



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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Downtown Howell Named a Great American Main Street Winner

Michigan Community wins prestigious national award, named one of the best out of 1600 national communities

Howell MI –Downtown Howell has been named the winner of one of the most prestigious national awards that a downtown can receive in a lifetime. On Monday, March 26, in Kansas City, MO, the National Main Street Center Inc. (NMSC), presented downtown Howell with the Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA). Selected by a national jury of community development professionals and leaders in the fields of economic development and historic preservation, award winners serve as exceptional models for comprehensive, preservation-based commercial district revitalization. Howell Main Street received the elite status due their achievements in transforming the downtown district into a cultural destination through community-driven economic development and placemaking efforts.

“Howell is a prime example of a small rural community that is doing big things. They have all the charm you’d expect in a historic Main Street community, but they don’t stop there,” said Patrice Frey, President and CEO of the National Main Street Center. “Downtown Howell is setting itself apart as a supportive place for entrepreneurs and business owners and that’s how we’re seeing small communities stay competitive in today’s economy.”

This transformation is spearheaded by Howell Main Street Inc., in conjunction with the Downtown Development Authority. Despite a challenging regional economic environment, downtown Howell now has a vacancy rate of just 1.2 percent and is home to a diverse mix of businesses that foster a strong sense of place to attract and keep people downtown.

In years past, downtown Howell was home to mostly professional services that filled a need, but failed to bring the kind of energy and enthusiasm needed to make downtown a place that drew people in and gave them a reason to stay. Through extensive engagement with local partners and the City, and strategic business recruitment, downtown now boasts a diverse mix of businesses featuring unique retail, dining establishments, and service industries. Anchored by entertaining destinations like the new local brewery Aberrant Ales, entrepreneurial attractions like the Frontal Lobe co-working space, and cultural institutions like the Howell Opera House and Howell Movie Theatre, downtown is once again a destination.

“Downtown Howell has long-been known as a charming and family-friendly town. However, during hard economic times, the community recognized that we needed to grow, change, and get creative in our approach to making Howell a destination for our residents and visitors. The Main Street program was just the change that was needed!” states Howell Main Street C.O.O. Cathleen Edgerly. “Through years of hard work, strategic planning, collaboration and creative vision, we are proud to have fostered a strong sense of place in our community. Today you’ll find millennials and retirees alike coming to downtown Howell as a place to invest, live, work, and play!”

The impact of the Main Street program, and its focus on deliberate, strategic investment in downtown is especially evident in Howell’s burgeoning arts scene. What began as a couple one-off initiatives to bring outdoor art to the district has become a transformative movement in the community. In the last three years alone, Howell Main Street has overseen the addition of murals in the downtown district, installed six new art-inspired bike racks, and raised over \$30,000 for an alley transformation resulting in a pedestrian plaza and outdoor art gallery. Taken together, these efforts have transformed Howell from a quaint and charming historic bedroom community into a thriving downtown that draws thousands of students, young families, and retirees to arts and cultural celebrations year-round.

“Being named a Great American Main Street Award winner is not the end for downtown Howell. While the staff, volunteers, and community partners have set-up a solid framework of success, we look forward to the Howell Main Street program continuing to push the envelope, and lead positive and purposeful economic growth in our city.” states Howell resident and Outreach Coordinator, Kate Litwin.

About the Great American Main Street Awards

Each year, Main Street America, a program of the National Main Street Center, celebrates the country’s best examples of comprehensive commercial district revitalization. Winners are selected from a nationwide pool of applicants by a national jury based on successful and innovative uses of the Main Street Approach®. Criteria for winning include: strength of the Main Street in creating an exciting place to live, work, play and visit; commitment to historic preservation; implementation of model partnerships, and demonstrated success of the Main Street Approach®. A community can receive the Great American designation only once, and is considered the highest honor. The National Main Street Center is a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

About Howell Main Street Inc.

Howell Main Street Inc. is a unique blend of business and property owners, community leaders, entrepreneurs, residents, and visitors, all personally engaged in working together to support downtown Howell. Our grass roots, volunteer-led non-profit organization blends innovation and creative approaches to positively position and grow our downtown through quality events, projects, preservation, and programming. We are a community celebrating our past while looking toward our future, building passion and pride for downtown Howell.

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