopment of a desolate parking lot around the Depot to serve as a beautiful landscaped park and multi-modal center.

Stacie returned to Iowa and settled in Greenfield near family. She became executive director of Greenfield's Chamber/Main Street and Development, an established program in 1995 that was in the process of reorganization. Much focus and work has been done in developing and updating the organization's policies and procedures, bylaws, mission/vision statement, board and committee structures as well as evaluation of events and projects under Stacie's direction. Perhaps one of the biggest endeavors to have a positive impact on the community was establishing an agreement with the city to manage the Hotel/Motel Tax funds. This agreement leveraged partners and grants that doubled or tripled the amount of money available to promote Greenfield.

Stacie enjoys time with her husband Todd, and three kids, Taylor 20, Ryan & Rachyl 15, as well as seven siblings and fourteen nieces and nephews, all who live in Iowa. Stacie enjoys cooking and live theatre and is an active community volunteer. Quoting the infamous Bob Rose, "Be a volunteer to get a volunteer."

"Main Street works, if you work it" says Stacie. Serving in several communities and even two different states, she is often asked how they compare, "A community is only as strong as its people; all communities have wonderful assets, as well as big and little challenges, but how they choose to come together and move forward is what makes the difference." Her vision for the future of downtown is to create a sense of place that instills pride and enjoyment for the community today while protecting and establishing historic fabric and traditions that foster a strong connection to the community for generations to come. "I have been fortunate along the way to work with wonderful people that really 'get it' and share a passion for Main Street."

## Open 4 Business

The 2016 Open 4 Business contest officially kicked off in February and is again open to any business located within a designated Main Street district in Iowa. Following the success of last year's inaugural contest, the 2016 event is anticipated to be bigger and better with a chance to win up to \$28,000! The contest is designed to help local Main Street programs provide financial and technical support for business retention, expansion and recruitment efforts that improve Main Street districts. Businesses must be a for-profit business with a physical location within a state-designated Main Street district. Businesses can be a new start-up or an existing business planning an expansion and are required to provide a 25 percent cash match toward its project. Businesses are required to complete a paper application and make a 15-minute "business pitch" to a panel of judges at a sub-state competition the week of June 13-16, 2016. Each local Main Street district can submit one business to represent their district and local entries are due to Main Street Iowa by 4:00 p.m. on June 3, 2016. Statewide contest pitches will be held the evening of August 2, 2016, prior to the State Downtown Conference in Mason City, Iowa.

To learn more, please contact Robin Bostrom at 515.725.3053 or e-mail [robin.bostrom@iowa.gov](mailto:robin.bostrom@iowa.gov).



# Retail Promotions Ring Cash Registers for Downtown Businesses

Promoting downtown takes many forms, but the ultimate goal is to position the commercial district as the center of the community and the hub of economic activity while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics. There are three general promotion types, each with a different goal, that are the most recommended:

1. Special Events or Festivals bring crowds, traffic and exposure to downtowns
2. Image Promotions help improve consumer perception about the downtown
3. Retail Activities promote the variety of goods and services offered downtown and serve to generate immediate sales

The primary purpose of a retail promotion is to entice consumers to spend money at downtown businesses. This can be done through encouraging local businesses to market cooperatively, offering coordinated activities to drive traffic into the retail establishments and sales.

Why should downtowns have coordinated retail promotions?

- Businesses need help making more money
- Promoting collaboratively generates more excitement
- It's more cost effective
- Highlights the variety of downtown businesses
- Helps develop new or strengthen connections to customers
- Targeting customers is more effective advertising

Here's a quick look at some retail activities and events that have been successful in Iowa's Main Street communities.

- In Cedar Falls, a social media campaign encouraging everyone to Eat, Shop, Live Local is consistently utilized, and a t-shirt with that message is worn by all downtown merchants on Fridays.
- Instead of "guilting" people to shop at home, Hampton and Hamilton Hometowns both promoted buying just one product local that everyone needs and uses: toilet paper. Merchants displayed T.P. in their windows, and rolls were thrown out from parade floats. Even the local car dealership got involved by giving away the product with each auto purchase.
- Le Mars' residents were encouraged to spend their holiday dollars at home and purchase Chamber Bucks at a 20% discount. The promotion kept \$100,000 worth of shopping power in the local community.
- Corning created a Christmas window promotion that beautified an empty building, rewarded shoppers and kept people in town. All shoppers received raffle tickets as they visited the stores. At the end of the night, after the tree was lit, tickets were drawn for the entire contents of the window.
- Strolls are a great way to get shoppers into retail establishments. Participants visit multiple downtown merchants to view product demonstrations or receive samples of wine, chocolate or holiday treats.
- Valley Junction featured district merchants with their Independent Retailer Month social media campaign. The promotion brought awareness to customers about the importance of shopping locally and the economic impact it has on the community with daily stories on Facebook.
- Colfax created an Adult Scavenger Hunt to get people into stores. A flier was designed with questions like "What is the price this week of an eight-piece chicken dinner at Shugars?" Completed forms were turned into the Main Street office and entered into a drawing for prizes. The back of the flier included a map, but another possibility could have been a coupon page.
- If you have a local college or university, consider this idea from Waverly. Student Relief Cards were printed and distributed with coupons to participating merchants on one side and a number on the other. Students were encouraged to visit the shops to see if their digits matched one of the numbers displayed in the businesses.
- Chariton held a Cash Mob utilizing social media to encourage folks to come out en masse to each spend \$20 in a particular store. Businesses that sent employees to a customer service training were entered into a drawing to be selected as the store that was mobbed by shoppers.

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## Retail Promotions, continued...

- All downtown communities should take advantage of the national advertising and freebies offered by American Express. Google Small Business Saturday, and sign up to be a neighborhood champion.
- Holidays are a great excuse to hold a retail event. Burlington produced a Build a Bouquet promotion for Mother's Day. Customers visited a number of businesses to collect a flower from each to create a bunch for mom!
- Sidewalk Sales don't need to be in the summertime! In Waverly, they host one on Valentine's Day.
- Punch cards, also known as loyalty cards, are a great way to keep customers coming back, especially to a restaurant or retail service business. By rewarding customers with a free product or service after a certain number of visits, you drive up repeat business and grow your revenue. Lansing, Stratford and Mt. Pleasant all host an annual punch card promotion where shoppers have the chance to win Downtown Dollars by spending money at home. Shoppers are given punch cards, and for every \$5 spent in local shops and restaurants they receive a punch on the card to be eligible for prizes.
- Retail events can also be designed to target a specific consumer group, for example couples planning their wedding day. Several years ago, Cedar Falls hosted Married on Main, a seven-month promotion that involved the entire community through online voting, to choose elements of a perfect wedding composed of items that could be purchased downtown. One lucky couple won the entire package! Elkader recently hosted a wedding expo, and Marion combined its bridal show with a 5K "Race for the Altar".
- Events targeting women like Divas and Dining" in West Union, "Chucktown Chickfest" in Charles City and "Ladies Night Out" in Waverly appeal to gals who want to enjoy a day or night on the town shopping among friends.
- You can't beat cooperative promotions featuring similar businesses working together. Organizers of "Taste of 'Loo" in downtown Waterloo sell "passports" to a variety of culturally diverse dining establishments offering samples of their specialties.
- Events featuring a specific product sector, like antiques and repurposed finds, never get old! "Antique Jamboree" in Valley Junction, "Funky Junk-a-loo" in Waterloo and the "Lincoln Highway Antique Show" in Mount Vernon are all great examples.

Use these ideas to stimulate your imagination when thinking about activities to add to the promotional calendar in your community!

## staff listing

### Main Street Iowa and Downtown Resource Center

Robin Bostrom	515.725.3053	robin.bostrom@iowa.gov	Business Specialist
Terry Poe Buschkamp	515.725.3075	terry.buschkamp@iowa.gov	Promotion Specialist
Jim Engle	515.725.3058	james.engle@iowa.gov	Director, Iowa Downtown Resource Center
Debi Flanders	515.725.3055	debi.flanders@iowa.gov	Organization Specialist
Maia Jessen	515.725.3056	maia.jessen@iowa.gov	Design Specialist
Tim Reinders	515.725.3077	tim.reinders@iowa.gov	Design Specialist
Kelsie Ring	515.725.3172	kelsie.ring@iowa.gov	Graphic Design Intern
Darlene Strachan	515.725.3057	darlene.strachan@iowa.gov	Assistant State Coordinator
Jim Thompson	515.725.3061	jim.thompson2@iowa.gov	Business Specialist
Michael Wagler	515.725.3051	michael.wagler@iowa.gov	State Coordinator
Susan Watson	515.725.3059	susan.watson@iowa.gov	Office Specialist

Iowa Economic Development Authority  
200 East Grand Avenue | Des Moines, Iowa 50309  
[iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/IDRC/mainstreetiowa](http://iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/IDRC/mainstreetiowa)  
[mainstreet@iowa.gov](mailto:mainstreet@iowa.gov) | [downtown@iowa.gov](mailto:downtown@iowa.gov) | Fax: 515.725.3010



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