

Report on the  
Heritage Tourism Potential of  
Lansing, Iowa

Produced for  
**Main Street Iowa**



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## **Introduction**

This report was funded by Main Street Iowa (MSI) as part of the broader effort by the state Main Street program to encourage local programs to identify specific market niches to grow the businesses in their downtown districts.

This Assessment of the Heritage Tourism Potential was conducted from July 28 to July 31, 2014 and involved a three night, four day technical assistance visit to Lansing by Donna Ann Harris, principal of Heritage Consulting Inc. Also participating in the visit were Shawna Lode, Manager of the Iowa Tourism Office and Carrie Koelker Executive Director of the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association. The Main Street Iowa staff managing and participating in the visit were Terry Poe Buschkamp, Promotions Specialist, and Jim Thompson, Economic Restructuring Specialist.

This brief visit was designed to provide advice about implementable projects for the next six months to a year for the Main Street Lansing program. The consultation and the resulting report are meant as an introduction to organizing heritage tourism activities in Lansing.

### **Preparation work for the technical assistance visit**

This visit involved a great deal of preparatory work that was undertaken first by Dan Howard, former manager of Main Street Lansing (MSL), and then by Bruce Palmborg, Board President of MSL and Joe Papp, a board member of MSL.

These gentlemen worked with the Allamakee County Economic Development Corporation to prepare an extensive asset map of all downtown businesses, historic sites, lodging facilities, and the great variety of recreational amenities (boating, hiking, birding, fishing, canoe, kayak, skiing, and biking) in the greater Lansing area. The purpose of this asset mapping exercise was to create an up-to-date map on a graphic information system (GIS) platform that can be updated and expanded at will. The GIS map offers basic information for use by any visitor. The information on the map can be expanded by creating additional layers to offer pop up boxes with photos or additional information about the noted feature. We are grateful to Deneb Woods of the Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development for creating this map and for participating in one of the focus group sessions.

Another important preparatory effort was undertaking an intercept survey of existing visitors in the downtown. Donna Ann Harris worked with Jim Thompson to create the survey instrument, which was two pages and could be filled out by a visitor in about ten minutes. Main Street Lansing board members administered the survey over several weekends. Thirty six (36) surveys were completed, and tabulated by Joe Papp and Bruce Palmborg. Susan Matthews, Office Specialist with the Main Street Iowa staff produced the final report on the results of the intercept survey which is attached as Appendix E.

The final agenda for the three day visit is attached as Appendix A. The MSI staff, Shawna Lode, Manager of the Iowa Tourism Office, and Ms. Harris arrived on Monday July 28, 2014 in the afternoon for an orientation to Lansing and surrounding area walking and driving tour organized by Bruce Palmborg. Carrie Koelker, Executive Director of the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association arrived on July 29, 2014. Dinner with the Lansing Main Street Board of Directors was held on July 28, 2014 in the evening to review the agenda for the visit.

All day Tuesday July 29 was spent conducting three ninety-minute focus groups of key stakeholder groups: summer residents, year-round residents, all of the four point MSL committees and partners who manage recreational attractions/parks in the area. We also conducted two forty-five minute interviews with owners/managers of lodging facilities and with retailers/restaurants in the downtown. For each focus group or group interview, Ms. Harris provided a script of questions to ask. She then conducted all of the focus groups except for summer residents, which Shawna Lode conducted. Jim Thompson and Terry Buschkamp recorded notes of all focus groups and interviews.

Each focus group or interview group member was promised anonymity to encourage them to provide candid responses to interview questions. The names of those who participated in the focus groups and interviews are listed in Appendix B. Two separate individual interviews were held with Paul Horsfall Jr. owner and manager of the Lansing Variety Store, and with Bill O'Connor, a board member who led the recent branding effort. Again, Terry Poe Buschkamp took notes.

We spoke with 80 different people from Lansing through these three days of interviews and focus groups. This gave us an extraordinarily wide group of highly interested and involved stakeholders.

## **Lansing: The Big Picture**

Lansing Iowa is a charming place. It is filled with historic homes, and excellent views of the Upper Mississippi from Mt. Hosmer and the homes and inns that line the bluffs and riverfront. Much of the charm of Lansing is due to its hometown/small town atmosphere. All of the brick and limestone buildings are human scale and rarely more than three stories tall. These handsome buildings lining Main Street have retail or service business on the first floor, and storage or apartments above. There are public restrooms at the foot of Main Street, an unexpected and highly important visitor amenity. There are no chain stores on Main Street other than the gas station and the IGA grocery store.

The Mississippi River is the main draw in Lansing, along with all the wildlife that uses the river for food, transportation, or nesting purposes. The various State, County, and Federal government agencies that protect fishing and other wildlife habitats have long histories here. Recreational uses such as boating, fishing, and hunting have existed alongside conservation efforts for decades. All are well managed. Migratory birds, deer, and different types of fish

(trout and bass were mentioned frequently) draw fishermen and women and hunters during legally sanctioned seasons. Winter sports including snow mobiling, ice fishing and skiing bring out a smaller number of winter season travelers.

Iowa State Highway 26 is designated as the Great River Road National Scenic Byway and is marked with square green highway signs along the thousands of miles of road on either side of the Mississippi River. The State of Iowa Driftless Scenic Byway is well marked on the same stretch of road, with handsome multicolor rectangular signs. Both Scenic Byways attract vintage cars, two wheel bikes, and motorcycles organized as clubs or individuals who want to experience the changing landscape along the majestic Mississippi River.

For Lansing, the highly anticipated construction of the Driftless Scenic Byway Interpretive Center just south of town will create a hub to explore the area's historic as well as natural resources when completed in 2015 or 2016.

The Lansing area is full of potential.

There are so many recreational, historic, and shopping opportunities for visitors. These disparate elements however, need to be "knit together" as a highly valued attraction to be packaged and promoted to visitors. Lansing needs a "one stop shop" both virtually and physically, and in an office, to learn about lodging, events, recreational attractions, and the downtown retail to turn the greater Lansing area into a destination.

Our advice is to combine all the attractions--lodging, shopping, and recreational amenities- into a destination to be promoted. In the pages that follow, we offer our observations and recommendations on specific topics in the hope that this advice will permit the Main Street Lansing organization to take concrete steps in the next few months towards knitting together all of your worthy heritage tourism assets into one great destination for visitors.

This report follows the order of the presentation made on Thursday July 31, 2014 in the Community Center in downtown Lansing. The presentation slides are attached as Appendix D.

## **Overview**

### **Tourism based work plans**

#### *Observations*

Our review of all the Main Street Lansing Committee work plans revealed that some of the work plans are indeed tourist oriented. The Design Committee's work now focuses on maintaining and sprucing up the physical environment of downtown. This work is essential for

both visitors and residents, and should continue. We learned that the Design Committee had more projects than were shared with us, and all of them are high quality.

The Promotion Committee already hosts events that cater to both residents and visitors. This committee has the largest number of work plans, and all are well developed.

The Organization has only one work plan for the committee, and appears to have the smallest number of volunteers.

The Business Opportunities (Biz Ops) Committee has a handful of work plan items but seemed to need more information about the economics of downtown. Jim Thompson of Main Street Iowa made a very brief presentation of the most current ERSI data about Lansing during the July 31 Presentation. The ERSI material is attached as Appendix I

### *Recommendations*

The Design Committee should add additional activities around the pending designation of downtown as a National Register Historic District. We recommend that once that date is known when the Secretary of the Interior will actually list the district in the Register, that the Design Committee plan an event with the State Historic Preservation Office to celebrate that achievement. We suggest a short tour or other activity to interpret the downtown for visitors. This event can be improved and expanded upon for the summer season, but it is important to do something now to tell people about this important and honorary designation. Get ideas for other events/activities from the Main Street Iowa staff. There are literally countless ways you can celebrate your historic local architecture and interpret it for residents and visitors.

The Organization Committee seems to be the weakest committee. This committee is generally in charge of taking on some fundraising tasks, communication, and volunteer recruitment. The effort to expand heritage visitors in Lansing will fall heavily to this committee, as the communication piece is critical. Later in this report, we discuss the need for a website immediately, to continue the Facebook posts and to increase your email mailing list. The newsletter begun this year is a great start, but has much more potential to reach visitors if it was converted into an e-newsletter. Finally, one or more fundraising events will be needed to raise regular, predictable funds for the organization. We are uncertain if the Organization Committee is responsible for any existing fundraising activities. Building this committee is essential to the success of the heritage tourism efforts in the future.

The Promotion Committee already manages a full event calendar. The committee members may wish to reassess whether some events, especially the two Open Houses, are really meeting your needs. These two events received the weakest reviews on the intercept survey and during the focus groups and interviews. Consider a major revision of one or both of these, perhaps refocusing one towards visitors during the summer season.

The Biz Ops Committee should invite Jim Thompson to come and further discuss the ERSI material he introduced during the Presentation on July 31. Jim can also help to identify a series of tasks to begin recruitment of businesses that would serve the visitor market. The ERSI material he presented is included as Appendix I, at the end of this report. It is not clear if this committee is involved in business recruitment efforts. There are several vacancies in town, and these stores could be filled with tourist-oriented retail. We saw two restaurants that were for rent, and we believe that filling these two vacancies should be the first priority for this committee. There also seems to be a business opportunity to supply recreational outfitter type activities (renting bikes, canoes, fly fishing rods, identifying guides, etc.). We share more information about this later in this report.

## **Everyone working together**

### *Observations*

Working together to create a visitor designation in Lansing is both a short and long term priority. We recommend that the Main Street Lansing Board focus on organizing the lodging community first as this is the most critical goal. From our focus group conversations, it is clear that retailers and restaurants already know one another and do a good job of making referrals to each other in the downtown. The lodging facilities should do that same, but they need a forum to exchange ideas, set priorities, and undertake actions to benefit themselves. We provide further advice about this work later in this report.

### *Recommendations*

The Main Street Lansing Board should meet with City Council to explain the results of this Tech Visit and ask for their support to increase the Hotel/Motel tax next year from the current two percent (2%) to the maximum of seven percent (7%). The MSL Board should learn about the referendum process and participate actively. Learn more from your County and Regional Tourism partners about passing a referendum.

## **Tourism development has to be someone's job**

### *Observation*

We agree that there is plenty to promote in the Lansing area. However, all the components of a destination-- lodging, attractions, retail, events, and restaurants-- must work together.

### *Recommendations*

We recommend that a part time Heritage Tourism Coordinator be hired to manage the larger effort to promote the greater Lansing area as a heritage tourism destination. The job could be shared with the Main Street Manager, making two part time jobs into one full time job, or you

could hire two part time workers, ideally each working 24 hours a week. Grant writing is an important skill for the Heritage Tourism Coordinator to possess, so look for someone with demonstrated experience in this area.

It is not obvious to us at this point how the Heritage Tourism Coordinator position will be funded. Expanding the Hotel/Motel tax to seven percent (7%) could fund part of this person's salary if the City would agree. We also recommend investigating other funding sources. Fees could be generated from memberships in the Main Street organization from a broader segment of the tourism community (especially lodging and attractions). Modest fees could be charged to link to lodging or attractions to their websites. Sponsorship opportunities could be created for parts of the MSL website dedicated to tourism. New special events could be developed specifically for visitors and sponsorships solicited from tourism partners. Regardless, creative thinking about how to fund the Heritage Tourism Coordinator position is critical because we believe that this job is far beyond the scope of the Main Street manager. We suggest that the Board should have some basic discussions about funding this position during the next three months and come up with a work plan for funding the position by the time that MSI returns to conduct your annual program review in late October, 2014.

Rename/rebrand the existing Main Street Lansing office as the Greater Lansing Visitor Center, and add way finding signage if the office is on a side street. Add more traditional brochure racks for visitor brochures in the front part of the office. The visitor center area should have a desk for volunteers and another desk for the Heritage Tourism Coordinator in that front space.

## **The pace of change**

### *Observations*

There was some discomfort about the pace of change in Lansing. Many retirees moved here because it is a quiet, peaceful community with only occasional large events. The fear is that Lansing's character will change quickly once it is "discovered" by visitors. These are completely legitimate concerns. But, change can be managed in Lansing.

### *Recommendations*

We agree that the character and quality of Lansing is the very thing you are trying to market to visitors, and therefore protecting that charm and quality must be high on everyone's agenda. Traditionally we think of protecting the character of your community as being focused on retaining and restoring historic buildings. But in Lansing, protecting the character of the community goes further: we must respect the wildlife habitats and water quality as well. Outdoor recreation is a critical aspect of the destination you are trying to create and market to visitors, and its essential character must not change.

The Main Street movement preaches that change should be incremental, and we agree. This is

why our recommendations and priorities are basically focused on organizing and then implementing a handful of small activities in the next three or six months. We do not expect that new lodging, for example, will occur for several years. First, the existing lodging businesses need to be organized and well promoted to the point where the market reacts by adding more hotel rooms.

We do not expect the pace of change in Lansing to go into overdrive for several more years to come. You need to take the first basic organizing steps we suggest here and build on successes. That is not to say that your historic architecture should remain unprotected. We recommend investigating a local preservation ordinance this year. Work with Main Street Iowa staff to understand the implication of enacting such an ordinance. Promote restoration and the availability of the Federal and State Investment Tax Credits for Rehabilitation, once the downtown is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Continue to work with your conservation and recreation site partners to understand their concerns about maintaining a healthy balance between recreational use and conservation needs.

## **Lansing cannot be your little secret**

### *Observation*

At each of our focus groups and interviews we heard comments about the “FT” which is local slang for the (expletive) tourist. This was actually embarrassing to hear, as Lansing already has many tourists who visit. We believe that this local slang is not helpful, especially if MSL wants to actively market the area to visitors in the future. We understand that this is a long-standing attitude in the community and not of recent invention.

### *Recommendations*

Local attitudes towards tourists must change. We know that the 999 residents of Lansing could not support the grocery store, the many restaurants, and cute retail shops through resident spending alone. The local economy is already tied to tourist dollars. Without tourists, these important community assets would wither and die. Therefore, local attitudes about tourists needs an update. Try a fun way to put an end to this unpleasant slang expression in town. We recommend that this effort begin with MSL. Fine anyone \$5.00 if this term is spoken out loud in any meeting, collect this money and use it for a tourism related activity.

The Lansing everyone loves, is already one that visitors love too. So Lansing can no longer be your little secret. Embrace visitors and the dollars they bring to Lansing.

## **More seasonal events throughout the year**

### *Observation*

There were many complaints about how downtown is dead when the Mississippi River is too low or too high. No one controls Mother Nature, all you can do is react to it. Weather is something that many businesses must react to, and tourism is no exception.

### *Recommendation*

The high season in Lansing will always be the precious summer months when the river explodes with fishing, boating, and other recreational pursuits. The summer season is critical, but it would be wise to beef up the spring and fall seasons with events. You might also want to concentrate your marketing on these shoulder seasons to spread out the economic benefit to the local businesses and become a bit less dependent on summer time. You could also consider winter promotions in concert with some of the winter recreational areas as a way to fill some lodging units that are open year-round. Get advice about seasonal marketing from your County and Regional Tourism Partners. Share this information with the recreational and lodging partners and create a seasonal marketing strategy for Lansing.

## **Put heritage in heritage tourism**

### *Observations*

The listing of the downtown on the National Register of Historic Places is already in the works and that is wonderful news. The tax incentives available at the Federal and State levels will help make rehabilitation a more economically viable choice for property owners who are seeking to restore their buildings.

### *Recommendations*

Listing the downtown on the National Register is only the first step in making your community a heritage destination. Now the downtown needs to be interpreted to the public by telling the town's story through the buildings. Contact your County and Regional Tourism Partners to learn about the interpretation efforts in other towns in the region that promote their history. Main Street Iowa's Design consultants have files of clever ideas for towns who wish to make their stories come alive for visitors. Consider having MSI staff come to the Design Committee meeting to discuss the range of options available to you. Create a work plan for one or more activities and implement these for the coming summer season.

## **Time for implementation is NOW**

### *Observations*

We understand that Main Street Lansing is quite adept at planning, but is weak on implementing its plans. This is evidenced by an incomplete website, three years after it was initiated. We learned during our visit that no one seems to know exactly how many lodging rooms are available or where they are located. The handsome Lansing tourism brochure produced more than a year ago has not been updated or reprinted, and is not circulated to all the lodging businesses. And like countless other Main Street towns, a handful of downtown retailers continue to have inconsistent hours or are not open at all.

### *Recommendations*

We make suggestions in the section below about seven key tasks to tackle in the next year. Some of these tasks are large and complex, such as organizing the lodging businesses in the area. Other tasks are simple, such as joining the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association.

We are challenging the Main Street Lansing Board to implement a handful of these activities in the next three months (see this list at the end of the report under Priorities) as discussed at the brief Board meeting at the end of the visit on July 31.

## **Seven Tasks to Tackle**

### **1. Need a website NOW**

A website is critical for any downtown organization that wishes to encourage visitors to come and enjoy their community, lodging options, retail businesses, or restaurants. The website that gets developed for Main Street Lansing in the next few months must serve both the organization and the visitor. We are attaching a brief memo called “An Ideal Main Street Website,” which discusses how the website’s content management system and website navigation could be organized to suit both audiences. See the memo as Appendix C. The content management system must be able to be managed by the organization staff/volunteers and the web designer should provide training on how to use it. The website must be responsive, meaning it should be readable on all kinds of devices: smart phones, tablets, and laptops.

We are recommending that the lists of attractions, retail, restaurants, and lodging have links to existing websites. If any one of these businesses do not have a website now, we suggest that MSL create a simple, one page website for these businesses, so that the business will own the URL. In the future, should the owner decide to create their own website, they will own their domain name. These web pages should have contact information, telephone numbers, and a few high quality photos of the business and email addresses. We suggest that a small fee be charged for this service.

The web designer should also provide advice about key words for Lansing so that the website's Search Engine Optimization (SEO) will cause the website to come up first on common search engines, including Google, Yahoo, etc. Google has a program where they make grants to nonprofit organizations for Google Ads (<http://www.google.com/grants/>). Learn more about this and determine if you wish to apply.

There are a host of websites geared to visitors of Lansing IA that one can find with a simple Google search. We entered a variety of search terms and found the following websites. A webpage called Visit Lansing Iowa (<http://www.visitlansingiowa.com/mainstreet.html>) has information about the Main Street organization including former personnel's contact information, but seems mainly ad sponsored. Other websites about Lansing include: [visitlansingiowa.com](http://visitlansingiowa.com), [mylansingiowa.com](http://mylansingiowa.com) (Thornton House B & B), [lansingiowa.com](http://lansingiowa.com), and [midwestweekends/lansing.com](http://midwestweekends/lansing.com). All of these have some, but not complete information for visitors to Lansing. The Thornton House B & B website—[mylansingiowa.com](http://mylansingiowa.com) is the most complete.

It might be worthwhile to determine who owns/administers all of these URL's to see if they are local and would be willing to offer links to the new MSL website. Link the new MSL website to as many of these as possible, even if only to improve your search engine ranking.

If MSL does not already have a website URL, buy one as soon as possible. Make sure to purchase at least .com, .org, .info, .net, and .us domain names to protect your brand.

Make sure that the tourist guide gets updated and reformatted as a PDF document, so it prints well in both black and white and color on an 8.5 x 11 inch format from your website. Make it easy for people to print out the brochure and take it along with them. Also make sure the PDF document is not large, say no more than 2 MB (megabits) so that it can be sent easily by email.

When the new website goes live, it is critical that someone is there in the office, to answer calls/emails promptly and do fulfillment of requests for information as soon as possible. Consider including a visitor inquiry form to gather all the information needed from a visitor in search of information.

## **2. Inventory current lodging, build more**

We learned towards the very end of our visit that there are 132 beds in the greater Lansing area. This does not necessarily equate with rooms available, as some cabins can sleep 10 people, but may only represent one hotel unit.

There are a host of different lodging opportunities for visitors. There are cottages, an older traditional motel, RV sites, traditional B & B's, and inns. These facilities run from rustic to the well-kept. The only category missing might be luxury units.

There is no one listing of all the lodging in the greater Lansing area. We learned during our interview with some of these lodging owners that they don't know about other lodging facilities in the area. This hinders them to make quality referrals to others if their location is booked.

Few lodging partners use the State (free), County (fee) or Regional (fee) tourism websites to generate bookings. Not all lodging facilities have websites. Some use online reservation services, but not all. Some have sophisticated websites or 360 degree videos of their facilities, others not.

It was clear that these lodging owners need to get to know each other better so that they can organize to market and expand their businesses. We are suggesting that the MSL Board extend an invitation to all the lodging businesses to host a meeting to begin an effort to organize them for better cooperative marketing.

We suggest that Main Street Lansing set up a limited-time task force for the lodging partners and have the lodging partners undertake the following tasks in the next six months:

1. Highly encourage all of the lodging partners to submit material to the state tourism website to have their business listed. This is a free service.
2. We recommend that the Lansing tourism brochure be updated and reformatted and be made available for download on all existing lodging websites. If the brochure is eventually printed with grant fund (further information about this comes later in this report), each lodging facility should have a stockpile of these brochures to hand out. Replenishing them should be the job of the Heritage Tourism Coordinator.
3. We are recommending that individual attractions and lodging facilities have links to their existing websites on any MSL website. If anyone does not have a website now, we suggest that the MSL create a simple, one page website for these businesses, so that the business will own the URL. This will permit the business owner, in the future, should they decide to create their own website, to own their domain name now. These web pages should have contact information, telephone numbers, a few high quality photos of the business, and email addresses. We suggest that a small fee be charged for this service.
4. Conduct a familiarization tour (FAM tour) of all the lodging facilities in the area, perhaps over a few days, for the lodging partners. The point of the tour is to show all the lodging business owners each other's facility so they can make high quality referrals to others when their facility is booked.
5. Lodging partners should also be encouraged to be join the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association to get on their website (\$135 yearly) and the Allamakee County EDC/Tourism website (\$125 yearly).
6. Identify other common issues such as joint marketing, seasonal advertising and encourage the lodging partners to implement these.

Finally if there are entrepreneurs who want to investigate how to bring independent hotels or hotel chains into the Lansing market, we suggest working with Eastern Iowa Tourism to determine your approach for extended stay lodging.

### **3. You need money to promote Lansing**

To grow the greater Lansing area into a visitor attraction, it will take money to organize, market, and promote the variety of resources here. The current Main Street Lansing budget is tight and it is unrealistic to expect that organization to take on all tourism activities. We believe that the area hotel/motel tax should be increased from the current two percent (2%) to the maximum of seven percent (7%). Work with your partners and with the Region and County tourism entities to understand the process for passing a referendum if City Council agrees.

Grant writing is an important skill that will be needed for the Heritage Tourism Coordinator. There are grants from the State of Iowa for a whole host of tourism-related activities. Grant applications are accepted once a year in early fall, so it is unlikely that the MSL organization will be ready to make an application in 2014. However, during the coming year, we suggest that you network and collect examples of other interesting marketing campaigns and get advice from all of these partners. Go to their conferences and learn as much as you can.

We have also discussed the variety of ways you might wish to fund the Heritage Tourism Coordinator position, hopefully not at the cost of the Main Street Lansing organization's own fundraising.

Main Street Lansing needs to develop one or two more fundraising events—designed only to raise money, not promote the downtown. The Organization Committee traditionally organizes fundraising events on behalf of the Board. We are attaching a presentation we have been making around the country about 139 different ideas for downtown fundraising events, called “A Main Street Fundraising Event Catalogue.” Most of these fundraising events are tried and true, but if you can make a few of them unique to Lansing, they are more likely to generate regular predictable revenue as they grow over time.

### **4. Aggressively market what you have**

There is plenty for a visitor to do in Lansing. Knitting together all the component parts of a destination—the attractions, retail, restaurants, and lodging—is a big and long term effort. The Main Street Lansing Facebook page already is an excellent venue for promoting downtown to residents, be they year-round or summer residents. Grow this base. Consistently add to your email lists to capture more names to market all the visitor attractions and amenities.

The visitor kiosk at the corner of Main Street and the Great River Road, near the public restrooms, is almost invisible to an area visitor. It is a fine initial attempt to provide information

for tourists. Being outside, it is open 24 hours a day, which would not be the case with a Visitor Center in the Main Street Lansing office. We suggest that another kiosk, perhaps smaller or of a traditional design, be placed in the Farmer's Market area in the middle of Main Street. On this kiosk should be posted a map of all the downtown business (that gets updated twice a year to reflect the inevitable openings and closings), the tourism brochure, other area attraction brochures, lodging information (rack cards), and directions to the Main Street Lansing/Visitor Center once it is open.

Learn and understand the tourism industry and network with state, region, and county tourism entities. We suggest that you attend their meetings and network with their staff and other regional members to become more familiar with tourism issues, nomenclature, and the economics of tourism.

Carrie Koelker, Executive Director of the Eastern Iowa Tourism Association, has already offered to come back to Lansing to provide training for all committees right after the Main Street manager is hired. We suggest that Carrie focus on helping the committees add tourism-related activities to their work plans, and get advice about the hotel/motel tax. View their website at [www.easterniowatourism.org](http://www.easterniowatourism.org)

Work closely with the Allamakee County Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator Laura Olsen. Consider inviting her or other tourism staff from the county to help with specific projects. View their website at: <http://www.allamakeecounty.com/tourism.html>.

All of the state tourism grants have been centralized in the State of Iowa Tourism office. The application date is on October 1. Lansing would probably not be ready to make any applications this year. You should begin thinking about what projects you might wish to apply for next year. Maximum awards range from \$2,000 to \$5,000 per applicant, depending on the program. Shawna Lode, Manager of the Iowa Tourism Office, noted that her office has a webinar online that explains how to apply for grants. See: [http://www.traveliowa.com/asp/medi/industry\\_partners.aspx?itgrants=y](http://www.traveliowa.com/asp/medi/industry_partners.aspx?itgrants=y). Some suggestions for grant applications might be for professional photos for website or other brochures, scholarships to attend state tourism conference, or printing and distribution the Lansing tourism brochure.

As soon as the downtown has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, consider obtaining the brown Highway Signs from Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT). These brown highway signs are called "Destination Brown signs." Place these at all the entrances to town. This might be a long process to obtain these signs, so get started now. You might also discuss with the Iowa DOT representative, if there are other brown signs needed to mark specific historic sites in the area. Also discuss if there are opportunities to place the traditional "Blue tourist oriented directional signs" at major gateways into town. See: [www.iowaDOT.gov/iowaroadsigns](http://www.iowaDOT.gov/iowaroadsigns) for more information.

Work closely with Driftless Scenic Byway and IA Great River Road to maximize Lansing's relationship to these organizations and promotion of the town on their websites. You might want to have a representative from either or both organizations come to speak with the Board and committees about how to maximize that relationship, especially now that the Driftless Scenic Byway Interpretive Center is coming soon. Keep up to date on planning, fundraising, and construction.

Consider if you need additional directional signage for pedestrians, to direct them to Mt. Hosmer or other recreational locations, once they are walking in the downtown.

Finally, two businesses in town actively market their business on regional radio and especially television. Everyone benefits from Horsfalls Variety Store and the Lansing Furniture Store's aggressive advertising. Thank them for marketing Lansing for you.

## **5. New tourism related business opportunities**

We have already noted that the two restaurant vacancies should be the focus of the Biz Ops Committee.

The Main Street Iowa program has a sizable Challenge Grant program available that might be useful for an entrepreneur who wants to build an additional boat launch in the downtown. These grants require a 50/50 cash match. Learn more from Tim Reinders at Main Street Iowa. The grant amount changes from year to year so keep up to date with Tim.

Jim Thompson also discussed Business Challenge Grants that are available from Main Street Iowa. These might be useful, if local business wish to expand their operations to include some outfitter type activities (adding canoe rentals, fly fishing gear rental, etc.). If no local business appears interested in expanding their operations, then these funds could be used to recruit a new outfitter business to town who is expanding into a second location.

As you include and promote all of the attractions and retailers on the new website, you will be raising the expectations of visitors that all of these businesses will actually be open. There is nothing more disappointing to a visitor driving a long distance to see a particular attraction or shop, to arrive and find it closed. Continue to work with retailers who have with inconsistent business hours, especially during the high summer season and encourage them to offer and post regular open hours.

Jim Thompson of Main Street Iowa has prepared a brief PowerPoint presentation about the ERSI statistics that he shared during the July 31 presentation. It appears in the back of the report as Appendix I. He has also included ERSI Tapestry information about the five most important consumer segments in the Lansing area. Please ask Jim to visit with your Business Ops Committee as soon as possible to review the ERSI materials in detail and discuss next steps for the committee.

## **6. Committee help to reorient their work plans**

We pointed out earlier in this report that the committees must review their work plans and add more tourist-oriented activities. We also suggest that you consider refashioning some existing events to become more tourist-oriented. At least one more retail event should be organized for the height of the visitor season. The National Register Nomination is a critical tool to use to interpret downtown Lansing for ordinary visitors.

## **7. Start collecting tourism statistics, learn about the cultural and heritage traveler**

The economic impact of visitors coming to Lansing should be tracked to chart your progress and prove to others that the increase in spending in the community is real and measureable. Work with the County and Regional Tourism Partners to understand how they track economic impact of visitation and set up a simple local model to use in the coming years.

Virtually all of the recreational partners invited to the focus group said that they collect and report visitor attendance and spending. It might be a good and worthwhile activity to ask for copies of these visitor stats so you can learn what numbers get collected, and understand the cumulative impact of visitor spending in the region.

Shawna Lode, manager of the Iowa Tourism Office, has been kind to share the most recent (2013) Allamakee County tourism statistics. See them in Appendix H at the end of this report. The 2012 statewide economic impact statistics can be found at:  
[http://www.traveliowa.com/UserDocs/buildapage/Trsm\\_CountyImpact\\_092013.pdf](http://www.traveliowa.com/UserDocs/buildapage/Trsm_CountyImpact_092013.pdf).

Both Carrie Koelker and Shawna Lode made the following suggestions for other towns you might visit to get insights about how these communities developed their visitor attractions into a destination. They suggested the following communities: Guttenberg, Decorah and West Branch IA, a Main Street Iowa communities.

We mentioned during the Tech Visit, that cultural heritage travelers are a lucrative market. These visitors spend more than other visitors. The most recent information about these visitors can be found in a 2013 report by Mandala Research LLC. The nine page summary version of the report is available here:  
[http://mandalaresearch.com/images/stories/free\\_download\\_CH\\_2013.pdf](http://mandalaresearch.com/images/stories/free_download_CH_2013.pdf). The entire report is available for \$295. The State Tourism Office has not purchased this, and we do not think it is worth investing in the purchase of the full report at this time.

The cultural and heritage traveler has been studied since 2009 when the U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism (USCHT) Marketing Council, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of

Commerce, commissioned a report from Mandala Research LLC. <sup>1</sup> Heritage Travel, Inc., a subsidiary of The National Trust for Historic Preservation was lead sponsor of the study. This was the first time that this travel segment merited a full blown economic analysis and it helped the historic preservation community rally around heritage tourism as a viable driver for tourism product development (tours, events, new interpretation, web sites etc.) for historic sites, historic districts, Main Street towns and heritage areas.

According to this 2009 national research study, 78% of all US leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling, translating into 118.3 million adults each year. Cultural and heritage visitors spent on average in 2009, \$994 per trip, compared with \$611 for all US travelers.<sup>2</sup> This was the first time that there was quantifiable research about the larger economic benefit to attract heritage travelers. Other reports since that seminal research project have reinforced the economic benefit of marketing to these travelers.

In 2013 this visitor segment was studied again by Mandala Research LLC and the study “confirms that the cultural and heritage traveler is the most productive travel segment of the travel industry, generating over 90 percent of the economic benefit of all U.S. leisure travelers.”<sup>3</sup> In the 2013 study the total trip spending by cultural and heritage travelers was \$1,319 versus \$994 in 2009. <sup>4</sup>

The 2013 study found that cultural and heritage travelers are more likely to participate in culinary activities, such as sampling artisan food and wines, attending food and wine festivals, visiting farmers’ markets, shopping for gourmet foods, and enjoying unique dining experiences as well as fine dining.<sup>5</sup>

Other cultural and heritage activities identified by travelers include visiting historic sites (66%); attending historical re-enactments (64%); visiting art museums/galleries (54%); attending an art/craft fair or festival (45%); attending a professional dance performance (44%); visiting state/national parks (41%); shopping in museum stores (32%); and exploring urban neighborhoods (30%). The vast majority of these travelers (65%) say that they seek travel experiences where the “destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their historic character.” <sup>6</sup>

Cultural and heritage travelers as a whole are more frequent travelers, reporting an average of 5.01 leisure trips in the past 12 months versus non-cultural/heritage travelers with 3.98 trips.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://mandalaresearch.com/index.php/purchase-reports/view\\_document/1-the-cultural-a-heritage-traveler-study](http://mandalaresearch.com/index.php/purchase-reports/view_document/1-the-cultural-a-heritage-traveler-study)

<sup>2</sup> <http://culturalheritagetourism.org/resources/research.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.travelpulse.com/news/destinations/study-finds-culture-and-heritage-as-major-travel-motive.html>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> [http://mandalaresearch.com/images/stories/pressreleases/CHT\\_release\\_Oct\\_20.pdf](http://mandalaresearch.com/images/stories/pressreleases/CHT_release_Oct_20.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

More than half of cultural/heritage travelers agree that they prefer their leisure travel to be educational and nearly half said they spend more money on cultural and heritage activities. They are also likely to travel farther to get the experiences they seek: about half of most recent overnight leisure trips were 500 miles or more from home. More than a third say they traveled between 100 and 300 miles for a day trip.<sup>7</sup>

The cultural and heritage traveler market is important to Lansing and to other historic sites and communities along the Driftless Scenic Byway because these are the visitors that would be attracted to the variety of history related offerings in Lansing beyond simply outdoor recreation.

For Lansing to thrive, more effort must be made to create tourism products—tours, events, brochures --with plenty of content about the history of the community and your historic architecture. Yes you need a “one stop shop” on your web site and at the repurposed Main Street Lansing office as your visitor center, but these visitors want to be enchanted with your town’s history, character, traditional foods and festivals.

### **Priority tasks**

The following is a list of the priority projects discussed during the July 31, 2014 presentation and the subsequent meeting with the Board of Directors of Main Street Lansing.

#### **Short term: Complete by October 28, 2014 (listed in order of importance)**

- Hire and train a new part time Main Street Lansing Program Director
- Finish MSL website and launch.
- Investigate increasing the current hotel/motel tax to seven (7%) percent with City Council members.
- Create a work plan for how you are going to raise funds for a part time Heritage Tourism Coordinator.
- Have Carrie Koelker come back to meet with all committees about inserting more tourism related activities into new or existing work plans.
- Host a meeting with all lodging establishments. Encourage the lodging businesses to list their lodging facility on the State website and plan a FAM (familiarization) tour so they see each other’s venue to facilitate referrals. Consider creating a task force for lodging businesses to encourage this group to organize and undertake tasks they need, such as coop marketing/advertising.

#### **Medium term: Complete by January 2015 (in no order of importance)**

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

- Update and redesign the MSL tourism brochure. Reformat it as a PDF document so that it can be printed from the new website.
- Contact Iowa Department of Transportation and begin discussions about placing brown historic district signs at all the entrances to town. Also discuss any blue directional signs needed or any additional brown signs needed in town. Start the work to implement this.
- Rebrand the Main Street office as the Lansing Visitor Center. You will need a new sign on the storefront glass, more tourism brochures and racks. The visitor center should be staffed with volunteers in the spring/summer/fall seasons, 7 days a week.
- Plan and host a celebration about designation of downtown Lansing as a National Register Historic District.
- Identify interpretive opportunities for next summer about downtown's architecture, implement this work plan.
- Update the GIS asset map with popups about all the historic buildings listed on the National Register. Include photos and information from the National Register nomination as the popup.
- Have new or revised work plans in place for every committee to include visitors as a priority.
- Meet all the tourism representatives at State, Regional, and County levels, to discuss Lansing's needs, and get their advice.
- Have Katelyn Rutledge, the MSI Design specialist come to Lansing to talk about the implications of establishing a local preservation ordinance in Lansing, and projects others have used to interpret their downtowns to visitors.
- Have Jim Thompson come to discuss the latest ERSI figures and how to recruit to fill the vacant spaces in town for visitor centered businesses.
- Create a work plan for one more special event for visitors in June or early July.
- Consider offering one new retail event during summer 2015, develop a work plan in the next six months, implement in June or July.
- Review the events calendar, and determine whether some events, especially the Open Houses should be rethought or eliminated.
- Collect all of the economic impact and visitor studies from all of the partners who attended the Focus group meetings, and from the State, Region, and County tourism offices. Digest this information and make a report on the potential economic impact of tourism on the greater Lansing Region.
- Identify at least one more fun fundraising event to undertake during summer 2015, develop a work plan.

**Long term: Complete by August 1, 2015 (in no order of importance)**

- Institute a 7% Hotel/Motel Tax, dedicate the maximum amount of those funds for marketing Lansing as a four season destination and for hiring the Heritage Tourism Coordinator.
- Host a fun fundraising event to raise at least \$2500 net.

- Attend State and Regional tourism conferences, network actively at them.
- Fund and hire a part-time Heritage Tourism Coordinator.
- Have a fully functioning Visitor Center in the front of the Main Street office, staffed by volunteers in spring, summer, and fall, 7 days a week.
- Secure a tourism grant to print the tourism brochure and hire a distribution company to make sure that the brochure is placed in all the visitor centers in the region and at all the lodging facilities in the greater Lansing Area.

## **Conclusion**

Main Street Lansing has a wonderful opportunity to organize all of the disparate elements of a high class visitor destination—retail, lodging, attractions, and restaurants—and market this to cultural heritage travelers. Your organizing work will come in bursts of energy as you involve stakeholders and volunteers. The last three years as a Main Street Iowa community has provided you with excellent training in organizing for committee work, reaching out to stakeholders, raising funds, and making a compelling case that downtown is important. You now want to expand that work to make heritage tourism in Lansing an economic engine for continued growth. This work will positively impact the entire community. Your work to draw heritage tourists will never be finished, but please start!

## **Appendices**

- A. Final agenda for technical assistance visit to Lansing IA
- B. List of all participants in Focus Groups and interviews
- C. An Ideal Main Street Website
- D. Assessing the Heritage Tourism Potential of Lansing IA PowerPoint presentation 7-31-14
- E. Main Street Fundraising Event Catalogue PowerPoint presentation
- F. Intercept Survey for Lansing IA
- G. Intercept Survey Results Lansing IA
- H. Allamakee County tourism statistics
- I. ERSI information for Lansing, PowerPoint presentation and four Tapestry Consumer Segments

## **A. Final agenda for technical assistance visit to Lansing IA**

### *Final Agenda*

#### *Lansing IA Heritage Tourism Tech Visit*

### **Monday July 28**

2:30PM Team arrives in Lansing, check into hotel  
3:00 Driving and walking tour  
6:00 Sweeney's On the River, working dinner meeting, review this agenda, review visitor amenities map, discuss focus groups  
After dinner, Donna meets with MSI team re focus groups.

### **Tuesday July 29**

7:45AM Breakfast with Team  
9:00-noon Morning focus groups  
9:00-10:30 (two groups concurrently)  
Summer residents– Shawna Lode FG Leader at MSL Office  
Year-round residents– Donna FG Leader at Community Center  
10:30 to noon (one group) at S&S Rentals  
Partners that manage area visitor attractions, events, recreational locations,  
Donna FG Leader, Shawna as resource  
Noon Team lunch with Shawna  
1PM DAH brief meeting with Shawna Lode before she drives back  
Afternoon, MSI staff types up notes from focus groups for Donna  
2:00-4:00 Committee meetings at KBSB Community Center about work plans  
2:00 Promotions, Jana Schoh  
2:30 Design, Curt Snitker  
3:00 Org, Sue Stirn  
3:30 Biz Op, Dave Janzen  
4:00 DAH meets with retailers, Location?  
4:45 DAH meets with B & B owners, other lodging, Location?  
5:15 Meeting with Paul Horsfall Jr. meeting at MSL Office.  
5:45 End of meetings  
6:00 Dinner meeting with team  
7:30 Meeting with Bill O'Connor at MSL office  
Evening Donna to meet with other individuals if needed, TBD

### **Wednesday July 30**

8:00 Team breakfast  
10:00 Donna meets with Carrie Koelker

Morning Donna has other meetings as needed in AM  
Visit Commercial Fishing Museum sometime during the day  
Noon Team lunch with Bruce  
Afternoon more prep time for Donna  
6:30 Dinner with MSI team  
Evening more prep time for Donna

**Thursday July 31**

7:30-8:15 PowerPoint Presentation at Community Center  
9:00 Board Meeting  
11:00 Donna departs Lansing  
In three weeks, draft report to MSI

## B. List of all participants in Focus Groups and interviews

NAME		IDENTIFYER
Betty	Bell	Seasonal-Part-time Resident
Ed	Benson	Full-time Resident
Scott	Berg	Seasonal-Part-time Resident
Bruce	Blair	Yellow River Forest – DNR
Marty	Brennan	Board Vice-president, Main Street Matters
Mike	Brennan	Mayor
Alison	Brennan	Full-time Resident
Marty	Brennan	BizOp Committee
Joi	Brimmer	Seasonal-Part-time Resident
Jodi	Buckmaster	Capoli Cabin
Mike	Carroll	Hiking, Biking, Kayaking, Canoeing
Brian	Clark	Org. Committee
Becky	Conway	City Council
Mike	Conway	Org. Committee
Mike	Conway	Milty's Restaurant, Bar & Lodging
Mike	Conway	Milty's Restaurant, Bar & Lodging
Tracy	Craun	Seasonal-Part-time Resident
Dale	Crozier	Board Member
Jackie	Custer	Custer's Cabin
Dave	Darling	Board Member/City Council
John	Drew	Seasonal-Part-time Resident
Fred	Easker	Uncle Charlie
Frank	Ebersold	Thornton House B&B
Sue	Gage	Org. Committee
Michelle	Gauer	Org. Committee
Ric	Gramlich	Promotions Committee
Daun	Grief	The Lounge
Nick	Hammell	Safe House Saloon
Ron	Heim	Broken Paddle RV Park & Lodge
Mary	Hogan	Full-time Resident
Brian	Houlihan	Design Committee
Sharon	Huber	Lansing Loft
Kelly	Hutchinson	Gracie's Hutch
Brent	Hutchinson	Gracie's Hutch
Jim	Jannet	Allamakee County Conservation Board
Dave	Janzen	Board Member/Chair. BizOp Committee
Dave	Janzen	Lansing Hardware

Jim	Kerndt	Board Member
Jim	Kerndt	Design Committee
Richard	King	US Fish & Wildlife
Becky	Kobos	Seasonal-Part-time Resident
Ross	Kolsrud	City Council
Joanne	Kondora	Red Barn Resort & Campground
Lisa	Leppert	Espresso
Dixie	Libby	Mississippi Explorer Cruises
Arlene	Lynes	Secretary, Promotions Committee
Sarah	Majewski	Org. Committee
Sue	McNally	Promotions Committee
Sue	McNally	Lansing Tea Co.
Barb	McPherson	Promotions Committee
Carn	Murphy	Murphy's Cove
Jim	Nepstad	Effigy Mounds National Monument – National Parks Service
Jared	Nielsen	Northeast Iowa RC&D
Bill	O'Connor	Full-time Resident
Laura	Olson	Allamakee County Economic Development
Laura	Olson	BizOp Committee
Bruce	Palmborg	Board President, Main Street Matters
Mary	Palmborg	Promotions Committee
Bruce	Palmborg	Design Committee
Bruce	Palmborg	BizOp Committee
Joe	Papp	Board Member
Sue	Papp	Promotions Committee
Sue	Papp	Secretary, Design Committee
Joe	Papp	BizOp Committee
Dick	Roeder	City Council
Dale	Root	Kwik Star
Stephanie	Runkle	Full-time Resident
Judy	Schild	Promotions Committee
John	Schild	Eagle's Nest Gallery
Judy	Schild	Eagle's Nest Gallery
Pauli	Schmadeke	Board Member
Pauli	Schmadeke	Design Committee
Mark	Schmadeke	Org. Committee
Pauli	Schmadeke	The Painted Lady
Mark	Schmadeke	The Painted Lady
Kristi	Schmuecker	Seasonal-Part-time Resident
Jana	Schoh	Board Member/Chair. Promotions Comm.
Jana	Schoh	Red Geranium Floral & Gifts

Heather	Schulte	Full-time Resident
Mike	Schweitzer	Full-time Resident
Bruce	Scott	Full-time Resident
Mary	Severson	Full-time Resident
Teresa	Severson	McGarrity's Inn
Doug	Sharp	BizOp Committee
Justin	Shepard	Sweeney's On The River
Lunch	Smith	BizOp Committee
Curt	Snitker	Board Member/Chair. Design Committee
Curtis	Snitker	Archive on Main
Sue	Stirn	Board Member/Chair. Org. Committee
Sue	Stirn	S & S Rentals
Mike	Stueck	DNR – Fisheries
Jane	Ung	Scenic Valley Motel
John	Verdon	Mississippi River Pool 9
Pat	Wagner	City Council
Rick	Welsh	Board Member
Deneb	Woods	Northeast Iowa RC&D
Ric	Zarwell	Birding – Lansing

## C. An Ideal Main Street Website



### An Ideal Main Street Website

This list can help you to identify a wide range of information to post to your website. This is to ensure that it serves as the crucial information and communication tool for the local Main Street organization. By driving your online presence, such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, Four Square or other location-based apps) as well as your blog (if you have one), to your website, this tool becomes the central place for all information about your organization. Your website must be able to be updated in-house, ideally using a content management system provided by your web designer. In addition, there must be a commitment to update the website on a regular basis so that visitors and residents have the most up-to-date information.

**Home/welcome page.** The face and brand of your local Main Street organization is your home page. It needs to be well designed and consistent with your brand's color palette. This page should contain the most up-to-date news, info, and event highlights and a few photos of people having a good time downtown. The page should be easy to navigate and allow visitors to get further into your site. The Home Page should have links to your Facebook fan page, Twitter feed, Flickr (photo sharing), and your blog. If you have podcasts about downtown, have a click-through from the home page to their location. If you want people to sign up for your mailing list, have a link from the homepage to the location for mailing list sign up on your website. Finally, you must have a Donate NOW button that brings the visitor directly to the donation page (either on your website, PayPal, or other third party site).

We recommend the following tabs for navigation throughout your website. Each tab will have a drop-down menu with the name of sub-pages for each tab. Each of the tabs will have a landing page with general information and then sub-pages with specific information. Some of the information in each of the tabs will be redundant, but do not worry, different audiences need similar information.

About us  
Pressroom  
Visitors  
Businesses  
Residents  
Support

### About Us Tab

**About Us page.** Include general information about your local program, a list of all board (and advisory board) and staff members, pages on basic introduction to Main Street, and the history of your Main Street program. If you have one, include your MS organization chart. We suggest sub-pages for the following information:

**Sub-page for organizational documents and agendas.** This page would have your current vision and mission statements, IRS 990 form for current year and previous year(s), any current strategic plan, annual reports since inception, and a link to Press room for PDF of all newsletters. If you must post agendas and minutes to comply with open public meeting acts, you could include PDFs of all board or executive committee agendas and minutes as well as all committee meetings and agendas in this location.

**Sub-page for committees.** One sub-page for each of the four committees, with lists of projects, work plans for the current year, and list of whom to contact for each committee if someone is interested in volunteering. Link to volunteer sub-page (see info below).

**Sub-pages for specific events.** Your larger events may merit their own web pages with more photos and descriptions. Perhaps put vendor contracts and sponsor packages on these pages that can be downloaded and sent back.

**Sub-page for volunteers.** Briefly explain the role of volunteers in Main Street. Include a list of short job descriptions, which we call “HOT JOBS” for volunteer projects that need volunteers now. Include a volunteer interest form, which could be interactive, or a PDF form potential volunteers can fill out and send to the office.

**Sub-page for photo albums.** Photos of events (could be a click through to Flickr, Shutterfly, or other photo-sharing website) or click through to your Facebook page with photo albums. Note the ownership/copyright of the photo if it is not the local Main Street organization.

**Press room page.** All press releases in PDF format or click through format (see below), any good recent articles from local paper about organization (reproduced with permission or link to the newspaper’s website), how the press can reach you via phone, fax, cell, and email.

**Subpage for annual reports.** All of your annual reports in PDF format since inception (if you do an annual report).

**Sub-page for newsletters.** All of your newsletters in PDF format since inception and/or the archive of all of the email newsletters you send.

**Sub-page for downloadable photos**—High quality copyright free photos for the Press to use about your organization and events. Links to other photo sharing sites (Flickr, Shutterfly etc.) where you post photos about your activities.

**Business Tab.** This tab should be used as your business recruitment and retention hub. If someone is interested in opening a business in your town, this tab should provide demographics and incentive programs and links to the city or county economic development agencies.

**Sub-pages for business directory, parking, and downtown map.** Include every business downtown in the business directory, and organize this list by type (service business, hotels, restaurants, etc.) so a website visitor can find the information quickly. It is ideal if there is a link from the business directory to individual business website (some towns do this only for “investors” who pay a fee for the link). All of these should be in online and PDF form so they can be downloaded and printed. Make sure that the PDF documents are usable when printed on a black and white printer as well as color printer.

**Sub-page Business/Property incentives.** This page should identify what incentives are available, either with a click through to state and city websites with applications and information, or brief overviews of each incentive and contact info and links for applications and forms. Describe the process that the local Main Street organization uses to counsel applicants before submitting applications, and explain the application process, fees (if any), and timelines.

**Sub-page Guidelines/Regulations.** Pages containing any regulations or controls in the downtown such as sign controls, design guidelines, historic preservation ordinances, and any local regulatory controls. These can be click through to local government websites where these documents or information is located or reproduced on your website. Include any information about how the local Main Street organization will help applicants to submit better proposals to these regulatory bodies.

**Sub-page for available properties.** A list with photos of all vacancies and for sale properties with links to real estate brokers or managers of the property.

**Subpage for demographics.** Post the most recent census information here or have a link to other websites that have complete demographic information about your town. This could be the city or county economic development agencies. Make it easy for an entrepreneur to learn about these critical figures by having them here.

**Sub-page on resources.** A list with links to other organizations and other resources that business people should know about in the area or region, such as city or county economic development agencies or tourism groups (local and regional).

**Residents tab.** Residents are the primary users of downtown. They will need regular information about events, street closings, construction, or parking changes.

**Sub-page News Update.** Any breaking news about downtown. This would be a link from the Home Page. Post maps or photos if there is construction or parking changes.

**Sub-page business directory, parking and downtown map.** Same as above.

**Sub-page annual events.** Same as above.

**Sub-page for committees.** Same as above.

**Sub-pages for specific events.** Same as above.

**Sub-page for volunteers.** Same as above.

### **Visitors tab**

If you have an extensive heritage tourism program, or many destination businesses, this tab may have a large number of sub-pages to describe all of the activities and amenities available. Here are some basic sub-pages to consider.

**Sub-page business directory, parking and downtown maps.** Same as above

**Sub-page(s) for area attractions—** This list of attractions in your town should be inclusive. Visitors want many choices including art, dining, music, shopping, wildlife, recreational options, and local food choices. You will have to organize these subpages based on logical categories for your location. Include hot links to every site that has its own website and include the most up-to-date contact information including website, email address, and phone number. Don't forget to include nice photos of these attractions too. Include a map of all the attractions you are identifying in your website.

**Subpage for Lodging/hotels.** This can be a list that you create about downtown hotel options or a link to the local Convention and Visitor Bureau that lists all are hotels, B & Bs, cabins, and the like. You should highlight hotels in downtown as well as downtown attractions with links to these businesses websites. High quality photographs also help. Include a map of all the lodging you are identifying on the website.

**Sub-page annual events.** Same as above

**Sub-pages for specific events.** Same as above.

### **Support tab**

**Donate NOW page or Investor/Supporter page.** Include an application/donation form. This could be either a PDF to fill out and send or a direct link to PayPal, Network for Good, or a

shopping cart on your website. If you set up your own Donate Now page (shopping cart), use a reliable service and a secure page to take credit cards for donations. Ideally you should be able to use the secure page to take any kind of payment, including co-op ad fees, vendor fees, sponsorships, and event and ticket sales, so see if this possible from your service provider.

**Privacy policy, copyright information, web master contact page.** These are usually located at the very bottom of the home page and every major page. Ask your web designer for advice.

This list is by no means exhaustive; we would love to hear about how you use your website to communicate about your local Main Street program.

#### Contact

Donna Ann Harris  
Heritage Consulting Inc.  
422 South Camac Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19147  
215 546 1988  
[donna@heritageconsultinginc.com](mailto:donna@heritageconsultinginc.com)  
[www.heritageconsultinginc.com](http://www.heritageconsultinginc.com)

Other appendix

- D. Assessing the Heritage Tourism Potential of Lansing IA PowerPoint presentation 7-31-14
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