

Simon honors outstanding work to revitalize Main Street communities

Written by Annie Thompson
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Illinois Main Street celebrates 20 years in Historic Downtown Pontiac

SPRINGFIELD – October 2, 2013. As the ambassador of Illinois Main Street, Lt. Governor Sheila Simon today honored the recipients of the Lt. Governor's Award for Excellence at this year's Illinois Main Street conference. The program is celebrating its 20th anniversary with the "Driving into the Future" conference taking place Oct. 1 – Oct. 3 in Historic Downtown Pontiac.

"For 20 years now Illinois Main Street has been helping support communities throughout Illinois," said Lt. Governor Sheila Simon, who chairs the Governor's Rural Affairs Council. "I look forward to continuing to work to preserve these communities that often provide an important snapshot of our past and a vision for our future."

The conference, which is being hosted by Pontiac P.R.O.U.D. Main Street and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) – which administers the Illinois Main Street program – gives community and economic development professionals from around the state an opportunity to network, and learn about innovative new practices to rejuvenate Illinois' downtown business districts.

Simon honored individuals who have excelled in organization, design, promotion and economic restructuring of downtown commercial districts with the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence. Awards were also presented for Main Street Innovation, Business, Property Owner, Innovation and Volunteer of the Year.

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Recipients included:

- Batavia Main Street for its River Street: “Woonerf,” which is a European concept for shared space
- Chicago Six Corners Association: Renovation of the Grayland Theater Façade and Tuck Point
- Pekin Main Street: Converting the Elks Lodge into the Fusion Building/Sabella St. Station
- Pontiac P.R.O.U.D.: Restoration of the historic Livingston County Courthouse
- Aledo Main Street: Digital promotion project
- Batavia Main Street: Creation of the Batavia Main Street Award for local residents and businesses
- Jacksonville Main Street: 2013 Diamonds and Ice Masquerade Ball
- Main Street Libertyville: Membership drive to promote local merchants
- Chicago Six Corners Association: Six Corners BBQ Fest
- Downtown Crystal Lake: 20th Annual Johnny Appleseed Festival

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- Jacksonville Main Street: Art Fair on the Square
- **Main Street Orion: Band shell 100th birthday celebration**
- **Aledo Main Street: New Business Springboard**
- Batavia Main Street: Artisan Collective
- Chicago Six Corners Association: Revitalizing vacant storefronts and streetscapes
- Jacksonville Main Street: Creation of a Downtown Business Alliance
- Volunteer of the Year: Meek Family, Jacksonville Main Street
- Outstanding Main Street Business: Green Town Tavern, Waukegan Main Street
- Outstanding Main Street Innovation: ShopDowntownQuincy.com
- Outstanding Main Street Property Owner: Austin Properties, Quincy

Over the past 20 years, Illinois Main Street communities have created 9,300 jobs, opened over 1,200 new businesses, and represent public and private investment of over \$750 million. In Illinois, 42 communities hold the Illinois Main Street designation.

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Additional conference highlights include a 20th anniversary celebration featuring Illinois products, walking tours of Historic Downtown Pontiac, the Lieutenant Governor's Award of Excellence Gala and a proclamation from Governor Pat Quinn in honor of Illinois Main Street's 20th anniversary.

This year's keynote speaker is Valecia Crisafulli, who served as the first state director of the Illinois Main Street Program and most recently as the CEO of the National Main Street Center. The center works with a nationwide network of communities to encourage preservation-based economic revitalization, and has participated in the renewal of more than 2,000 older commercial districts during its 30-year history.

Click [here](#) for more information about Illinois Main Street.

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