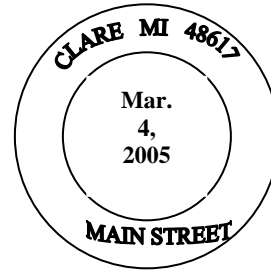


# POSTMARKED: MAIN STREET



By Abigail Kulick, Main Street Manager

Greetings from Main Street! As many of you know, one week ago the Chamber of Commerce hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Clare Area Business Expo. This year, for the first time, the Expo offered four informational sessions to its participants and guests. Although four magnificent presenters were prepared and anxious to share their information, the sessions did not receive high attendance. As one of the presenters at the Expo, I have to confess that I was slightly disappointed that I did not attract a standing-room-only crowd that was just dying to learn everything there is to know about Main Street. However, in understanding that this was the first year for breakout sessions and new ideas take time to grow, all I can do is hope that next year's Expo presenters have a better turn out.

Since many of you, for one reason or another, were unable to attend my Clare Main Street: Time to Revitalize! presentation, I will provide you with the convenience of bringing it to you! I want to take this opportunity of expressing to the community the reasons why it is important to revitalize our Main Street and who it will benefit.

## **Why Revitalize Main Street?**

- A city's downtown is the most visible indicator of community pride, as well as its economic and social health.
- Downtown is either an asset or a liability in the effort to recruit new residents, new businesses and industries, retirees, tourists to the community.
- Quality of life is what separates successful cities and towns from declining communities.
- Downtown is the visual representation of the community's heritage. The architecture of the downtown is a physical expression of the community's history.

## **Why are Main Streets Important?**

- Downtowns are prominent employment centers.
  - Even the smallest downtown employs hundreds of people.
- Traditionally downtowns are an ideal location for independent businesses, which in turn:
  - Keep profits in town.
  - Support other local businesses and services.
  - Supports local families with family-owned businesses.
  - Provides a stable economic foundation, as opposed to a few large businesses and chains with no ties to stay in the community.
- A historic downtown is a major tourist attraction.
  - When people travel or shop, they want to see unique places --- especially those that offer a unique "shopping experience."
- A vital Main Street area reduces sprawl:
  - By concentrating retail in one area and uses community resources wisely, such as infrastructure, tax dollars and land.
- Downtown is a government center
  - Municipal buildings are located in the Main Street district. It is

also an important service center for finding attorneys, physicians, insurance offices, and financial institutions.

- Main Street provides a place where members of the community can congregate.
  - Parades, special events, and celebrations held there reinforce intangible sense of community.

#### **Who Benefits from a Revitalized Main Street?**

- Stakeholders & Merchants
  - Greater opportunity for growth and expansion
  - Expanded customer base
- Property Owners
  - Stable or higher rents
  - Increased occupancy rates
  - Improved marketability of property
  - Higher property values
- Financial Institutions
  - Expanded business customer base
  - Expanded residential customer base
  - Improved public image and goodwill
  - Fulfillment of community reinvestment mandate
- Professionals and Service Businesses
  - Ready-made customer base of district employees
  - Location near government, banks, post office, and other institutions
- Chamber of Commerce
  - Potential new member businesses
  - Healthier overall business climate
  - Potential partnerships on joint projects
- Residents
  - Local accessibility to goods and services
  - Preservation of community for future generations
  - More employment opportunities
- Community Partners
  - Improved quality of life in the community
  - Achievement of common goals
  - Preservation of community history
- Schools
  - Youth involvement in civic projects
  - Use of downtown district as "classroom" for school projects
  - Potential employment and business opportunities
  - More places to go and activities for youths
- Businesses Outside the Commercial District
  - Increased visitor traffic to the community
  - Improved municipal services throughout community
  - Increased business from overall healthier economy
- Industry
  - Improved quality of life makes recruiting and retaining employees easier.

As you can see, a Revitalized Main Street benefits everyone and enhances the quality of life for the entire community!