

BUSINESS BRIEF

JULY/AUGUST 2025



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Downtown Thursday's Attendance, Economic Impact Increase

By: Lisa Cochran, Main Street Director and Glenda Smith, Director of Conventions and Tourism

As numbers grow at the Downtown Thursday events put on by Main Street Owatonna, the economic impact goes up. Here's some data from recent events.



- **Growing Attendance:** Total visits have steadily increased from 2,963 in 2023 to 3,284 in 2024, with a projected jump to 4,477 in 2025. This shows remarkable year-over-year growth for the event.
- **Dominant Local Draw:** Owatonna's own residents consistently make up the vast majority of attendees (e.g., 2289 in 2023, 2370 in 2024, and a projected 3044 in 2025), indicating strong local community engagement and support for the event.
- **Expanding Regional Reach:** The number of visitors from nearby Minnesota cities like Faribault, Albert Lea, Waseca, and

Minneapolis/Saint Paul zips has generally increased, or shown consistent presence, demonstrating the event's growing appeal beyond Owatonna's immediate vicinity.

- **Increasing Economic Contribution:** The estimated direct spending and total economic impact have risen year over year, to a projected ~\$201,000 direct spending / ~\$302,000 total impact in 2025.

Early Bird Softball Tournament Continues Positive Impact



The Early Bird Softball Tournament has generally growing attendance from Owatonna and draws visitors from a wide geographic range, primarily within Minnesota and surrounding states like Iowa and Wisconsin, but also from as far as Arizona, and Texas. Owatonna's local visits of 2,291 attendees and estimate event attendance of approximately 5,000 unique visitors over the tournament weekend with an average \$200 spent per attendee netting a \$1.8M impact (with spend multiplier of 1.8).



The Annual Themed Chamber Golf Event is bringing the Christmas spirit to summer!

Join us on **August 5th** at the Owatonna Country Club for a festive day on the greens. Dress up, decorate your cart, or spread cheer in any way you can!

This event *always* sells out — **don't be a Scrooge — register today!**

Sponsorships are still available — a perfect chance to spotlight your business and show your Chamber support!

JULY/AUGUST 2025

Industrial Training Lab Installed at Riverland Owatonna

It's a partnership that started 3 years ago between Riverland Community College, Owatonna Public Schools, and the Owatonna Area Chamber Foundation to add industrial training equipment at our local schools and it is coming to fruition. The partners worked with Senator John Jasinski and then Rep. John Petersburg to get a \$950,000 state appropriation to support training pathways in Owatonna.

Part of the monies were to equip the Riverland Owatonna campus with the proper training equipment for those currently in manufacturing, or who want to work in manufacturing so that they understand how this advanced equipment works.

The Industry 4.0 advanced mechatronics learning system (pictured) simulates a real-world manufacturing process giving students the ability to run the equipment, diagnose issues that come up in the process, and create their own processes.

This is one of several things happening bring more opportunities to the Riverland-Owatonna campus.



27 Students 'Sign' to Enter Workforce



Students and employers gather for Signing Day to celebrate students entering the workforce.

As the graduating class of 2025 goes on to their next steps in life, many are entering the workforce. At the SteeleCoWorks Signing Day event, 27 students and their future employers celebrated that decision. The students are from Owatonna, Bloomington Prairie, and Medford and businesses ranged from manufacturing and trades to the military.

At the event, employers spoke about the students who are joining their team and

why they are so excited to have them working for their business.

Special thanks to the partners in the SteeleCoWorks program:



Thank you to our Gold Level Sponsors!



BOSCH



Thank you to our Bronze Level Sponsors!



Thank you to our School Partners!



Chamber Progress on Key Initiatives

It's the half-way mark for 2025, let's do a check on the chamber's progress on its key strategic initiatives as identified by the Chamber Board of Directors.

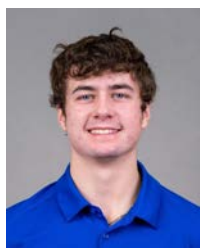
The Top 2 overarching goals include:

1) Complete CRM/Website overhaul: **On Track for September**

2) Complete year 2 plan for new branding of

Owatonna: **On-Track**

- Membership: 44 New Members, Net 12
 - **Twenty-eight (28) new members have joined and net growth of 6.**
- Tourism: Implementation of new website and data management system
 - **September completion**
 - Increase number of overnights to Owatonna by 3,300
 - **July the Model T convention will take close to 1,000+ room nights putting us on track for this goal.**
- Events: Revamp 3 Events: Past Board Chair, OCLA Alumni, Chili Open House
 - **Past Board Event combined with Growth Breakfast; OCLA Alumni event at the Fair, Open House still in planning.**
- Main Street: 2 Pop-Up shops Available by November: **On-Track**
 - Expand Downtown Thursday along W. Broadway: **On-Track**
- Operations: Analysis/Recommendation for updating the Chamber gift certificate program:
 - **On Track-October**
 - Tuesday Talk e-newsletter average open rate of 45%:
 - **Open rate through June is 54.5%**



Welcome Preston

Welcome summer intern Preston Meier who will be gaining experience for his double major in Marketing and Entrepreneurship at Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon, WI which is just 20 minutes outside of Milwaukee.

At Concordia, Preston also plays Lacrosse and runs Cross Country, and will serve as a captain for both teams this next year. Preston will be at the chamber until August 14.



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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2025

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DoubleTree by Hilton will be an economic catalyst for Owatonna

The reopening of the DoubleTree by Hilton in Owatonna on June 19, 2025, after sitting vacant since February 2023, signifies a critical economic uplift for the city. Its previous life as a Holiday Inn (until 2019) and then a budget Motel 6 (2020-2023) highlights a significant brand evolution with distinct economic implications.

As a Holiday Inn, the property offered mid-range services, attracting diverse travelers and providing steady economic contribution. The subsequent Motel 6 phase, however, catered to highly price-sensitive guests, drastically reducing the economic yield per room and limiting appeal to group business. The 28-month period of vacancy (Feb 2023 - June 2025) represented a complete loss of revenue, tax dollars, and job opportunities from this key property. The return as a DoubleTree by Hilton completely transforms this dynamic.



As an upscale, full-service brand, DoubleTree:

- Higher rates directly boosts lodging revenue.
- Attracts higher-spending guests who often spend more at on-site amenities and more likely to explore Owatonna's local restaurants and retail.
- Helps position Owatonna as a quality destination for discerning travelers.
- The presence of a dedicated ballroom and conference space further amplifies economic impact.

With DoubleTree by Hilton's return, its conference capabilities, and the River Rock Grill & Pub full service restaurant, there is substantial opportunity to enhance Owatonna's capacity to host events and meetings. This transition from vacancy and budget lodging to an upscale, meeting-capable hotel is a powerful economic catalyst for the entire community.

DoubleTree is considering plans for the waterpark, currently no specific timeline is in place.



Model T Tour expected to bring a boost to Owatonna's economy with July events



With over 500 tour participants staying 5 nights, it is expected the tour will contribute an estimated \$200,000 in hotel revenue.



Local business can expect extra activity for a week in July when the Model T Tour comes to town. The tour has potential to boost Owatonna's profile as a destination with attendees visting from across the nation, and internationally. Between hotel revenue, additional public events associated with the tour, and attendee spend in our local business, the overall estimated economic impact for Owatonna from the Model T Ford International Tour will be significant for the week. Help us welcome the group to Owatonna this July!

Mohs Contracting Continues to Expand Services and Reach

What began in 2006 as a roofing and siding company founded by Scott Mohs in Owatonna, Mohs Contracting has grown into a trusted regional leader in commercial and residential construction. Backed by Scott's entrepreneurial spirit, a commitment to quality craftsmanship, and strong community support, Mohs Contracting continues to steadily expand its services and reach.



Their passion for building strong, vibrant communities is especially evident in their ongoing role in the revitalization of downtown Owatonna. Notable projects include ASCEND, West Bank, Oak Hill Community Connection, Courtyard by Marriott, The Pearl and 111 Vine—each contributing to the area's transformation.

Mohs Contracting offers comprehensive general contracting, design-build, and construction management services across the region. The team is known for its open, honest approach and collaborative mindset—working closely with clients and partners to share ideas, solve challenges, and deliver exceptional results. Integrity is at the core of their work, and lasting relationships are the foundation of their success.

Beyond the job site, Mohs Contracting is deeply invested in the well-being of the communities they serve. From volunteering time and talent to supporting local initiatives, the team is dedicated to making a positive impact and fostering a culture of leadership and service.





Downtown Thursday and Gem Days Combine for Big August Event

This summer, two of Downtown Owatonna's most popular events are coming together for one exciting weekend packed with shopping, food, music, deals, kid's activities, and more! Downtown Thursday and the longtime favorite Crazy Days—now called Gem Days—will join forces to create a three-day celebration you won't want to miss.

It all kicks off on Thursday, August 7, with Downtown Thursday starting at 5 p.m. Enjoy an evening filled with food trucks, local vendors, live music, and family-friendly activities. It's the same great experience as earlier in the summer, with even more energy to start the weekend!

Main Street Sees Growth, Momentum, and Opportunity

How is Main Street doing?

While downtowns across the country have faced challenges in recent years, Owatonna's Main Street District is showing signs of resilience and growth. Despite some business closures, the district saw a **net gain of 10 businesses in 2024**, including new openings, ownership changes, relocations, and rebrands.

2025 is already off to a strong start:

5 new businesses: The Train Station Bar & Grill, West Bank, Mexican Bakery addition to La Flor De Mayo Mercado, Atlantis Hobby, Olmsted Medical Center.



Find full downtown report at Owatonna.org blog

Main Street strategies to support local businesses and increase foot traffic:

- Hosting **evening Farmers Markets** monthly from June through October
- Expanding social media reach to attract a broader audience
- Launching a new website this fall
- Developing a Retail Incubator Space to help nurture new local businesses

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FARMER'S MARKET

May 3 (Every Saturday May – Last Saturday in October)
7:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Central Park, Downtown Owatonna

DOWNTOWN THURSDAY

July 3
5:00—9:00 PM
Location: 100 – 300 Blocks of Cedar AVE & Central Park

CHAMBER 101

July 11
8:30 – 9:30 AM
Location: Ted G Ringhofer Conference Center, 120 S Oak AVE, Owatonna

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

July 22
5:30 – 7:00 PM
Co-hosted by: Bulldog Coatings, Grapeful Wine Bar and North Risk Partners
Location: Grapeful Wine Bar, 306 N Cedar AVE, STE 2, Owatonna



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PICKLEBALL

July 24
4:00 – 6:00 PM
Location: Owatonna Country Club, 1991 Lemond Rd, Owatonna
Paddles and Balls will be provided

MODEL T DOWNTOWN THURSDAY

JULY 24
5:00 – 9:00 pm
Location: 100 – 300 Blocks of Cedar AVE & Central Park

CHAMBER GOLF EVENT

August 5
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Location: Owatonna Country Club, 1991 Lemond Road, Owatonna

DOWNTOWN THURSDAY

August 7
5:00—9:00 PM
Location: 100 – 300 Blocks of Cedar AVE & Central Park

BUSINESS *after* HOURS

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

August 8
5:30 – 7:00 PM
Sponsor(s): Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Advantage Real Estate, Block Plumbing and Heating, Cash Wise Foods, and Steele County Free Fair
Location: SCFF Beer Garden, 1524 Cedar AVE
Fair Kickoff and let's fill the Ye Olde Beer Garden

**BERKSHIRE
HATHAWAY**
HOMESERVICES
ADVANTAGE REAL ESTATE



OWATONNA COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY ALUMNI SOCIAL

August 13
4:30 – 6:30 PM
Location: NEW Steele Saloon
Drink tickets & Fair Food on us!
Come reconnect, socialize and enjoy some fair food! Register at Owatonna.org

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL-STEELE COUNTY FREE FAIR

August 21
4:00 – 6:00 PM
Location: Beer Garden's Patio



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

August 26
5:30 – 7:00 PM
Location: United Way of Steele County, 245 SE 18th ST, STE 1
See Their New Location and Celebrate Their Impact!

DOWNTOWN THURSDAY

September 4
5:00—9:00 PM
Location: 100 – 300 Blocks of Cedar AVE & Central Park

EVENTS Update

By Julia Seykora, Events Director



Save the Date! Erik Therwanger returning in October for "Leading Through Chaos"

Give your team the gift of motivation, inspiration, and influence! Join us Wednesday, October 8, from 8:30–11:30am at Torey's Event Space for keynote speaker Erik

Therwanger and his dynamic presentation, "Leading Through Chaos." Enjoy breakfast and save with early registration!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



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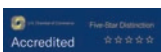
CHAMBER PACK DEADLINE
Supply 550 copies of your promotional insert by for
September/October mailing; \$150 by **August 27th.**

The Owatonna Chamber of Commerce and
Tourism will be **be closed on Friday, July 4**
in observance of Independence Day.



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 AM-5 PM



Business Brief is published by the Owatonna Area
Chamber of Commerce & Tourism



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