



500 SW 7th Street, Suite 101, Des Moines, Iowa 50309
(515) 244-7282 www.iowaleague.org

Contact: Tara Turner | Library Director, Story City
(515) 733-2685 | librarydirector@cityofstorycity.org

Story City Named All-Star Community

Story City was named a 2026 All-Star Community by the Iowa League of Cities for its Bertha Bartlett Public Library Expansion and Renovation. The city will be recognized at an Awards Banquet at the League's Annual Conference & Exhibit, held in Bettendorf from September 23-25.

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. Story City was one of three of Iowa's 940 cities to garner such recognition.

The Bertha Bartlett Public Library in Story City has completed a transformative expansion and renovation that has significantly enhanced its ability to serve residents throughout the community and surrounding rural areas. Originally constructed in 1995, the library had outgrown its space after nearly 30 years of service. Following a 2017 space needs assessment and the acquisition of an adjacent property in 2019, the project added approximately 5,000 square feet while modernizing the existing facility with new meeting and performance spaces, expanded children's and teen areas, study rooms, a makerspace, upgraded technology and improved accessibility.

The project was driven by growing demand for library services and community gathering spaces. The renovation addressed these challenges by creating flexible spaces that support everything from children's programs and remote work to public meetings, performances and cultural events. A new performance space seating more than 200 people, along with a dedicated music room housing a custom Steinway piano, has expanded opportunities for arts and community engagement.

Since reopening, the renovated library has quickly become an even more vibrant community hub. In its first nine months, the new performance space has hosted piano recitals, theatrical productions, educational programs, club meetings and numerous public events. The project reflects Story City's commitment to investing in a modern public library that supports lifelong learning, strengthens community connections, and meets the changing educational, technological and cultural needs of residents for years to come.

The Iowa League of Cities congratulates Story City on this remarkable achievement. This year's other All-Star Community Award winners are West Branch and Mason City.

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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.