

Quality of Place and Economic Development



A Case Study of the Iowa Great Places Program

Dubuque
Clinton
Fairfield

Quality of Place and Economic Development

Iowa Great Places
Dubuque, Iowa
Clinton, Iowa
Fairfield, Iowa

Perryville, Missouri

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Introduction

Successful community development requires strong partnerships. The ASU Delta Center for Economic Development is appreciative of the support provided by the United States Economic Development Administration. EDA shares our commitment to provide community development services and resources to rural areas of Arkansas. Our working partnership provides the critical technical support necessary for even our least populated communities to develop strategic plans for their economic future.

The Delta Center is equally appreciative of our working relationship with the East Arkansas Planning and Development District and the University of Arkansas Little Rock Institute for Economic Advancement. Collaboration was made even more successful through the expertise of EAPDD members Richard Spelic and Pam Alexander and Mark Goodman, UALR IEA. Recognizing the importance of community development is much more evident when individuals give of their own time and resources to seek best practices and learn from the success of others. A special thanks also to Aaron Stewart, Executive Director, Cross County Chamber of Commerce who added tremendous value in observing as a local developer.

The State of Iowa Great Places program encourages communities to be innovative in looking for ways to improve life for its citizens and use their unique characteristics to foster economic development activity. We were well received in every “great place” we visited. We were heartened by greetings from the city’s mayors and their staff, Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development professionals and volunteers who were eager to tell their story. Cyndi Pederson and the staff of the Iowa Great Places program devoted significant time scheduling and organizing our interviews. A special thanks to Aaron Todd who joined the Arkansas delegation along the way and provided important information in advance of the trip.

Alan McVey, Executive Director
Arkansas State University
Delta Center for Economic Development

Perryville, Missouri Arkansas Delegation

Our thanks to Larry Tucker, CECd, Executive Director, Perry County Economic Development Authority for organizing a tour of the town and interviews with city and county leaders. We are especially grateful for the opportunity to have met the late Robert Miget, Mayor of Perryville at the time of our visit. Mayor Miget fervently believed that good governing often included making decisions that were not always popular but the right thing to do for the betterment of the community. The Perryville story is inspiring and an affirmation that it pays to strive for excellence.

The Arkansas delegation included Dixon Chandler, Mayor – City of Marked Tree; Buddy Lovell, State Representative; Pam Wright, City Clerk, City of Marked Tree; Soози Williams, Marked Tree Chamber of Commerce; Renee Doty, Arkansas Economic Development Board; Jay Robison, Arkansas Economic Development Commission and Frankie Gilliam, ASU Delta Center for Economic Development.

Quality of Place and Economic Development

The bottom line is that cities need a *people climate* even more than they need a business climate.

Richard Florida, Author
Rise of the Creative Class

In the early 1980's economic development professionals began to discuss more frequently the importance of quality of life and its relevance in attracting new investment and jobs to a community. Marketing materials emphasizing good schools, safe neighborhoods, quality healthcare, recreation and excellent shopping outlets stocked the shelves of chambers of commerce and economic development offices. If you were especially progressive, a 20-minute video completed the package. By the mid 1990's, the Internet and World Wide Web made it possible to market the advantages of doing business and living in a community. The standard site selection process utilized by the nation's top consulting firms included visits to the top 10 or 12 communities that best matched the project criteria. Today, that number is substantially lower. Professional site consultants now do the "first look" by way of the world-wide-web.

Development organizations and community leaders also devoted the majority of its time and resources to develop land and utilities and lobby state and federal government officials for better roads and highways, all minimum requirements for industrial development. This was especially true in agrarian regions where new technologies and mechanization had reduced the number of persons necessary to work on farms and in farm-related business. Many rural counties lost significant population in the 1980's and 1990's and were also among the first to feel the effects of companies relocating to Mexico and countries overseas where laborers were willing to work for significantly less wages. From 1990 to 2005, The International Labour Organization reported a 24 percent decline in manufacturing employment in the United States as a result of outsourcing jobs overseas and increased productivity.

As we entered the 21st century, employment in the service, knowledge-based and life science sectors were experiencing rapid growth as manufacturing jobs continued to decline at an alarming rate. It wasn't all bad news though as business experts predicted industrial development was not over, but that it would be different.

The path to attract new industry has indeed proven to be more complex than in previous decades. Utility companies have responded by creating divisions that provide community and economic development training programs and technical assistance for lands under development. Today's project-ready sites are free and clear of any potential environmental risks, are fully infrastructured and cost competitive. Communities across the country have devoted significant resources to build first-class sites, but too often the work stops here.

What works best today is a comprehensive - whole approach to build the local economy and it is catching on in cities and small towns across the country. The cost of starting-up and sustaining a profitable business primarily drives the decision, however, when competing communities are equal or close, quality living conditions and amenities are significant in the site selection process.

Global Competition and the Impact on American Business

A dramatic shift has occurred over the past decade in the number of cities and countries competing for new business investment. China, India and other developing countries continue to develop its infrastructure and are experiencing tremendous growth in the skilled and college educated work force. Manufacturing jobs once dominated foreign markets, however, overseas countries are now filling knowledge based sector jobs and research and development divisions have followed factories. In March 2004, Daryl Hatano, Vice President of Public Policy, Semiconductor Industry Association presented, "How Important is Technology Development" at

the annual legislative summit hosted by the International Economic Development Council. He encouraged summit participants to not be overly concerned about the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs, most of which were unskilled processes, but to remember we are a country of innovators and a nation of people that should continue to look for the next big thing. American based scientists and engineers have successfully increased productivity by applying new technologies and standards. The result has been high capital outlay for the more technologically advanced equipment found on today's factory floors, using fewer people. Automobile assembly facilities require a larger number of people, but the power is not in the number, but rather the quality of the workforce and the ability to recruit management talent that can apply today's best approaches to start-up and sustain maximum productivity. Equally important to sufficient infrastructure and government policies that encourage capital investment, is the ability to recruit today's trained and talented. Michael Gregoire, CEO of Taleo Corporation, a talent management search company cited the shift in company workforce dynamics in a November 2007 special release for ZDNet News. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, adult workers in the 25 to 40 year-old category declined by 1.7 million in 2007 and by 2010, the U.S. will experience a shortage of 10 million workers and an unemployment rate of 2 percent. It isn't any wonder that in this day and time, a company is more concerned about its brainpower than where it lays its bricks and mortar.¹

Where People Want to Live

For the first time in the history of our country, the workforce spans across four different generation groups. The Silent generation born between 1922 and 1945 are traditional, follow the rules and believe in work before gratification. The Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964 have received a lot of attention lately as the oldest of this group are entering retirement. Often

viewed as workaholics, Boomers haven't done a good job finding a balance between work and living. Generation X includes persons born between 1965 and 1980, and prefer a structured environment, need direction and demand the necessary technology to complete the task at hand. They do however, respond well when given the latitude to "do it their way" and have done a better job balancing family life and work. Millennials are persons born between 1981 and 2000 and the youngest demographic in today's workforce. Millennials are good at multi-tasking, entrepreneurial and goal oriented. They are more interested in work and a lifestyle that is fulfilling, and unlike the Boomers who "live to work", they "work to live". Like the generation before them, a healthy balance between work and family life are important factors.² While each generation has distinct attitudes, behaviors and habits, one common denominator prevails. Expectations are higher and exceed the traditional amenities and qualities that once characterized a community as being a good place to live.

Good schools, great neighborhoods and recreational parks are now common standards as a result of the community development movement that encouraged building from within. There is new debate about what constitutes a high quality of life and the measurements are more difficult to define. States and communities across the nation are taking community development programs to yet another level by embracing innovative approaches to develop unique, natural, built and cultural assets.

Jack Schultz, author of *Boomtown USA: The 7 1/2 Keys to Big Success in Small Towns* has gained national notoriety for his outlook on rural survival based on experience in his hometown of Effingham, Illinois. Located in the heart of the state, the community of 12,384 experienced a substantial loss of manufacturing jobs in the late 1980's. A comprehensive approach that included planning, marketing and image-building was adopted and a decade later,

the community began to recapture jobs. Schultz has gone on to form Agracel, Inc., a firm that specializes in industrial development in small towns.

According to Schultz, Boomers are exiting the workplace and looking for communities where they can be involved in social and community betterment causes. Golf courses will continue to be important, but the fastest growing spectator sport in the country is bird watching, yet another signal that there is value in developing natural assets. The Gen X'ers place a high significance on family and want to feel connected. Neighborhoods with sidewalks and houses with front porches are being purchased by young families. Millennials prefer to live in a place that offers close-in neighborhoods and loft apartments in vibrant downtown districts. They work hard and are as interested in playing hard. Close proximity to interesting commercial districts, extreme sporting venues, and outdoor trails will be a major asset for communities anxious to retain and attract today's newest members of the talent pool.³

There are other amenities and characteristics growing in popularity that are becoming increasingly popular with all age groups. Arts and entertainment districts are being developed in cities and very small communities. Colquitt, Georgia, population - 1,918 has gained international attention for rebuilding its economy through the performing arts. A unique characteristic of the town are stories about people and events that had been passed down through many generations. A staged production entitled "Swampgravy" was written and performed to a sold-out audience in 1992. By 1996 the arts council was invited to perform in the Kennedy Center. Today, Colquitt receives 40,000 visitors annually and will complete a \$1.5 million dollar conference center to house the Swampgravy Institute, a learning center that will host an annual conference for small towns looking for ways to capitalize on their own unique culture and qualities.⁴

Neighborhood concepts are back and especially appealing when mixed in with grocery stores, local restaurants and shops. Especially popular are markets that supply locally produced food. Americans are becoming more interested in whole versus processed foods and the purity of mass produced and imported foods is a growing concern. According to the USDA, farmers markets totaled 2,410 in 1996 and in 2006, 4,385 were in place representing an 81.9 percent growth. Trends and predictions regarding lifestyle characteristics have inspired communities of all size to take a more holistic approach to community development and create a place to live that appeals to young at heart retirees and today's up and coming talent.

A Country Town Can Survive

Urban settings have interesting commercial districts, mixed housing and other amenities that appeal to many younger persons new to the job market. There are however, people that equate a high quality of life to smaller places because there is a stronger sense of community.

This is good for home-based businesses which can be run from any location equipped with reliable – high-speed broadband service. Success stories of persons starting up small and growing into multi-million dollar sales are cropping up across the country. Coldwater Creek, a women's apparel store started as a catalog business in a remote area of Idaho by two women from New York who were weary of the pace of life in the city. The store has expanded to malls and fine shopping areas across the country and employs 4,000 people.⁵

Economic development will continue to grow in complexity as technological gains impact productivity, more foreign countries position themselves to compete and the demand for a high-knowledge based workforce continues to trend upward. Strategies for a sound economic development program must be comprehensive with literally no stone left unturned as cities and communities search for ways to be their best and develop an environment where its citizens can

thrive. This study provides an overview of Perryville, Missouri and a more in-depth look at Dubque, Clinton and Fairfield, Iowa's participation in the state program, Iowa Great Places. While each has its own personality and unique set of qualities, the common denominator was an efficient local government and community leaders who envisioned growth and development in a more innovative and comprehensive way. Arkansas teams were involved with each community visit. The delegations included elected officials, community volunteers, local developers, and planning and economic development staff from regional and state organizations.



Perryville, Missouri

Perryville, Missouri is located on Interstate 55 between St. Louis and Cape Girardeau, a regional hub in southeast Missouri. In 2000 the population of Perry County was 18,132. The city of Perryville, population 7,667, is the commercial center for Perry County. Perryville's local government body includes a mayor, board of alderman and city administrator. Robert Miget was elected as mayor in 1984 and continued to hold the position until his death in January 2008.

A controversial issue occurred in Mayor Miget's his first year of office regarding residential street development. Developers were opposed to new policy that would raise the standards of streets in new subdivisions. Homeowners were also asked to share in the cost of curbing and improving streets and adding sidewalks in existing neighborhoods. Although it was a politically hot issue with significant opposition, ordinances were passed by the city board of alderman for new and existing street standards. The bold action of political leaders during that time set the tone for future development. Today, citizens in the community take pride in the appearance and quality of the city's streets and sidewalks. The mayor acknowledged the key to the city's success was maintaining a professional administrative and technical staff with the expertise to direct projects and keep the public informed.

Perryville has a total of 3,473 housing units. As members of the delegation toured the city, there was no unsightly property and even the most modest of homes were well maintained. Two major intersections in the city are constructed with roundabouts. Perryville's daytime population grows by 3,000 people commuting from the county to jobs in the city limits. This

method is used in place of the traditional traffic light and four-way stop approaches, allowing a slower, consistent traffic flow and a lower incident of dangerous wrecks.

A Progressive Community

The Perryville Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1923 and raised its first funds by selling building lots to citizens in the community for \$300. Chamber funds were used to seed the construction of the International Shoe Company in 1925. In exchange for the building, the company pledged to spend \$2 million in wages over the next ten years. A second effort was launched in 1939 with residential lots selling for \$250 to construct an additional International Shoe facility in return for an annual payroll of \$100,000.⁶

Industrial development continues to be an important growth strategy. Perryville has approximately 2700 people employed in manufacturing jobs. TG Missouri Corporation manufactures steering wheels and other auto parts for Toyota and Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation is a food preparation center for dry products including cake mix, cereal and popcorn.

Other major employers include the Perry County Hospital (360), Wal-Mart Supercenter (246), Semco Distributing (159), Bucheit, Inc. (154). The Perryville Industrial Park has 133.7 acres with all utilities on site, is accessible from Interstate 55 and has a 40,000 square foot building available.

Perryville's higher education center partners with Southeast Missouri State University and Mineral Area College. The center provides a general education track and customized programs for area business. General education courses are available through the traditional classroom setting, internet and instructional television (ITV).

Parks, Recreation and Schools

Perryville City Park is a 96-acre site with six baseball and softball fields, basketball court, sand volleyball court, four pavilions and playground areas. The Perry Park Center houses an indoor swimming pool, a 417 seat movie theater which shows first run films and classics and is home to First ACT Community Theater Group. A unique feature is the location of the city's library within the center. The center provides a one-stop place for family recreation and entertainment needs. The cost of the center was approximately \$9 million dollars and financed with a sales tax bond issue. The most recent addition to the city's park system is a 31-acre soccer complex that includes 10 fields, three parking lots, pavilions, concession stand and restrooms.

Perry County has two public and six private schools. Perry County School District 32 includes the Perryville Elementary School with grades K-4, Perry County Middle Schools serves students in grades 5-8 and Perryville High School includes grades 9-12. Altenburg School District 48 serves students in grades K-8. Private schools include a Catholic school for grades K-12, and three Lutheran schools that serve students in grades PK-8. Mayor Miget stated that one public high school in Perry County had proven to be a major uniting factor.

Development Organizations

The Perryville Chamber of Commerce, Perryville Development Corporation and the Perry County Industrial Development Authority work in unison to advance economic growth. The chamber specializes in promoting the city and growth in the retail sector. The Perryville Development Corporation was established in 1954 to relieve the chamber of the growing demands of industrial recruitment. In 1980, a third entity, the Perry County Industrial Development Corporation was formed as an alternate approach to the Perryville Development

Corporation, an organization run solely by volunteers. A county-wide organization also provided the means to utilize public monies from the city and county in the development process. The Perryville Development Corporation continues to exist and is the legal entity for securing and disposing of land to business prospects. The Perry County Industrial Development Authority assists the other two organizations with economic development projects and is the lead for industrial development marketing. The chamber and industrial development authority both employ a professional staff.

The Perry County Industrial Development Authority is funded by the city of Perryville and Perry County through an annual contract of \$66,950 from each entity. The authority has the capacity to issue development bonds. The Perryville Development Corporation has approximately 6 million dollars in total assets. This includes \$600,000 in checking/savings and 1.3 million in land.

Perryville has experienced steady growth during a time when many communities similar in size and characteristics lost population and jobs. From 1970 to 2006, Perry County had a 30.6 percent gain in population and has experienced a 2 percent growth in its labor force every five years. Its proximity to Interstate 55 has no doubt been a factor in developing a strong industrial base and all three organizations have worked jointly to leverage resources needed to develop infrastructure and land - but the work didn't stop there. As impressive is the city and county's commitment to excellence and it is evident in all aspects. A combined library, movie theater and recreation center are unique, creative touches that appeal to young families. The vision and courage to develop new policy in the housing development sector led to sidewalks, walking trails and paths that connect the community and are important features that fit today's lifestyle choices. These attributes all add up to building a place where people want to live and today's jobs follow

the people as opposed to people following jobs. Perryville's practice of a well-rounded community and economic development program has prevailed for nearly a century and there is all evidence the tradition will continue for many years to come.



Iowa Great Places

Purpose: Iowa Great Places is designed to bring together the resources of state government to build capacity in communities, regions, neighborhoods or districts to cultivate the unique and authentic qualities that make these areas special places to live and work, and among the assets on which communities will capitalize are the arts and culture, historic fabric, built environment, natural environment, housing options, retail amenities, entrepreneurial incentives, business development, and diversity.

Background

In March 2005, Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack announced Iowa Great Places, a new initiative designed to pool state government resources to support development projects that focused on the unique qualities and characteristics of communities. The “one-stop shop” would allow state agencies to organize a team that matched the community’s vision versus the community developing a project to fit a state program.

The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, Iowa Department of Economic Development and Iowa Finance Authority served as the lead agencies and were charged with early implementation of the initiative. A total of 18 state agencies are currently involved and review applications to determine if their services and programs are a good match for the community’s vision and a team of coaches are then assigned accordingly. The coaching team works with communities for two months to prepare a final presentation that is made to an advisory council appointed by the Governor. Communities receiving the Great Places designation are provided continued support as state agencies identify and assist in securing funding and technical services to carry out the project.⁷ The following dimensions define the program:

1. **Unique Sense of Place.** An Iowa Great Place possesses a sense of place that values historical roots while embracing a shared vision which welcomes, includes and involves both natives and newcomers and promotes itself as a great place.

2. **Engaging Experiences.** An Iowa Great Place provides and supports authentic, credible and varied opportunities for individual and community expression, interaction and common experiences.
3. **A Rich Social Fabric.** An Iowa Great Place promotes and encourages social interaction – formal and informal – throughout the community or place, with equal opportunity for all people to participate.
4. **A Vital Economy.** An Iowa Great Place contains a balanced, growing, transformative mix of rewarding jobs and sustaining capital.
5. **A Pleasing Environment.** An Iowa Great Place offers clean, healthy and accessible natural and built environments that enhance the quality of life.
6. **A Strong Foundation.** An Iowa Great Place contains infrastructure that is available, accessible and responsive to everyone – the entire social fabric.
7. **A Creative Culture.** An Iowa Great Place displays a shared attitude of optimism that welcomes new ideas, based on a diverse and inclusive cultural mosaic.⁸

Vision Iowa – A Commitment to Creative Development

Mission: The Vision Iowa board is charged by the Iowa Legislature and Governor with establishing, overseeing and providing approval of the administration of the Vision Iowa program and the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) program of the state of Iowa. The Board will encourage and support creative projects that enhance the lives of Iowans throughout the state, will encourage and support visionary thinking in cities and towns and counties of all sizes and in all areas, and will leverage state money as heavily as possible to attract funds for these projects from other sources. The Vision Iowa board will support projects that build on Iowa's unique assets and values, and expand the cultural, recreational, entertainment and educational opportunities in the state.

In 2000, legislation was passed and signed by Governor Vilsack to establish Vision Iowa; a financial assistance program for the construction of large recreation, education, entertainment and cultural projects with costs of \$20 million dollars or higher. A second feature of the legislation is the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) component designed to fund projects on a smaller scale. The Iowa Department of Economic Development community development division is administrator for Vision Iowa and the CAT program. Both programs have been used extensively to fund projects in the Iowa Great

Places initiative. From the smallest communities to more urban settings, leaders in the state of Iowa are utilizing both financial packages in innovative and exciting ways. As of March 2008, the following figures were released in the *Vision Iowa Status Report*:

Vision Iowa

Number of Projects: 13
Total Vision Iowa Investment: \$236,550,000*
Total Overall Investment in Vision Iowa Projects: \$995,589,286

Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Program

Number of Projects: 284
Total CAT Investment: \$95,486,780
Total Direct Leveraged Investment in CAT Projects: \$696,927,252

Total Vision Iowa and CAT Investment

Total number of Projects: 297
\$ 332,036,780 – State Investment
\$ 1,360,479,758 – Local Investment
\$ 1,692,516,538 – Direct Leveraged Investment

Investments have been made in 91 counties and 205 communities

In October 2007, an Arkansas delegation visited the state of Iowa and cities of Dubuque, Clinton and Fairfield to study the Great Places program and learn from community leaders how and why projects were selected. The Iowa Department of Economic Development’s website is www.iowalifechanging.com. The opening page of the state’s lead economic development organization alludes to “balance” and “quality of life” and is a testament to the state’s commitment in seeking whole and meaningful approaches to building its economy.

Dubuque, Iowa **“Masterpiece on the Mississippi”**

Dubuque is the seventh largest city in the state of Iowa, and located along the Mississippi River. Settled in the late 1700's, the city has an interesting Victorian inspired architecture. Population estimates in 2007 reported 60,000 in the city of Dubuque and 90,000 county-wide. From 1990 to 2000, population in the city grew at .2 percent. From 2000 to 2012, the population is expected to change by 3.6 percent. Dubuque County has a diverse economy with trade, transportation and warehousing representing 15.6 percent; manufacturing 14.9 percent and health and social services 12 percent of employment in the area.

A City With a Vision

Dubuque's success is a culmination of four visioning efforts that first started in the 1980's. In January 1982, Dubuque had a 23 percent unemployment rate and the city lost 7.8 percent of its population from 1980 to 1990. A grassroots initiative driven by leaders in the private and public sectors resulted in the formation of three organizations to address development. Dubuque Initiatives and the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation continue to drive business development and have been directly involved in the development of 246 acres and the creation of approximately 1,900 jobs. Dubuque Main Street was one of the first urban main street programs in the country with over a 55 percent downtown vacancy rate in the lower floors. In 2006, new construction totaled \$119 million and building rehabilitations were over \$77 million dollars.

In 1990 broad-based community activism helped shape a vision statement that served as the basis for the Dubuque Comprehensive Plan complete with policies, goals and objectives for the physical, economic and social aspects of the community. Iowa State University provided the groundwork for curriculum to aid in the study of downtown Dubuque. This resulted in over 6

million dollars in infrastructure improvements and the city was the first recipient of the Great American Main Street Award by the National Main Street. The River Museum, first opened in 1980 underwent a \$3 million dollar improvement in the mid 1990's. A past president of the Dubuque County Historical Society, William Woodward believed the museum and riverfront development had even greater potential. Upon his death in 1995, a 1.76 million dollar gift was left to further explore how to best to utilize the brown field areas expand the River Museum. The decade also brought significant change to the state with the legislature's approval of riverboat gaming on the Mississippi and authorization of the Vision Iowa and CAT program.

The people of Dubuque continued to look at development in the city in interesting and innovative ways in the last decade of the 20th century. The revolution taking place along the riverfront led to additional renovation projects in the downtown area. Retail shops, housing, service and knowledge-based industry begin to fill buildings and warehouses abandoned decades earlier. Inspired by the success of the River Museum and local interest in downtown development, city leaders unveiled the "America's River" project. Funding from the Vision Iowa program was awarded in the amount of \$40 million which was utilized to leverage \$188 million dollars in state and local, private and public funds.⁹

In 2003, the City of Dubuque celebrated the opening of the America's River complex. The transformation of an old industrial riverfront into a recreational haven for residents of Dubuque and premier tourism attraction celebrates the historical, environmental, educational and recreational elements of the Mississippi. The five anchor components include the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, the Mississippi Riverwalk, the Grand Harbor Resort, the Grand River Center and the Star Brewery.

The \$188 million development is the result of a partnership between the City of Dubuque, the Dubuque area Chamber of Commerce, the Dubuque County Historical Society, Dubuque County, Vision Iowa and Platinum Hospitality Group. So inspired by the success of the project, citizens of Dubuque began to ask themselves, “What’s next?”¹⁰

The Tradition Continues

Big Ideas with Broad Acceptance that will have a Long-term, Positive Impact on the Growth and Quality of Life of the Greater Dubuque Community
-Steering Committee, Envision 2010, Criteria for the Top 10 Ideas-

In 2005, the Community Foundation of Dubuque and Dubuque Chamber of Commerce initiated Envision 2010, a grass-roots approach powered by visioning tool kits that allowed groups to work on their own to cultivate ideas and interests into viable projects. A community breakfast to jump-start the process was attended by 480 persons. Visioning Tool Kits and training on how to run the process were provided. Community groups would spend the next six months developing their ideas on how best to further enhance the quality of life in Dubuque.

Mayor Roy Buol encouraged participation throughout the community including young professionals who were growing more interested in staying in Dubuque and willing to lend their training and expertise to build an environment that offered unique places to work and live. The Dubuque Racing Association funded the development of an Envision 2010 website citizens could refer to as they went through the process. Over 3,000 ideas with approximately 10,000 people providing input were generated over next six months. The Steering Committee accepted applications for persons interested in serving on the Selection Committee who would narrow the ideas to a list of 100. Town meetings were held to reduce the list to 30 and in January 2006, 10 final ideas were unveiled.¹¹

The Envision 2010 process is proof in the power of involving people in planning for a community’s future. Today, 150 volunteers are actively involved with each of the ten Envision

projects. An action plan, the identification of partnerships and resources has been developed for each committee. Early in the process, Mayor Buol stated, “That work over the next five years would define the next 50 for the city”. The citizens of Dubuque have worked diligently and systematically to recapture its economic vitality. The most recent community development projects identified in Envision 2010 and used in the Iowa Great Places application is a continuation of the tradition established in the 1980’s and has gained the city national recognition as a top destination for today’s young workforce and new investment.

Envision 2010 Projects and Iowa Great Places Application City of Dubuque

1. America’s River Phase II

Phase II of the Mississippi River Museum campus includes a Rivers of America Museum, large screen theater, children’s museum and science center, eco-tours, water taxis, and the Great Rivers Interpretive and Research Center. Additional restaurants, shops and recreational activities will be developed along boardwalks.

The Great River Interpretive and Research Center will enhance the education component of the campus and serve as a base to study mussel revitalization, endangered species, changes in the river and archeological sites. The RiverMax Theater will function similarly to an IMAX but utilized primarily to present information about the Mississippi River as well as other rivers in the nation featured in the Rivers of America Museum. Research scientists from universities across the nation will have an opportunity to be affiliated and the facility will also serve as site for interns.

In 2004, the Mississippi River National Museum and Aquarium was named the Iowa Tourism Attraction of the Year. The addition of the Great River Interpretive and Research Center and RiverMax Theater will double the size of the facility. A movement is also underway to develop a formal network of cities and a coalition of community foundations from Lake Itasca, Minnesota where the Mississippi begins to New Orleans. Partners and resources dedicated to the America’s River Phase II project include:

Iowa Great Places/Endowment for Iowa Health Account Restricted
Capitals Fund of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund

US Department of Transportation National Scenic Byways Program

US Save America's Treasures Program

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, Iowa Historic Site
Preservation Grant

Iowa Department of Economic Development, Vision Iowa Program

Diamond Jo Casino

Tourism Cares for Tomorrow

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA)

Environmental Protection Agency

Total Cost of Project: \$6,745,000

Great Places Grant: \$250,000

Estimated Completion Date: June 2009

2. Performing Arts Center

The citizens of Dubuque have a high appreciation for the performing arts and the city is home to several well-preserved highly treasured buildings that house the Heartland Ballet, Dubuque Chorale, Dubuque Symphony Orchestra and Dubuque Youth String Ensemble. In 2001, the city celebrated the opening of the Museum of Art and houses the largest permanent collection of Grant Wood, the renowned mid-West artist made famous by his painting *American Gothic*. Museum organizers collaborate with the Dubuque Cultural Alliance and Warehouse District to organize special events across the city.

The city council recognized the importance of art and culture to its citizens and in 2003 established a task force, who has since been highly successful in advancing the city's cultural amenities. As a result of the task force, the city has received the designation as a Cultural Corridor; established an Arts Commission and created a grant program and annual operating budget for local organizations.

During the Envision 2010 process, the idea of a state-of-the-art indoor and outdoor performing arts center was presented and adopted as one of the top ten projects. A new center would enhance the city's existing programs and proximity to Chicago could result in touring companies stopping in Dubuque further enhancing the city's reputation as an entertainment destination.

The Performing Arts Center is not an Iowa Great Places supported project. Including the center as part of the city’s plan will however, help leverage state funding should the city move forward with construction. The Performing Arts Center Committee has developed a “Vision for a Performing Arts Center” report that will be used in dialogue with citizens throughout the community to determine how best to maximize resources and build a center that will serve the community well into the future.

3. Passenger Rail Service

Passenger train service to the Rockford and Chicago areas for business and pleasure travel is of major interest to the City of Dubuque as it continues to develop the America’s River project as a destination for special events, meetings/conventions, attractions, educational experiences and tourism. Local support is tremendous and volunteer groups are uniting for the effort according to Cindy Steinhauer, Assistant City Manager. A total of 2,000 signatures were secured in support of the rail service. The Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce has been interested primarily in four-lane highway improvements, but are now, “on board in a big way” according to Steinhauer.

The Illinois Department of Transportation is conducting a feasibility study for service between the cities of Dubuque and Chicago. Local volunteers working closely with the East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) continue to lobby the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Illinois and Iowa state legislature and congressional delegations to make the project a reality.

A study conducted by the Illinois Department of Transportation provided preliminary infrastructure and operational costs:

Cost of Infrastructure repairs	\$32.3 million
Annual Operating Costs	\$4.4 million
Projected Annual Ridership	74,500 passengers
Revenue from Ridership	\$1.5 million
Annual Operating Deficit	\$2.9 million

Kelly Deutmeyer, Executive Director of the ECIA reported that \$32 million is pending in the Illinois state legislature. Also important in the lobbying effort is the Metropolitan Planning Organization who attends regional meetings in support of the project. Other key organizations including the Chicago Convention and Visitors Bureau support the project.

4. Warehouse District Development

We want to create a vibrant Warehouse District that provides a diverse, user-friendly environment for residents, businesses, workers and visitors. The District will enhance the quality of life in the Dubuque Area and create an active, spirited neighborhood and cultural destination for the city, its residents and visitors.

Vision Statement, Warehouse District Revitalization Strategy

The historic Dubuque Warehouse District spans a 17-block area and includes 28 buildings with over 1 million square feet of space. Constructed in the late 1800's, the buildings housed the largest mill working operation in the world. High quality doors, window and trim were produced for over five generations, creating great wealth and the inspiration for many of the city's Victorian homes. The revitalization project adopted by the city council in September 2007 calls for a mixed-use approach that will result in a healthy blend of residential, office, entertainment, and commercial development. The warehouse district became a part of the city's downtown urban renewal district in December to provide financial incentives.

The Dubuque Warehouse District restoration was selected by nearly 15,000 citizens in and around the city as one of the 10 big ideas by 2010. The project involves multiple partners including the city of Dubuque, Dubuque Main Street, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, NICC Business Accelerator and Envision 2010 Warehouse District Committee. A task force of 54 persons ranging in ages and occupations from a young hardware store manager in his 20's to bankers with decades of experience to a graphic artist were involved in the visioning process and will continue the process with the end result being a master plan for the district. Goals adopted by the task force include:

1. Create a Master Plan for the Warehouse District
2. Create a Thriving, Mixed-Use Neighborhood
3. Preserve and Sustain the Warehouse District
4. Create a Clean and Attractive Streetscape
5. Improve Pedestrian, Bicycle and Vehicular Traffic
6. Improve Parking

Currently, raw warehouse space is in use and serves as home to "Voices from the Warehouse District". Art shows, musical presentations, dramatic interpretations, and film screenings are just a few of the events that have made "Voices" one of the city's favorite destination points. The district is also home to an ad agency, interior design and retail shop, law firm and a small iron-working operation. A 25,000 square foot area will be devoted to an

“Entrepreneurial Neighborhood” and will be coordinated through the state funded Business Accelerator program.

Revitalization of the warehouse districted is an estimated \$200 million dollar project. The City of Dubuque Department of Economic Development serves as the lead in the warehouse revitalization project. Aaron DeJong, assistant director in the department and Katie Bahl, Dubuque Main Street work with committee members, private investors, local and state agencies to secure funding and resources. Graduate students from the University of Iowa have completed a study of the district and will allow property owners, city government, development agencies, and citizens the basis to complete a master plan.

While no monies from the Iowa Great Places fund has been appropriated, the warehouse project was included in the application to demonstrate this multi-partner, innovative economic development project. State and federal agencies dispensing funds to development projects are giving more weight to cities that are willing to inject local dollars. Including the warehouse project in the Envision 2010 scope of work and Iowa Great Places application has also created momentum at the local level.

Today there are already hundreds of employees working in the warehouse district and this number will grow!

Dan LoBianco, Dubuque Main Street

5. Washington Neighborhood Revitalization

Washington Neighborhood, Building Community One Home at a Time
Yard Sign, 1502 Washington Street

In June 2005, the City of Dubuque Housing and Community Development Department launched “Revitalize Dubuque: Washington Neighborhood,” a comprehensive revitalization strategy for the downtown area targeting one of the city’s older neighborhoods. The neighborhood includes 55 blocks with 86 percent of the housing constructed before 1939. City officials recognized the unique pedestrian friendly feel and historical quality of the area are qualities especially appealing to young professionals.

A primary factor in launching the project is the potential of building personal assets through home ownership. Findings in the initial assessment of the neighborhood showed 70 percent of properties

were rentals. Organizers approached local lenders who agreed to participate in a pooled program that offers first mortgages at discounted rates. Additionally, for-profit and non-profit contractors in the city have been successfully recruited to rehab homes for sale to qualifying families.

Another important facet of the program is the upturn in citizen involvement through the Washington Neighborhood Association. Jerelyn O'Connor, Neighborhood Revitalization Specialist with the city noted that in the beginning, residents in the area felt as if the revitalization effort was something that was being "done to them." Involvement and input was critical if residents in the district were ever going to embrace the project as "theirs". The once lax attitude has shifted to a more engaged and excited community. Disposable cameras provided to residents were used to photograph areas they deemed as an asset and also to identify problem areas. The process was an excellent tool that further enhanced public participation. When a site for Orange Park, a playground and green space for children was first announced, residents in the district expressed concern about the location. The city responded by scrapping the initial plans and selected a site identified by residents that would better serve children.

In addition, the city's police department initiated a Community-Oriented Policing Program (COP). Officers patrol the area by bike and are an integral part of the neighborhood meetings – they don't miss. Orange Park and refurbished homes complete with front porches have created a heightened sense of community in the district.

a. Prescott Elementary School

Prescott Elementary School serves K-5th grade students in the Washington Neighborhood. A new building was opened in August 2006 and designated as an Expeditionary Learning Charter School for the Arts. The school has become an important focal point in the neighborhood and a haven for many children who are in need of a safe place after school and during the summer months. The City of Dubuque is one of the school's six business partners. Staff from city hall serves as mentors to students and hold regular sessions to discuss city government issues.

b. Crescent Community Health Center

The Crescent Community Health Center exists to improve and maintain the health and well-being of our communities by providing affordable, client-

friendly and comprehensive, high-quality healthcare services in collaboration with other community organizations and resources.

The Mission of the Crescent Community Health Center

In October of 2006, the neighborhood had cause to celebrate again with the opening of the Crescent Community Health Center. It was the vision of local private developer, John Gronen to restore the Dubuque Casket Company building to its original splendor. The upper three floors are being renovated into affordable apartment space with the first floor housing the health center.

The Crescent Community Health Center is one of the city's most noted success stories and made possible through a network of over 45 community-based organizations including health care and government. A major event in the development of the program was a \$1.3 million endowment from the Schmid family, owners of Crescent Electric Supply Company. These funds in turn provided the leverage to secure an additional \$1.3 million, two-year grant from the State of Iowa. A second milestone was the center's designation as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), which will provide up to \$650,000 annually for operations and enhance patient reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid.

The health center has a regional component and serves citizens from Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin that qualify to receive services. The center currently has one part-time physician, a nurse practitioner, one dentist and three hygienists.

In addition to fulfilling its primary goal of providing quality healthcare to residents in the region, the program allows the city to access state and federal funds that have not been available in the past. Dubuque's two hospitals, Mercy Medical Center and Finley Hospital absorb approximately \$4.5 million in charity-care costs and another \$4 million in bad debt on an annual basis. By providing a medical home for the underinsured and uninsured, both hospitals can devote these monies to new programs and create new jobs.

6. Carnegie-Stout Public Library Renovation

To Improve the Quality of Life by Providing Resources that Enhance and Contribute to Individual Enjoyment, Enlightenment, and Knowledge.

The Mission of the Carnegie-Stout Public Library

In the 1850's, Dubuque was the largest and most prosperous city in Iowa. The Young Men's Literary Association was an active group and successfully lobbied the city for a public library. Andrew Carnegie,

library philanthropist endowed the city with a building constructed on a site donated by former Mayor Frank D. Stout. The Library opened in 1902 and in 1981 an addition was made to the building.

Citizens of Dubuque continue to hold their public library in high accord and the city council identified the renovation of the historic portion of the building and an addition to the west wing as a priority in 2006 through 2008. Details of the renovation include more naturally lit reading areas, coffee bar, enhanced computer and Internet services and expansion in its collection. The Library includes 54,000 square feet. Approximately 8,000 square feet in the historical section not in use includes a glass floor mezzanine and skylight and is a major feature in the renovation plans.

The Library is a major destination in downtown Dubuque for locals and tourists to the area. In one year, 419 programs were held and attended by 15,594 people. The offerings are varied including intellectual discussion on books and film to recreational programs for children. Additionally, over 900 meetings are held annually by groups to exchange ideas and disseminate information. The average daily visit to the Library is 1,800 including tourists who are interested in the Carnegie background and its listing the National Register of Historic Places. The library is featured in the book, "Heart of the Community: Libraries We Love". The Carnegie-Stout Library received a Great Places Grant in the amount of \$250,000. Other sources of revenue include:

Iowa Great Places – Endowment for Iowa Health Account Restricted
Capitals Fund of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund

Lacy Trust

City of Dubuque: \$3 Million

Library Board of Trustee Pledges

Private Donations

Total Cost of Project: \$25,791,392.00

Great Places Grant: \$250,000.00

Estimated Completion Date: October 2008

7. Bi-lingual Curriculum and Integrated Bi-lingual Bike & Hike Trail Signage

The Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) included in its 2004 "Strategic Plan for State Economic Growth" the need to "grow in diversity of population and workforce." Iowa like many rural states has experienced population loss in many areas of the state, which in turn has adversely affected the number of persons in the labor force. Cindy Steinhauer, City of Dubuque acknowledged the state's goal to reduce the rate of out-migration and increase in-

migration to the state, fully realizing new residents would bring more cultural diversity.

For this reason, a Bilingual Education Curriculum Committee was established as part of the Envision 2010 process. The committee is working with teachers and parents to expand its foreign language offerings and services to the community's immigrant population. The ability for the local workforce to communicate with persons in countries in other parts of the world will continue to drive where knowledge based jobs go. It is the hope that students graduating from Dubuque schools will be able to speak two languages.

In addition to an enhanced foreign language curriculum, the city's walking/biking/hiking trail system will integrate bi-lingual interpretive signs along its 26-mile trail. Since 1991, the city has leveraged approximately \$2.6 million in federal and state grants to plan, design and build this on-street and off-road system. In October 2006, the city celebrated the opening of the first phase with completed scheduled for the year 2010. Laura Carstens, Dubuque's Planning Services manager noted the trails as alternative means for transportation. Local cyclists are responding with great enthusiasm for its wellness component, but also due to the growing interest in becoming a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly community for commuters going to work. The off-road trails further enhance the city's green space and are family friendly.

The Envision 2010 plan calls for an interconnected system including the Port of Dubuque, Mississippi River Trail and a state park and complete with maps and restrooms.

Revenue Sources Funding the Project:

Iowa Great Places – Endowment for Iowa Health Account
Restricted Capitals Fund of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund
City of Dubuque

Total Cost of Project: \$84,074.00

Great Places Grant: \$34,000.00

Estimated Completion Date: November 2008

8. Mental Health

In March 2006 the local community health organization ceased its program of providing outpatient and support services for persons with chronic mental illness. Hillcrest Family Services, a Christian-based organization that has provided services for over 100 years in eastern Iowa stepped up and within a few weeks were able to resume services. The success of the transition was due to collaboration between Hillcrest and the United Way Services of

Dubuque. United Way is providing in-kind rent and utilities with professional staff from the Hillcrest group providing in-kind services. The United Way building is located in the downtown district and within close proximity to other agencies including social services, workforce development, the community college, governmental offices and is well serviced by public transportation.

The program includes a Recovery Center component and offers courses that aid persons in recovery and rehabilitation the chance to improve and better understand the value of good communication skills, conflict resolution, problem solving, social skills, interpersonal relationships and employment preparedness. A consumer run coffee shop open to the public provides a dual purpose as an outlet for social interaction and training for persons interested in working in the service sector.

Remodeling costs for the project were \$50,000. Operating monies are provided by the Dubuque County Mental Health fund; Title XIX funds; in-kind support from Hillcrest, NAMI and the Dubuque Mental Health Association.

9. Community-Wide Wireless

During the Envision 2010 process in early 2006, the concept of building a city-wide wireless system was identified with and selected as one of the top ten projects.

The City of Dubuque is working with multiple partners to secure funding for the project and have successfully constructed an institutional network (I-Net) connecting 78 educational, non-profit, health care and governmental offices. Through corporate sponsorships, wi-fi hotspots are functional throughout the downtown area providing young professionals and residents of the area the opportunity to work or study while enjoying a view of the Mississippi River.

State Funded and Citizen Centered

Steinhauser, a native of Dubuque detailed the city's long history of a city government that believes in transparency, committed elected officials and a professional staff devoted to the well-being of the citizens it serves. The decision to apply to the Great Places program provided important new money to the community, however, Steinhauser along with others involved in the process claimed as important, was the opportunity to engage citizens representing all ages, social

and economic groups in the visioning and planning process. The hard work in the end created a better sense of “being on the same page.” The City of Dubuque received a total of \$900,000 in Great Places funding. Local match included in-kind services, local monies from the city, organizations and federal dollars.

Quality of Place and Economic Development in Dubuque

The Greater Dubuque “difference” is a high quality of life and a convenient location. There are plenty of tax and business incentives, but for many employers, the attractive landscape and change of seasons, welcoming atmosphere, and recreational amenities play an equal role in the decision to locate here.

www.greaterdubuque.org

The Greater Dubuque Development Corporation (GDDC) is a non-profit public/private partnership and the lead economic development organization in the region. Public investors include the cities of Dubuque, Dyersville, Peosta; Dubuque County, Iowa Workforce Development and the Northeast Iowa Community College.

Rick Dickinson, Executive Director and COO explained the organization’s priority is retention and expansion. In 2003, the GDDC Board of Directors launched the River Valley Initiative, an aggressive five-year plan that included the creation of 5,100 new jobs and \$200 million in commercial development. Over 100 businesses and individuals participated in the campaign raising \$2.3 million. Goals established by the board were achieved in less than four years. The initiative called for a very focused - intense approach to expansion and job creation made successful by a city of leaders willing to invest in them. Since 2006, approximately 1,000 jobs have been added to the greater Dubuque workforce and with the exception of two, all are local business expansions. Dickinson explained that economic development projects in the past two years have not included high numbers of new jobs per project, but they are new economy jobs that require substantial levels of knowledge and

training and the decision made by the State of Iowa and City of Dubuque to fold meaningful quality of place initiatives into its overall development strategy was a great fit for the type of job creation occurring in the city.

Morrison Brothers Company, a Dubuque based company established in 1855 is one of the world's premier producers of petroleum marketing equipment. In June 2008, the company announced the construction of a new headquarters and R&D Tech Center adding 10 new jobs. Making a difference in the industry plays a meaningful role in this company's culture with "innovation and introduction" of new products cited as a main objective according to its website. John Deere Dubuque Works has expanded its operation three times since 2006 adding two forestry production lines and the Forestry Engineering Headquarters, adding a total of 145 new employees. In November 2007, McGraw-Hill Higher Education cut the ribbon on its new global headquarters, a \$32 million, 139,000 square foot building overlooking the Mississippi River. The state-of-the art building has a number of eco-friendly features that will reduce energy cost and water usage in addition to preferred parking for employees driving hybrids. The ribbon cutting hosted by Harold "Terry" McGraw, III, Chairman, President and CEO of the McGraw Hill Companies stated, "We are excited that this state-of-the-art facility provides a new home for our talented and dedicated workforce as we continue to help students around the world reach their full potential."¹² Employees provide editorial, production and marketing services in the development of textbooks, digital products and other classroom content for the subjects of engineering, math, science and health professions for institutions of higher learning around the world. A minimum of 24 new jobs will be added to the existing workforce of 400.

The city has approximately 600 acres available for business development. A 155- acre

area is zoned for heavy industry, has access to rail and is in close proximity to Interstate highways in the region. The City of Dubuque owns a state of the art technology park with lot size ranging from 2 to 6 acres. The site will include a park complete with walking trails, two lakes and landscaped green space.

Although there is much to boast about in the way of job creation and investment, Dubuque is an excellent example of a city whose leadership understands the value of continuing the development process. The GDDC board of directors voted in June 2006 to conduct a feasibility study to determine where the focal point should lie in the next development phase. One-to-one interviews with 67 business leaders in the community were conducted. Findings from the interviews included a strong belief that the focused approach used in The River Valley Initiative had been the key to the city's surge in economic growth. Strategies include a continued focus on retention and expansion, workforce development and new business attraction. A \$6.2 million goal was established to fund the Greater Dubuque: Destination for Opportunity five year plan (2007-2012), which was exceeded within months of launching the new initiative.

Dubuque: An All American City and Best Place for Young People

In 2007, the City of Dubuque was named an All America City by the National Civic League and designated as one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People by the America's Promise Alliance. The National Civic League designation is one of the most prestigious community recognition programs in the nation. Communities compete by submitting three projects whereby grass roots – highly collaborative approaches are used to identify and resolve problem areas in the community and develop assets to their full potential. The Dubuque application included the America's River Project, Downtown Master Plan and Crescent Community Health Center. Ten cities receive the designation each year.¹³

The America's Promise Alliance recognized Dubuque's comprehensive approach to caring for, educating and preparing its young people for their future through a variety of community based programs. Health and dental care services provided by the Crescent Community Health Center to families and their children that are uninsured or underinsured has been embraced as one of the city's most important accomplishments. The Youth Area Philanthropists (YAPPERS), a 12-student board that meets regularly to organize fund raisers, special events and recognition program for other youth in the community. The Dubuque Mentoring Partnership involves several organizations and actively recruits adults to mentor to school children during the week and for one hour each weekend for at least nine months. The business community is directly involved with all public and private schools in the city through formal "partnerships." Mentoring, educational support, in-kind donations and direct financial contributions are provided by business to the schools.

Since the mid 1990's, the City of Dubuque has been recognized for its commitment to excellence and building a place where people can work hard – play hard and live well. The historical features of the downtown buildings provide the perfect backdrop for today's young, edgy workforce. The mighty Mississippi is a tremendous asset and city leaders have worked smart and hard to fully develop this natural resource into a destination for entertainment, learning and commercial trade.

Clinton, Iowa
“Even More Things to do With a River View”

We believe that Clinton Iowa is not only a region that radiates energy, or a culture rich in history with many hidden assets, but it is a place that will connect to your spirit, a place that will connect with you. You can feel, see, smell, and taste the authenticity of Clinton Iowa. We would like the State of Iowa to help us re-image our “special place.” Our Vision for Clinton is to expand and improve the public spaces of the twelve mile Clinton riverfront by “connecting the dots” of existing public spaces to produce a Grand Promenade extending along the entire riverfront from the South Bridge Area to Eagle Point Park.

Clinton Great Place Vision Statement

Clinton, Iowa was selected as a pilot community for participation in Iowa Great Places.

The city is located on the Mississippi River and has an impressive 12-mile developed riverfront area. Clinton’s past and present successes have been fueled by its location. In 1855, the Chicago, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad selected a point of crossing adjacent to the settlement spurring an economic boon that created great wealth for many in the area. From the 1850’s to 1900, Clinton was regarded as the nations’ sawmill capital. The city had as many as 13 millionaires during the era and jobs were plentiful for young families looking for a place to settle.

The river and rail continues to play an important role and is an economic driver for the region. Heavy industry, value added processing and movement of commodities make up a significant portion of the region’s employment base. The scenic and recreational qualities of the river have been used to develop outlets for entertainment that range from professional baseball to dinner aboard the riverboat in this community of 27,000 people.¹⁴

Commitment to Good Living

Clinton’s selection as a pilot community in the Iowa Great Places initiative was due in large part to the city’s commitment to building a community where citizens can live a balanced life with good wages and things to do as evidenced with the city’s involvement in Vision Iowa.

Vision Iowa, an initiative of the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) was authorized and funded by the Iowa legislature in 2000. The state's department of economic development not only touts the merits of community development, but with this important piece of legislation provides funding to communities interested in enhancing its recreation, education, entertainment and cultural activities.

Clinton's proposal, "Things to Do with A River View", included a wide array of projects totaling \$22,432,279 and is the precursor to its "*Even More Things to Do with a River View*", the name given to its Iowa Great Places Proposal submitted in 2005. By the time the Great Places proposal was submitted, many of the projects listed below were completed or had been initiated, demonstrating an aggressive community willing to invest energy and resources in itself. The city was awarded with a \$3,300,000 grant from the Vision Iowa program to fund the following projects and to leverage additional local, state and federal dollars:

First Class Marina

Construction of a new marina to support recreational boating on the Mississippi

Minor League Baseball Stadium Improvements

Clinton has been home to a professional baseball teams since 1895. Riverview Park which became Alliant Energy Park in 2002 has been home to the Clinton LumberKings since 1937. The LumberKings is a Class A farm team for the Texas Rangers. With an estimated \$3,400,000 in upgrades, the facility meets major league standards.

Showboat Theater

First constructed in 1935 as a working tugboat on the Ohio River, this craft was converted to a showboat in 1962 and purchased by the City of Clinton in 1966. It has since been used as the city's place to go for stage performances in the summer months. Under the Vision Iowa plan, the theater was refurbished and is used on a year-round basis.

Aquatic Park

Enhance and enlarge existing public pool for families in the region.

Band Shell in Riverview Park

Construction of new facility to host outdoor performances on the banks of the river.

RV Park

Enhancement and enlargement of park to better support RV's and campers

Skateboard Park

Construction of new facility in River View Park.

Allied Steel Redevelopment

A \$14,000,000 EPA supervised clean-up on a 7.7 acre site adjacent to River View Park. The site will be reverted back to public use and become a part of River View Park upon completion of clean-up.

Liberty Square Redevelopment

A 220-acre brownfield renewal project that includes environmental clean-up of several properties. The total scope of the project is estimated at \$52,000,000 which includes reconnecting the revitalized downtown to the area. Federal funds in the amount of \$13,500,000 have been secured for the project. Upon completion, the redeveloped area will be used for business development, provides an alternative to sprawl and will strengthen other investments in areas adjacent to the square.

Cultural & Entertainment District

Communities can earn the designation as a certified cultural and entertainment district (CED) through the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Benefits to the community include tax credits for the renovation of historic properties and building new programs to encourage participation in the area of arts and entertainment. The Clinton downtown district will continue to encourage arts and cultural development, organize ethnic festivals and events to celebrate Clinton's diverse heritage and support the Clinton Diversity Team, a program designed to uphold the community as a warm and welcoming place for all groups.

Iowa Great Places Application

When Governor Tom Vilsack unveiled Iowa Great Places in March 2005, community leaders in Clinton began to discuss how to continue the process of developing the city's riverfront. To capture fresh ideas on how the city's greatest natural asset could be further developed to provide amenities that appeal to young adults, youth and adults under the age of 40 united to form the Clinton Great Places Committee. Today, leaders cite this approach as one of

the primary reasons their town was selected as a pilot for the project. The Great Places application included four focal points along the Mississippi:

1. Eagle Point Park

Owned and operated by the City of Clinton, Eagle Point Park was constructed in the 1930's as part of the nation's WPA project. The park overlooks the widest point on the Mississippi River just before emptying into the Gulf of Mexico. Several structures including a stone castle and a wooden lodge built by WPA workers serve as anchors for the park. Projects named in the Great Places application include:

- An observation tower in the form of a lighthouse to overlook the river's widest point. Upon completion the tower will be the tallest in the state and the tallest lighthouse in America.
- Restore the 1,000 step WPA project that once linked overlooks to the river
- Develop walking and hiking trails
- Develop sites to support RV and primitive camping; restroom facilities
- Enhance recreational play area by adding large sprinklers/fountains and outdoor ice-skating during winter months. Additional outdoor activities to a Frisbee (disc) golf course, paddleboats, kayaks, and other water craft.
- Add North park entrance to support traffic flow to campsites
- Re-open the Soaring Eagle Nature Center
- Acquire additional lands to serve as residential buffer
- Private sector development of lodging facility and water park

Eagle Point Park projects supported by state and local sources as of January 2008:

Playground Equipment. Iowa Great Places/Endowment for Iowa Health Account Restricted Capital Fund of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund; City of Clinton Parks & Recreation: GameTime

Total Cost of Project - \$136,982.58
Great Places Grant - \$79,860
Completion Date – October 2007

Restroom Facilities. Iowa Great Places/Endowment for Iowa Health Account Restricted Capital Funds of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund; City of Clinton Parks & Recreation

Total Cost of Project - \$83,902

Great Places Grant - \$80,402
Estimated Completion Date – April 2008

Disc Golf Course. Iowa Great Places/Endowment for Iowa Health Account Restricted Capital Fund of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund; Clinton County Community Development Association; Private Sponsorship and Pledges

Total Cost of Project - \$17,660
Great Places Grant - \$11,160
Estimated Completion Date – May 2008

2. **North River Drive and Lyons Historical District**

This element of the Clinton Great Places proposal seeks to “connect the dots” by extending its northern River Drive to the city’s Main Avenue. This connection will follow the river allowing greater visibility and scenic quality. Projects also included in the area that will hopefully inspire additional redevelopment in this historical district:

- Build playground and picnic areas overlooking the river
- Establish a trolley depot to Eagle Point Park using the restored Lyons Depot
- Construct a decorative archway over the North Bridge

North River projects supported by Iowa Great Places:

Welcome Bridge Arches. Iowa Great Places/Endowment for Iowa Health Account Restricted Capital Fund of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund; Federal Transportation Enhancement Program; Iowa Department of Transportation

Total Cost of Project - \$229,084.75
Great Place Grant - \$103,084.75
Completion Date – January 2008

3. **Joyce & Willow Islands**

Joyce and Willow Islands provide natural barriers from the main current of the Mississippi River. The Clinton Marina is situated in the Joyce Slough area and upon completion will provide easy access to the main channel for local boaters and will be a conduit for recreational boaters from other places to dock and enjoy shopping, restaurants and other forms of entertainment in Clinton. Projects designated to further enhance the area:

- Clinton Sawmill Heritage Experience. This project celebrates Clinton's early sawmill days and will include exhibits, log rides, sawmill and tours.
- Gate installation to flow river water into the Sawmill grounds
- Public beach development in the Willow Islands harbor complete with bathhouse and concession stand. The area will be designated for out-of-the current swimming
- Boardwalk to include restaurants and create a carnival atmosphere
- Work cooperatively with Army Corps of Engineer in Joyce Slough study
- Create a link between Riverview and North River Drives
- Improve parking

Joyce and Willow Islands projects supported as of January 2008:

3a. Sawmill Heritage Experience Museum. The Clinton Kiwanis club, Clinton County Community Development Association, Wild Rose Casino and McEleny family are local supporters involved in the development of the museum. State support is from Iowa Great Places/Endowment for Iowa Health Account Restricted Capital Funds of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund.

Total cost of project - \$1,965,000

Great Places Grant - \$490,000

Estimated Completion Date – June 2008

3b. Public Beach. Plans to enhance the existing beach includes reshaping and additional fill. Lighting consistent with that along Discovery Trail, park benches, restrooms, picnic tables and trash receptacles will complete the area.

4. South Bridge Area

The Chamber of Commerce and Clinton Regional Development Corporation are housed in the historic Armstrong building. Designed by a Clinton architect and constructed in 1891, the building housed the Clinton Produce Company. In 1912 the building became home to a local hardware company and in 1941 was acquired by R.W. Armstrong. Upper floors have been renovated and are used as affordable apartment space. Projects defined in the South Bridge area are in close proximity to the Armstrong building and upon completion will enhance the historical integrity and value of the building.

- Extend the Riverview Trail which currently terminates in the area. A \$2.1 million grant awarded in 2005 to extend the trail. Designation as a Great Place will aid in leveraging this pool of federal dollars

- Construct a multi-station exercise area adjacent to river and trail. Area targets physically inactive residents.
- Develop a Heritage Sculpture Garden to reflect river and sawmill heritage
- Establish a community art grant program for public art and murals
- Decorative archway over the South Bridge

South Bridge Area projects supported as of January 2008:

4 a. Public Art Sculpture Garden. Iowa Great Places/Endowment for Iowa Health Account Restricted Capital Funds of the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund; Gateway Area Cultural Alliance.

Total Cost of Project - \$72,500
 Great Places Grant - \$68,000
 Estimated Completion Date – June 2008

Vision Iowa has provided much needed capital for large community projects in excess of \$20 million. Important grant monies had been awarded but the lack of technical support at the state level made it difficult to pull projects together. Communities were pretty much on their own to find ways to best use its Vision Iowa funding. The Great Places initiative filled the gap. While additional funding is tied to the Great Places program, the most noted and lauded element of the program are the teams of state agency members assigned to coach community leaders as they identify and coordinate ways to make their visions a reality.

Economic Development

The Clinton Regional Development Corporation serves as the lead economic development agency for Clinton County. Established in 1953, the organization serves the regional development program for the cities of Clinton, Camanche and Low Moor, Iowa and Fulton, Albany and Thomson, Illinois. Every two years, a Labor-Shed study is conducted to determine various employment characteristics including the number of people in management, advanced manufacturing and value-added agriculture jobs. A 2006 survey revealed the Clinton Labor-shed consists of approximately 223,000 people.

Manufacturing represents 21.6 percent of covered employment in Clinton County. Education/ Health Services and Trade round out the top three job categories. The average weekly wage in the manufacturing sector is \$903.¹⁵ Archer-Daniels Midland (ADM), International Paper, Nestle-Purina, Bemis Clysar (DuPont), Lyondell Chemicals and Custom-Pak are among the city's top employers.

ADM one of the world's largest agricultural processing companies employs 800 people in its Clinton corn processing facility. In March 2006, company officials announced a \$500 million dollar project to be constructed in Clinton as the result of a partnership with Metabolix, Inc., a Cambridge, Massachusetts based company who through years of research developed a biodegradable, multi-use plant-based plastic. The process will use corn starch from the Clinton plant as its primary raw material. Approximately 100 new jobs with an hourly average wage of \$21 will be added.¹⁶

In 2005 the Quality Jobs 4A Strong Future campaign was announced with the goal of raising \$2,400,000 for development projects. A cooperative effort between the chamber of commerce, the regional development corporation and the non-profit group, Clinton Business Park Development Corporation to establish new jobs in the commercial, light industrial and office sectors resulted in the 108 acre Lyons Business and Technology Park.

The city also celebrated in that same year, the opening of Ashford University, a private university accredited by the North Central Association that offers bachelor's degrees in 15 areas and a master's degree in Organizational Management and Business Administration. The university is owned and operated by persons previously affiliated with the University of Phoenix. In addition to a traditional campus program, the university caters to those seeking to advance their education online.

Clinton Community College and Technology Center is part of the Eastern Iowa Community College District encompassing six counties. In addition to more than 7,000 students enrolled in associate of arts and college transfer programs, the district has an average of 3,000 students enrolled in one of its 40 career technology programs and 30,000 people participated in business and industry training, continuing education and adult education offering.

Tax Increment Financing

“Tax Increment Financing put Clinton back on the map,” according to Steven Ames, President and CEO, Clinton Regional Development Corporation. Tax Increment Financing or a TIF as it is commonly known, allows governments to use property taxes from the increased value of a property to offset costs associated with public improvements, utility upgrades, to finance direct grants or loans to a company or to provide the local match for federal or state economic development assistance programs. A TIF has been used for brick and mortar projects including residential, commercial and industrial projects throughout the City of Clinton, including development and revitalization in the historic downtown district.

Downtown Partnership

The downtown business district built on the shores of the Mississippi includes beautifully restored 19th century buildings with nine listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Boutique shopping, home-cooking and a wide array of service businesses provide something for everyone. The city hosts 1.5 million visitors annually. In 1997, the Downtown Partnership was formed as a division of the Clinton Chamber of Commerce complete with an executive committee, board of directors and committees. The Partnership provides technical support and assistance regarding local, state and federal downtown and urban revitalization programs. So

inspired by the focus on downtown development, property owners in 1999 petitioned the city to form a Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) for a period of ten years beginning in July 2000 and ending in July 2010. Over 250,000 square feet of commercial space has been filled and 100 businesses have started up or expanded. The first phase of a streetscape project was completed in 2003 with 60 percent of the funding coming from foundations and grants.

In addition to the SSMID, several local and state programs exist to support downtown revitalization. The City of Clinton Urban Revitalization Program provides a 50 percent property tax exemption for three years if the value is increased by at minimum of 10 percent. The Clinton Enterprise Zone Program provides new jobs credit of one and one-half percent of gross wages for all new jobs created by a business and may claim a corporate tax credit up to 10 percent of the new investment and are eligible for a refund of sales, service and use taxes paid to contractors. The Downtown Clinton Façade Program provides matching grants up to \$5,000 for property owners participating in the SSMID. The 20 percent Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program is available for National Historic Landmarks that generate revenue and have followed rehabilitation standards established by the Secretary of the Interior. Additionally, the State of Iowa provides a 25 percent Historic Preservation Tax.¹⁷

The Right Thing to Do

The Midwestern states are often characterized as a place where its people are “salt of the earth” and regarded by many as one of the best depictions of true Americana. Independent, smart, hardworking and a quest for excellence are characteristics that came to mind as the Arkansas contingency traveled through the State of Iowa. Clinton was no exception.

The city has an impressive professional staff working on a wide array of development programs. The Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Partnership and Convention & Visitors Bureau have a combined staff of eight housed in the historic Armstrong building. All three organizations share support staff and other resources. Julie Allesee, President of the Clinton chamber and Steve Bamman, Director of the Downtown Partnership both voiced the advantages of working under one roof. While each area has its own board and mission, projects and programs are coordinated and everyone is on the same page. The Clinton Regional Development Corporation is also housed in the Armstrong building, including Ames and three full-time staff. Ames explained the importance of the staff, boards and committees doing the job very well to succeed and thrive in today's economy. He further claimed the community is the best it has been in 35 years. The Clinton County Community Development Association rounds out the group as the license holder for the Mississippi Belle II Casino. In an average year, over one million dollars is distributed to nonprofit groups in Clinton County.

The City of Clinton is 93.9 percent Caucasian. The Mayor and Chief of Police are both African-American. Diversity is a Clinton value not taken lightly. The Clinton Diversity Appreciation Team was organized when two former school board members recognized the importance of creating a welcoming environment for all people. As impressive is the city's community-wide church picnic – an event that has grown from two churches to many representing Protestants, Catholics and African American congregations.

The presence of arts and entertainment is a mainstay when it comes to measuring quality of place and Clinton is no exception. The Clinton Symphony Orchestra, Gateway Contemporary Ballet Company and Summer Stock Theater provide exposure to and appreciation for the performing arts in the area. The Riverview Cultural and Entertainment District is a certified

“cultural and entertainment district” (CED) as designated by the The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. A CED is defined as a mixed-use compact area of any city with a high concentration of art and entertainment venues. The Clinton CED includes 40 blocks and 200 businesses offering a broad array of activities from unique dining in one of its sixteen restaurants to shopping in the museum gift shop. The city is also home to Bickelhaupt Arboretum, a 14-acre outdoor museum opened to the public in 1970. The arboretum is operated as a foundation with a board of directors committed to using this community asset to provide educational and enrichment programs for adults and children in the region.

Clinton’s commitment to quality is as evident in its unique approach to developing infrastructure and housing. In October 2005, a new subdivision was announced by a non-profit developer and the chamber of commerce. Persons in the 80 to 110 percent median income range can purchase shovel-ready lots for \$10,000 allowing the new homeowner to put more money into the structure. The Clinton Municipal Transit Authority operates a trolley and allows school children to ride a bus at no cost. Both modes of transportation are well utilized with over 270,000 rides given on an annual basis. The city also places a high priority in street and public space maintenance. Approximately 80 percent of the city’s street budget and 8 percent of the park system budget goes to maintenance. The city’s Parks and Recreation Department include 10 administrative and 16 field staff and are responsible for the city’s 479 acre system that includes 18 parks and 21 facilities. A 4.8 mile trail from Riverview Park in the downtown area to Eagle Point Park is also a part of the parks system.

As the group sat around a conference table in the Armstrong building near the end of the session in Clinton, Ames briefed the group on various projects in the region when the discussion turned to today’s trends in economic development and how it was becoming more necessary for

states and communities to work in very whole ways to build the economy. Ames, a talented and seasoned developer talked about the complexity of the ADM project and studies underway within his department to better understand existing and future trends in the labor market. As members of the Arkansas contingency commented on how Clinton had evolved from a good community with a strong industrial base to an exceptional place alive with recreation, entertainment, and great neighborhoods he agreed the movement had enhanced the city's economic development effort but added, "More than anything, working hard to build a great place for people to live is the right thing to do."

Fairfield, Iowa

Named Nation's Most Entrepreneurial City Under 10,000 Population

National Association of Small Communities, Washington DC, 2003

One of the Nation's 12 Great Places You've Never Heard Of

Mother Earth News, 2006

Iowa Community Entrepreneurship Award

Community Vitality Center, 2004

Fairfield, Iowa located in southeastern Iowa is more than just a great place. It is one of the most unique small towns you will find in the country. The area has a rich agrarian history with beautifully maintained farmhouses, barns and crops scattered through the countryside. As you enter the town, coffee houses, restaurants, retail shops and art galleries – 25 of them in all - line the streets of the historic downtown district. There are 22 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places including the first Carnegie library constructed west of the Mississippi River. Storefronts line the streets and advertise a wide array of products and services including organic food and clothing, wellness products, and art supplies. Situated next to, above and below the shops are restaurants. Fairfield has more restaurants, cafes and specialty food eateries per capita than San Francisco and the choices are as impressive. An organic vegan cafe,

chocolate candy store, Thai, Mediterranean, Indian, Italian, French, Chinese, Mexican and American fare provide choices one would expect in a big city. The buildings in the downtown district have beautifully restored exteriors. The interior design and decorations are appropriate and impressive. Alley-ways are clear, clean, landscaped, and provide added pedestrian walk space.

Central Park is the heartbeat of the downtown square. The park is fully landscaped with pathways, a bandstand gazebo, benches, and a bronze life-size statue of an early settler seated on a bench talking to a modern-day boy. The park is home for the Farmers Market, Live on the Square music shows and the 1st Friday Art Walk.

Fairfield has implemented a Cultural District and shares this distinction with only 90 cities across the United States. Building owners can benefit with certain tax credits or exemptions. The Iowa State Historic Preservation Office administers the program. In order to meet the criteria of establishing a Cultural District, a Fairfield Cultural Alliance was formed in 2005. The alliance serves as an umbrella for organizations whose mission is to inspire and support heritage and artistic endeavors in the community.¹⁸

Fairfield's population estimate in 2007 was approximately 9,500 and Jefferson County was estimated at 15,618. There are more than 60 different cultures represented in this population and the source for the collection of stores in and around town. The economic base of the area is as diverse as the people who populate it. In 2006, the county had a total employment of 7,803. Persons working in wholesale and retail trade represented 20.8 percent of employment, followed by manufacturing at 16.9 percent. Employment in education and health services and professional and business services represents 12.7 percent and 11.6 percent of the population respectively.¹⁹ Persons 25 and older in Jefferson County with a Bachelor's degree represents

19.4 percent of the area compared to the nationwide average of 15.7 percent; Master's degree is 8.6 percent compared to 5.9 percent and at the Professional and Doctorate levels, 3.15 percent compared to 2.9 percent.

The town got its start in the 1830's and flourished as railroads expanded to the north and west. Agriculture and industry were dominant and the people were mostly of Dutch and German heritage with traditional Christian values. In 1875, Parsons College, a Presbyterian supported institution was established. A surge in enrollment occurred in the early part of the 1960's but by 1969 the college had lost its accreditation and was forced to close its doors in 1973. In 1974, the campus and its 72 buildings were sold to the Maharishi International University, now known as the Maharishi University of Management (MUM). The university's leader, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement had been in the United States since 1959 and already had a substantial following including rock groups, The Beatles and The Beach Boys. The university would incorporate TM into its culture with the intent of developing a consciousness-based learning environment. In 1979, 800 new students moved to Fairfield to be a part of this unique learning environment, followed by 2,000 more from across the globe several years later.²⁰ Longtime Fairfield residents were apprehensive of these modern day immigrants. Transcendental Meditation is believed to have ties to Hinduism, however, the MUM website states, "It's not a religion, philosophy, or lifestyle. It's the most widely practiced, most researched, and most effective method of self-development." There are members of the "meditating" community that also attend one of the town's many churches.²¹ Although it has taken several decades, the early and modern-day settlers have found a common bond in finding ways to develop Fairfield. It is impossible to discern longtime members of the community from the newer-comers and they like it that way. While it is necessary to tell the TM story,

community leaders are much more interested in discussing how in this highly diverse, multi-cultured climate, great minds have come together to make their town one of the most interesting and unique rural places in America.

The Fairfield Evolution

Dr. David DuBois, President of the Fairfield Cultural Alliance describes Fairfield as a place where the entrepreneurial spirit has thrived since the town's early beginnings. Fairfield successfully planned and was home to the first two Iowa state fairs in 1854 and 1855. The area's strong agricultural base was also the catalyst and inspiration behind William Loudon, a local agriculturist who issued a patent in 1867 for a hay-stacking device that marked the genesis of the Loudon Company. Loudon issued over 100 patents for specialized farming and materials handling equipment and was to dairy production what John Deere and McCormick were to row-crop farming. The family sold the company in 1953.²² Today, the three-story Loudon building is home to a gourmet restaurant, shops, studios and apartments.

Burt Chojnowski, Founder and General Manager of Brainbelt Consulting is a past president with the Fairfield Entrepreneur's Association and lauded by the town's leadership for his commitment to helping others understand the dynamics of turning a great idea into a viable business endeavor. In a piece presented at the National Rural Entrepreneurial Gathering organized by the Iowa Community Vitality Center, Chojnowski writes about start-up Fairfield companies that are successful and have had tremendous influence in their respective sectors.

Books are Fun, a national book and gift fair display company got its start in Fairfield after local entrepreneur Earl Kaplan failed at his first two business endeavors. In 1999, Kaplan sold *Books are Fun* to the Reader's Digest Association for \$380 million. The success of *Books are Fun* was due in part to its association with the *Chicken Soup* franchise. A partnership

between *Books are Fun* and Marci Shimoff, author of the best-selling series that began with *Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul*, resulted in sales that soared to \$400 million over twelve years. The partnership also provided opportunities for writers in the area. There have been thirteen co-authors of the series that live in Fairfield. The Reader's Digest Company continues to own *Books are Fun* and Fairfield remains as its corporate headquarters.²³

If you have ever watched a thirty minute commercial about how to make money in the real estate market or an offer from Time-Life on buying special music collections, you have experienced the work of Hawthorne Direct, a locally grown company and the country's lead producer of long-form commercials known today as infomercials. Tim Hawthorne started the company in 1984, and is known as the "Father of the Modern Infomercial." Today the company is one of the nation's leading producers of short and long direct television campaigns with clients such as Apple Computers, Inc., the U.S. Navy and the Christian Children's Fund.²⁴

The innovative force of the community was further strengthened in 1989 with the establishment of the Fairfield Entrepreneur Association. Dave Neff, Executive Vice President, Iowa State Bank serves as the board president and explained the town's long history of growing business from within which inspired leaders to look internally for ways to further support local business start-ups. The association has developed an array of services. The *CEO Roundtable* meets monthly in a non-competing environment to discuss how local business can best support each other and aids in keeping the overall lines of communication open. *Idea Bounce* is a popular and highly-valued concept that includes panels of experienced entrepreneurs and business leaders who convene three to four times a year to hear new ideas and offer feedback. A *Boot Camp for Entrepreneurs* is held annually and features guest speakers and investors. Camps are also offered for specialty services including artists, food preparation and nonprofit

organization. Lunch and Saturday morning mentoring events cover topics such as marketing, sales and developing network. Here, persons interested in launching a new business can receive individual coaching provided by a network volunteers that provide mentoring and free consultation.

In addition to meaningful information-based products, the association has created equally important paths to secure and research funding sources. The Fairfield Entrepreneurial Development Trust provides assistance to entrepreneurs and investment in startup companies. The trust allows Fairfield citizens a tool whereby they can invest in local people and new business development. A local *Investor's Roundtable* is more formal and the conduit to bring in angel investors. In the past, individual entrepreneurs have been successful in securing millions of dollars of outside investment, but the roundtable provides a more united approach. A second important function of the roundtable is to address how to retain jobs when local companies sell to larger companies. The association maintains a comprehensive website that provides information on its local programs, plus pages of details on where to go for assistance in preparing everything from business plans to a long list of state and federal funding tools.²⁵

The Fairfield Entrepreneurial Association is an effective results centered organization that has influenced meaningful economic growth the county. Jefferson County is ranked 18th in the state in per capita income. In 1990, the county was ranked 50th. Creating and having local wealth has had an added bonus for Fairfield. It is the number one county in Iowa for philanthropy and is one of the top five in entire United States. The town has received recognition and national awards for its commitment to continuing the tradition of innovative thinking and turning great ideas into reality. Economic Gardening Hotspots is a concept that encourages local business to host events to further discussion and networking opportunities. A

local Thai restaurant holds an event called “Noodle Tuesday” and another café partners with ICON art gallery to discuss different ways to use art to advance economic opportunity.

Chojnowski’s 2005 report states over \$250 million has been invested in 50 new companies that range from software development to media and telecom businesses. The result has been the creation of 3,000 new jobs locally, 12,000 jobs globally and \$1 billion in new equity. There are over 60 companies headquartered in Fairfield with a national and international presence.²⁶ A recent study by the University of Iowa puts Jefferson County in sixth place in the Iowa Creativity Index, a measure designed for the state based on Richard Florida’s “Rise of the Creative Class” model. In the past, work defined as “creative” has primarily included persons such as writers and members of the visual and performing arts community. Florida’s broader definition takes into account racial integration, persons that work in high-technology related jobs, engineers, scientists, educators, health-care professionals, the law and other occupations that require an advanced or professional degree.

The inventive nature of Fairfield’s early and modern-day settlers continue to influence the creation of new enterprise and inspire long-time companies to take innovative approaches to compete in today’s market. Harper Brush Works, Inc., is a 106-year-old manufacturing company that continues to develop its line of cleaning tools to provide the highest level of efficiency and quality and expanded its line to over 600 products ranging from floor sweepers to squeegees. Revenues have grown from \$3 million to \$100 million over a ten-year time period and in 2005, the company doubled the size of its workforce. The company was named the Fairfield Entrepreneur of the Year in 2002. Cambridge Investment Research, Inc. received the same award in 2003. Eric Schwartz moved the company to Fairfield when it was ten-years-old

and employed five people. Over a ten-year period Cambridge grew to 160 employees and its revenues went from \$500,000 to \$100 million.²⁷

Fairfield's lower overhead and talented workforce has captured the interest of investors and entrepreneurs across the nation. The way of life in the rural Midwest mixed with a high concentration of people looking for innovative ways to create wealth inspired Chojnowski to make the move in 1996 and has since, dubbed the area as the "brain belt." Chognowski is cited by Fairfield leaders as one of the nation's top experts in the area of entrepreneurship and has helped put Fairfield in the forefront by telling its story at workshops and conferences across the country through his company, BrainBelt Consulting, Inc. He has been involved in the start-up of more than a dozen companies in the state and secured more than \$80 million in private equity.²⁸

The State's Premiere Place for Art and Entertainment

In October 2002 Fairfield introduced the "1st Friday Art Walk", an event that has put Fairfield on the map as a top destination for people who love the visual, performing and culinary arts. In 2005, the event was named the Iowa Tourism Event of the Year. The event is held year-round on the first Friday of each month with new and exciting activities including live music, art displays, improv theatre and a children's area featuring things to do for all age groups. Holly Moore, President of the 1st Friday Art Walk of Fairfield, a nonprofit 501 C(3) organization defines Art Walk as the cornerstone for tourism. Moore described the Fairfield cultural community as wide and deep. Artist associations have been active over the past 40 years. Approximately 500 people or 20 percent of the town's population is involved in the visual and performing arts. Art Walk has provided an outlet for folks to develop their talent and persons in the region a reason to come to Fairfield every month. The corporate community has embraced the event and as of October 2007, nine Art Walks in 2008 had committed co-sponsors. This in

tandem with the work of the volunteers setting themes and securing the talent has allowed the event to be first class. In 2005, the event was named the Iowa Tourism Event of the Year. The community-at-large is as passionate about its Art Walk. The social interaction has further developed the community into a place where people from very different cultures can live and play and know more about each other. Longtime residents involved with early art associations share gallery space with members of the 1st Friday organization. It is a respectful relationship with the established group wanting to be a part of the excitement brought to the community by its newer citizens.²⁹

Fairfield Arts and Convention Center

In October 2007, the community and its downtown district had cause to celebrate another triumph. The opening of the 32,000 square foot Fairfield Arts and Convention Center located near Central Park will be used as a venue for educational programs, community meetings, business conferences, exhibit hall and is the town center for the visual and performing arts. The center also has a commercial kitchen, art gallery and a display devoted to Parsons College, a Presbyterian College that served the community from 1875 until 1973. The Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts is a 522 seat-theater with state of the art features including a superior acoustical system, orchestra pit, rigging and lighting, all features good enough to house any Broadway production, which is what happened in its first month of production. Stephen Sondheim, the legendary composer/lyricist made his Broadway debut in 1957 as the lyricist for “West Side Story” which later became a hit movie. This small town of just under 10,000 has the only theater in the country bearing the Sondheim name.³⁰

How it Happened

In 2000 a board was established to develop a plan on how to finance an arts and convention center. The performing arts already had a strong presence in the community, but there were few quality locations to house productions. By 2005, the group had raised the monies through public and private contributions. A portion of the City of Fairfield's local option sales tax was devoted to the cause totaling \$1.4 million dollars and additional public funding from the state in the amount of \$800,000 was also received. Private contributions from local business and individuals in the amount of \$7 million gave way to an October 2007 Arts and Convention Center opening in a facility that was paid-in-full. A business plan was developed to address how to generate revenue to operate and maintain the facility. A study revealed there were not enough residents in the Fairfield area to support the facility and in order to have a state-wide appeal, the Fairfield center would have to book "A" level touring productions.

Randal "Randy" West, creative director for Hawthorne Direct, a nationally known infomercial company based in Fairfield moved from Brentwood, California in 2000. He and his family were interested in a quieter life and intrigued by the fact that a company with Hawthorne's reputation could thrive in a town of 10,000. The creative culture, amenities the town had to offer and harmony made for an easy decision. The added bonus for folks in Fairfield was West's involvement in the entertainment industry.

West, an accomplished director and producer for several decades worked with George Furth and Stephen Sondheim on the hit Broadway show, "Merrily we Row Along." West's ardent respect for Sondheim's work inspired his graduate thesis and he had also maintained contact with both Furth and Sondheim over the years. When asked to contact Sondheim about

lending his name to the theater, no one, including West knew what the outcome would be.

Sondheim said yes and offered the following note:³¹

“I'm honored and flattered that you would choose to name a building after me,” Sondheim wrote. “What thrills me most is not the boost for my ego but the fact that I'm a part, no matter how distant, of your devotion to the development of professional musical theatre, especially as it contributes to the cultural landscape of the Midwest. Support for the arts on the East and West coasts is highly publicized, less so in your section of the country. I hope that the Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts will prove to be a major contribution.”

As West continued the process of creating a plan to bring productions to Fairfield, he discovered there were no organized professional companies in the state specializing in musical theater and quickly set about to establish a professional company. The Encore Players made their debut in 2006. “The Musical of Musicals” was performed by the Encore Players and attended by the show’s commercial producer Melanie Herman and artistic producer James Morgan. Audience members also included writers and players from the Broadway production. The Encore Players took the show on the road to venues around the state and continue to serve as ambassadors for the Sondheim Theater.

In February 2008, Richard Kind, best known for his role in the television hit, “Spin City” starred in “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum.” The fusion of well-known screen and stage actors with local talent is truly a gift for this small town. In addition to providing a world-class entertainment venue, the Sondheim Center has an educational component that will include workshops, seminars and an internship program for aspiring performers and persons interested in the technical aspects of the entertainment industry. As the Arkansas group toured the center, West mentioned a few other well-known entertainers as possibilities for upcoming performances – that would be Paul McCartney and Sting.

Unique Fairfield Places

The transition of Parsons College to the Maharishi University of Management (MUM) has brought people from around the world to Fairfield. Upon graduation, many chose to make Fairfield their home to be near the university that teaches the practice of Transcendental Meditation and close to others that have adopted consciousness-based approaches to living. The university's *Golden Domes* are two round structures, one each for men and women. The domes provide a place for students to gather twice daily for group mediation. *Maharishi Vedic City* is Iowa's newest incorporated city and is located near the university. Every house and building is designed to bring about good health, happiness and fortune. All buildings face the east and have a central silent space called a Brahmasthan and a golden roof ornament called a kalash.

Abundance EcoVillage located within a bike's ride from Fairfield is a planned village completely off the electric grid. Energy is generated through the use of wind and solar panels. Rainwater catchment systems and pond storage provide water for domestic and agriculture use. Homes are constructed using the Vedic principles of architecture. Lonnie Gamble, a project co-founder is a faculty member at MUM and teaches Sustainable Living as an undergraduate degree; the first of its kind in the world. A tour of the village led by Gamble provided the Arkansas group a close look at how the systems were connected to make the best use of natural resources down to how well each home made use of its space. The *Raj* is a Ayurveda Health Center opened since 1993. Ayurveda is a system originating in India that promotes balance and awakens the body's natural healing properties. The Raj was declared as "One of the top 5 health spas of the new millennium" by Town and Country magazine.³²

Fairfield 2012

Fairfield in 2012 will be a shining success story in Iowa, featuring a revived and vibrant downtown, a dynamic growing economy, and a leading center for culture and the arts. Fairfield

will showcase the unique blending of its rich heritage and small town qualities with the diversity, cultural richness, and economic opportunities of a thriving city.

Fairfield...the best of all worlds.

- Vision Statement, City of Fairfield Strategic Plan-

Beth Dalbey, a writer with the Des Moines Social Magazine writes in a 2006 article the story of Mayor Ed Malloy's move to Fairfield from New York to attend the university and upon completing his education decided to make the town his permanent home.³³ Malloy served on the city council when he decided to run for mayor in 1997. He lost the first campaign, but what resulted was an open and frank discussion of how division among Fairfield's long-time and newer citizens had delayed the community from realizing its full potential. Dalbey likens the discussion to "group therapy" over a course of several years. The outcome was a healing and a consensus that there was a common denominator – that being a genuine concern and care for the future of the town.

In 2001, Malloy ran again and was successful in his bid for the mayor's race. Dr. Dubois explained in his opening remarks to the Arkansas contingency that with the election of a new mayor a renaissance occurred when Malloy called on community leaders, both the long-time and newer to come together and develop a ten-year strategic plan. Fairfield 2012 was one year in the making. A committee of 25 conducted community meetings with 5 areas selected as major goal areas and was endorsed by 80 organizations who would partner to implement the plan.

Published in May 2003, the plan would serve as the basis for Fairfield's entry in the state of Iowa's Great Places program.³⁴

Fairfield – Celebrating Creative Energy

One of the main criteria Iowa communities must demonstrate to be selected as a Great Place is readiness. Goals and strategies outlined in the 2012 plan fit proved to be a *great fit* for

the Great Places program. The city’s proposal was accepted in the second round of the Great Places program and featured the following 12 projects:³⁵

Goal 1: Expand Fairfield’s Dynamic Economy.

1. Civic Center

Rising construction costs made it necessary to remove some elements of the original Fairfield Arts and Convention Center plan. The Fairfield Great Places project reincorporates elements of the original plan to include a commercial kitchen; plaza and public art area; visitor center/gift shop; external marquee and signs; theater lighting; civic center offices; classroom partitions and a first-year operating fund. Important to note is that Great Places funding was used to initiate a final local drive and match of \$828,000. The center opened in December 2007 – debt free.

Total Cost of Project - \$928,000
Great Places Grant - \$100,000
Applicant Match - \$828,000
<i>Local Corporations-\$408,000</i>
<i>Creative Edge, Inc. -\$20,000</i>
<i>Individuals-\$400,000</i>
Estimated Completion Date – December 2007

2. Marketing Plan and Business Incubator/Entrepreneur Development Center

Fairfield is known nationally for its longtime entrepreneurial spirit and understands the value of further strengthening the environment for start-up companies. This component of the Fairfield Great Places plan includes a comprehensive business marketing plan for and construction of a business incubator and entrepreneur development center.

Total Cost of Project - \$475,000
Great Places Grant - \$50,000
Construction of Incubator and Development Center
Technical – Assistance with marketing plan / identify grant opportunities for incubator
Applicant Match \$225,000
<i>Marketing Plan \$200,000</i>
<i>Land acquisition \$39,000 (approximate)</i>
Balance to Construct Incubator Building \$236,000

3. Fairfield Investors Roundtable

The roundtable was founded in 2006 by the Fairfield Entrepreneur’s Association. The group hears presentations from local ventures seeking capital. The primary objective of the roundtable is to uncover local sources of capital to assist local start-ups. The roundtable will include under its umbrella, an Entrepreneurial Development Corporation, Community Venture Fund and an Economic Gardening Corporation. As of 2006, the roundtable had heard 12 presentations and over \$200,000 in local investments secured.

The Fairfield Investors Roundtable is an example of a project relying primarily on important technical assistance that is provided through the Great Places program.

Total Cost of Project - \$250,000
Great Places Support – Technical assistance only; identify grant opportunities and tax credits
State Grant Application - \$10,000
Applicant Match - \$240,000
<i>Local Investors - \$150,000</i>
<i>Federal and Private Grants - \$90,000</i>

Goal 2: To Improve Our Community’s Physical Assets, Beauty, and Natural Environment

4. Redevelop Downtown Streetscape

The downtown district is a source of pride for the citizens of Fairfield. The objective of the project is to implement consistent and historically respectful architectural and design standards. A professional urban design team will be secured to create a masterplan for the downtown development. The Fairfield Architectural and Redevelopment Commission (FARC), a Chamber of Commerce program and the City of Fairfield, a strong supporter of the project will partner in the effort. The FARC and Fairfield City Council will approve design. The city will sell general obligation bonds to generate revenue for the project cited by community leaders as an important element in continued downtown revitalization.

Total Cost of Project - \$1,174,700
Great Places Support - \$150,000
Grant Application - \$329,000
Applicant Match –
City of Fairfield - \$695,000

5. Restoration of the Maasdam Barns

The Maasdam’s Barns was home to some of the country’s finest draught horses and one world champion. The farm will showcase the county’s agriculture history and incorporate a visual legacy of the Loudon and Turney companies, both large manufacturers in the pre-industrial era. The Farmstead will serve as an entry point into the county and double as a Welcome and Education Center. The project is a joint venture between the City of Fairfield and Jefferson County. The Maasdam Barns Preservation Committee is a volunteer organization who has led the effort to restore the three barns situated on the property. As of 2006, one barn has been completely restored.

Total Cost of Project - \$350,000
Great Places Support - \$35,000
Technical assistance
State Grant Application - \$40,000
Applicant Match
<i>Federal grants - \$200,000</i>
<i>Local Support - \$75,000</i>

6. Implement Bikeway/Walkway Plan

The community’s objective is to design a plan that connects neighborhoods, schools, parks and recreational facilities through a system of bike routes, trails and walking paths to tie into the Jefferson County Trails system. In 2005, University of Iowa graduate students developed a comprehensive trail plan for the city, upon public review and acceptance of the plan, the city council endorsed the project.

Total Cost of Project - \$385,000
Great Places Support - \$10,000
Technical Support – Identify state and federal grant opportunities
Applicant Match
<i>Federal Grant - \$105,000</i>
<i>Future Federal Grants - \$270,000</i>

Goal 3: To Advance Fairfield’s Educational Opportunities

7. KRUU Radio Station

KRUU is a non-commercial, non-profit radio station that has become a voice for

community dialogue and involvement. Students in the area participate in all aspects of this medium including administrative, on-air and technical activity. Local news, events and activities are promoted through open and inclusive forums. In 2006, a FCC construction permit was awarded. A building was acquired and renovated with locally raised funds. Although the project is underway, funding for programming and staff is requested.

Total Cost of Project - \$25,000
Great Places Support
Financial - \$5,000
Technical Assistance – identify grant opportunities
Applicant Match
Local Contributions - \$5,000
Federal, state and private grants - \$15,000

8. Information Kiosk and Sustainable Learning Center

Inspired by Abundance Eco-Village and the Sustainable Living Coalition, the strategy is to create a system of regular trade shows, and informational programs to promote sustainable living practices in the greater Fairfield area. Eco-Village has drawn thousands of visitors including the Governor. The Fairfield Great Places proposal includes \$50,000 to improve the entrance and parking areas; construct a world-center for learning, \$1,000,000 and a visitor’s center/kiosk complete with a self-guided tour and displays, \$40,000.

Total Cost of Project - \$1,090,000
Great Places Support
Financial - \$80,000
Technical Support – Identify grant opportunities
Applicant Match - \$305,000 <i>Private donations for kiosk - \$5,000 (assured)</i>
<i>Private donations for center - \$300,000 (anticipated)</i>
Federal, state and private grants - \$785,000 (anticipated)

9. Educational Kiosks for Civic Center & Visitors Centers

To maximize the experience for local and out-of-town visits to cultural and heritage sites in Jefferson County, 8 multi-media computer kiosks are recommended for placement in key destinations in the county.

Total Cost of Project - \$150,000
Great Places Support
Financial - \$0
Technical Support – Identify grant opportunities
Applicant Match - \$150,000

10. Jefferson County Trails System

The objective of this component of the proposal is to create an integrated trail system for bikers, hikers and other outdoor activities throughout the county. The system would have a heritage component linking National Historic Registry buildings associated with the county’s early agricultural sites and bodies of water including Cedar Creek, Skunk River and the city’s three reservoirs.

Total Cost - \$2,130,000
Great Places Support
Financial - \$50,000
Technical Support – Identify grant opportunities
State Grant Applications - \$265,000
Applicant Match - \$1,815,000
Local support - \$154,000 (anticipated)
Federal support - \$1,661,000 (anticipated)

10. Vedic Observatory

The Vedic Observatory in the newly incorporated town of Maharishi Vedic City is used to educate people interested in the movement of the stars and sun. Site improvements and a City festival have been initiated to promote the observatory and architecture of this unique place.

Total Cost of Project- \$78,000
Great Places Support
Financial - \$73,000
Technical – Identify grant sources
Applicant Match - \$5,000

11. 1st Friday Art Walk

The 1st Friday Art Walk is one of Fairfield’s most successful tourism related events and received the “Tourism Event of the Year” in 2005. The proposal calls for enhancement to this local and statewide attraction that has put the town on the map as a premiere destination for the arts. The 1st Fridays Art Walk of Fairfield is managed by a nonprofit organization with a volunteer board of 12. The Convention and Visitors Bureau will serve as the lead in promoting activities.

Total Cost of Project - \$100,000 annually
Great Places Support
Technical – Identify agencies that can provide marketing expertise, state and federal grant sources for programming and administration.
Applicant Match - \$100,000
<i>Local contributions - \$80,000</i>
<i>State, Federal and Private Grants - \$20,000</i>

12. Community Philanthropy

The Fairfield Cultural Alliance will serve as the lead organization in forming a Cultural Trust Fund. In addition, Jefferson County Foundation, City of Fairfield, Civic Center, Hospital Foundation, School Foundation, Dharma Foundation and the Trails Council will join as partners to further the community’s philanthropic spirit through the new fund. The focus will be on programming and people, providing events that will bring in professional speakers and workshops on grant writing. The Fairfield Great Places proposal calls for assistance in endowing the trust.

Total Cost of Project - \$200,000
Great Places Support –
Financial - \$25,000
Technical Support – identify grant sources
Applicant Match - \$175,000
<i>Local contributions - \$100,000</i>
<i>Federal, state and private grants - \$75,000</i>

Fairfield – A Great Place to Work and Play

The Fairfield Economic Development Association (FEDA), an incorporated entity independent of the Chamber of Commerce launched the website GrowFairfield.com in 2008. Brent Willett serves as Executive Director for the chamber and FEDA. The Fairfield Chamber of Commerce, Fairfield Convention and Visitors Bureau and FEDA worked in unison to develop new websites showcasing the diversity of the strong local economy and amenities often found only in large cities. The arts, cultural and heritage programs in Fairfield are impressive and have added tremendous value to building a place where people want to live and a place people want to visit.

FEDA's commitment to grow the economy through job creation includes a strong existing business component. The Fairfield Existing Business Initiative (FEBI) was initiated in 2008 as an assessment project to better understand conditions of the existing business community in Jefferson County. A total of 41 companies participated by way of on-site interviews and surveys. Data from surveys and interviews showed that 85 percent of economic growth was the result of existing business expansion. In that same year, FEDA assisted in securing \$3,051,000 in local, state and federal incentives that included low and no-interest loans and grants. A "Report to the Community" released in February 2009 indicated the overall attitude of Fairfield business people relative to the recent recession is that of confident optimism. Many of the Fairfield companies offer unique services and hold strong market positions. Approximately 90 percent of Fairfield companies invest in worker training and although the area has felt the recent downturn, 58 percent were increasing their worker training budget in 2009.³⁶

GrowFairfield.com includes in its opening page commentary, the importance of an environment that yields a strong bottom line and includes, "but we know it's about life, too. It's

why we're proud to have cultivated a quality of place like anywhere else." The Fairfield business community agrees. When asked what is the community's greatest strength as a place to do business, 43 percent responded "quality of life/location."

Iowa Life Changing

"There are 76 communities in better shape today as a result of the Great Places process"
-Jeffrey Geerts

Cyndi Pederson, Director of Cultural Affairs, the state agency that manages Great Places explained departments now work together and are more familiar with programs and resources across the board. In the past, agencies housed across the hall from each other had little to no interaction. The Great Places initiative provides important technical support and resources at the local level and has reinforced the value of *holistic development* at the state level. Holistic development is a term introduced decades ago and continues to be used to define incorporating multiple strategies in a development plan versus a focus on just one thing.

Staff members of 18 state agencies were asked to identify how their department could contribute to the Great Places program. The consensus was to form a team of coaches to match the community and its projects. In the early stage of the process, a team of state agency staff assists the community in determining how best to involve people in developing the Great Places proposal. Some form of "visioning" has proven to be an effective tool to generate thought about the community's assets and how they can be developed. State agency coaches are involved in facilitating, but the process is designed by the community. A proposal is submitted and reviewed by a state advisory board made up of citizens across the

state who selects communities into the Great Places program. The 12-member board is appointed by the Governor and approved by the senate. The board is geographically balanced and a member cannot vote if its community has submitted. Upon selection, additional state agency members are brought into the project to identify state and federal resources including those that provide technical support only.

An important piece of the Great Places concept is the relationship that has been established between communities and state agencies. A greater awareness of available resources exists at the local level and the state-team approach upholds the notion that everyone has a role to play in today's economic development.

Many of the state agencies that administer grants are giving extra consideration, at their discretion, to Great Place communities. Jane Schadle, Iowa Department of Public Health noted communities that include walking and biking trails in their Great Places applications also fit well into the Iowa Healthy Communities initiative which provides grants to places that put measures in place to promote sustainable approaches to healthy lifestyles.

City council and county government involvement are important in the Great Places process. Monica Fischer, a deputy director with the Department of Cultural Affairs during the start-up of Great Places noted some false collaboration occurred in the beginning, especially in the case of regional proposals. The local piece of community and economic development is hard to connect and visioning tends to be inward – it is hard to envision regional impact. The team approach and concentration of state talent in one place was vital in this regard – local elected officials viewed Great Places as credible. Fischer cited the difficulty of the work but ended by saying “coaching was important in the beginning and my favorite thing in 13 years of state government.”

Funky, Fun and a Good Vibe

Measuring and analyzing the impact of quality of place initiatives are difficult. The benefits are often intangible, plus there are differences of opinion on what constitutes quality. There are few quantitative measures in relation to “better sense of community” and other social capital factors. Claire Celsi, a public relations supervisor with The Integer Group, an international sales promotion agency and a member of the Great Places board discussed that in the assessment phase and in determining who comes into the program, communities that have established goals that set their place apart in a creative and innovative way are more likely to win. Celsi explained, “If Great Places had to choose between qualitative and a hard measurable, we would choose the value of deliverables that make the community “fun, funky and puts out a good vibe.”

Iowa Department of Economic Development

Jeffrey Geerts, Special Project Manager with the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) explained the state agency has a long and sound history of establishing whole approaches to developing communities and the economy. The Vision Iowa; Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) grant programs and Iowa Great Places provide important financial resources and state technical support that have enabled communities to be innovative and develop a more dynamic environment.

Iowa’s traditional business climate is as vibrant. In 2007 Iowa exported more than \$9.6 billion in manufactured and value-added goods - an increase of \$1.2 billion from the previous year. In addition to important support for the manufacturing sector, the state continues to update its tax reduction programs to better support new economy companies. The High Quality Jobs Tax Credit program invested more than \$300 million into private

development in 2008.³⁷ As business needs and processes change to compete in a more modern economy, this program provides assistance to both new and existing companies.

Generation Iowa

In April 2007 to better understand the dynamics of the state's young workforce and professional network, Governor Culver signed into law the Generation Iowa bill. The act established the Generation Iowa Board, a group of 15 Iowans ages 18-35 to advise the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) and employers how to recruit and retain the state's trained and talented. A study presented in December 2008 identifies the state's strengths and challenges and offered the following recommendations:

- Amend legislation to include voting seats for Next Generation Iowans on all boards and commissions relating to economic development and quality of life
- Make job creation programs more ambitious to increase job opportunities for the next generation's education level
- Expand "Iowa Internship Program" that links top Iowa college students with internships in small and medium sized businesses
- Expand the Education Award to Iowa's Americorps volunteers to attract service-minded, educated young professionals.³⁸

The study revealed that while Iowa is a "top 5" importer of college students and number one in the Midwest, the state was experiencing both a "college brain gain" and "graduate brain drain." From 1995 to 2000, the state lost 19,500 graduates in spite of the state's popularity with new college students. The flight of college graduates from the state was the 4th worst in the nation since 2000 according to the study. Further investigation of the market revealed 12 percent of available jobs in the state required a college degree. The 2006 Census Bureau estimates show 21 percent of Iowans have a college degree and approximately 33 percent of the Next Generation workforce is pursuing the same. The oversupply of educated workers further suppressed wages and added to the problem of young people leaving the state. It was stated in a public forum the state had "a generation of

economic migrants.” The out-migration of college educated workers is resulting in a state growing less educated, which could adversely affect knowledge-based operations interested in expansion or locating in the state.

The study also reflects that in addition to living in a place with things-to-do, attractions, strong cultural climate and other demographic-specific amenities, educated young people are becoming more concerned about pay-scale and cost-of-living. Findings in the study released in December 2008 may reflect sentiment due to a downturn in the economy and job market and confirmation the country was indeed in a recession.

The study also revealed that the notion “wages are low, but it’s a lot cheaper to live here” is a misconception. Factoring in cost-of-living adjustments does not close the wage gap. Cost-of-living calculators use the cost of owning a single-family home. Young adults living in apartments in Iowa carry a higher tax burden, especially in cases where they pay a share of the commercial tax rate that is often attached to each unit. Student loan costs are also not calculated into cost-of-living. Iowa graduates owe on average \$24,990 at graduation – the sixth highest student loan occurrence in the country. The pay-scale in Iowa’s urban areas which typically pay better than rural areas didn’t compare well to 11 other states in the region – overall Iowa had the third lowest wages in the “Business and Finance” job sector.

Job creation programs are being revised to support new economy jobs in the same way it has supported the manufacturing sector. The High Quality Job Creation Program is one of many incentive programs in the state designed to assist companies that create higher-wage jobs for the college graduate population.

The work of the Generation Iowa Commission included surveying 889 persons 18 to 35 year old. Survey results indicate this age group has the desire to stay in Iowa – an

affirmation that recognizing the need and devoting resources to develop high quality living conditions over the past decade has worked. In 2008, the Washington-based Congressional Quarterly Press ranked the state 2nd in the nation for its quality of life.³⁹ The state consistently ranks in the top 10 for its positive attributes, amenities and balanced environment. In 2008 Kiplinger named the state capitol of Des Moines as one of the best cities to live, work and play.

Although Iowa is experiencing a high percentage of college graduates leaving the state, it is an issue in many places across the country. Iowa's advantage is that the out-migration of young people is being driven by economic factors that will likely shift – not by quality of place. The website www.generationiowa.com provides the state's young and talented information on places to live and serves as a source to build networks better connecting them to job opportunities within the state. The site, managed by the Generation Iowa Board includes human interest stories and testimony about the advantages of living in Iowa and is written by young people around the state.

The challenge for Iowa and other states is to not lose sight that a comprehensive approach to economic development that includes education, training, quality of life and job creation programs is more important than ever in building an economy that is sustainable for this generation of workers and those that will follow.

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