



2011 River Town of the Year Application
Deadline: December 20, 2011
Award Presented: January 6, 2012

PURPOSE: Iowa Rivers Revival is the statewide river advocacy group working to engage individuals, organizations, communities and government leaders in river awareness, responsibility and enjoyment. IRR is committed to protecting some of our most precious natural resources – our rivers and streams. This award celebrates the many vibrant river communities across the state that are reclaiming riverfronts as anchors for economic development, recreation, and ecological practices, as well as to address some of challenges and solutions related to the quality of the water in Iowa's rivers.

WHO CAN APPLY: Applicants must demonstrate community commitment and involvement in protecting and maintaining river quality and promoting the river as an asset to your town.

AWARD: One Iowa river town will receive the *River Town of the Year Award* at IRR's River Congress on Friday, January 6, 2012, at the Blank Park Zoo-Discovery Room in Des Moines. The winning city/town will be notified by December 30, 2011.

<u>Charles City, Iowa</u> <small>NAME OF RIVER CITY/TOWN – PLEASE PRINT</small>	<u>charlescity.govoffice.com</u> <small>CITY/TOWN WEBSITE – PLEASE PRINT</small>		
<u>Tom Brownlow</u> <small>NAME OF RIVER CITY/TOWN CONTACT – PLEASE PRINT</small>	<u>City Administrator</u> <small>TITLE – PLEASE PRINT</small>		
<u>105 Milwaukee Mall</u> <small>ADDRESS – PLEASE PRINT</small>	<u>Charles City</u> <small>CITY</small>	<u>IA</u> <small>STATE</small>	<u>50616</u> <small>ZIP</small>
<u>(641) 257-6300</u> <small>BUSINESS PHONE</small>	<u>()</u> <small>CELL PHONE</small>	<u>tom@cityofcharlescity.org</u> <small>E-MAIL – PLEASE PRINT</small>	

Please describe how your town qualifies for the River Town of the Year Award (*attach narrative, 2 page-maximum*). Examples of Award criteria include, but are not limited to, these activities (*please provide examples and/or pictures*):

- Promote commerce that accommodates river enthusiasts along the river (commercial establishments - bed & breakfasts, bait/fish shops, restaurants, canoe boat/rentals).
- Targeted River Tourism efforts
- Efforts to protect greenbelts and/or ecosystems
- Annual/Seasonal river clean-up
- Provide walking trails along the river
- Other river programs (please describe): River programs are described in following narrative.
- Efforts towards dam safety
- Education and Advocacy by local river/watershed groups
- Innovative storm water controls/river protection
- Participated with river trails programs

*In addition to the activities listed above, the applicant town **must** demonstrate good stewardship of river water quality through compliance with wastewater and storm water permits. If the applicant city/town has had violations of wastewater or storm water permits in the last 3 years, please explain what the city/town has done to address the problem in an attached narrative.*

Charles City has not had any violations of wastewater or stormwater permits in the last 3 years.
References that are knowledgeable about your town's river stewardship:

<u>Steve Lindaman</u> <small>NAME</small>	<u>Charles City Parks and Recreation Director</u> <small>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION</small>	<u>641-228-6312</u> <small>PHONE#</small>
<u>Veronica Litterer</u> <small>NAME</small>	<u>Charles City Area Chamber of Commerce and Community Revitalization Director</u> <small>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION</small>	<u>641-228-4234 or 641-228-4234</u> <small>PHONE #</small>

Registration deadline is December 20, 2011. Please e-mail application to rlehman@iowarivers.org or mail to:

Iowa Rivers Revival, Attn: River Town Award, PO Box 72, Des Moines, IA 50301

For questions or additional information, please contact Rosalyn Lehman, Program Director at rlehman@iowarivers.org.



Iowa Rivers Revival

2011 River Town of the Year Charles City, Iowa

The magnificent Cedar River has been a defining feature of Charles City throughout its history. Native Americans and early European settlers appreciated the value of the river, and that appreciation has continued to this day. Following the damage and destruction of record floods in 1999 and then again in 2008, Charles City and its residents responded by embracing the river and implementing measures to make the scenic Cedar River the focal point of the community. The flood swept away the iconic 102-year-old suspension bridge, which the community has replaced. Recent storm water best management practices have attracted nationwide attention. Unique recreational features along the riverfront downtown adjacent to Main Street provide enticing opportunities for fishing and other family outings and draw people into the business district. A low-head dam has been mitigated, with the resulting structure becoming part of a world-class whitewater kayak course. These accomplishments add new dimensions to the quality of life in Charles City.



A group of flat-water river enthusiasts paddled under the new bridge and floated into the downtown area of Charles City for lunch.

In 2010 a new ADA accessible cable-stayed bridge opened to pedestrian and bicycle traffic where the beloved historic suspension bridge and symbol of the community once stood. Involved residents participated in meetings to design the aesthetic features of the new bridge. Custom designed lighting was provided as a gift to the community by Musco Lighting. A new park is planned adjacent to the bridge on land donated by the owner of an elegant home destroyed by the flood. The new Victory Park will include an artistic sculpture created with debris from the old bridge. Volunteers have collaborated on the sculpture design with David Williamson, the creative force behind "Reverse," an initiative to increase the awareness of Project AWARE (the Iowa DNR's Watershed Awareness River Expedition program). Participation may help fill the void left by the loss of the historic bridge with a sense of fulfillment at being part of the future.

Charles City's first permeable paving project was completed in 2010. This project, encompassing approximately 16 blocks, is the largest permeable paving project in Iowa and is reportedly the largest permeable paving residential retrofit in the nation. This undertaking fulfilled the following multiple objectives: it replaced roads long in need of repair, it eliminated localized flooding and ponding in areas either lacking a storm water system or served by an undersized system, it significantly reduced runoff volumes and rates, and it yielded significant water quality benefits.

The permeable paving system achieves zero discharge to the storm water system, and hence to the river, for a two-year event (2.98 inch rain). For a ten-year event (4.38 inch rain) the runoff volume is reduced over 60% and the peak discharge is reduced over 90%. Even for a 100-year event (7.07 inch rain), runoff volumes and rates are reduced over 30%. The pollutant load was reduced by the following amounts: total suspended solids released to the storm water system reduced 65%-100%, total nitrogen reduced 65%-100%, and total phosphorus reduced 30%-65%. An intangible, but nevertheless important, aspect is that it marks a new way of relating to the environment, restoring a more natural system of addressing storm water, protecting our rivers and streams and recharging the aquifer.



The largest permeable paving project in Iowa was completed in Charles City in 2010, eliminating localized flooding.

Riverfront Park has been an ambitious project constructed on 23 acres of land and 11 acres of water in the downtown area. The idea behind the park is to turn largely underutilized green space, acquired primarily through flood buyouts, into an attractive recreational area. Features in the park include a boat launch, a natural play area, an amphitheater, a storm water fountain, a labyrinth, a disc golf course, and the first whitewater play area in the state. The new recreational areas have transformed the riverfront. On warm summer days it was commonplace to have more than a hundred people actively utilizing the park at any time. Watching kayakers and tubers using the whitewater play area has become a favorite spectator sport, and on weekends and evenings the riverfront area is filled with people. Because of the increased access and improved habitat for fish, the number of people fishing in the area also increased significantly.



The new park has increased the bonds between the river, the downtown, and the larger community. It has brought people together. It is not unusual to see three generations together enjoying the benefits the park offers. The riverfront has become the best place in town to meet friends and neighbors and to enjoy the outdoors. Paddlers of all levels, tubers, swimmers and others are attracted to the one-quarter mile whitewater course with three distinct features rated at class II and III levels.

As a result of the river and park improvements, businesses have expanded inventories and services, including sales and rental of equipment, shuttling services, lodging packages, and other amenities. Interest in paddling other parts of the river has increased. Responses to tourism and community promotional efforts have skyrocketed. The whitewater course has been featured in *Paddler Magazine*, and a December 2011 *Scientific American* article about responses to flooding included both the storm water management practices and the river enhancements. The park was also featured on Iowa Outdoors on IPTV and on Iowa Public Radio (Pat Blank). Local and regional media coverage, especially by the Charles City Press, has been extensive.

Riverfront Park is part of more than 300 acres of park space for public use in Charles City, with many smaller parks enhancing other parts of the river. Innovative public art sculptures, "art that you can sit on" that was developed as part of the local Main Street Iowa Community Revitalization program, bring additional interest and play opportunities to the riverside parks. The walking trail through Riverfront Park has easy access to a community railway system of more than five miles. The Charles Western Recreational Trail features a scenic view from a former railroad bridge over the Cedar River and beautiful plantings in a riverside park.



Interest in the river and river environment extends to young people in the community as well. A retaining wall in Riverfront Park was planned and constructed as an Eagle Scout project, as was the nine-hole disc golf course. Another student, as a participant in a Herbert Hoover scholarship program, raised funds to purchase and plant 50 trees in several parks including Riverfront Park. The Floyd County Isacc Walton League also donated funds for plant materials and their labor to landscape the boat launch area. For the fourth year in a row, a team from the Charles City Middle School has won the top prize in the Lexus Eco Challenge, a national contest that encourages students to develop and implement environmental programs that positively impact their communities. In cooperation with a local service group, this year's winning team will build bat houses and install them in parks along the river.

The future will bring more improvements. Construction is expected to start next year on an ultraviolet disinfection system at the wastewater treatment plant. When completed the disinfection system will assure that no harmful organisms are discharged to the river. A second permeable paving project will be completed in 2012. This project is expected to include 8 1/2 blocks and will link the new bridge to the downtown. Additional amenities in Riverfront Park are likely to include benches, waste receptacles, trail extension and picnic areas.

The new park features and riverbed changes in Charles City have resulted in a safer, more accessible, and more enjoyable river through the community. A replacement has been built for the iconic swinging bridge, with salvaged pieces of the historic bridge transformed into a work of art symbolizing the community's history. Storm water best management practices reduce flooding and pollutant levels of the river. Mitigation of a low-head dam resulted in better fishing, improved access to the river, and construction of a safe whitewater course that offers a wide variety of opportunities to the community. The Cedar River is now more than ever a valued asset for the community, making Charles City an even better place to live, work and play, and making Charles City an excellent candidate for the 2011 River Town of the Year Award from Iowa Rivers Revival.



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