



Community
Development

IOWA

SMART IDEA™

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First Class Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Des Moines, IA
Permit No. 1195

The Main Street Messenger is published by the Iowa Department of Economic Development's Main Street Iowa program. Reprinting is permissible by crediting the Iowa Department of Economic Development.

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MAIN STREET IOWA

Planning Calendar

April

3 MAIN STREET APPLICANT
COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS
7-10 NATIONAL TOWN
MEETING
Fort Worth, Texas
18 AIA MEETING
Des Moines, IA
26 TOURISM UNITY DAY
26 MAIN STREET AWARDS
Hotel Ft. Des Moines,
Des Moines, IA

May

2 SMART CONFERENCE
Des Moines, IA
5-11 NATIONAL TOURISM WEEK

June

26-27 GROUP WORKSHOP
Waverly
MAIN STREET COMMUNITY
VOLUNTEERS & PROGRAM
DIRECTORS

July

30 GETTING TO KNOW IDED

August

1-31 IOWA DOWNTOWN MONTH
8-18 IOWA STATE FAIR
Main Street Booth,
Tourism Building
20-21 IOWA DOWNTOWN SUMMIT
Mason City

September

11-13 IOWA CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE EXECUTIVES
FALL CONFERENCE
24 GROUP WORKSHOP,
Hamilton County
Main Street Community
Volunteers & Board
Members

Main Street Messenger

ISSUE 67, SPRING 2002

A Publication of the Iowa Department of Economic Development

Interest in Main Street Program at a Record High

Communities interested in becoming part of the Main Street Iowa program participated in an Application Workshop held in November 2001, in Valley Junction, West Des Moines. Thirty towns were represented at the annual workshop which was attended by 75 people, a record number.

The workshop included an overview of the Main Street Approach to revitalization as well as presentations from towns currently active in the program. The day-long event concluded with general instruction on submitting an application. Representatives of Iowa towns included from eight communities - East Village, Des Moines, Eldora, Grinnell, Marshalltown, Mason City, Mt. Pleasant, Muscatine and Storm Lake. Those communities will make presentations to the Main Street Advisory Council on April 3.

For more information on the application process, contact Jane Seaton, State Coordinator, (515) 244-7500 or e-mail jane.seaton@ded.state.ia.us.

ECONOMIC

RETURN ON IDED'S INVESTMENT = \$50 TO \$1

Good Signs on Main Street

For every dollar invested by the State of Iowa in the Main Street program, more than fifty dollars has been invested by private entities for downtown revitalization in Main Street communities, a cumulative total of more than \$317 million over 15 years.

Main Street was established as a program of the Iowa Department of Economic Development by the Iowa legislature in 1985. Since April 1986, when the first five Main Street Iowa communities were selected, the millions of dollars invested by those communities were used to rehabilitate, renovate and purchase downtown buildings.

In addition, a net gain of 2,126 business starts, relocations and expansions and 6445 jobs has been realized, and community volunteers have donated 753,422 hours for the betterment of Iowa downtowns, according to a February 2002 report.

Mature Main Street communities - those that have been in the program for more than three years - have developed skills in revitalization and downtown management which enable them to initiate and implement projects using local expertise.

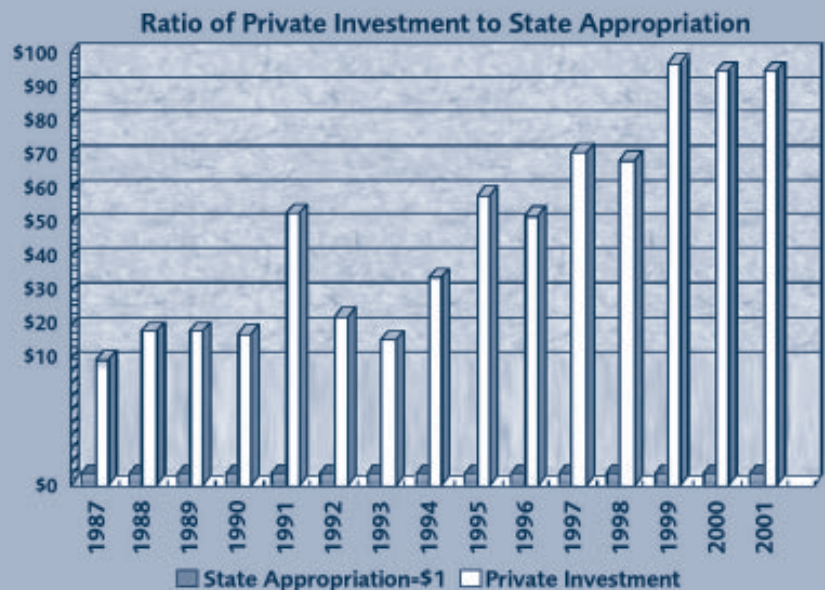
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(Re)Inhabit - AIA Spring

The Spring Meeting of AIA Iowa, co-sponsored by Main Street Iowa is Thursday, April 18, at the Savery Hotel, in Des Moines. This meeting will explore the planning, design, construction and furnishing of various existing places that we (Re)Inhabit.

Keynotes are Dana Crawford, Urban Neighborhoods, in Denver and Richard Ward, Development Strategies, Inc, St. Louis. Workshop topics include the State Capitol restoration, planned Court Avenue redevelopment, and a variety of government, corporate and residential projects.

Watch your mail for the conference brochure with more information, or contact AIA Iowa at 515-244-7502 or www.aiaiowa.org.



A MODEL FOR SUCCESS

Midwest Opportunities, Inc.

The sounds of busy construction workers resonate through *Antiques on Main* and *Consignments & More*. The clatters, clunks and bangs come from the upper stories of the beautiful building at 726 Davis Avenue in Corning which is being renovated to house the administrative offices of Midwest Opportunities, Inc. (MOI).

The renovation began in September 2001, a result of the dreams, planning and tireless efforts of Barbara Houck, the organization's executive director.

Incorporated in 1992 as a private 501(c)(3) corporation, MOI's first services were intermediate care group homes located in the rural communities of Corning and Creston, Iowa. The populations served in these homes were adults and children of any age with physical and mental disabilities. Along with the residential services, MOI also provided training in pre-vocational and work skills at their center in Corning.

In 1998, MOI added a retail business, *Consignments & More*, to their vocational training program, and, continued to expand their services. In the spring of 2000 they took ownership of Corning's only community childcare center, *Hearts and Hugs Daycare Center*, which had provided daycare services in Corning since 1994.

The daycare was moved into MOI's vocational and administrative center which added to already crowded conditions. MOI needed space in their center to offer alternative, non-vocational adult day services and additional space to accommodate their administrative offices.

In the fall of 2000, MOI purchased a 2 1/2 story historic building on Corning's Main Street. Dan Turner, Iowa Governor from 1931-1933, had operated his business in the building for many years and, in more recent years, the building had housed the offices of the National Farmers' Organization.

Midwest Opportunities, Inc. assumed management of *Antiques on Main*, a Corning retail business that had operated on the first floor of the building since 1991. MOI has since moved their consignment business there as well, where it operates in conjunction with the antique mall. They plan to relocate their administrative offices to the upper floor of the building after improvements are completed.

The upper story renovation is being funded, in part, through the **Main**

Street Revitalization Loan Program (see inset) and will include \$478,000 in improvements; an additional \$31,000 will be spent on first floor and exterior improvements. Midwest Opportunities was the first project in the state to be awarded a loan through this program.

Tim Reinders, Main Street Iowa Design Consultant, toured the building in its BEFORE stage and described the space:

"The upper floor of the double storefront building features a large central room spanning the entire width of the building. A row of decorative cast iron columns provide structural support for the floor and roof joists in the center of the space. Along the front of the building are three office spaces, apparently constructed for the NFO."

"The rear of the building has a large mezzanine level midway between the first and second floors. This multi-level plan presents some additional design challenges, especially for the elevator installation," Reinders said.

In 2001, Corning's Main Street Design Committee awarded \$1,000 to MOI to help pay for a fabric awning which will be installed across the front of the building. Two smaller fabric awnings had previously been installed along the side of the building by MOI. MOI had made first floor improvements - painting, carpeting and a new restroom - on that level.

A local contractor, Rod Johnson of Cornerstone Commercial Contractors, Inc., is completing the upper story restoration. Houck says that she is very pleased with the contractor's work. "I'm happy that the money MOI is spending on this project is going back into the community," Houck says.

The project included removal of previous renovations returning it to the original shell and restoring an original skylight, window trim and columns as well as installing a new tin ceiling, windows, flooring, staircase, restroom, offices and a conference room. The addition of an elevator and ramps will make the building wheel chair accessible. Completion date is scheduled for February 2002 with a ribbon cutting to follow.

"This project is great in magnitude and the end result will be to bring more jobs downtown, provide a beautiful community meeting area and office space, and restore a little of the past," said Sue Basten, Main Street Corning program director. "Our sincere thanks go to Midwest Opportunities, Inc. and Barbara Houck, and to the Main Street Revitalization Loan program, for making this happen!"

THE MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION LOAN PROGRAM

In July 2001, a partnership between Main Street Iowa, the Iowa Finance Authority and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines created a program to make available funds for lending to Main Street communities in Iowa. The Iowa Finance Authority, as an associate member of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, can borrow from the Federal Home Loan Bank at favorable rates and then loan that money out for certain downtown development projects.

Main Street Iowa had identified a need for mortgage lending for multi-family housing and commercial development in the downtowns of Main Street communities, specifically for infill construction and the rehabilitation of upper floor

housing into other residential or commercial space in mixed-used buildings.

The Revitalization Loans will carry a maximum loan of \$250,000 with a minimum loan of \$50,000 per project and are only available to communities participating in the Main Street Iowa program.

Eligible projects include the rehabilitation of upper floor housing in commercial properties and new construction on infill lots in downtown areas; the projects must complement Main Street Iowa's vision of a revitalized downtown.

Applications, first reviewed and approved by Main Street Iowa for design appropriateness in regard to material, size and scope of project, will

then be reviewed by the Iowa Finance Authority for underwriting purposes.

Currently, the Main Street Iowa program has 32 active communities with populations ranging from 458 to nearly 69,000, and, while their sizes vary, their goals are similar: to maintain and develop their downtown areas. Access to affordable loans has been a major obstacle to downtown development; the Revitalization Loan program seeks to address this issue.

In addition to the Midwest Opportunities, Inc. project, two other Main Street communities - Cedar Falls and Spencer - have made application to the Revitalization Loan program. Both projects are for upper floor development.

Stanley Lowe Visits Iowa

Main Street Iowa hosted a three-day visit from Stanley Lowe, the National Trust for Historic Preservation Vice President for Community Relations, January 20-22.

Iowa was the first of four states that Mr. Lowe visited to learn more about the operation of local Main Street programs, with specific interest in upper story rehabilitation projects, Lowe's area of expertise.

Lowe toured seven Main Street communities of various sizes and a broad range of revitalization projects.

They included:

- **WATERLOO** - Marsh Place Project, the renovation of an office complex into affordable housing; UNI Regional Business Center business incubator; the Osco Block; UNIQUE, a satellite campus alternative school; and a high-end condominium project.
- **CEDAR FALLS** - lunch at Montage; a public improvement project; the Regents Theatre; and a Main Street Revitalization Loan project.
- **WAVERLY** - the Palace Theatre; a community-initiated development project; and the Big Six renovation project.
- **CONRAD** - four housing subdivisions; a speculative home built by high school students; and an upper story unit renovated by the high school Shop Class.
- **IOWA FALLS** - walking tour of downtown highlighting numerous design projects and the new McFarland Clinic and Public Library.
- **ADEL** - the Dallas County Courthouse restoration and renovation of attic space into court rooms; destination retail shops; lunch at Jay's Java Garden; discussion of the city's efforts to retain its small town identity.
- **VALLEY JUNCTION** (West Des Moines) - district tour with key business leaders and a review of their outstanding promotional calendar.



ABOVE In Adel, business leaders and Lowe view the Dallas County courtroom restoration.

Following the tour, a reception in Lowe's honor was held at Terrace Hill.

Lowe's visit concluded with a dinner attended by staff representatives from Main Street Iowa, the State Historical Society and the Department of Cultural Affairs.

After returning to his Washington, D.C. office, Lowe wrote of his visit to Iowa as "an eye-popping, hair-raising, terrific Main Street experience" and congratulated Main Street Iowa and the Iowa Department of Economic Development on their program.

"Even though I only spent 2 1/2 days with you, it was enough for me to at the very least say 'I'll be back for the Sweet Corn Festival'," Lowe wrote.



ABOVE (from left) Rose Wazny, Hank Manning, Stanley Lowe, Sandy Ehrig and C.J. Niles at Terrace Hill reception.

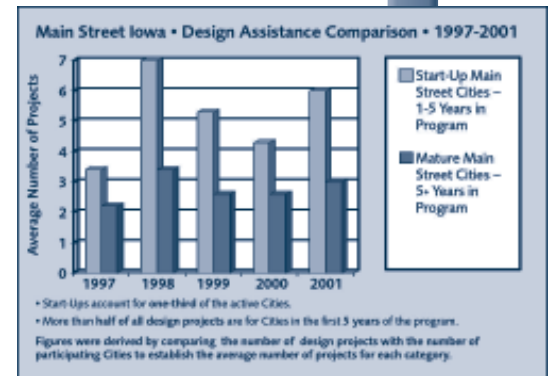
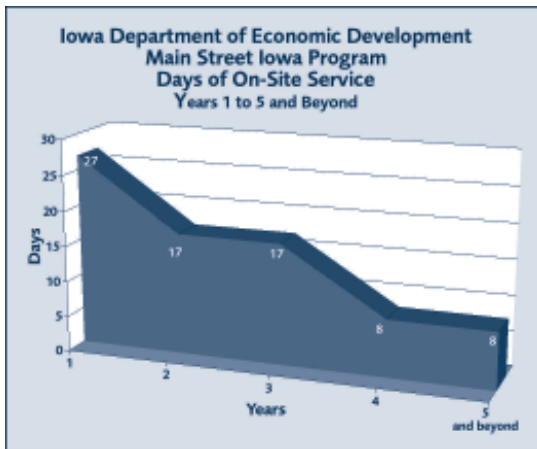


RIGHT Lowe enjoys the vintage soda fountain at Fifth Street Finds in Valley Junction, West Des Moines.

THE BENEFITS OF LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

Continued from page 1)

“While Main Street Iowa continues to provide assistance to these communities, the investment of time and dollars at the state level is significantly reduced as programs mature,” says Jane Seaton, State Coordinator of the Main Street Iowa program. “Conversely, investments of private dollars and volunteer hours at the local level show annual increases in most of these communities,” Seaton says.



EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

INVESTING IN YOUTH

Today’s youth are tomorrow’s leaders and keys to the future of each community. Early involvement in Main Street activities provides the basis for understanding the program’s goals and developing interest and skills in community revitalization.

Such programs as Project SOLD in Corning and CITY in Charles City have been highly successful in providing leadership training and community education in the classroom.

Many Main Street communities involve youth as voting members on the board of directors or as members of standing committees.



YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS IN GREENFIELD TOOK ON A PROJECT TO REOPEN THE MUCH-LOVED POPCORN STAND ON THEIR TOWN SQUARE. THE FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS WERE ASSISTED IN THE START-UP PHASE OF THEIR BUSINESS VENTURE BY BOTH THEIR SCHOOL AND THE LOCAL MAIN STREET PROGRAM.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP TRAINING

While Main Street Iowa requires participating communities to have paid staff, the program’s primary principle is to enable community leaders and volunteers to direct and implement the process.

To that end, Main Street Iowa annually offers a series of educational programs.

- Quarterly training sessions for new board members and directors provide an overview of the Main Street Approach® to revitalization.
- Five workshops, each of which focuses on a specific aspect of the Main Street program, cover such topics as fundraising, visual merchandising and historic preservation, to name a few.
- Scholarships for National Town Meeting registration are offered by application on a first come basis. Five full scholarships have been awarded to volunteers since 1996.
- The Iowa Downtown Conference, held each year in August and open to all Iowa communities, features noted speakers on topical issues as well as ‘nuts and bolts’ advice from experienced downtown professionals.

COMMUNICATION

Main Street communities use a variety of methods to keep members and residents informed.

- Monthly newsletters and feature articles in local newspapers promote upcoming events, give progress reports on projects, and encourage participation in program activities.
- Educational seminars, offered both locally and regionally, provide opportunities for improving business practices.
- Monthly “after-hours” activities promote networking and socializing.
- Business roundtables, often over breakfast or lunch, give retailers and professionals a forum to exchange ideas and updates.

Good Signs on Main Street

PHYSICAL FITNESS FOR THE FUTURE

The Main Street program was founded in 1977 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to provide communities with a framework for economic revitalization of their downtown and commercial business districts.

Since that time, nationwide studies have tracked the impact of preservation efforts and have proven that appropriate design improvements to facades of downtown buildings lead to positive economic results.

As of February 2002, 6,579 building rehabilitations, renovations and sales have taken place in Main Street Iowa communities.

Tim Reinders, Main Street Iowa Design Consultant, assists communities and property owners in determining appropriate design and preservation standards. "The unique characteristics and architecture of each building are taken into consideration first," says Reinders. "The goal is not to create Disneyland versions of small towns but rather to create enhancements that maintain the integrity of the built environment and the economic viability of the downtown business district."

In addition to design assistance, Reinders also provides information on grant sources and state and federal tax incentives for appropriate rehabilitation.



EVEN SIMPLE VISUAL IMPROVEMENTS GREATLY ENHANCE THE OVERALL CHARACTER OF THE STREETScape. OVER 30 SUCH PROJECTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AROUND THE SQUARE IN SIGOURNEY.

RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

Achievements can be measured and recognized in many ways - a simple thank you card to the volunteer who gives the most hours of his or her time each month; a competition and award for the "best" project in a given category; or the pure satisfaction of seeing that one's efforts have made a positive improvement in their community.

FINDING DOWNTOWN'S NICHE PROVES SUCCESSFUL

Through visioning, market analysis, targeted recruiting and other research and development tools, Main Street communities are increasingly able to discover their niches and reap the rewards of effective marketing strategies.

Whether the niche is office and professional, home improvement, arts and entertainment, or destination retail, communities have concentrated their efforts to enhance and promote that strength and, as a result, have seen increased property values, retail sales, and activity.

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD

The National Main Street Center annually honors exceptional achievements in revitalizing America's historic and traditional downtowns and neighborhood business districts with the Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA), presented to five communities at the National Town Meeting on Main Street.

Six Iowa communities - Dubuque in 1995, Bonaparte in 1996, Corning in 1998, Keokuk in 2000, Elkader in 2001 and Cedar Falls in 2002 - have received the award, the highest number for a state nationwide.

The 2002 National Town Meeting was held April 7-10 in Fort Worth, Texas.

MAIN STREET IOWA AWARDS

The 15th annual Main Street Iowa Awards will be held on Friday, April 26, 2002 at the Hotel Fort Des Moines.

Outstanding achievements in 26 categories within the four points of the Main Street program - Design, Organization, Promotion and Economic Restructuring - will be honored this year. Main Street communities compete for top honors in all categories except Outstanding Volunteer Individual or Business which is awarded to each community's nominee.

A special honor - The Spirit of Main Street Award - is given, at times, to an individual or community whose contributions exemplify the tenets of the Main Street program.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT

The Main Street Experience

COMMUNITY LEADERS

When asked to comment on the long-term benefits of the Main Street program, community leaders responded with enthusiasm.

“Simple,” said **State Representative Rebecca Reynolds**, “it’s proof positive that the old adage ‘if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day - if you TEACH a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime’ holds true.”

Reynolds was instrumental in encouraging the city of Bonaparte to become involved in the Main Street program in 1990. Since that time, Bonaparte, population 458, has invested more than \$1,250,000 private dollars in rehabilitation projects and, in 1996 received a Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA) from the National Main Street Center.

Shane Tiernan, president of First State Bank in Conrad, has been active in their Main Street program since it began in 1991.

“Throughout the life of our Main Street program we have had a very positive public/private partnership with our city government. It is because of this partnership and the Main Street Approach® that we have been successful with several major projects, two of which are residential development near the downtown area and the replacement of an historic bridge with a replica that is the only one of its kind in the state,” Tiernan said.

“Our Community Development Committee has led the effort to complete four residential projects which have resulted in 40 new homes, 50% of which were new residents to the community, and a significant corresponding increase in the tax base.”

Conrad has recorded over \$1.5 million in private investments in community revitalization.

“Years from now, people will ask, ‘How did your downtown rebirth come about?’ and we will point to the Main Street program.”

IKE ACKERMAN, Mayor, City of Waverly

Waverly Mayor Ike Ackerman believes that the impact of the Main Street program in his community has been very positive.

“Substantial investments have been made in the improvements to buildings and facades, and new enterprises have regularly been attracted to the Waverly Main Street area,” Ackerman says. “In addition, an appreciation for quality design, signage and beautification standards has been ingrained into the community.”

Ackerman goes on to say that a noticeable increase in the tax base has occurred, jobs have been created and retained, and retail leakage to the Waterloo-Cedar Falls vicinity has been reduced.

“The Main Street program has not only been a catalyst for specific down-town Waverly improvements, but perhaps more important, the development of enthusiastic volunteers whose spirit is contagious,” Ackerman adds.

Waverly has been a Main Street community since 1989 and has invested nearly \$7 million private dollars in rehabilitation projects.

DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

Professionals who began their careers with the Main Street program in Iowa, reflected on the benefits of their experience.

“For me, Main Street Iowa was the foundation of my career. Working with the program taught me several things:

- The fundamentals of how Main Street should and does work
- The important and effective role that government can play in supporting local community and economic development
- The importance of innovating - expanding what you know and testing different approaches to revitalization

“My association with Main Street Iowa - because of the program’s reputation for quality and excellence - has also given me instant credibility in many circles. People literally say ‘Oh, you worked with Main Street Iowa!’ and the respect they have for the program has carried over to me individually.

“When I worked with the state program, I always had the sneaking suspicion that Main Street folks at all levels were some of the best people in the world. That opinion has only been reinforced since I’ve had the opportunity to work with Main Street programs across the nation.”

“I can now say with the confidence of first-hand experience that Main Street Iowa people - local directors, volunteers, and state staff - are absolutely the best informed, most dedicated people involved with commercial revitalization today.”

STEPHANIE REDMAN, Senior Program Manager
for Technical Services, National Main Street Center

“Main Street is probably the best training for business people who want to work in the area of economic development.

It gave me a sound background to first enter the field of banking. I then moved into micro-enterprise development for targeted populations and today manage Iowa’s Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program and the Disabilities Fund.

“I can clearly attribute my time with Main Street as fundamental to my ability to manage these groups.”

Patti Lind, Former program manager, Centerville Main Street

“I was the Main Street Program Manager in Oskaloosa, Iowa for four years prior to joining the state Main Street staff in Wisconsin in 1990.

“The Iowa program has always had a great reputation. I believe anyone that has been a Main Street manager in Iowa and has worked with the Main Street Iowa staff can leave with a very marketable set of skills.

“My experience with the Iowa Main Street program has certainly helped me. Many of the services that we provide to Wisconsin communities were perfected in the state of Iowa!”

Jim Engle, Coordinator, Wisconsin Main Street Program



“The Downtown Resource Center
will make available
information and services
to more than 900 communities
throughout the state of Iowa.”

Thom Guzman, Director



THE DOWNTOWN RESOURCE CENTER

Expanding Services to Iowa Communities

In July 2001 the Iowa Department of Economic Development announced the creation of the Iowa Downtown Resource Center - a recommendation from Main Street Iowa and an opportunity to take downtown development to a higher level.

“The Main Street Iowa program has a 15-year history of success and has become one of the National Main Street Center’s top-ranked programs,” said Thom Guzman, director of the new entity and former State Coordinator of the Main Street program. In those 15 years, Main Street Iowa has provided services to 46 communities, 32 of which are currently in the program.

The Main Street staff had long recognized the need to offer services to a broader audience - the 900+ communities that are not in the program - but, with a staff of only three, were unable to do so. The Iowa Department of Economic Development acknowledged that the program’s resources, which include the state’s most extensive library on downtown development, should be fully utilized, and made the bold move to expand services by creating the Downtown Center.

“Main Street Iowa will continue to be the premiere program of the Center offering training and technical assistance to those cities who pursue the application and selection process. However, we realize that not all communities want or need Main Street’s comprehensive approach to downtown development. Those cities may seek assistance with a specific issue or access available resources on an a la carte basis,” Guzman said.

The Downtown Center is the first of its kind in the nation. It will not only house the Main Street program but also will provide a menu of fee-based services that will include training opportunities, referrals, technical information, statewide awareness, and

technical assistance to any Iowa city.

First year priorities, according to Guzman, will be to develop consultant exchange lists, organize reference materials and a lending library, develop and deliver one series of regional workshops, and assume planning for both the 2002 Iowa Downtown Conference and the Iowa Downtown Month celebration. The Center will also develop marketing materials to promote the expanded services.

RESOURCE CENTER SERVICES

- Information exchange
- One-stop shop for downtown questions
- Lending library (deposits required) of slides videos, books, self-help workbooks
- Examples - sample contracts
 - Consultant exchange
 - Architects and landscape architects
 - Structural engineers
 - Retail and marketing consultants
 - Historic preservation consultants
- Fee-based statewide training opportunities
- Iowa Downtown Conference
- Regional /ICN workshops
- Statewide promotion
- Iowa Downtown Month
- Services for Commercial CEPP Certified Communities
- Fee-based initial downtown assessment visits
- Fee-based technical assistance

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