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By: Teya Vitu October 12, 2016 0



The American Planning Association especially noted the Trailing of the Sheep Festival in naming Main Street in Ketchum as a Great Street for 2016. Photo courtesy of city of Ketchum.

Two Idaho streets made the list of five Great Streets designated in the American Planning Association's annual [Great Places in America](#) list, which was announced Oct. 3.

Main Street in Ketchum and Sherman Avenue in Coeur d'Alene were recognized for "demonstrating exceptional character, quality and planning" that allow for economic growth, the measures APA uses to select its Great Streets.

APA selects great streets, great neighborhoods and great places as part of National Community Planning Month, which is in October. Ketchum and Coeur d'Alene join streets in Albuquerque, the Bronx and Davidson, N.C. on the 2016 list, selected from nominations from 24 states, APA President Carol Rhea said.

"One of my business partners returned from Coeur d'Alene and declared it was the most beautiful place he has ever been," Rhea said.

Wallace, whose Bank Street was named a Great Street in 2010, is the only other Idaho city among the 90 that APA has singled out since 2007. Boise's North End was named a Great Neighborhood in 2008, the second year of APA's Great Places award.

The association is a Washington, D.C., nonprofit that provides leadership in the development of vital communities.

The planning association was especially enamored of Ketchum's Trailing of the Sheep Festival, where sheep are driven through downtown to winter pastures in the first week of October.

"This kind of peculiar festival is indicative of the spirit that makes Main Street in Ketchum one of the most unique streets in America," APA said in its written summary about Ketchum.

In Coeur d'Alene, the association was drawn by the "punctiliously perfected infrastructure."

"The street is compact and meticulously maintained for the throngs of tourists that pass over the pavement," APA's written summary of Sherman Avenue said.



Coeur d'Alene fills Sherman Avenue with people with more than 20 events a year, including the Car d'Alene classic car show. Photo courtesy of city of Coeur d'Alene.

Coeur d'Alene and Ketchum share a hallmark of many vibrant cities – six blocks of continuous businesses right up to the sidewalk.

"Great streets create great business environments," Rhea said. "They provide a vibrancy for many different users."

The national recognition for Sherman Avenue and Main Street come after 20 to 30 years of public and private investment in both cities to restore historic buildings, add landscaping and lighting, improve pedestrian features and create events to engage a regular stream of people.

Over the past 20 years, Ketchum has assembled a Main Street with public and private improvements that have preserved the small-town, historic feel. Mayor Nina Jonas said the city Planning Commission in the 1990s moved fuel stations off Main Street. Since then, trees and landscaping have been installed and the 4th Street intersection was improved for pedestrians with sidewalk expansions and a signalized crossing.

"Our towns are still towns," Jonas said about Ketchum and Coeur d'Alene. "We're tried and true. Today's visitors want a sense of place."



Nina Jonas

She said until a few years ago, businesses were wary of opening on Main Street.

"Since the Warfield Distillery, Enoteca and Cornerstone Bar & Grill opened, you can see additional vibrancy on Main Street," Jonas said. "They are thriving off each other."

Additionally, the nexStage Theatre converted a Main Street garage into a 265-seat theater, the historic Mercantile and Casino buildings saw restorations and Zions Bank did extensive façade and interior improvements in the building it occupies at Main Street and Sun Valley Road.

Ketchum also dresses up Main Street with tree lighting from early December to the end of ski season and strings banners across the street and from lamp posts.

"The planning department and myself work to provide a sense of place and a human scale environment," Jonas said.

Jonas sees increased business activity for Main Street with the opening of the 99-room Limelight Hotel Ketchum in December. Foundation work just started across the street from the Limelight for the 62-room Auberge Resort Sun Valley, expected to open in 2018.

"We've been missing hotels for decades on Main Street," Jonas said. "Those additions will bump it up."

Aspen Skiing Company, which owns four Aspen ski resorts and the Limelight Hotel Aspen, found Ketchum living up to its philosophy of locating a hotel that's walkable to everything, said Jeff Hanle, director of public relations.

"I've never been acquainted with being so liked in a community as we are in Ketchum," Hanle said. "You walk out the door and have all the restaurants and shops right there. It's very easy to find everything off Main Street."

Coeur d'Alene began its Sherman Avenue renaissance in 1989 with a [Sherman Avenue Corridor Plan](#), which led to the establishment of the Coeur d'Alene Downtown Association. The association was responsible for the tree planting in the early 1990s; installing flower baskets on lamp posts since 2000; and staging many events, including the annual Car d'Alene classic car show for the past 26 years.

The association also puts on "Shop Local, Shop Late," where downtown shops stay open until at least 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays in July and August.

In 2011, the city also lined Sherman with local artist statues. In 2012, it started a utility box beautification program similar to Boise's.

"We have events almost every weekend in the warmer months," said Hilary Anderson, Coeur d'Alene's community planning director. "We have 20-plus parades, festivals and other events plus the weekly farmers markets."

Larger Sherman Avenue projects included construction of the Coeur d'Alene Resort in 1984. The front lawn and access to the resort were redesigned in 2013. The Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center built its existing office at the western entrance to Sherman Avenue in 2007.

Anderson said several restaurants have installed rollup garage doors to extend the interior to the sidewalk patios.

"Having a vibrant downtown is really an advantage for the downtown association and chamber to attract businesses," Anderson said. "They can show all the people who come downtown. You will have all this visibility and a captive audience."

The APA Great Street designation stretches from Lakeside Drive to Seventh Street, but the city intends to improve Sherman east of Seventh to Interstate 90, a mid-20th century stretch with narrower sidewalks, fewer trees and businesses set back from the sidewalk. Anderson said city officials will finish a master plan by spring.

That eastern stretch of Sherman is the venue for the city's "PARK(ing) It on Sherman," a three-day block party that Coeur d'Alene staged for the second time in September.

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ABOUT TEYA VITU



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