

BUSINESS BRIEF

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Newest Owatonna Business Under Construction



Founded in 1980, Renneberg Hardwoods began as a sawmill and logging operation. This year they are expanding locations with a new facility in Owatonna. Renneberg Hardwoods provides quality hardwoods from flooring to lumber, they follow a strict kiln-drying protocol to ensure first-class wood products.

The new building is being built on State Avenue. The 13,600 sq ft building will allow the company to better service and grow in southern MN and beyond. Mohs Contracting is constructing the building and the company hopes to be open by the end of the year. Their main operation is in Menahga, MN.

Sputtering Components Expansion

Sputtering Components is undergoing a major building expansion at its Owatonna, Minnesota facility, construction started in May 2025. This expansion will create new space for innovation, growth, and enhanced customer service, coinciding with the company's 25th anniversary and will be marked by a grand opening event. The project is expected to be complete the end of October.



Owatonna DEVELOPMENT Summit



REGISTER TODAY!

4 Hours CE Approved

September 24, 2025



Owatonna Country Club
11:00am - 3:30pm



OWATONNA
where the state adds value

4 hours of real estate continuing education has been Approved with the Minnesota Commissioner of Commerce and Minnesota Department of Commerce

Development Summit Spotlights Owatonna

Attracting new development to Owatonna is a big goal for the Owatonna Partners for Economic Development (OPED) and hosting the Development Summit is one of many ways the group is working to achieve this objective. The event will draw regional and local developers, financiers, real estate agents, and land developers to Owatonna.

The 4 hour program provides Continuing Education credits through the State of MN and allows Owatonna to tell its story.

The event is September 24th and more details can be found at:



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Update

Brad Meier, President/CEO

Bosch Community Fund Awards Chamber \$13,000 Grant



BOSCH

The Chamber continues the multi-year partnership with Bosch's Charitable arm of the business the Community Fund. The grant will support another year of the Made in Owatonna Days program and additional Field Days at Owatonna High School.

Made in Owatonna Days is a partnership that includes United Way of Steele County, Junior Achievement, Workforce Development Inc, Owatonna High School, Medford High School and Blooming Prairie High School that brings students out into businesses to see what jobs look like and how to get them.

Field days are specific classes who want to bring their students and teachers out to see different career fields. Both initiatives support the Chamber's goal to attract and retain talent in Owatonna.

Workforce Update

Gospel Kordah, SteeleCoWorks, Workforce Coordinator

Build the Future: Partner with SteeleCoWorks

The workforce of tomorrow is already here, are you ready to shape it?

At SteeleCo.Works, we believe building a stronger, more resilient workforce begins with early, meaningful investment in our youth. We invite local businesses and organizations of all sizes to join a growing movement of employer partners who are shaping the next generation of talent right here in Steele County.



Why Partner with SteeleCo.Works?

- **Build a Talent Pipeline:** Partnering with SteeleCo.Works connects you with eager, local youth ready to learn and grow in your industry. Together, we create custom youth workforce and engagement opportunities tailored to your needs.
- **Provide Real-World Work Experience:** Give students their first opportunity to build essential skills in a real-world environment.
- **Strengthen Our Community:** When young people work, our community thrives. Help us eliminate barriers to employment and ensure every student has access to opportunity.

Let's Build the Future Together.



Gospel Kordah

MN's Paid Family Medical Leave Nears; Businesses Need Readiness

The new PFML program starts on January 1st and your business needs to be ready. PFML requires every employer in the state to offer up to 12 weeks of paid medical leave and up to 12 weeks of paid family leave (maxing out at 20 weeks total in a 52-week period) for all employees. Wage replacement is partial, and job protection after 90 days from date of hire.

The program will be administered by a new state agency within the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), unless an employer substitutes an equivalent private plan. Over the next 4 months, the chamber in partnership with the Minnesota Chamber will be providing information to our members on the requirements. You can also find them online at mnchamber.com

Housing Development Gets City Approval

The City of Owatonna has agreed to carry some development costs in order to get the project off the ground. The Mineral Springs Estates has been in the works for a couple years. The project is in conjunction with Prairie LaSalle Partners out of Chicago, IL. The plan phase 1 includes 36 lots and 13 outlots just east of River Springs Waterpark. There are 4 planned phases to complete the 82-acre development.

The City will carry the cost of hard surfacing streets, curb and gutter, and sidewalks for up to 5 years or until the lot is sold then will get that portion of the investment back. It's part of an ongoing plan to increase the number of single-family houses to fuel continued growth.



OWATONNA

AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025

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RE/MAX Venture

Syd Briggs, Past Chair
Steele Waseca-Cooperative Electric

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American Family Insurance – Oscar
Mazariego Agency

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Shannon Cliff, At-Large
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Owatonna

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Lakeside Foods

Scott Mohs
Mohs Contracting, Inc.

Annie Priebe
Federated Insurance

Christy Tryhus
Riverland Community College

How Owatonna sees itself: Becoming a destination

For decades, Owatonna—considered a friendly and prosperous community along I-35—was a hidden gem. And while Owatonna still occasionally wins accolades like one of the “8 Most Overlooked Minnesota Towns For 2025” from places like World Atlas, over the last 25 years a quiet transformation has taken place. The city has stopped seeing itself as just a stop along the way and has begun to embrace its powerful identity as a tourism destination. This strategic shift has been driven by a combination of long-standing community assets, community-wide branding and a new, data-driven approach to growth.

The Foundation: The Steele County Free Fair

Owatonna's tourism success began with an event that has been a tradition for generations: the Steele County Free Fair. Far from just a local gathering, the fair is a regional economic powerhouse, contributing an estimated \$3.3 million to the local economy. The average attendee comes from over 30 miles away, and out-of-state visitors show strong attendance from nearby states like Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and South Dakota. Fairgoers are deeply engaged, spending an average of 3 hours at the fair and returning for an average of two visits during the event, showing strong loyalty and repeat engagement.

“Some towns feel like they’ve been waiting for you to find them. It is not flashy or crowded - just comfortable places where the coffee pours warm, the sidewalk conversations feel genuine, and the scenery sneaks up on you...Each of these spots holds a story you’ll want to bring home...”

-World Atlas, 8 Most Overlooked Towns in Minnesota



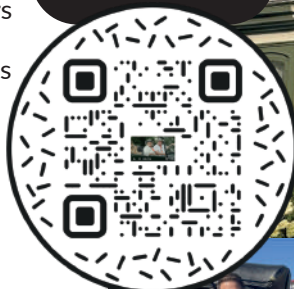
Looking Ahead: A Path to Growth

This data driven approach is being formalized in our Tourism Leads Process, and tracking attendance and visitor activity through Placer Ai. This comprehensive strategy is intended to empower every member of our community, from hotel staff and local businesses to residents and economic development partners. This new initiative, marks a significant turning point—moving from an organic, event-based model to a strategic, data-informed one.

The numbers are clear: Owatonna is not just a place to stop, but a place to experience. By leveraging our proven successes and formalizing our collaborative efforts, we are ensuring that Owatonna's journey as a premier tourism destination is just beginning.



Watch the recap video of the Model T week here!



“Congratulations to everyone involved with the planning of the Model T Tour last month. The entire town and the surrounding areas welcomed us with open arms and made me feel so very special. Job well done!!

-Anne, Model T Attendee

A New Chapter: The Power of Community and Collaboration

Building on this success, Owatonna has begun a new chapter. The recent Model T Ford Club International Tour is a perfect example of the city's ability to host major, multi-day events. The success of the tour was a direct result of strong community collaboration and partnerships and building on successful, and popular local events like Main Street's Downtown Thursdays, and with partners like the Steele County Historical Society, Little Theatre of Owatonna and the City of Owatonna's Park and Recreation. In addition to host venues, the support of local businesses and community leaders, proves we are taking our tradition of hospitality and applying it to new, exciting initiatives.

Owatonna is strategically growing its digital footprint leveraging the branding initiative set forth by community partners beginning in 2023. Data from our website, visitowatonna.org, shows that key cities like Minneapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Omaha, Des Moines and St. Paul are among the top sources of new online visitors. We are actively reaching them where they live and work.



OLMSTED
MEDICAL
CENTER

Now Open in Owatonna: Fast, Accessible Walk-in Care Your Workforce Can Count On

Owatonna's business community moves quickly—and so do we. Olmsted Medical Center's new Owatonna clinic is open and ready to serve your employees and their families with walk-in Acute Care, 7:00 AM–7:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Whether it's a sudden illness, a sprain from weekend softball, or a same-day need before a shift, our clinic is built for accessibility, quality, and convenience.

What We Treat in Acute Care

Acute Care is here for your same-day, non-emergency needs. We treat common problems that disrupt your day but don't require a trip to the emergency room. Examples include:

- colds, flu, sore throat, earaches, cough, and sinus infections
- minor injuries such as sprains, strains, simple fractures, and cuts that may need stitches
- rashes, skin infections, insect bites, and minor allergic reactions
- pink eye, minor eye irritation, and mild asthma flare-ups
- urinary tract infections and other simple infections
- work and school note evaluations or basic return-to-work guidance.

When to Choose Acute Care vs. the ER

Call 911 or go to the emergency room if you have a life-threatening condition such as chest pain, trouble breathing, severe bleeding, or stroke symptoms. Choose Acute Care for non-emergency issues like those listed above. It's often faster, easier, and less expensive than the ER.

Built for Accessibility

- **No appointment needed:** Employees can stop in before or after work—or even on a break—for timely care.
- **Consistent hours:** We're open from 7:00 AM–7:00 PM, Monday through Friday, offering flexibility around varied shifts and family schedules.
- **On-site diagnostics:** Radiology and lab services are onsite, so most patients can be seen, tested, and treated in a single visit.
- **Insurance friendly:** We accept many insurance plans; patients should confirm specific coverage with their insurer.

- **Coordinated follow-up:** If further primary or specialty care is needed, we'll help schedule it quickly to keep recovery on track and minimize downtime.

Benefits for Employers

- **Reduce absenteeism:** Faster care means faster returns to work.
- **Lower costs:** Using Acute Care instead of the ER helps avoid unnecessary medical bills.
- **Better employee experience:** Convenient, local care shows your commitment to staff wellbeing.
- **Clear documentation:** Visit summaries and return-to-work guidance support smooth staffing and planning.

Partnership Options for the Business Community

We're here to be a resource—not just a clinic. Ask us about:

- on-site or virtual health talks on topics such as injury prevention, cold/flu season preparation, and stress management from within our health system
- referral pathways for musculoskeletal injuries common in active workplaces

Contact:

- Visit olmstedmedicalcenter.org to learn more or call **507.935.5601** to schedule an appointment.



Mary Ellis
APRN, CNP, DNP



Abby Bartz
APRN, CNP



Rebecca
Penning
APRN, CNP, DNP

Downtown Thursdays are Bringing the Crowds - and business-to Main Street



Downtown Thursdays are proving to be more than just a community celebration full of fun—they're a powerful driver of business for Owatonna's downtown district. The 2025 season once again drew thousands of people to Main Street, benefiting local shops and restaurants. For downtown businesses, that translates directly into foot traffic and sales. Owatonna Shoe Co-Owner Matt Jessop explained, "You cannot buy the kind of advertising and impact Downtown Thursdays have had on our store. So many people that live in town, as well as visitors to town, just stroll into the store because they are here for Downtown Thursdays. It's a real gift to be able to draw on the thousands of people that

congregate in our Main Street area for these monthly events."

With the combination of local support and out-of-town visitors, the event demonstrates a twofold impact—strengthening community ties while positioning downtown Owatonna as a regional destination. Each month, businesses benefit from new customers discovering what Main Street has to offer and creating lasting impressions that extend well beyond the event itself.

Defending the Title: What Will it Take to Win Top Prize in the 2025 Main Street Holiday Lighted Parade?

Get ready, Owatonna—The Annual Main Street Holiday Lighted Parade is set for **Friday, December 5th.**

Think your business or organization has what it takes to dazzle the crowd and capture the trophy? Now's the time to start dreaming up your float idea and secure your spot. But don't wait too long—this year's parade is **capped at 80 entries** to keep the evening merry and manageable (we all know how long folks are willing to brave the winter chill!).

Registration and pricing available online October 15th at Owatonnainmainstreet.org



2024 Parade Winner, Kirchner's Siding and Window

Lori Lair Recognized with Chamber's Extra Mile Award



Lori Lair lost her battle with cancer. A bright light for the community, Lori was most recently serving on the Chamber Board of Directors initially as a representative of Carroll Seating company and then as an individual member. Her term started in 2024 and she brought ideas, energy and support to the organization. Outside the Chamber, Lori was positive energy to anyone she encountered. Her infectious smile was

impossible to ignore.

A week and a half before her death, Board Chair Deb Gillard and Incoming Chair Oscar Mazariego presented Lori with the Chamber's Extra Mile Award in recognition of her service to the Chamber Board, but more importantly for her service to the community. Rest in peace Lori.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



FIRST ALLIANCE CREDIT UNION
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STEELHEAD AMERICAS
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CHAMBER GROWTH BREAKFAST SERIES

September 18

7:30 – 9:00 AM

Location: Torey's Restaurant

& Bar, 208 N. Cedar AVE,

Owatonna (Event center)

Topic: School Referendum

featuring Dr. Tammy Champa,

Superintendent

Sponsors: Federated Insurance, Keen Bank, Mayo Clinic Health

System-Owatonna and Riverland Community College



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

September 23

5:30 – 7:00 PM

Hosted by: Owatonna Foundation

Location: Foundation Building on the

Fairgrounds



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS BACK YARD BBQ

September 23

4:00 – 6:00 PM

Location: Darts Park (Food provided, Bring Your Own Beverage)

YPRO MENTORSHIP LUNCH & LEARN

October 1

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Location: Owatonna Public Utilities, 208 Walnut Ave

Erik Therwanger Returns 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!

BUSINESS
after **HOURS**

LEADING THRU CHAOS with Erik Therwanger

October 8

8:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Location: Torey's Restaurant & Bar (Event Space)

CHAMBER GROWTH BREAKFAST

October 16

7:30 – 9:00 AM

Location: Torey's Restaurant

& Bar, 208 N. Cedar AVE,

Owatonna (Event center)

Topic: Tariff Impact featuring

U.S.Chamber of Commerce

Sponsors: Federated Insurance, Keen Bank, Mayo Clinic Health

System-Owatonna and Riverland Community College



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

5:30 – 7:00 PM

Sponsor(s): Owatonna Shoe and

Roma's Italian Eatery

Location: 121 North Cedar AVE, Owatonna



CHAMBER PACK DEADLINE

Supply 550 copies of your promotional insert for November/December mailing; \$150 by **October 28th**.



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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P: 507.451.7970 | E: oaacct@owatonna.org

Hours: Monday–Friday, 8 AM–5 PM



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

