

This project is a shining example of new construction and a catalyst for future projects. When people see one of the anchors of Main Street being renovated or expanded, this can change the whole psychology of a town or community. It offers hope. It serves as a catalyst for a far-reaching ripple effect of positive changes.

So I congratulate the citizens of Waterloo for putting together a winning proposal to secure a Main Street Challenge Grant. Their efforts to reinvigorate their historic downtown are setting a terrific example for other towns across America, and for that, I salute them.●

VALLEY JUNCTION, IOWA, INNOVATIVE EXPANSION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, one of the greatest challenges we face—not just in Iowa but all across America—is preserving the character and vitality of our towns. This is about economics, but it is also about our culture and identity. After all, you won't find the heart and soul of Iowa at Wal-Mart or Home Depot out in the strip malls. No, the heart and soul of Iowa is in our family farms, and on Main Street in communities all across my State. That is why we need to be as generous as possible and creative as possible in keeping our downtowns not just alive but thriving.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am involved in funding many hundreds of programs every year. But the Main Street Iowa program—providing challenge grants to revitalize downtown buildings across my State—is in a class by itself. It's smart. It's effective. And it touches communities and people in very concrete ways.

For example, the citizens of Valley Junction, IA, have been working hard to make their area a true destination in central Iowa and a more vibrant community. With the help of a Main Street Iowa Challenge Grant, the Lagniappe in Valley Junction, a trendy boutique offering art, jewelry, gifts, accessories, and clothing with an emphasis on local artists is now expanding. The retail area will be expanded by approximately 1,000 square feet and will offer garden art, fountains, planters, wind chimes, and other outdoor accessories. The new addition will also add a social flare to the specialty shop with an outdoor seating area for 50 people. The second floor remodeling will allow expanded selection of wine and gourmet foods. The addition of a coffee/wine bar, featuring a beautifully preserved oak and marble bar, will provide an elegant conversation area with access to a rooftop garden. This New Orleans-style atmosphere is quite fitting for this boutique, named for the Creole term for "a little something extra"

This expansion project is mainly the brainchild of Caren Sturm, the owner of the Lagniappe. Her creative and innovative thinking serves as an inspira-

tion to the rest of Valley Junction, and the project itself will allow for expanded business hours, special events, private parties, and jazz music on a regular basis. This upwards expansion is an innovative solution to the lack of commercial space present in the Valley Junction area. It is a model for other proprietors to emulate, as demand for retail space far exceeds the availability of property. I salute Caren Sturm and the rest of Valley Junction for their hard work to maintain the status of their town as one of the best retail and downtown areas in Iowa.

The beauty of the Main Street Iowa program is that the ideas and initiatives come from local creativity. I have been pleased to secure \$1.5 million in funding since 2002 for Main Street Iowa Challenge Grants. The Main Street programs of the Iowa Department of Economic Development help provide technical assistance, but, as we have seen in Valley Junction, success itself comes from local leadership, local teamwork, and home-grown ideas and solutions.

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So I congratulate Caren Sturm and the citizens of Valley Junction for putting together a winning proposal to secure a Main Street Challenge Grant. Their efforts to reinvigorate their historic downtown are setting a terrific example for other shopping districts across America, and for that, I salute them.●

STORY CITY, IOWA, DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, one of the greatest challenges we face—not just in Iowa but all across America—is preserving the character and vitality of our small towns. This is about economics, but it is also about our culture and identity. After all, you won't find the heart and soul of Iowa at Wal-Mart or Home Depot out in the strip malls. No, the heart and soul of Iowa is in our family farms, and on Main Street in small communities all across my State. That is why we need to be as generous as possible—and creative as possible—in keeping our downtowns not just alive but thriving.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am involved in funding many hundreds of programs every year. But the Main Street Iowa program providing challenge grants to revitalize downtown buildings across my State is in a class by itself. It is smart. It is effective. And it touches communities and people in very concrete ways.

For example, the citizens of Story City, IA, and the editor of the Story

City Herald, Eloise Thorson are making efforts to improve their downtown and spur investment in the area. Eloise and the Story City Herald received a Main Street Challenge Grant in 2003 to reclaim their old downtown location. In 1987, the building that had housed the Story City Herald was deemed unsafe for occupancy and demolished. Receipt of the \$25,000 Main Street Challenge Grant was the true catalyst to the reestablishment of the Story City Herald in its original location.

This positive change is causing more positive change, as vacancies in Story City's downtown are being filled and more building owners are taking interest in improving the look of their downtown. Community pride in the downtown is returning. Since becoming a Main Street Iowa Community in November of 2004, Story City's downtown has seen over \$4 million in private investment, as well as a net gain of 16 businesses and 46 jobs.

Eloise Thorson and the Main Street Challenge Grant gave a great deal back to the community by replacing a long vacant building lot with a magnificent piece of architecture, gracing Story City's "main" street. The community pride in this project is evident as pedestrians walk along Broad Street and stop to show off this new construction to visitors and tourists. Residents are proud to have this century-old business located back in the downtown district, renewing faith in the future of Story City.

The beauty of the Main Street Iowa program is that the ideas and initiatives come from our small towns and rural communities. I have been pleased to secure \$1.5 million in funding since 2002 for Main Street Iowa Challenge Grants. The Main Street programs of the Iowa Department of Economic Development help provide technical assistance, but, as we have seen in Story City, success itself comes from local leadership, local teamwork, and home-grown ideas and solutions.

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So I congratulate Eloise Thorson and the citizens of Story City for putting together a winning proposal to secure a Main Street Challenge Grant. Their efforts to reinvigorate their historic downtown are setting a terrific example for other small towns across America, and for that, I salute them.●

SIGOURNEY, IOWA, IMPROVEMENTS

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