

If You Preserve It, They Will Come

All the growth in Iowa shouldn't just happen in suburbs and on farmland around urban centers. Iowa has 948 incorporated cities that also need to be enhanced.

“It has been said that, at its best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future.”

William Murtagh

Keeping Time: the History and Theory of Preservation in America [1988]

As farms get larger and the average farmer gets older, rural Iowa has seen an outward migration of residents. Commercial sprawl on the edges of small towns combined with mega malls and box stores in Iowa's larger cities, drain the vitality of a small town's Main Street.

Enough can't be said about the importance of locally owned businesses to a community. Economists tell us that the multiplier effect on a dollar spent in a local economy is duplicated seven times. But it is difficult to keep those small businesses and create a vibrant Main Street.

In 1985, the Iowa Legislature adopted the National Main Street Center's approach to downtown revitalization by approving the establishment of Main Street Iowa within the Iowa Department of Economic Development. The mission of the Main Street Iowa Program is to improve the social and economic well-being of Iowa's communities by assisting selected communities to capitalize on the unique identity, as-

sets and character of their downtown area. Main Street Iowa is economic development within the context of historic preservation.

Communities have to apply to become a Main Street Iowa community. The program helps towns and neighborhoods revive declining business districts through a tried-and-true blend of design, development and restoration activities. Supported by public and private investment, the Main Street approach provides communities with a blueprint for reviving and preserving the unique history, architecture and vitality of old-fashioned downtowns. *continued page 3*

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Founded 1998

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1000 Friends of Iowa is a statewide non-profit organization founded in 1998 based in Des Moines, Iowa.

1000 Friends of Iowa promotes responsible development that

- Conserves and protects our agricultural and natural resources
- Revitalizes our neighborhoods, towns and cities, and
- Improves the quality of life for future generations

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Get to Know...

You probably recognize their names, but how much do you know about those who serve on the **1000 Friends of Iowa Board of Directors**? We want you to become acquainted with the people you've entrusted with leading our member supported organization. In the coming Land Use Bulletin issues, we'll feature one or two board members as a way to help you know more about them, and thank them for their work on the board.



Mary Ellen Warren, Vice President

My interest in land use issues began in 1980 when my husband and I purchased properties in downtown Waterloo. Initially, I was interested in how to protect those inner-city core properties from abandonment. I was on the founding board of Main Street Waterloo, established in 1996, which is a private-public partnership dedicated to the revitalization of our city's downtown center and founded on the concept of economic development through historic preservation of buildings, neighborhoods and business districts. I was also on the founding board of Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area. Comprised of 37 counties in northeast Iowa, it was formed to support the interpretation of the region's heritage to its residents and visitors. I have learned much about Iowa agriculture from this work.

I first learned about 1000 Friends of Iowa when representatives shared ideas and advice to residents at a neighborhood organization meeting opposing the City of Waterloo's planned intersection by Highway 20. Soon after that initial encounter, St. Mary's school children had a unit of study about urban sprawl. 1000 Friends included them in a video showing the kids going to the Iowa Capitol to lobby legislators. The children offered legislators donuts and explained how the hole of the donut was like the downtown. When everyone moves out to build sprawl on farmland, it leaves a hole in the community.

When I was asked to be a board member in 2005, I was more than happy to serve an organization that supported my beliefs about responsible land use. I think 1000 Friend's most important function is educating the citizens of Iowa about how precious Iowa's farmland is. Feeding the world is what Iowans do. It is vital that we conserve and protect our natural resources: soil, water and air. And because most Main Streets in Iowa were built to last with quality craftsmanship and materials, educating citizens about reviving, preserving and giving new life to the beautiful structures we already have, rather than building new on farmland, is essential to preserving our history and protecting our natural resources.

Historic Preservation, If You Preserve It, They Will Come continued from page 1

Many times communities adopt the Main Street approach to fight back against the outlying strip malls and superstores that have preyed upon their commercial core. However, like a box of Cracker Jacks, the community gets more than the popcorn and peanuts of economic development. They are also offered a prize—Smart Growth. Downtrodden downtowns are transformed into desirable destinations, and the community has attained a new tool to manage commercial and residential growth. Many times, the link to Smart Growth remains a happy coincidence that residents are never made aware of.

Main Street Iowa's success is clearly demonstrated by the economic gains experienced by the 63 Iowa Main Street communities that have been active throughout or during a portion of the time between April 1986 and the present. Currently, there are 39 active Main Street communities in Iowa.

Since 1986, for every dollar the State of Iowa has invested in operating the Main Street Iowa program, \$79.45 in private funds have been invested in building acquisition and renovations, resulting in over \$1 BILLION invested in Iowa. (see table 1)

*“To make a new brick today to build a building on a site where there is already a building standing steals from two generations. It steals from the generation that built the brick originally by throwing away their asset before its work is done, and it steals from a future generation by using increasingly scarce natural resources today that should have been saved for tomorrow.” Don Rykema, *The Economics of Rehabilitation* [1997]*

Main Street Iowa's Economic Impact	
Net gain of business starts, expansions and relocations	3,765
Net gain in new jobs	11,506
Building rehabilitations or renovations	8,987
Private dollars invested in building rehabilitations and renovations	\$800,100,820
Buildings sold	3,139
Private dollars invested in property acquisitions	\$332,432,135
Total private dollars invested in downtown buildings	\$1,142,532,955
Total volunteer hours contributed	2,185,211
<i>Table 1: Figures from 1986 to present</i>	

Every year, 1000 Friends of Iowa chooses to hold their annual meeting in various cities across Iowa. Often these cities are towns which have been selected as a Main Street Iowa city. Last year we were wowed by the successful transformation of Greenfield's historic town square and Main Street District. It was an opportunity to experience the way life in small town Iowa should be.

This year, please join 1000 Friends of Iowa for our Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 10, 2012, at The Historic Park Inn Hotel in Mason City. The Historic Park Inn Hotel is the last remaining hotel in the world designed and built by famed architect, Frank Lloyd Wright and is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. We're planning tours of local preservation success stories, including a tour of the Historic Park Inn Hotel.

We hope to see you there!

“If You Preserve It, They Will Come”

Historic Preservation in Iowa

Saturday, November 10, 2012

9:30 a.m.— 5:00 p.m.

The Historic Park Inn Hotel

7 West State St., Mason City, IA 50401

Save the Date! Details will be included in our Summer Land Use Bulletin and on our website as they are finalized.

1000 Friends of Iowa will hold our Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 10, 2012 at The Historic **Park Inn Hotel** in Mason City, IA. We are also planning a welcome reception Friday evening, November 9th at the hotel for those interested in enjoying the many comforts and amenities of The Historic Park Inn Hotel.

The Historic Park Inn Hotel is the last remaining hotel in the world designed and built by Frank Lloyd Wright and is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. The newly restored boutique hotel, conference center and lounge won our Best Development award last year in the Renovated Commercial/Small City category.

A block of rooms have been reserved for November 9th and 10th. When making your reservation, be sure to mention you will be attending the 1000 Friends Annual Meeting. For additional information about the hotel, area attractions and to make reservations visit <http://www.stoneycreekinn.com/hotel/travel/masoncity-parkinn/home.do>.

Save the date and join us in Mason City on November 9th and 10th!

Now Accepting Nominations for

2012

Best Development Awards

Deadline for Nomination Entry

September 28, 2012

recipients, and read more about the BDA program by visiting: <http://www.1000friendsofiowa.org/content/blogcategory/95/225/>.

The Best Development Awards program recognizes quality development and redevelopment projects in Iowa and leadership that uphold our mission. The nomination process is user friendly, and is a great opportunity to reward cities, companies, and individuals implementing 1000 Friends' ideals to make Iowa a better state. If you prefer, you may download the following nomination form, review previous years BDA

Best Development Awards are given in six categories:

1. New Residential
2. Renovated Residential
3. New Commercial/Civic
4. Renovated Commercial/Civic
5. Mixed Use
6. Leadership

Projects will be reviewed and awards granted based upon the project fulfilling the objectives of Smart Growth as defined below:

Smart growth efficiently utilizes our tax dollars and private investments through. . .

- Reinvesting in existing communities that have experienced decline. This includes rehabilitation and reuse of older buildings and in-fill development.
- Focusing new development around walkable, mixed-use town centers with a balance of housing and jobs.
- Coordinating the provision of utilities and public services amongst local jurisdictions in a metropolitan region.

Smart growth is sustainable because it. . .

- Distributes affordable housing throughout the region to improve access to employment opportunities and avoid concentrations of poverty.
- Utilizes green building practices to conserve energy.
- Attracts new business and industry, which increasingly consider quality of life factors when selecting communities in which to locate or expand.
- Balances urban expansion with the protection of agricultural land and natural areas.
- Empowers citizens to take responsibility for their community and become actively involved in the planning process.
- Recognizes the interdependence of the social, natural and built environments.
- Considers the impact of development on future generations.

Smart growth provides a high quality of life by . . .

- Creating a framework to build community and establish a sense of place.
- Providing walkable, mixed-use community centers that include civic, commercial and residential uses.
- Offering residents a variety of choices in housing options and transportation modes.
- Establishing urban green spaces and protecting environmentally sensitive areas from inappropriate development.
- Engaging residents in a more active, healthy lifestyle.
- Reducing health threats from air and water pollution. *continued page 7*

The River Bluff's Resort Saga

by Timothy Mason

The River Bluff's Resort, a failed, publicly funded complex located in NE Iowa, originally began with a deceptive marketing campaign to bring riverboat gambling to Clayton County in 1994. The airwaves and print media were flooded with questionable examples of how riverboat gambling would benefit the citizenry of Clayton County. At the time, local residents opposed to the riverboat casino were no match for the propaganda machine and, unfortunately, the Miss Marquette Riverboat Gambling Casino began operation in my hometown of five generations, Marquette, Iowa. Pop. 375.

Shortly after arriving, the casino management team began plans to build a hotel. First they planned to have the adjoining wetland of Bloody Run Creek filled for expanded vehicle parking and a massive hotel. We fought hard and won that environmental battle.

In 2001 the gambling giant gave their aggressive PR man authority to go after a huge multimillion dollar grant from the Vision Iowa committee. He mailed a \$10,000 casino check to MSA Consultants of Dubuque to begin the VI application process and located two developers, both with controversial histories, from California and Wisconsin. Then he, along with the town clerk of nearby McGregor, spent the next six years pursuing River Bluff's Resort. It was to be a \$139 million dollar complex including a hotel, water park, golf course, condominiums and single family housing located on rural farmland just west of the tiny sister villages of Marquette & McGregor.

Greed had drained the entire little river town of its charm and character. My wife and I, being disgusted by what my hometown had become, moved to a rental farmhouse on a quiet gravel road four miles from the ugly neon glitz, like many long time residents have done. One night I received a call from a local politician who informed me of the planned resort. The original location of this urban sprawl complex was on a 390 acre farm on our gravel road less than a half mile away. This brought many land use and environmental issues into play including a high capacity water well, leap frog annexation, stream degradation, light pollution, etc.

We and our neighbors immediately began to organize as The Concerned Citizens of Clayton County. We discovered many things about the developers past track record and convinced the Governor's Office to have the Iowa Attorney General's Office conduct a due diligence investigation on the two developers. The investigation resulted in the withdrawal of the \$3.5 million Vision Iowa grant and the local farmer did not sell his land.

The developers then drew our three rural County Supervisors into a Tax Increment Financing plan and convinced several other farmers just a mile west to sell their land. They secured financing through a nearby bank despite reams of documents sent to the banker and the bank's Board of Directors detailing the developers' history of failure to repay loans.

The developers and their associates filed Iowa's first SLAPP lawsuit (Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation) against us. We hired noted Cedar Rapids environmental attorney Wallace Taylor and fought back. The suit was later dropped; the developer's lawyer was never paid.

The casino later fired the PR man. The Iowa DNR sued the Limited Liability Company and their contractors for massive soil erosion into nearby Sny McGill trout stream (which is still resulting in long term siltation and the DNR never collected the \$55K fine) as several months of earth-moving were in violation of state storm water protection rules. Then on June 19, 2012, a Sheriff's Sale was held and Freedom Bank cleared the property for sole purchase with a check for \$3,705,661.69. The other lien holders of millions of dollars and many vendors lost it all. Long story short, the developers cheated local and regional companies out of millions of dollars of services, never paid the bank and fled the area like they had done time and time before. *continued page 7*

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BDA Nomination Instructions

Please provide us with the following information:

Nominee:

Company Name
Company Acronym/Abbreviation
Contact Name
Position
Company Address
City
State
Zip Code
Business Phone Number
Company website
E-mail address

Nominator:

Your Name
Company Name
Company Address
City
State
Zip Code
Business Phone Number
E-mail Address

Nominee Instructions

Each nominee is encouraged to submit a formal description with photos of the project nominated. Please answer the following questions and return the entry form with your formal submission of the nominated project.

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The Concerned Citizens of Clayton County, with help from many regional volunteers and local donors, devoted thousands of hours, traveled the state and spent many of our own dollars battling to save our homes from urban sprawl. We won the battle due to our nonstop fight and exposing the developers' track records.

Unfortunately a new plan with another development company, a secret Limited Liability Company, and another bank to build a hotel in Marquette just a couple blocks from the casino is underway. The plan involves tearing down four historic buildings, including the town hall, and replacing these structures with a 50 unit hotel which will also house the offices of the village government.

Editor's Note: At our 2003 annual meeting Tim Mason traveled from his rural home in Clayton County to Pella, to present to our membership his discoveries about land use in Clayton County and the work of a team of concerned neighbors to hold elected officials accountable. For over a decade Tim has worked diligently to expose the truth driving the development...and the story continues.

Company Information

- Company or Organization
- Company Address
- City
- State
- Zip Code

Contact Information

- Your name
- Your title
- Phone
- E-mail
- Company website

Project Details

- Name of Development/Individual Project
- Location
- Brief summary of how this project meets the mission of 1000 Friends of Iowa and the Principles of Smart Growth (You are welcome to prepare a more detailed submission in addition to this summary)

Please list local media and relevant contacts, if known.

Please submit your nomination and project description to:

1000 Friends of Iowa
3850 Merle Hay Road, Suite 605
Des Moines, IA 50310-1300

crystal_letto@yahoo.com

If you are mailing your nomination and project description, please include a CD of all images. Please note, including contact information for **local media is appreciated** and will help to ensure local coverage of your project.

**National Complete Street's
2011 Report and Companion Workbook
Now Available for Download at:
www.smartgrowthamerica.org**

**The Report and Workbook Highlight Successful Complete
Streets Policies From Across the United States**

Communities across the United States adopted 146 Complete Streets policies in 2011, and over 350 policies are now in place across the country. A new report looks at some of the best of these policies, and a new resource can help community leaders bring these practices to their town or city.