



## **HVJF FAQ**

### **What is HVJF?**

The Historic Valley Junction Foundation (HVJF) is a 501c3 nonprofit Main Street organization that coordinates promotions, events, business growth, and beautification efforts in Historic Valley Junction, the original downtown of what is now West Des Moines.

### **What is Main Street?**

Main Street America is a program begun in the 1970s by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to revitalize older and historic commercial districts and build vibrant neighborhoods and thriving economies. The Main Street Iowa statewide coordinating program was established in 1986. HVJF has been a Main Street program since 1987. There are 50+ Main Street Iowa communities and over 1200 across the country.

### **What is the Main Street district?**

Our district has specific boundaries, as shown on the map included in this packet. Generally speaking, it is the commercial corridor between Fourth and Sixth Sts. from Railroad Ave. to Vine. Our work focuses on the businesses, buildings, events, appearance, and promotion of this area.

### **Is HVJF part of the City?**

While we work closely with West Des Moines city officials, we are an independent organization. The City owns and maintains our offices in Historic City Hall, and we receive some funding from their hotel/motel tax income.

### **Who runs HVJF?**

We have a volunteer board of directors, elected through the process laid out in the HVJF bylaws included in this packet. They guide the work of the paid staff, which consists of a full-time executive director and an events & marketing manager, along with a part-time office assistant and a venue coordinator.

### **How do I join HVJF?**

We are not a membership organization. We work with and for all the stakeholders in the Valley Junction Main Street district. If you own a business or building here, work or live here, or volunteer for us, you are part of HVJF!

### **What benefits are there to being in Valley Junction?**

Being in one of the Midwest's premier business locations, you will benefit from exposure during our many events as well as our district promotions. We market Historic Valley Junction on social media channels (be sure to tag us in your Stories!), print publications, radio, TV, and billboard advertising, and through Catch Des Moines, the metro's tourism organization. You'll be listed on our website, our printed and online business directories, and the district map. We also provide access to Main Street Iowa services like free design and business improvement consultations, and you're eligible to apply for business and building grants exclusive to Main Street Iowa programs. Other funding opportunities may arise as well. Contact the HVJF office if you have questions.

### **Where are the public restrooms?**

Public restroom facilities are available during open hours both at our office at 137 Fifth St. and at the Valley Junction Activity Center, 217 Fifth St. In addition, there are public restrooms located in Railroad Park.

### **Do I need a permit for my sign or to put items on the sidewalk?**

The City of West Des Moines has ordinances in place that cover commercial signage, as well as the use of public sidewalk space for planters, benches, sandwich boards, etc., You'll find links on the Business Resources page of our website, <https://www.valleyjunction.com/about/our-business-resources/>, or contact our office. Businesses cannot use vinyl banners as permanent signage.

### **What do I do about snow shoveling and plowing?**

Keeping the sidewalks and street crossings clear makes Valley Junction an accessible, welcoming district. Sidewalk snow removal is the responsibility of the business and building owners; contact our office if you'd like a referral. The City handles plowing in the streets and public parking lots. They make clearing Fifth St. a priority and will return after a significant accumulation to haul the snow away. Please note that even in an officially declared snow emergency, parking in our district **is** still allowed during business hours. To receive text notifications of snow emergency parking bans, go to <https://verified-broadcast-3453-0cdpmp.twil.io/subscribe.html>.

### **Is there a meeting room I can use for my business?**

The upstairs board room at Historic City Hall is available at no charge to Main Street district businesses during regular HVJF office hours; contact the office to make arrangements. Depending on your needs and schedule, you might want to contact the Valley Junction Activity Center at 217 Fifth St., 515-222-3440.

### **I want to make changes to my building. Are there any restrictions?**

Contact the West Des Moines Development Services Department, 515-222-3630, to discuss what you have in mind. The Historic West Des Moines Master Plan includes design guidelines for rehab and new construction in the district to ensure that development contributes to the quality and character of the Valley Junction Main Street district. The approved design guidelines are linked at <https://valleyjunction.com/partner-resources/development-resources/>

### **How can I connect with my fellow business owners?**

You are surrounded by neighbors here – but as a business owner, it can be hard for you to connect with them outside your walls. HVJF is here to help! You'll receive notice of our regular merchant meetings, where you can introduce yourself, meet fellow business owners, and find out what's going on in the district. You will receive the weekly HVJF Update e-blast on Friday mornings, letting you know about events, openings, grant opportunities, and other items of interest. You'll also get the monthly e-newsletter that goes out to over 6000 community members. And as a business owner, you can join the private Facebook page, Historic Valley Junction Merchants Group – Cup of Sugar. It's a great place to share ideas, get recommendations, swap news, and more. Your employees can take advantage of all these opportunities as well.

### **Do I have to keep certain hours?**

As an independent business owner, you choose your own days and hours of operation. However, if you are a retailer, we highly recommend tailoring your hours to when your potential customers are available. Instead of 9 to 5 Monday through Friday, this might mean opening and closing later and being open on Saturdays and Sundays. The restaurants bring a substantial amount of people here during evenings and weekends, and they can't shop at your store if you're not open.

### **Where can I park?**

A parking guide is included in this packet. To conserve parking for customers and visitors, we strongly recommend that all business owners and employees park in the public lots if they do not have private parking.

### **Can I use the common trash dumpsters?**

As a district business owner, you are able to participate in our voluntary cooperative trash program. Information is included in this packet. You will likely find that it is less expensive than contracting with a private waste hauler.

### **How can I get involved with HVJF?**

Our organization relies heavily on the passion, commitment, and expertise of volunteers. If you would like to help out with an event or join a standing HVJF committee (Design, Business Improvement, or Promotions), be sure to contact our office. There are special projects that come up from time to time as well. We want to find a good fit for your talents and interests and our needs!

### **How can I support HVJF?**

So glad you asked! You are invited to contribute to our annual fundraising campaign; letters go out each fall. Supporters are recognized in a variety of ways, depending on the level of giving. You can also choose to sponsor an event or activity, giving your business added exposure. There are several special events, such as Sip & Shop and Gallery Night, that give you an opportunity to participate in co-op marketing. You might also like to Adopt a Planter in spring, which lets you get your name out while also beautifying Valley Junction.