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Jefferson Named All-Star Community

The City of Jefferson was named a 2025 All-Star Community by the Iowa League of Cities for its Building Restorations on Jefferson's Square. The city will be recognized at an Awards Banquet at the League's Annual Conference & Exhibit, held in Des Moines from September 17-19.

The All-Star Community Award is the most prestigious honor given by the League to cities. Entries are judged by a panel of former city officials and others familiar with municipal government. Judges determine winners based on innovative efforts in areas such as urban renewal, development, preservation, collaborative efforts or quality of life improvements. Jefferson was among three of Iowa's 940 cities to garner such recognition.

Since 2017, the city of Jefferson, Iowa, has been at the forefront of one of the state's most ambitious small-town revitalization projects. With a goal of fully renovating the commercial buildings surrounding its historic downtown Square, this multi-year effort is poised for completion in 2025. It's a story of perseverance, community pride, and strategic investment—one that other communities across the nation can look to for inspiration.

As of 2025, 32 out of Jefferson's 52 downtown buildings have been fully renovated, while an additional 13 have undergone facade upgrades through a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The driving force behind this transformative initiative is a collaborative model—bringing together city leadership, state and federal grants, historic tax credits, and significant private investments from building owners. The mission is clear: preserve the Square's rich architectural legacy while ensuring structural integrity and modern functionality for future generations.

As Jefferson's historic downtown renovation nears completion, the results are unmistakable. The Square now stands as a thriving center of commerce, culture, and community connection. It's a model for how small towns can revitalize not by starting over, but by investing in their heritage, empowering local stakeholders, and embracing creative, inclusive planning.

The Iowa League of Cities congratulates Jefferson on this remarkable achievement. With restored buildings, energized citizens, and a renewed sense of purpose, Jefferson is proving that small towns can dream big and deliver even bigger. This year's other All-Star Community Award winners are New Albin and Cedar Falls.

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The Iowa League of Cities is the oldest, continuously operating municipal league in the country. Founded in 1898, the League is a not-for-profit organization that serves as the unified voice for cities, providing advocacy, training and guidance to the cities of Iowa.