



Main Street Messenger

2013 volume one



Main Street Iowa Recognizes Outstanding Achievements

Award Winning Projects and Volunteers Honored

The 27th annual Main Street Iowa Awards celebration was held on Friday, May 17 at the Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center in downtown Des Moines. The event was attended by approximately 430 individuals representing communities across the state. Competitive nominations were submitted for 105 projects; 26 were selected for awards and six received honorable mention.

Governor Terry Branstad, Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds, and Debi Durham, Director of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) presented the honors. Main Street Volunteer of the Year awards were presented to 47 individuals or couples who were selected by their community for outstanding dedication and volunteer service benefiting the local Main Street program.

"I am proud to have been part of the effort to bring the Main Street program to Iowa in 1985 as an economic development tool," stated Governor Branstad. "It is gratifying to see the successes Iowa communities have had because of our Main Street program. As a result of the hard work of countless local leaders, Iowa's Main Street districts in communities large and small are flourishing."

In its 27-year history, Main Street Iowa has tracked over \$1.2 billion in private investment in the purchase, construction and rehabilitation of property in participating commercial districts, significantly increasing the state's job and business base. In addition, over two million hours of volunteer time has been logged collectively by local main street organizations.

"Main Street is an economic development model which epitomizes the strength of public-private partnerships," added Durham. "Taxpayers are certainly getting their money's worth. Since 1986, for every dollar the state of Iowa has invested in operating the state Main Street program, the private sector in those communities has invested \$71.93 into building improvements and acquisitions. In 2012 estimated sales tax receipts from net new businesses in Main Street communities was approximately 48 times the budget of the state Main Street program."

During the event, eight communities were recognized for reaching significant benchmarks based on private dollar investments made in the purchase and revitalization of properties within their respective commercial districts. Belle Plaine was recognized for reaching the \$2 million benchmark in the last year, with Dunlap honored for \$3 million in local investment. Greenfield and New Hampton were awarded certificates for \$5 million in local investment; and Le Mars was recognized for achieving the \$10 million benchmark. Cedar Rapids' Czech Village/New Bohemia, Davenport's Hilltop Campus Village and Mason City all attained \$20 million in local investment since the program's inception in 1986. The new Main Street organization in Marion was recognized and welcomed into the program; and New Hampton received recognition for their 20 years of participation as a designated Main Street community.

As a highlight of the evening, two special awards were presented. The "Spirit of Main Street" Award recognizes the person, organization, community or project that best demonstrates the true meaning and spirit of "Main Street at work." Living this spirit is the difference between interest and commitment, between mediocrity and excellence. This year's "Spirit of Main Street" Award winner is Dan Tindall. Main Street Iowa honored the community of Belle Plaine for their Downtown Revitalization Streetscape & Façade Master Plan as the "Signature Project of the Year." This award honors a project that rises above traditional award categories in impact, emotion and significance.

In 1985, the Iowa Legislature adopted the National Main Street Center's Four Point Approach® to district revitalization by establishing Main Street Iowa within the agency that is now the Iowa Economic Development Authority. Since its inception, the state program and its communities have been considered examples of excellence in the national effort to revitalize historic commercial districts across the country. 2013 marks another major event in the life of Main Street Iowa. For 26 years, Thom Guzman has passionately led the Main Street Iowa program. Later in the year, he will be retiring and embarking on new adventures.



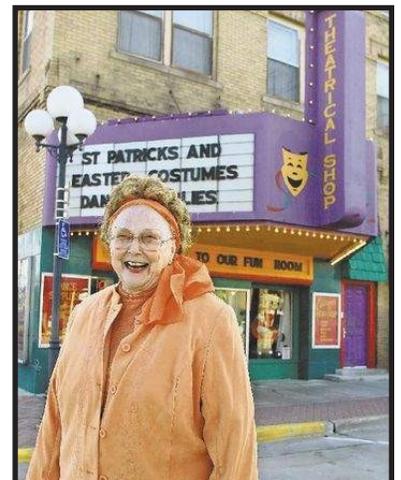
Dan Tindall, 2013 Spirit of Main Street



*Warren Cultural Center, Greenfield
Total Rehabilitation Over 5000 Square Feet*



*Belle Plaine, Signature Project of the Year –
Façade & Streetscape Improvement Project*



*Betty Hill, The Theatrical Shop,
West Des Moines, Business of the Year*

Assessment of the Main Street Iowa Program

As part of a Planning in Small Towns class, a group of fifteen undergraduate students at Iowa State University, in the Community & Regional Planning Department studied and conducted a research project on the Main Street Iowa program during the fall semester of 2012. The class project involved an assessment of the Main Street program focusing on the research question: what benefits are associated with the Main Street Program in terms of number of firms, pull factors, size of firms, and how do these benefits differ based upon size of the community and length of time in the program?

To answer this question, the students aggregated data collected on 19 Main Street Iowa communities who had been in the program for a minimum of 10 years and preferably 15 years or longer. These 19 communities were divided into three categories based upon population size: Small cities are cities with populations under 5,000. There were eight communities in this category. The average population for these communities was 2,006. Medium cities are cities with populations between 5,000 and 10,000 people. There were five communities in this category. The average population for these communities was 8,252. Large cities are cities with populations of more than 10,000 but less than 50,000. There were six communities in this category. The average population for these communities was 20,992.

First the students examined the data concerning the number of firms located in the Main Street cities. Aggregating the number of firms by city size categories identified that largest cities have the greatest number of firms with an average of 652; medium sized cities have an average of 316 firms and small cities have an average of 123 firms. This finding is not surprising but when these results are compared with population size the smallest cities have the greatest number of firms per person at 6.1 compared to medium at 3.8 and larger cities with 3.1 firms per person.

The next three figures examine these trends in greater detail by comparing the average number of firms before the community joined the Main Street program with the average number of firms after becoming a Main Street community distinguished by city size. Figure 1 shows before joining the Main Street program the number of firms in small communities indicates a slightly declining trend. However, after participating in the program, the number of firms shows a positive increase. The average number of firms in small cities pre-program was 116 and post-program is 128 -- a gain of 12 firms or approximately 10 percent on average.

Figure 2 shows the trend for medium sized cities. Before participating in the Main Street program the number of firms shows a slowly increasing trend line. After joining the program the average number of firms levels off indicating stabilization in the number of firms in medium sized cities. The average number of firms in medium sized cities pre-program was 302 and post-program is 340 – a gain of 38 firms or 12 percent on average.

Figure 3 shows the trend in the number of firms found in large cities. Prior to participating in the Main Street program the average number of firms was increasing in the case of large cities. After joining the program there is some minor variation in the number of

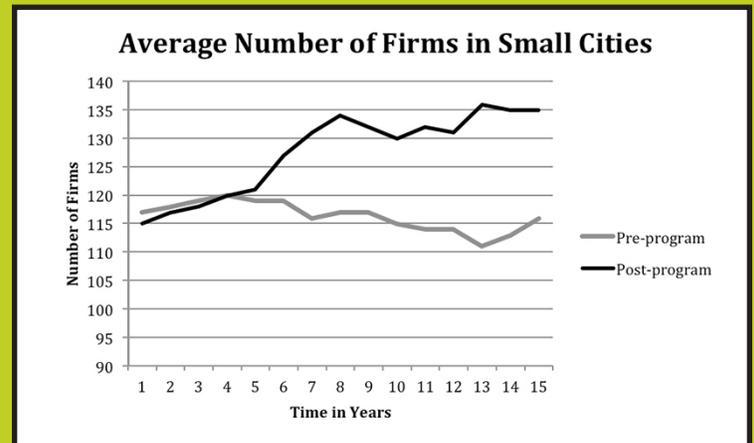


Figure 1. Comparison of the Number of Firms Before and After Joining the Main Street Program for Small Cities. Source: Iowa State University, Retail Trade and Analysis Reports, 2011.

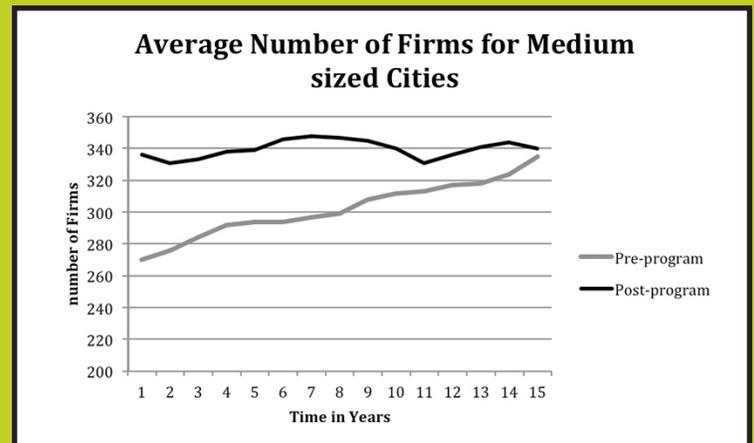


Figure 2. Comparison of the Number of Firms Before and After Joining the Main Street Program for Medium Cities. Source: Iowa State University, Retail Trade and Analysis Reports, 2011.

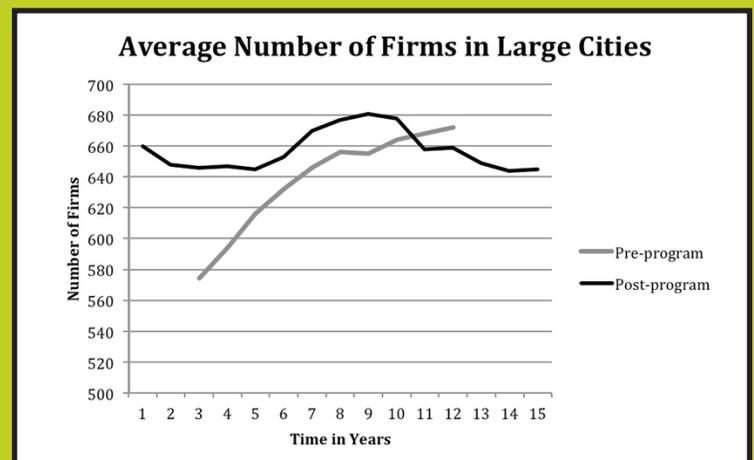


Figure 3. Comparison of the Number of Firms Before and After Joining the Main Street Program for Large Cities. Source: Iowa State University, Retail Trade and Analysis Reports, 2011.

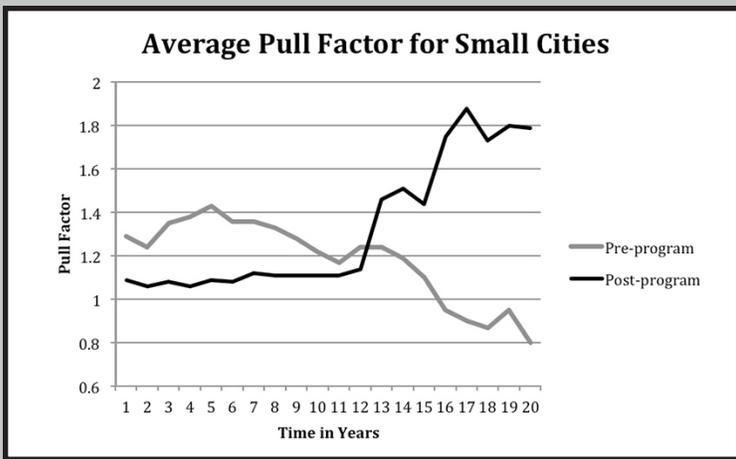


Figure 4. Comparison of the Average Pull Factors for Small Cities Before and After Joining the Main Street Program. Source: Iowa State University, Retail Trade and Analysis Reports, 2011.

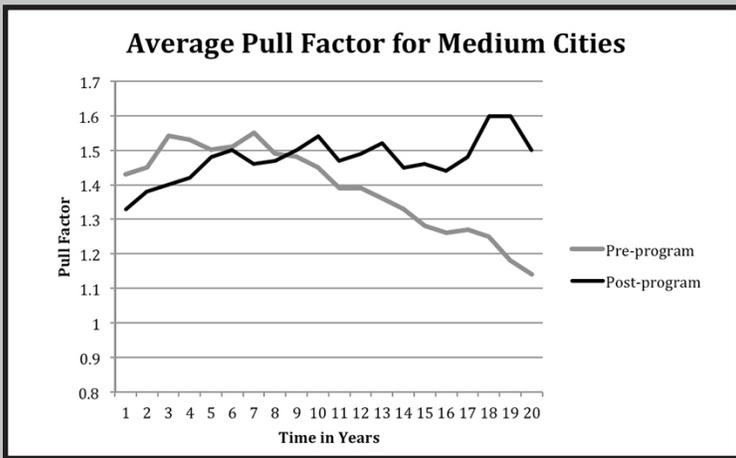


Figure 5. Comparison of the Average Pull Factors for Medium Cities Before and After Joining the Main Street Program. Source: Iowa State University, Retail Trade and Analysis Reports, 2011.

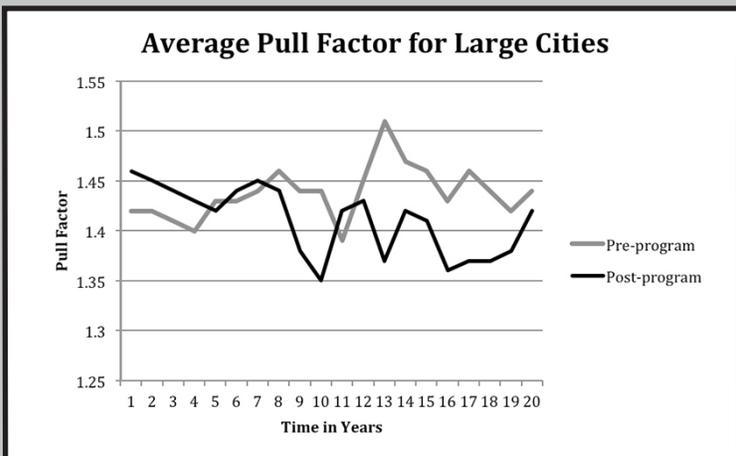


Figure 6. Comparison of the Average Pull Factors for Large Cities Before and After Joining the Main Street Program. Source: Iowa State University, Retail Trade and Analysis Reports, 2011.

firms but mostly this figure shows that the number of firms hasn't changed significantly in the larger communities since joining the program. The average number of firms pre-program was 638 and post-program is 658 – a gain of 20 firms or 3.1 percent on average. These figures show that the Main Street program has a much more pronounced and positive impact on the number of firms located in smaller and medium sized communities than what has been experienced in the larger communities.

Next the students examined an economic indicator referred to as the Pull Factor. The Pull factor is a commonly used economic indicator that relates to the retail activity within the community. The pull factor estimates the number of people attracted to shop in the community and compares that to the population within the community. The important thing to remember about the pull factor is whether it is greater or less than 1. If the pull factor is greater than 1, then this indicates that the community attracts customers from outside the community, as well as from the community. If the pull factor is less than 1, this indicates that people within the community are shopping elsewhere.

Figure 4 compares the pull factor for small communities prior to the implementation of the Main Street program with what occurred afterward. This figure clearly shows how the program has benefitted small cities. Before participation in the Main Street program the average pull factor for small cities was declining sharply. However, after implementing the Main Street program the average pull factor for small cities has leveled off and stabilized with a pull factor around 1.2, well above the threshold value of 1. This is a significant finding, indicating that these small communities are able to serve the local population and attract people from outside the community to shop, demonstrating the city's strength as a retail center.

Figure 5 shows a somewhat similar trend for medium sized cities. Prior to the Main Street program the average pull factor for medium sized cities was declining. Afterwards, despite some considerable variability the average pull factor has stabilized with an average pull factor of approximately 1.5. This indicates that these medium sized cities serve the needs of their local population and are able to attract people from outside the community to shop there. This shows the strength of these cities to serve as retail centers.

Figure 6 shows the average pull factor for large cities both before the implementation of the Main Street program and afterwards. As this figure shows the Main Street program has had less of an impact on the larger communities. Overall, the pull factor has remained relatively unchanged between the two time periods at approximately 1.4. While a pull factor of 1.4 indicates that the city is serving its local population and attracting people from outside the city to shop, this is an expected result for cities with populations of over 20,000 that often serve as regional service and retail centers, especially throughout parts of Iowa. However, what is impressive is that cities with populations as small as 1,000 to 2,000 are also able to do this.

These results on the number of firms and pull factors are based upon independent, secondary data collected by the State of Iowa and reported by Iowa State University's Community Indicators Program. In this next series of figures the data utilized is reported by the Main Street communities, which have been aggregated for comparison purposes. The next few figures show the gains that have been reported after the implementation of the Main Street program.



Figure 7 shows the average net gain in business starts, relocations and expansions that occurred in the downtown over time by size of city. Not surprisingly the larger cities appear to have the highest gains during each time period. This could partly be a function of the physical size of the Main Street district since larger cities have a larger downtown district. As you can see over time these gains continue with larger cities experiencing the greatest gains in businesses. However, examining this more closely and comparing this data to the total number of firms that were looked at earlier indicates that proportionally the greatest gains have occurred in the smallest cities. Based upon proportion to total number of firms, the increase in net new businesses in small cities accounts for 32 percent, compared to 18.7 percent for medium sized cities and 19.3 percent for large cities. Thus the net gain in businesses that have been recorded in the downtown for small cities represents a significant percentage of total firms within the city.

Figure 8 shows the average net gain in new jobs over time by city size. Once again the largest cities have experienced the greatest numerical gain in jobs. Notice that the net gain in jobs for small cities remains relatively low over time. It is also interesting to compare the data in this figure with those in Figure 7. In the small cities it would appear that each new business creates approximately 1.2 jobs, whereas in medium sized cities each new business creates approximately 3 jobs and in large cities each new business creates approximately 3.5 jobs. Here we can clearly see the benefits of the Main Street program in bringing jobs to downtown districts especially in the case of medium and large cities.

Figure 9 shows the average number of buildings renovated/rehabilitated over time by city size. This data is somewhat misidentified and tends to over-estimate what is actually occurring. This data represents the average number of renovation/rehabilitation projects that have occurred in the downtown district, rather than the number of buildings actually renovated. This data is particularly interesting because it looks at another type benefit associated with the Main Street program, that of physical improvements. Once again the largest cities have undergone the greatest number of renovation projects, but considering variation of population size between the smallest and largest cities, the small cities have performed well in raising the funds needed to support the number of building renovation projects that they have completed.

What is most interesting about these research findings regarding number of firms, pull factor and size of firms is that the benefits associated with the Main Street program are often proportionally greater for the very smallest of cities, when compared to larger cities. This may be at least partly explained by the fact that the downtown plays a much more significant role economically in smaller cities and as a result the Main Street program has a much greater impact on these communities.

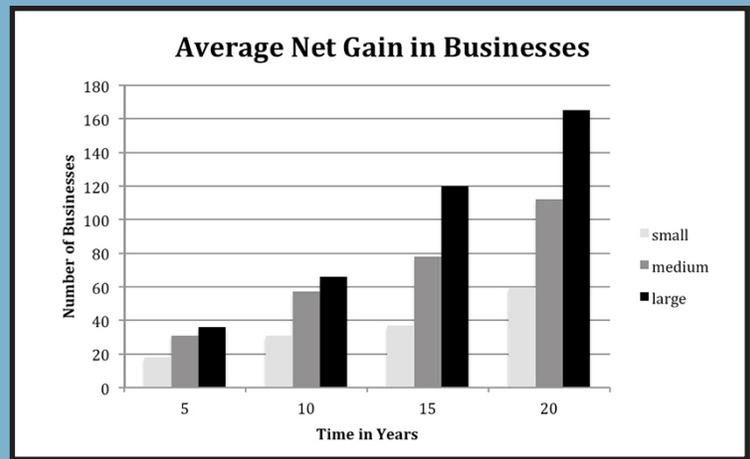


Figure 7. Net Gain in Business Starts, Relocations and Expansions. Source: Main Street Iowa, 2012.

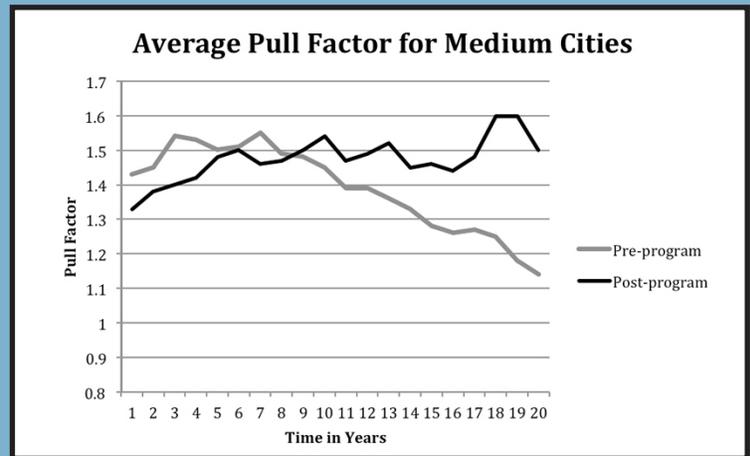


Figure 8. Net Gain in New Jobs. Source: Main Street Iowa, 2012.

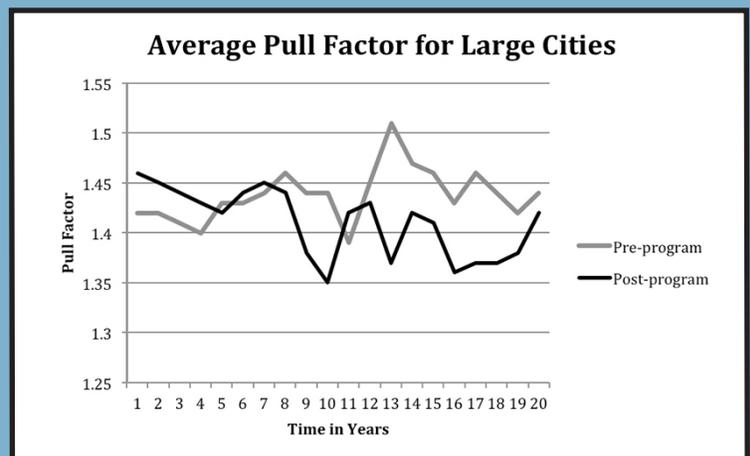


Figure 9. Number of Buildings Renovation Projects. Source: Main Street Iowa, 2012.

Here's the scoop...

Every year, each American consumes an average of 23.2 quarts of ice cream, ice milk, sherbet, ices and other commercially produced frozen dairy products. Over 600 million of those quarts are produced in the northwestern Iowa Main Street community of Le Mars, with a population of 9,826. In fact, there is more ice cream made in Le Mars, Iowa than any other one location on earth, making it the Ice Cream Capital of the World®!

Officially designated as such in 1994 by the Iowa Legislature, Le Mars has been the home to Wells Enterprises Inc., makers of Blue Bunny® brand ice cream since 1913 when Fred H. Wells purchased a horse, a delivery wagon, a few cans and jars, and the good will of the business from a local dairy farmer for \$250. The original contract granted Wells the milk distribution route and guaranteed a source of raw milk from a herd of fifteen milk cows.

Around 1925, Fred H. Wells and his sons began manufacturing ice cream. As the popularity of their ice cream grew, they quickly branched out and began distributing their frozen confections in neighboring towns. In 1927 Fred and his brother, Harry C. Wells, began a partnership to distribute ice cream in Sioux City, Iowa, located about 25 miles south of Le Mars. In 1928 Fairmont Ice Cream purchased the ice cream distribution system from the Wells' brothers along with the right to use the Wells' name.



Seven years later, the Wells' brothers decided to again sell ice cream in Sioux City. No longer able to use the name "Wells," the brothers decided to run a "Name That Ice Cream" contest in the Sioux City Journal. A Sioux City man won the \$25 cash prize for submitting the winning entry, "Blue Bunny," after noticing how much his son enjoyed the blue bunnies in a department store window at Easter time.

Wells is now the largest privately held, family owned ice cream producer in the U.S., with 2,600 employees and more than \$1 billion in annual sales. The company produces more than 150 million gallons of ice cream annually, at three state of the art manufacturing facilities (two in Le Mars). There are more than 500 Blue Bunny ice cream and frozen novelty products distributed throughout the United States, with over 70 flavors of Blue Bunny ice cream.

To share their history, in 1999 the company opened an 8,500 square foot ice cream parlor, museum and visitors center in a commercial center at the intersection of Highways 3 and 75 in Le Mars. For over a decade, the venue attracted thousands of visitors from around the world, and was a popular stop for national political candidates. Needing additional space, the Blue Bunny Ice Cream Parlor and Museum moved into a 12,000 square foot vintage building in the heart of Le Mars' business district in 2011.



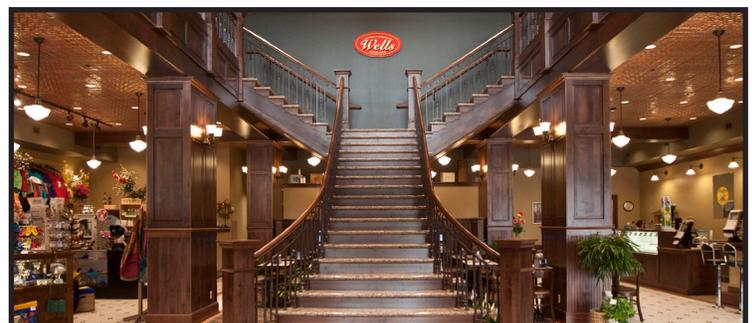
The building that houses the 1920s-style parlor is itself full of history. The brick structure was built in 1875 by George E. Pew, just six years after the town of Le Mars was incorporated. His general hardware and agricultural implements company was one of the first businesses in the state of Iowa. The business closed in the 1960s, and the building had been used for storage for many years before it was acquired and extensively renovated by Wells.

The space has undergone a transformation that marries both the integrity of the old building with some of the features from their former location. The Parlor's marble ice cream bar, originally salvaged from the historic M&M Bakery & Café in O'Neill, Nebraska, as well as the iconic sundae sculpture are familiar cornerstones to the parlor. The new location boasts a grand staircase, private room for meetings, events and parties, and a specialty gift shop. Historical photos, packaging displays and exhibits that highlight Wells company history are integrated throughout the Parlor.

Visitors have had little trouble finding the Blue Bunny Ice Cream Parlor, despite its move from a busy highway intersection. "The downtown location has proved to be a great move for the Ice Cream Parlor," said Dave Smetter, vice president corporate and integrated marketing communications for Wells Enterprises. Since moving to the downtown location, traffic at the Ice Cream Parlor is up an average of more than 40%!

"What a wonderful addition the Blue Bunny Ice Cream Parlor and Museum is for our downtown Main Street district," stated Mary Reynolds, Le Mars Chamber of Commerce Main Street Manager. "The addition of this venue enhances the composition of Main Street as well as supports Le Mars' merchants who have long served as the downtown anchors of our community."

The move to downtown Le Mars has added a great opportunity for the Parlor to be in the heart of the downtown business community, and the rejuvenation of a city landmark has invigorated the community's business district. Life is sweet!



The Power of One Product

Every chamber of commerce and Main Street organization in America talks about buying local, but is anyone paying attention? The residents of Greater Franklin County, Iowa are.

So, what is it that has gotten the attention of this community? It's one product. That's right, just one product. Rather than talking in generalities about buying local, the Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce (Hampton, Iowa's Main Street organization) has chosen to focus on one product for their campaign. That one product is toilet paper. And, since the kick-off of the campaign in November 2011, it's been on a roll (pun intended) with no sign of wearing thin.

Why toilet paper? Toilet paper is one product that everyone uses, regardless of gender, race, age, or socioeconomic status. Not only does everyone use toilet paper, but it is also a product that is readily available from a variety of retailers in Greater Franklin County. When you talk about buying local in general terms, people have plenty of excuses why it doesn't work for them - the stores in town don't carry what I need, don't have the brands I like, aren't my style, etc. When you talk about buying toilet paper locally, those excuses go away.

The uniqueness of toilet paper as the product focus of the Buy One Product Local campaign has really created buzz. Most peoples' first reaction is something along the lines of, "toilet paper...seriously?" Once they hear the numbers, though, the light bulb goes off and they begin to realize the difference buying local could make in their community.



The Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce held a Facebook promotion to give away a year's supply of toilet paper. There were four winners who all walked away with 105 rolls of toilet paper.



Retailers from all over Franklin County have participated in the Buy One Product Local campaign. Each store received signage to indicate their participation. Not only have grocery stores participated, but also convenience stores, drug stores, the local hardware store and other specialty shops in the area.

According to kimberly-clark.com, the average person uses 105 rolls of toilet paper per year. The population of Greater Franklin County is 14,987, so the total toilet paper consumption in Greater Franklin County for one year is 1,573,635 rolls. At an average cost of \$1.25 per roll, residents of Greater Franklin County spend approximately \$1,967,043.75 on toilet paper in a year. According to information from local retailers, though, total dollars spent on toilet paper in Greater Franklin County in 2011 totaled approximately \$335,800. That means there was leakage of \$1,631,244 from just that one product.

Those \$1.6 million lost translate into jobs for family members, friends and neighbors of the residents of Greater Franklin County. They are also tax dollars that could be used for community projects such as the new bike trails in the area or Hampton's new aquatic center, skate park and tennis courts. In some cases, it could mean the difference between a favorite store keeping the doors open or closing for good - all because of toilet paper.

When you start talking about \$1.6 million leaving their community, people take notice, especially when it's lost on something as basic as toilet paper. As a result of the Buy One Product Local campaign, members of the Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce continue to hear stories from people about how they used to go to the big box stores 30 miles away out of habit to buy their toilet paper, but since the start of the "toilet paper campaign", they are buying it, and other supplies, from local retailers. Some even say they bought Christmas presents locally due to the campaign because, if toilet paper sales can put \$1.6 million into the community, just think what sales of things like a GPS or jewelry could do!

Not only has the Buy One Product Local campaign caused local residents to think before they head out of town, it has also worked to unite Greater Franklin County traditional retailers, specialty shops and Hispanic retailers for a common cause. The groceries stores and discount stores in the area quickly jumped on board, of course, but so did the specialty shops that don't even sell toilet paper. Some specialty shops ran special ads and promotions centered around toilet paper, some took the opportunity to display 105 rolls of toilet paper along with flyers giving the facts on buying toilet paper locally. A local bed and breakfast invited people to "roll on in" with stickers placed on individual rolls of toilet paper. Informational hand-outs were translated into Spanish to get the message out to all segments of the Greater Franklin County community and the Hispanic retailers joined in and promoted buying local to their target customers as well. Buying locally affects all segments of a community. The retailers in Greater Franklin County understand this and have really come together to get the word out. All with the same message of buying just one product, toilet paper, locally.

Rural America is probably never going to be able to completely stop residents from heading to larger urban areas to shop from time to time, and selling toilet paper won't make retailers rich. Getting residents to stop and think before heading out of town for basic supplies though, can only boost the local economy. Buying toilet paper locally is a small, painless step that leads consumers to think about what other things they could be buying in their community. And, if toilet paper can add \$1.6 million to the local economy, just think what laundry detergent, steaks or baby gifts could do! It's as simple as - THINK BEFORE YOU SHOP!



Visual Merchandising

Main Street Iowa technotes

As you know as a business owner, products and services don't always sell themselves. It takes a lot of effort on your part to make that product or service look enticing. That is where visual merchandising comes into play. Visual Merchandising reinforces your company's image through all products and services. It can determine the success or failure of a retail store.

Visual Merchandising includes everything the customer sees both exterior and interior. It effectively communicates to the customer what your store is all about.

Exterior Presentation

The exterior of the building should give the customer an idea of what they will find inside. Consider the following: Are the sidewalks clean, safe, and accessible? Are the signs clean and readable? Does the storefront need cleaning, painting or touch up? Are the outside entrances clean and accessible? Are the windows clean, bright and inviting? Are the window displays themed and changed frequently?

Approximately 75% of first time customers remember a store's entrance, which provides the first and last view of the store's interior. A properly designed canopy or porch not only protects the customer in bad weather but can add to the aesthetics of the building.

Landscaping should lead the customer's eye to the focal point using color and texture to provide contrast and harmony. Landscaping can also screen undesirable sights, such as trash receptacles, power transformers and refrigeration equipment.

Window displays should be changed often and kept with one theme. They are free 24 hour advertising and a great opportunity to grab a customer off the street. Window displays should attract attention, create interest and invite people into the store to purchase goods. Be careful not to crowd too much merchandise into a window, as customers find it difficult to determine the message and what items are being promoted.

Principles of Design

Selling space is the most important part of a store. The more square footage you have the bigger the selection and the greater chance having what a customer needs. Promotion and advertising dollars

are less effective when efforts are not made within the store to effectively merchandise products.

Good merchandising also assists customers in navigating through the store. Advertising near the merchandise has a large influence on the purchase of an item. Effective displays can be created by suppliers or brand-name manufacturers, while others are developed from scratch.

The main principles of design used in display are balance, emphasis, proportion, rhythm, color, lighting and harmony. These principles apply to all displays--window and interior.

Balance involves the equilibrium and weight of element between two sides of a display. Emphasis is the point of initial eye contact. From this spot all other eye movements flow. Proportion is the ratio of the parts to the whole display. Rhythm or flow involves the measurement of organized movement; a self-contained movement from object to object, background to foreground, and/or side to side.

Harmony is a coordinating umbrella principle that can cover and incorporate every other principle. Harmony is agreement in feeling and consistency in mood.

An effective way of attracting customers to a store is by having good displays, both exterior and interior. Every display should be planned and have a theme. Good design makes a visual presentation come together. This means the design attracts attention in a way that strengthens the store image, as well as introducing merchandise to the customer. Consider the following: What is the store's image? What type of customer is being attracted? What is the concept of the merchandise to be presented in the display? Where is the display going to be set up? How will the location determine the design? Why is this merchandise being put on display as opposed to other merchandise? Highlight sale merchandise for small periods of time only.

Color and Lighting



Color contributes significantly to people's impression of a display, as well as a store's overall appearance. Color in a display can catch the eye and make people look. The color combinations of the ceiling, wall, floor covering, and the overall decor can affect the atmosphere of a store. Changing the color scheme can change

people's attitudes and perceptions of a store, and can increase or decrease business.

Warm colors excite, stimulate, and promote cheer. Reds, yellows, and oranges make up the warm palette. They make a room feel warm and intimate. Blue, green, violet and colors containing blue make up the cool color palette. These help create a relaxing atmosphere. Cool colors are especially pleasing in smaller rooms.

There are no absolute rules for choosing and combining colors. The type of merchandise featured, such as hardware, jewelry, clothing, etc., will have an effect on the type of color schemes that can be used and the extent to which they can be used.

Lighting is essential in calling attention to merchandise in a display. Lighting treatment may be used to draw attention to part of the display area, a specific item in the display, or to coordinate parts of the total display area. Lighting can also be used to direct shoppers through the store.

Props, Fixtures, and Signage

A prop is something used with a product in a display that clarifies the function of the merchandise being sold or the story being told. A display prop may be something that is not for sale, such as floor coverings, wall treatments, backgrounds, mannequins, shelves and steps. They may also be merchandise that is for sale. When using sellable merchandise as a prop, be sure it is appropriate for the theme of the display and that sufficient quantities exist to meet an increase in demand arising from the display.

Merchandising is not just about making things look nice. Effective merchandising and product displays have a direct impact on sales. Product presentation and location within the store affect sales. Even the location of the cash register within the store impacts the customer experience. Easy to navigate stores are more customer friendly, making it easier for customers to find various items. Effective signage and descriptions help explain the goods to the customer. Understanding some of these concepts and how merchandise display and presentation affects sales will help make your business more profitable

The secrets of Main Street Iowa Success

from a Japanese researcher's point of view



Seven years have passed since I started my research on the Main Street Program (MSP). Now I am studying urban engineering at the University of Tokyo as a Ph. D candidate. The main focus of my research is on organization and function of statewide Main Street coordinating programs, and the relationship between statewide coordinating programs and local programs.

For my master's degree, I studied the Tier System which exists in Washington state and Missouri state.

Now I am researching a couple statewide coordinating programs and local programs which have received the Great American Main Street Award. In the last few years, I was able to visit the National Main Street Center in Washington, D.C. three times and investigate three statewide coordinating programs as case studies. In the process I received some recommendations about one of the most successful statewide coordinating program, "IOWA".



In 2012, I had the opportunity to meet Thom Guzman and have dinner with Team Iowa at the National Main Streets Conference in Baltimore. This year, I visited

Iowa. During this research trip, I visited 10 Main Street Iowa communities and not only did I get important information but also was able to meet many good people. I would like to say thanks to all of them for their support and hospitality.

The Secrets, of why Main Street Iowa is successful

MSP and Iowan Spirits

Iowa has often suffered from floods throughout its history. But Iowans have endured these hardships and were able to overcome. Those experiences are based on community solidarity and the partnership of the private and public sectors. With this cooperation, you regenerated your cities and lives. These factors are basic principles in the MSP. I think that is one of the reasons why the MSP has been successful in Iowa.

Existence of Iowa Downtown Resource Center (IDRC)

The Iowa Downtown Resource Center has 10 people. I am sure this team is one of the largest teams of any statewide coordinating program in the US. They have talented specialists who have a variety of backgrounds. This means that high quality assistance, services and training have been provided for the last 27 years. There is no doubt that the existence of the IDRC is essential to Main Street Iowa.

Refined Main Street Program in four categories

The MSP model was further developed in Iowa. Main Street Iowa serves four different types of districts: downtowns in rural communities under 5,000 population; downtowns in communities between 5,000 and 50,000 population; urban downtowns in cities over 50,000; and

urban neighborhood historic commercial districts in cities over 50,000. The IDRC does a great job not only by carrying out the MSP but developed it in order to suit circumstances of the local community. It resulted in the MSP becoming a more effective strategy in Iowa.

MSP used for extensive urban master planning

In Iowa, I was able to see the MSP being used as the basis for comprehensive urban planning. For example, in Dubuque, they deploy a variety of urban policies based on the MSP with Complete Streets Strategy. In Waverly, they created their city master plan in 2012. The MSP being used as the basis of the urban policies in each city has expanded its capability.

Strong and close networks

At this time, networks have two meanings. One is the network between IDRC and local programs, and the other is the network between local programs.

The IDRC created many opportunities for training, education and technical services. Thom told me that IDRC visits each local MSP many times every year, no matter how far they are from Des Moines. The IDRC acts as a role of HUB and local programs acts as role of a SPOKE.

On the other hand, by attending these events, seminars and meetings, local programs are able to get to know each other and exchange views. These two networks are important factors for the success of the MSP in Iowa.



The reasons why downtown revitalization has not been successful in Japan

Now let's turn to Japan, where downtown revitalization and economic restructuring in rural communities and small cities has been a big problem and needs to be resolved immediately.

(For example, a city with a population of 50,000 or less is recognized as a "small city" in Japan)

But it seems that there are only 100 or less cities in Japan which are successfully actively involved in downtown revitalization. The number is much less than the United States. And those cities which are successful belong to "middle sized city" category of 200,000 and above. These are the present situations on the downtown revitalization projects in Japan. I would like to show a couple of reasons for my thinking.

- There is a belief that downtown revitalization projects are particular issues of each city or community and should be settled by themselves. Unfortunately these projects do not involve the participation of the national and prefectural governments. .
- We do not have a system similar to the MSP, (Four Point Approach®), so locals are not united to address such issues as downtown revitalization projects.
- Due to these factors, we do not have a network system for training and education with each community. We also do not have opportunities for community to interact with each other and exchange information.
- In the private sector, we usually have many nonprofit organizations whose mission is downtown revitalization for their respective communities. I am also a president of a local nonprofit organization in my home town. For most nonprofit organizations on downtown revitalization, the big issue is always budget. And as I told Thom Guzman, there is a big difference between Japan and US relative to gathering donations and recruiting volunteers. So nonprofit organizations on downtown revitalization cannot do practical activities as much.

These are typical reasons why I believe downtown revitalization has not been successful in Japan.

As I mentioned before, there is a big difference between Japan and United States. However I think the concept and methodology of MSP for downtown revitalization would be acceptable in Japan.

The State of Iowa has a track record of building the Iowa Downtown Resource Center, networking between Main Street Communities, making four categories by populations and so on. The formula of Main Street Iowa is, of course, based on the National Main Street Program. Through the years it has been developed and refined from its original version. Your state's positive impact for the last 27 years is a tremendous achievement.

From my point of view, Main Street IOWA is a very ideal model.

I think the formula of Main Street Iowa has a possibility of becoming an "export business" from the state of Iowa to Japan.

For that reason, I believe I still need to research Main Street Iowa and visit your Main Street communities even further. I will be BACK.

Hiro Matsumoto

Ph.D Candidate, University of Tokyo Urban Engineering Course

55 years old, living in Fukaya City (located 50 miles north of Tokyo Metropolitan Area, Population of 150,000)

Working for an economic research department of a regional bank in Saitama Prefecture



Main Street Iowa to Hold Application Round

Whether you come from a small town, from the state's largest cities or from the hundreds of communities with struggling historic commercial districts, Main Street could be the right tool for your district. The road to be designated a Main Street community is not easy, but that road starts with the application process.

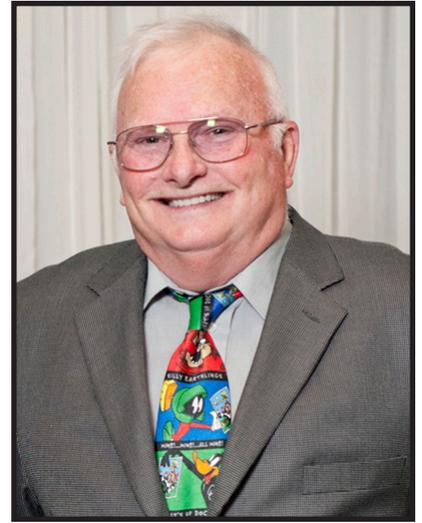
In preparation for the new Main Street Iowa community application round this fall, Main Street Iowa will be hosting three regional application workshops in September. Interested communities must participate in an application workshop to be eligible to apply in 2013. The workshops will cover topics ranging from the basics of the Main Street Approach® and program services of Main Street Iowa to the mechanics of completing the application. Workshops will be held on September 17 in Waverly, September 18 in State Center and September 19 in Corning. Locations, times, registration and additional details for each workshop will be available at <http://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/IDRC/MainStreetIowa>.

The deadline for new Main Street Iowa applications will be December 13, 2013. Each applicant district will make a presentation to the Main Street Iowa Advisory Council in January 2014. Designation of new Main Street Iowa districts will be made in February 2014. Contact Michael Wagler, Main Street Iowa State Coordinator, for more information at michael.wagler@iowa.gov or 515.725.3051.

Program Director Spotlight...

Dunlap, Iowa

Would you move from a city with a population of over 212,000 to a town of just over 1,000 people? Well, that is exactly what Fonley Allen, Dunlap's Main Street Program Director did! He is originally from Birmingham, Alabama and while stationed at Ft. Carson, Colorado he met his wife Jan, who was raised on a farm outside of Dunlap. Jan's background was an influential reason for the move to Dunlap, Iowa with a population of only 1,036.



Being a big city kid, the move was tough. His new life was a challenge when he realized that he couldn't get a hamburger at 2:00 a.m. or easily find a job. The first winter was the roughest, being totally unprepared for so much snow but now he believes we are never ready for too much snow. Today he says "I can't imagine living anywhere else. The city is just a place to visit and be reminded why small town Iowa is such a great place to live."

Fonley has always been interested in history, preservation and conservation. Since the Main Street program embodies all of these he feels right at home. As Fonley serves as the director for the Dunlap Community Development Corporation, which has incorporated the Main Street Four Point Approach®, he has observed and been in the midst of major projects and positive development in the downtown district and industrial park. From repairs and new paint on buildings to building a youth sports complex and saving the American Legion building Dunlap is demonstrating drastic and optimistic changes. Fonley feels that the greatest gifts we can give our children are roots and a prosperous future...Main Street strives for both.

One of Fonley's favorite Main Street activities is attending workshops. The training and networking gives him an opportunity to learn new things that he can take back home and share with others. "They are motivating, you find out that you're not alone with your problems, you learn more about your state, and they are just plain fun."

On a personal note he enjoys spending time with his family and grandkids, fishing and playing with his "choo choos: the Jan, Fonley and Kids Model Railroad." Fonley is an Army retiree, a Vietnam Vet, and "probably the only guy in the country that gets bored watching football."

Fonley's vision for the future of downtown Dunlap is for it to be a "vibrant commercial district where all your basic shopping needs are met. Streets full of smiling faces and community cheerleaders."

To find out more about Dunlap call 712-643-2164, send an e-mail to info@dcdconline.com or visit their website <http://dcdconline.com>

2013 PRESERVE IOWA SUMMIT AUGUST 22-24 BURLINGTON



Join us for the Preserve Iowa Summit!

The Summit, which will take the place of the Iowa Downtown Summit, Statewide Historic Preservation Conference and Preservation Awards Dinner, will be the only statewide annual conference for professionals and volunteers involved in historic preservation and historic commercial district revitalization in Iowa.

At the Summit, you will learn how historic preservation can give you the tools to discover, retain and enhance your community's sense of place with general sessions, concurrent breakout sessions and tours that will be held throughout the day Thursday, Friday and Saturday morning.

The online registration site is available now at: www.regonline.com/2013iasummit

Hurry! Early Bird Registration ends August 1, 2013.



staff listing

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Main Street Messenger

Main Street Iowa has gone "GREEN!" We will use more and more electronic communication, slowly phasing out most printed materials. Our first step was to move to electronic distribution of the Main Street Messenger.

Visit iowaeconomicdevelopment.com and register to receive electronic updates from any of the teams at Iowa Economic Development Authority.