



# IOWA MAIN STREET CHARLES CITY

NEWSLETTER | FALL 2023



**BUSINESS  
IMPROVEMENT**

**DESIGN**

**OUTREACH**

**PROMOTION**





# MAIN STREET CHARLES CITY BOARD



**Ryan Venz**  
Board Chair

The Main Street Charles City Board is the foundation for our downtown district. Since Charles City is my hometown, I feel very passionate about enhancing what we can offer for both our current residents and visitors to our town. We hear all too often the negatives, but we have many positive things going for Charles City and downtown. By building on what we have already started we will be launched into being the best we know we can be.

The past six months have been busy for the Main Street Charles City board and committees. Our board continues to meet monthly to hear about all the work being completed by the four committees. As a program, we were able to offer a business motivational speaker and Grow with Google training as well as support another successful Party in the Park season. We also unveiled a new print of downtown Charles City as a fundraiser, which, by the way, is still available for

purchase at the Main Street offices at 401 North Main Street. As the fiscal year closes, we have been busy working on budgeting and recruiting new board members to our team. It is amazing to see how well the board works with the committees to bring the Main Street Charles City vision and mission to life.

As a new fiscal year begins our board will meet to discuss and develop our goals for this year. One of my main focuses will be on how we are going to strengthen our Main Street district and how we can retain existing businesses and attract new businesses to our downtown. Main Street America offers informational webinars, in-person meetings to enhance business, and community grants to recruit a new businesses or maintain an existing business. To continue to have these at our disposal we want to continue forward as a strong Main Street community. We can do this by retaining our current financial investors, as we bring new investors to our program. Together we can make a difference!

One thing that never changes is the need for new ideas and additional help to make our events successful. If you are looking for a chance to get involved, please contact any board member or scan our QR code to get on the list of volunteers. Our program is volunteer driven and could not operate without your help! Please consider taking time out of your schedule to make Charles City the best it can be!

**Sign up to Volunteer**



<https://tinyurl.com/22zwpwswz>

**Members of the 2023-24 board include:**  
Ryan Venz, Krista Noah (Vice Chair), Pat Ohlerking, Shelley Zweibohmer, Phil Hammermeister, Evonne Neupert, Nikki Knowlton, Anne Benning & Drew Mitchell

## ON THE COVER:

It was a "spooktacular" evening for the 28th Annual Spookwalk event October 23rd, hosted by Main Street Charles City. The weather was perfect and 28 different businesses and organizations had decorated booths and handed out treats to over 1,100 costumed kiddos. Pictured is the Valero Renewables booth, which was judged "Best Use of Theme." This year's Spookwalk theme was "Circus CarnEvil." Thanks to all who participated and attended this always fun event!

## FOUR POINTS APPROACH



### ORGANIZATION (OUTREACH)

Build leadership and strong organizational capacity. Ensure broad community engagement. Build partnerships across sectors.

**Funding**  
**Public Relations**  
**Internal Communication**  
**Volunteer Development**

- Recruitment
- Orientation
- Recognition

### DESIGN

Create an inviting, inclusive atmosphere. Celebrate historic character. Foster accessible, people-centered public spaces.

**Main Street and Parking**  
**Lot Planters**  
**Adopt-A-Lot**  
**Holiday Decorations**  
**Vintage Street Lights**  
**Banners**  
**Design Assistance**  
**Façade Improvements**

### ECONOMIC VITALITY (BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT)

Build a diverse economic base. Catalyze smart new investment. Cultivate a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem.

**Business Loans**  
**Signage**  
**Business Inventory**  
**Economic Profile Reports**  
**Business Recruitment**  
**Business Assistance**

### PROMOTION

Market district's defining assets. Communicate unique features through storytelling. Support buy local experience.

**Assessment & Planning**  
**Image Development**  
**Special Events:**

- Party in the Park Summer Series
- SPOOKWALK
- Firecracker 5

# BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE



**Tami Vetter**  
Committee Chair

The Business Improvement Committee is here to provide support, training opportunities, tools and active involvement to businesses located in the Charles City Main Street district. In addition, we encourage others not in the immediate district to take advantage of training opportunities and events to better the entire community's business climate. We are excited to have completed several goals this year including offering free training on what Google can do to grow individual businesses and

organizations and show what they have to offer to a global market! We've also expanded our series of community surveys to address the desires of locals and visitors alike that has led us to our Ready 2 Recruit training and exercise to make our community ready for more eating options. This included updating our marketing materials as well as examining the steps it takes to work with new business owners. The Business Improvement Committee is planning more free training opportunities and plans to work on increasing the visibility of opportunities the Main Street program can offer building & business owners. The wide range of free training materials and services, along with funding opportunities, are just two of the many reasons to join the thriving business community of Main Street Charles City, Iowa. The opportunity to support the Main Street Charles City program is open to any

person or business, no matter where they reside or operate. As the heartbeat of the community, Main Street offers a multitude of opportunities and the program continues to grow and change with community trends, keeping us vibrant and relevant to residents and businesses – new and existing. The Business Improvement committee is a great place to learn about, and be part of, forward movement in the community and our committee is open to anyone eager to be a positive and productive partner in our community! Reach out to any of our committee members for more info and thank you for your interest and support of MSCC.


*Committee Members Include: Tami Vetter, Jim Davis, Tiffany Rottinghaus Dean Stewart, Tom Bock, Dean Andrews, Drew Mitchell, Evonne Neupert, & Dennis Keifer.*

# NEWSLETTER SPONSORS


*This newsletter is possible thanks to the sponsorship from these local businesses.*

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**Larry Pump, CPA**  
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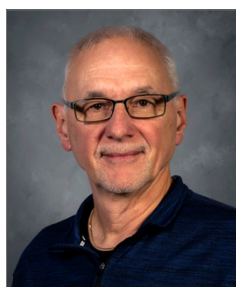
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## DESIGN COMMITTEE



**Steve Schiller**  
Committee Chair

The mission of the Design Committee is to enhance the vitality of downtown Charles City by developing the architectural and natural aesthetics of the area and its associated riverfront environment. To me, we are about helping to beautify and maintaining the visual integrity of downtown Charles City. This is done through the placement of flower pots on Main Street, beautifying the parking lot planters or cleaning up the parking lots, decorating the downtown for the holidays, putting up street banners and other enhancement efforts. Our Committee also helps the City review and recommend Facade Improvement Grant project applications.



This year the Design Committee has been working on replacing our old street banners. We worked with the Rotary Club to replace the Fall banners and are currently working on replacing the Spring and Summer banners for next year.

In addition our Committee has a goal off getting the Spring and Summer street

banners replaced in 2024. We will also be putting up holiday decorations in Central Park and on the Main Street Bridge, as well as arranging for the Main Street flower pots for 2024.

Anyone interested in helping to beautify and enhance our downtown, decorating Charles City for the holidays, or helping with our fundraising booths at Party in the Park is invited and encouraged to come check out our Design Committee meetings. We meet monthly at 6 p.m. at 401 North Main Street. Contact me or the Main Street Charles City office to learn more.

### **Committee Members Include:**

Steve Schiller, Elaine Shelton-Bruton, Mike Bauer, Nancy Clarke, Christopher Anthony, Harley Anthony, Shelley Zweibohmer, & Darci Tracey



# OUTREACH COMMITTEE



**Larry Pump**  
Past Committee Chair

The Outreach Committee is the glue for the Main Street Charles City program. This committee is the conduit For volunteers for our community. It connects the community to the Main Street program. The Main Street Charles City program has consistently been one of the strongest volunteer organizations of over 50 communities in the Main Street Iowa as part of the National Main Street Program.

The Outreach Committee is in the process of conducting a successful fundraiser featuring a print of Charles City's Main Street. The committee accomplished this through a partnership with local photographer Steve Schiller

The committee plans to continue Appreciation Visits to various departments of the City of Charles City



to show the community's gratitude for the City's assistance with the many Main Street functions, like Party in the Park and Spookwalk. You will note that the Appreciation Visit photo attached represents the Parks and Recreation Department enjoying ice cream courtesy of the Main Street Charles City program.

I hope to see new people volunteering

within the next year. You can be a part of the program by calling our office at 641-228-2335.

**Committee Members Include:**  
Chair Ryan Venz, Larry Pump, Dean Andrews, Toni Noah and Veronica Litterer.

# PROMOTION COMMITTEE / PARTY IN THE PARK



**Arcon Conception**  
Committee Member & Past Chair

We put on four Party in the Park events this summer, including celebrating our 20th anniversary. Coming back from a slow start after COVID, I think we have our rhythm back again and hopefully that will continue.

We are already on our way with planning for 2024, looking at dates, bands

and activities. But we could use some more volunteers and new ideas. Both are welcome.

Being a part of Party in the Park and the Promotion Committee is a great way to meet new people and to get involved in the community. I invite anyone looking to get more involved and wanting to help us keep this great community tradition going strong to contact the Main Street Charles City office.

**Committee Members Include:**  
Krista Noah, Arcon Conception, Lora Mills, Mike Schwab, Mike Bauer, Suzie Ross, Jessie Schultz





## FROM THE MSCC DIRECTOR

# MSCC Board of Directors welcomes new faces



**Mark Wicks**  
MSCC Director

With the start of the new fiscal year October 1st, the Main Street Charles City Board of Directors welcomed two new members. Drew Mitchell, of First Security Bank & Trust, and Anne Benning, who is employed by Short's Travel Management, were appointed to the Board in October to replace outgoing members Matt Bradley, Jessie Schultz and Amber Bergeson. One Board seat remains open at this time.

A Charles City native, Mitchell currently serves as an Ag Lender at First Security Bank & Trust. He graduated from Charles City High School in 2017 and went on to attend Iowa State University,

where he majored in Agricultural Business. He also serves on the Floyd County Fair Board, is a Lions Club member, Charles City High School Football Coach, and a member of the Business Improvement Committee of Main Street Charles City. He is married to wife Madison and enjoys hanging out with family and friends, raising and showing cattle, as well as watching and participating in sports.

Benning's family, meanwhile, relocated to Charles City in June of 2011, and she has been immersed with children, career, and service. Her daughter Josette is a high school senior, and son Vinny, a sophomore. Her youngest, Jasper, is in second grade at IC School. Benning brings almost 25 years of collaboration and leadership from her



**Drew Mitchell**  
New Board Member

Human Resources career, most recently as the HR Director for Short's Travel Management. She was involved in the Executive RAGBRAI Team in 2022, and currently serves on the Faith Formation committee at IC Church, additionally volunteering her time at IC School. In her spare time, she enjoys bowling and tries to keep with her kids' schedules.

The Main Street Charles City program thanks Bradley, Schultz and Bergeson for their time and efforts on behalf of the volunteer-driven, non-profit organization. Anyone interested in learning more about Main Street Charles City, its Board, committees or event task forces, is encouraged to contact Director Mark Wicks at (641) 228-2335 or email [mark@charlescitychamber.com](mailto:mark@charlescitychamber.com).



**Anne Benning**  
New Board Member

## Main Street Prints Photo and Graphic

Congratulations to Quinn Weber of Charles City, whose name was drawn at Party in the Park this summer as the winner of the special Main Street Print Raffle. Thank you to all who purchased a raffle ticket in support of the Main Street Charles City program.

If you would still like a copy of

the Steve Schiller print, it is for sale exclusively at the MSCC Office, 401 North Main St. All proceeds benefit the non-profit, volunteer-driven organization. You have a choice between a matted and framed print or canvass print for \$150, a matted print only for \$65 or just the print itself for \$40.



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## City Appreciation Visits

Main Street Charles City showed our local police officers some love in September when Outreach Committee members Ryan Venz and Veronica Litterer stopped by their training session and handed out ice cream treats. The visit, and others like it

to various City departments, was in appreciation for all that the police department does to assist the Main Street CC program throughout the year with its events and activities to help make them possible.

## Eve Welton joins staff as new Project & Events Coordinator

In August the Main Street Charles City program and the Charles City Area Chamber of Commerce welcomed new staff member Eve Welton to replace Joanna Thompson as Project & Events Coordinator. Thompson served in that role since late 2020 and has re-located out of state with her family to pursue other avenues.



**Eve Welton**  
Charles City Project & Events Coordinator

Welton is a native of Thailand, but has lived in Austin, Texas, for the past 5 years and moved to Charles City this summer, to be with her grandfather. She is a graduate of Lanna International School, focusing on business, travel and tourism, and is currently going after her business degree. Coming from a family restaurant background, she enjoys cooking and spending time in nature.

Please join us in welcoming her to Charles City. Welton will be splitting her time between both Main Street CC and the Chamber.

## Additional Google training sessions set

Certified Digital Online Coach Lindsey Newland will be back in Charles City November 1st and 2nd for another free session on how your business or organization can benefit from using Google online tools and resources. This time around it will be how to utilize Google Analytics, which was requested following her class in August on how to "Reach More Customers Online With Google."

The class is open to any and all interested and will be offered at two different times

– 6 p.m. on Wednesday, November 1st, and again at 7:30 a.m. on Thursday, November 2nd. Both sessions will be in the Zastrow River Room of the Charles City Public Library (please use rear parking lot entrance).

Grow With Google sessions are offered free of charge through a partnership with Main Street Iowa and Google, with the local classes organized by the Business Improvement Committee of Main Street



Charles City. Please call (641) 228-2335 or email [info@charlescitychamber.com](mailto:info@charlescitychamber.com)

[charlescitychamber.com](http://charlescitychamber.com) for more information.



# Charles City is 'Ready 2 Recruit' following MSI training

Charles City is "Ready 2 Recruit" new businesses, as well as better equipped to retain the ones we have and assist with business succession following a special training course this past summer undertaken by the Business Improvement Committee of Main Street Charles City.

The BI Committee successfully applied for the Ready 2 Recruit training in 2023 through Main Street Iowa, which only accepts two Main Street communities a year to work with out of the 54 MSI towns and cities across the state. A requirement is that local program must have first completed the Market Study & Strategies training course, which the Committee did in 2022.

Through virtual and in-person training sessions with Jay Schlinsog of Downtown Professionals Network and Robin Bostrom of Main Street Iowa, the BI Committee members created a number of new business recruitment tools and materials to utilize. A local "Top Business prospects" survey was conducted to identify potential prospects sought by the community and help create a market-driven framework for downtown business and real estate development strategies. The intent of those strategies is to help existing businesses sustain and grow, and to invite new businesses and potential entrepreneurs to consider downtown Charles City.

The information and tools gained from those trainings was then put to a real-life test with the Recruitment Challenge. The Business Improvement Committee selected a hypothetical business it wanted to recruit (a finer dining restaurant), and a professional developer playing the part of that potential business investor was assigned by Main Street Iowa to make a visit to Charles City to look at what was available and



what we have to offer. The developer was contacted in advance, information gathered on what he was looking for, marketing materials sent out, potential sites and buildings identified, a visit itinerary created and a recruitment team assembled. The Challenge Visit took place on August 14th, with a meet and greet, driving tour of the community, downtown walking tour and site visits, lunch, and a "closing" session to try and seal the deal. The Committee then met with the developer, Schlinsog and Bostrom for a post-visit critique session.

"You hit it out of the ballpark," remarked Schlinsog afterward. "Communication was extremely good," and materials provided the prospect "hit the mark in terms of quantity, content and presentation." He added that the "team members present were welcoming and displayed good camaraderie," and that they were "effective" and "set a positive tone for the day."

The prospect was shown a total of five different locations for a perspective restaurant, met with existing business owners and was treated to a catered lunch above Dean Jewelers, overlooking Central Park. During the closing session the recruitment team shared technical assistance, financial incentives and other resources that would be available for him and his business to locate in downtown Charles City.

"In the wrap-up, the prospect indicated that he was sold on the community and downtown district, and the opportunity for an upper scale casual dining restaurant here," said Schlinsog.

Some minor suggestions and tweaks were provided by the developer and trainers for consideration, but overall they said the Charles City team did very well in completing the Ready 2 Recruit Challenge. The challenge moving forward, is to now continue to utilize what was learned and the tools created to recruit and retain businesses in real life. That includes promoting available properties, spaces and investment opportunities, as well as to rethink how some existing spaces could be retrofit or added onto in the back of the property to fit the needs of a perspective business.

To learn more about business and investment opportunities in downtown Charles City, contact the Community Development Office at (641) 228-2335, email [info@charlescitychamber.com](mailto:info@charlescitychamber.com) or visit the Main Street Charles City and Chamber website at [www.charlescitychamber.com](http://www.charlescitychamber.com).