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Council Bluffs

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Bayliss Park is one of Council Bluffs' many family-friendly spaces.

Photo by Colin Conces




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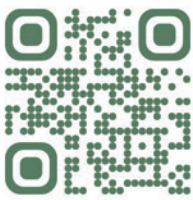
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On the Menu

Discover a helping of local favorites to satisfy your food and drink cravings • *By Amy Antonation*

In keeping with Council Bluffs' friendly, down-to-earth vibe, the area's bars and restaurants are all about comfort with a side of amiability. Here is just a sample of the many area spots where warm, welcoming service collides with quality eats and beverages.

Napoli's Italian Restaurant

Downtown – specifically the historic stretch of West Broadway known as the 100 Block – is home to several locally owned restaurants and bars. One of the newest is Napoli's Italian Restaurant, which set up shop in fall 2024 in a building that dates to 1917.

The moody space, with rustic exposed brick and concrete walls, has ambiance to spare. String lights hanging from the ceiling make for a romantic atmosphere, and the menu is chock-full of beloved classics, like lasagna, fettuccine Alfredo and veal piccata. The spot isn't just perfect for a night out with your sweetie, though. It offers a killer weekday lunch special – 10 pasta dishes, including baked ziti and spaghetti with meatballs, ring in at just \$7.95.

Barley's

A few doors east of Napoli's is Barley's, a bar and grill that occupies an equally historic building (their long, narrow dining rooms seem to have once been mirror images of each other).

At nearly 25 years old, Barley's is a Council Bluffs institution. Its solid selection of craft beers includes plenty of regional representation, such as beer from SingleSpeed, Toppling Goliath, Backpocket and Exile breweries in Iowa and Kros



Strain and Infusion breweries in Nebraska.

Barley's bar menu

offers appealing dishes like a signature burger, pickle chips and a Thai chicken pizza.

Doozie's

Doozie's is the ultimate family-friendly dining establishment. With a menu featuring burgers, sandwiches, ice cream cones and sundaes, kids of all ages can indulge their sweet tooth, while those with more savory-inclined palates can enjoy the Iowa-famous pork tenderloin sandwich. Its candy-colored dining room is equal parts diner and ice cream parlor, giving off a retro vibe that has wide appeal.

Full Fledged Brewing Co.

Just 10 minutes away on the western edge of Council Bluffs is Full Fledged Brewing Co., the city's first craft brewery. With over 16 taps pouring everything from classic German hefeweizen and piney American

IPA to cayenne-chocolate stout and pre-Prohibition-style Kentucky common, there's a brew for everyone.

Plus, the space offers regular live music, plenty of board and card games, and events like music bingo, a chili cook-off and yoga. The industrial-chic taproom serves as a de facto living room for the area, and plenty of loyal customers even cross the Iowa-Nebraska state line (granted, it's only 5 miles away) to patronize the spot.

Cellar 19 Wine & Deli

Wine lovers and east side denizens will want to stop in at Cellar 19 Wine & Deli for a broad selection of drinks and a bistro-style menu. As its name suggests, the spot offers 19 different wines by the glass to accompany its roster of sandwiches (cold and hot), soups, charcuterie boards and desserts.

Constantly rotating daily specials round out the offerings at this unpretentious, hospitable place that's truly emblematic of the city's overall dining scene. *with*



Create Your IDEAL HOME

The region's amenities, career opportunities and charm
make it the perfect spot to plant roots



Clockwise from opposite page: Full Fledged Brewing Co.; Bayliss Park; Historic 100 Block; Celebrate CB; Hitchcock Nature Center

If you visit Council Bluffs, there's a chance you might stay a lifetime. Located just across the Missouri River from Omaha, it delivers small-town charm and all the perks of big-city life. These include career opportunities in various industries, good schools, a stunning natural landscape and plenty of things to do and see, such as attending community events, like the local farmers market, and hiking and biking along the region's many trails.

To get a better idea of what it's like to live in Council Bluffs, read on to learn about two relocatees

who share why they moved to the area, what they most enjoy about it, and some of their go-to spots that you need to check out.

The Perfect Combination

"I grew up on a farm outside of Treynor, Iowa, but moved to Denver, Colorado, in my early 20s," says Shannon Kotlarz, executive administrator for Right Idea Media & Creative, a full-service ad agency in Council Bluffs. "After living there and working in corporate banking for many years, I decided I wanted to be near family, so in 2011, I moved back to Iowa and bought my first house in Council Bluffs."

The opportunity to live near family and join a creative team where she could grow professionally motivated Kotlarz to make the move, but the ability to purchase a home on her own sealed the deal. Today, the average home price in the region is just over \$200,000, making it an affordable place to buy.

Since moving to the area, Kotlarz has fallen more in love with her community, from its amenities, including schools, to its never-ending things to do.

"I love our school – Lewis Central Community School District – here in Council Bluffs, and my son has

a blast every summer at the Charles Lakin YMCA day camp,” Kotlarz says. “Our family enjoys dinner at Barley’s or The Salty Dog and finds an afternoon at Full Fledged Brewing Co. a fun time, as well.”

As a runner, she especially enjoys having access to so many trails and places to take in nature, like Lake Manawa State Park and Lewis and Clark Monument Park. For those who love to hike or bike, Fairmount Park and Vincent Bluff Nature Preserve have paths worth exploring. Plus, the region boasts plenty of events for all ages, from Springfest, where large,

colorful kites fill the sky, to story time gatherings at the Council Bluffs Public Library for little ones.

A Place to Grow

Like Kotlarz, Anna Scott, a Realtor at Embarc Realty, relocated to Council Bluffs to be closer to family, but she quickly realized that the city was also the perfect place to grow her career. Scott worked in insurance and property management before pursuing her passion for real estate and becoming a full-time agent. “I’ve been so lucky and blessed to build my business and meet so many fantastic people here,” she says.

Outside of work, Scott and her family enjoy taking in all the entertainment, restaurants and nature that the region has to offer. And with a diverse arts community and an ever-growing food scene, there’s never a shortage of things to see and eat.

“I really like going to the Hoff for their ballets and Friday night musicians,” Scott says of the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, which is home to several arts-based organizations and includes

a theater, rehearsal areas, a gallery, artist studios, classrooms and a commercial-grade teaching kitchen that hosts a food startup incubator.

Other creative offerings in Council Bluffs include public art, like Molecule Man, a 50-foot aluminum sculpture, and Rhythm, a 22,000-square-foot sculpture garden.

For good eats, Scott says she and her family often head to LPL’s Restaurant & Pub, where they always get an order or two of the crispy fried cheeseballs. Another favorite for them is 712 Eat + Drink, a contemporary restaurant known for its extensive beer and wine offerings, weekend brunches and American classics.

“We always enjoy all of the activities during Celebrate CB, a weeklong celebration of the Council Bluffs community, and we go to Sunset Park as often as we can,” Scott says of the beautiful 6-acre park. It’s the perfect place to spend a day watching a local baseball game, playing horseshoes or barbecuing with friends and family.

– Candace Nagy



River’s Edge development
Above: Hoff Family Arts
& Culture Center

A Lifetime OF LEARNING

Iowa Western Community College provides educational offerings for work and fun



Officially, Iowa Western Community College (IWCC) is a two-year institution of higher education. But for those who live and work in the Council Bluffs area, IWCC and its Business & Community Education division provide an any-year opportunity for a lifetime of learning.

High school students can take dual-enrollment classes at IWCC in preparation for college. Young adults can receive certifications for employment in manufacturing and other industries. Established professionals can take leadership classes to advance in their current roles, or even start their own company with the help of the IWCC Small Business Development Center. And when all the work is done, retirees can enjoy classes on cooking and other leisure activities.

"We're there for any point of your life," says Matt Mancuso, IWCC vice president of Business & Community Education. "We're there for your whole educational span, from high school all the way into retirement age."

For those in the early stages of their work careers, IWCC's Adult Education programs include opportunities to receive a high school equivalency diploma or take English as a Second Language courses.

Once workers are established, they can utilize the school's Continuing Education programs for workforce training, retraining and certification. IWCC's online offerings enable more than 8,000 people each year to receive needed instruction in a variety of fields, including Emergency Medical Services and Commercial Driving.

IWCC also works directly with companies throughout the Council Bluffs area to create customized training for their businesses. "We meet with them to hear what their workforce needs are, then develop a curriculum specifically for their industry," Mancuso says.

In addition, IWCC regularly creates new classes and certificates to meet the area's changing needs. Additions for 2025 include an offering called Business Essentials (basic business strategies for individuals and small companies), as well as a dog grooming certificate (a high-demand position that can pay more than \$50,000 annually).

"Iowa Western plays a vital role in education in southwest Iowa," Mancuso says. "From workforce skills to our leisure classes, we offer many different ways for people in this area to advance their careers and improve their lives."

For more information about Iowa Western Community College, visit iwcc.edu/ce.

KID-FRIENDLY ADVENTURES

Seven weekend itineraries you and your family will love



Taking a stroll
in Bayliss Park

1. Park Day

Spend some time at Bayliss Park in downtown Council Bluffs. Here, the kids can play in the splash pad, check out the fountain and take in the child-scaled art. Depending on the day, you might also enjoy the farmers market or a movie or concert in the park (especially during the summer when this kind of programming is more common). Afterward, head to Tish's Restaurant for lunch.

"We really love Tish's," says Jordan Morse, early childhood coordinator for the Child and Family Resource Network and a mother of five. "They have really good American food, and they give a scoop of ice cream with their kids meals."

2. Museum Marvels

Open Thursdays through Saturdays, Union Pacific Railroad Museum offers entertainment and education in one exciting package.

"It's a fun experience, especially if you have kids who like trains or if you have a history buff," Morse says. "I have a kid who loves history, so getting to learn about how the railroad was started is fun. Plus, they sometimes have traveling exhibits, so those change."

Once you've had your fill of the exhibits, take a quick walk to neighboring Boxer Barbeque for lunch. Here, you'll find traditionally smoked meats and comfort-style sides like fries and mac and cheese.

3. Fire Hydrant Party

During the summer months, the Council Bluffs Fire Department hosts hydrant parties, where they'll open fire hydrants for kids to come and play in the water. Dates and days of the week vary, so be sure to check the department's website or follow them on social media for accurate updates. Once the kiddos have splashed to their hearts'

content, grab some sweet snacks at Sugar Makery, Council Bluffs' neighborhood sweet shop.

4. Head to the Library

When in doubt, go to the library. Besides instilling a love of reading, it's also a great place for kids to explore and relax.

"We have a phenomenal library in Council Bluffs that provides a lot of entertainment," Morse says. "They host movie nights, game nights, craft events and many of them are age specific."

If everybody was extra good, stop by J's Coffee & Donuts for a treat. J's mini donuts will melt in your mouth.

5. Trampoline Park

When the kids are bouncing off the walls, head to The Hub, where they can safely bounce till they get tired. An indoor trampoline park, The Hub is perfect for year-round entertainment. Once you've worked up an appetite, grab a bite at The Hub Patio. Their wide menu selection of salads, sandwiches and pizza will please even the pickiest of eaters.

6. Mini Golf

A tried and true classic, mini golf is always a fun time for kids of all ages. Pirate Putt Mini Golf is a themed indoor venue that has options to play nine or 18 holes, which is perfect for those with wandering attention spans.

"Pirate Putt is so fun," Morse says. "And with the option to do nine holes or 18, it's nice to only commit to nine if you have smaller ones."

Refuel with a slice or two at the Pizza Counter – a Morse family favorite.

7. To the Trail

Meander on down to the Wabash Trace Nature Trail, a limestone trail that's perfect for active families. Right off the trail, you'll find Tastee Treet, a small ice cream parlor with insanely good shakes, ice cream and even burgers.

– Kelly Rogers

"We have a phenomenal library in Council Bluffs that provides a lot of entertainment."

— Jordan Morse, mother of five —



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Community Profile

DISTANCES TO NEARBY CITIES *(in miles)*

Omaha, NE	4
Lincoln, NE	63
Sioux City	93
Des Moines	128
Sioux Falls, SD	178
Kansas City, MO	182
Cedar Rapids	255
Davenport	296
Minneapolis, MN	371

POPULATION

62,564

Council Bluffs

39

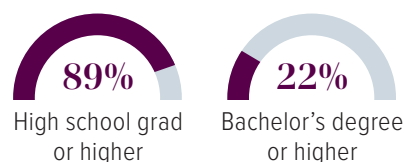
Average age

AVERAGE COMMUTE

18.6 minutes

Sources: Census Reporter, U.S. Census Bureau, Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce, Advance Southwest Iowa, Zillow

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

- » Buena Vista University- Council Bluffs
- » Council Bluffs Community School District
- » Iowa School for the Deaf
- » Iowa Western Community College
- » Lewis Central Community School District
- » 7 private schools

IOWA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- » Enrollment of about 5,500 students
- » 80 vocational and technical programs
- » Located near the intersection of Interstate 80 and U.S. Route 6
- » Employs about 750 area residents
- » Sports teams are the Reivers, which are river pirates

REAL ESTATE

\$206,047

Average home price

25,894

Number of households

27,576

Number of housing units

HOMEOWNERS / RENTERS



■ Owners **64%**
■ Renters **36%**

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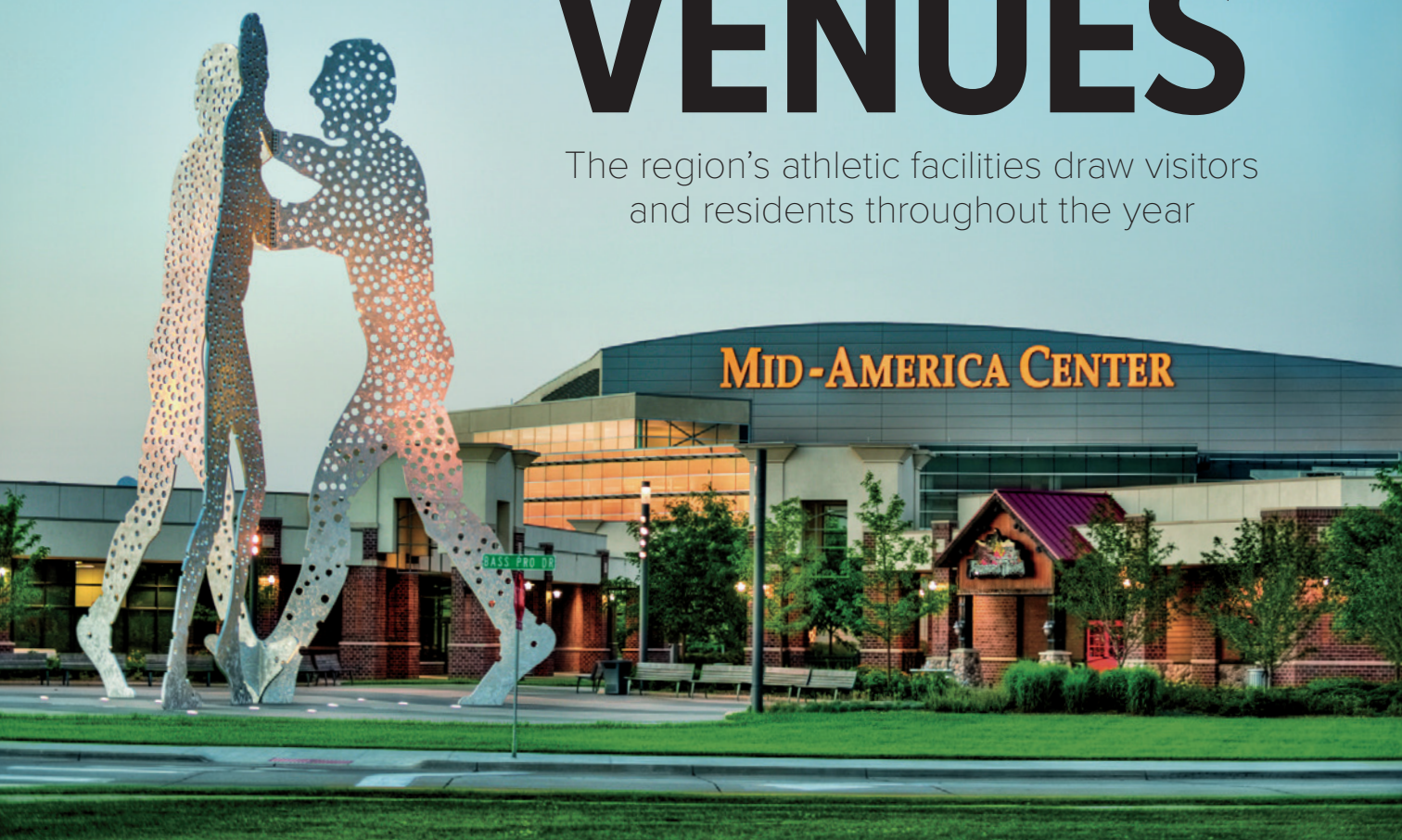
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Winning VENUES

The region's athletic facilities draw visitors and residents throughout the year



With a welcoming environment and top-notch athletic venues, Council Bluffs has proven to be a haven for youth sports. And thanks to the vast tournaments that many of the venues host, area hotels, restaurants and retail shops feel the positive impact of nonresident spending.

Read on to learn more about what makes this region a prime spot for youth sports and the venues and events that draw crowds.

MID-AMERICA CENTER

The Mid-America Center always has something going on. It hosts

youth wrestling and basketball tournaments, 10 dance competitions and six cheer competitions annually.

With people coming from throughout the Midwest, Mark Vacanti, the center's general manager, says many are fans of the Council Bluffs area. One thing they love is the region's ease of mobility. Getting in and out of the area via Council Bluffs Municipal Airport is easy, and for those driving, the Mid-America Center is just off Interstates 29 and 80.

"It makes travel easy," Vacanti says.

The Mid-America Center even has international visitors for the Yonex

U.S. Open Badminton Championships, which have been held twice at the Mid-America Center in the past three years.

Each year, the facility rolls out the wrestling mats for the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Wrestling Championships. This event draws thousands of people each day.

"We take a lot of pride in it," Vacanti says. "The NJCAA is really happy with our facility, and we are centrally located in the country."

Many of the events hosted by the Mid-America Center span multiple days, which provides a real boost to the local economy.



Council Bluffs Recreation Complex and Iowa West Field House host a wide variety of sporting events.

local sports organizations, high schools and middle schools who use the facility for their practices and games. This has had a huge impact on the community with the amount of teams we can provide court time to on a weekly basis.”

The Field House hosts the Adidas 3SSB high school basketball tournament, which draws many of the top 50 high school players in the nation to the area. And following those players to watch are major college coaches and even NBA players.

Byers says Council Bluffs is known as a great place to host sports, and the amenities surrounding the Field House add to the experience.

“The area around the Field House has many hotels, restaurants, a movie theater and many more entertainment options that allow people to not only enjoy their time here but also in the area around the Field House,” Byers says.

“It gives people time to explore the community and check out our restaurants, bars and casinos,” Vacanti says of the events.

IOWA WEST FIELD HOUSE

Located right next to the Mid-America Center is the Iowa West Field House. It hosts dozens of youth basketball tournaments and a handful of youth volleyball tournaments each year.

Amenities enjoyed by visitors during weekends are also enjoyed by local teams on weekdays.

“The events that we host on the weekend allow us to provide community use time during the week at no cost to many local organizations,” says Aaron Byers, general manager of Iowa West Field House. “We are booked every day during the week with



“With all of the options for our guests, as well as the amount of parking in the area, many of our events are recurring because the organizations that host the events and fans who attend love coming to Council Bluffs.”

COUNCIL BLUFFS RECREATION COMPLEX

The massive Council Bluffs Recreation Complex is a go-to for outdoor sporting events.

With 77 acres of athletic fields and amenities, the Recreation Complex stays busy, especially during warmer months. It boasts 10 soccer fields, seven softball fields, four football fields and three baseball fields.

“That complex is a luxury to have for our city and our parks and recreation department,” says Dan Bettmann, recreation and events manager with Council Bluffs Parks and Recreation Department, which operates the complex.

The biggest event of the year for the Recreation Complex is the multiweek Triple Crown’s SlumpBuster baseball tournament in June, which Council Bluffs hosts with neighboring Omaha. As many as 42 states have been represented at the event.

“SlumpBuster takes over the entire

complex, and it’s a big deal for our community,” Bettmann says.

From Easter through the end of July, every weekend is booked with major softball and baseball tournaments at the complex, plus Bettmann says they host soccer tournaments, as well.

– Andrew Potter

Cha-Ching



Amateur sporting events provide a powerful economic boost for the Council Bluffs area.

In fiscal year 2024, 10 amateur sporting events attracted 109,136 athletes, spectators and officials and generated 8,590 hotel room night stays at Council Bluffs properties, according to numbers provided by the Council Bluffs Convention & Visitors Bureau.

These sports included volleyball, wrestling, basketball, baseball and badminton.

While this does not reflect the total number of tournaments and events in Council Bluffs, it does indicate the impact that just 10 of these have on the region. The economic impact from the hotel stays for these 10 events represented nearly \$878,000 in business.

GOOGLE IS PROUD to Call Council Bluffs Home

The company has been investing heavily in the region for nearly 20 years



Since breaking ground in 2007, Google has been steadily creating a digital hub in the region, with more than \$6.8 billion in investments. The company increased its commitment in 2024 by investing another \$1 billion in its two Council Bluffs data centers, which play an essential role in supporting the company's AI innovations and Google Cloud business.

And all of this does not even include the more than \$2.1 billion of economic activity Google's presence has generated for tens of thousands of Iowa businesses, publishers, nonprofits, creators and developers.

Google has worked to support local schools and

nonprofit organizations, awarding more than \$5 million to help support efforts to expand computer science education and upskilling Iowans to help grow their careers and expand their businesses.

"Google has been proud to call Iowa home for nearly two decades, and our continued investment underscores our long-term commitment to the community and state," said Dan Harbeke, Google's regional head of public policy and external affairs. "Council Bluffs has been a critical partner in helping us deliver the latest digital technology to the world, and we look forward to continuing our work together to keep Iowa a digital leader for years to come."



In addition to continued investment in data center facilities, Google contributed a \$1.3 million grant in support of a Missouri River Basin grade stabilization project, conducted in collaboration with the Great Outdoors Foundation and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. As part of the company's goal to replenish 120% of the water it consumes, the

project will reduce surface runoff and erosion, and improve flood protection, groundwater quality, and the overall aquatic habitat.

These are just a few examples that underscore Google's commitment to Council Bluffs and benefit the region as a whole. To learn more about Google in Iowa, visit **economicimpact.google/state/ia**.

Community SERVICE

IWCC's continuing education programs help enhance lives and grow careers

When it comes to lifelong learning, Iowa Western Community College (IWCC) in Council Bluffs is at the forefront, offering a robust menu of continuing education programs designed to serve the evolving needs of the region and workforce.

Whether it's picking up a new hobby, refining a skill set or earning credentials for career advancement, IWCC's diverse course offerings are tailored to meet learners where they are, enhancing the region's quality of life and growing the economy.

"The continuing education programs have a very important

role because we're taking individuals and then retraining them for today's workforce needs," says Matt Mancuso, vice president of business and community education for IWCC. "Whether they are scaling up their skills or changing their skills, we have a program to fit their interests, from health care and transportation to business and emergency management."

Building Futures

At the heart of the programs' success is a commitment to community engagement.

Libby Woods, director of community education for IWCC, says the college continuously gathers input from local business partnerships, market research and instructor expertise.

"We have a team that goes out and meets with local businesses and community partners to understand where growth is happening," Woods says. "Our goal is to provide education and training that aligns with workforce development and community interests."

This proactive approach ensures that IWCC is not just offering classes but is also creating real opportunities for both personal enrichment and professional advancement.

"We recently started offering classes in dog grooming, drone operation and business essentials, which includes financial management, sales, growth and expansion, and marketing," Woods says. "We are also working hard to offer new life and leisure classes, such as cooking classes and a land stewardship series based on the feedback we received from the community."

Unlocking Potential

Some of the more popular programs include those related to health care, such as certified nursing assistant (CNA), pharmacy technician, phlebotomy, paramedic and EMT. Mancuso says the CNA program serves as a gateway to

IWCC offers a welding certificate program.





Iowa Western
Community College

higher-paying positions in the health care field, a fact that is especially appealing to students, such as Lacey Lantau.

After battling and overcoming addiction, Lantau decided to pursue a career in health care. Her passion for caregiving was deeply personal, influenced by time spent with her grandmother in a nursing home.

“I wanted to find a role where I could truly make a difference,” she says. “Becoming a CNA has allowed me to do that. The residents I care for bring joy to my life, and I know I’m making a real impact.”

Woods says Lantau’s story is a testament to the power of continuing education – and not just as a professional development tool, but as a catalyst for personal growth and renewal.

“It’s a great way to invest in yourself and your future,” Woods says. “Continuing education offers a chance to gain new skills, expand your knowledge and stay competitive

in your field. Whether you’re looking to advance in your current career or explore something new, it can open a lot of opportunities.”

Priming the Talent Pipeline

Mancuso says the programs offer a win-win for students and the community.

“We work with a lot of low-income individuals who are looking to train or retrain, and we want to make sure those individuals who go through our program can earn a living wage,” he says. “We want to make sure that they continue to be actively engaging and participating in our community in many ways through the workforce.”

Mancuso says the continuing education programs can help bridge workforce gaps by providing targeted training in areas where demand is high, but supply is low, such as health care, IT, trades and manufacturing.

IWCC doesn’t just train new workers; it helps companies upskill their current employees, offering customized courses tailored to company-specific needs.

“We are constantly talking to businesses – about 75 to 100 each week – to track industry trends and create relevant training,” Mancuso says. “If we hear a repeated need, whether in welding, construction or health care, we develop programs to address it. We’re not just helping create a workforce pipeline, we are also helping to retrain or train up the current workforce – all to hopefully fill the needs of our industries.”

– Teree Caruthers

Hear From a Grad

Bridgette Watson,
executive director of the
Council Bluffs Schools Foundation,



shares her thoughts
on the school
district’s future.



CAREERS BUILT ON *Care*



Local health care professionals open up about serving their region and why they love their work

Several high-quality health care organizations in Council Bluffs provide exceptional patient services and offer lifelong career opportunities for natives and newcomers alike. These include Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital, CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs and All Care Health Center. Ahead, learn about some of the people employed by these facilities and why they enjoy where they work.

MICHELLE KAUFMAN

"I love what I do"

A Council Bluffs native, Michelle Kaufman says she always considered Methodist Jennie

Edmundson Hospital a pillar of the community, so when she enrolled in radiography school and needed a part-time job at 19, she went to work there in medical records.

Kaufman continued at Jennie Edmundson while in school for radiation therapy, progressing to a position in the X-ray Department, and moved to radiation oncology upon graduation. She's spent her entire career at the hospital and now serves as service executive for radiation oncology.

"I started here before I was married, before I had children, and now, my husband and I are empty nesters," she says.

There are many things that have kept Kaufman

at Methodist Jennie Edmundson for 35 years.

"I love what I do," she says. "Oncology is a very rewarding and humbling field. We're privileged to work with our patients and offer them care during their most vulnerable time. We've always had this sense of purpose and desire to move forward, providing the best care possible for our community."

Kaufman says that same focus on exceptional care for patients informs how the staff takes care of one another.

"We work really well together, and our team mindset means the patient is the most important thing to us," she says.

KRISTEN BLUM

"I've established my own family here"

Serving CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs as its new president marks a homecoming for Kristen Blum.

"My first introduction to CHI Health was here at this hospital for a 12-week internship during my master's program," Blum says.

"It was my first experience in a hospital, and it was a game-changer for me."

Blum says that project – with local nonprofits and public health entities focused on improving community health – was eye opening.

"I saw this great marriage of the day-to-day



operational side of the hospital, along with the investment and dedication to helping the community as a whole, which is very much part of CHI Health's mission," she says.

She joined CHI Health upon graduation, holding a variety of roles within the system before returning to Mercy in 2024 as its president.

"We're a faith-based nonprofit, and that comes through with our care teams," she says. "It also means looking outside our walls before people even come to us and asking how we can help people live healthier lives, or how we can get them back to living a healthy life after they've been in the hospital."

Blum says working for CHI has been a special experience.

"I've established my own family here," she says.

"This is the community where we live, and I had all three of my children here, so it's a special opportunity for me to be impacting how we provide care and what that looks like in the community where my own family and friends are receiving care."

JOLYNN AHMANN

"You get to truly help others"

JoLynn Ahmann, pharmacy director for All Care Health Center, had worked in retail pharmacies for nearly 12 years before joining

All Care Health Center in 2013. The Federally Qualified Health Center was building a new facility and expanding its operations to include pharmacy, which Ahmann helped establish.

"My goal was to expand my role into the clinic and help manage disease states with the providers," Ahmann says. "I had always wanted to work more closely with patients, taking time to review and teach them about their medications and diseases. Providers don't always get to spend a lot of time with patients, and I knew I could bridge this important aspect."

All Care provides robust service options for the community.

"We are kind of a one-stop shop for your health care," she says. "We provide primary care, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, access services and X-ray services."

She says All Care serves patients regardless of insurance coverage or their ability to pay.

"The people you work for and with here genuinely care about you and your family," Ahmann says. "But probably more important, you get to truly help others."

— Karen Vernon

Learn more about the region's high-quality health care at livability.com/council-bluffs.

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Council Bluffs is the place to build your life and career

Council Bluffs boasts a close-knit community, plenty of job opportunities and a fabulous quality of life that many love. This combination makes it an excellent location for those looking to start or grow their careers.

With a solid economic foundation driven by several major companies and a rich history of innovation, this region has become a place where those from various industries can thrive. Council Bluffs boasts a diverse economy with major employers like Google, food industry giants Tyson Foods, ConAgra,

Jack Link's and Bunge, and prominent casinos such as Harrah's, Ameristar and Horseshoe. The region is also home to major health care providers, including CHI Health Mercy and Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital.

Positive Energy

Health care is a rapidly growing sector in Council Bluffs.

David Burd, president and CEO of Methodist Jennie Edmundson, relocated to Council Bluffs from Hebron, Nebraska, in May 2020.

Burd's career in health care began with an internship at Lincoln General Hospital in Nebraska, and today, he credits his growth to the supportive and dynamic environment at Jennie Edmundson.

"The great thing about Jennie Edmundson is its special culture," Burd says. "We truly care here. Whether you're an employee, a patient or a family member, you feel the difference."

Under Burd's leadership, the hospital has not only remained a critical health care provider,



David Burd, a hospital executive, and Robin Reber, a hospitality industry executive, both praise Council Bluffs' blend of small-town feel and big-city amenities.

but it has also contributed to job growth and community development.

Jennie Edmundson is partnering with Acadia Healthcare to build a new behavioral health hospital in Council Bluffs, adding much-needed resources to the community.

"It's a great time to work and live in Council Bluffs," Burd says. "There's a lot of positive energy to grow and improve the community, and the city is becoming stronger every day thanks to its leadership."

Community Feel

The sense of community that Burd describes resonates across the region, as individuals are often drawn to its small-town feel and big-city amenities.

For example, Robin Reber, the hotel operations manager for Harrah's and Horseshoe Council Bluffs, is a native of the area and has spent her entire career in hospitality here. After attending design school in Chicago, she returned to Council Bluffs and started working in the service industry at Harrah's.

She thought it would be a temporary job. Little did she know it would launch a successful 18-year career

in the casino and hospitality industry.

"I never thought I'd stay in the hospitality industry, but here I am, and I love it," Reber says.

Her story reflects the opportunities Council Bluffs offers for growth and leadership, particularly in sectors such as hospitality and entertainment. Reber has risen through the ranks at Caesars Entertainment, which owns Harrah's and Horseshoe, taking on roles that allowed her to gain exposure to different departments, develop management skills and earn a business degree through tuition reimbursement provided by her employer.

"I love that Caesars invests in leadership development and supports our career growth," she says. "It's a company that really values its employees and their families."

A+ Amenities

There is much to love about Council Bluffs, which is why people choose to grow their lives and careers here. Its proximity to Omaha makes it an attractive place to live for those who want to experience the charm of a smaller community while still having easy



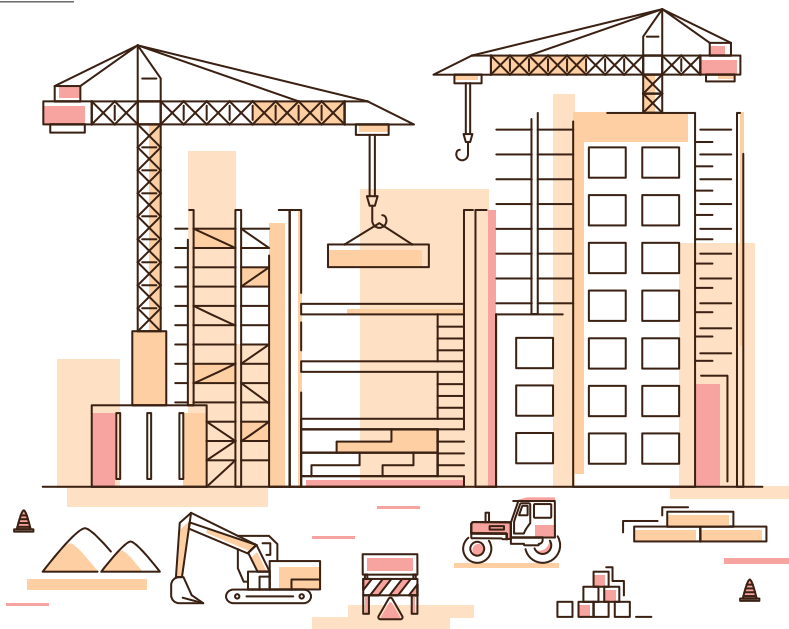
access to a metropolitan area. The region offers plenty of recreational opportunities, from biking and running trails to a range of shopping and dining options.

"Council Bluffs is a big, small city," says Reber, an advocate for the local lifestyle. "It's not overwhelming, and people are genuine here. It's a great place to build a career while also enjoying a high quality of life."

Whether it's the health care initiatives led by Jennie Edmundson, the hospitality experience at Harrah's, or the broader economic opportunities available, Council Bluffs is positioned for continued growth, with abundant room for personal and professional success.

"There's a bright future ahead for Council Bluffs, and we're excited to be a part of it," Burd says.

— Heather Cherry



BUILT to THRIVE

Continuing development at River's Edge brings additional vitality to the riverfront

What was once a bare stretch of land on the Iowa side of the Missouri River in Council Bluffs has undergone a remarkable transformation. River's Edge, a thriving development, now occupies the space, and its story is still being written.

CREATING RIVER'S EDGE

Over the years, the riverfront district has seen a wealth of developments and improvements, and the area has become an essential place for residents, businesses, office workers and community members who utilize River's Edge to live, work and gather.

"Our group brings partners together for projects in Council Bluffs and southwest Iowa, and River's Edge has been a big part of our recent focus," says Pete Tulipana, president and CEO of Southwest Iowa Nonprofit for Collective Impact (SINC), a nonprofit organization in Council Bluffs that has raised money for several River's Edge developments.

Early successes of the development project included building the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, which opened in 2008 and spans the Missouri River between Council Bluffs and Omaha, and Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park, which opened in 2013. River's Edge

Pavilion debuted in 2017, and the 4200 Office Building opened in 2019.

"Today, our mission continues to be improving the quality of life in River's Edge by providing more recreation and leisure opportunities," Tulipana says. "That way, people can enjoy activities and attractions on our side of the Missouri River instead of having to go to the Omaha side."

CONTINUED GROWTH

Apartments, townhomes and businesses also adorn River's Edge and plans for more living spaces and small businesses are ongoing.

"This is a great place to invest because there is much more land to be developed," Tulipana says. "It's going to become a destination place for Council Bluffs residents as well as people in southwest Iowa and Omaha."

Other recent openings in River's Edge include the Belles' Play Garden at Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park and the new Council Bluffs Community School District early learning center. Plans are in the works for a treetop walk through a wooded area. The walk will include a 138-foot-tall adventure tower with features like multilevel observation platforms, a climbing wall and a glide ride through the trees.

"The walk will take visitors above the trees to enjoy views of scenic woodlands, the Missouri River and cityscapes," Tulipana says. "There are also plans to build a long pier where residents can walk over the Missouri River, and another playground and a dog park are in the design stages. Many projects will be under construction in 2025 and 2026."

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

While River's Edge is open for all to enjoy, living there brings even more advantages, as residents have easy access to all the amenities and great views.

One such resident is Kourtney Butler, a technology center support specialist with Council Bluffs Community School District. Butler was born and raised in Council Bluffs, graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in 2018 and has lived at the Broadmoor apartments at River's Edge for five years.

"I love the connectivity of River's Edge to the interstate," she says. "I have a dog, so I enjoy the walkability of the area. I can also hear summertime concerts in the distance from my apartment, and I like the Mercy Thai Restaurant that is close to where I live."

Butler adds that there continues to be an influx of new people moving into River's Edge apartments. Her neighbors include Creighton University students, young professionals and those up to 55 and older.

"A nice sense of community has always been in River's Edge," she says. "As for the future, I hope the development eventually gets a community activity center that features group games like pickleball and other outdoor events, and I also look forward to someday having a dog park here."

The cool thing? Butler won't have to wait long. There are plans in the works to build a dog park in River's Edge in 2025 or 2026.

— Kevin Litwin



Renderings of Adventure Tower at River's Edge



A rendering of the planned treetop walk



"I have a dog, so I enjoy the walkability of the area. I can also hear summertime concerts in the distance from my apartment, and I like the Mercy Thai Restaurant that is close to where I live."

— Kourtney Butler, resident —

GROW HERE

Kris Richey and her aunt opened The Olive Branch boutique in Council Bluffs in 1999. Though she left for a few years for a different opportunity, she returned in 2022 and bought the store from her aunt, relocating to be closer to family and to expand the shop.

The Olive Branch sells home decor, handmade items, gourmet food, Polish pottery, housewares, jewelry and handbags. Richey is about to open a second location that will carry gift items for women, men, children and babies.

Every bit of financing that went into the store's launch was financed by savings and from family, Richey says. "We did a lot of marketing on our own," she says. "There was no social media at the time, so we passed out flyers, took out newspaper ads and did a lot of networking with family and friends."

The Olive Branch is a member of the Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce, and Richey attends chamber events often and utilizes other available local resources.

Richey says Council Bluffs is the perfect size city to raise a family, offering all the conveniences, a nice selection of restaurants and shopping options, quality schools and standout parks, trails and activities for families.

"People are so incredibly friendly, and the community works really

well together. I love it here. I always have," she says.

Richey lauds The Olive Branch's "phenomenal" customer base that has brought multiple generations of families through the door.

And she sees an even brighter future ahead for her business.

"Being here for 25 years, I feel like we're the best-kept secret in Council Bluffs, but I don't think we will be for much longer," she says. *GRH*

Online Exclusive

Scan the QR code to read about Kris Richey's insights on launching and growing a business and all that Council Bluffs has to offer.



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- » Bunge
- » CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs
- » ConAgra
- » Council Bluffs Community School District
- » Harrah's Council Bluffs
- » Horseshoe Council Bluffs
- » Iowa Western Community College
- » Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital
- » MidAmerican Energy
- » Palfinger
- » Plumrose USA
- » Tyson Foods
- » Union Pacific
- » U.S. Pipe
- » Walmart
- » Warren Distribution

INCOME

\$34,252

Per-capita income

\$64,092

Median household income

HOUSEHOLD INCOME



■ Under \$50,000	40%
■ \$50,000-\$100,000	32%
■ \$100,000-\$200,000	24%
■ Over \$200,000	4%

KEY INDUSTRIES

- ✓ Advanced manufacturing
- ✓ Agriculture
- ✓ Casino gaming
- ✓ Distribution and logistics
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Energy
- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Food processing
- ✓ Health care
- ✓ Technology

40,843

Local labor force

RESOURCES

For information on resources for employers, visit councilbluffs.iowa.com/employer-resources.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce, Advance Southwest Iowa

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