

TRACTI • N

A MAGAZINE FROM THE AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

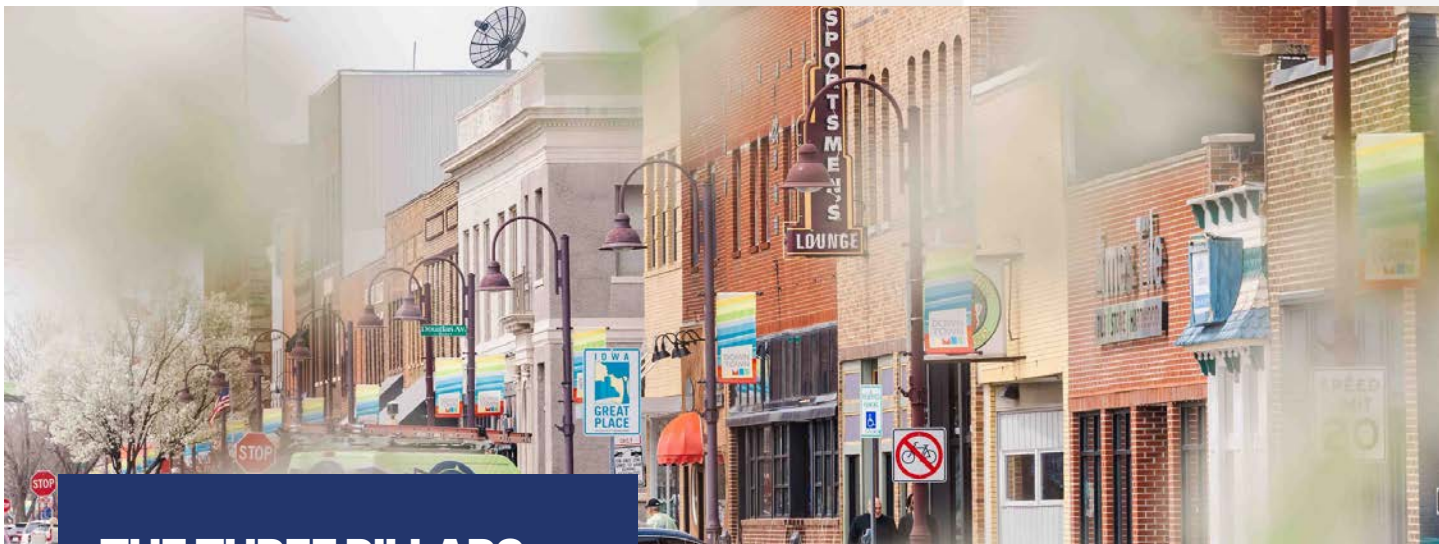
Summer 2025

Issue 11



be happy • be kind

b.e. good



THE THREE PILLARS THAT WILL LEAD OUR WORK WILL BE: **LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT ADVOCACY**



Dan Culhane
President & CEO
Ames Regional Economic Alliance

At the Ames Regional Economic Alliance, we believe that building a strong, vibrant community means investing in both the cornerstones of our economy and the visionaries shaping what's next. In this issue of Traction, we're proud to highlight the dynamic region that makes Ames such a remarkable place to live, work, and play. From legacy companies like Hach—an anchor in our industrial and innovation landscape—to exciting entrepreneurs like Bridget Good of b.e.good in Downtown Ames and Matt Runge of OnTrack Construction. This issue captures the spirit of collaboration and growth that defines our region.

Supporting long-standing companies is just as critical as cultivating new ideas. Legacy employers provide stability, mentorship, and long-term investment in our community. At the same time, entrepreneurs bring new energy and creativity to the heart of Ames. Their work represents the next generation of business owners building unique, people-centered experiences that draw residents and visitors alike.

The future is bright. I'm excited that we are able to highlight the Downtown Ames: Guiding Vision for the Future plan—an ambitious and thoughtful roadmap that will help shape the long-term vitality of our historic downtown. This issue also introduces the Live Work Play in Ames website, which offers a fresh lens on why Ames is such a great place to call home, and the AREA Podcast, where we feature in-depth conversations with the people driving our region forward.

Together, these stories and initiatives reflect our commitment to honoring the legacy of where we've been while boldly charting the path forward. Thanks for being part of the journey.

What is Traction?

The **Ames Regional Economic Alliance** and affiliate organizations help create traction in our community. We drive business and community vitality in the Ames region by being connectors. We lead, engage, and advocate for the betterment of our communities. We help get projects off the ground or help move them forward, and we are undeterred in our purpose, cause, and passion. A great idea often needs a little bit of progress and momentum, and we help provide that **traction** to move it forward.

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On the Cover

Bridget Good's love for fashion didn't begin with a storefront or a blog. It started in Boone, Iowa — her hometown — and blossomed during her years at Iowa State University. After a summer internship working with a renowned celebrity stylist in New York City, she returned to Central Iowa and launched b.e.good in Downtown Ames. Read more in this feature article of Traction magazine.

AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC Alliance

**304 Main St.
Ames, Iowa 50010
Phone: (515) 232-2310**

Centrally and conveniently located in the heart of the Midwest and Iowa, Ames is known for its healthy, stable economy, flourishing cultural environment, and the world-renowned Iowa State University.

AmesAlliance.com

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With over 750 members, the Ames Regional Economic Alliance strives to make the Ames region a better place to live, work, and do business by strengthening the economic vitality and the quality of life in the area.



Bridget Good
Owner, b.e.good

be happy • be kind

b.e.good

In the heart of Downtown Ames, nestled among the charm and bustle of Main Street, there's a boutique that's more than just racks of clothing and curated styles — it's a reflection of one woman's journey, her passion for fashion, and her devotion to community. Meet b.e.good, a boutique as thoughtfully named as it is designed, and the dream-turned-reality of Bridget Good.

From Boone to the Big Apple

Bridget Good's love for fashion didn't begin with a storefront or a blog. It started in Boone, Iowa — her hometown — and blossomed during her years at Iowa State University, where she studied from 2016 to 2020. While there, she joined Chi Omega and participated in The Fashion Show, one of the largest student-run fashion shows in the country. But it was a summer internship in 2019 that truly broadened her horizons: working with renowned celebrity stylist Micaela Erlanger in New York City.

"That summer changed everything," Bridget recalls. "I was managing every single piece that came in and out of the studio. I was on the front lines of high-end fashion, handling designer garments and interacting with celebrity clients. It taught me professionalism, attention to detail, and gave me a new level of confidence."

The Spark of Small Business

Despite her experience in Manhattan's glittering fashion world, Bridget's heart remained in Iowa. Her love for small business took root much earlier, at the age of 16, when she landed her first job at Modern Dress in Boone. For eight years, it was more than just a job — it was her classroom, mentor, and creative outlet.

"I always admired how personal and community-focused small businesses are," she says. "Modern Dress showed me what it means to make someone feel special — whether they're shopping for their wedding day or just stopping in for style advice."

From Blog to Boutique

While still in college, Bridget launched b.e.good as a fashion blog — a place to share her style, ideas, and inspirations. But after graduating into a world halted by the COVID-19 pandemic, her plans for a big-city fashion career took an unexpected turn.

"Everything I thought I was going to do got put on pause.

But in that pause, something new had room to grow."

That "something new" was the evolution of b.e.good from blog to boutique — and not just any boutique. Instead of leaping into a permanent storefront, Bridget rolled out her vision, quite literally, with a mobile boutique. She transformed a trailer into a traveling fashion haven, bringing her curated style and contagious energy to communities across Iowa.

"I wanted to see new places, meet new people, and bring something fresh to them — and a mobile boutique gave me that freedom."

A Boutique with Meaning

In 2024, b.e.good found its home as a storefront in Downtown Ames, and the mission remains as heartfelt as ever. The name itself is a play on Bridget's full name — Bridget Elizabeth Good — but it also represents her personal mantra: be happy, be kind, b.e.good.

Inside the boutique, shoppers find a collection of clothing that strikes the perfect balance between timeless and effortless — stylish yet approachable. But more than just fashion, Bridget strives to offer a little piece of inspiration to every customer who walks through the door.

"I want people to feel good in what they wear, but also feel seen and celebrated. It's about creating a space where women of all ages can feel confident and beautiful."

Building Community, One Outfit at a Time

What sets b.e.good apart isn't just the handpicked inventory or Instagram-worthy aesthetic — it's Bridget herself. Whether she's popping up at local events, partnering with fellow small businesses, or chatting with regulars in the boutique, her authenticity shines through.

"The best part of this journey has been the people. Iowa is full of incredible communities and women doing amazing things. I feel lucky to be part of that."

As b.e.good continues to grow in Ames and beyond, Bridget remains grounded in the values that started it all: creativity, connection, and kindness. In a world where fast fashion often overshadows personal style, b.e.good is a breath of fresh air.

Learn more about b.e.good online at:
www.shopbegood.com



WASHINGTON D.C. FLY-IN

May 6-8, 2025

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance Public Policy Program focuses on educating and engaging members on key legislative issues and initiatives impacting the Ames region. Maintaining strong relationships with federal, state, and locally elected officials is a core tenet of the Alliance and a service provided to the entire membership.

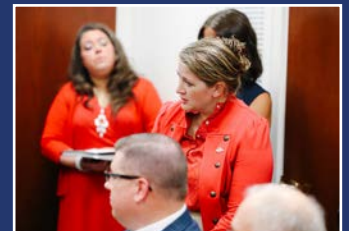
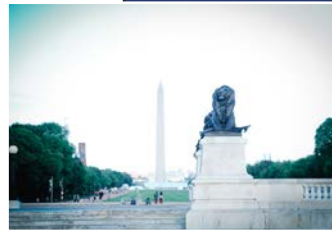
While advocacy is most active during the spring legislative session, the Alliance's efforts continue year-round at both state and federal levels. The organization remains nonpartisan, does not endorse candidates or support PACs, but does facilitate opportunities for constituents and officials to exchange information.

In May 2025, the Ames Alliance organized its annual Washington D.C. Fly-In, bringing business and community leaders from the three-county Ames region to the nation's capital. The goal: to elevate the region's voice on the national stage and gain insights into federal policy impacting local priorities. Meetings included discussions with elected officials and policy experts on topics such as infrastructure, economic development, international trade, workforce, and agriculture.

The delegation met with Senator Charles Grassley, Senator Joni Ernst, Representative Randy Feenstra, Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks, and Representative Zach Nunn. A policy packet was shared, and participants held candid conversations about upcoming legislation. The pace within the Capitol building is robust, yet many of our federally elected officials prioritized time to meet with our delegation from Boone, Hamilton, and Story County between committee meetings and votes.

Trade specialists from the Canadian Embassy answered questions on tariff debates and trade ties between Iowa and Canada. CYGNAL's Mitchell Brown presented polling insights impacting recent and upcoming elections, while Josh Stull from the House Agriculture Committee staff shared updates on rural development and the new Farm Bill. Other topics related to our region included the importance of regionalism, small business support, funding opportunities, tourism, and transportation.

This annual fly-in is vital for forging direct relationships with both elected officials and their staff. These connections can lead to future federal partnership opportunities for local and regional initiatives. Planning for the 2026 Fly-In is already underway, tentatively scheduled for April.



This year's delegation included representation from the City of Ames, City of Boone, City of Nevada, City of Webster City, Boone County, Hamilton County, Story County, Iowa State University, Des Moines Area Community College, and many private business partners across Boone, Hamilton, and Story County.



A Half-Century of Hope: Mainstream Living Celebrates 50 Years in Ames

A Half-Century of Hope: Mainstream Living Celebrates 50 Years in Ames

In 1975, a small but determined group of parents in Ames envisioned a better world for their children with disabilities—one rooted not in institutions or isolation, but in love, community, and dignity. That vision gave birth to Mainstream Living, a nonprofit dedicated to empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live full, integrated lives. Now, as the organization marks its 50th anniversary this year, the legacy of those families continues to ripple through the community, enriching lives with every new step forward.

At its heart, Mainstream Living is the product of unwavering parental love. The original families poured their time, resources, and hearts into building something new—a community-based support system where their children, and others like them, could thrive. From a single children's home on Clark Avenue, the organization grew to support thousands of individuals across central Iowa with housing, employment programs, behavioral health services, and more.

Much of Mainstream's growth can be credited to visionary leadership. Reno Berg, who served as CEO from 1977 to 2013, was the soul of the organization for decades. Under his tenure, the annual budget grew from \$150,000 to nearly \$17 million. His "we can do that" mantra still echoes through Mainstream's culture today.

As Ames and the broader Iowa community celebrate Mainstream Living's golden anniversary, the gratitude is mutual. Generations of families have found peace knowing their loved ones are valued, respected, and supported. From those first hard-fought letters to city hall in the 1970s to today's innovative, person-centered care, Mainstream Living remains a testament to what happens when community and compassion come together. And in the words of Albert Einstein, "To look to the future, we must first look back upon the past. That is where the seeds of the future were planted." For Mainstream Living, those seeds are still blossoming.

Mainstream
Living 

LIVE ^{IN} AMES >>>

This spring, the Ames Regional Economic Alliance announced the launch of the “Live - Work - Play in Ames” website and social media channels that are designed as a digital platform to showcase the myriad opportunities that make Ames and its surrounding communities vibrant places to reside, pursue careers, and enjoy leisure activities. The new website serves as a centralized hub for residents, prospective movers, job seekers, and visitors, offering detailed insights into the unique aspects of living, working, and playing in the Ames region. Each section provides valuable resources for the region.

Live: This section provides an in-depth look at residential life that aims to assist individuals and families considering relocation by offering valuable resources and information about the quality of life in the region.

Work: Dedicated to professionals and job seekers, this section offers access to a robust job board featuring listings from Boone, Hamilton, and Story County areas.

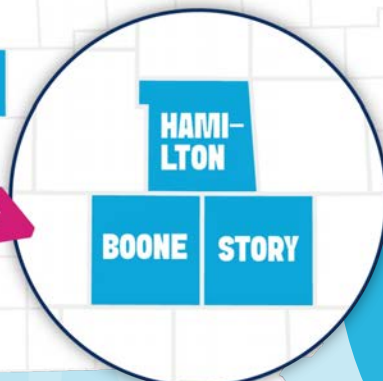
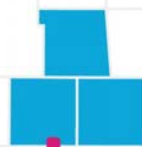
Play: Highlighting the rich cultural and recreational offerings of the area, this section, in partnership with Discover Ames, guides users through local attractions, events, dining, shopping, and outdoor activities.

The “Live - Work - Play in Ames” digital platforms reflect the collaborative efforts within the three-county AREA to promote economic growth and community development across Boone, Hamilton, and Story counties.

www.LiveinAmesAREA.com



FOR THE EXPLORERS



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PLAY ^{IN} AMES

www.PlayinAmes.com

FOR THE DREAMERS

Pizza Pie Looza in Nevada

Nevada held their fourth annual Pizza Pie Looza event on May 10, with not one, but TWO headlining acts. Country stars Terri Clark and BlackHawk capped the evening that also included special guest Bryan White. The free, family-friendly festival featured a variety of local food vendors and activities for kids. Crowds packed downtown Nevada to enjoy live music, great eats, and a strong sense of community spirit. The event continues to grow each year, drawing visitors from across the region and shining a spotlight on the Nevada community.



Pizza Pie Looza images courtesy Miranda Cory



FOR THE AMBITIOUS

515 Days in Downtown Ames

Downtown Ames comes alive each summer with 515 Days, a celebration that highlights the energy, creativity, and community spirit of the district. This year's event kicked off on Thursday, May 15 with a Food Truck Showdown and Family night! The party continued on Friday with the Big Bash at Bandshell Park. The two-day celebration encourages residents and visitors alike to explore local businesses, enjoy the vibrant atmosphere, and make the most of summer in the heart of the Ames.



Campustown Showdown

The inaugural Campustown Showdown took place in Ames on April 25–26, 2025, blending traditional livestock competition with urban flair. The event began at the Hansen Agriculture Student Learning Center, where exhibitors showcased their cattle in showmanship, market beef, and breeding heifer categories. The excitement culminated in the Campustown Business District on Welch Avenue, where the top six entries from each division participated in the Grand Drive. Attendees enjoyed a vibrant atmosphere featuring a fashion show, live music, vendor booths, and live interviews with the champions. With over \$7,500 in prizes awarded, the Campustown Showdown successfully celebrated Iowa's agricultural heritage while fostering community engagement and education about the livestock industry.



Corpse Flower at Reiman Gardens

Reiman Gardens in Ames drew big crowds as its corpse flower, "Stink Floyd," bloomed over a May weekend. This rare event, which happens only once every 7–10 years, featured a towering 78-inch plant and its famously foul smell—like rotting flesh—meant to attract pollinators. The bloom lasted just 24–48 hours, making it a must-see (and smell) moment.

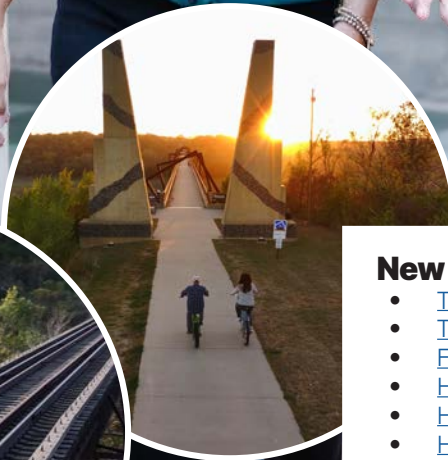
RV THERE YET?

National Premiere: April 19, 2025

In October 2024, Patrice and Kevin McCabe, visited Ames with their production crew to record an episode for RV There Yet?, the popular show on Discovery. That Ames / Boone County episode premiered nationally in April and can now be viewed on YouTube. The episode covers the two-county region and highlights include camping at Ledges State Park, biking on the High Trestle Trail, the Rail Explorers experience in Boone, butterflies at Reiman Gardens, shopping in Downtown Ames, and tailgating at Jack Trice Stadium with Cornbred and the Iowa State University Marching Band.

Patrice and Kevin McCabe

Hosts of RV There Yet? on Discovery



ONLINE MEMBER DIRECTORY



Looking for a local business? Consider one of our over 750 Ames Regional Economic Alliance members through our online directory. Visit our website at:

[AmesAlliance.com](https://www.AmesAlliance.com)

Scan the QR code to access our online directory to search for some of the businesses gaining traction.

New Members

- [Thirsty Pigs](#)
- [The Outside Scoop](#)
- [Fabled Popcorn Company](#)
- [Home 2 Suites by Hilton - Ames](#)
- [Harvest Pickleball & Tennis](#)
- [Honey Creek Golf Club](#)
- [Capital Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine](#)
- [The Dot Cafe](#)
- [Empoweress Studios](#)
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ON TRACK

CONSTRUCTION, LLC



Matt Runge
Owner, OnTrack Construction

As OnTrack Construction moves into its eighth year, CEO Matt Runge envisions not only continued business expansion but also a deeper commitment to supporting the community. "We like to give," he says, "but more importantly, we want our contributions to make an impact."

OnTrack, which specializes in underground sewer and water main construction, has been a generous supporter of local events like Pizza Pie Looza, the Nevada Community Rodeo, Swinging for a Cure, and various school and community initiatives. Most recently, the company backed Valentine's Day dinner concerts featuring country artists at Gatherings. "Some of our giving is about creating opportunities for people to enjoy local events," Runge explains.

While giving back is important, OnTrack has also been focused on strategic growth. The company purchased 24 acres in the West Industrial Park in Nevada, developing infrastructure and selling parcels to businesses that will become close neighbors. "We subdivided the property, put in a road and utilities, and have already sold one lot to a company building 'contractors' condo' units," Runge says. OnTrack will retain part of the land for its own expansion.

In late 2024, OnTrack launched Highmark Trucking, a separate business designed to meet its growing need for hauling services. Along with dump trucks, the company added a specialty vac truck to locate buried utilities, a service with increasing demand. "These are high-dollar trucks, and we plan to grow this part of the business."

A recent grant helped fund a solar field north of its headquarters, significantly reducing energy costs while feeding surplus power back into the grid. Meanwhile, the workforce has grown by about 10 employees in the past three years, now numbering between 35 and 45. Runge is also exploring a new concrete division to handle street, driveway, and sidewalk pours, which would create additional jobs.

With a growing regional presence, OnTrack remains deeply rooted in Nevada. Runge appreciates the town's supportive business environment and affordability. "Nevada has been great," he says. "It's a friendly place to do business."

Learn more about OnTrack Construction online at:
www.ontrackconstructioniowa.com



McFARLAND CLINIC CYTOWN BUILDING

McFarland Clinic broke ground on its new 78,000-square-foot Ames location in CyTown on Tuesday, April 15. The McFarland Clinic CyTown facility will anchor the new CyTown development at Iowa State University near Jack Trice Stadium and Hilton Coliseum. This state-of-the-art facility will enhance access to healthcare for residents of central Iowa and university students, faculty, and staff.

The McFarland Clinic CyTown location will feature several primary care and specialty care services available to the general public, including Family Medicine, Orthopedic Sports Medicine, Pediatrics, Physical Therapy, Primary Care Sports Medicine, and Urgent Care. The CyTown location will also have laboratory and radiology services, including general imaging and an MRI unit. The tentative opening date for McFarland Clinic CyTown is anticipated to be late 2026 or early 2027.

Learn more about CyTown online at:

www.cyclones.com/feature/cytown

Photos courtesy Iowa State Athletics
Renderings produced by RMH Architects



DAISY BRAND BREAKS GROUND IN BOONE

On May 20, 2025, Daisy Brand held a groundbreaking ceremony in Boone, marking the commencement of construction on its new \$1.2 billion, 1 million-square-foot dairy processing facility. The event featured remarks from City of Boone Mayor Elijah Stines, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, and Daisy Brand President Ben Sokolsky who noted that this is Daisy's "most ambitious project yet." This investment is expected to create 106 new jobs initially, with projections to increase up to 255 positions as demand grows. The facility underscores Daisy Brand's commitment to expanding its operations and highlights Boone's strategic importance in the region's economic development.

DOWNTOWN AMES A GUIDING VISION

This spring, Ames Main Street unveiled their transformative plan that aims to enhance its vibrancy and appeal. The “Downtown Ames: A Guiding Vision for the Future” outlines strategic improvements to position the area as a premier destination in central Iowa.

“The guiding document is not a fixed plan, predetermined roadmap, or final decision,” said Travis Toliver, Executive Director of Ames Main Street. “Instead, it serves as a starting point—offering ideas and broad concepts to keep the conversation going as we explore ways to improve downtown and suggest possible next steps.”

A central component of the vision is the introduction of an 18-hour downtown that would include expanded restaurant and retail operations to better serve increased housing options. By encouraging businesses to extend their hours and developing diverse residential opportunities, the plan aims to create an environment that supports local enterprises and attracts more residents. This approach also addresses the current housing shortage and promotes an around-the-clock neighborhood atmosphere.

Renderings within the Guiding Vision show opportunities that could be capitalized on, such as making downtown streets more pedestrian-friendly and transforming them into inviting public spaces. Proposals include widening Main Street to accommodate outdoor dining and converting sections of Burnett and Douglas Avenues into multi-use entertainment districts. Enhancing connections across Duff Avenue is also a priority, aiming to integrate Bandshell Park more seamlessly into the downtown area.

“Through these efforts, we’ve shaped a collective vision that honors Downtown Ames’ rich history while paving the way for future growth, innovation, and deeper connections with both the community and visitors,” said Sam Stagg, 2023 Ames Main Street Board Chair and Project Leader.

Strengthening ties with Iowa State University is another key objective. The vision encourages developing off-campus experiences to better engage students and faculty with the downtown community.

The Guiding Vision document was developed in



FOR THE F

partnership with Bolton & Menk, an engineering and consulting firm that specializes in public infrastructure. The document provides a range of opportunities that incorporates committee and public input.

Overall, the “Downtown Ames Guiding Vision” serves as a flexible framework to inspire ongoing dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders. By focusing on strategic improvements and intentional investments, the plan aspires to transform Downtown Ames into a cultural and economic hub that reflects the community’s aspirations and enhances its quality of life.

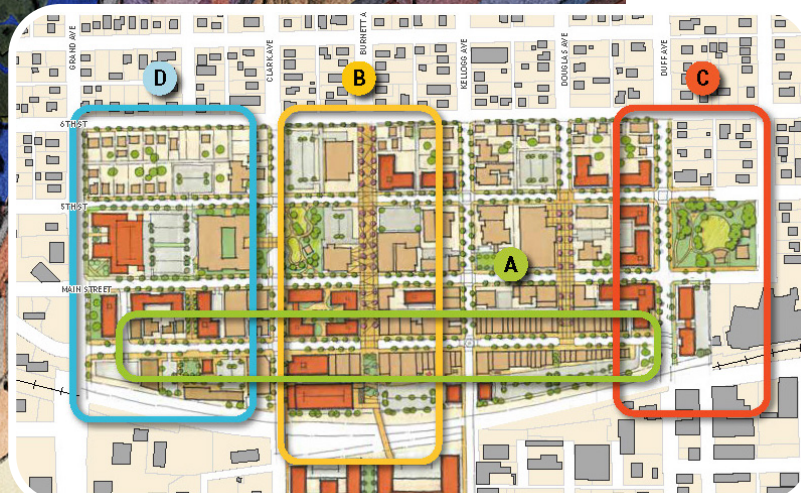
Redesign Main Street (Above Image)

Redesign Main Street to maintain assets such as mature trees and public art while expanding the sidewalk zone to increase pedestrian amenities. The rendering converts diagonal parking to parallel parking in order to expand sidewalk space.

Tom Evans Plaza Reimagined (Right Image)

The park is the first impression for many who come to Downtown as they park in public lots and walk through the park to get to Main Street. This concept extends the park north as the Burnett Avenue Greenway and south to connect to the Linc Project.





Four Focus Areas

Main Street Activation

- A1: Redesign of Main Street
- A2: Douglas "Civic Festival" Street
- A3: Activation of the Backside of Main Street
- A4: Guidelines for Infill Development

Schinker to Future Lincoln Way Development

- B1: Improvements to Tom Evans Plaza
- B2: Multi-modal Parking Ramp and Welcome Center
- B3: Burnett Avenue Improvements
- B4: Redevelopment of the Bank Block

East Edge and Duff Avenue

- C1: Highlighting the Power Plant
- C2: Improved Main Street Gateway
- C3: Improved Connections to Bandshell Park
- C4: Redevelopments Along Duff Avenue

City Hall / Grand Avenue

- D1: Gateway Development on the City Land
- D2: Mid-Block Connection from Depot to City Hall
- D3: Western Extension of Main Street Buildings
- D4: Redevelopment Around The Depot

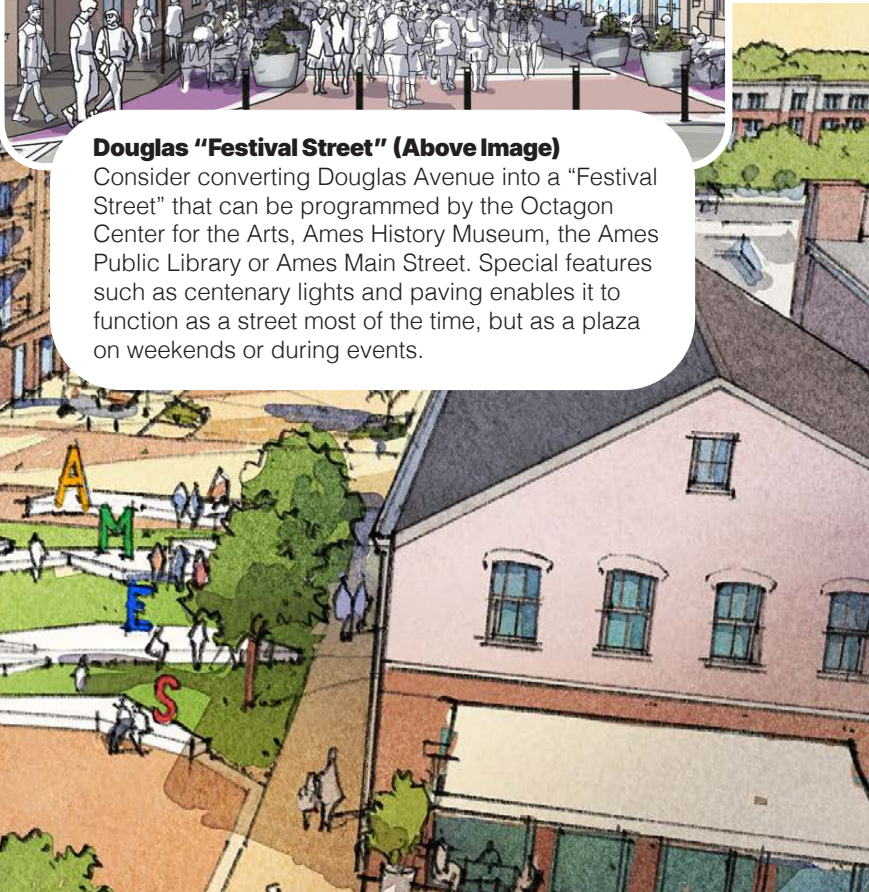


FUTURE



Douglas "Festival Street" (Above Image)

Consider converting Douglas Avenue into a "Festival Street" that can be programmed by the Octagon Center for the Arts, Ames History Museum, the Ames Public Library or Ames Main Street. Special features such as centenary lights and paving enables it to function as a street most of the time, but as a plaza on weekends or during events.





BLUESTEM BOULDERS

Climbing High in Ames: How Bluestem Boulders Are Building a Community

Walk into Bluestem Boulders, and you'll immediately feel the energy—chalk dust in the air, climbers eyeing their next move, and the hum of encouragement from all corners of the gym. This isn't just a place to work out; it's a place to belong.

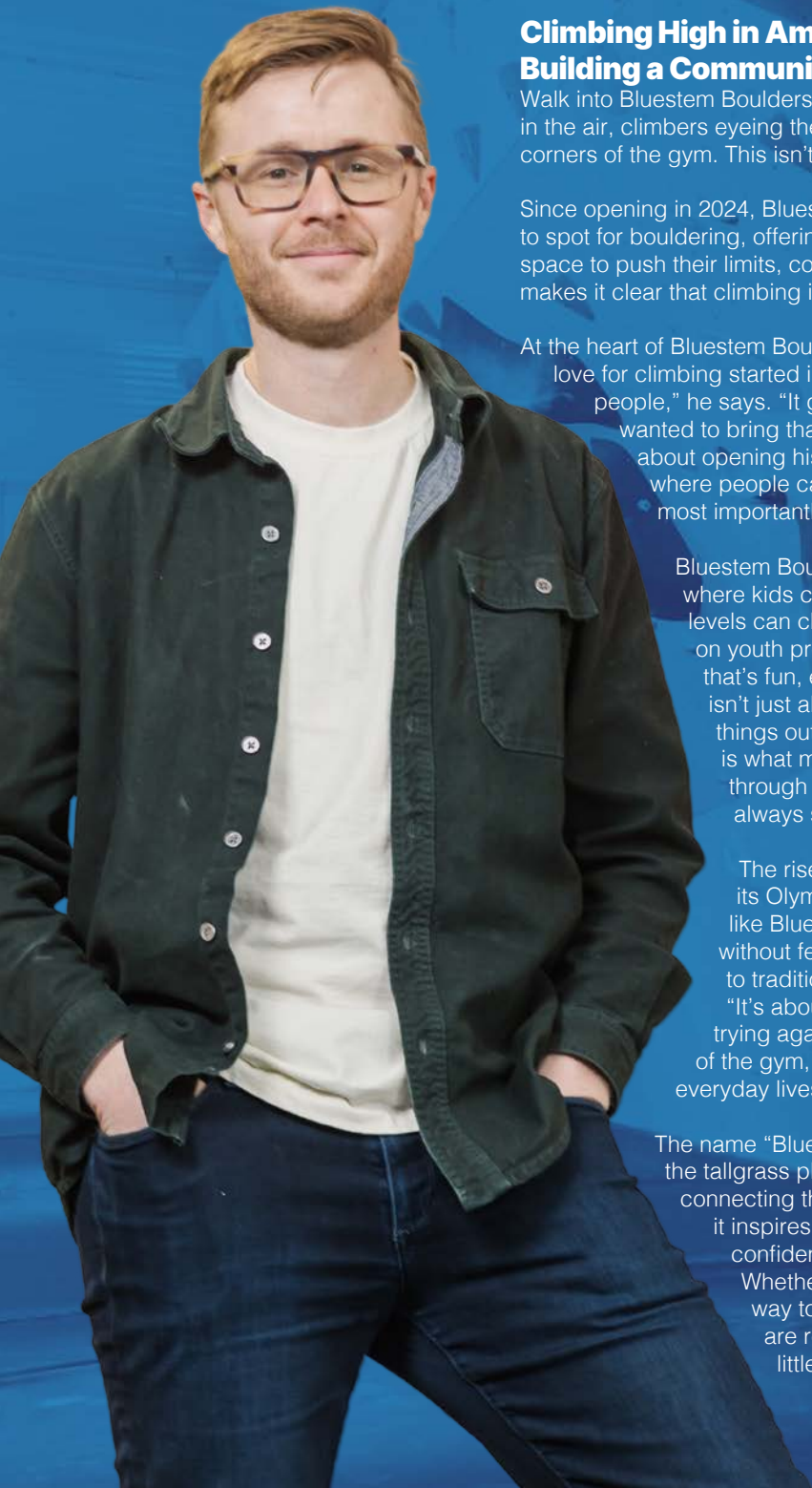
Since opening in 2024, Bluestem Boulders has provided Ames' residents a go-to spot for bouldering, offering everyone from first-timers to seasoned climbers a space to push their limits, connect with others, and have fun. The gym's atmosphere makes it clear that climbing is about more than just strength—it's about community.

At the heart of Bluestem Boulders is Brian Doscher, an Iowa State graduate whose love for climbing started in college. "The climbing gym was where I found my people," he says. "It gave me an escape from the stress of school, and I wanted to bring that same experience to Ames." After years of dreaming about opening his own gym, he made it happen—building a space where people can challenge themselves, grow in confidence, and, most importantly, feel at home.

Bluestem Boulders is more than just walls and holds—it's a place where kids can discover a new passion and where climbers of all levels can cheer each other on. Doscher has placed a big focus on youth programs, hoping to introduce kids to the sport in a way that's fun, engaging, and maybe even competitive. "Climbing isn't just about getting to the top," he explains. "It's about figuring things out, solving problems, and trusting yourself." That mindset is what makes the gym so special—whether you're working through a tough route or just learning how to fall safely, there's always someone rooting for you.

The rise of climbing as a mainstream sport—especially after its Olympic debut in 2020—has only fueled interest in places like Bluestem Boulders. Climbing offers a full-body workout without feeling like a chore, making it an appealing alternative to traditional gyms. "It's not just about strength," Doscher says. "It's about thinking through the challenge in front of you and trying again if you fall." That philosophy extends beyond the walls of the gym, shaping the way people approach challenges in their everyday lives.

The name "Bluestem Boulders" is a nod to Iowa's prairies, named after the tallgrass plants that once covered the region. It's a fitting tribute, connecting the gym back to nature and the sense of adventure it inspires. Bluestem Boulders is a place where people find confidence, connection, and the courage to reach new heights. Whether you're a seasoned climber or just looking for a new way to move, Doscher and the team at Bluestem Boulders are ready to welcome you with open arms (and maybe a little chalk).



A man with glasses and a beard, wearing a light-colored t-shirt and dark jeans, is climbing a large, white, curved bouldering wall. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The wall is covered in various colored climbing holds (blue, green, yellow, and red). The background is a solid blue color.

Brian Doscher
Owner, Bluestem Boulders

Bouldering is rock climbing stripped down to its raw essentials. Leaving behind ropes and harnesses and just using climbing shoes and a bag of chalk over safety mats, your challenge is to climb short but tricky bouldering “problems” (a route, or sequence of moves) using balance, technique, strength, and your brain.

Learn more about Bluestem Boulders online at:
www.bluestemboulders.com



Katy and Pete McMahon
Owners, Express Employment Professionals



Building Careers and Community: Express Employment Professionals in Ames

For nearly a decade, Express Employment Professionals in Ames has helped local businesses find talent, and helped job seekers find opportunities. Specializing in both temporary and full-time staffing solutions, Express Employment Professionals and its Specialized Recruiting Group work to match job seekers with opportunities that align with their skills and aspirations. Whether placing candidates in administrative, industrial, or professional roles, the team at Express Employment is dedicated to fostering long-term success for both employees and employers in the Ames community and beyond.

At the heart of Express Employment Professionals in Ames are its owners, Katy and Pete McMahon. With strong ties through the community, the McMahons are passionate advocates for the people they serve. Since starting their staffing journey nine years ago, they've supported over 300 companies and thousands of applicants—and they wouldn't want to do it anywhere else. "Ames isn't just where we do business—it's where we raise our kids, bump into clients when we're out for dinner, and do life," says Katy. "It means everything to build something here that actually helps people move forward."

Looking back, Katy admits it's been far from easy. "The past nine years have stretched me in every possible way - personally and professionally," she says. "But it's also been unbelievably fulfilling. Staffing's not just about filling jobs. It's about seeing potential in people, opening doors, and solving problems that keep business owners up at night. It's messy sometimes - but it matters."

That kind of clarity has come from being deeply embedded in the community. Express Employment Professionals has forged strong partnerships with local businesses, schools, and community organizations, creating a ripple effect that contributes to the growth and prosperity of the entire region. "More paychecks for the people who live here means more money spent at the businesses located here," says Pete. "And we take that seriously."

But their mission goes beyond clients and candidates—it's also about the incredible team they've built.

"Our team is everything," Katy says. "We work hard, and everyone here genuinely cares. We support each other, challenge each other, and celebrate together. The days are so much better when you're working alongside people you like and respect."

That culture is rooted in one core value: adding value.

"To be part of this team, you have to believe in that," Katy explains. "We challenge each other multiple times a day—did we ask the right questions to uncover what the resume or job description didn't say? Did we give honest, useful feedback on the issues we saw? If we didn't add value to both the job seeker and the company, we didn't do all we could."

As Express Employment Professionals in Ames celebrates nine years of success, Katy and Pete McMahon remain as committed as ever to their community. Their journey is a testament to the power of relationships, resilience, and shared success. Looking ahead, they are excited for continued growth, deeper connections, and more opportunities to make a lasting impact. "Here's to nine years of growth, lessons, and connection—and to many more ahead," Katy reflects. With their passion and dedication, Express Employment Professionals will undoubtedly continue to be a driving force in shaping the future of Ames' regional workforce for years to come.

www.expresspros.com/us-iowa-ames

A podcast from the Ames Regional Economic Alliance

AREA POD



PERSONAL STORIES, PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS.

Presented by  FLYNN
WRIGHT

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance launched the AREA Podcast in the first quarter of 2025, providing a new platform dedicated to sharing the personal stories and professional journeys of leaders across our region.

The AREA Podcast features in-depth conversations with business leaders, entrepreneurs, and community stakeholders, covering topics such as leadership, innovation, and economic development initiatives shaping the future of Ames and the surrounding region. From groundbreaking startups to legacy businesses, community builders to visionary thinkers—if it's making an impact, you'll hear about it here.

"Beyond the projects and policies, one of the most powerful tools we have is storytelling," said Dan Culhane, President & CEO of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance. "Sharing the successes of our businesses, the innovations happening across industries, and the personal stories of those who call this region home strengthens our community in ways data alone never could."

The AREA Podcast is available on major streaming platforms, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Amazon. Viewers can watch a video version of each episode on the Alliance YouTube channel.



**Debi Durham,
Director, Iowa Economic Development Authority**

From attracting national brands to the region to supporting expansion projects, we talked to Iowa's biggest advocate about the importance of economic development across the state.

**Rick Sanders,
President, Iowa State University Research Park**
Home to over 130 companies across 550 acres, the Research Park serves as a regional hub for innovation and plays a key role in developing CyTown at the Iowa State Center.



**John Wyffels,
President, Wyffels Hybrids**

Now in its 3rd generation of leadership, being "fiercely independent" is at the core of Wyffels Hybrids, a family-owned business that is expanding west with a new facility in Ames.

**Jill Klindt
Chief Financial Officer, Workiva**
Jill was a Week 1 employee at Workiva that now serves over 6,000 companies with their financial reporting and data compliance needs, including 80% of the Fortune 500.



**Rob Denson,
President, Des Moines Area Community College**

From expanding academic programs to establishing new business partnerships, we talk with DMACC's longest-serving president about the ever-increasing role of community colleges.

**Ryan Newstrom,
Owner, Cornbred Barbecue**
With over 250 national awards, including National Brisket Champion, Cornbred is looking to "make Ames weird" with their incredible menu offerings and service.





Naser Naser
Area Manager, Powders and Kits

Be Right!



Cassie Winkel

Area Manager,
Microbiology, Medical Cell, and Label Cell

Hach: A Local Legacy with a Global Reach

On the south side of Ames, across 17 acres of innovation, stands a company quietly making waves in the world of water. Hach, a name recognized by scientists and engineers across the globe, started from humble beginnings—born in 1947 in a garage thanks to the vision of Clifford and Kitty Hach. Today, it spans more than 200,000 square feet over four buildings, shaping the science of water quality and carrying forward a legacy rooted deeply in Iowa soil.

More Than Just Water

Though Hach doesn't treat water directly, its work is critical to keeping water safe. The company develops chemicals and instruments used in water quality testing, ensuring that water in cities, industries, and ecosystems meets the highest standards. From laboratory benches to remote fieldwork, Hach equipment provides precise, reliable measurements that help protect communities and the environment.

Hach's solutions give operators and managers the confidence they need to make crucial decisions—whether that's ensuring compliance, improving energy efficiency, or reducing waste in production. "Be confident in your water analysis," they say.

Roots in Ames, Reach Across the World

Despite its global presence—with operations across the United States, a headquarters in Colorado, a parent company based in Massachusetts, and a distribution center in Illinois—Ames remains the beating heart of Hach. It's where the chemistry happens—literally.

The Ames facility is home to the production of testing powders, manufactures test strips commonly used for items like hot tubs, and biological tools that allow researchers and professionals to assess stream and river health. In a unique partnership with Story County, Hach employees pull samples from the South Skunk River every other Friday using their own equipment, helping to monitor and understand the local ecosystem.

Hach also treats its own wastewater before returning it to the city—a testament to the company's environmental responsibility, further exemplified by their internal "Green Team" committed to sustainability initiatives.

A Culture Built to Last

With nearly 300 employees at its Ames location, Hach is more than a workplace—it's a community. The average employee has been with the company for more than 9 years, a reflection of a culture grounded in purpose and precision. A sculpture outside the facility titled "Atomium" nods to the company's chemical roots, and inside, teams lean into LEAN engineering practices, striving to reduce cost and waste at every step of the production process.

Partnerships also shape the company's DNA. Through a collaboration with Mainstream Living, 13 individuals with disabilities contribute meaningfully to Hach's operations. The engineering team is almost entirely made up of Iowa State University alumni, and internships through Iowa State remain a vital pipeline for talent. Hach also partners with the Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) to engage in data collection and career development.

The journey from Clifford and Kitty's garage to a global network is more than a business success story—it's a story about vision, perseverance, and purpose. It's about treating water with the respect it deserves and empowering people with the tools to protect it.

So next time you cross the South Skunk River or turn on the tap, remember: some of the science keeping your water safe might just have come from a lab right here in Ames.

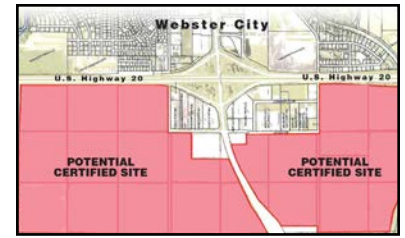
www.hach.com

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Webster City 600-Acre Certified Site Approved by Council

(February 26, 2025)

The Webster City City Council has officially approved a resolution to create a 600-acre industrial park south of Highway 20, a strategic move designed to attract new business investment and create jobs for the region. This project will be developed as part of the Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Certified Sites Program, a key initiative that helps Iowa communities prepare prime real estate for economic growth. This certification is essential for attracting companies that need to accelerate their development schedules.



Olive Garden is coming to Ames!

(March 31, 2025)

The popular Italian restaurant known for its endless breadsticks has announced they are building a new restaurant in Ames on the northwest corner of Highway 30 and Dayton Avenue. When Olive Garden is opening has not yet been finalized, but the company announced its intention that the Ames site will be Olive Garden's ninth Iowa location and fourth in central Iowa. The new location is expected to bring dozens of jobs and a fresh dining option to the growing east side of Ames.



MGMC President & CEO Announces Retirement

(April 21, 2025)

Brian Dieter, President and CEO of Mary Greeley Medical Center, announced his retirement from the leadership position he's held since July 2008. Prior to becoming President and CEO, Dieter was the medical center's chief financial officer for nine years. The medical center has received a range of recognitions with Dieter at the helm, most significantly the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2019, and Magnet designation in 2019 and 2024. Amber Dearnorff was announced as his successor and will take over in August 2025.



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Carole Gieseke
Matt Runge
Steve Sullivan
Garrett Ringblum
Jeff Harris

Sam Stagg
Brian Doscher
Katy McMahon
Pete McMahon
Marc Kincade
... and the entire Ames
Regional Economic
Alliance team

As the host of the new AREA Podcast, I'm thrilled to introduce this exciting extension of our digital media and storytelling efforts. Just like Traction magazine has given us a platform to highlight the people and ideas moving our region forward, this podcast brings those stories to life through conversations, insights, and firsthand perspectives. The AREA Podcast builds on the work we've done with Traction, offering listeners a front-row seat to the people and progress behind the headlines.

We strategically chose to record these episodes with not only audio, but video as well (watch on YouTube)! There's something powerful about experiencing these conversations in real time. The podcast is designed to showcase authentic, unscripted conversations with business leaders who have incredible personal stories and professional journeys. I encourage you to listen and enjoy the ride.

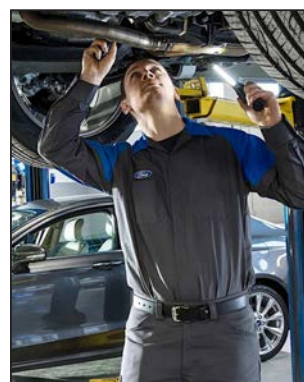
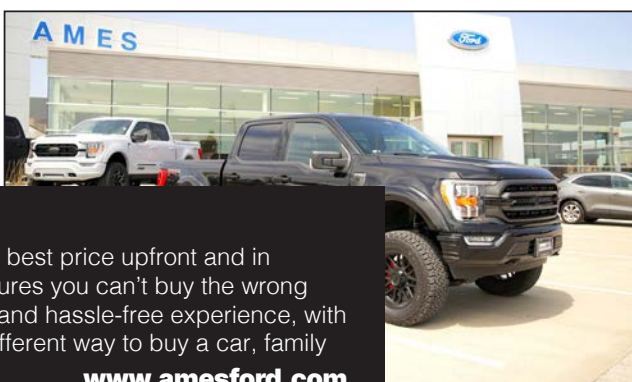
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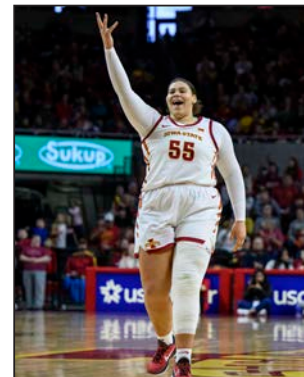
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www.cyclones.com

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