

## **Main Street Application Workshops**

PLEASE NOTE: Attendance at one of these workshops is **mandatory** for any community planning to apply for Main Street designation during the 2008 application cycle. Sessions will be held in three areas of the state from 1:00 to 5:00 PM on October 16 (Greenfield), 17 (Charles City), and 18 (West Branch). Download a registration form at: [www.iowalifechanging.com/register](http://www.iowalifechanging.com/register) Pre-registration is encouraged, but walk-ins are welcome.

## **LEARN, LEAD, VOLUNTEER! INVEST IN IOWA**

The Iowa Conference on Volunteer Service will be held November 13 & 14 at The Meadows Events & Conference Center in Altoona, Iowa. Early and group registration discounts are available until October 11. For details, or to register to attend, go to [www.RegOnline.com/122891](http://www.RegOnline.com/122891).

## **Newly Created Main Street Staff Positions Filled**

The Iowa Downtown Resource Center is pleased to announce the addition of two outstanding individuals to the Main Street Iowa (MSI) team. Both new staff members bring with them a wealth of expertise and experience that will assist downtown districts across the state.

These newly created staff positions were the result of an increased MSI budget and Governor Chet Culver's desire to see an increase in the number of Main Street communities in Iowa. With the growth of the Main Street staff, Iowa has a great opportunity to grow Main Street and address a definite need in our downtown areas.



**JIM THOMPSON**, former executive director of Charles City Community Revitalization — a Main Street Program — officially joined the state staff on October 1 as a Business Development Consultant. He will concentrate on providing technical assistance to downtown business owners. A Certified Main Street Manager since 2004, Jim has extensive experience in economic and community development as well as more than 22 years experience in the retail management field.



**JIM MILLER** will join the staff as a Main Street Program Consultant on November 1. The executive director of the Valley Junction Foundation in West Des Moines since 2006, will now use his talents and skills to help develop an urban neighborhood commercial district Main Street program for the state. This program will take lessons learned from the existing 36 Main Street communities to create a model that can be used in some of Iowa's larger cities.

Please join us in congratulating Jim and Jim. And help us figure out what to call these two guys named Jim! Jim<sup>2</sup>? Two guys named Jim? Jamestown? M and T? Send your ideas to [mainstreet@iowalifechanging.com](mailto:mainstreet@iowalifechanging.com). A special Main Street prize will be given to the person who submits the best suggestion!



# Three Main Street Iowa Communities Celebrate 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

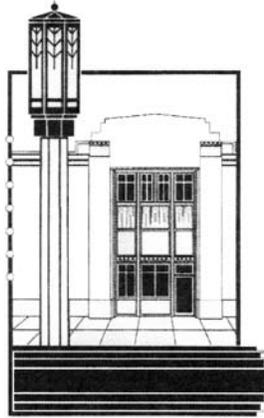
These communities were all accepted into the MSI family in 1987:

*Cedar Falls*, was first settled in March 1845. The site was selected because of the water power afforded by the Cedar River. As early as 1859, Main Street was the commercial center for farmers who brought grain and stock into town from more than 100 miles away. While the days of the grain elevators and the mill-race are long past, downtown Cedar Falls continues to serve as the city's thriving central business district.



The rebirth of downtown Cedar Falls has been a product of hard work, dedication and enthusiasm by local residents and Community Main Street, Inc., founded in 1987. Today, with banking and finance, the Cedar Falls Public Library, post office, City Hall, Cedar Falls Community Theatre and many other services and activities present, downtown links the citizenry to the area's history, cultural amenities and businesses. It is easy to see why the 36,000 residents of Cedar Falls call the 20-block downtown area the "Heart of the City." For more information, visit [www.communitymainstreet.org](http://www.communitymainstreet.org) or call 319.277.0213.

*Spencer*, has the largest, most diverse collection of 1930s architecture in the Midwest. This was not a planned occurrence but rather a statement regarding Spencer's community pride and spirit after nearly all of its downtown buildings were destroyed by an unfortunate mishap. In 1931, a young boy dropped a burning sparkler into a box of fireworks, igniting a blaze that destroyed much historic architecture and many financial assets downtown. The central business district was rebuilt and today remains an active center for retail, business offices, restaurants and culture thanks to the efforts of local residents and the Spencer Main Street Company, founded in 1987.



The population of this northwest Iowa community has risen steadily over the years, increasing from 8,864 in 1960 to its current number of nearly 12,000. Spencer enjoys a reputation of outstanding community spirit that greatly contributes to its continued growth. With its proximity to Lake Okoboji and Spirit Lake and the popularity of the annual Clay County Fair, Spencer is a favorite tourist destination for many. For more information, visit [www.spenceria.org/mainstreet](http://www.spenceria.org/mainstreet) or call 712.262.7246.



*West Des Moines' Historic Valley Junction*, the original downtown of West Des Moines features six square blocks of unique antique and specialty shops, art galleries, fashion boutiques, hair salons, service businesses and restaurants. Besides serving the West Des Moines community, which is Iowa's fastest growing city and Des Moines' largest suburb, Historic Valley Junction draws visitors from throughout the United States.

Neither a small town nor a big city, the historic district, located in the valley of the Raccoon River, is a gentle reminder of days gone by and a hub of present day hustle and bustle. A reoccurring theme in Valley Junction is its rich railroad history. Key to the success of the area is the Historic Valley Junction Foundation, founded when West Des Moines was named a Main Street Iowa community in 1987. The organization is well-known for its street events, which include antique and art festivals, a farmers market, open houses and special sales promotions. For more information, visit [www.valleyjunction.com](http://www.valleyjunction.com) or call 515.222.3642.

## *Congratulations!*

# State Fair Photo Contest Results



Paige Shannon of Des Moines took home the blue ribbon for the photograph of the Latino Fest she entered in the "Downtown Faces & Places" category of the 2007 Iowa State Fair photography contest. Main Street Iowa staff members were lucky enough to be nearby when Paige's name was announced to share in her excitement.



Second place honors went to Terry Kruse of Clive for his photo, "At Peace", which was taken at the downtown Des Moines ice-skating rink.

Larry Smith of Des Moines received the third place ribbon for his unique untitled photo of downtown Des Moines.



## REMINDER!

Keep your camera handy... The "Downtown Faces & Places" category of the Iowa State Fair photography contest is sponsored each year by Main Street Iowa. Photos should portray an IOWA downtown. You have from now until June 2008 to snap the next award winning photo! Contest entry deadline has not been announced, but will probably be July 1.

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# Photographing your Downtown

One important, fairly simple, but often overlooked project in the revitalization of downtown business districts is the photographic documentation of the entire commercial area. Having a solid photographic record of your downtown is important in marketing the successes of your community's revitalization efforts. After all, it's pretty difficult to get that nice "before" picture of a project after the work is underway (or worse, completed!)

A photo inventory is useful for a number of different projects. These include building inventories, streetscape planning, storefront designs, historic or architectural surveys, business recruitment packets and for marketing successful rehab projects to name a few. Creating this inventory is one of the very first things an organization should implement and should update on a regular basis.

One of the biggest challenges in getting a good photograph of a downtown building is to eliminate perspective distortion. This occurs when a camera lens is tilted in order to get an especially tall building entirely in the frame. When the lens is tilted, the vertical lines of the building are distorted to a vanishing point, making the building appear even taller. There are at least two basic methods for dealing with the problem. The first is to use a perspective correcting lens. This is a special lens that actually shifts its position in relation to the camera body to eliminate the problem. Since these lenses are fairly expensive, most people elect to use the second option, simply elevating the position of the camera so it can remain parallel to the façade of the building. A simple way to elevate the camera is to use a sturdy stepladder or even to stand in the bed of a pickup truck.

Eliminating the perspective distortion in the photos is important so that the individual pictures can be put together into an accurate streetscape composite or elevation for an entire block. Without

correcting the perspective the bottom of each building will be wider than the top, creating gaps between the buildings when they are put together. The photos should also be taken at a consistent distance from the building line so that the proportions remain identical. Since not all facades will sit in perfect alignment, things like a curb can be used as a reference line to keep distances equal. Use the minimum distance needed to capture the tallest building without tilting the camera, assuming that the street width is adequate.

The best time to complete a photo inventory of the downtown is when there are very few cars on the street to block views of storefront details. Also, choose a time when the sun is quite even and not very bright. High sunlight creates strong shadows and contrast making it difficult to get a nice uniform exposure of an entire building. Therefore early morning hours, evenings and slightly overcast days make good choices for lighting. Early mornings are good because of lighter traffic. A weekend, especially a Sunday morning, is an especially quiet time in most downtown areas with little traffic and makes an excellent time to shoot photos, especially since many times photos will be taken from somewhere in the middle of the street!

If the photos are taken during the day and it is sunny, buildings facing east should be photographed in the morning and buildings facing west in the afternoon. Remember to always try to keep the sun at your back as much as possible to eliminate glare and exposure problems.

The use of a tripod is highly recommended to be certain the camera stays at a consistent height and remains level. Even if one person is taking all the photos, keeping the camera level is a difficult task. It can be very tempting to tip the camera "just a little bit" in order to be sure to get that cornice finial or the flagpole atop the courthouse. When shooting

the photos, be sure not to omit anything. Include vacant lots, parking lots, and all structures. Don't assume that a particular property is not important enough to warrant documentation, you will never know.

Another streetscape documentation technique is the "panoramic" photo collage. This type of photo is created by setting up a tripod in one spot. Consecutive images are taken while turning the camera in a series of individual pictures to capture the streetscape. This method can be particularly effective for areas like town squares or major intersections. This also gives a quick overall impression of an area or district without photographing each individual façade.

Technology has also impacted photography. No longer is the choice strictly prints or slides, but now you can also choose CD, DVD or disk. Using a digital camera is very convenient and results are almost immediate. However, in order to ensure a high quality print, the resolution of a digital camera must be fairly high. This means individual images will be quite large files creating storage challenges, especially for large numbers of images. A recordable CD can be a good storage solution. A photo CD is also a good choice that provides access to computer technology with the benefits of traditional photography. The photo CD is created by the film lab from standard photographic film. One big benefit from the photo CD processing is that regular prints or slides can be included with the processing. This gives the best of both worlds; digital images and a "hard copy" (print or slide). It's hard to beat the convenience of having photos or slides of your downtown buildings in conjunction with digital images.

When shooting buildings, film should be a low ISO/ASA value. The lower the ASA typically the less grain the sharper the final print. In order to get your photos to last, the ideal processing is to use archival quality. Archival processed

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# PROGRAM DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT - DAN LOBIANCO

Written by IDED Intern Kevan Irvine

Dan LoBianco was born and raised in Dubuque just beyond the bluffs. As a youth he established a love for the downtown area due to the theatres and shopping that were available at the time.

Dan graduated from the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) with a bachelor's degree in public relations and minors in marketing and journalism. After UNI, he worked as a recreation coordinator for a short time before moving back to Dubuque in 1986. He returned during a declining time for Dubuque with two of its major employers falling on hard times and an increasing westward sprawl.

Downtown Dubuque had 55 percent first floor vacancies in the 1980s.

He began working at a local downtown bank in 1987 doing consumer lending and bank marketing. He also began to volunteer for Main Street at this time. Dan helped to edit and proofread the Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA) application in 1995. Although he didn't apply for the director seat for Main Street in Dubuque right away, things "just worked out" and he became the director in 1998.

Dan has also graduated from the voluntary yet extensive National Trust Main Street Center's Certification in Professional Main Street™ Management Institute, which provides advanced-level training and certification in the Main Street Four-Point Approach® to commercial district revitalization. His certification has helped him to get a better grasp of the national Main Street program and the Four Point Approach. He also believes that the Four Point Approach helped him to get back to the grass-roots base of the Main Street program. Since the initiation of the Main Street program in Dubuque in 1985, the city has experienced major advancements in growth and progress.

The Main Street program in Dubuque has helped to open circulation for the downtown area and has helped other areas that did not have as much support to start receiving tourism and renovation. "The Main Street program is something near and dear to my heart and I have a great appreciation for how well Dubuque has pulled itself up by its boot straps," Dan said. "Main Street helps downtowns to once again become the heart of the community."



## BITS & PIECES

### 2007 STATE FAIR BOOTH RESULTS

26 communities took turns hosting the Main Street Iowa exhibit table in the new Iowa Tourism Hall in the Varied Industries Building. That's 72 percent of all Main Street Iowa communities! A big thank you to everyone who pitched in to help out! Hopefully, all participants enjoyed the new location. If you have any comments or suggestions for improvements for next year, please send your thoughts to [mainstreet@iowalifechanging.com](mailto:mainstreet@iowalifechanging.com).

### 21<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL IOWA DOWNTOWN SUMMIT

275 people from over 80 communities, including seven from Nebraska and one from South Dakota, attended the Summit in Council Bluffs on August 28 and 29. During the summit, nationally renowned experts in downtown development offered informative sessions on how rural and urban communities across America are creatively addressing the revitalization of their city centers. Mark your calendar now! The 2008 Summit will be held August 26 & 27 in central Iowa. The exact location will be determined soon.

### DEADLINE FOR LETTERS OF INTENT IS NOV. 20

As one of the first steps in officially requesting Main Street Iowa designation, communities are required to submit a letter of intent to apply for the program. The letter is non-binding but will serve as an indication of those communities who intend to apply. Also, attending a Main Street Application workshop is a required pre-requisite to submitting a full Main Street Iowa application. See the front page for details on upcoming workshops. Full applications are due January 4, 2008 and new MSI communities will be announced in March 2008.

## Photographing your Downtown

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prints have all of the chemicals washed off. Standard prints have traces of the developing chemicals still on them which gradually destroy the prints. Archival prints also use a special paper, usually a linen or rag stock instead of the standard resin coated paper. Most mass production processing outlets do not provide this service; you may need to find a special photo lab that will process to “archival standards”.

Prints or slides? That’s a good question! Ideally, you would have both. Prints are used more often by most people for most projects. However, slide presentations are still a popular way to communicate about downtown’s progress, so having the capability to get a slide is still important in most situations, but again technology is affecting this as well. Computer programs like Microsoft’s PowerPoint can replace the traditional slide presentation. Slides can also be made from these computer images in PowerPoint in a photo lab, so always shooting slides may not be necessary. You may just want to have your best images converted into slides for the presentations.

A good photo inventory is not a cumbersome task. With some planning and the involvement of local “shutter bugs” a local program should have a great collection of current photos. And decades from now, the next wave of downtown preservationists will thank you for it!

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## Iowa’s Main Street Program Exceeds All Expectations in FY 2007

The Main Street Iowa program surpassed all of its business recruitment, job creation, investment and volunteer recruitment goals during Fiscal Year 2007, according to data compiled by the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED).

According to the department, \$80 was invested by the private sector for every \$1 of state investment in the program. The program’s efforts helped to create 147 new businesses and 368 new jobs. Private sector investment in Main Street Iowa communities totaled more than \$52.7 million. And volunteers contributed more than 150,000 hours of time, providing approximately \$2,189,695 of value.

In the last session, Governor Chet Culver signed legislation increasing funding for Iowa’s Main Street program by \$400,000, bringing the total budget to approximately \$958,000. This new appropriation is a significant increase nearly doubling the program’s budget

“Our local community programs over-achieved in every measurable area,” said Thom Guzman, director of the State of

Iowa’s Downtown Resource Center. “None of these community improvement projects would be possible without the hard work and dedication of local Main Street investors, leaders and volunteers. These everyday folks do remarkable things.”

Since the program’s inception on July 1, 1985, Iowa’s Main Street communities have experienced:

- A net gain of 2,966 business starts, relocations or expansions
- A net gain of 8,159 new full time equivalent jobs downtown
- 6,753 building rehabilitation projects
- Invested over \$400 million in private sector funds for downtown building rehabilitation
- Sold 2,477 downtown buildings
- Invested more than \$220 million in private sector downtown property acquisition
- Invested over 1,449,117 volunteer hours, providing \$21,070,161 of labor value, using the Independent Sector’s equation of the value of volunteer service