



**OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**  
**SHEILA SIMON**



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**Illinois communities receive Lt. Governor's Awards for  
Downtown Revitalization**

*Winners include Batavia, Bloomington, Cambridge, Crystal Lake, Elgin,  
Genoa, Jacksonville, Moline, Momence, Pontiac, Prophetstown,  
Quincy, Waukegan*

QUINCY – September 17, 2012. Several Illinois communities received the 2012 Lieutenant Governors Awards for Excellence in Downtown Revitalization during the Illinois Main Street Conference held September 13 - 14 in Quincy. The award winners included Batavia, Bloomington, Cambridge, Crystal Lake, Elgin, Genoa, Jacksonville, Moline, Momence, Pontiac, Prophetstown, Quincy and Waukegan.

The presentation of the Lieutenant Governor's Awards for Downtown Revitalization has been an annual occurrence since 1994, the year after Illinois Main Street was established. Illinois Main Street programs were eligible to submit award nominations for activities completed between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012. A total of 17 awards were presented, four in each of the Main Street points of Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring, and one for Volunteer of the Year. Judges from the three state government entities supporting the Main Street program – the Office of Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency – selected the winners.

"Across the state we see renewed efforts at revitalizing our downtown communities, and the passion and dedication shown by these honorees is inspiring," Lt. Governor Sheila Simon said. "These

honorees exemplify the best of what our state has to offer and remind us that Illinois Main Streets are open for business.”

### **The Design Awards**

These awards honor excellence in public or private construction or rehabilitation projects and in Design Committee activities.

#### **Batavia MainStreet for its Community Planters**

Batavia MainStreet revamped its existing planter program by recruiting a local business, Batavia Enterprises, and local organization, the Association for Individual Development (AID). The individuals from AID learned garden skills through “Green Thumb” workshops and applied those skills by maintaining the planters. Shady Hill Gardens, a local nursery, designed and selected the planting material. The city shuttled the planters around and stored them at the end of the season. The judges loved how the project involved and supported local businesses, while it provided great job skills to individuals with special needs.

#### **Jacksonville Main Street for its “Dig It 2” Project**

By 2009, Jacksonville was slowly untangling itself from its downtown urban-renewal nightmare. But this award honors “Dig It 2,” the second phase of the project that brought new water and sewer lines, sidewalks, period-style streetlights, wayfinding, and landscape improvements to feeder streets. Perhaps most noticeably, Dig It 2 reconstructed one of Jacksonville’s historic steel arches, fabricated by one of their local long-term businesses, the Eli Bridge Company. Jacksonville Main Street continued its supporting role by providing information guides and on-site offices for project engineers and posting project information on their website, Facebook and Twitter pages. During construction, 11 businesses expanded, 61 new jobs were created, and two buildings were improved. During construction, the buzz about the downtown’s rebirth generated more than \$17 million in private reinvestment.

#### **Moline City Centre’s Washington Square Apartments**

Having sat vacant for nearly a decade, Washington Square rowhouses were an eyesore in a redeveloping historic district. With urging from local preservationists and utilizing Federal Neighborhood stabilization funds, the city chose to rehabilitate the 1876 Italianate rowhouses into ten affordable and market-rate apartments. Washington Square Apartments is now the jewel in the center of downtown activity. The property is fully leased, well maintained and beautifully landscaped.

#### **Historic Quincy Business District for its Downtown Walking tour podcasts**

The project initially called for about a dozen podcasts about historic downtown buildings, but it quickly captured the imaginations not only of HQBD’s intern, but also of the many HQBD volunteers. Their intern spent her summer break digging through records, uncovering hundreds of stories and photographs about downtown buildings. The tour quickly grew to 27 stops with at least four more in development. WGEM-TV volunteered to record the audio portions of the presentations, resulting in a professional look and sound without the commensurate price. Each building is “tagged” with the QR code that takes you directly to its own web video. The online videos were an instant hit in preservation-minded Quincy. Many building owners have added HQBD’s videos to their own websites and have become some of the campaign’s biggest promoters. The judges thought this was a fantastic and exemplary use of technology to raise awareness of historic resources.

## **The Organization Awards**

The Organization Awards recognize successful projects completed by the local Main Street communities' Organization Committees. Winning projects can focus on volunteer recruitment, training, management, and retention strategies; promotion of the local Main Street program; fundraising, or other Organization Committee activities.

### **Cambridge Main Street for its "Christmas on the Square" Event**

Cambridge's annual Christmas on the Square holiday event brings the entire community together with activities that engage businesses, churches, school groups, and the local government. In 2011, Santa Claus was arrested and put on trial in "The Case of the Missing Spirit," held in the historic Henry County Courthouse. After the acquittal, the standing-room-only crowd was invited to tour the historic Courthouse on foot and then the downtown on horse-drawn wagons. Attendees enjoyed the Taste of Cambridge and viewed the holiday window displays while being serenaded by Christmas music. The High School hosted an arts-and-crafts fair, and local churches offered Swedish food and holiday treats. Cambridge Main Street sponsored the Festival of Trees, visits with Santa, a Tours of Homes, and a chili supper. The judges loved the breadth of the event, especially the Santa trial.

### **Downtown Crystal Lake for "Ginger Bread for the Salvation Army"**

Crystal Lake's "Gingerbread for the Salvation Army" fundraiser worked in conjunction with the Salvation Army's Red Kettle campaign. Participating downtown businesses crafted their own Gingerbread Creations and displayed them next to a countertop Salvation Army Red Kettle. The public voted for their favorites with every dollar they dropped into the red kettles. Many gingerbread creations were reflections of the business - for example, a hair salon crafted a gingerbread barber chair, and a fabric store combined gingerbread with sewing notions for their creation. The 19 downtown businesses helped raise almost \$2,400. Thrilled with the event, the Salvation Army said that nothing similar is being done at any Salvation Army in the U.S.

### **Genoa Main Street for its Partner and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner**

Like most Main Street programs, Genoa Main Street must hold an annual membership meeting. To spice up a boring and sparsely attended event, the program added a thank-you component for its partners and volunteers. They wanted the event to be celebratory so guests could feel special. In order to receive an invitation, a person must have volunteered a minimum of ten hours or contributed a minimum of \$50. To keep costs down, awards were made in-house. To recognize the volunteer who generated the spark that made plans a reality, the Volunteer of the Year was given the Spark Plug Award – a mounted spark plug inscribed with the winner's name. Volunteers donated their specialties for the live dessert auction. At the end of the evening, guests filled out volunteer forms for the coming year. The judges loved the dessert auction and the clever take on the awards.

### **Pontiac P.R.O.U.D. for its 2012 Premier Partnership Campaign**

In January 2012, Pontiac PROUD's Organization Committee began to build a Premier Partnership Opportunities Package. Two committee members met with each potential premier partner to discuss the history and achievements of the organization and the various partnership opportunities and benefits. The Committee targeted eight premier sponsors and received commitments from six. These six partners generated \$20,500 in revenue for the 2012 fiscal year. In comparison, the previous

financial support from these same six businesses totaled only about \$9,000. Because of this resounding success, regular small business partnerships did not need to be increased, and no additional fundraising has been needed for 2012. The initiative will be expanded for FY 2013. The judges praised how PROUD took the bold step of claiming and publicizing their worth within the community and linked the size of the “ask” to the proven success of the organization.

### **The Promotion Awards**

The Promotion Awards recognize excellence in promoting an Illinois Main Street district through creative and effective image campaigns, retail sales events, and other promotional projects that help spread the word about the community’s central business district.

#### **Batavia Main Street for its Community Garden**

The mission of Batavia’s “Come Grow with Us” Community Garden is to create an all-organic, ecologically sound garden that teaches food self-sufficiency, good nourishment, and sustainable gardening methods while addressing universal access to fresh local food. Each member of the volunteer garden committee takes a turn convening a Saturday morning work group to plant, weed, water, and harvest. This year, more than 175 volunteers expanded the vegetable beds by 700 square feet, doubled the size of the herb garden, and added a flower bed of native plants to attract pollinators and beneficial insects. In the five months of its operation, the garden has produced truckloads of vegetables in more than 30 varieties. Although many people have approached the committee to rent space for private use, the committee has steadfastly clung to the garden’s original charity mission. Outlying communities and national food banks have looked to Batavia’s Community garden as an example of what a community can do to educate and feed their citizens.

#### **Downtown Bloomington Association for its Double Value program**

The Downtown Bloomington Association revamped its Farmers Market to help provide greater access to fresh, local foods. With help from the Heartland Local Food Network, \$5 vouchers were given to the community’s food-pantry users. The Market initiated a double coupon program that doubled the value of LINK purchases up to \$25. In partnership with the local School District, the Market started a second year of its “Healthy Start Market” at a local elementary school, where children and their families learned about the Market and how to use locally grown, fresh foods. The DBA uses spreadsheets to track sales, redemptions, and card users, and it trains vendors and volunteers on how to be reimbursed. Last year, the program substantially increased LINK sales at the Market. The judges saw this program as an exemplary way to take a farmers’ market to a new level, by making it available to a new demographic.

#### **Jacksonville Main Street for its First Annual Downtown Celebration**

After last year’s city-sponsored celebration marking the reopening of its square, Jacksonville Main Street’s Promotion Committee decided to maintain the momentum in 2012 with an annual festival on the square. Volunteers coordinated marketing, sponsorships, music, food, vendors, entertainment, and a parade even bigger than the one during the big celebration in 2011. The opening of the South Main Street improvements was marked by a ribbon cutting. Vendors sold their wares on and around the square among dance performances, pony rides, military displays, and children’s art activities. More than 30 sponsors gave over \$14,000. Gross income exceeded \$34,000 and yielded a net profit of \$12,000. Dozens of new volunteers stepped forward, and interest from businesses outside the Main Street District looking to relocate into the district increased by nearly 15% in the weeks after the

Celebration. The judges saw this as an excellent way to create a new tradition by celebrating its renewed downtown.

### **Prophetstown Main Street for its Charity Auction and Wine Tasting**

Because the holidays are the season for giving, Prophetstown Main Street created a Charity Auction and Wine Tasting, with the proceeds benefiting local charities. Volunteers decorated evergreen trees, wreaths and baskets, which were then auctioned off. The holiday items were displayed in store windows for two weeks before the auction, and the community voted by leaving canned food and paper items next to their favorites, which were then given to the local food pantry. The display with the most donations was given an award. Prizes donated by local businesses were placed into a silent auction. Auction-goers specified the charities to which their winning bids went. Local vendors provided a variety of wines and beers, and tastings were sold by the ticket. All monies raised above the event's costs were donated to charity. An unintended benefit of the event has been that Prophetstown Main Street has added new people to their membership and volunteer lists. The judges loved the clever tweaking of established holiday events, while the donations broadened the reach of the organization.

### **The Economic Restructuring Awards**

The Economic Restructuring Awards recognize successful economic restructuring projects within Main Street commercial districts that involve business recruitment or retention efforts, economic development, or financial incentive programs. Winning activities may feature partnerships with local organizations, such as chambers of commerce, economic development groups, or local governments.

### **Batavia MainStreet and its Broker Tour**

Batavia MainStreet co-hosted a real estate broker tour with the city and the Chamber of Commerce. A bus took area brokers on a narrated tour of 12 properties across the city. Prime development sites and businesses that took advantage of city incentives were highlighted. While they were held captive on the bus, the brokers learned about different city programs, ongoing projects, traffic counts, demographics, and community spending power. The event concluded downtown at Aliano's Ristorante, in the middle of the new River Street streetscape. Over a light dinner, organizers presented the brokers with a flash drive containing new marketing and recruitment materials and additional information on downtown Batavia. The judges loved the whole idea, especially holding the audience captive on the bus and providing flash drives. The tour was so original and so successful that a neighboring community has just invited the brokers on a similar tour.

### **Downtown Neighborhood Association of Elgin for its "Open for Business in Downtown Elgin" Campaign**

In April, Elgin's Downtown Neighborhood Association began conducting a series of progressive ribbon cuttings called Open for Business. In one afternoon, eight new businesses were welcomed to downtown Elgin. The next Open for Business event celebrated the 50th anniversary of one of Elgin's oldest businesses, Central Barber Shop. The event also offered discount coupons at some of the newest businesses. The judges responded to how the progressive ribbon cuttings maximized the impact of what traditionally is just a single, short event. They also loved how the video footage of events was used in new recruitment and marketing materials. It's a clever and effective way to celebrate both new and established downtown businesses.

## **Momence Main Street for its Revolving Loan Program**

In August 2009, Main Street Momence was awarded a \$99,000 USDA Rural Development Grant to establish a low-interest, revolving-loan program. Kankakee County provided an additional \$50,000 in local matching funds. The low-interest loan worked in tandem with Momence Main Street's existing facade grant program. Together, the incentive promoted downtown economic development, closed financing gaps, created and retained employment in the downtown, and helped finance a variety of improvements. As a result of the program, 27 full-time jobs and 17 part-time jobs were created or retained. The judges admired how the local Main Street program ambitiously sought a federal grant and saw it through to completion. So far, the results have been exactly what the grant was intended to produce.

## **Waukegan Main Street for its Art Wauks**

Though initially developed in 2002, the occasional ArtWauks were completely re-imagined in 2011 as a monthly pop-up, art-retail event. On the same block and on the same February day, a team of artists, volunteers, city staff and Waukegan Main Street staff coordinated a grand opening for Dinosaur Studio Tattoo and Gallery and the new office for State Representative Rita Mayfield. People from all walks of life came downtown for the free event and celebrated new doors opening together. Soon after, in cooperation with visionary property owners, the ArtWauk team renovated space for six new businesses to open. A property owner gave the keys to a small retail space to one of the ArtWauk artists. The artist rallied the troops to re-paint walls, scrub the windows and floors, and replace lighting. The spaces were transformed into impromptu art galleries in which additional artists then hung shows. The volunteer force markets the spaces by distributing thousands of fliers and utilizing social media to draw crowds downtown. Every one of the ArtWauk spaces now boasts a paying tenant. Property owners are thrilled, business owners are making money, and the overall perception of downtown has dramatically improved.

## **The Volunteer of the Year Award**

### **Armida and Joe Dominguez of Elgin**

The Volunteer of the Year Award recognizes volunteers in an Illinois Main Street community whose commitment to community and service to others are exemplary. The 2012 Illinois Main Street Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Armida and Joe Dominguez of Elgin.

Armida was a bank officer for JP Morgan Chase. Joe was a City of Elgin construction worker. In the decade since their retirement, the Dominguezes have made new careers out of service to the Elgin community. Whether it's volunteering at Elgin's Fiesta Salsa, advocating for important causes at public meetings, serving on volunteer committees, or helping with fundraising for Elgin non-profit organizations, Armida and Joe personify the volunteer spirit in every sense.

An active DNA board member, Armida has helped raise thousands of dollars for the Downtown Neighborhood Association of Elgin by bringing in new members and event sponsors. She also helps organize and facilitate the DNA's monthly "Out to Lunch in Downtown Elgin" program. Joe serves on the "Downtown Elgin Harvest Market" committee and always helps with special-event set-up and take-down.

They have encouraged their church to participate in DNA-sponsored events. And they serve as liaisons to the Hispanic community to encourage its involvement with DNA and with other community

organizations. In 2011 they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, and they were honored with the Extraordinary Volunteers Award at DNA's Annual Awards Gala. The word "volunteer" means to give freely of one's time. Armida & Joe Dominguez have spent the better portion of their lives giving of their time and of themselves.

Illinois Main Street is part of a successful national movement to revitalize America's traditional downtowns, neighborhood business districts, and urban corridors. The Illinois Main Street program is administered by the [Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity](#), the [Illinois Historic Preservation Agency](#) provides design services, and [Lt Governor Sheila Simon](#) serves as ambassador.