

Program gets national status

Clare advances as a Main Street community

By SUSAN FIELD
Clare Managing Editor

After being designated a Michigan Main Street community four years ago, the city of Clare has reached a milestone in the program.

Clare is now one of a select few cities in the state to receive accreditation, which bumps the city to national Main Street status.

Jim Allen, chairman of the Clare Main Street and Downtown Development Authority board, received notification earlier this month that the city met the criteria to become accredited.

Although scoring enough points on a 10-point criteria in the past to come close to the target, improvements to the pro-

gram put them over the top this year, Main Street Manager Lori Schuh said.

In prior years, the city fell just shy of the mark, she said.

"Their criteria is so stringent," Schuh said. "It isn't an easy thing to do."

Clare proved to meet all the criteria in 2008 - having broad-based community support; having adequate vision and mission statements; having a comprehensive Main Street work plan with measurable objectives; maintaining an historic preservation ethic; an active board and committees; an adequate operating budget; professional management and development; a program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers; reporting of key statistics; and National

Main Street Network membership, according to Laura Krizof, manager of the Michigan Main Street Center.

Main Street designations, part of Gov. Jennifer Granholm's Cool Cities program, are an effort to create vibrant communities throughout the state.

Based on numerous studies that show that investing in downtowns creates centers where people want to live, work and invest, the effort is an approach to make Michigan economically stronger.

The Main Street program is aimed at encouraging economic development through organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring.

Because of the accreditation, the city will receive an additional training session, provided by

the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, in a topic deemed important to the community, Schuh said.

"The communities get to choose what interests them," she said. "Main Street provides topnotch professionals and they do in in our community."

Topics for the training include retailing, entrepreneurship and real estate development, Schuh said.

Schuh hopes to garner input from community members, business owners and property owners in selecting the training topic.

Other cities in Michigan that have obtained Main Street accreditation include Marshall, Niles, Calumet and Boyne City, all of which received the distinction last year.