



## MAIN STREET IOWA AWARDS

Nearly 600 individuals from across the state attended the 33rd annual Main Street Awards ceremony held March 8 at Scottish Rite Consistory in Des Moines. During the celebration, Governor Kim Reynolds presented awards to 21 projects and activities occurring in local Main Street communities. Seven communities were recognized for reaching significant benchmarks based on private dollar investments made in the purchase and revitalization of downtown properties, and volunteers from each of the 53 designated Main Street communities were honored with Leadership Award certificates.

**Dubuque was awarded the 2019 Signature Award for its Steeple Square project.** The project includes almost the entire square block of the St. Mary's campus, with restoration of the massive church as the focal point. Standing at 225 feet, the Gothic-style building is the tallest church in the Dubuque area, an important

piece of architectural and cultural history. Construction and project manager Gronen Restoration repaired masonry and stained-glass windows; and Durable Restoration handled the steeple's metal roofing restoration. The steeple required more than 25,000 pounds of copper to create hundreds of flat-lock panels and dozens of decorative pieces. Friends of Saint Mary's spearheaded the restoration of the \$2.2 million steeple, which is only one part of an overall \$15 million project. The unique venue is now used for nonprofit and neighborhood gatherings, weddings and conferences.

**Primrose Restaurant in Corning took home the award for the Superior Interior Rehabilitation.** Jill Fulton and Joel Mahr dreamed of starting their own business, and in the fall of 2017 purchased a downtown building that had housed everything from a funeral parlor to a furniture store.

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*Dubuque Steeple Square project*

## MAIN STREET IOWA AWARDS, CONTINUED

Using mostly local contractors and businesses, they demolished the main floor to create an open concept restaurant space. Plaster side walls were patched and repainted, the original ceiling tiles repainted, and layers of linoleum and carpet covering removed. The bar was handmade for the space, incorporating refurbished wood and ceiling tin. The finished project is a beautiful example of a modern build that respects the historic mass and character of the building. Opened in May 2018, The Primrose is a beloved farm-to-table experience that placed Corning on the map as a dining destination.

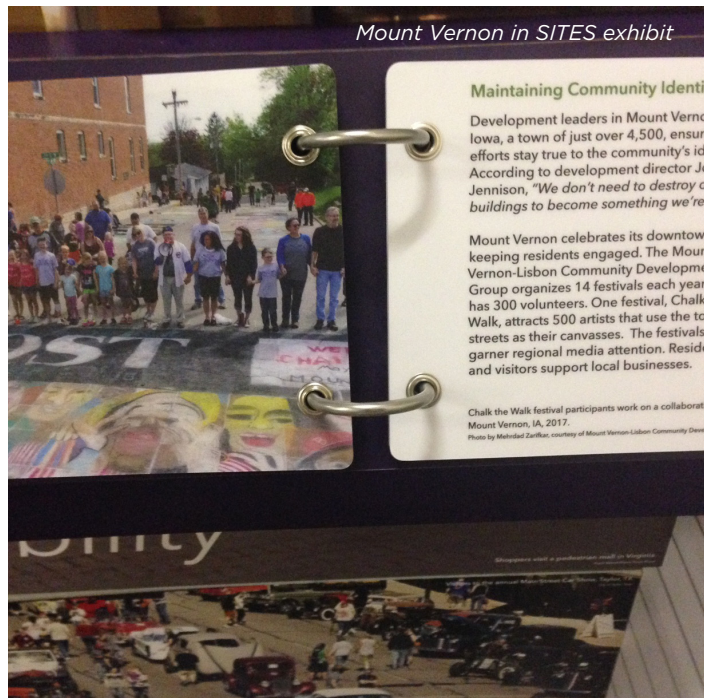


Primrose Restaurant in Corning

**The community of Mount Vernon was named the Spirit of Main Street Award winner.** The recipients were honored for their skill of leveraging local relationships, strong preservation ethic and culture of volunteerism; as well as for advocating, supporting and spearheading the efforts to bring Smithsonian’s exhibition of “Hometown Teams: How Sports Changed America” to Iowa. The spirit of Main Street bubbles up in Mount Vernon to support local businesses and connect a community of people. Their vision inspires the Main Street network to think big.

For a full list of the awards presented during the ceremony, visit

[iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/newsDetail/6647](http://iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/newsDetail/6647)



Mount Vernon in SITES exhibit

## CONTACTS

For more information about the Iowa Downtown Resource Center and the services offered, contact Jim Engle, 515.348.6180 or [james.engle@iowaeda.com](mailto:james.engle@iowaeda.com).

To find out more about the Main Street Iowa program, contact Michael Wagler, 515.348.6184 or [michael.wagler@iowaeda.com](mailto:michael.wagler@iowaeda.com).

To contribute articles and photos to the “Downtown Resource”, contact Darlene Strachan, 515.348.6182 or [darlene.strachan@iowaeda.com](mailto:darlene.strachan@iowaeda.com).

## NATIONAL MAIN STREET NOW CONFERENCE

Nearly 50 Iowans traveled to Seattle the last week of March to attend the National Main Street Now Conference. Convened annually, the event showcases implementable best practices, time-tested solutions and innovative ideas from a national network of practitioners with an expertise in creating economic and social prosperity in downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. Iowa was well represented with eleven representatives presenting educational sessions during the conference. Jim Miller, Carol Lilly, Deb Sprecker and Dan LoBianco presented “GAMSA: Now and Then and In Between”; Michael Wagler

and Jim Thompson shared “Housing Matters for your Community,

Downtown and Historic Preservation,” as well as “How to Prevent Development... On Purpose or By Mistake”; Terry Poe Buschkamp and Joe Jennison presented “The Smithsonian Comes to Town!”; Sarah Grunewaldt and Abby Huff presented “Advocacy Superheroes: Creating Change for Your Main Street”; and Robin Bostrom presented “Exit Stage Right: Helping Your Businesses Develop a Succession Strategy.”



## DOWNTOWN DIFFERENCE MAKER

Katie Mason grew up on a farm west of Bayard and graduated from Coon Rapids-Bayard in 1999. After graduating from Simpson College with degrees in marketing and communications, she and her husband, Ben, lived in Des Moines, St. Louis, Missouri, and Garner where Katie held various marketing/public relations positions before moving back to Coon Rapids in May 2013. She was employed at the Coon Rapids Enterprise for five years before taking the newly created position of community coordinator in June 2018.

Moving back to Iowa once they had children was an easy decision. What attracted them to Coon Rapids – and keeps them there – is the quality of life they were seeking. Coon Rapids is a progressive rural community that’s bursting with recreational activities. The number of outdoor opportunities packed into this community of 1,300 people is amazing. For a small community, the business district provides all the necessities – medical clinic, pharmacy, chiropractor, grocery store, hardware store, restaurants and more.

In the last few decades, Coon Rapids made great strides in increasing quality of life aspects of the community, but like many rural communities they have empty buildings on Main Street. That is why her current focus and biggest passion is downtown

revitalization within Coon Rapids’ Main Street. Katie said, “Prior to this job, I did not know about any of the programs offered through the IEDA, DOT, DNR, Iowa Arts Council, etc., and I must say, Iowans are so fortunate to have access to the resources provided by these organizations and others. As a rural community, we are not deep in funding nor human assets, so to have access to some of these programs is crucial to our success.”



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## DOWNTOWN DIFFERENCE MAKER, CONTINUED

Coon Rapids saw significant development between early 2001 and 2011 but went through a few years of stagnant growth. A community vision program in 2017 created new momentum and led to the understanding that downtown revitalization is the next step to the community's success. They haven't had any visible, drastic physical changes yet, but ask Katie a year from now, and she will be able to offer up several changes! The biggest recent success is the number of people engaged in revitalization efforts. The number includes those who participated in the Iowa Living Roadways Program, which yielded four concepts - three of which focus on the downtown retail area and connecting corridors; It includes more than a dozen champions working on a Main Street Iowa application as you read this article. Coon Rapids also embarked on a three-month downtown revitalization campaign where they hosted 15 public meetings to discuss revitalization plans. This helped lay the foundation for several projects and energized a large portion of the community.

Coon Rapids Main Street plans to be the gathering spot for residents and visitors who seek quality shopping experiences and enjoy social interaction/activities for both families and adults. It will be a bicycle friendly area catering to the guests of Whiterock Conservancy who enjoy the recreation provided by the conservancy and the City of Coon Rapids. To accomplish this, city leaders will focus on both physical and social changes to the downtown area. Main Street Coon Rapids will be a clean and attractive area, which will require building façade rehabilitation, streetscaping, infrastructure improvements, gathering plaza development, designated bicycle amenities and empty building renovations. Socially, they will work to strengthen existing businesses, create and promote activity/events in the downtown area, recruit new businesses and build a strong base of community volunteers to collaborate and implement visioning plans.

To learn more about downtown Coon Rapids, contact Katie Mason at [growCoonRapids@gmail.com](mailto:growCoonRapids@gmail.com) or 712.999.4769. The city's website is [www.coonrapidsiowa.com](http://www.coonrapidsiowa.com).

## DOWNTOWN GEM

### *BRICKER-PRICE BLOCK: SPARKING A VIBRANT SPIRIT INTO DOWNTOWN EARLHAM AND MADISON COUNTY*

Restored inside and out, the historic Bricker-Price Block serves as the cornerstone for renewed community life in Earlham and Madison County, extending a welcome to guests from central Iowa and beyond. On the ground floor, The Hare & the Hound Restaurant is the area's newest destination dining spot. Upstairs, the Social Club with classic arched windows, tin ceilings and refinished wood floors, is a beautiful setting for parties, receptions, weddings, dinners and corporate meetings. The Hadley

Family Social Club also presents a wide variety of entertainment and educational opportunities including live music concerts, trivia competitions, craft fairs and art exhibits. Culinary classes showcasing Iowa's greatest chefs, gourmet dinners, and cooking demonstrations round out the offerings in the Prairie Meadows Culinary Kitchen.



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## DOWNTOWN GEM, CONTINUED

### *HISTORY*

Just thirty years after Earlham was originally platted, with the central business district growing, C. D. Bricker and Walter Price began construction of the Bricker-Price Block. Contractor J.E. Walton built the structure with a unified façade, matching cast-iron storefronts and a shared central staircase. A skilled mason created the exterior Roman arches, elaborate cornice and geometric designs.

A year after opening, fire struck Earlham's central business district. The town's hand-pump fire engine was overpowered by the flames until they reached the new Bricker-Price Block. The building's brick-and-mortar construction, resistant to burning, slowed the fire enough for the townspeople to subdue it. Though heavily damaged in 1901, it survived.

Over the next century, the Bricker-Price Block was home to many commercial endeavors and served as professional offices, a grocery store and a pharmacy. For a time, it functioned as a unique, downtown residence including a personal elevator. Unfortunately, in 2015, a strong storm lifted the roof and caused catastrophic water damage, leaving the building unoccupied and falling into disrepair.

Slowly a grassroots movement began, and the people of Earlham orchestrated a rehabilitation of the Bricker-Price Block. Through these efforts, it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a building worthy of preservation. In 2018, more than a century after its doors first opened, the Bricker-Price Block once again welcomed the community inside, this time as a social center reflecting the vibrant spirit of Earlham's people.



# RAGBRAI 2019 OVERNIGHT STOPS INCLUDE THREE MAIN STREET IOWA COMMUNITIES

Before you know it, the temperatures will be on the rise, and it will be time for the infamous 2019 RAGBRAI, Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa. Three of Iowa's Main Street communities will be overnight towns: Burlington, Centerville and Keokuk. Of course, every town will showcase the best of foods, entertainment and its unique personalities. Main Street Iowa encourages all Iowans to join in on the RAGBRAI festivities in each of these communities and to explore their dynamic downtowns.

Wednesday, July 24 RAGBRAI goes will be in Centerville, whose claim to fame is being home to "The World's Largest City Square". Centerville, a town rich in history going back to the coal mining and railroad days, has been named one of the top five outdoor towns in America by Outdoor Life magazine. With nearly 50 percent of the downtown including retail stores, restaurants and drinking establishments, visitors are sure to find downtown Centerville the place to eat, shop and play. To find out more, go to [www.ragbrai.com/tag/centerville/](http://www.ragbrai.com/tag/centerville/)



Friday, July 26 RAGBRAI will be in the Main Street community of Burlington. This will be the sixth time Burlington has hosted RAGBRAI. As attendees celebrate "Rally to the Alley" in Burlington, visitors must make time to check out Snake Alley, one of the crookedest streets in the world. This famous alley, located in downtown Burlington, was built in 1894 and is composed of limestone and blue clay bricks. For the latest of information, go to [www.burlingtonragbrai.com](http://www.burlingtonragbrai.com)



On Saturday, July 27, riders will find themselves in Keokuk, the southernmost city in Iowa. Keokuk hasn't entertained hungry and thirsty riders for decades, with the last time being 27 years ago in 1992. While in Keokuk, visitors and cyclists will be amazed. From the houses on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River and the beautiful, historic homes along Grand Avenue to viewing the 19 properties listed on the National Register and enjoying Keokuk's Cultural and Entertainment District, Keokuk invites visitors and cyclists to join in the "Best Dam Dip, on the Mississipp," as Keokuk is the official site for the final dipping. Log into [www.keokukragbrai.com](http://www.keokukragbrai.com) for complete details.



# DOWNTOWN FORUMS



## 2019 DOWNTOWN FORUMS

The Iowa Downtown Resource Center will offer several downtown forums in July that focus on the characteristics of a successful downtown.

The day will include a self-assessment tool and discussion topics in five major areas - characteristics that contribute to the success of a downtown. There will also be an overview of programs and grant opportunities for downtowns.

Attendees will have an opportunity to share experiences relating to the downtown forum discussion and communicate with other community leaders the exciting activities occurring in their commercial districts.

[CLICK HERE](#) to register for a location near you. Downtown Forums are FREE to attend, but registration is required.

- **Sigourney — Tuesday, July 16**  
City Hall, 100 N Main St
- **Audubon — Wednesday, July 17**  
Library Cultural Center, 401 N Park Pl
- **Parkersburg — Tuesday, July 23**  
Parkersburg Civic Center (basement),  
502 3rd St (north entrance)
- **Cherokee — Wednesday, July 24**  
The Gathering Place, 207 W Main St

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWN

- 9:00 AM Coffee and Networking
- 9:35 Introductions  
Get to Know Your Downtowns
- 10:00 Assessing Your Downtown
- 10:45 Resources: Learn about Programs and Grant Opportunities for Your Downtown
- 11:45 Downtown Tour & Lunch on your own (groups encouraged)
- 1:15 PM Discussion Topic: Cool Environment
- 1:45 Discussion Topic: The Place to Go!
- 2:15 Break
- 2:30 Discussion Topic: Well-Maintained Historic Buildings
- 3:00 Discussion Topic: A Thriving and Diverse Business Community
- 3:30 Discussion Topic: People Live Downtown
- 4:00 Adjourn

The Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) [Downtown Resource Center](#) assists communities around the state in revitalizing downtowns and commercial districts. Be sure to register for the [Iowa Downtown Resource](#), the state's downtown revitalization newsletter.

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN — DOWNTOWN AT NIGHT

I work in communities that have gone through extensive vision planning exercises to label or project downtown as a “great place to live, work and play,” or “an exciting business district to meet all your needs,” or some similar phrase. But, drive to those downtowns during nighttime hours, and you'll often find a very, dark street with little pedestrian traffic...sometimes even in a downtown with a theater, three restaurants and a bar or two. We aren't enticed to drive thru that downtown, let alone get out of the car. I contend that one of the characteristics of a vibrant, successful downtown is the existence of a nighttime economy. A thriving downtown during evening hours can improve life quality of residents, attract visitors and brand the district as a great place to be.

Our communities and downtowns are different. For some of our smaller communities, it may be a stretch to expect a change in this area; but, there are certainly small tasks that can be completed to add life to the downtown so locals avoid the word “dead” to describe it...regardless of the time of day. And, larger communities can certainly strategize in specific focus areas to bring life to the downtown at night. If this is a community's vision and already has businesses that stay open into the evening, the development of an atmosphere they can capitalize on is crucial. If this is the vision, but no businesses with evening hours exist, the strategy will certainly involve influencing that business mix.

So, back to that vision of “creating a great place to live, work and play,” whose job is it to increase the vitality of downtown in the evening? The responsibility is spread across the board.



The businesses can be involved by keeping window displays great and well lit into the evening. Any downtown can do this. Also, offer evening hours. Retail has changed. Can people that work during the day shop in your stores? Extend hours or open one night a week. Develop cross promotions with theatres and restaurants.

Your downtown development organization, Main Street program or chamber of commerce can be involved by taking a close look at the existing business mix. What kinds of businesses can be targeted to improve the nighttime experience? Don't be afraid to hold more evening events to establish downtown as a good place to go at night. Be creative! Promotional series in the evening provide residents something to look forward to attending. And, promote downtown as a good place for a healthy walk or a place to walk the dog. Promote the downtown restaurant experience.

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN — DOWNTOWN AT NIGHT, CONTINUED

And, the city can be involved by providing friendly downtown police presence at night (perhaps a bike patrol) to promote a feeling of safety. A well-lit downtown with people walking almost always creates a safer feeling for users of the downtown. Lighting. This is an absolute must. Don't take it for granted. Take a close look at the downtown street lighting and how it is perceived by consumers. Is Main Street a dark street no one wants to enter or are shoppers, walkers, etc. drawn to the bright downtown like moths to a light?

Allow outdoor restaurant seating for those restaurants. But, perhaps the most important undertaking a city, chamber, Main Street Program and property owners can be involved with is the development of upper story housing (please, no storefront housing!) in the downtown. This is perhaps the hottest trend that is having a positive impact on downtowns across the country.

This type of housing is a savior to historic downtown buildings but also creates a new market of people that eat in the restaurants, frequent the shops, go to a movie or play and bring activity to the downtown. Downtown housing is critical to creating a nighttime economy and vice versa, a downtown that doesn't shut down at 5 p.m. is critical to developing and sustaining downtown housing.



## FROM A VISION TO A REALITY

When Kyle Dasher, LISW decided to leave full-time employment to open her private practice in Corning, Iowa, she found a distinct shortage of rental space suitable for her needs. Someone pointed out a small building at 816 Davis Avenue that had been for sale for years. The nearly 100-year-old building had been occupied by services such as an insurance agency, a hair salon, a daycare/preschool and was in sad shape. Her first reaction upon inspecting it involved dismay and disappointment. At first glance, there were obvious issues like broken windows; a bad ceiling; and a moldy, wet basement that smelled bad and was full of abandoned items from previous owners. Space was another issue as the interior was one big room that didn't lend itself to the privacy needed for mental health counseling. The entrance was not ADA compliant, and a false front seemed out dated.



Her husband, Barry Newton, had the vision to point out that it was on Main Street, had excellent parking and was located across from a beautiful park. With the support of the local PCSB bank, they took the plunge and bought the building in June of 2018. With advice from Main Street, both local and State, spending significant time looking at other Main Street buildings for architectural value, colors, signage, and canopy elements with an eye to preserving historical elements while adding sophistication, function and comfort, they finalized plans to apply for a Façade Grant from the local Main Street organization.

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## FROM A VISION TO A REALITY, CONTINUED

Upon approval of the application, transforming the building became both a scavenger hunt and a family project.

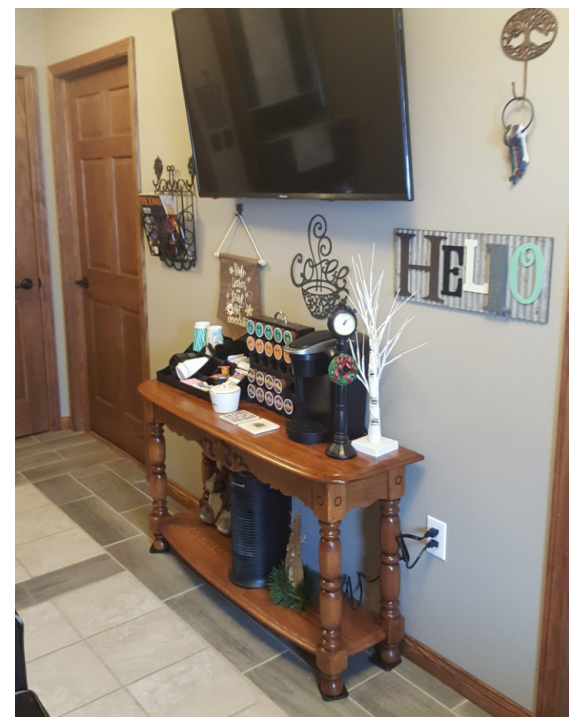
Their five children, aged 11 to 22, pitched in and cleaned the basement. When the contractor rebuilt the interior walls and ceiling, he broke up the big room by adding new interior walls, insulation and sound proofing. The youngest children learned to strip, sand, stain and finish oak wood trim repurposed from a local funeral home undergoing a renovation to a daycare. The desks and file cabinets came from another business that was disposing of them. Her oldest son repaired the damage and removed the stains making them into beautiful furniture. The sofa/display table in the waiting room had been a plant stand in her mother-in-law's home for decades. It was the wrong color, cracked and weather checked, but it became the rich focus of the waiting room offering coffee, tea and cocoa.

The solid oak interior doors were repaired, refinished and adorned with unique hardware. Research showed the false front to have significant historical value and to be architecturally unique, so it was repaired and preserved.

A warm neighborly relationship with the attorney next door resulted in an attractive shared ADA compliant wooden stairway and ramp complete with a shared landing for a relaxing view of the street and park.

The result has been nothing short of amazing. Now, the back half has everything needed for their children after school, including a separate entrance, kitchenette, bathroom and a connection to the business side that can only be unlocked from that side. The front half has two offices, carpeting, an ADA compliant bathroom and a comfortable waiting room complete with a large TV and a small marble water fountain.

Kyle opened her building to clients in November 2018 as Aspire Behavioral Health Services, LLC and has built a full-time active practice. Looking back on her construction experience, Kyle sums it up this way, "The number of visits before and after by community members is amazing with so much input, support and feedback. We didn't just open a business, we joined a community!"



## RESOURCE CONNECTIONS

**Iowa Downtown Resource Center** [iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/idrc](http://iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/idrc)

- Learn about the importance of downtown development and how to use tools for downtown viability.
- Be sure to delve into Community Resource Examples within this link.

**Iowa Economic Development Authority** [iowaeconomicdevelopment.com](http://iowaeconomicdevelopment.com)

Works to strengthen economic and community vitality by building partnerships and leveraging resources to make Iowa the choice for people and business.

**Keep Iowa Beautiful** [keepiowabeautiful.com](http://keepiowabeautiful.com)

Committed to enhancing the image and appearance of the countryside and Iowa communities. An affiliate of the national Keep America Beautiful program.

**Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center** [inrc.law.uiowa.edu](http://inrc.law.uiowa.edu)

A center to help Iowa's charitable nonprofit organizations become more effective in building their communities.

**Main Street America** [mainstreet.org](http://mainstreet.org)

- The national movement helping revitalize older and historic commercial districts for more than 35 years.
- Check into the new feature: Community Resource Examples.

**Main Street Iowa** [iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/MainStreetIowa](http://iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/MainStreetIowa)

- Iowa's program to work with selected communities to revitalize historic commercial districts.
- Check into the new feature: Community Resource Examples.

**National Park Service** [www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&query=preservation+briefs](http://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&query=preservation+briefs)

Guidance on preserving, rehabilitating and restoring historic buildings.

**National Trust for Historic Preservation** [savingplaces.org](http://savingplaces.org)

The trust protects and celebrates America's diverse history.

### Sidewalks

[cedar-rapids.org/local\\_government/departments\\_g\\_-\\_v/public\\_works/sidewalk\\_repair\\_program.php](http://cedar-rapids.org/local_government/departments_g_-_v/public_works/sidewalk_repair_program.php)

Cedar Rapids, IA, Sidewalk Repair & Reimbursement Program

[como.gov/Council/Commissions/downloadfile.php?id=18599](http://como.gov/Council/Commissions/downloadfile.php?id=18599)

Columbia, MO, Point of Sale Program-Fixing Our Broken Sidewalks

[walkdenver.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/15.08.15-Rethinking-Denver-Sidewalk-Policy.pdf](http://walkdenver.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/15.08.15-Rethinking-Denver-Sidewalk-Policy.pdf)

Denver, CO, Rethinking Denver Sidewalk Policy

**State Historic Preservation Office (Iowa)** [iowaculture.gov/history/preservation](http://iowaculture.gov/history/preservation)

Information ranging from archaeology to getting a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Travel Iowa** [traveliowa.com](http://traveliowa.com)

Trip ideas. Things to do. Places to stay. Events calendar. Travel by region. Travel guide and map.

**Volunteer Iowa** [volunteeriowa.org](http://volunteeriowa.org)

Resources for organizations and communities to engage Iowans in addressing pressing community challenges.