



Sterling Main Street 2017 Annual Report

2017 was a great time to be a part of downtown Sterling! We welcomed five new businesses: Merle Norman, Primitive Frills, The Help Desk, Country Financial agent Curt Repass, and Images in Ink. We also welcomed many new residents with the opening of the Lawrence Lofts; saw the beginning of another grand rehabilitation project – The Mercantile; and added some new events, too.

Our whirlwind of a year started on a high note in March when Sterling native, Brian Garza, who now works for the Chicago Cubs organization, brought the Cubs' World Series Trophy to his hometown. An estimated 1500 attended this special 90-minute event, which was a huge, short notice undertaking, in cooperation with the City of Sterling, Sauk Valley Area Chamber, Greater Sterling Development Corp, and Sterling Schools, who graciously offered us use of the Challand Middle School gymnasium for the viewing event.



The Cubs' World Series Trophy on display



UIO staff spreading mulch at City Hall

Spring brought another successful Clean & Green workday with more than 60 volunteers donating their Saturday morning to cleaning up the downtown. Our May Car Show continues to grow with 137 entrants for our 2017 show. We're looking forward to celebrating in style with our 5th Anniversary show this year!

Summer kicked the event schedule into high gear with Movies at Grandon, Music Fest, two Pop-Up Market Events and everyone's favorite, Hot Dog Day! While we fell a bit short of our 10,000 goal, we managed to serve up 9,600 hot dogs on what was a gloomy, chilly August day.



City intern Madison Hans and Alderwoman Retha Elston having fun at Movies at Grandon

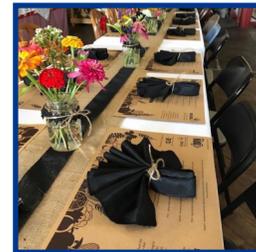
The Lawrence Lofts project which began in the fall of 2016 was brought to completion mid-year, with a ribbon cutting ceremony on July 20th. By September, the 20-unit complex was at full occupancy. Also on July 20th, Sterling Main Street and the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce welcomed State Senator Neil Anderson and Representative Tony McCombie to town. After a joint meeting with the boards of both organizations, they toured downtown Sterling and met with several of our business owners.



Brandi Duchay, owner of The Help Desk, visits with Senator Anderson & Representative McCombie

Fall brought two new events to the Main Street line-up of activities. In partnership with Smoked on 3rd, a Downtown Wine Walk was held on September 19th. Eleven businesses took part, and the event quickly sold out of the 150 tickets available for the night. Hops on the Rock was held on October 14th. While Mother Nature did her best to rain us out, thanks to Jim Prescott BBQ Shop, we were able to move the event indoors on very short notice to a (then-vacant) storefront. Featuring more than 90 unique craft brews from across the region, the event had a great turnout and we look forward to the growth of this event in 2018.

The Twin City Farmers' Market continues to thrive. Three new stoves were donated and installed in the Market kitchen, along with a new air conditioning unit, much to the delight of our bakers! Our 2nd Mid-Summer's Bounty Dinner was held in August with guest chef Jonathan Zellar and Brewmaster Steven Winter of Generations Brewing Co. This annual dinner event continues to be a great fundraiser for our Market as we continue to make improvements. The Market has quickly grown to capacity in its current space and exploration is underway for further expanding within its current building.



Tablescape for our Mid-summer's Bounty Dinner

Social Media continued to be a strong source of community engagement for the organization. The Sterling Main Street Facebook page saw a more than 20% increase in the number of followers. Our Executive Director, Janna Groharing, also presented three workshops on social media usage through the Small Business Development Center at Sauk Valley Community College.

The Main Street Board of Directors began a strategic planning process in August. The 3-year plan was adopted in December, setting the course for the future of the organization. Longtime Board Member Phil Mattox retired from the Board at the end of November. We thank him for his many years of service and commitment to the Downtown. We welcomed new board members Matthew Hicks of Matthew's Carpentry and Anna Garcia of Verifacts at our January 2018 meeting.

Once again, volunteers continue to be the lifeblood of the Main Street organization, as 225+ volunteers dedicated more than 2200 hours of time in helping bring Sterling Main Street's vision to life in 2017.

Goals for 2018 and beyond...

With the guidance of our *NEW* Strategic Plan, Sterling Main Street will seek to

- ◆ Continue core events and activities such as Movies at Grandon, the Main Street Car Show, Hot Dog Day, Hops on the Rock, Seasonal Sights & Sounds, and others.
- ◆ Continue to improve regular communications between Main Street and the businesses it serves within the Downtown Business District through a regular newsletter and networking activities.
- ◆ Continue to expand and develop retail promotional activities with the downtown merchant group to enhance the economic vitality of the downtown district.
- ◆ Continue to expand the Twin City Farmers' Market for both vendors and customers, making it a premier agritourism destination in the Sauk Valley.
- ◆ Develop and implement a plan to address the ongoing maintenance and promotional needs of the 20 historic murals located throughout the downtown.
- ◆ Continue to promote our Façade Grant program to the property owners within the Downtown Business District.
- ◆ Continue to grow in our working relationship with the City of Sterling and assist wherever possible in the implementation of its Strategic and Riverfront Redevelopment Plans and the revitalization of the Downtown Business District.
- ◆ Continue to partner with Sterling Today, Inc., the Greater Sterling Development Corp., Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, the Small Business Development Center at Sauk Valley Community College, and other community partners in economic development activities for the betterment of the greater Sterling area.



Sterling Main Street

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