

# Keep Marshalltown Beautiful

## Plan of Action and Report

Prepared January 2008



*The following report was prepared by volunteers who serve on the Keep Marshalltown Beautiful committee as an ongoing effort to educate and inform residents on the benefits of Community Betterment.*



# Mission Statement

**The mission of the Marshalltown Betterment Task Force is to cultivate a sense of pride in the Marshalltown community and improve the physical appearance of the city by educating and engaging the people and by advocating for the enforcement of effective ordinances.**

## Goal

**The goal of the Marshalltown Betterment Task force is to involve the community in sustaining Marshalltown as the Cleanest and Most Attractive City in Iowa.**



**Cleaniac**

# History

In the spring of 2004, a dozen citizens met to discuss concerns about property neglect and the deterioration of Marshalltown's appearance. A lack of community pride was identified as both the underlying cause and the resulting effect of deteriorating property conditions and standards in Marshalltown. Property codes were weak and code enforcement was lacking. The interests of responsible property owners and the community's sense of pride were being undermined by the neglect of a thoughtless minority. The community's image was being tarnished. The group concluded that something had to be done.

With the support of MEDIC, the City of Marshalltown, CBD-Main Street, and the Chamber of Commerce, the group of concerned citizens grew and became known as the Marshalltown Betterment Task Force. Cleaniac, a broom-stick caricature, was adopted as a symbol of community pride. The broomstick's mission was established to make Marshalltown the Cleanest and Most Attractive City in Iowa. He started showing up at public events, in newspapers and on TV to promote the importance of community appearance and community pride. Clean-ups were organized and a campaign was undertaken to educate the public on existing nuisance codes. Volunteers were enlisted to assist the City in its code enforcement efforts. Lobbying convinced the City to devote more resources to nuisance enforcement and abatement. Once public support had begun to swell, the group's call for higher standards regarding property maintenance was answered. In February 2006, Mayor Gene Beach appointed a committee to study and make recommendations regarding property maintenance. In late 2006, the committee recommended a property maintenance code which was unanimously adopted into law by the City Council in January 2007.

While much progress has been made during the past three years through the volunteer efforts of the MBTF, much work remains to be done to ensure Marshalltown's position as the Cleanest and Most Attractive City in Iowa. We must continue to work with the City to achieve increased compliance with property codes. We must continue to advocate for effective ordinances and to make sure that the necessary resources are appropriated to code enforcement and violation abatement. We must continue to reinforce Cleaniac's message about the importance of community appearance and pride, and efforts to educate and engage the public must be expanded and intensified.

The agenda is ambitious and will require a sustained effort to achieve its objectives. While a committed volunteer force has taken large steps toward improving Marshalltown's appearance and pride during the past three years, it has become apparent that paid staff will be necessary to sustain and expand the effort in the way necessary to ensure that the objectives are realized.

The future of our community hinges on the success of these efforts. Marshalltown is defined and judged by our appearance and our level of community pride. We must be a proud and attractive community to be a progressive and sustainable community.



# Objectives

- Organize and develop community support for the recommendations and activities of the City's appointed Betterment Task Force Committee.
- Support efforts to enforce City nuisance and property maintenance codes.
- Continue Cleaniac campaign to educate and engage the public.
- Establish a funded, staffed and sustainable organization to continue and expand current efforts to improve community appearance and pride.

# Areas of Activity



- Enforcement
- Ordinance Review
- Promotion, Education and Outreach
- Recognition
- Projects

Español en el otro lado.



# Areas of Activity (Detail)

## **Enforcement**

- Organize volunteer force to systematically search for code violations

## **Ordinance Review and Expansion**

- Support activities of City Betterment Task Force Committee
- Encourage members to participate in BTFC

## **Promotion, Education and Outreach Program and Material Ideas**

- “Take Pride in Marshalltown” brochure—keep updated & distribute
- Billboards—signs, buses
- Cleaniac facts distributed
- Service club announcements
- TR, Sun, Pennysaver, Voz
- MET 12
- Newspaper articles—weekly TR, Sun, Voz (April—September)
- Cleaniac Salutes....
- Before and After Photos (contests or feature properties)
- Inform public about New and Existing Codes
- Costume appearances at events – Expand on opportunities
- Grocery/trash bags printed by HyVee with Cleaniac logo & message
- City council presentations
- Speaking engagements
- Promote Cleaniac in schools
  - Develop elementary program to be put on by middle school/H.S.
  - Coloring book / KIB Litter-Free Campus Program?
- Promote Adopt-A-Spot
- Promote Assistance League’s Can-Do-For-Cleaniac
- Keep Marshalltown Beautiful window clings

## **Recognition**

- Postcards
- Framed certificates
- Newspaper articles

## **Projects**

- Downtown spring clean-up—Friday before Garden Extravaganza
- Build list of potential volunteers to help the needy comply with codes
- Continue to build growing list of Cleaniac’s “friends”
- Establish a funded, staffed and sustainable organization to continue and expand current efforts to improve community appearance and pride



# Indicators of Progress

## Enforcement

- After a dramatic increase in 2005, nuisance violations received and handled by the City nuisance department grew from 1,825 in 2005 to 2,587 in 2006 and ended with 2,497 for 2007.
- More than 1,800 junk cars have been removed from the city limits since the campaign to rid the community of junk vehicles was begun in May 2005.
- The City has gone from one half-time paid nuisance officer to a full-time paid nuisance officer. Additional staff are assisting with new property maintenance codes.
- More than 1,500 volunteer hours have been devoted to the nuisance enforcement effort since May 2005.
- City nuisance abatement & demolition expenditures are 4.5 times higher between 2004 (\$8,444) and 2007 (\$37,789).

2005 - 2007 Comparison



## Ordinance review

- A Betterment Task Force Committee was appointed by Mayor Beach in February 2006 to study Marshalltown's existing codes and to make recommendations to the City Council for code improvements.
- City Council adopted into law a property maintenance code (Ordinance #14793) as per the recommendation of the Betterment Task Force Committee in January 2007.
- The Betterment Task Force Committee continued to work for another six months and made additional recommendations to the Council noted as Phase 2 Plan of Action identifying several additional code improvements.

# Indicators of Progress

## Community Appearance and Pride

- Increased nuisance reporting, enforcement, and abatement have improved community appearance and demonstrate rising community pride.
- The City Council's move to establish property maintenance standards is a reflection of increasing community pride.
- An official from the Main Street Iowa program recently noted that Marshalltown's downtown was the cleanest that she had seen anywhere.
- Independent efforts such as the MHS student project to beautify the high school courtyard demonstrate community pride and a commitment to improving appearance.

## Efforts Recognized

- Cleaniac was honored as Grand Marshal of the 2005 MHS Homecoming Parade.
- Cleaniac received a Governor's Volunteer Award in June 2006.
- The Marshalltown Betterment Task Force and the City of Marshalltown received one of four annual Keep Iowa Beautiful awards in November 2006.



KEEP  IOWA  
Beautiful





# Future Plans/Projects

## Promotion/Education/Outreach

- Tab or other form of newspaper insert
- Mediacom ad
- Magnets for city vehicles, other
- Nextel-type inflatable Cleaniac
- Traveling Cleaniac display
- “Which Marshalltown is your Marshalltown”-type campaign using pictures to contrast trimmed vs untrimmed bushes, edged curb vs weeds growing over curb and into street, peeling paint vs fresh coat, broken window vs. unbroken window, etc.
- Get “nuisance report” published in both local newspapers
- Change name of Marshalltown Betterment Task Force to Keep Marshalltown Beautiful maintaining Cleaniac as mascot
- Newspaper series featuring “friends of Cleaniac”
- Classified ads
- Revive “focus of the month” concept



**Cleaniac**



# Future Plans/Projects

## Projects

- Pride day
- “Project Skyline”—Arbie Feeds, bring it down
- Work to develop and implement comprehensive plan to improve esthetics of our gateways
- Yard of the week or month program
- Incentive program to encourage kids to pick up litter
- Designate South Center Street a “Memorial Drive”
- First Impressions Symposium II
- Promote tree planting—partner with Trees Forever, Iowa Valley Leadership
- City Council chambers “extreme makeover”
- Neighborhood or block competition
- Develop and promote neighborhood association concept
- Seek out grants to help schools hire additional custodians
- Dangerous and dilapidated building program
- Seek and secure grants for rehabilitating dilapidated properties using TIF funds
- Seek other sources of grant money to sustain current efforts
- Establish relationships with developers
- Urge implementation of “community policing”/“neighborhood-based service delivery” concepts
- Work with local Habitat for Humanity program
- Stick and nail brigade
- Get more city resources devoted toward enforcement of codes
- Partner with PTA’s to improve cleanliness and appearance of school campuses
- Paint-a-thon
- Emphasize recognition of volunteers, property owners, City staff, etc.
- Pursue water bill check-off as a way to gain funding (and increase awareness of cause)
- Organize “investment group” to buy and rehabilitate dilapidated properties



# Imagine 7 Big Ideas

## Imagine – Target on Beautification Goals

### *Target on Beautification by*

- Expanding the Cleaniac effort;
- Making all entrances to the city focal points of community pride;
- Cleaning up abandoned industrial sites;
- Revitalizing the 13th Street area to serve as a proud community gateway to our Iowa Veterans Home;
- Offering free/expanded recycling;
- Establishing neighborhood associations;
- Improving city park system and offering incentives to revitalize homes.



**Cleaniac**

# **Volunteer Your Time!**

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**It is never too late to  
volunteer your time, talents  
or resources to the Keep  
Marshalltown Beautiful  
initiative.**

**To find out how you can get  
involved please contact the  
Chamber at 641-753-6645.**

