

## Bettendorf, Iowa

September 8 - 10, 2015

**Consultant Team:**

**TERRY POE BUSCHKAMP** CMSM, CTP  
MAIN STREET IOWA PROMOTION SPECIALIST  
IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY / IOWA DOWNTOWN RESOURCE CENTER  
DES MOINES, IA

**NICHOLAS KALOGERESIS** AICP  
VICE PRESIDENT  
THE LAKOTA GROUP  
CHICAGO, IL

**MICHAEL KRITZMAN**  
ASSOCIATE  
THE LAKOTA GROUP  
CHICAGO, IL

**JIM THOMPSON** CMSM  
MAIN STREET IOWA BUSINESS SPECIALIST  
IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY / IOWA DOWNTOWN RESOURCE CENTER  
DES MOINES, IA

**Resource Center**

**Iowa Downtown**

## INTRODUCTION

*The following report summarizes the observations and recommendations that are a result of an Iowa Downtown Resource Center Assessment Visit conducted in Bettendorf, Iowa. In preparation of this report, the Team learned about Bettendorf's development history and plans for future development. The Assessment Team's familiarization process began with a review of Bettendorf materials, a driving tour of the city and a driving and walking tour of the Downtown commercial district. The intensive three-day visit also included interviews with nearly 100 community leaders, individuals and groups representing the public and private sectors and a community meeting. Based upon these activities and the Assessment Team's extensive working knowledge in downtown economic development, this report summarizes their findings and recommendations for Bettendorf.*

## PURPOSE

The City of Bettendorf contracted with the Iowa Downtown Resource Center, Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), to conduct a Downtown Assessment Visit that includes the following services:

The Downtown Assessment Visit serves multiple purposes—raising awareness, educating, recommending, and encouraging the local community. In conducting this “self-discovery” process, Bettendorf has begun to empower itself by stepping out of its comfort zone. It is a good sign that the community appears ready to take additional steps to address Downtown's challenges.

This assessment visit and recommendations should serve as a call to action and provide the community with current information to formulate strategies necessary to address the very serious issue of saving Downtown for future generations. This report cannot and does not provide all of the answers. Ultimately, Bettendorf citizens must explore their options, decide what is relevant and realistic and acquire additional information and resources as they address Downtown's future. We encourage you to prioritize action items in this report that are right for you!

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

**-Margaret Mead**

## ASSESSMENT TEAM

*The Assessment Team included four downtown development professionals:*

**Terry Poe Buschkamp** **cmsm ctp**, Main Street Iowa Promotion Specialist for IEDA's Iowa Downtown Resource Center, has been with IDRC since 2008. She provides professional services to communities across the state, is the lead trainer to provide services in the area of Promotion, manages a program to assist communities that operate historic theaters in designated Main Street communities, and coordinates the Iowa Downtown Conference. Previously, Buschkamp served in the position of Executive Director for: Main Street Waterloo, the Waterloo Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Downtown Council. She taught Tourism Marketing at the University of Northern Iowa, and was in management for a major retail chain. Buschkamp is recognized as a Certified Main Street Manager by the National Main Street Center; has a BA from the University of Northern Iowa; is a graduate of Iowa Association of Industry's "Leadership Iowa" and the Iowa Tourism Leadership Development Programs; and received a Certified Tour Professional designation from the National Tour Association. She has served as a consultant for the National Main Street Center, and presented at state and national downtown conferences.

**Nick Kalogeresis** **AICP** is currently Vice President with the Lakota Group, a planning and urban design firm based in Chicago, Illinois. Nick's practice areas at Lakota Group include historic preservation planning, community comprehensive planning, downtown and commercial corridor plans, neighborhood revitalization, and urban design management. Nick previously worked with the National Main Street Center for ten years and provided consulting services to Main Street communities throughout the Midwest. A Chicago native, holds a bachelor's degree in history from Elmhurst College (Ill.) and a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and serves on the Advisory Committee for the Municipal Design Review Network of the Chaddick Institute at DePaul University.

**Michael Kritzman** is an urban designer/planner and has experience working on a range of environmental design and planning projects nationwide. His areas of expertise lie in preparing concepts and graphics for both public and private sector projects. Michael also brings a valuable and unique skill set in developing and facilitating public workshops that result in dynamic and participatory environments.

**Jim Thompson** **cmsm** serves as the Main Street Iowa Business Specialist, covering all areas of Economic Development for Main Street districts. He served in all aspects at the local level including program director, board member and volunteer. Jim earned his Certified Main Street Managers credentials through the Certification in Professional Main Street Downtown Management Institute, a National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center course. He oversees all aspects of market analysis including data analysis, business retention, recruitment, and implementation strategies. He has also led efforts in tax increment finance, branding and one-on-one business technical assistance for Iowa's Main Street communities. He has over 25 years' experience in community development, retail management as well as having served on the City Council for 10 years. Jim has also served as a consultant for the National Main Street Center, worked in several states and has presented multiple times at the National Main Streets Conference.

## OVERVIEW

*This Downtown Assessment Visit report and recommendations for Bettendorf are based on the Team's downtown development experience, totaling over 70 years. Their beliefs are grounded by the philosophy that in order for Downtown to re-establish itself as the social and commercial center of the community – the physical heart and soul of the city – Downtown must become more valuable physically, economically, socially and politically.*

The dialogue with the community begins with the community's need to understand why Downtown is important.

- 1) Downtown serves as the symbol (*the visual testimony*) of the community's economic health. The commercial activity and vibrancy of downtown is a reflection of the health and investment within the entire community.
- 2) The viability of Downtown is important to both public and private sectors. Government officials and taxpayers have a vested interest in the health and viability of Downtown and the valuation of its commercial properties. Since the welfare of Downtown is both a public and private concern, it is in everyone's best interest to form a partnership to address its vitality. Both sectors have resources and expertise to contribute to the revitalization process.
- 3) The local quality of life (*livability*) is reflected through the condition of Downtown. Today, young workers will change their employment and careers multiple times, many of them basing those decisions solely upon where they prefer to live. Quality of life is a key factor in industrial, commercial and professional business and employee recruitment.
- 4) Downtown reflects local pride and the values of the community. Much can be learned about your community and its values by exploring its Downtown.
- 5) Downtown is a functioning, living museum. It speaks volumes about how your community developed, how it has evolved and what influences have been instrumental in its development. Your Downtown is unique--with its own character and history (*sense of place*), that sets it apart from any other place.

The health of Downtown has a direct impact upon the entire community's economic well being. They are inter-related. Downtown revitalization IS economic development. Downtown is a prime location for incubating small business, it is an affordable location for independent businesses, and is historically one of the community's major employers. The commercial center provides a compact environment with multiple stories for commerce, government and living spaces, thus reducing sprawl and the cost associated with extending city services and infrastructure. The pedestrian friendly environment is convenient and accessible, serving as the center (*community space*) for not only commercial trade but also cultural, social and civic engagement. Historic downtown districts can serve as heritage tourism attractions. A building's condition, the business' viability and maximization of the building's square footage for income generation affect not only the property's value, but also the value of the neighboring properties and real estate in the entire community. Investments in Downtown allow it to "*pay its fair share*" in taxes resulting in lessening the tax burdens of its citizens and city government.

Bettendorf does not look nor resemble what it was like 40 years ago. Downtown has also changed. Various factors have had dramatic effects upon the character of Downtown and its business viability.

External forces have affected Downtown's competitiveness--big box retail, internet sales, catalog sales, transportation and commuter trends to name a few. Citizens are more mobile and technologically connected. Increasing regional and even global competition directly affect the level of activity and commerce in Downtown. More women have entered the workforce. Women, the primary household purchasers, are making the majority of their purchases on Saturday, Sunday and in the evening. Different generations of consumers have different spending habits and expectations. The commercial business world has dramatically changed.

Internal forces at work include the investments or lack of investments that have occurred in Downtown buildings. Inappropriate façade changes over the years have lessened the historic integrity of Downtown properties and affected its overall appearance. Under-utilization of buildings also reduces income generation, which has a direct effect upon the amount of capital available for maintenance and reinvestment in the buildings and ultimately, the value of Downtown. Covered, boarded up and scaled down display windows create barriers between the businesses and the customers. In some cases, signage is lacking, poorly designed or obsolete. These physical changes combined with other external forces have substantially challenged the dynamics and vitality of Downtown. It is important to note that none of this occurred with malicious intent. Rather, building and business owners were seeking possible solutions to the ever-changing dynamics under which Downtown existed, not realizing that many of these solutions only contributed to Downtown's decline.

During the recent past, Bettendorf has had many successes in its community building efforts. Through this assessment visit, Bettendorf has taken another step in addressing its commercial district's future. As you already know, change does not occur overnight. The successes will be incremental and every success should be celebrated. Failures will occur and lessons will be learned.

Most of our memories are directly associated with a place. We *"go back"* to places we feel good about. We *"go back"* to places where we have had positive shopping experiences. We *"go back"* to places where we have had fun. We *"go back"* to places we think are important. We are also attracted to places where *we think* we will have a positive experience. We must strive to make Downtown a *"go to"* kind of destination, not an *avoidable area we pass through to get somewhere else*.



## REVIEW TEAM OBSERVATIONS

### First Impressions

- Drove through beautiful residential developments.
- Nice quality of life amenities in the community.
- GPS says we're downtown, but where the heck is it?
- We didn't know we were there when we were there.
- Pedestrians are discouraged (skywalk locked behind us, and we couldn't get back to the Convention Center).
- One-way pairs feel like a racetrack.
- Suburban feel.



## INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITY

### Community Assets

- Affluent, highly educated population (one of the highest per-capita incomes in the state)
- Small town feel in a larger metropolitan area with big-city amenities
- Museums, parks and trails
- Excellent school system
- Community pride
- Low crime rate/safe
- Supportive city administration
- Great city services
- Business friendly
- Family oriented
- Beautiful homes (average 175 new home builds per year)
- Churches
- Community buy-in
- Philanthropic



### Downtown Bettendorf Assets

- Mississippi River (but you can't see it)
- Riverfront
- Marina
- Floodwall
- New bridge will be fully functional in 2021
- Convention Center / growing convention business
- Channel Cat
- Bike trails
- Interstate access
- Isle Casino (investing \$60M in a new land based casino)
- Largest hotel in Iowa (514 rooms)
- The Alter Building
- Community Center
- Surrounded by high income households
- Valuable businesses (hardware store)
- Farmers Market





## Challenges

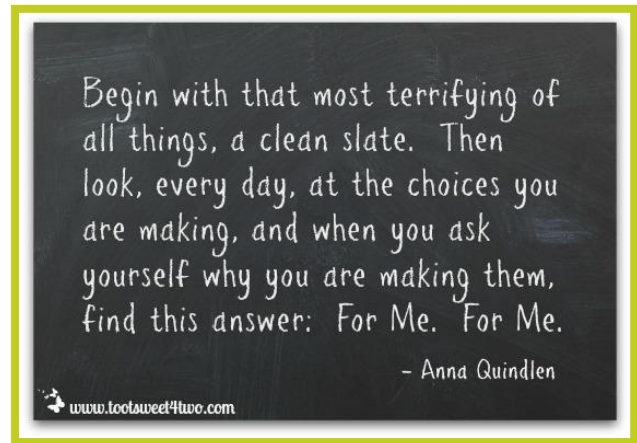
- One way streets
- Heavy commercial traffic (bridge and noise not conducive to downtown walkability)
- Deteriorated and ignored properties
- Perceived lack of parking
- No sense of place/identity
- No entertainment/restaurants/shopping
- Strung out
- Railroad noise makes it tough for housing
- No definition of downtown district
- No historic commercial fabric
- Lack of cooperation / cohesion
- Lacks an identity
- There are no two businesses to walk to
- No way-finding signage
- Private ownership of large parcels
- Little river access

## Comments

- “We need to compliment – not compete – with other communities in the Quad Cities.”
- “The success of our neighbors makes us want what we don’t have.”
- “We don’t know what the future is, but we’re preparing for it.”
- “We need to be bold with our thinking.”
- “We have an extraordinary opportunity to sizzle.”
- “We need to figure out how to have a downtown that Bettendorf deserves.”
- “We’re never going to get a better opportunity than right now.”
- “Downtown needs to be reflective of our community.”
- “We don’t have a personality.”
- “We’ve lost nearly 50 downtown businesses with the bridge.”
- “The riverfront in worn looking.”
- “I don’t know how you know you’re in downtown.”
- “Our residents want a cool creative downtown.”
- “We struggle with sprawl.”
- “We have plenty of ugly strip malls.”
- “It’s great to have new businesses, but put them where they make sense.”
- “Downtown appears to be two streets that lead to somewhere else.”
- “Our whole downtown has been demolished.”
- “Conventioneers go anywhere BUT downtown Bettendorf.”
- “After all this, I’ll be disappointed if we end up with a Hardees and a gas station.”
- “If Bettendorf is deemed a Premier City – we have a long way to go, and it should start downtown.”
- “People are starting to pay attention to downtown.”
- “We need to reclaim the river.”
- “If the river is our best asset – let’s show it!”
- “We’re ready to do whatever needs to be done.”
- “We need a foundation and better direction. Right now, it’s who’s talking the loudest.”
- “We don’t know what the future is, but we’re preparing for it.”
- “My fear is that we’re going to have another plan that sits on the shelf.”

## Most Frequently Heard One Word Responses about Downtown Bettendorf

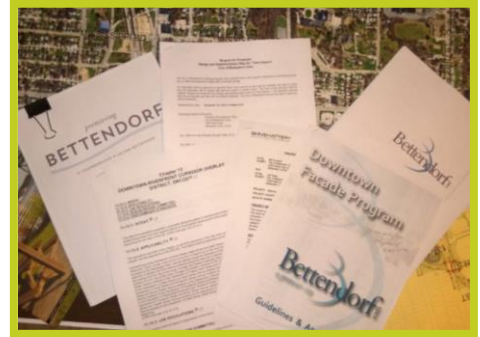
- Hodge Podge
- Stale
- Blighted
- A mess
- Riverfront
- Potential
- Neglected
- Unorganized
- Ignored
- Potential
- Glass Half Full
- A “Clean Slate”



## ASSESSMENT TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS

The community of Bettendorf has spent a great deal of time and money in the planning process. You do not need another plan to sit on the shelf. The assessment team recommends that you review your existing plans as well as this document, and implement the shorter-term recommendations. As the process gains momentum, community leadership will need to determine additional strategies and develop approaches that are more sophisticated.

Now is the time for action.



## FOCUS AREA #1: FOCUS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Observations and Recommendations:

Let’s start with an explanation of economic development for a Main Street® district:

*“Improving the overall business climate within your Main Street District strengthens your community's existing economic assets while diversifying and restructuring its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding successful businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business owners, and attracting new businesses that the market can support. Converting unused or underused commercial space and real estate into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district. The goal is to build a commercial district that responds to the needs of today's consumers.”*

The last thing Bettendorf needs is another plan to sit on a shelf and collect dust. It’s time to agree on a shared vision for downtown and work toward this common goal. This goal should encompass all areas but especially economic development.

It was repeated over and over that downtown Bettendorf is a blank slate but it absolutely is not. You have great buildings and business opportunities within your current footprint. Historic preservation much become a foundational building block. This must be where you start your economic development efforts. You have buildings that should be saved. Direct resources around this historic preservation base and build around this effort. Do not allow any district to become a higher priority than downtown. Direct resources exclusively to downtown. Create a master plan that addresses exactly what you want,



but start with the preservation of existing buildings. This master plan must address appropriate building materials and design standards. Never allow incentives dedicated to this district to ever leave the district. This sends a poor message that any economic development is quality development. It is not. You get what you incent. Make it quality. Work with the DOT to determine the appropriate kinds of development for this corridor. With the high traffic counts coupled with the high speeds that exist it is going to be extremely difficult to create a safe walkable environment. Bettendorf does have areas within the downtown footprint that will allow for planned development. You have already encouraged, with incentives, a more suburban style development. Work with traffic engineers to work with your current situation and create a planned development that complements the area. Whatever you do should not hurt your industrial base. They depend on traffic flows that allow workers and deliveries to move through this area. Traffic calming initiatives may hurt your industrial clients.

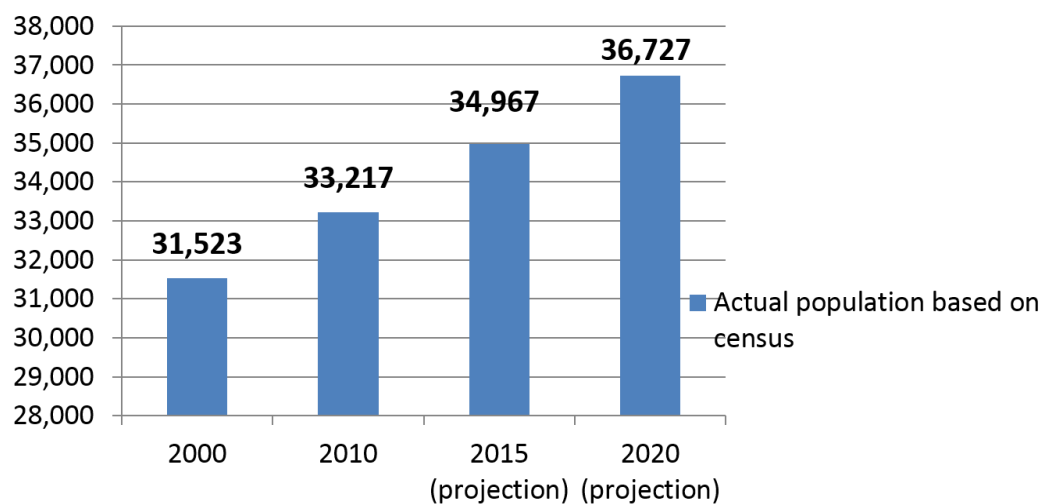
The Bettendorf Business Network (BBN) is a great vehicle to get things done. BBN must create an environment to succeed by helping businesses thrive within the downtown district. Start with a comprehensive communication system that reaches every business. Follow that effort with assessment; retention; expansion; recruitment; and finally development. This comprehensive strategy will provide the best return on investment when you make your downtown district a priority in your long-term development efforts.

**“Coming together is beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success”**  
– Henry Ford

**Assessment**

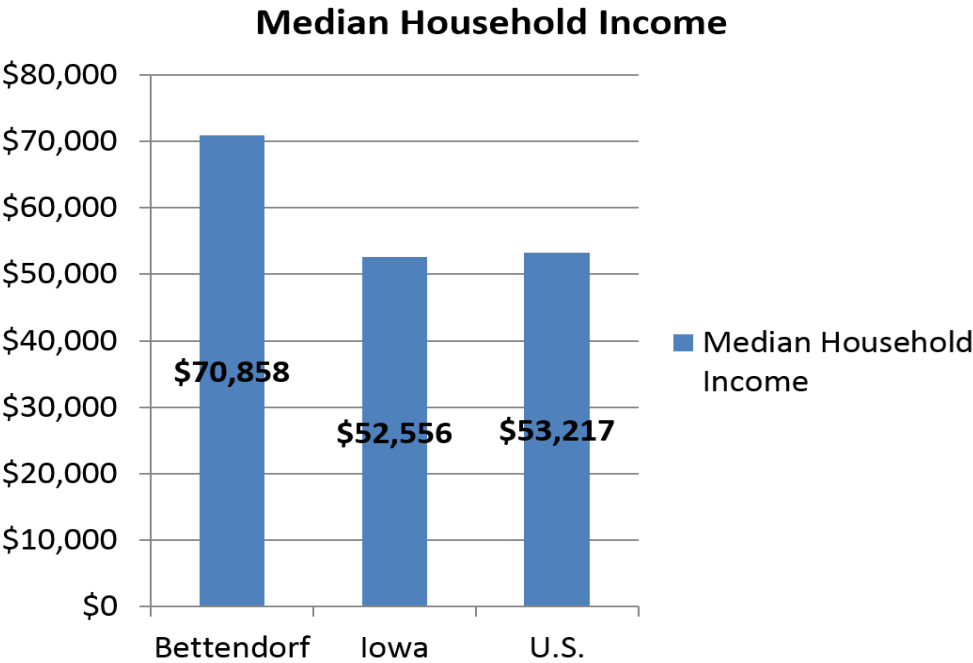
This happens when a downtown district is fully aware of existing conditions. This is accomplished through data collection. Main Street Iowa has provided you statistical data through our subscription with ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.). We provide the following reports: Market Profile; Retail MarketPlace; Tapestry Segmentation; and Housing Profile.

**Actual population based on census**

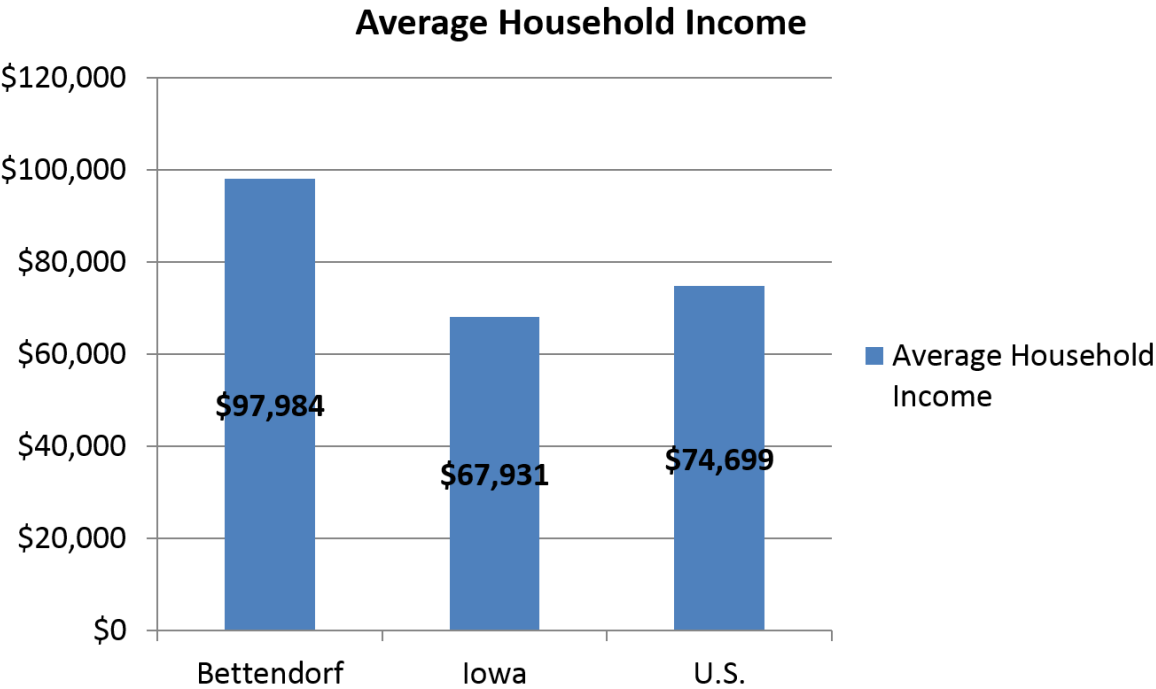


For the Bettendorf city limits the current year population projection is 34,967. The rate of change since 2010 was 0.98% annually. The five-year projection for the city limit population is 36,727 representing a change of 0.99% annually from 2015 to 2020. Currently the population is 48.8% male and 51.2% female. The median age is 41.8 compared to the state of Iowa at 38.6. The projected household count for the

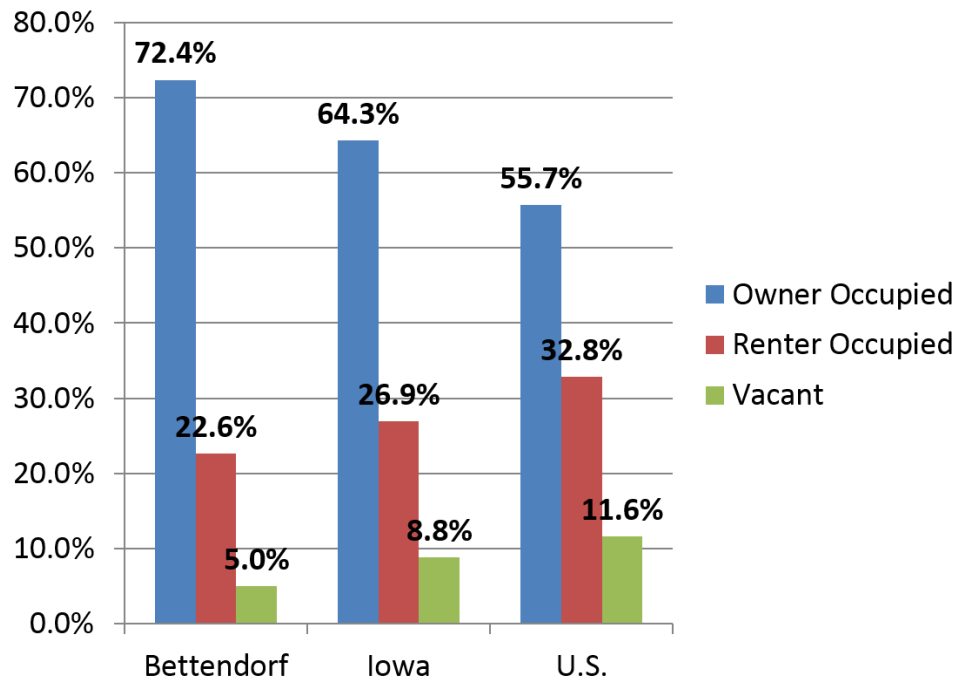
Bettendorf city limits has changed from 13,681 in 2010 to 14,490 in 2015, a change of 1.10% annually. The five-year household projection is 15,230, a change of 1.00% annually. Average household size is 2.40, which is exactly the same as the entire state of Iowa.



Current median household income is \$70,858 in the city limits of Bettendorf, compared to \$52,556 for the state of Iowa. Median household income is projected to be \$82,754 in 2020.

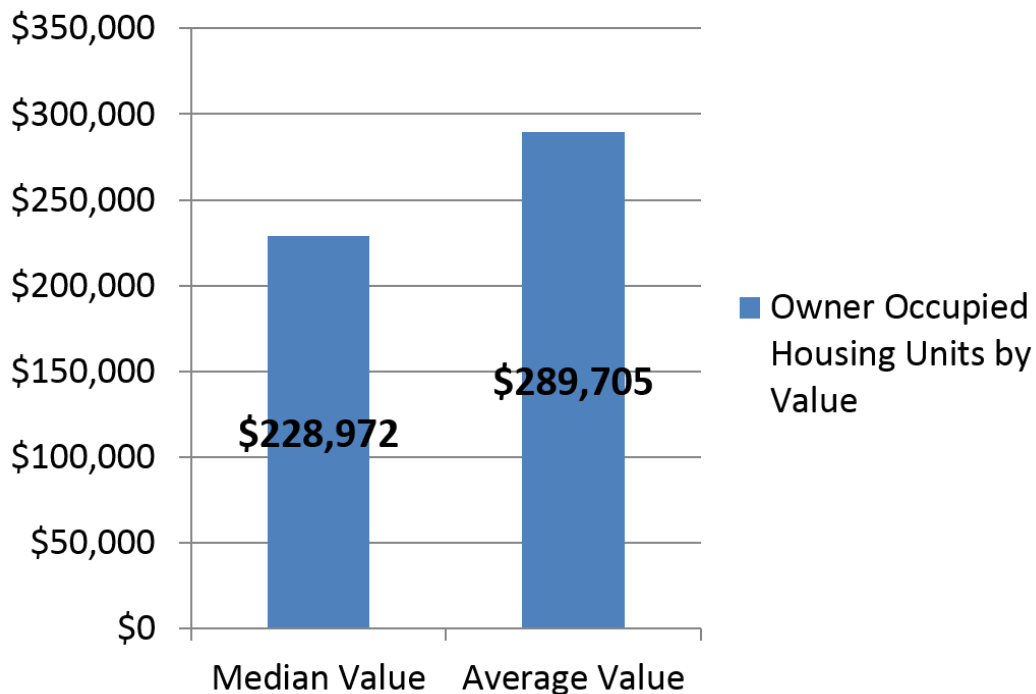


Current average household income is \$97,984, compared to \$67,931 for the state of Iowa. Average household income is projected to be \$111,866 in 2020.



Bettendorf city limits has 72.4% owner occupied housing units; 22.6% renter occupied; and 5.0% are vacant. This graph demonstrates solid owner occupied units but also shows a lack of available renter options. This relatively low quantity of available rentable options coupled with low vacancy rate creates concern. The inventory selection available demonstrates a need for expanded options. As downtown and the riverfront develops consider mixed use/multi-family housing as a high priority.

### Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value



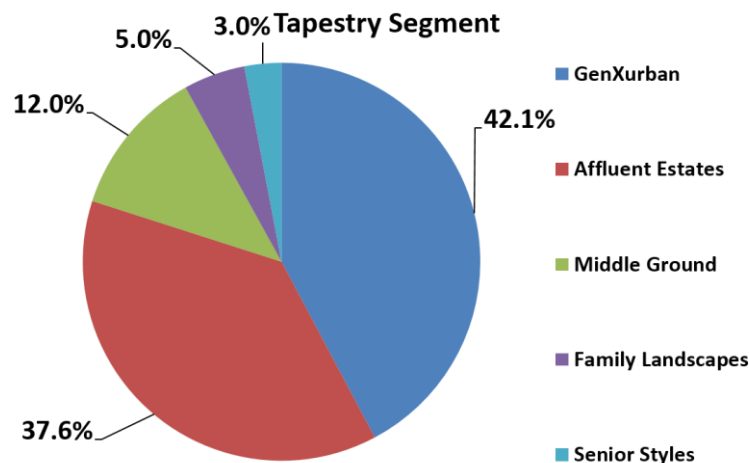
Bettendorf has some of the highest owner occupied home values in the state of Iowa. Housing selection must become a high priority. Identify who is the lead entity to build upon your success.

	Demand	Supply	Retail Gap
Industry Summary	(Retail Potential)	(Retail Sales)	
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$540,600,529	\$224,716,363	-\$315,884,166
Total Retail Trade	\$485,582,419	\$193,846,420	-\$291,735,999
Total Food & Drink	\$55,018,110	\$30,869,943	-\$24,148,167

ESRI uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to classify businesses by their primary type of economic activity. Retail establishments are classified into 27 industry groups within Retail Trade sector, and four industry groups within the Food Services & Drinking Establishments subsector.

All estimates of actual sales (supply) reflect current dollars derived from receipts of businesses primarily engaged in selling merchandise. Potential sales (demand) is estimated by using ESRI's consumer spending data which provides estimated expenditures for more than 700 products and services that are consumed by U.S. households. The estimate of a trade area's demand is based upon estimated expenditures by households within the trade area.

Leakage within the city limits of Bettendorf represents a condition where supply is less than demand. Retailers outside of Bettendorf are fulfilling demand for retail products. Surplus within the city limits of Bettendorf represents a condition where supply exceeds the demand. Thus retailers are attracting customers that reside outside the city limits of Bettendorf. ESRI's Retail MarketPlace data provides a direct comparison between retail sales and consumer spending for the city limits of Bettendorf. Deviations from potential sales may reveal areas of opportunity in the Bettendorf city limits. The only area of retail sales surplus is in the area of Building Materials, Garden Equipment & Supply Stores. Every other area shows significant leakage away from Bettendorf. Unless you're content being a bedroom community for the entire quad-city area you must focus on the lack of retail sales.



79.7% of Bettendorf's current population is made up of just two LifeMode Groups – GenXurban & Affluent Estates. We have included the full report as an attachment. Generally these groups are made up of hard working families with children in school. They own homes and are affluent. The higher incomes afford them opportunities for recreation / community activities.

Other forms of assessment happen locally, business & building inventories, consumer & business surveys, and finally market analysis training and utilization. We believe a district cannot know what it wants, without fully understanding what it already has. A great place to start would be through a comprehensive Business Visitation process. The goal of quality business visitation process would be to first create a relationship. Once businesses know BBN is there to help they will be much more aggressive in sharing. If you need any examples, just ask.

### **Retention & Expansion**

Once community leaders understand what they have within their district they are better equipped to move to retention and expansion. It's much easier to grow existing businesses. Once district needs are determined, it just makes sense to utilize existing businesses whenever possible. Many times communities recruit a new business only to lose two of their existing business, thus a net loss in businesses. Bettendorf needs to start from within. Existing businesses like K & K Hardware are businesses to build around. It's sad to see that this is the only retail category that demonstrates surplus. Bettendorf needs to strengthen its economic base. Conduct primary research through consumer and business surveys. Main Street Iowa has examples when you're ready to start this process. This effort will explore supply and demand Bettendorf. Once you know what consumers are forced into buying out of town you can explore the supply side.

Economic Development for Main Street districts can be summed up in two areas:

### **Business Development**

- *Business retention*
  - Business directory
  - Business assistance team
  - Educational seminars and workshops
  - Business recognition program
  - Business transition assistance
  - Newsletter articles
- *Business expansion*
  - Focus groups
    - Business
    - Customer
  - Market feasibility studies
  - Business plans and projections

### **Real Estate Development**

- *Finding better uses for vacant or underutilized buildings*
- *Total building utilization*
  - Upper story housing
  - Commercial rehabilitation
  - Proforma analysis
  - Adaptive use studies
- *Develop & market incentive programs*
  - Local
  - State
  - Federal
- *Clustering strategies*
  - Determine existing clusters
  - Create list of complementary businesses

## **Recruitment**

Retail recruitment is much different from industrial or manufacturing recruitment. Retail recruitment involves being sensitive to what exists while still serving the needs of the community. In many communities there is not anyone with this charge. Recruitment must not be entered into lightly or without the proper amount of training and technical assistance.

## **Development**

Real Estate Development will encompass all prior strategies. It will only be successful when identifying the appropriate players at the table and bringing broad based community support. Adaptive reuse and full utilization of vacant or underperforming property must be accomplished to be successful in development.

All of us at the Iowa Downtown Resource Center want to be a partner in economic development for Bettendorf. We want to assist any Iowa community that is working to build a commercial district that is sustainable and continues to grow. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any follow up information you desire. The numbers clearly state that Main Street districts are valuable and that communities can count on a strong return on investment when they make these districts a priority in their long-term development efforts.

## **FOCUS AREA #2: DESIGN AND URBAN PLANNING ISSUES**

### **Observations:**

Downtown Bettendorf's built environment has been impacted significantly by the pending construction of the new Interstate 74 Bridge and the realignment of State and Grant Streets, the two principal east-west thoroughfares through the downtown district. Over the last two years, more than 40 buildings have been demolished and 44 businesses relocated in order to accommodate the new road realignments, bridge ramps and embankments that will also change the overall physical footprint and land use character of downtown Bettendorf. Rightly so, even with the construction of the new bridge and the loss of a substantial amount of its building fabric, the Bettendorf community believes there are new opportunities to rebuild the downtown in a way that mirrors its original pedestrian-oriented character while introducing new commercial, residential and recreational uses into the downtown district. To achieve this, the City of Bettendorf is embarking on a new planning process that will build on the downtown land use vision first outlined within the City's new Comprehensive Plan. It is hoped that the downtown plan can provide specific direction for where new development should take place, what it should look like and how the riverfront should be treated – perhaps downtown's most important asset.

However, as the community embarks on the downtown planning process and seeks to redevelop its opportunity sites in the years ahead, there are other short-term design initiatives that should be pursued to help build momentum for new downtown investment as well as enhance its image as a place to visit, shop, dine and play. These initiatives should focus on rehabilitating and re-using downtown Bettendorf's remaining building fabric, implementing achievable urban design and placemaking projects, and making downtown more walkable and safe for pedestrians.



## Recommendations:

### Short-Term Catalytic Design Improvement Strategies

As downtown planning and development efforts proceed long-term, there are several design improvement initiatives that should be pursued and implemented over the short term to help enhance downtown's overall physical environment and visual appearance. Undertaking such improvements can help build a more unified, attractive image for downtown Bettendorf. Poor storefront merchandising, vacant buildings and lots, and the lack of pedestrian amenities and regular maintenance to the downtown streetscape all contribute to an image and perception that downtown Bettendorf is not a safe nor comfortable place to walk around nor compelling enough to visit. The following design recommendations are organized around "catalytic" activities that can help make significant visual improvements within the next few years while other development efforts are undertaken.

### Targeted Building Improvements

While long-term planning efforts will focus on new infill development, there are significant opportunities, especially along State Street between 15th and 19th Streets, to facilitate improvements to existing buildings, such as storefront rehabilitation, new business signage and awnings, and site and parking lot improvements. The existing Downtown Façade Program should be used explicitly for such purposes rather than for business relocations as has been the case most recently. However, going forward, consideration should be given to focusing efforts strictly on façade improvements with an enhanced Downtown Façade Program that includes the following elements:

- *Building Inventory.* Inventory the remaining traditional buildings in the downtown district to assess each building's existing conditions and potential for storefront, signage and façade enhancements; the inventory should also determine the potential for upper-story office or residential uses. It appeared that most traditional buildings — older, historic buildings that front the sidewalk with zero setback — are in good condition and suitable candidates for rehabilitation. An inventory should be conducted with a qualified preservation architect and contractor; prior to conducting the inventory, the City should review any previous historic building surveys and inventories that might have been undertaken by the City or other agency or organization to determine if any architecturally or historically significant buildings along State Street have been identified.



*Several existing buildings in downtown Bettendorf are strong candidates for storefront improvements and new signage and awnings; these buildings in particular should be high priority candidates to access the City's façade grant program.*

- **Design Assistance.** The City’s current guidelines and provisions for the Downtown Façade Program appear to not require the submission of any schematics and drawings as part of the application, nor does the application suggest that applicants seek professional architectural design assistance. As an added incentive, the Downtown Façade Program could provide limited design assistance to applicants by offering to underwrite and provide basic design drawings and schematics up to a set dollar amount for new storefront rehabilitation and reconstruction, signage and awnings and other façade enhancements. The City could retain and compensate a professional preservation architect as part of the grant award; alternatively, the City could require the applicant to retain an architect, not a contractor, to furnish required design schematics.



*Providing design sketches can help property owners make informed decisions on the type and quality of building improvements that should be undertaken (Moline Riverfront Neighborhood Plan Updates)*

- **Yearly Project Targets.** Focus efforts and façade grant improvements funds on one to three key projects in any given year; in the year or two ahead, work with property owners that have straightforward design improvements to make — new signage and awnings that can be installed or a storefront that can be rehabilitated. Buildings with more substantial exterior rehabilitation issues should be subject to more detailed assessments from professional architects and contractors. These assessments could be underwritten as part of a matching grant with a property owner.
- **Preservation Design Guidelines.** The City’s Middle Road Commercial Overlay District (MRCOD) is currently being used as the design guidelines for assessing the appropriateness of building improvement projects seeking to access the City’s Downtown Façade Program. The standards within the Overlay District include requirements for landscape and site enhancements, exterior material finishes and off-street parking — standards that appear to be more focused on new construction than on the rehabilitation of existing historic commercial buildings. Missing from the standards are procedures and proper treatments for building material preservation, storefront rehabilitation, and appropriate signage and awning materials and placement. As has been noted previously, a new downtown master plan will be prepared by the City and professional planning consultants in the coming year; it is unclear if the new design standards guidelines will be prepared after the plan is completed. If so, consideration should be given to adding specific guidelines and language on proper building preservation and rehabilitation procedures. Such guidelines should also be well illustrated with diagrams and sketches.
- **Model Block.** A “model block” using one architect and contractor to design and rehab several buildings could be undertaken, which could reduce costs through “economies of scale” regarding fees and construction. Such an approach could create a more dramatic and immediate physical change along State and Grants Streets.

- **Downtown-Wide Building Improvements.** Apply funds toward a district-wide initiative of improving a universal feature on all building facades. An example would be replacing or installing new awnings over all storefront windows or a custom motif signage bracket for new blade or hanging signs.



*A concerted effort to improve building storefronts and signage can make a significant visual impact in the downtown (existing commercial buildings on State Street, left; prototype new signage, right).*

- **Grant Matching Requirements.** The current Downtown Façade Program will fund a maximum of 25 percent up to \$25,000 of a total façade improvement project; the City should consider raising the maximum up to 50 percent with a ceiling of \$30,000 to \$50,000 as a more attractive incentive in facilitating building rehabilitation activity along State and Grant Streets.

### **Streetscape/Landscape Improvements**

Several initiatives can be undertaken by the City and downtown stakeholders to improve the streetscape environment, including the installation of pedestrian amenities and the implementation of small-scaled placemaking projects that can help build back a distinctive identity for downtown Bettendorf as it redevelops over time. These initiatives are meant to be near-term measures in place of a more comprehensive streetscape project once transportation planning and downtown's traffic flow issues are resolved. (see recommendation regarding downtown transportation). Elements of catalytic streetscaping and landscaping initiatives could include:

- **Parking Lanes and Pedestrian Improvements.** Many community stakeholders commented on the need for more parking downtown, although it appears that on-street parking is available on most streets. However, on-street parking is not marked with parking lanes or signage except in a few locations. The City should work with Iowa DOT to install parking lane strips on State Street to better define the parking lane and parking spaces; parking spaces and lanes should also be striped on the side streets wherever feasible. Parking lanes can help auto travelers understand where there is available parking as well as help slow traffic since motorists will have a more defined roadway viewshed.



*Parking lanes are not striped in downtown Bettendorf and lack proper signage. A short-term improvement is demarcate where people can park their cars.*



- **Crosswalks.** Pedestrian crosswalks are missing in a number of locations within the downtown district along Grant Street and some portions of State: crosswalks with stamped concrete, however, have been installed along State Street at 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st Streets. Additional crosswalk enhancements should be undertaken to better define the pedestrian zone and to make walking more safe and comfortable within the one-way street configuration. Enhancements should be low-scale and low-cost at first until a more comprehensive streetscape plan can be prepared once transportation issues are resolved; in other words, installing stamped concrete or other more elaborate paver treatments in crosswalks should be considered a part of a broader, long-term streetscaping scheme. In the short-term, high visibility crosswalk striping or even painted murals and other artwork should be considered in cross walks and a placemaking action, although these actions will require consultation and approval by Iowa Department of Transportation. Painted or colored crosswalks have recently been installed as temporary placemaking efforts in many communities.



*The lack of crosswalks (right) at several controlled (traffic lighted) intersections are missing; marked crosswalks can help improve pedestrian safety and comfort. Crosswalks can be an opportunity to install public art as a placemaking project (below). Some downtown Bettendorf intersections may be candidates for such efforts*



## **Placemaking Initiatives**

Placemaking strategies are presented in the recently completed Bettendorf Comprehensive Plan and will be further explored in a new downtown master plan to be prepared in the coming year. The Comprehensive Plan proposes a wide-ranging placemaking strategy that incorporates public art, community events and programming, pedestrian amenities, better architectural design in new buildings, water features such as interactive fountains, public art and streetscape and building lighting. These placemaking efforts should be pursued, as the Comprehensive Plan recommends, in partnership with the private sector, and local artist, artist groups and residents. Placemaking should also be thought of as short-term, temporary effort that can also catalyze additional improvements in buildings and public spaces, as well as improve downtown's image as a place for shopping and community gathering, while more permanent streetscape and placemaking investments are implemented in the long-term. Short-term placemaking efforts should include:

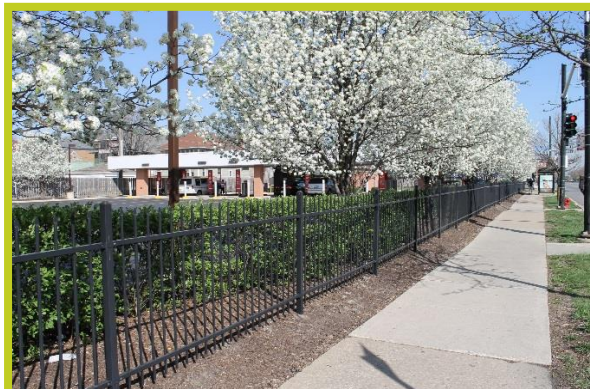
- *Temporary Public Art.* Locations along the downtown Bettendorf streetscape and in vacant lots or exposed side elevations of key buildings should be considered for installing temporary public art pieces and murals. Temporary art should be of high design quality and installed in areas where their presence can contribute positively to the streetscape. Sculpture and other customized pieces can focus on a particular historical theme or cultural association, be modern or whimsical in design to capture the attention of visitors and shoppers to downtown Bettendorf. Certainly, the Town Square development site and other vacant and underutilized lots could be secured as places for temporary art installations.
- *Temporary Plaza Space.* The Town Square site could be utilized as a temporary plaza space until development takes place in the future. A temporary plaza space would allow for easier, more flexible set up space for a farmer's market, potential music events with a stage, opportunities for public sculpture or art events, and a signature, focal point for other public gathering activities. The plaza space should also consider incorporating uses for all generations, including a portion for a playground, places for outdoor seating and community gardens. A temporary space could just consist of a blacktopped surface that's painted and designed with public art to make it visually attractive; a more permanent plaza should be carefully considered and planned through the



upcoming downtown planning process or other future placemaking planning process. The temporary plaza space could also be rotated to different locations in the downtown for different events or activities.

*A temporary plaza space could be developed on the Town Square development site, rotated to other sites in the downtown.*

*Vacant Lot/Parking Lot Treatments.* Off-street parking areas and vacant lots could be candidates for “targeted” placemaking fencing enhancements that allow public art to be incorporated within the new fencing as a screening mechanism between the parking or vacant lot and the sidewalk and the pedestrian realm. Fencing in these locations can help create a street wall appearance where it once existed, provided that new fencing is well-maintained. Vacant lots on corners could be reserved for public garden or art installations rather than being fenced.



*Parking and vacant lots are opportunities to provide better screening and landscape treatments through simple fencing or public art.*



- *Temporary Retail Space.* Retail space could be installed on vacant blocks in the downtown as another method for activating such spaces for pop-up businesses on a short-term basis. The temporary spaces could be designed with distinctive shapes and colors in order to enhance downtown’s visual appeal and sense of excitement.



*Temporary pop-up store spaces.*

### **Long-Term Urban Design Improvements**

Permanent improvements to downtown Bettendorf’s public spaces should be guided by a comprehensive streetscape plan that considers enhancements to downtown’s sidewalks, signage and wayfinding system, gateways and potential plaza and gathering spaces. The streetscape plan should also consider permanent placemaking initiatives that can add a dimension of visual appeal and prospect to downtown Bettendorf’s built environment. It should be noted that preparing a long-term streetscape and public space enhancement plan should be undertaken once downtown’s transportation system — whether State and/or Grants Streets can be converted to two-way traffic — and the available ROW for streetscape improvements is more firmly determined. In creating a long-term urban design program for the downtown, specific elements to consider include gateways, a more permanent plaza-gathering space and placemaking initiatives.

- *Gateways.* Urban design treatments for gateway entrances should be undertaken to enhance the physical character of the downtown and provide a stronger identity to demonstrate short-term change, generate interest and excitement, and define the downtown as a more cohesive, distinct place. Gateway options could include a “Downtown Bettendorf” sign or monument along State and Grant Streets east of the proposed new Interstate 74 ramps or perhaps a painted mural on the side façade of the first commercial building seen along State Street as one travels east.



*Gateways can take many forms including more traditional monuments to (left) to wall murals that provide visual interest (below)*



- **Permanent Public Art.** As with temporary public art installations, locations should be sought and determined for permanent art installations. Permanent public art can consist of murals, signage, sculpture, mosaics and interpretive signage and markers highlighting Bettendorf's history. As with temporary art, opportunities will exist to partner with local artists and residents to design, install and maintain the public art.



- **Permanent Plaza Space.** A permanent plaza space should be considered as part of the Town Square redevelopment, potentially for events and activities that can occur across the year. A permanent space should be designed and constructed according to a design plan that incorporates flexible set up space for a farmer's market, music events and festivals, public art, outdoor seating and garden and green space. A plaza design should respond to the overall urban design scheme proposed in the streetscape and public space master plan. Secondary plazas and gathering spaces could be considered for the riverfront area for larger festivals, gatherings or musical events.



*A plaza space on the Town Square development sites makes sense and should be designed with flexibility in its use.*

- **Wayfinding System.** A comprehensive wayfinding signage program is needed for both the community and for downtown Bettendorf to guide residents and visitors to important locations and destinations. Wayfinding signage should be designed in such a way promote a specific Bettendorf brand identity

## Transportation Planning

Consideration should be given by downtown Bettendorf stakeholders to examine the possibility of converting State and Grants Street from one-way to two-way travel. The primary reason for seeking the conversion is to help facilitate the economic well-being of the downtown district, which will function better in a two-way system that slows traffic, enhances the pedestrian environment, and increases

direct access to downtown destinations, making the downtown more navigable. Currently, State and Grant Streets experience high traffic speeds with low traffic volumes, non-existent pedestrian activity and “dead” blocks — meaning from an access standpoint, they require circuitous routing to arrive at a destination located in that block.

Converting the current street system will require a traffic engineering study, underwritten through Iowa DOT or the City; perhaps the Bi-State Regional Commission or other entity could participate in the study. The engineering study will determine the feasibility and associated costs for conversion, including any need to secure additional right-of-way along State or Grant Street. If additional right-of-way is needed, future plans for streetscaping and public space enhancements will need to be adjusted to take into account new sidewalks or parkway dimensions. If two-way traffic is not feasible for either State or Grants Streets, then traffic-calming measures should then be explored as possible solutions to slowing traffic and making the downtown more walkable. During the assessment visit, downtown stakeholders consistently stated that making downtown Bettendorf more safe and comfortable for pedestrians should be a key downtown revitalization goal. Two-way traffic can help achieve that.

### **Downtown Planning and Land Use**

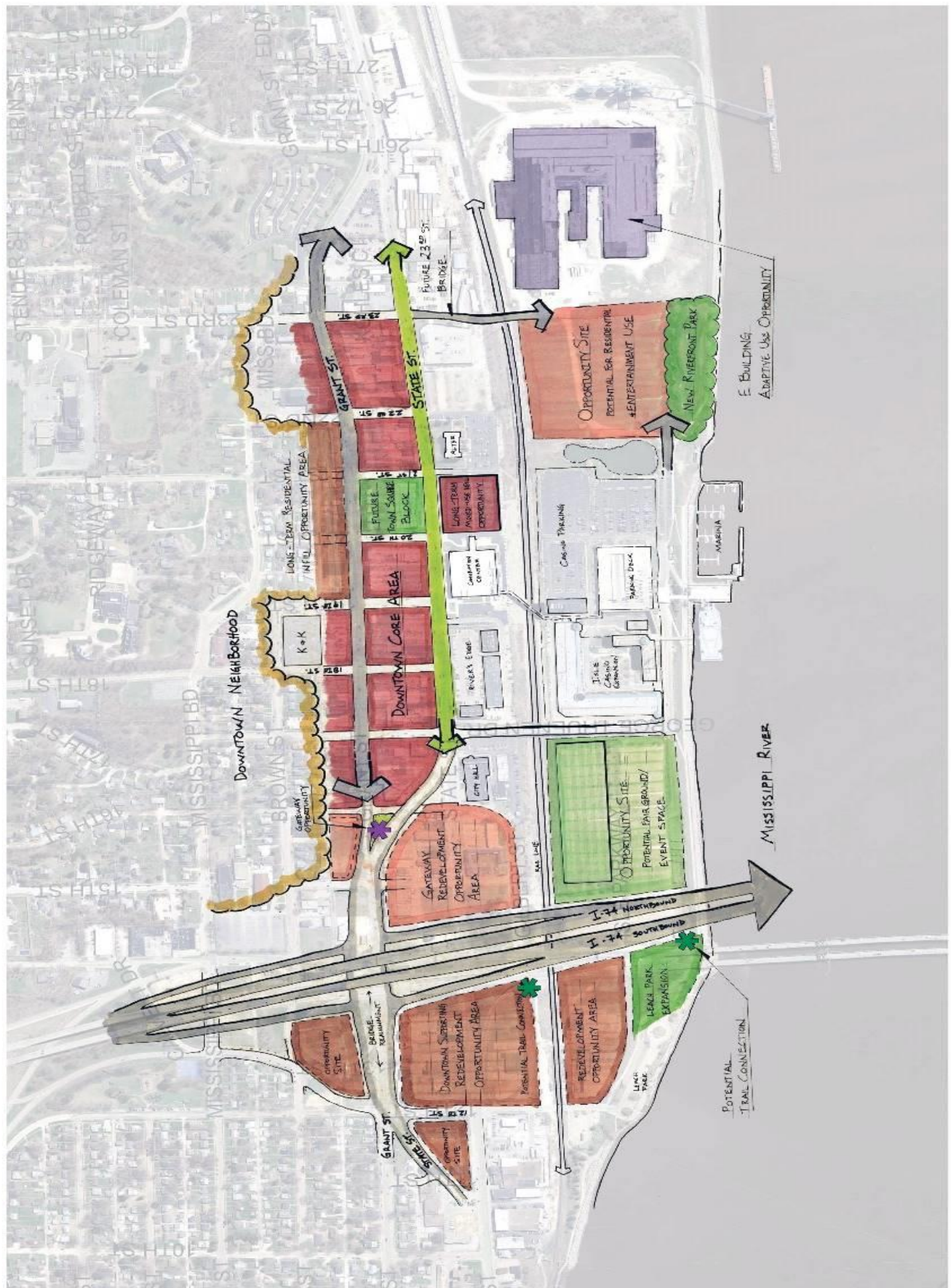
Bettendorf’s new Comprehensive Plan provides a compelling land use framework for downtown’s long-term redevelopment and, as noted previously, a downtown master plan that builds on this framework while considering the new alignments for the new Interstate 74 Bridge and State and Grant Street alignments is set to be prepared in the coming year. The new downtown plan should fine-tune the land use framework presented in the Comprehensive Plan by addressing specific market opportunities and constraints for new downtown development. In other words, the plan should include a more complete market analysis component to better understand the potential for the types of commercial, mixed use and residential development opportunities that could be accommodated in the downtown district. Interviews with real estate brokers during the assessment visit revealed that the regional Quad Cities commercial market is soft although rental residential rates remain strong. This may signal that new downtown housing development may be more feasible in the short term; new mixed use development is not typical development product found in the Quad Cities and may take longer to come to fruition. A more thorough downtown market study may help Bettendorf gain a more thorough understanding of potential development phasing for the downtown.

Going forward, the following are suggestions and recommendations for refining the downtown land use strategy as presented in the Bettendorf Comprehensive Plan (reference sketch map below).

- *Compact Downtown District.* During the assessment visit, community stakeholders were asked to define the actual boundaries of the downtown with many suggesting that it extends from “point” to “point” — typically from 6<sup>th</sup> Street on the west to 26<sup>th</sup> Street on the east. However, with the pending realignment of State Street northwestward to the new ramps and the closure of Gilbert Street due to the placement of an Interstate 74 embankment, will, by and large, separate the downtown into two segments, thus changing the geographical perception that downtown exists “point” to “point.” Although some commercial activities exist west of the Interstate 74, downtown Bettendorf as a commercial/mixed use center will largely exist east of the bridge where the majority of development opportunity sites are located. Therefore, the City should concentrate and focus its development and revitalization efforts in this area where a more compact downtown district can be achieved.

- *Downtown Support District.* The land west of the Interstate currently contains a mix of commercial and light industrial uses with residential becoming the more dominant land use as one travels west and north. Portions of this area adjacent to the Interstate could remain commercial/industrial although opportunities should be sought over time to add new residential wherever feasible in order to support new commercial and mixed use development in the downtown core east of the Interstate. Residential development would be especially attractive this area given proximity not only to downtown but also the waterfront, Leach Park and bike trails. Over the long-term, this area could be become predominately residential in land use and serve as the more appropriate land use character zone adjacent to the downtown. New residential development could take the form of new townhomes or rental apartments. Some of the light industrial uses could be transitioned to other more suitable industrial areas in Bettendorf.
- *Downtown Core.* Emphasis should be placed on both building rehabilitation and new infill development that is urban and pedestrian oriented in design character. Auto-oriented, strip mall development should be discouraged along State Street where pedestrian activity is highly desired and needed. The Comprehensive Plan's suggestion to re-orient pedestrian activity to the downtown core's alleys should be reconsidered if streetscape and other urban design improvements are desired for State and Grant Streets, especially if two-way traffic can be implemented along these streets.
- *Downtown Core Opportunity Sites.* The Comprehensive Plan suggests different opportunity development sites – several as “gateway” developments into the downtown from the west and the Town Square block located to the northeast of the Convention Center. These sites should be subject to additional study, perhaps with development pro-formas that can be included as part of request for proposals or circulated to the development community to spur developer interest. If the City desires to gain control of these sites, a fee-developer arrangement could also be pursued. In addition to these sites, housing development could perhaps be considered for land directly west of the E Building near the waterfront; housing in this location would aim to support retail and commercial activity in the downtown core. This may be a more suitable site for new housing than the expansive parking lot on the waterfront to the west which was suggested in the Comprehensive Plan; this site could be converted to a green or park area given its adjacency to Leach Park or a potential event/festival space that could incorporate the use of the nearby open air sheds.
- *E Building.* Although not identified in the Comprehensive Plan as a development opportunity site, the E Building on the eastern edge of downtown near the waterfront was mentioned consistently by downtown stakeholders during the assessment visit as a potential catalytic adaptive use project. The E Building's large footprint presents challenges for how it could be adaptively used; however, according to several stakeholders, the building would be eligible for both the Federal and State of Iowa historic preservation tax credits, which would be substantial incentives for its rehabilitation. To better understand the building's adaptive use potential and projected rehabilitation costs, a feasibility study should be undertaken, perhaps underwritten jointly between the building owners and the City of Bettendorf. The feasibility study should provide a thorough pro-forma of rehabilitation costs.





**Observations:**

In addition to functioning as the commercial business district, downtowns traditionally served as the community's social center. Interviewees shared many recollections when kids and adults alike shopped and played in downtown Bettendorf. Other than the activities going on at the Isle, there is very little reason for anyone to come to downtown Bettendorf to socialize.

Reestablishment of the central business district as a social center through the staging of promotional events is an essential ingredient to every community's downtown development success. This can be done through highlighting cultural traditions, celebrating architecture and history, encouraging local businesses to market cooperatively, offering coordinated specials and sales, and hosting special events aimed at changing perceptions of the district and communicating to residents, investors, businesses, and property-owners that this place is special.

To communicate your commercial district's unique characteristics and bring new life to downtown Bettendorf, it is vital that you program the district with a calendar of activities.

The Bettendorf Business Network group was on the right track last year with the four events that were planned and executed with the help of a professional Event Planner. Without the grant funding to employ staff, will these activities continue? Moreover, are you hosting the right promotions for Bettendorf?

**Recommendations:****Spend time assessment and planning.**

- *Find out whether there is a market* (i.e. audience) for your existing and intended promotions. Use ESRI demographic information <attached> to learn about your community. Be aware of Bettendorf's assets - including physical attributes, community heritage and institutions – when making decisions as to what activities should be included on your event calendar. (0 – 6 months)
- *Bring a group together* to brainstorm ideas that could be included on downtown Bettendorf's 2016 calendar of events. Before adding any new events, use the assessment tool <Keeper/Deleter attached> to evaluate the success of the events that took place last year. (0 – 6 months)
- *Create committees with volunteer chairs for each event* to function efficiently and share the work without the help of paid staff. Be respectful of the resources (people, time and money) it takes to produce events. They can be labor intensive and take months to plan and implement. (ongoing)
- *Create a "Bus Book"* (i.e. everything you need to know about the event in case the organizer is hit by a bus) for each of your events. The success or failure of an event is in the organization and the precision of details. Write down the major steps and all of the tasks involved. Leave out no detail, no matter how small. <Action Plan samples attached> (ongoing)





## Plan and implement at least one or two events to bring people to downtown Bettendorf.

There are generally three types of promotions: special events or festivals that provide entertainment with community-wide (and beyond) impact to increase the number of people who come to downtown; retail/business promotions that ring cash registers; and image activities that accentuate the positive things about downtown or perhaps dispel an unjust negative perception. While the event types have a different purpose, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Following are a number of special event ideas that could work in downtown Bettendorf. By no means should you try to develop them all. Quality is much more important than quantity. (0 – 18 months)

- *Celebrate your history and culture.* Finding the perfect idea for that “Signature Event” (for which the community is known) is a constant point of discussion for communities across the country. Many towns in Iowa have experienced enormous success with events that celebrate their history and culture:

- |                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| - Cedar Rapids: Houby Days            | - Pella: Tulip Time       |
| - Mt. Pleasant: Old Threshers Reunion | - Le Mars: Ice Cream Days |
| - Cedar Falls: Sturgis Falls Days     | - Manning: Weinachfest    |
| - Colfax: Mineral Springs Days        | - Conrad: Black Dirt Days |

With Bettendorf’s history of growing the downtown where onion fields once existed, an Onion Festival would appear to be a natural theme for a creative new celebration. Think about hosting it on June 22 (National Onion Rings Day) with giveaways and prizes, family activities and crafts. Include a Chef’s Competition with all recipes required to include onions; “Funion games” for kids; and perhaps a costumed character onion mascot leading a parade or hide a festival icon (a cartoon onion?) in windows of downtown businesses.



- *Consider your existing assets and institutions.* With downtown Bettendorf’s critical mass of home improvement businesses, a Home Improvement and Remodeling Expo to focus on that niche would work very well. The event could be held indoors at the Convention Center in early spring, when people are looking for DIY ideas and there is less competition from other warm weather activities. Include celebrity appearances and presentations by special guests from HGTV shows like Two Chicks and a Hammer. Invite downtown Bettendorf businesses ONLY to provide product displays, exhibits and demonstrations. Encourage them to distribute coupons for in store specials. Include businesses with less obvious ties to the home improvement sector, like your credit union.





Another obvious choice would be a Car Show in partnership with Veit's Vets. Members of car clubs are always anxious to show off their vehicles. Incorporate the traditional elements of a special event: food, music and free stuff. Provide dash plaques to the first 50 entries in the show. Your one-way pairs of streets could be an asset for a downtown "cruise"! Invite vendors to set up pop up drive in restaurants for the day. Include a competition with judging by participants, and award trophies in multiple categories. Live music by "oldies bands" work well for this type of event.



Here's a fun idea! Collaborate with the 514-room hotel in downtown Bettendorf to hold an event featuring bed races. Encourage corporations, bars, restaurants and groups/clubs to compete to race real beds mounted on wheels. Encourage spectators to vote for the most zany decorated bed, or wild and wackiest team costumes. Some communities who have hosted this type of event have made this a "race for the cause" with proceeds benefitting a nonprofit organization. Prizes for the racers could be an overnight stay at the hotel.

Holidays are always a great opportunity for a special event. In the past, you have hosted Christmas activities in your central business district. You can also build a new event around a more obscure holiday. Check out Chase's Calendar of Events to find an excuse for a celebration on any of the 365 days of the year! <http://www.mhprofessional.com/templates/chases/upcoming-events.php>

A construction-themed event would help put a positive spin on the bridge project and remind Quad City residents and visitors that downtown Bettendorf is "open for business." A promotion that could be easily staged is a "Touch a Truck" event, with trucks, construction equipment and emergency vehicles for kids to sit in, crawl on and "drive." Create an obstacle course in a vacant lot and encourage kids to race "big wheels". Distribute hard hats and take plenty of photos. Work with businesses to coordinate and cross-promote in-store "construction specials."



- *Consider elements that could be added to existing festivals and events.* Small weekly events like recipe tastings, a pie-eating contest featuring local celebrities, and activities for kids like a pumpkin seed-spitting contest would be great additions to your weekly Farmers Market. Investigate the headliner acts booked at the Isle and Convention Center to see what could be developed. The Frankenstein's Fortune slot tournament in October would have been an opportunity for a Frankenstein lookalike contest or in-store scary specials.



## Help ring the cash registers for businesses in the district with at least one new retail event.

Although many of the special event suggestions listed above include elements where businesses could participate, existing businesses that have not been displaced to other areas in the community need all the help that they can get. The district lacks the number of pedestrian oriented businesses to generate “people traffic” and vibrancy on a steady basis, but there are a number of ideas that could work in downtown Bettendorf. Retailers should be involved in the planning and implementation of retail/business promotions designed to support local businesses. (0 – 6 months)

- *Design and distribute a flier with questions* that could be answered by stopping into participating businesses like “What’s the special today at Purgatory’s Pub?” or “How many kinds of hammers do they sell at K&K True Value Hardware?” Completed forms are entered into a drawing for prizes.
- *If you decide to maintain your summer sidewalk sale*, here are a few ideas to add a new twist to the clearance event:
  - Invite non-retail businesses to participate
  - Boom box playing summer music (Bob Marley, Beach Boys)
  - Some type of visual attraction (bubble machine, balloons with business logos)
  - Activities for children (paint a giant mural mounted on plywood, or make ice cream using a coffee can rolled back and forth  
<http://homecookingmemories.com/homemade-ice-cream-in-a-can-fun-for-kids>)
  - Kids could set up their own tables and sell old/used toys
  - How about Sidewalk Poker Run? When a customer makes a purchase, they receive a playing card with their receipt. Whoever turns in the best hand wins a prize.
- *Shop Small Saturday has become a national phenomenon.* Many communities take advantage of this successful campaign to encourage people to shop at the locally owned small businesses in downtown. Sign up at this link to be a neighborhood champion and receive lots of free “stuff” including tote bags, welcome mats, etc. Businesses do not need to accept American Express credit cards to take advantage of free advertising. <https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/shop-small>



## Embrace tourism

The assessment team thought it was amazing to spot license plates from 13 states in the hotel parking lot. It is obvious that the Isle plays a vital role as one of downtown Bettendorf’s leading industries and a primary revenue driver.

A recent study by the Iowa Gaming Association suggested that about 50 percent to 60 percent of Iowa's casino guests are from out-of-state, mostly from surrounding states like Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska. According to the Iowa Tourism office, these visitors spend an average of \$724 per trip.



While these nonresident tourists come to Bettendorf to try their luck at the gaming tables, you shouldn't miss the opportunity to brainstorm with the management team at the Isle to create events for these out of town visitors, find ways to extend their stay, and spend their winnings in downtown!

### **Start thinking about regular daily programming in the gathering space proposed in the Master Plan**

Programming of a civic square that is to be an actively used resource for the community does not happen simply by providing an open space in the center of the city. The development of a plaza requires four key ingredients: community ideas, public space design that supports a program, a management group in charge of the square and active public uses in adjacent buildings. Who will be responsible for management of the public space so that it will become a gathering place for future generations? Now is the time to be making those decisions.



### **Keep your electronic communication up to date**

A quick look of downtown Bettendorf's website reveals "upcoming event" information about activities that happened in July and August. This is a quick fix. Keep your website up-to-date or take it down.

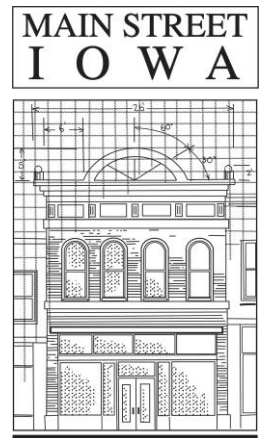
## **FOCUS AREA #4: CREATE A STRUCTURE TO FOCUS ON DOWNTOWN BETTENDORF**

### **Observations:**

Lot of discussion in Bettendorf concerning the potential designation as a Main Street Iowa community.

Main Street Iowa is a signature program of Iowa Economic Development Authority's Iowa Downtown Resource Center. The program assists designated communities, helping them capitalize on the unique identity, assets and character of their historic commercial district.

There are currently 53 designated Main Street communities in Iowa. The local programs utilize a proven strategy based on historic preservation that has proven to be successful in cities and towns of all sizes.



Ideally, the local Main Street organization is a strong, independent nonprofit organization with a sole focus on downtown revitalization. A public/private partnership is formed with the local government to contribute both financially and philosophically to support this effort. Communities utilizing the Main Street Approach® enter into a contractual agreement with the Iowa Economic Development Authority. Main Street cities between 5,000 and 50,000 in population agree to have an annual operating budget for the program of no less than \$60,000, maintain an office and hire paid staff for a minimum of 40 hours per week. Local Main Street programs also establish committees that correspond to the four points of the Main Street Approach — Organization, Design, Promotion and Economic Restructuring.



Main Street Iowa is planning for the next formal application cycle in 2017, with designation of new Main Street communities in August. This will give you two years to learn about the program and its processes, as well as investigate other options that may be a better fit: Downtown Merchants Association, Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Corporation or City program.

Use this time to ask the hard questions:

- How does downtown revitalization fit into the community's overall development plan?
- Why is downtown important to the community?
- Who does/should support revitalization efforts & why?
- How does it fit with other development groups?
- How do you find the necessary resources for one more cause (people & money)?
- How will it benefit our businesses?
- Why should we do Main Street?

### **Recommendations:**

Should the community of Bettendorf decide to pursue designation as a Main Street Iowa community, the following steps are offered as a guideline:

#### **Program investigation**

- *Call a town meeting to inform citizens about the program.* Participants should include: downtown building and business owners, chamber, representatives from city and county government, historic society, betterment committees, CLG's, economic development groups, bankers, hospital, schools, industry, media, seniors, youth, churches, residents, etc.

Invite a representative from a Main Street community to speak and inform the group about their local program. Good attendance would be considered to be between 50 and 100 people. This should help you reach consensus on whether or not to continue program investigation.

- *Organize a task force who will commit to doing a thorough investigation of the program.* Typically, this team should visit three or four Main Street communities of similar size. Suggestions would include Cedar Falls (pop. 39,260), Dubuque (pop. 57,637), and West Des Moines (pop. 56,609). The contacts for these communities are listed in the attachment.
- *Hold a second meeting* inviting all who attended the first meeting, to hear the results of the task force's findings. Build consensus on whether or not to proceed to the application stage. Main Street Iowa could be invited to speak at this meeting. Attendance of 50 to 100 is expected.

#### **Commitment**

Consensus has been reached. The decision to proceed should be supported by your local government(s), development groups, downtown building and business owners, industry, service organizations, etc. They should realize that their support must be on both a financial and philosophical level. It must be understood that Main Street is not a quick fix, but a long-term development program.

## Application

When a new application cycle is held, community representatives who attend the application workshop will receive an electronic version of the application. Attendance at the application workshop is a requirement for a community to be eligible to apply.

## Designation

Becoming a designated Main Street Iowa community is no easy task. Communities must demonstrate support from local organizations, businesses, and lawmakers; funding and in-kind support must be secured and documented; strategic plans outlining short- and long-term goals must be in place. Most importantly, community officials, business owners, and volunteers must agree to work together with the common goals of 1) preserving Iowa's historic buildings and unique commercial business districts, and 2) improving the local economy by adopting and following the Main Street Four Point Approach® to historic commercial district revitalization.

## CLOSING

In closing, thoughts become words – words become actions – actions become habits – habits become character – character is EVERYTHING! The character of Downtown Bettendorf deserves your utmost attention. Hopefully this report will be used to develop structure/committees/action to accomplish priorities. There is no better time to start than today!

### REMEMBER:

People want to see change, they just don't know .....**"HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN"**.

You told us you were ready for change. You now have the opportunity to... **"MAKE IT HAPPEN"**.

Take ownership and responsibility and ....**"GO"**!

## CONTACT INFORMATION AND LINKS

**Certified Local Governments**, State Historic Society of Iowa .....515.281.6826  
**Iowa Downtown Resource Center**, IEDA, Des Moines, Iowa.....515.725.3058  
**Community Main Street (Carol Lilly)**, Cedar Falls, Iowa .....319.277.0213  
**Dubuque Main Street (Dan Lo Bianco)**, Dubuque, Iowa .....563.588.4400  
**Historic Valley Junction Foundation (Jim Miller)**, West Des Moines, Iowa .....515.222.3642

### National and State Preservation Services and Programs:

Main Street Iowa ..... [www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/MainStreetIowa](http://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/MainStreetIowa)  
National Trust for Historic Preservation ..... [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)  
National Main Street Center. .... [www.preservationnation.org/main-street](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street)  
National Park Service Preservation Briefs..... [www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm](http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm)  
State Historic Preservation Office ..... [www.iowahistory.org](http://www.iowahistory.org)

### FOCUS AREA #1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Understanding ESRI
- ESRI LifeStyle Groups Bettendorf
- Executive Summary
- Housing Profile
- Market Profile
- Retail Market Place
- Site Map
- Tapestry Segmentation Area Profile
- Business Visitation Template
- 2015 First Impressions Guide

### FOCUS AREA #3 EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS

- Action Plans
- ESRI Profiles (see above)
- Keepers/Deleters