

# IOWA DOWNTOWN RESOURCE CENTER

**IOWA**  
economic development

A downtown or traditional commercial district represents a community's history and helps define the community. Does your downtown present a unique identity with features and strengths to draw residents, visitors, businesses and commerce? Would you be proud to show your downtown to potential new business prospects or even someone considering a move to your community?

If downtown development or downtown revitalization is not an active segment of your community's economic or community development plans, your efforts may be incomplete.

The Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Iowa Downtown Resource Center (IDRC) helps communities learn more about the importance of downtown development and specifically how your community can implement strategies to make downtown more viable.

Community involvement may range from a simple downtown walk around to Main Street Iowa (MSI) program services.

## ASSESSING DOWNTOWN

What are your downtown's strengths? Weaknesses? What can be done to make it more attractive to customers? The IDRC offers a variety of services to help communities identify these strengths, weaknesses and solutions.

### Downtown Assessment Visit (\$2,500)

The experienced professionals in the IDRC perform an intense, on-site study of your downtown, including a public presentation and written report that provide short and long-range recommendations to use for planning.

### Downtown Walk Around (\$300)

This visit offers communities an honest first impression of its downtown — helping to identify downtown strengths, challenges and basic revitalization strategies.

## Funding Opportunity

The Community Catalyst Building Rehabilitation grant assists communities with the rehabilitation of buildings to stimulate economic growth or reinvestment in the community. This competitive program awards up to \$100,000 for the rehabilitation of one commercial building per community or two adjacent buildings with common ownership. Strong projects show potential for catalytic economic growth and serve as a model for future projects. Converting underutilized space into new businesses and upper story apartments are common uses for the grant; 40% of funds are annually awarded to communities with populations under 1,500.

## DOWNTOWN NETWORKING

### Iowa Downtown Conference

The Iowa Downtown Conference is the premier statewide annual conference for professionals and volunteers involved with downtown revitalization in Iowa and neighboring states.

### Iowa Downtown Forums

The IDRC hosts a series of Downtown Forums annually across the state to provide communities the opportunity to network about downtown ideas, successes and challenges.

### Newsletter: *Iowa Downtown Resource*

Published three times per year, the *Iowa Downtown Resource* is the state's downtown revitalization newsletter. To subscribe, visit the IDRC website.



Visit the IDRC at [iowaeda.com/downtown-resource-center/](http://iowaeda.com/downtown-resource-center/)  
or contact the IDRC for more information: [downtown@iowaeda.com](mailto:downtown@iowaeda.com) or 515.348.6180.



VISIT US ONLINE AT [iowaeda.com](http://iowaeda.com)

## IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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## MAIN STREET IOWA

**Main Street is a time-tested movement.** Main Street Iowa (MSI) is a leading voice for preservation-based economic development and traditional commercial district revitalization. Working together, local leaders implemented practical strategies producing fundamental changes in Iowa's main streets for over three decades.

**Main Street in Iowa.** In 1985, the Iowa Legislature adopted Main Street America's Main Street Approach model and established MSI as a program of the IEDA. Today, Main Street is the premier program of the IDRC and is recognized as one of the most successful state programs in the nation.

**Main Street is impact.** Since MSI's inception, local Main Street districts have experienced [significant impacts](#) that include:

- Creating more than 5,000 downtown businesses employing an additional 16,000 people.
- Assisting in over 13,000 building improvement projects leveraging over \$2.5 billion dollars in private investment.
- Each Main Street program is locally powered through human resources and has documented over 3.7 million volunteer hours.

**Main Street is a process.** The Main Street Approach consists of tightly integrated components making up a common-sense, strategy-driven framework to guide community-based downtown revitalization efforts. Locally developed strategies are implemented through comprehensive work in four broad areas known as the Four Points: Economic Vitality, Organization, Promotion and Design.

**Main Street is a resource.** MSI provides a variety of services and training opportunities for designated Main Street programs to build the capacity of the local revitalization effort. During the start-up phase of a Main Street program, MSI invests approximately \$120,000 in technical assistance and training for local programs. Throughout the life of a Main Street program, MSI invests an average of \$15,000 annually.



## INVESTIGATING MAIN STREET

It is important that a community understands the MSI program and its requirements prior to application. Communities typically invest one to two years learning about the program and its process. The following steps are suggested for a community investigating MSI:

- Review MSI and Main Street America websites to access basic program information and materials.
- Contact MSI for additional information pertaining to the program, application cycle, process, etc.
- Convene a core group of local downtown stakeholders, community leaders, city representatives and development groups to discuss a desired focus on downtown revitalization.
- Invite MSI to your community to discuss the program requirements and other downtown revitalization strategies.
- Discuss the MSI program and opportunities with downtown business and property owners.
- Visit designated MSI communities to explore other downtown districts and talk to local leaders about MSI experiences.
- Reconvene the core group to discuss the outcomes and lessons learned from visits. A consensus should be gained before moving forward.
- Host a town meeting to discuss the MSI program and its benefits/expectations, and gain consensus to move forward with the MSI application process.
- Stay in touch with MSI throughout the process.

The Main Street Iowa program may not be right for all communities at any given time. Use each step as a decision point to move forward or determine alternative downtown revitalization strategies or opportunities available through the IDRC, IEDA or private sector partners.

Visit Main Street Iowa at [iowaeda.com/main-street-iowa/](http://iowaeda.com/main-street-iowa/)  
or contact the IDRC for more information: [mainstreet@iowaeda.com](mailto:mainstreet@iowaeda.com) or 515.348.6184.