



Historic Downtown La Crosse Update

October 05
edited by Margaret Norden



**“Downtown La Crosse is experiencing a renaissance that’s a model for other cities.”
--Governor James Doyle**

Greetings from Bud...

... no, wait..... it’s Margaret. Bud asked me to fill in for him this month. I’ve thought this day might come, given Bud’s increasingly busy schedule, so I’ve kept handy a column by Stacy Mitchell, first published by the Preservation Trust of Vermont, entitled *Ten Reasons Why Homegrown Economy Matters*. Here they are:

Local Character and Prosperity

In an increasingly homogenized world, communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character have an economic advantage.

Community Well-Being

Locally owned businesses build strong communities by sustaining vibrant town centers, linking neighbors in economic and social relationships and contributing to local causes.

Local Decision-Making

Local ownership ensures that important decisions are made locally by people who live in the community and who will feel the impact of those decisions.

Keeping Dollars in the Local Economy

Locally owned businesses recycle a much larger share of their revenue back into the local economy, enriching the whole community.

Jobs and Wages

Locally owned businesses create more jobs locally and, in some sectors, provide better wages and benefits than national entities.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship fuels America’s economic innovation and prosperity, and serves as a key means for families to move out of low-wage jobs and into the middle class.

Public Benefits and Costs

Local stores in town centers require comparatively little infrastructure and make more efficient use of public services relative to big box stores and strip shopping malls.

Environmental Sustainability

Local stores help to sustain vibrant, compact, walkable town centers—which in turn are essential to reducing sprawl, automobile use, habitat loss, and air and water pollution.

Competition

A marketplace of tens of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and low prices over the long-term.

Product Diversity

A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based, not on a national sales plan, but on

their own interests and the needs of their local customers, guarantees a much broader range of product choices.

Here in La Crosse, we’ve seen some of our locally owned downtown businesses become the cornerstones of a business district that draws visitors from around the country. And we’ve also seen some local entrepreneurs develop companies from the seed of an idea to corporations that do business internationally.

I recently sent out requests to both our downtown merchants and corporate members to participate in a member discount program (see below). The response so far has been outstanding. To date, 2200 discount cards have been requested, and approximately 5700 corporate ID’s approved. This is just one way we support *each other* and grow *as a community*.

Historic Downtown La Crosse Day had something for everyone

Whether it was an impromptu parade behind the La Crosse Pipe and Drum Band, an opportunity to “meet” the postman who delivered Nathan Myrick’s mail, or a chance to try your hand at disc golf, Historic Downtown La Crosse Day had something to offer people of all ages and interests. To the sponsors, event coordinators, merchants, historic re-enactors, musicians, presenters and participants, and all the volunteers who made it happen....*THANK YOU!* Now we can all look forward to making next year’s Historic Downtown La Crosse Day on **October 14, 2006**, even more successful.

New member acknowledged

We gratefully acknowledge DMI’s newest **general member—Premier Fitness**, located in the King on 5th building. **They have already joined the gift certificate and employee discount programs.** Present your orange card or DMI approved corporate ID for a discount on a one-year or two-year membership. Call 793-1300 for details of the discount and to learn about the facility.

DMI discount cards to be updated

The popular employee discount and convention attendee discount programs are now being updated for 2006. *You should have received a mailing from the DMI office recently.*

These programs create awareness not only of the participating businesses, but the entire downtown as a unique shopping and dining experience! We hope *all* our downtown businesses will support each other by participating in these programs, both by offering a percentage or dollar amount off a purchase, and by providing cards to their employees. We hope, too, that our corporate sponsors will make the discount cards available to *their* employees and encourage them to frequent downtown La Crosse.

In 2005, approximately 2,500 employee cards were given out. In addition to the cards, employee ID badges from some of La Crosse's major employers were approved by DMI. More than 7,000 convention cards were distributed by DMI to local convention and conference hosts, and through the LACVB to conventions they've recruited to La Crosse.

We thank all those who have already responded. For more information, please either call Margaret at the DMI office at 784-0440 or email us at downtownmainstreet@centurytel.net.

Please patronize and support our member businesses.

Holiday open house reminder

Get a head start on outfitting yourself or your home for the holidays, and finding the ideal gift for a friend, relative, or business associate. To date, 15 downtown businesses have committed to participating in a Holiday Open House on November 11 from 5:00-9:00 p.m.: *Ambiance, Antique Center, Art 211 Pearl, Feminine Fancies, The Gift Basket, La Crosse Clock, Monet Flowers & Gifts, The Pearl, Rose Jewelers, Scott Joseph Menswear, Stamp 'n Hand, TJ's Cheddarheads, Touch of Class, Vision of Light Stained Glass, The Wedding Tree.*

If your business would like to take part, contact Kim Pretasky, Touch of Class, 784-2640, or the DMI office, 784-0440, by October 31. A complete list of open house businesses will be sent to all those participating, and sent via e-mail to DMI members. Please plan to decorate for the season, and notify your own customers about the event.

Noteworthy Dates:

October 19, Mississippi Queen at Riverside Park, 8:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.

October 20, What's Up Downtown meeting, 8:00 a.m., Chamber of Commerce meeting room, 712 Main.

October 26, Business Over Breakfast, 7:30-8:45 a.m., Chamber of Commerce meeting room, 712 Main. This month's topic is "Making Interns Work for You." See the attached flyer.

October 29, Mississippi Queen at Riverside Park, 1:00-5:00 p.m.

November 2, Mississippi Queen at Riverside Park, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (NOTE: This is the last riverboat shore stop for 2005).

November 11, downtown Holiday Open House. Watch the *DMI News Flash* for a list of participants.

What's Up Downtown promotions group looks ahead to 2006

The DMI promotions group is already making plans for a busy 2006. A winter social, the City of La Crosse Sesquicentennial celebration, and a possible familiarization tour by local hotel staff, are all new events on the group's agenda. There are also 2005 projects nearing completion, including the Holiday Open House on November 11, and a float planned for the Rotary Lights opening parade on November 25. The group produces a brochure, "Experience Historic Downtown La Crosse," and coordinates the annual Historic Downtown Day.

Anyone wishing to help make these projects a success is asked to contact a steering committee member listed below, or call the DMI office at 784-0440.

The promotions group wishes to remind everyone that their regular meeting is held on the third Thursday of each month, in the conference room at 712 Main Street, beginning at 8:00 a.m. The door is open by 7:30 a.m. for anyone interested in coming early to meet other members.

Steering committee members are:

Donna Cullman, president, 782-7240; Deb Carlson, Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, 784-4444; Christy Ihrke, State Bank of La Crosse, 784-4600; Sharyn Jordan, Visual Changes Salon & Day, 784-8267; Kim Pretasky, Touch of Class, 784-2640; Kevin Timmerman, Lutheran Bookstore, 784-0669; and Margie Wanek, Stamp 'n Hand, 784-1234.