

# MILFORD DOWNTOWN STOREFRONT RENOVATION NEAR COMPLETION

It had become clear that downtown Milford storefronts required major improvements in order to serve the Milford of today, as well as future generations. With that concern, in December 2011, Milford Downtown revitalization became a top priority as a result of the collaborative efforts of United Community Bank, Milford Municipal Utilities and Milford Development, Inc. (a nonprofit community development corporation). With United Community Bank and Milford Utilities each providing \$260,000 to the downtown Milford revitalization project, a pool of \$520,000 for significant building improvements in the form of no-interest forgivable loans was created to help facilitate and encourage businesses in the downtown area to renovate their storefronts. As a result, 13 Milford storefronts have been renovated with the final 2 to be completed in 2016.

“The importance of the Downtown Milford Renovation Project to the economy of downtown Milford, the entire city and the Lakes Region is not underestimated, and it’s exactly because of the importance that we worked diligently with all of our local partners on a plan to move forward,” explained Mark C. Fisher, President of United Community Bank and member of Milford Development, Inc. “We are confident that the renovation of the downtown mirrors the values that underpin Milford’s development. It has strengthened the city’s position and provides the foundation for a dynamic downtown area,” said Fisher.

Todd Johnson, Vice President and CFO of United Community Bank and member of Milford Development, Inc. explained, “Our top priority was to renovate as many storefronts as possible, while managing the costs of those renovations.

As important, the process has included a cursory evaluation of the building’s structural and historic integrity, with conceptual designs for improvements to the facade while bringing in new energy-efficient aspects. It’s amazing the transformation that the town is seeing with these renovations. It’s bringing our downtown back to life.”

The building designs and drawings were a collaboration of ideas from Mick Noteboom and Nolan Van Berkum. Nolan was instrumental in preparing the drawings and Mick was the liaison between the contractors and the building owners.

Their goal to have a cohesive look yet offer unique building attributes has been well received by the public. “We have made sure no cookie cutter approach has been used for any storefront project,” said Mick Noteboom.

Milford Utilities has been working alongside the businesses to ensure the most energy efficient materials are used on the projects. “By consuming less energy, our local businesses are more competitive, more efficient and can pass those savings on to their customers,” said Eric Stoll, General Manager of Milford Municipal Utilities and member of Milford Development, Inc. “People really see an improvement when they come through downtown Milford,” Stoll said.

The positive long-term economic impact of a stable commercial business district is the anticipated return to all involved in the project. The downtown renovation project has provided significant improvements that will have a visible and meaningful impact to Milford for years to come.



Photos featured are the 13 Milford storefronts completed, located on the four main blocks at the center of downtown Milford. East side of Okoboji Avenue, starting south (top row, left to right): Mill Creek Restaurant, Milford Communications, Pampered Pet Salon, Stan’s Barber Shop, 3 Little Birds and True Value Hardware. West side of Okoboji Avenue, starting south: Steffes General Contractor, Twisted Tattoos, Okoboji Wireless, PFT. MHR Insurance, Iowa Lakes Realty and Classic Comb share building. The Coffee Shop, Zen Salon and Sunset Travel share building. Former JoWaCo Depot and John’s Tire Service building. The Scoreboard Lounge and Walters Real Estate will soon be completed.