

Main Street Memo



Brought to you by the Organization Committee

Vol. 2 , No. 7

Calendar

April 1 – Kickoff of the 3/50 Project Campaign; Main Street Iowa Awards; Big Band Night @FMHS

April 2 – Antique Tractor Show at Faeth's

April 4 – Organization Committee, 8am @The Ivy

April 5 – City Council, 6pm

April 7 – Coffee Talk, 8am & Main Street Board meeting, 4:30pm.

April 8 & 9 – Dinner Theatre @ FMHS

April 9 – FMAAA Art Auction, 7pm @ Comfort Inn & Suites

April 11 – 4th of July meeting at 12pm, Historic Preservation Commission at 5:30pm

April 12 – Historical Society meeting, 7pm @CBQDepot; Design Committee Meeting, 6pm @FMP

April 14 – Boston Brass Concert @ FMHS

April 15 – Deadline for Main Street Newsletter and Committee Updates

April 18 – Organization Committee Meeting, 8am @The Ivy

April 19 – Business Improvement Committee, 5:30pm; City Council 7pm

April 20 – Old Fort Commission meeting, 5pm

April 24 – Happy Easter!

April 25 – Design Committee Meeting, 6pm @FMP

April 26 – Visit from Jim Thompson with Main Street Iowa

3/50 Project Kicks Off on April 1

The 3/50 Project (pronounced three-fifty) is a public awareness campaign on the importance of shopping local. The only “shop local” campaign of its kind, it does not promote the boycotting of “big box” stores or national chains. Instead, we are asking everyone to consider those specialty stores we have here in town, and spend a total of \$50, at 3 separate stores, each month. Not only is this a part of the Green Movement (think of the gas you’ll save!?) but it also helps financially support Fort Madison! You’ll save on those annoying shipping/handling fees and receive outstanding, five-star customer service all while helping to pump money back into the services we all receive as Fort Madison citizens! Statistics show that for every \$100 spent in our community, \$68 stays here, whereas only \$43 with national chains, and \$0 (that’s right, zero!) with online purchases. It’s so easy to help ourselves!

Recap of IDOT Info Session for Bypass Signage held March 8th

Members of the DOT engineering and marketing staff were in town on March 8th to discuss the options of signage along the new bypass. Construction is expected to be completed by this fall, with the bypass opening in late November. There are numerous restrictions for signage, though there are plenty of spots available for those who meet the requirements. The Main Street/Chamber office has plenty of brochures and applications available, so feel free to call us with questions. Have no fear, Fort Madison Partners is here! FMP, Main Street and the Chamber are all working together to make sure that Fort Madison has some generic signage along the bypass.

Farmers Market

The Farmers Market is back on Thursday evenings at Central Park! 4:30-6:30pm. We have some new things planned this year, including musicians, demonstrations, etc. to add to the market! Help us kick off the first Farmers Market of 2011 on June 2nd. Do you know a home gardener who is looking to make some extra cash? Bakers? Artists? Tell them contact us! We're always looking for more vendors. Local organizations are welcome as "vendors" as well, allowing for fundraising. Contact Mary for more information.

Did you know?

That the NATIONAL Main Street Conference is in Des Moines, this year!
Mark your calendars!
May 22– 25

<http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/training/>



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Kansas Visitors

Be sure to take a moment and read the attached letter from some Spring visitors to Fort Madison. We know we're doing things right and downtown Fort Madison is looking good, but sometimes it helps to read unsolicited comments. Pat yourself on the back Main Street businesses!

Main Street BBQ - 10th Anniversary

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Main Street BBQ at Faeth's. Congratulations! This event continues to grow and grow attracting not only local residents, but people from outside Fort Madison who enjoy a day of BBQ and live music. Judging begins at 11am for chicken, 12 noon for pork and 1pm for beef. Gather together your BBQ group and enter the competition today. Call Faeth's for entry info. May 14th is the day to remember.

NYC Film Crews

The Ivy Bake Shoppe and Café was the set for filming on March 24th and 25th by an independent film crew from NYC hired by Siemens for their company informational materials. We just know Martha and Sue will be next year's Academy Award winners!

Fort Madison Main Street Board of Directors

Charlie Scoville, *President*
Bob Reding, *Vice President*
Ryan Nagrocki, *Treasurer*
Angie Sodey, *Secretary*
Byron Smith, *City Liaison*

Maggie Abolt
Andy Andrews
Tina Faeth
Kathy Greenwald
Mike Howard
Sam Manka
Neva Peak
Tom Schulz
Michele Young

Steppin' Up For Main Street

Committee is now forming and seeking volunteers to make this year's Steppin' Up for Main Street home and apartment tours even more successful than last year! If you have a few spare hours to assist with planning and assisting with the event on November 5th, please contact Martha with the Organization Committee. Your help is appreciated!

Watch the Depot Rise!

You can access the webcam pointed at the old ATSF Railroad Depot Complex on the North Lee County Historic Society's website: www.fortmadisonhistory.org While you're checking out the latest progress on this huge project, be sure and peruse the Historic Society's website out. They meet the second Tuesday of each month and meetings are open to the public.

a NEW Community Garden helps the Farmers Market!

RSVP is the lead on our new community garden located at 4th Street and Hwy 61.

Call Jimmy to reserve a plot.
372.7700 x 205



Community Clean-Up Day is May 7th

Donate an hour or two of your time keep our downtown beautiful!

Contact Mary to sign-up.
372.5471 x 103



March 15th, 2011

Dear City of Ft. Madison,

We visited your town on March 11-12, 2011 and we just wanted to let you know what a charming town you have. We had a fantastic time. You definitely have an untapped gold mine.

It is evident that Ft. Madison wants to keep their history, architecture and culture alive and try to mix it with tourism, rail/river traffic and the ever changing economic times. We understand it is difficult and costly, but we appreciate a small community who is willing to change and stay the same.

After talking to a few people in your town about your improvements and the town in general, we were encouraged to send along our opinion of your town and why we visited.

We love to take train trips on Amtrak and work with Amtrak Vacations for weekend trips. We take at least two weekend trips a year. We give Amtrak a budget usually around \$1000-1500, a time-line, and they provide us with options. Our options were, Santa Fe, NM, Kansas City, La Platta, Mo, Ft. Madison, Iowa, Naperville, IL. Your town was also a "green" option for us, a town not needing a car to get around. After researching our options on the internet, we picked Ft. Madison as it is on the Mississippi river and has the old Victorian charm of yesteryear. Amtrak Vacations was right, there was not a whole lot to do on foot, but we did fill twenty nine hours in your town and left you with \$700 of our dollars and took away a great memory.

Our day started with the Kingsley Inn picking us up at the Amtrak Station. We went to the Wild Whisk for lunch and walked around your downtown and stopped at your Chamber of Commerce for information. We found the Betsy Ross house, your courthouse and jail and walked to your Settlers Park. We took pictures in your gazebo. On the way back to our hotel we stopped at Ivy's Bakery for coffee and snacks. We went back to our hotel and watched the river outside of our windows and went and ate supper at Alpha's on the Riverfront.

The next morning we had a wonderful high tea breakfast at the Kingsley Inn and then went on the auto tour of your Victorian homes by foot. What a wonderful tour. What a bonus to have so many homes and businesses that have retained their history. We went back to the Ivy Bakery for a morning snack and coffee and continued our tour until we ended up at the Historical Society's museum. I suggest doing whatever is possible to keep your history in tack for further generations and those who visit. What a valuable time capsule. It was suggested to visit Faeths and your Arts Council and we bought T-shirts in both places. We then shopped some of your unique downtown stores and had lunch at the Angel Secret. We bought gifts for friends and hand lotions for family. A pocket knife for our son and antiques for the collector. We then walked your river park and tried to skip a stone on the Mississippi. We would have loved to visit your Fort. What dedication from your city. We walked down to your bridge and walked past your Schaeffer Pen factory. We then had cocktails and supper at Alpha's on the Riverfront before being taken back to the Amtrak station.

We understand it takes money from taxes, individuals or businesses, but here are a few things we as tourists have seen, participated in and would suggest for Ft. Madison.

Expand on your riverside park. Make this a priority. While we were sitting watching the river, many people were pulling off the highway to take pictures of the river and your Casino. We would suggest maybe a sign showing us tourists other things to see in your town, show down town, where the museum is, where to eat or grab a snack, historical spots. Another idea would be to have placards telling your history on one side and this placard being sponsored by a local business with a map or menu or business description on the other side. You could place these along your walking path for people to read and gain information. Get Siemens to donate a windmill blade for your river park. It makes people stop and take pictures and it really is a site to see how large the blades are and makes a great tourist attraction.

Expand on your driving tour and make it a walking tour with your local businesses in mind. Have this tour start with breakfast and end with lunch and have a snack in-between.

Something where people can get out onto the river. An excursion boat, a dock side restaurant or just a dock to walk out on. We didn't even know you had a marina until we left town.

Push Amtrak. When you get Amtrak back to your depot, think about a trolley or carriage ride to bring people to your downtown or their hotel. Make day trips, people come in and go out on Amtrak the same day from the west, expand and make it a weekend or an entire week.

Have a historical trolley ride or carriage ride, pointing out local businesses, historical homes, parks and your industry. This could even be an antique car or one of your past local dairy trucks.

Art. Get your art people to place art in your river park, statues, fountains, unique benches, have an art walk in your park or parks and have the art walk tour continue to your downtown. Have locals paint pictures on plywood, seal and place in your parks on light poles, goal posts or somewhere open to the public and have a local art tour. The art was saw was spectacular.

Flood. Have something showing your flood lines and a place for people to take pictures. Those of us that live in dry areas are fascinated with your floods. Take advantage of us.

Hotels. Have a hotel downtown in one of your empty buildings or at least have it upstairs. Or an upstairs restaurant with river views.

Tin Ceilings. Have a tin ceiling tour; Ft. Madison could be described as the tin ceiling capitol.

Geo Caching. Push your local geo-cachers to bring in more people and have a geo cache at every local park and get your local businesses involved.

Architecture. Continue with your building updating and renovations. Put a value on your sidewalks in town, sponsor a town cleanup.

Some other suggestions from tourists looking to spend their money in your town.

For us on foot, you need a convenience store or someone to offer convenience store items closer to your downtown, maybe a general store like atmosphere selling T-shirts, souvenirs or the like downtown. Bottled water, pop, candy, sundries, we walked to your Loves store one afternoon just looking for bottled water. An ice cream or yogurt shop or have your bakery expand. A penny smashing machine with your top tourist draws on the smashed pennies. A walking crossover from your park to your downtown over the rail tracks and highway. More stores that interest the male gender. More antique stores. A native store selling things made in Iowa.

We understand it takes money, cooperation, time and willing people. But just know you have some of the best and most friendly people in any area we have visited. Start with this goldmine and work from there.

The only complaint we had was the food was so good we needed more walking trails to keep from gaining weight. We plan to visit again in a couple of years and see your progress. Your people, the museum, your downtown, your Victorian homes and the Mississippi river are your calling cards. You have the large draws covered, rodeo, balloons, etc. but work on the small tourist. Market it as green, simple, wholesome, relaxing or romantic, but get out there and market your town. Start with package tours, a river, Victorian, romantic, or history package, remember women love the Victorian era and men love the river, you have them both.

Thanks for listening and thanks for a wonderful trip. Your progress is evident, more people should have the opportunity to come see what you have strived to retain and build.

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