

FHWA's Livable Communities Case Study Series

Dubuque Millwork District—An Iowa Historic Revitalization Project

Challenge—Vision to the Future with an Eye on the Past

Traveling along the Mississippi River, from Milepost 579-584 you will find the small city of Dubuque, Iowa. Dubuque—Iowa's oldest city and one of the earliest settlements west of the Mississippi River—was established in 1785 by French-Canadian Julien Dubuque who was trading furs with the local Mesquakie (Fox) tribe. Along with furs, the Mesquakie also traded lead that they mined nearby. Due to the extensive history of lead mining, this area is now called the "Mines of Spain." Julien Dubuque was given a 198-acre land grant by the Governor of Spain, which gave him permission to work the land. Following the Black Hawk Purchase Treaty of 1833, the area became an established settlement, with many new industries: button making, boat building, logging, meat packing, and millwork. Over time, millwork became their primary industry. Today, the historic Millwork District of Dubuque has over 1 million square feet of warehouse space.

The challenge in 2009 was to reinvigorate the Millwork District, which includes the waterfront area and the Washington neighborhood, while respecting and recognizing the area's historic character. The District lies between the Port of Dubuque and downtown areas, and the new concept was for the District to connect these areas and create one large, thriving, livable area.

Solution—Transitioning a Warehouse District Into a Thriving Community

An attractive site for redevelopment, the Millwork District contains many historic warehouses that offer the potential for residences and commercial centers. The city of Dubuque worked with four developers on a mixed-use initiative throughout the District.

The main features of the [Historic Millwork District Master Plan](#) include:

- Green streets
- New development blocks
- Improved connections between the District, the Port, and Downtown
- Reprogramming to two-way or calm one-way streets
- A signature public open space
- A coordinated parking strategy



The warehouses have maintained their historic character.

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



- A mix of uses
- Integration of visual and performing arts in the area
- Sustainable technologies and management solutions

Funding—Money for the Millwork District

In February 2010, the USDOT announced its award of \$5.6 million for revitalization of the Millwork District in Dubuque. The funds focused on multimodal improvements to establish Dubuque as a model for sustainable transportation in areas with populations under 200,000. These Federal dollars helped the city to leverage millions more in additional investments for a total of \$7.7 million. The project drew on cost-effective and sustainable practices, such as reusing brick pavers and installing energy efficient streetlights. The project also created local jobs and capitalized on local resources. For instance, crews added locally manufactured benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles.

Results—A New Industry of Progress

Because of the Millwork District complete streets program, new streets are now accessible to all travelers, including drivers, public transit passengers, pedestrians, bicyclists, people without access to automobiles, children, and people with disabilities. The revitalization of the Millwork District has blended historic features with environmentally friendly and sustainable community growth, and all involved stakeholders have established a vibrant community, building on the past. It helped build the momentum to take advantage of existing assets and transform the Millwork District and Dubuque into a more sustainable and livable community.



Numerous warehouses are slated to be redeveloped as part of the mixed-use initiative in the District.



Revitalizing the Millwork District will blend historic features with environmentally friendly and sustainable community growth.

Federal Highway Administration: www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability
Partnership for Sustainable Communities: www.sustainablecommunities.gov/

