Cumulative Totals July 1, 1986 – Dec. 31, 2011

Net gain of new businesses: 3,712
Net gain of new jobs: 11,440
Total number of volunteer hours: 2,141,496
Number of building rehabs/sales: 11,953
Total private dollars invested into downtown buildings: 1,104,777,307

These statistics are used to show the economic impact monitored in Iowa Main Street commercial districts. Success of the Main Street Program cannot be measured by numbers alone. Cumulative figures are condensed from reports submitted by each local Main Street Program. Each community’s or neighborhood’s population, size of project area, and local priorities vary.

New Main Street Communities Announced

February 7, 2012 (Des Moines, IA) - Governor Terry Branstad announced that three Iowa communities were selected to join the Main Street Iowa program: Chariton, Jefferson and Lansing. The announcement was made during a special ceremony held at the Iowa State Capitol.

"Iowa’s historic main streets are the heart and soul of our communities,” said Governor Branstad. “We will continue to do whatever we can to keep Iowa’s downtowns strong and vibrant for business owners, workers, residents and visitors. I am pleased to welcome each of these communities into the Main Street family and wish them much success in the future.”

For more than 25 years, the Main Street Iowa program and its communities have been looked upon as the “best of the best” in a national effort to revitalize downtowns across the country. The addition of these new communities brings the total number of Main Street communities in Iowa to 48.

While it may be challenging to become a Main Street community, designated communities reap many benefits. During the first three years of the program, each community receives 40 days of on-site training and technical assistance from Main Street Iowa, National Main Street Center staff and private consultants, as well as 30 days of training for volunteers and local staff, resulting in a state investment of $100,000. Mature Main Street communities each receive continuing training valued at $10,000 annually.

Over the years, by working together with the state, Main Street Iowa communities have realized the benefits of more than two million hours of volunteer time committed to improving their city centers, a significantly increased job and business base, and over a billion dollars in private investment to purchase, construct and rehabilitate downtown property.
main street iowa
changing places, changing faces, changing lives!

Overview

For almost three decades, Iowa’s Main Street communities have made a commitment to the long-term revitalization of their historic commercial districts. Using the Main Street Four Point Approach®, local leaders have implemented practical management strategies producing fundamental changes in Iowa’s Main Streets.

The Main Street Four Point Approach® was developed in 1977 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, D.C. Its primary purpose is to establish historic commercial districts as economically-viable centers of commerce through comprehensive, incremental and coordinated work in four key areas: Organization, Promotion, Design and Business Improvement.

In 1985, the Iowa Legislature adopted the National Main Street Center’s model and established Main Street Iowa as a program of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). Today, Main Street is the premiere program of the Iowa Downtown Resource Center and is recognized as one of the most successful state programs in the nation.

Communities interested in revitalizing their historic main streets and joining a progressive network of cities throughout the state are invited to apply for IEDA’s Main Street Program. From a city so small as Bonaparte, population 433, to Des Moines, population 203,433, local leaders have embraced the Main Street model and use it as the rallying call to bring population and business back to traditional historic commercial districts.

The mission of the Main Street Iowa Program is to improve the social and economic well-being of Iowa’s communities by assisting selected communities to capitalize on the unique identity, assets and character of their historic commercial district. Main Street is economic development within the context of historic preservation.

Main Street Approach®

The Main Street Four Point Approach® is a trademarked program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Center. It offers a comprehensive and integrated strategy to commercial district revitalization using four key facets.

Organization — With coordination by a paid program director, organization brings together the public sector, private groups and individual citizens to work together more effectively.

Business Improvement — Diversifies the historic district’s economy by identifying potential market niches, finding new uses for vacant or under used spaces and improving business practices.

Design — Utilizes appropriate design and preservation concepts, to enhance the visual quality of the district (buildings, signs, window displays, landscaping and environment).

Promotion — Encourages a community to focus on the district as a source of community pride, social activity and economic development potential.

Resources to the Community

State Investment

Each Main Street Iowa community receives thousands of dollars annually in training and technical assistance.

First three years – State invests approximately $120,000

• 40 days - Training and technical assistance on-site by Main Street Iowa and National Main Street Center staff and private consultants
• 30 days – Training for local volunteers and staff

On-going annual investment - State invests approximately $15,000

• Quarterly volunteer and director training
• Design assistance
• Business Assistance
• Yearly consultations
• City-specific technical assistance and support

Training and Technical Assistance

It is imperative that cities receive the training and technical assistance needed for them to make good planning decisions relative to revitalization and future development of their district.

Statewide

• Quarterly program orientation/training for new staff and volunteers
• Quarterly training workshops facilitated by nationally-known professionals
• Board and volunteer development training via Webinars

In Community

• Architectural and design assistance
• Business Assistance
• Facilitated vision development
• Facilitated mission statement development
• Committee training
• Board roles and responsibilities training
• Facilitated board and committee planning
• Issue-specific technical assistance
• Support with program director selection
• Annual one or two-day program visits

Benefits and Advantages

The state program strives to build strong partnerships, improve communication and provide new opportunities for continued success.

• Inclusion in a state and national movement involving 1,800 communities in the United States
• Registration scholarships for National Main Streets Conference
• Main Street Loan Pool for upper floor development, rehabilitation and in-fill construction
• Reduced registration cost for the annual Iowa Downtown Summit
• Participation and recognition during annual Main Street Iowa Awards
• Inclusion in the Main Street Iowa website with links to local community websites
• Inclusion in statewide marketing and public relations efforts

Eight Guiding Principles

Incremental Process
Comprehensive Approach
Emphasis on Quality
Public and Private Partnership
Changing Attitudes
Focus on Existing Assets
Self-Help Program
Implementation-Oriented

"Revitalizing our town centers is one of the toughest challenges facing our communities today - and one of the most important things civic leaders can do to strengthen their community’s economic foundation, boost civic pride and retain young talent.”

— Kennedy Smith, Principal
Community Land Use Economics Group

Contact

Iowa Economic Development Authority
Main Street Iowa – Iowa Downtown Resource Center
200 East Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50309-1819
Phone: 515.725.3051 E-mail: mainstreet@iowa.gov
iowaeconomicdevelopment.com

"Never doubt that a small group of committed dependable citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Mead