

Group wants to spread the word about city being 'great place'



Main Street Executive Director Sarah Grunewaldt (left) and local Iowa Great Places Committee chair Millie Youngquist stand with one of the chalk boards that will be used as one of several ways to gather public opinion on how to improve Washington during Farmers Markets in Central Park starting this Thursday and running each week through October 15.

A local committee has been formed to gather ideas from the public to help continue the progress the community has made during the past 10 years. The Great Places Committee is in its infancy and is beginning to seek input from the citizens of the community on how best to develop innovative and entrepreneurial cultural and tourism efforts in Washington.

Some 42 communities have been designated as Great Places making them eligible to apply for grants to implement community improvement projects. The average grant is \$210,066.

The Iowa Great Places application is a grass roots process. Ideas come from the citizenry up through the Great Places Committee, which will be submitting an application to the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs for Iowa Great Places designation, making the city eligible for grants for projects identified by the public.

The committee, chaired by Millie Youngquist, will be using several ways to gather citizen input. One method involves the weekly Farmers Markets. Each Thursday, chalk boards will be posted in several locations around the market with questions like, "What's missing in Washington?" The chalk boards will be posted until the markets end October 15.

"Being designated as one of Iowa's Great Places by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs would have many benefits for Washington," Youngquist said. "In addition to the grant opportunities mentioned, we would be part of a state-wide network of other vibrant communities and passionate community leaders, have access to professional development, technical assistance and access to other state and local resources. Our designation could be used in signage and marketing materials to promote our community. We already know that Washington is one of Iowa's "great places", we just need to let others know about us!"

The committee will use other ways to solicit input like online surveys and possibly town meetings before developing its application for designation.

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