

Main Street at Work in Iowa

Main Street Iowa celebrated 30 years of commitment to downtown and commercial district revitalization during an awards celebration held Friday, April 29, 2016, in downtown Des Moines. The event recognized local Main Street innovation, leaders, entrepreneurship, private investments and the catalytic power of Main Street. View the full release to learn more about the entire award winning projects and volunteers honored at the ceremony.

The Main Street Iowa family has grown from a small group of communities willing to take a risk on an untested development model to 52 dedicated communities that implement a sophisticated economic development strategy that is replicated throughout the country. Main Street Iowa communities continue to drive innovation in downtown revitalization tactics that stretch the limit of what can be accomplished with tight budgets and ambitious volunteers. These communities support the entrepreneurship mindset of Iowans, which is the backbone of not only each Main Street district but the state's growing economy. Incrementally, the Main Street Approach is a program that builds resilient communities that can readily adapt to change.

Entrepreneurship, innovation, and catalytic game-changing events — along with local leadership involvement — are crucial elements in downtown's revitalization. Annually, local Main Street programs' leadership strengths and successes are acknowledged. In observance of thirty years of "Main Street at Work in Iowa", competitive nominations were submitted in the categories of Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Game Changer.

The following briefly explains the categories and highlights a winner from each category:



Burlington Original Cyns



Woodbine Odd Fellows



Mount Pleasant downtown housing

Entrepreneurship Award

Nominations in the Entrepreneurship category are well-established businesses in their respective Main Street districts. They weather storms, adapt to market changes, and demonstrate quality business practices, effective commercial experience and positive impact in their districts. The submissions were all exemplary models of creativity and success on Main Street. Nominations were submitted within designated population ranges.

Entrepreneurship Winner, Cynthia Schuyler, Original Cyns, Burlington

Taking a chance when told she couldn't succeed, Cynthia Schuyler lobbied her mother to convert unused upperstory space for her initial boutique location, Original Cyns. She set lofty goals and launched her business plan, quickly gaining the reputation of a hip, fun shop. Her hard work, fashion sense and dedication to service quickly helped her establish a solid customer base. For Cynthia, it was never just about the product. In her words, "I don't love fashion – I love business".

Cynthia understands marketing and demonstrates her commitment to downtown's vibrancy through participation in downtown promotions. She is responsible for the annual Cynapalooza event that blossomed into an all-day street festival.

Her commitment to downtown is apparent as her business has undergone multiple expansions. She opened a second complementary business in 2009. In 2014, she purchased and renovated the deteriorating "bookend" buildings...expanding the business once again into a new location in what was formerly considered a "dead" block — bringing life to downtown Burlington. Cynthia is a true entrepreneur.

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Innovation Award

“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.” This quote by Henry Ford is the spark of innovation. Community leaders and historic district downtown revitalization groups must constantly foster an open-mindedness to introduce new ideas, strategies or methods into their program’s scope of work to achieve new, exciting results. The ability to creatively adapt positions communities to take advantage of new opportunities. Getting stale with downtown district revitalization efforts is not an option.

The Innovation Award was subdivided by community size and nominations were submitted within three specified population ranges. Winners demonstrated innovation in property development and Main Street district revitalization. Each submission in this highly competitive category took an approach on a property that, at first glance, seemed insurmountable. Through partnerships, creative ideas and a willingness to take risks, these projects were completed and illustrate innovation at work throughout Main Street.

Innovation Winner, The Oddfellows Building, Arch-Icon Development, Woodbine

Innovation is a necessity, not an option, in small towns. The “high-octane” rehab of the Oddfellows Building reignited Woodbine’s fierce pride of community. Biding its time in the heart of downtown, this 15,000 square foot building full of hidden 1890s charm was three-quarters vacant, in the beginning stages of foreclosure, and was a crumbling hulk of mismatched windows, peeling paint and shingle-sheathed awnings. Dustin and Mindy Crook purchased the building in 2009 and joined forces with Smith Project Management and started Arch-Icon Development. They explored every available resource and in just two years, the \$1.6M rehab was completed. The building is full of life – home now to a restaurant, six incubator offices, a micro-brewing facility, seven apartments and a banquet room/combo office suite. Every square foot of the building is used to its maximum potential. The Oddfellows became the “community’s” project, serving as a powerful catalyst for Woodbine to pursue a CDBG Downtown Revitalization Grant and inspiring Woodbine’s Main Street district to go from blighted to a vibrant, award-winning downtown in five short years.

Game Changer Award

Throughout the life of every program, there are inspirational, catalytic occurrences that make a significant impact on the community. These events have the ability to influence the future direction of the community -- sometimes negatively, sometimes positively. In many cases, it comes down to the ability for a community to rally together to make the most of each opportunity. The Game Changer was designed to recognize catalytic events and their impact downtown. Submissions ranged from spectacular social events that changed a place’s image, to pinnacle building rehabilitations that started the domino effect, to people that have left their mark in a district so dynamic that it will never be the same. Nominations were submitted based upon ranges of years a program has been designated a Main Street community.

Game Changer Winner: Downtown Upper Housing Initiative, Mount Pleasant

Like so many communities, downtown Mount Pleasant has a wealth of historic multi-story buildings. While the district is now an economic hub for retail and service businesses, this has not always been the case, which makes the Mount Pleasant Downtown Upper Floor Housing Initiative a winner. With the reality that there was thousands of square feet of underutilized and vacant space above downtown properties demonstrating millions of dollars of economic opportunity, Main Street Mount Pleasant’s Board and the city of Mount Pleasant partnered with Southeast Iowa Regional Planning to create an upper story rehabilitation plan.

In the span of the last 13 years, Mount Pleasant developed over \$4.2M in local downtown housing assistance programs, creating 54 new upper story housing units. With an additional \$121,000 in incentives from the city, more than \$8.5M has been leveraged to create downtown upper story housing.

These units provide unique and affordable living spaces, increase the city’s tax base and provide additional income potential for property owners. This investment, driven by successful public-private partnerships, has also increased the confidence of others to invest in downtown in the last years, setting the stage for projects like the Union Block and Brazelton Hotel Lofts.

New downtown residents form a consumer group that now anchors the district’s businesses. Since 2002, Main Street Mount Pleasant’s efforts have helped spur a 25 percent increase in sales tax revenue. And, during that same period, the assessed property values in the Main Street district have increased 32 percent! This successful upper-floor initiative has truly been a catalyst for big impacts in downtown Mount Pleasant.

For more information or to view Main Street Awards’ photographs, visit iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/MainStreetIowa, or e-mail mainstreet@iowa.gov or call 515.725.3051.

DOWNTOWN FORUMS



The Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Downtown Resource Center assists communities around the state in revitalizing their downtowns or commercial districts.

This summer, staff of the Iowa Downtown Resource Center will facilitate several downtown forums to bring together community leaders interested in engaging in a discussion about their downtowns.

Iowa Downtown Resource Center staff will facilitate discussions and give brief presentations related to downtown development. The focus will be on downtown design issues such as building rehabilitation projects, incentives, maintenance programs and streetscape projects.

Attendees will have the opportunity to network with other downtown leaders and are encouraged to bring and share examples of successes in their downtown (photos of projects, marketing pieces, or other visual examples). Come prepared to discuss specific questions relating to downtown design issues available for download at:

iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/UserDocs/documents/IEDA/DowntownDesignPreForumQuestions.doc

Downtown Forums are FREE to attend, visit surveymonkey.com/r/2016_DowntownForum to select the location and date of the forum you plan to attend.

June 7 – City Park Bandshell - Lakeview Room, 10 N Lakeview Drive, Clear Lake, Iowa

June 8 – Kirkwood Community College, 111 W 3rd Street, Vinton, Iowa

June 21 – Albia Chamber of Commerce, 18 S Main Street, Albia, Iowa

June 22 – Chamber Community Building, 407 W 5th Street, Carroll, Iowa

Schedule for Downtown Forums: Keeping up Appearances

- 9:00 a.m. Introductions
- 9:15 a.m. Community Share: What's Going On in your Downtown?
- 10:00 a.m. Presentation: "Appropriate Rehabs to Save your Downtown"
- 10:45 a.m. Tour of host community's downtown
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch on your own
- 1:15 p.m. Constructive thoughts: What did you think of downtown in host community?
- 1:30 p.m. Downtown Resources & Incentives
- 2:30 p.m. Discussion Group: "Downtown Appearances"
- 3:30 p.m. Questions & Comments
- 3:45 p.m. Adjourn

Questions?

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Main Street Manager Spotlight

Scott D. Tunncliff was born in Davenport and raised in Iowa; however, in his own modest words, "Growing up is a work in progress." Scott has come full-circle in his 30-years in economic / community development. He began as a "smoke-stack chaser" looking for businesses in an expansion

mode whose need might align with the strengths offered locally. Over time, Main Street, with its emphasis on restoration and creative re-use, has helped him realize a vibrant and viable way to maintain the economic integrity of Iowa. By revitalizing smaller commercial areas incrementally, helping to maintain pride in cities of all sizes, joining the growing chorus of planners, engineers, developers and preservationists warning against the perils of urban sprawl and growth, his passion for Main Street continues to grow.

He believes that each city has a unique character that contributes to the area ambiance. Scott enjoys living a few blocks from the mighty Mississippi River and walking on the bike trail along its shore. In the 1980s, he began undertaking preliminary steps to emigrate to Australia but landed a position in economic development.

Scott has never been tempted to leave his home in Bettendorf because he loves the quality of living offered in the Quad Cities. He enjoys helping natives and other interested parties identify assets and liabilities, followed by crafting strategies to build awareness.

"One of the most drastic and best received strategies for Main Street has been the inclusion of the term urban center, for commercial districts that are not downtown but have a vital character, economic vitality, history and architectural integrity distinct from downtowns," says Scott. Such inclusions have been moving in the right direction since participating in the Main Street Iowa program since 2009.

Davenport's riverfront is seeing revitalization through the conversion of warehouse and office space into residential apartments with high occupancy rates fueled by many younger than 30 years of age. Scott said, "My vision for Hilltop Campus Village is to have its amenity base continue to broaden and deepen, tying into the needs of visitors, residents within the trade area -- including colleges, universities and historic neighborhoods -- so that, when people in the downtown want to acquire a starter home and think of starting a family, they will look to the Hilltop as a logical location, thereby strengthening the neighborhoods, reversing the trend of urban sprawl and depopulation on the central city core. The success of this vision is dependent on maintaining quality schools in the area, which involves securing sufficient funding so that districts with declining enrollments don't feel obliged to make tough decisions." Furthermore, "Time is a supply and demand thing. If it gets overbooked, something has to be set aside. As you get older and gain wisdom, you realize that "something" does not include "rest"."

Scott and his wife met doing "A Winter's Tale" at Genesis Guild in Rock Island, and got engaged while playing the leads in "Angel Street" at Playcrafters in Moline. They have two children, Annie and Phillip who are also involved in theatre. Scott is a Commissioner on the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, representing Scott County, and a huge fan of the music of Hoagy Carmichael. He also hosts a faux radio show podcast, The Bucktown Genesis Guild in Rock Island Revue (www.bucktownrevue.com), which performs monthly between August and May.

To learn more about Hilltop Village, call 563.370.2098, e-mail hcvscott@gmail.com or visit hilltopcampusvillage.org or hilltopbusinessassociation.org.

Save the Date!



Volunteers and professionals involved in historic preservation across the state will gather in Davenport September 15-17 for the 2016 Preserve Iowa Summit. This year is a celebratory one for preservation as 2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act. Celebrate with a range of educational sessions and demonstrations, tours of area sites and networking opportunities with fellow preservationists!

The Summit is a coordinated effort of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs' State Historic Preservation Office, the city of Davenport, the Davenport Historic Preservation Commission and Preservation Iowa.

For more information, visit www.preserveiowasummit.org

The Secret to a Long Life?

Main Street Iowa is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year and three communities also maintain the same claim to fame. Burlington, Keokuk and Oskaloosa started their programs in 1986 and Dubuque, an Urban Test Program Main Street community, began their efforts in 1985. For more than 30 years these four Main Street communities have hired directors, executed events, recruited businesses, raised funds and rehabilitated buildings. Less visibly, they have held meetings, recruited volunteers, developed vision statements, taken developed budgets, etc. Is a 30-year Main Street community in its purest form common? No. So, what's the secret? I recently interviewed three current directors and one volunteer extraordinaire from all four of these communities and asked for tips and advice to help any non-profit organization. The following is a summary.

- **Dan LoBianco, Dubuque:** Main Street community since 1985; director since 1998
- **Steve Frevert, Burlington:** Main Street community since 1986; director since 2008
- **Joyce Glasscock, Keokuk:** Main Street community since 1986; director since 1989
- **Emily Russell, Oskaloosa:** Main Street community since 1986; volunteer since 1986



Burlington

What's the secret to a long life as a Main Street community?

Burlington: We started with good bones. Burlington has a quality and variety of architecture that is perhaps unmatched by any town this size. People see this as worth saving and that has a lot to do with the passion leaders possess. We have had strong, knowledgeable leaders, which are essential. The most committed ones understand that their projects are boosted by having a good downtown. Patience! It's that whole incremental thing. Nothing will happen as quickly as you want.

Dubuque: Main Street communities must understand the incremental nature of downtown development. Public/private partnerships are crucial. We have developed strong communications with the city including city management, planning & zoning, economic development and elected officials. We have worked with the city and private sector to recognize downtown's challenges and opportunities and both have invested greatly. One example is a warehouse area - the Millworks District - that was largely vacant until both the public and private sectors worked together to bring it back to life. Main Street's Four Point Approach to downtown development has also been embraced consistently and has helped sustainability efforts.

Keokuk: There is no secret to a long life. Longevity directly corresponds to working the plan and making a tangible difference. It's also directly related to an engaged and empowered board and its volunteers.

Oskaloosa: We always had people willing to sacrifice their time to make the community better. We've had the backing of the powers that be and a good working relationship with local government and other stakeholders. That has been essential.



Oskaloosa

How do you keep the enthusiasm?

Keokuk: Communities must maintain a balance between those that are immersed in all things Main Street and engaging new volunteers who are eager to do something. Welcome new volunteers. Listen to them. People sometimes rally around a new effort or a new face. New and expanding partnerships have been key. Make sure the relationships are mutually beneficial. For example, the depot organization wants to piggyback on Crazy Days to raise awareness and funds for their restoration project. Okay...love that idea! We built the theme of the event around trains, and the Depot Commission and Foundation staffed the concessions in the pocket park. The hospital, little league, college and other partners have also partnered with our organization on projects.

Oskaloosa: Sure, we've had ups and downs, but the organization was able to stay fresh because we have always had new people come to the community that were enthusiastic. They helped make a difference.

How do you keep the organization well-funded?

Burlington: A solid financial footing with balanced sources of income is a huge benefit! A non-profit that has to spend all its time fund raising and worrying about keeping the lights on is not going to have the resources to bring about substantial change.

Dubuque: Funding has been diversified and has consisted largely of four sources: cash from private contributors and the public sector, in-kind support covering things like rent, and event income.

Keokuk: The trend is for more dollars to be dedicated to specific projects and less for day to day operations. It is important that those projects pay a share of the costs to keep the lights on and the doors open.

Oskaloosa: It's never easy, but with new projects and transitions, the community always has been able to succeed. Main Street has been good for Oskaloosa. We've had several directors with their own strengths. Our focus and projects have changed and people step up to keep us moving forward.

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Is organizational sustainability talked about or does it just happen?

Dubuque: It is talked about! We constantly work to keep things fresh including board members, volunteers, events and other practices. Don't hang on to something too long.

Keokuk: It just happens, but there is no substitute for a board action plan and timeline. This tool keeps us organized.

Is your organization's strength consistent or do you have peaks and valleys?

Dubuque: Sure, there are peaks and valleys. Staff turnover does that, and sometimes the economy does too. But, this is important. We pull things back together. Our organization has had peaks whenever we undertake large projects. They spur new energy and lead to smaller complimentary successes.

Burlington: Flexibility and adaptability are crucial. In the past 30 years, downtown Burlington has seen the loss of its biggest employer, record floods, fires and other setbacks. We have also received unexpected grants, brought buildings back to life and witnessed a burgeoning residential population. A good program has to stick to its vision while accepting unexpected changes. Any program that thinks it can just plunk along quietly without disruption is fooling itself. The key is to not let setbacks cripple you and to take advantage of the good things that occur.

Keokuk: We do have peaks and valleys but not to great extremes. Don't let those valleys define the program. Stay the course. The thread that is so frail by itself becomes strong when woven together with other threads by:

- Communicating: Listening as well as telling your story
- Forging strong partnerships
- Evaluating
- Being open to change
- Keeping an eye on the prize ... your vision



Oskaloosa

Mason City to Host 2016 Iowa Downtown Conference

The 30th annual Iowa Downtown Conference, hosted by the Iowa Economic Development Authority's Iowa Downtown Resource Center, in partnership with Main Street Mason City and Visit Mason City, will be held August 2 - 4 in Mason City. The premier annual event for professionals and volunteers involved in downtown revitalization in Iowa and neighboring states will be relevant and motivational for downtown enthusiasts, volunteers, chambers of commerce and Main Street Iowa communities, mayors, city officials, historic preservation advocates and practitioners, economic developers, business and building owners, developers and planners.

The Iowa Downtown Conference provides opportunities for attendees to make new connections, hear about the latest trends, acquire practical information and ideas, and learn strategies that are relevant to rural, mid-sized and urban communities and urban districts. Attendees will enjoy a unique meeting experience and take away the essential tools helpful to address local downtown development issues, historic commercial district vibrancy and competitiveness.

This valuable, educational and inspiring conference includes two full days of timely and relevant classroom sessions offering practical ideas and solutions presented by industry experts. In addition, there will be a bonus day with a series of "basic training" sessions providing a comprehensive introductory to downtown development presented by Iowa Downtown Resource Center staff.

Attendees will select from nine tours, including opportunities to explore a community famous for architectural masterpieces and Hollywood history, and field sessions using Mason City as a living laboratory to demonstrate the successful use of the Main Street Approach® in the downtown district. Tickets for these authentic experiences will be available on a first come, first served basis.



Annual favorites returning will be four plenary sessions featuring internationally known keynote speakers, the "Main Street Open 4 Business" competition finals, "Three Minute Success Stories" and "Ask the Downtown Doctor." New features include a series of mini sessions providing information on opportunities available at the Iowa Economic Development Authority; and issues luncheons that allow attendees the opportunity to discuss concerns of interest to their community.

There will also be enjoyable social activities planned for professional networking with others who recognize the importance of downtown revitalization and an exhibit hall featuring vendors showcasing interesting resources.

Online registration will be available June 1 at iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/downtown

For more information or to discuss opportunities to sponsor or exhibit at the Iowa Downtown Conference, contact Terry Buschkamp at terry.buschkamp@iowa.gov or call 515.725.3075.

#IowaDowntownConference

SAVE THE DATES

FOR THE IOWA DOWNTOWN CONFERENCE

THE ONLY STATEWIDE ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS
INVOLVED IN HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DISTRICT REVITALIZATION IN IOWA.

➤ AUGUST 2-4, 2016 ◀

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