



August 18, 2011

Press Release

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Missouri Communities Win Downtown Revitalization Awards

Missouri Main Street Connection (MMSC) presents awards each year to recognize excellence in downtown revitalization. This year during the state-wide conference August 9 – 11 in Kansas City, MO awards were given in 14 categories. Awards went to projects and individuals Cape Girardeau, Chillicothe, Clinton, Excelsior Springs, Glasgow, Lee's Summit, Liberty, Sedalia, and Washington.

“With these awards, we are proud to honor the dedication and investment that communities across Missouri are putting into their downtown revitalization programs,” said Steven Hoffman, professor of history at Southeast Missouri State University and President of Missouri Main Street Connection. “Their efforts reveal the most cherished values of citizens who choose to preserve their downtowns and improve the quality of life for everyone in their communities.”

The Award for Best Economic Restructuring Project went to The Green House on the Hill in Liberty. This pilot 353 Property Tax Abatement project redeveloped 1,300 square feet of an under-utilized building at 14 W. Kansas Street. The new business occupying the property is The Green House on the Hill. It is the first new retail space added to the Historic Downtown Courthouse district in over 40 years. The total redevelopment cost was slightly over \$55,000. The 353 Policy passed by the city makes over 100 properties in Liberty now eligible for the tax incentive that is expected to result in many improvements to the exterior and interior of downtown buildings.

Runner-up for Best Economic Restructuring Project was Downtown Lee's Summit's Business Development & Retention Strategy. Based on a public-private partnership, the city of Lee's Summit provided Downtown Lee's Summit Main Street (DLSMS) with one-time Downtown Master Plan funding for action item implementation. One of the action items was producing a business development and retention strategy for downtown. DLSMS hired Kennedy Smith of the Community Land Use and Economics (CLUE) Group to conduct the research and develop the strategy. The CLUE Group's findings and recommendations were delivered to the city and DLSMS in October 2010. DLSMS will continue to work with the City and other partners to determine an implementation plan for the recommendations.

The Award for Business Excellence went to Annie Laurie's Antiques of Cape Girardeau. Annie Laurie's Antiques was recognized for the entrepreneurial way it has integrated the store into the downtown community by reaching out to local talent to use in her marketing materials through a Top Model Contest. Most of the models were college students and it was a great way to promote her business

to a market usually not inclined to shop in antique stores. Annie's extended store hours and serving as the host of evening entertainment on the first Friday of each month during the Arts Open House has established the business as a favorite among local art lovers.

Runner-up for the Business Excellence Award was Heritage Hall of Liberty. The 10,000 square foot meeting facility in Heritage Hall has become a focal point of the community, thanks to the tireless efforts of Joe Dugdale and his dad Harry, with support from their families. Hundreds of weddings, fundraisers, parties and town hall meetings have been scheduled here. The Dugdale family is enthusiastic supporters of downtown Liberty and has devoted many hours of service to the community.

The Award for Outstanding Public Partner went to the Old Main Post Office in Washington, MO Negotiating to purchase the building for \$1,000 from the US Postal Service was the first big step for the Historic Washington Foundation and Downtown Washington Inc. to save the Old Main Post Office from demolition. The next step was putting it back into useful service. The estimated cost of extensive interior and exterior renovation was \$750,000, undertaken by HWF, with a boost from the Missouri Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP). Downtown Washington Inc. manages the building, operates the new postal unit and recruits tenants for the office spaces. All these elements, plus the restoration of a significant historic structure, make the Old Main Post Office a significant contributor to the downtown economy.

Runner-up for the Outstanding Public Partner Award was the Livingston County Library in Chillicothe. The Library purchased the former Federal Court Building in downtown Chillicothe in 1964, and since then has undertaken several renovation projects. But serious shortcomings in the building continued to hinder expansion of the library into unusable space on the second floor, and a lack of modern HVAC systems and inadequate lighting in the old court room prevented its use as a community meeting room. The recent passage of the \$3.4 million bond issue by the citizens of Livingston County made these renovations possible. Now the Library has a fully operational home, using the entire building and is able to offer many more valuable services to the community, besides providing archival space. The Library's success with enabled a broader functionality while preserving this historic structure on the square.

The Award for Heritage Travel went to "Winter in Wine Country," a brochure produced by the Washington Chamber of Commerce. The brochure featured a half-glass of wine, a cozy fire and a snow-covered collage of downtown Washington. In producing the brochure, the Chamber embraced the regional approach to promoting tourism. Inside are suggestions for wine-country tours and incentives for visitors to venture into the rural area, using Washington as a hub. The marketing piece recognizes the strengths of downtown Washington's holiday economy in attracting tourists for shopping.

The Award for Top Special Event or Promotional Event went to Main Street BBQ & Blues Fest of Washington. Fifty professional barbeque teams – about a dozen were local teams – came to Washington, MO on April 15-16, 2011, in a celebration of food and music. The event rehabilitated the old Cruise with the Blues event, which was losing steam. Downtown Washington Inc. invited the Kansas City Barbeque Society (KCBS), the world's largest organization of barbeque and grilling enthusiasts, to put on a sanctioned competition. Reviews from the competing teams were complimentary and positive, noting the convenience of the location within walking distance of a butcher shop, coffee shops and drug store. All the teams expressed a desire to come back next year. Local merchants, restaurants and hotels gave the

event a “thumbs up” for the crowds that poured into their businesses during the weekend. Of course Downtown Washington Inc. is preparing to expand the event in 2012.

Runner-up for the Top Special Event or Promotional Event was Kids’ Christmas in Chillicothe.

A shopping experience for children ages 2-14, with an opportunity to purchase items under \$15 from downtown merchants’ booths set up in the local courthouse, was an idea designed by parents who want to teach their kids how to be smart shoppers and have fun at the same time. At Kid’s Christmas, they have a two hour shopping experience where they can buy, create and wrap gift for the loved ones in their lives. A local fraternal organization contributed the gift-wrapping services, while the kids created cards to accompany their gifts.

The Award for Best Adaptive Reuse/Preservation Project went to Commerce Apartments of Sedalia. Originally a J.C. Penney Department Store and upper-floor offices, this 40,000 square foot building in downtown Sedalia dates from 1896. Vacant for the past 40 years before Matt Fulson purchased the building, it has undergone a dramatic transformation. Fulson, of Missouri Housing Partners, fell in love with the building and carefully prepared plans for family-affordable housing units. After gaining local and state support for the project to qualify for Historic Preservation Tax Credits, Fulson established the project as the private investment match to support the city’s CDBG revitalization grant. The \$7 million Commerce Apartments project rehabilitated a deteriorating structure and enabled 26 families to move into the downtown. Sedalia has every right to be proud of it.

Runner-up for the Best Adaptive Reuse/Preservation Project was Grand Boulevard Lofts of Kansas City. The 7-story Gates Building at 10th and Grand Ave. in downtown Kansas City opened in 1910, and was increased in 1930 to 17 stories. It sat empty for over 10 years in the 1990s. The \$32 million adaptation, completed in December 2010, resulted in 134 LMI housing units. The developer, Sherman Associates, took great care to preserve the historic elements of the building exterior while upgrading the interior with modern plumbing, electrical and heating, and added a community meeting room and fitness room for the residents. The architect and interior designer was Rosemann Associates. The owner is Grand Boulevard Lofts, LP.

The Award for Best Large Scale Project was the Old Dutch Hotel and Tavern, in Washington, MO.

This 1922 building originally housed a butcher shop and general store with living quarters above. The deterioration was evident before 2009 when an imaginative developer, Another Headache, LLC, purchased it and began stripping the entire interior to install replacement windows plus new plumbing, HVAC and lighting. Several original architectural features were re-purposed, including the 2nd and 3rd floor doors, the butcher’s ice box, the tin ceiling in the tavern, and the fireplace. Owners of Another Headache, Danny and Phyllis Cassette and Rick and Heidi Wunderlich are proud of the results, and so is everyone else who is again enjoying one of their favorite gathering spots in downtown Washington.

The Award for Streetscape & Public Space Improvements went to the Wayfinding Signage and Street Furnishings Project in Clinton

Clinton’s wayfinding signage and street furnishing have taken the public-private partnership concept to a new level. Clinton Main Street initiated the project with \$60,000, and the city provided labor. A local church contributed a piece of land at a major intersection for a new monument sign. Volunteers and park bench “adopters” put in their share of the cost to make the project truly a community effort.

Runner-up for the Streetscape & Public Space Improvements Award was Parking Lot Locator Signs in Lee's Summit. Shoppers in downtown Lee's Summit can now find those elusive parking spaces, thanks to new signs at eight free lots. This project of Downtown Lee's Summit Design Committee, is phase one of a comprehensive wayfinding signage master plan. Future phases will include directional signage and monument signs, as funding becomes available.

The Award for Top Façade Rehabilitation Under \$10,000 went to Heartland Advertising in Chillicothe. Heartland Advertising purchased the 611 Locust building when it still had a peach tin metal façade. Today it is an inspiration to other owners of metal-clad buildings that might be afraid of removing the skin and seeing what's underneath. Replacement windows, awnings and cleaning of the brick surface have added a sense of historic value and helped the building mesh with its neighboring buildings, all at a cost of slightly under \$7,500.

Runner-up for Top Façade Rehabilitation Under \$10,000 was the 259 E. Broadway Building in Excelsior Springs. This building needed to grow up, according to owner Brent McElwee, who purchased it for redevelopment. It didn't seem to fit with the neighboring structures, so working with the local Historic Preservation Commission, he came up with a plan and color scheme to add height and accentuate the building's features. Brent's project inspired a family member to begin fixing up their neighboring building.

The Award for Top Façade Rehabilitation Over \$10,000 went to the 506 First Street Building in Glasgow. Underneath an old wooden awning, some sparkling treasures were found when owners Nikki and Aaron Gouge decided to restore the façade. The stained glass panels on the first floor were discovered to be intact except one. Nikki and Aaron found a glass artist who was able to replicate the original design and replace the missing panel. This is among several buildings in downtown Glasgow where the owner has undertaken a big risk by removing parts of a façade, not knowing for certain what is underneath. Everyone in Glasgow can be proud of this achievement.

Awards for Outstanding Public Official went to two individuals: Heather Brooks, Cape Girardeau's Assistant City Manager, serves on the Old Town Cape Organization Committee and coordinated the investor campaign in 2010. Her commitment to downtown revitalization is carried out through the tasks she has undertaken with the DREAM Development Team, and the many other community projects where she has devoted hours behind the scenes, while receiving very little recognition. In a tie for the Outstanding Public Official Award was John Griesheimer of Washington, Franklin County. "Big John," as he is known locally, is a tireless supporter of Amtrak, tourism, economic development, historic preservation and downtown revitalization. John has been the primary supporter for keeping Main Street in the state budget in 2006, and has continued to be an enthusiastic supporter of the statewide Main Street program since he first began working closely with Downtown Washington in 1982. John is truly a public servant who gives his time and opens his checkbook to a variety of civic and benevolent projects.

The Award for Outstanding Special Project went to The Clipper in Chillicothe. It's not every day that a family gets to show the story of their four-generation barbershop business in a mural. Where there was once a stark, outdated storefront now there are new windows and awnings that complement the lively images on second-floor windows and two solid doors at side-walk level. Scenes of barbershop activities long ago from Jerry Bevelle's family-owned business are attracting visitors, who often stand and stare for a long time, and "read" the story in pictures.

Runner-up for the Outstanding Special Project was Independence Weekend Celebration in Cabool.

The goal of this project was to bring back “The Wall That Heals,” a half-size version of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The plan expanded into a four-day celebration of America’s freedom and memorial to those who served to preserve that freedom. Over 500 volunteers from Cabool and the surrounding rural area this community-wide event a success. Public and private donations to cover expenses reached over \$236,200 during the first year’s fundraising activities, evidence that Cabool’s citizens are willing to put their money where their mouth is.

The Stick-Your-Neck-Out Award went to Jim & Ginger Nelson of Excelsior Springs.

In 1988, when many were thinking that Excelsior Springs was a lost cause, Jim and Ginger Nelson opened the Old English Garden Shoppe. Some people thought they were out of their minds. The Nelson’s did a total restoration of the first floor of their building, using just half of it for retail space. The business grew and eventually they needed all of their space plus the building next door. This year they worked on the second floor-converting it into loft apartments. Through the years, Jim and Ginger have supported the arts and helped The Downtown Excelsior Partnership with the 2nd Friday Art Crawls. They are credited with starting a revitalization revolution downtown.

Runner-up for the Stick-Your-Neck-Out Award was the Big Field Café owned by Teresa Vaughn and Bill Uding of Ste. Genevieve

Teresa Vaughn’s dream of opening a restaurant and art gallery that could become a local gathering place has kept her and her husband, Bill, occupied with many tasks to which they are unaccustomed. Teresa is an attorney and Bill is an engineer, neither having any experience in the restaurant business. In spite of that handicap, they have made the Big Fields Café and the Hayloft Gallery a success that is praised by everyone who has visited there.

Two Awards were given for Volunteer of the Year. Steve Franke of Chillicothe founded the Main Street Chillicothe program and also is a past and current Board member, Steve has shown his deep passion for the redevelopment of the downtown area time and time again. This is remarkable to many who hear about it because his local, multi-million dollar manufacturing business is not located downtown, nor does he own any property there. He is quick to explain it by saying that the downtown is “the living room of the community, where we entertain our guests and show off all of our finest treasures.” In a tie for **Volunteer of the Year was Brad Culbertson of Lee’s Summit.** Having a great understanding of the bigger picture, Brad is a trusted source of advice and perspective. His skill at figuring out logistics or building and designing just about anything is the reason why the staff of Downtown Lee’s Summit (DLSMS) calls him “MacGyver.” His knowledge of Main Street, retail, preservation and economic development make him a valuable asset to DLSMS.

Congratulations to all the award winners!

MMSC is the state coordinating program for the Missouri communities that participate in the Main Street[®] Program, operating in 43 states under the direction of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Center[®] in Washington DC.