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West Branch Named All-Star Community

West Branch was named a 2026 All-Star Community by the Iowa League of Cities for its Heritage Hill redevelopment project. 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. West Branch was one of three of Iowa's 940 cities to garner such recognition.

For decades, the former Croell cement plant occupied a prominent downtown site, generating noise, dust, truck traffic and visual impacts while creating a physical and social divide within the community. Beginning in 2013, city leaders identified relocating the industrial facility and redeveloping the property as a key priority to improve quality of life and strengthen West Branch's future.

Redeveloping the 3.4-acre site required years of planning, environmental review, engineering, and collaboration among local, regional, and state partners. Guided by extensive public input, the city incorporated the project into its Capital Improvement Plan and comprehensive planning efforts, focusing on reconnecting neighborhoods, encouraging walkable development, and creating new housing opportunities.

Today, Heritage Hill stands as a testament to the power of long-term planning, public engagement, and strategic investment. The redevelopment has replaced an incompatible industrial use with a vibrant neighborhood that enhances downtown vitality, improves community connectivity, and supports sustainable growth.

The Iowa League of Cities congratulates West Branch on this remarkable achievement. Heritage Hill reflects the resilience of West Branch: thoughtful leadership, collaborative partnerships, and a commitment to progress. This year's other All-Star Community Award winners are Story City 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.