

Press Release November, 2013:

Main Street Ottumwa Director Bob Untiedt Leads Cedar Rapids Planning Session

One Saturday morning a few weeks ago, a board member of the Czech Village/New Bo Main Street District in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, suggested that what she'd like to see happen there in five years is that parking would no longer be an issue, and that they have a 'Signature event' – a great fundraiser – that would put them *on the map*.

This Main Street District in Cedar Rapids is one of 49 such groups in the state. But what sets them apart from most is that they cover only a part of a downtown district, and they're in the second largest city in Iowa. Normally Main Street® is an effort promoted by the Iowa Economic Development Agency that focuses on economic vitality in smaller towns. The other thing that was unique about this day in November is that the suggestion noted above came about during a strategic planning session. That session was directed by Bob Untiedt, of Main Street Ottumwa. It was a great way for one Main Street District to lend some support to another.

Bob comes to leading planning sessions for nonprofits from his nearly decade-long experience as the Executive Director of the Linn County Nonprofit Resource Center (LCNRC). That organization served around 1800 nonprofit professionals each year, people working in nonprofits in Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, and surrounding communities. During his tenure there, Bob hired and saw dozens of models of strategic planning. He came to the conclusion that focusing on the strengths and passions of an organization, establishing priorities in planning, and building methods of accountability into a plan make for the best planning sessions. Since 2006, Bob has led non-profit groups in Des Moines, Marshalltown, Iowa City, and Cedar Rapids through planning activities ranging from 4 hours to 3 months in duration. He comes to Main Street Ottumwa recognizing that it's one thing to have a good plan, but another to ensure that a good plan is actually acted upon. And yes, at a retreat in January 2014, Main Street Ottumwa will look at its own plan developed in the late spring 2013.

The CR Main Street District is a very different place from Ottumwa. It has many different issues, resources, and challenges. Yet a vision of creating a more beautiful, economically sustainable, and historically preserving district, with lots of great social activities, is the same there as here. The goals of that CR District for 2018 are echoed locally, and Bob Untiedt learned from the experience of reflection with that Main Street group.