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PRESS RELEASE

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Missouri Communities Win Downtown Revitalization Awards

Missouri Main Street Connection presented awards in 12 categories for excellence in revitalization during its state-wide conference July 24 - 26 in St. Louis, MO. Awards went to Sedalia, Cape Girardeau, Liberty, Clinton, Chillicothe, Excelsior Springs, Lee's Summit, Warrensburg, Washington, and Main Street Corridor District in Kansas City.

“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.”

Sedalia won the Award for Best Adaptive Re-use of an historic building, The Missouri Pacific Railroad Depot now owned by the Sedalia Downtown Development Corporation. The transformation of this 1886 Art Moderne building, gives AMTRACK passengers an improved terminal area, and is the new home to OATS Transportation's 13-county regional office, plus it provides a space for the SDDI offices, which stepped forward to purchase the Depot in 1991 and started the rehabilitation process. The 8,000 square-foot building and landscape enhancements cover an area spanning three city blocks. Funding came from several sources: a 25,000 grant from Great American Stations; \$540,000 in federal transit funding; \$160,000 from AMTRACK; \$250,000 from the Transportation Enhancement Act; \$212,000 from a CDBG grant; and \$137,000 in SAFETEA-LU funds. The project gained crucial support also from the City of Sedalia which contributed in-kind labor on the site; the local historic district taxing entity; local private contributions that were incentivized through the Missouri Development Finance Board; and a generous gift from the Union Pacific Railroad Foundation. As envisioned by the first supporters of the project, several large renovation projects have been spurred in north Sedalia because of the Depot transformation.

Cape Girardeau won the Award for Best Economic Restructuring Project with the Operation Main Street Program. The project – designed to provide strategic training for downtown businesses - originated in the Old Town Cape committee on Economic Restructuring, and later evolved into a partnership made up of Old Town Cape, The Cape Girardeau Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Douglas C. Greene Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The Center developed a custom training program that included financial counseling, needs assessment, mystery shopping, and an action plan competition at the end of the six-week program taught by professionals. The series of classes was offered to 15 selected businesses at no charge. In follow-up evaluations, participants reported that they received valuable tools to improve the performance of their businesses.

Liberty won the Award for Best Large-Scale Project, which went to Tim Harris - Star Development for its adaptive reuse of the Bedinger Furniture Warehouse (ca 1890. Star Development purchased the building in 2008 and began extensive rehabilitation, starting with rebuilding part of the exterior walls that were about to collapse. Other features included a new roof, windows, and stucco exterior, all of which received approval from the City of Liberty to comply with the Historic Overlay requirements in the Historic Downtown Liberty District. Interior work included new concrete floors, new electrical and plumbing, and an elevator for access to 2nd floor apartments. The entire cost of preservation and redevelopment was \$775,000, all financed without government incentives. The new tenants on the ground floor have opened up seven new jobs, and five one-bedroom apartments.

Excelsior Springs won the Award for Business Excellence which went to Willow Springs Mercantile. Jim and Daphne Bowman used a strategic plan for enhancing their antique store which they opened downtown in 2005. Based on research and experience, they gradually added a variety of products and services that include coffee, tea, candles, wine, bistro foods, catering services, live music on weekends, and art displays featuring local artists. Since they opened the store in 2005 the business has grown 94% and now employs seven people. The idea and formation of the Downtown Excelsior Partnership (DEP) came from Jim and Daphne out of the need to organize the efforts of the few businesses downtown when they arrived. Daphne helped create one of DEP's largest fundraisers – The Missouri Wine Festival, and has motivated additional events downtown that attract many visitors to Excelsior Springs. Jim has also been active in promoting downtown, and has served on the Historic Preservation Commission.

Lee's Summit shared the top Award for Business Excellence, with another business owner who is active in promoting the community and the historic district – Jet Pabst, owner of A Thyme for Everything. After six years in downtown Lee's Summit, the store that features kitchen, dining and entertainment goods, has expanded into a larger space to accommodate culinary classes. These often sold-out classes attract cooking enthusiasts and groups from all corners of the two-state area. Often offered in the evening, the classes add to the vibrancy of downtown and give people another reason to come downtown. Jet credits Rick Segal, the retail customer service guru, for helping her to realize that customers want an experience in addition to goods and services. Jet also supports the revitalization efforts of downtown Lee's Summit, serving as chair of the award-winning Chocolate Crawl event each year, among other volunteer tasks she undertakes.

John Simmons of Sedalia, was the winner of the Outstanding Public Official Award, nominated by Sedalia Downtown Development Inc. (SDDI). John is the City's Community Development Director, and offers his time in serving as a City representative on the SDDI Board of Directors. He also facilitates training of new organization members. He plays an invaluable role on the Design committee and has facilitated many downtown projects including the DREAM designation, two streetscape phases and several streetscape enhancement projects with benches and bike racks. He partners tirelessly with SDDI to find new developers and businesses to energize the downtown. John also assists the Central Business and Cultural District in developing projects to enhance the downtown tax district.

Warrensburg won the Award for Outstanding Special Project which went to "Fashion Become Art," a one-night transformation of the Impulse Boutique into a high-fashion, New York-style event venue showcasing the latest fall fashions of 2011. Warrensburg Main Street co-hosted the event; the Fashion Department of Central Missouri State University added student fashions and models; Whiteman Air Force Base volunteers assisted in serving food and beverages to the guests. An art auction, DJ,

champagne toast, and valet parking added touches of glitz to the event which raised \$5,000 for Main Street Warrensburg.

The “Stick Your Neck Out” Award recognizes an individual who demonstrated service that goes the extra mile and sticks out their neck in something thing they believe in, going above and beyond what is expected. The award this year went to two individuals – **Brandy Sensenich of Chillicothe**, and **Rick Hopp, of Washington**.

Sensenich Jeweler has always been a supporter of the Main Street program in Chillicothe, but when Brandy joined the Organization Committee, her enthusiasm sparked increased participation among the committee members, lively discussions, and new ideas. She became an integral part of several downtown fundraising events, including the Piccadilly Gala, Tunes under the Moon, BooFest and Kids Christmas. She has a strong ability to speak with people and perform the “ask” that all non-profits are faced with. Her leadership skills attracted the attention of the Board of Directors, and an invitation to participate as a Director, and she has taken more than the usual steps to educate herself about the Main Street Four-Point Approach® to Revitalization.

Rick Hopp took a big ‘leap of faith’ when he endorsed and encouraged the Downtown Washington Board of Directors to purchase, renovate and re-open the downtown post office – a \$750,000 project. Rick was so certain of the project that he was able to make the other directors feel at ease with it. During the construction phase, Rick spent many week nights and weekends working on the renovation, while he continued his daytime job. Rick was singlehandedly responsible for restoring the woodwork in the building to its original glory. Rick continues to pitch in and stick out his neck on this project and save the Downtown organization money by doing cleaning, maintenance and repairs on the building.

Main Street Corridor, Kansas City won the Award for Streetscape and Public Improvements. Main Street is historically Kansas City’s most important corridor, and its age has shown for many years. In the past, Main Street was a blighted area, discouraging property owners from investing in improvements to their properties, but has improved in the years since Main Cor stepped in to encourage economic development. The Streetscape Project is a large-scale effort to change the public perception of the Main Street corridor and show how far it has come. The project plans call for three phases, one of which is completed, with phase two under construction currently. Plans call for many components designed to increase aesthetics and safety. New sidewalks and curb cuts, improved pedestrian crossings, features to slow down speeding vehicles, new street signs, street light enhancements, pedestrian lights at intersections, new trash receptacles, rain gardens, landscaping, historic markers, and a daily patrol operated by the Main Street Community Improvement District all contribute to the improvements. The project is owned by the City of Kansas City and is primarily paid for using Tax-Increment Financing (TIF), PIAC dollars and General Obligation bond funds. Main Cor was designated as the administrator of the project, and will continue to maintain the improvements when all phases are complete. Phase One is already starting to spur redevelopment within the area, with signs of new investment in commercial properties.

Chillicothe won the Award for Façade Rehabilitation under \$10,000 for Lauhoff Jewelry. Darren Lauhoff and his wife, Angie, recently became the primary owners of the family business which had been in operation since the late 1970s. After making some interior décor changes that gave the store a more open, inviting look, they decided the exterior needed updating also. They wanted to preserve the unique architectural characteristics of the building, so they consulted Main Street Chillicothe’s Design Committee for advice. The new historic color scheme draws attention to the arched windows, and the new signage is appropriate to compliment the semi-ornate façade elements. The façade renovation grant offered by Main Street Chillicothe helped cover the costs of the project.

Excelsior Springs shared the Award for Façade Rehabilitation under \$10,000 for the Blue Raddish Artist Co-op. The façade restoration work on this 10-foot wide building (ca 1900) was a challenge, not only because of its narrow front, but that it really wasn't a *building* – but a roof with end caps nestled between two buildings. Removal of a rusted tin awning and replacing it with a new transom window above the door was the first step, followed by fresh paint and an artistic new sign. With guidance from the Historic Preservation Commission, a fun color palette was selected representing the natural elements of the springs and the Co-ops own name. The building owner, Stacy Cahalan, utilized the façade grant program through the Downtown Excelsior Partnership which provided a portion of the rehabilitation project costs. The space that had been vacant for many years and was definitely an eyesore is now – through an artist's eyes, it's a very functional and attractive space.

Washington won the Award for Façade Rehabilitation over \$10,000 for the Washington Public Library. The Library's home for several years was above the Washington Police Department until the Department's need for more space required a move, leaving the entire first floor of the building vacant. For nearly four years the City debated over what could be done with the space. The Library board proposed a renovation of the building and expanding the Library into the lower level. The rehabilitation project took nearly two years and \$4.3 million. Countless numbers of volunteers contributed their time to help complete the work. While the majority of the work occurred inside, the exterior was changed little, except for replacing the police car garages with a brick spire and adding a lower level entrance. The changes maintain the traditional brick exterior that adheres to the uniform look of Washington's municipal buildings, and exemplifies the stabilization and renovation of a specialized government building that serves the public.

Clinton won the Award for Special Promotional Event for “Olde Glory Days, Happy Birthday Clinton, 175 Years Strong.” Olde Glory Days is a four-day celebration of America's birthday, with free entertainment, carnival, music, food, games, parade and fireworks, going on annual for the past 18 years. 2011 was the sesquicentennial for Clinton; its birthday was the theme. Expenses are underwritten by various businesses – some contributing up to \$10,000. Combined costs of the evening entertainment and the many components necessary to put on a four-day event reaches close to \$100,000, all contributions from the community. The Grand Parade is the highlight of Olde Glory Days on Saturday morning. It creates many good memories for the children of the community. Following the Parade, a free lunch is offered to any veteran in attendance. It is one more way the community says, “Thank You” to its veterans. Many people are impacted by the event, including the 200 volunteers who make it all possible. They look forward to working on the event, include the planning period beforehand. Many class reunions and family reunions are scheduled during Olde Glory Days. It is a perfect time for a weekend reunion with plenty of activities for the whole family. As many as 10,000 people are in town during Olde Glory Days, which creates a large economic impact for the community.

The Volunteer of the Year Awards went to **Claire Bruce of Old Town Cape**, and **Andrew Unerstall of Washington**.

Claire has used her knowledge and skills in strategic marketing to help Old Town Cape's Economic Restructuring Committee develop a market message and matrix for each area of the Old Town Cape District. Since beginning her volunteer work with Cape's historic district, she has become both a downtown resident and business owner. One of her businesses, Merchaplitian, is a full-service market research and statistical analysis firm that helps companies connect with new customers and build their brand. She has also opened a retail store featuring beads and vintage and hand-made accessories. While keeping busy with her own enterprises, she continues to serve as a pro-active volunteer with Old

Town Cape, sharing her knowledge and seeking ways she can help her neighbors to enhance the downtown business environment.

Andrew (Andy, as he is known in Washington) completed the restoration of a historic home in Washington in 2008, and was soon thereafter elected to the Downtown Washington Inc. Board of Directors, and was elected president in 2012. He has made learning the Four Point Approach® process a priority, not only for himself, but for the entire Board. He has served as a member of many committees and takes part in the quarterly liaison lunches shared by the City of Washington, the Washington Area Chamber of Commerce, the Washington Tourism Commission, Downtown Washington Inc. and the Historic Washington Foundation. A dedicated preservationist, Andy's day-time job is keeping his own company – Unerstall Construction – working on multiple restoration projects, both commercial and residential, many of them in downtown Washington. Andy has thrown himself into the Main Street process. As a result of his dedication, Downtown Washington Inc. continuously receives accreditation from the National Main Street Center and Missouri Main Street Connection. As many Main Street managers say, “He just gets it!”

ADDITIONAL DETAILS for each Award will be available from these sources:

Old Town Cape, Inc., Cape Girardeau, MO

marlamills@oldtowncape.org

Downtown Excelsior Partnership Inc, Excelsior Springs, MO

kwinge@visitesprings.com

Downtown Washington, Inc., Washington, MO

bepple@downtownwashmo.org

Downtown Lees Summit Main Street Inc, Lee's Summit, MO

trisha@downtownls.org

Sedalia Downtown Development Inc., Sedalia, MO

Meg.liston@att.net

Main Street Warrensburg Inc, Warrensburg, MO

wmainst@embarqmail.com

Main Street Corridor Inc. (Main Cor), Kansas City, MO

d.burnett@maincor.org

Clinton Main Street Inc, Clinton, MO

diane@clintonmo.org

Historic Downtown Liberty Inc., Liberty, MO

vicki@historicdowntownliberty.org

Main Street Chillicothe Inc., Chillicothe, MO

mschilli@greenhills.net

Missouri Main Street Connection Inc., Branson, MO

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