

**Tuesday, March 04, 2008**

**Lt. Governor Judge Announces New Main Street Communities**

DES MOINES – Today, Lt. Governor Patty Judge announced that four Iowa communities were recently selected to join the Main Street Iowa program: Belle Plaine, Mount Vernon, Washington and Woodbine. The announcement was made during a special ceremony held in Des Moines.

“Iowa’s historic main streets are the heart and soul of our communities,” said Lt. Governor Judge. “This is why increasing the number of Main Street communities in Iowa is a top priority of the Culver/Judge Administration. We will continue to do whatever we can to keep Iowa’s downtowns strong and vibrant for business owners, workers, residents and visitors. I am pleased to welcome each of these communities into the Main Street family, and wish them much success in the future.”

For more than 20 years, the Main Street Iowa program and its communities have been looked upon as the “best of the best” in a national effort to revitalize downtowns across the country. The addition of these new communities brings the total number of Main Street communities in Iowa to 39.

“In their applications and presentations, the selected communities demonstrated strong partnerships, a high level of volunteerism and a commitment to the revitalization of their downtown districts, said Michael Tramontina, Director of the Iowa Department of Economic Development. “We are confident that these four cities will thrive and grow for many years to come.”

Some highlights from the applications:

- Belle Plaine (pop. approx. 2,800)
- Mount Vernon (pop. approx. 3,400)
- Washington (pop. approx. 7,000)
- Woodbine (pop. approx. 1,600)
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Becoming a designated Main Street Iowa community is no easy task. Community representatives must attend rigorous training sessions before even being eligible to apply. They 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; city resolutions and historic preservation ordinances must be passed and signed. 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 downtown business districts, and 2) improving the local economy by adopting and following the Main Street Four Point Approach™ to downtown revitalization.

While it may be challenging to become a Main Street community, designated communities reap many benefits. During the first three years of the program, each community receives 40 days of on-site training and technical assistance from Main Street

Iowa, National Main Street Center staff and private consultants, as well as 30 days of training for volunteers and local staff, resulting in a state investment of \$100,000. Main Street communities each receive continuing training valued at \$10,000 annually. Over the years, by working together with the state, Main Street Iowa communities have realized the benefits of more than 1.5 million hours of volunteer time committed to improving their city centers, a significantly increased job and business base and millions of dollars in private investment to purchase, construct and rehabilitate downtown property.

For more information, visit

[www.iowalifechanging.com/community/mainstreetiowa](http://www.iowalifechanging.com/community/mainstreetiowa),

e-mail [mainstreet@iowalifechanging.com](mailto:mainstreet@iowalifechanging.com),

or call 515.242.4756.