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State Officials Welcome Boone Into Prestigious Main Street Iowa Program

Boone was recognized by the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) on Tuesday as one of the two newest Main Street Iowa communities, earning the sought-after distinction following a rigorous application process.

About two dozen local leaders were on hand at the Iowa Downtown Conference in Cedar Rapids to share in the excitement as Boone and Indianola received the elite designation. Only 53 of the state's 947 incorporated communities are in the Main Street Iowa program.

Mayor Elijah Stines said the recognition was the product of "a tremendous amount of work and community spirit by volunteers, members of the business community, our city staff and council members, and others."

"Boone has ramped up investment in the district to levels that would not have previously been thought possible, and we have so much more planned for the future," Stines said.

Main Street is a proven strategy for downtown revitalization, a network of communities and a national support program. The elite designation follows a rigorous application process. Since its inception in 1985, the Main Street Iowa program has generated more than \$2.5 billion in private investment, more than 5,000 new businesses, and 16,000 jobs. Main Street Iowa is one of 46 programs in the Main Street America network and is often held up as an example of how to successfully leverage the Main Street Approach to revitalize downtowns and inspire economic growth, IEDA officials emphasized.

"Boone and Indianola are rural communities with strong legacies and leaders who understand the connection between a vibrant downtown and economic growth and quality of life," said IEDA and Iowa Finance Authority Director Debi Durham. "When you create good jobs and a place where people want to live, success follows."

According to an IEDA news release, "After falling short of the Main Street designation in 2022, Boone leaders took the feedback and rallied the community. Groups have since partnered to renew focus on preserving downtown history and architecture, and during the past two years, the district has seen 15 new businesses. The city hopes to add or renovate upper-story housing to meet residential demand in the Boone County seat of 12,500, and also create short-term rentals for those visiting the Boone County Fair, International Motor Contest Association Super Nationals at the Boone Speedway, or Farm Progress Show."

The state agency noted that the Main Street Iowa program "accepts a limited number of new communities every two years. Applicants must demonstrate local support and investment, a downtown district with the potential for growth, and readiness to implement the time-tested Main Street Approach™ to revitalization and economic development."

"I couldn't be any more proud than I am of our community and everyone involved who made this designation possible," Stines said. "Boone has so many positive things going on these days, and its inclusion in the Main Street Iowa program is, without a doubt, a sign of even brighter things to come."

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