

AMES *Insider*



A local guide to **attractions**,
shopping, dining, events, and more

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Ames^{IA}



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About Discover Ames

Get to know Discover Ames! Discover Ames is the official destination marketing organization for the city of Ames. The organization works to attract meetings, conventions, events, and leisure travelers to Ames and the Iowa State University campus while providing comprehensive services to groups and visitors.

Discover Ames produces an annual visitors guide, weekly newsletters, a tourism website, and social media content designed for both visitors and the local Ames community. The previous year brought significant celebrations to Ames, including Reiman Gardens' 30th Anniversary Celebration, the 515 Days festival in downtown Ames, and the Merry & Bright Holiday Weekend, along with numerous other events.

The year 2026 is shaping up to be equally impressive, with major events bringing excitement to the area. Luke Combs performed at Jack Trice Stadium on April 11, and Post Malone is set to take the stage there on July 17. Later in the year, the Farm Progress Show will arrive in September, and the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals will take place in May. Additionally, two major developments will be making waves this year: CyTown at the Iowa State Center and the Ames Event Center at The LINC near downtown.

8 Ways to Connect with Discover Ames

- Find things to do in Ames with our online events calendar, blogs, and itineraries
- Follow Discover Ames on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok
- Watch our videos on YouTube
- Subscribe to the bi-weekly Ames Insider newsletter
- Request a 2026 visitors guide to have handy when friends and family are in town
- Volunteer to be a Discover Ames Ambassador
- Stop by our office at 1601 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 110 – right off South 16th Street
- Find maps and additional visitor information at Ames 1864 at the Shops at Clark & Main in downtown Ames

Find everything you need at:
[DiscoverAmes.com](https://www.discoverames.com)





Discover Ames is the official destination marketing organization for the city of Ames and the surrounding area.

Find us

The Discover Ames office is located at 1601 Golden Aspen Dr., Suite 110. Our hours are M-F 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; our entryway is filled with visitor information and is open 24 hours a day. Additional Discover Ames visitor information can be found at Ames 1864, a retail shop located at 500 Main St. in Downtown Ames.

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Follow us at



2026 Ames Insider

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You know Ames inside and out...

But let us help you find the places even locals love to rediscover!

From community theater performances and live music all year long to annual festivals, farmers markets, and eclectic hidden gems, Ames is full of surprises waiting to be explored.

This is our fourth-annual Ames Insider, designed for people who live and work here, highlighting the best ways to enjoy the city year-round. Inside, you'll find curated local favorites, insider tips, and can't-miss events – all to help you experience Ames in a way that's both familiar and new.

We hope this guide sparks a new adventure, inspires a favorite local find, or simply reminds you why living in Ames is something special. Explore, celebrate, and fall in love with Ames all over again.

You can discover more Ames highlights, insider advice, and up-to-the-minute events at **DiscoverAmes.com**

— The Discover Ames team

Scan the QR code to subscribe to our biweekly Ames Insider newsletter or visit **DiscoverAmes.com/newsletter**





What's inside?



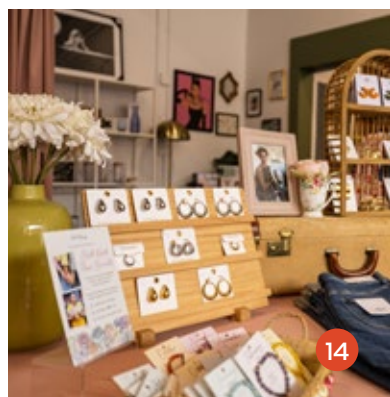
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DISCOVER HIDDEN

gems around Ames

LOCKWOOD CAFÉ

Discover the best crepes in Ames at Lockwood Café! Tucked away in west Ames, this cozy hidden gem is the perfect **breakfast spot** to enjoy with friends and family. Indulge in sweet or savory crepes paired with your favorite drink from their menu. Warm, welcoming, and delicious, Lockwood Café is a must-visit for any brunch lover.

CELLAR 626

Step through the cooler door at Cyclone Liquors and discover Cellar 626 – a secret hideaway with a cozy, relaxed atmosphere. Sip **handcrafted cocktails**, unwind with friends, and enjoy one of Ames' best-kept secrets. This hidden gem offers an intimate experience that feels worlds away from the ordinary.

NO ESCAPE IOWA

Grab your friends and put your problem-solving skills to the test at No Escape Iowa! Beneath Ames British Foods in downtown Ames, this hidden gem offers a variety of thrilling **escape rooms** that challenge your mind and spark your sense of adventure. With immersive themes and hours of fun, No Escape Iowa is the perfect spot for an unforgettable group experience.



The
**OCTAGON
 SHOP**

Did you know you can shop **locally made art** right here in Ames? At The Octagon Shop in downtown Ames, you'll find one-of-a-kind creations from over 175 local and regional artists — with new pieces added every day. From handcrafted jewelry to unique home décor, this hidden gem is the perfect place to discover and support local talent.

**CLOUDS
 CAFÉ**


Experience dinner in the sky at Clouds Café in Campustown, a charming European café celebrated for its stunning views of Iowa State University's campus. Whether you're attending a themed dinner, hosting a private event, or simply enjoying a cozy study session or coffee date, this unique hidden gem offers an atmosphere as unforgettable as its menu.

Daisy's
**DRINKS &
 DOGS**

Tucked away in the middle of town, Daisy's Drinks & Dogs is a hidden gem worth seeking out. Known for its **footlong hotdogs** and tasty drinks, this spot offers more than just good food — it's also a hub for fun events like drag brunches and bingo nights. Whether you stop in for a quick bite or a night out, there's always something going on at Daisy's.



Downtown: *the heart of Ames*



Look, we're not trying to oversell it, but downtown Ames just hits different.

Maybe it's the way you can grab your morning coffee, pop into a consignment shop, and end up discovering a new favorite lunch spot – all within a few blocks. Or maybe it's the fact that our downtown feels like a community, not just a collection of storefronts.

You'll find all the essentials here: locally owned bars and restaurants, seasonal menus that keep things interesting, and independent shops you won't see replicated in every strip mall across America. The Ames Public Library serves as a community hub for families and individuals alike, while the coffee shops and bakeries provide the perfect fuel for whatever your day demands.

But here's the thing – the heart of Ames has a pulse. There's always something happening. The Farmers' Market is a Saturday morning must from May until October. Then there's the Octagon Art Festival, Ames on the Halfshell concerts, Snow Magic when winter hits, the Fourth of July parade that somehow gets better every year. Pride. Pub crawls. Art walks. Halloween shenanigans with the kids. Long story short, if you're looking for something to do, downtown delivers.

For the past several months, the Ames Main Street board of directors – along with the city of Ames and other partners – have collaborated to create a planning document titled “Downtown Ames: A Guiding Vision for the Future.”

Stay in the loop at:
DowntownAmes.org/guiding-vision

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REIMAN GARDENS

Spring

Enjoy viewing beautiful tulip blooms, flowering trees, and fresh, vibrant color seeping it's way back into the gardens. The season is marked by popular spring flower shows, educational programs, and the Spring Enchantment Festival held annually.



Summer

Stroll through the gardens, join a hands-on workshop, or unwind during a guided forest bathing walk. Enjoy live music on the lawn with the Goldfinch Room concert series and take part in family-friendly activities that invite locals to experience the gardens from sunrise to sunset.

Insider Tip: Reiman Gardens is open for viewing the annual July 3 fireworks display, so bring a chair, a blanket, and the whole family for a memorable summer evening!

DURING THE SEASONS

Fall

As temperatures cool, fall brings rich autumn colors to the gardens. Don't miss Spirits in the Gardens, a popular fall celebration including 1,000+ intricately carved Jack-O-Lanterns, candy, and fun for the entire family!



Winter

Experience the magic of Reiman Gardens in winter as the gardens transform into a sparkling wonderland with Winter Wonderscape. Stroll through 17 acres of outdoor gardens illuminated by over 200,000 dazzling lights, and enjoy vibrant colors, festive music, and the enchanting spirit of the season!

Insider Tip: Buy tickets to Winter Wonderscape in advance as they can sell out quickly!

REDUCE, REUSE, & RECYCLE

GIVE YOUR HOME OR CLOSET A REFRESH WITH SECONDHAND TREASURES AROUND AMES - SUSTAINABLE, STYLISH, AND ONE OF A KIND.

Thrift your style

The Slow Era is a must-visit for lovers of timeless fashion with character. Think well-loved denim, statement accessories, and vintage pieces you won't find anywhere else.

Shopping pre-loved feels elevated and fun at **The Loft Resale**. A curated mix of trendy finds and everyday staples makes it easy to score style without overspending.

For gently used kids' clothing that's both adorable and affordable, **Duck Worth Wearing** is your go-to spot. High-quality pieces and budget-friendly prices make shopping for little ones a breeze.

Building a wardrobe of dependable staples is simple at **Miss Meyer's Consignment**. With a focus on well-made, long-lasting clothing, it's the perfect place to invest in timeless style.

Antique hunting

If wandering through endless aisles of antiques sounds like your dream, **Antiques Iowa** in Story City delivers. It's the perfect place to hunt for statement pieces or browse for inspiration.

A longtime local favorite, **Ames Greenhouse & Antiques** blends vintage finds with lush greenery. Explore exotic plants before diving into a mix of antiques, glassware, and unique collectibles.

Central Iowa Junk Jaunt is the ultimate vintage road trip, held in both summer and fall. From barns and sheds to small-town shops, each stop offers one-of-a-kind antiques and a new adventure.

Find treasures for the home

For affordable furniture and home essentials, **Habitat for Humanity ReStore** is the place to be. From décor and lighting to appliances, it's an easy way to furnish your space while supporting a great cause.

Rummage Rampage transforms the Intermodal Facility near Iowa State University into a massive secondhand shopping event each summer. With everything from small appliances to sofas and bed frames, it's ideal for furnishing a home in one stop.

Packed with charm and character, **Lindsey Loo's** is a Downtown favorite for home décor. Browse art, furniture, and trinkets, then head to the basement for antique glassware and upstairs for even more hidden gems.

Thrifting Staples

Goodwill, Salvation Army, and Overflow are Ames' thrifting essentials. These go-to spots are perfect for Cyclone gear, furniture, and everyday finds, with ever-changing inventory and budget-friendly prices.





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Shopping in Ames

What's New?

THE LOCAL RETAIL SCENE CONTINUES TO GROW IN AMES. HERE ARE A FEW NOTABLE ADDITIONS AND CHANGES THIS YEAR:

Crawdaddy Outdoors:

Find everything you need for your next outdoor adventure including tools, apparel, and more, located on Main Street in downtown Ames.

Furniture Mart:

Need to furnish a new home or apartment? Look no further than the Furniture Mart. Browse hundreds of pre-designed and customizable styles throughout their showroom.

b.e. good:

Shop for new outfits and gifts for loved ones at this women's clothing boutique in downtown Ames.

Rally House:

A longtime favorite for sports gear and fan apparel, Rally House has expanded with a new location in the former CVS building at the corner of Welch Avenue in Campustown.

Overflow Thrift Store:

Thrift lovers can score even more unique finds at the new Overflow Thrift Store location, now open in the former JAX building in west Ames.

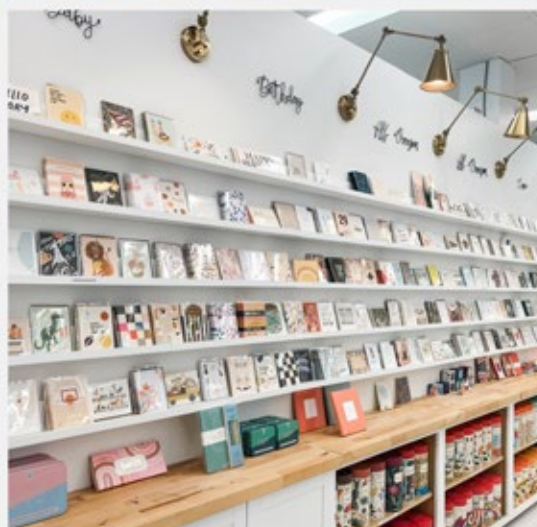
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Looking for the ultimate shopping experience? Visit The Shops at Clark & Main, where your favorite shops come together to bring you sustainable, quality stationery, home, lifestyle, personal care, and more—all under one roof!



AMES EATS WHAT'S NEW?



Daisy's Drinks & Dogs, Iowa's sassiest hot dog bar, is serving up loaded wieners, bold drinks, and just the right amount of drama, because dinner should never be boring!

Olive Garden, a long-anticipated addition to Ames, is set to open in spring 2026, bringing its beloved Italian classics to the community.

Finski's, now open in the new Anthem Development in Huxley, offering elevated comfort food paired with thoughtfully crafted cocktails.

El Patio Bar and Grill, serving up authentic Mexican food with bold flavors, handcrafted recipes, and a vibrant dine-in experience.

Roni's Mac Bar, bringing cheesy goodness to the Ames dining scene, with endless options to craft your macaroni masterpiece.

7 Brew, whipping up energizing coffees and power-packed drinks to fuel your day, sip by sip.

Fig and Sea, a new steakhouse focused on showcasing bold, fresh Mediterranean flavors opening soon in north Ames Somerset.

Jade Dragon Buffet, delivering an all-you-can-enjoy experience, featuring everything from sizzling hibachi dishes to freshly prepared sushi.

The Coop Chicken Fingers, introduces crave-worthy chicken fingers made fresh, packed with flavor, and served with signature flair — and a wide selection of sauces to choose from!

The Stan Tap Bar and Grill, your go-to spot for classic game-day specials alongside a solid lineup of draft beers and cocktails.

Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), cooking up mouth-watering fried chicken with a side of seasoned mashed potatoes, buttery biscuits, or crispy fries. Opening soon in north Ames.

Hyper Energy, mixing up tasty and uniquely flavored drink combinations with your choice of a caffeine or Italian soda base to fuel your day.

Campus Brew, located in Campustown, is one of the best new spots to find a dirty soda and the perfect place to study with friends.

Monterrey Mexican Grill, featuring an enticing selection of Mexican favorites, from hearty burritos to fully loaded nachos, all made with traditional flavors and fresh ingredients.

Dunkin' Donuts, brewing up your must-have morning coffee and helping you start your day with the perfect sip at a new location on the corner of Lincoln Way and Market Street.





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everyone in the family

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Enjoy some time in nature with Story County's 3,500 acres of parks, trails, lakes, and woodlands; the city of Ames' picture-perfect Ada Hayden Heritage Park; or the breathtaking Ledges State Park in nearby Boone County.

MAKE A SPLASH

Furman Aquatic Center features three water slides, 50-meter pool, lazy river, and zero-depth splash pool. It's a must for any summer itinerary.

COMPETE WITH FRIENDS

Grab your crew and get competitive! Ames has outdoor pickleball courts, disc golf courses, tennis courts, and three public golf courses. Many are located in Ames' city parks.





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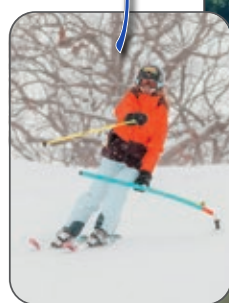
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RECREATION IN AMES WHAT'S NEW?

Ada Hayden Heritage Park:

The park's existing 10-foot asphalt trail was replaced with a wider 12-foot concrete path, and connections to the surrounding roads were updated.

Ames Play Yard:

This long-awaited indoor playground and basketball court is a great spot to take the kids to burn off some energy, located right outside of Ames off Highway 30.



Mini-Pitch Soccer Court:

Found in north Ames at Lloyd Kurtz Park, this hard-surface mini-pitch is tailored for futsal, a quick, small-sided style of soccer.



Agility Course:

First of its kind in the Ames park system, this new agility course at Carr Park includes agility equipment, safety surfacing, and a neighborhood park shelter.

Brookside Park:

A firehouse-themed playground was installed at the park ahead of its 100th anniversary celebration last year.





Finch Family *Indoor Aquatic Center*

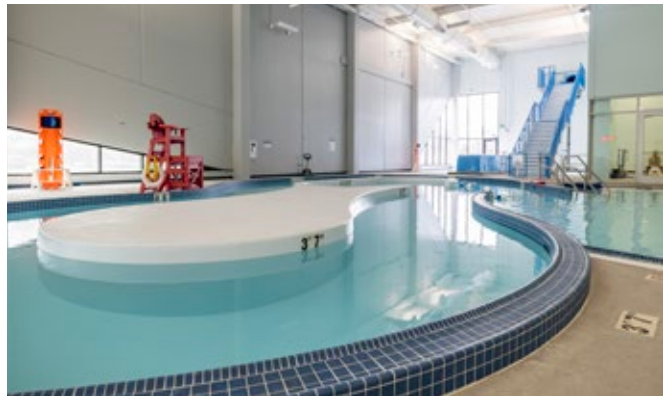
Ames' residents have something exciting to look forward to this spring – the grand opening of the Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center, located at 115 N. Elm Avenue.

The \$28 million facility is a community effort in every sense. The Ames City Council committed \$18.6 million to the project, with the remaining funding made possible through \$8.4 million in donor contributions, a \$500,000 investment from Story County, and a \$500,000 Community Attraction and Tourism grant.

The center promises something for swimmers of every age and ability. Highlights include a six-lane, 25-yard lap pool, a zero-depth entry splash pool ideal for young children, a current channel, a wellness pool, a body slide, and a dedicated walking area. Party rooms and multi-purpose spaces round out the facility, making it a destination for both recreation and community gatherings.

The Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center is designed to bring modern, health-focused programming to Ames and the broader Story County area – enhancing quality of life for residents year-round, no matter the Iowa weather outside.

Learn more about this project at:
CityOfAmes.org





Campus Favorites

GET READY FOR A FUN NIGHT OUT IN CAMPUSTOWN, WHERE LOCAL FAVORITES KEEP THE ENERGY GOING LONG AFTER SUNSET. WHETHER YOU'RE SHOPPING FOR THE LATEST ISU GEAR OR PLANNING A ROMANTIC DATE NIGHT, CAMPUSTOWN OFFERS A LINEUP OF MUST-TRY SPOTS FOR EVERY KIND OF EVENING.

DOGTOWN UNIVERSITY

Find the ultimate game day gear at Dogtown University, located just seconds from the action at Hilton Coliseum and Jack Trice Stadium. Whether you're gearing up for kickoff or heading to a big matchup, you'll find everything from cozy hoodies and classic t-shirts to baseball hats and fan-favorite accessories. It's the perfect stop to rep Iowa State in style before, during, or after game day.

RONI'S MAC & CHEESE BAR

Experience the viral TikTok mac and cheese bar right here in Campustown! This fan-favorite spot lets you build your own ultimate mac and cheese, loading it up with crave-worthy toppings like bacon, veggies, ranch, and more. If you've seen it all over your feed, now's your chance to try it for yourself!

BAR LA TOSCA

Take date night to Campustown at Bar La Tosca, where a refined menu and inviting atmosphere set the stage for a perfect evening out. From handcrafted wood-fired pizzas to rich, flavorful pasta dishes, every bite brings quality and sophistication to the heart of Iowa State. Keep an eye out for live music during the summer and be sure to end the night with one of the many expertly crafted cocktails on the menu!

BAREFOOT CAMPUS OUTFITTERS

Browse trendy outfits and accessories that are perfect for any Cyclone game day at Barefoot Campus Outfitters! From comfortable game-day staples to standout accessories, everything is designed to show Cyclone pride in style! Whether you're shopping for yourself or searching for the perfect gift for a friend or family member, there's something for every fan.

WELCH AVE STATION

Need a place to watch the Cyclones play? Welch Avenue Station offers the perfect spot to unwind with a drink, grab some great food, and cheer on Iowa State. With the lively atmosphere, big screens, and game day energy, it's a go-to destination for fans looking to enjoy every play alongside fellow Cyclones.

CAFÉ BEAUDELAIRE

If you haven't stopped by Café Beaudelaire yet, what are you waiting for? Their Brazilian and globally inspired dishes are next-level delicious, and the atmosphere is just as inviting as the food. Whether you're in the mood to try something new, catch up with friends, or just enjoy a meal that hits all the right taste buds, this place has you covered.

CLOUDS CAFÉ

Enjoy a delicious meal at Clouds Café, where a cozy atmosphere meets bold, flavorful options. It's the perfect spot for a relaxing coffee and study break, or a lively evening spent at one of the café's themed dinners.

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DISCOVER THE ARTS *and history* *in Ames*

FROM GALLERIES TO THEATERS, STREET MURALS TO LIVE MUSIC — THIS IS WHERE CULTURE COMES ALIVE. DIVE INTO THESE 10 EXPERIENCES AND PLACES THAT'LL IGNITE YOUR IMAGINATION AND CONNECT YOU TO THE CREATIVE SIDE OF OUR COMMUNITY.

1. Spend your day at the **Ames History Museum** viewing rotating exhibits and learning about the history of our town.
2. Catch a concert at the **Maintenance Shop** in the ISU Memorial Union, where students and residents can enjoy musical artists, comedians, and more!
3. Visit the community gallery at the **Octagon Center for the Arts**, find hand-made treasures at **The Octagon Shop**, or chat with local artists at **The Octagon Art Festival**.
4. Stroll through the charming streets of downtown Ames and enjoy the annual music and art walks throughout the season!
5. Browse **Brunnier Art Museum**, the only accredited museum emphasizing a decorative arts collection in the state of Iowa.
6. Get creative at **The Workspace** located in the Iowa State Memorial Union. Learn how to make pottery, bring a friend to drop-in crafts, or create gifts for your loved ones.
7. See a captivating stage show performed by **ACTORS** in their very own unique theater located in west Ames. ACTORS has been performing since 1956!
8. Enjoy a concert or play at **Ames City Auditorium** and take advantage of many other live music venues in Ames.
9. View the famous Grant Wood murals inside **Parks Library** or do a walking tour of artist Christian Petersen's sculptures on the **ISU campus**.
10. Make unique, one-of-a-kind gifts and beautiful home décor with your friends and family at **Board & Brush**.





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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Music and Theatre

ON STAGE *in Ames*

STEPHEN'S AUDITORIUM WAS PACKED WITH CAN'T-MISS SHOWS THIS SEASON, AND WHETHER YOU WERE PLANNING DATE NIGHT, GIRLS' NIGHT, OR JUST A TUESDAY THAT NEEDED SAVING, THEY HAD THE PERFECT PERFORMANCE WAITING FOR YOU.

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| GREAT AMERICAN CROONERS | <i>March 1</i> |
| THE PEKING ACROBATS | <i>March 3</i> |
| RED HOT CILLI PIPERS | <i>March 6</i> |
| GARY ALLEN | <i>March 7</i> |
| THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS: LOST IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM | <i>March 23</i> |
| DANIEL TOSH: MY FIRST FAREWELL TOUR | <i>March 25</i> |
| THE POUT POUT FISH | <i>April 1</i> |
| PETER PAN | <i>April 4</i> |
| THE FAB FOUR | <i>April 10</i> |
| WORLD BALLET COMPANY: CINDERELLA | <i>April 14</i> |
| CECE WINANS: MORE THAN THIS TOUR | <i>April 23</i> |
| THE GOLDFINCH ROOM FEATURING LOJO RUSSO | <i>April 28</i> |
| RAISING TREBLE VOICES FESTIVAL | <i>May 2</i> |
| MASTERWORKS CONCERT | <i>May 3</i> |
| WORLD BALLET COMPANY: SWAN LAKE | <i>October 7</i> |
| BRAD WILLIAMS: THE TALL TALES TOUR | <i>October 18</i> |

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THE UPCOMING SEASON ANNOUNCEMENT FROM STEPHENS AUDITORIUM, WHERE ANOTHER EXCITING LINEUP OF CONCERTS, PERFORMANCES, AND SPECIAL EVENTS IS EXPECTED TO BE REVEALED.

Lights, camera, *Ames!*

This spring, Ames will be in the spotlight with a brand-new episode of John McGivern's *Main Streets* on PBS. Hosted by John McGivern and Emmy Fink, the series explores small-town Main Street communities across the upper Midwest, diving into the people, history, local businesses, and attractions that make each place unique.

Discover Ames worked in conjunction with the Ames Regional Economic Alliance and Iowa State University along with producers to create an itinerary that showcased the best of the Ames community.

This lineup included Danfoss, the Ames History Museum, art exhibits on Iowa State's campus, Dog-Eared Books, Ames British Foods & Gifts, and many more local hotspots.

From campus culture to downtown charm, this episode captures the heart of what makes Ames home.

Mark your calendars!



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AMES

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CARROLL

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712-792-7500

McFarlandClinic.com/NeedCareNow



Each year Mary Greeley Medical Center's Emergency Department treats an average of **30,000** people.

At the Emergency Department at Mary Greeley, the focus is on using the medical center's extensive resources to provide high-level emergency care. That includes:

- 24-hour-a-day, 365-days-a-year staffing.
- A team of physicians specially trained in emergency care, and registered nurses with certifications in emergency medicine.
- Experienced paramedics who are trained to be life-saving first responders when a health emergency arises.



Mary Greeley
MEDICAL CENTER

Emergency (Fire/Police/Ambulance) **911**

First Nurse 515-239-6877
. 800-524-6877

Poison Center 800-222-1222

Mary Greeley Medical Center
(non-emergent). 515-239-2011



www.mgmc.org



CYTOWN BUILDS MOMENTUM

CYTOWN IS COMING ALIVE AS
CONSTRUCTION ACCELERATES ACROSS
THE DISTRICT.

2026 is shaping up to be a major year for construction in CyTown, the multi-year development taking shape between Jack Trice Stadium and Hilton Coliseum.

McFarland Clinic, CyTown's anchor tenant, is already under construction and remains on track for a fall 2026 completion. The clinic is expected to serve approximately 800 patients per day, generating the foot traffic needed to attract restaurants, retail, and additional tenants.

CyTown Suites is the next major project slated for construction, with groundbreaking expected this spring and an opening targeted for fall 2027. The project includes two five-story buildings with 60 high-end suites above ground-floor retail and commercial space.

Each suite offers approximately 1,300 square feet with two or three bedrooms, a private balcony, kitchenette, in-unit washer and dryer, fully stocked refrigerator, and cleaning service included. The suites are being marketed to Iowa State donors and corporate partners as a dedicated place to stay during game days, recruiting visits, and extended business trips to Ames.

When complete, CyTown is envisioned as a year-round hub for dining, entertainment, healthcare, and community gathering in the Iowa State Center — well beyond a game day destination.



THE AMES EVENT CENTER *at The LINC*

The Ames Event Center serves as the anchor of The LINC, an ambitious mixed-use development stretching along Lincoln Way between Clark Avenue and Kellogg Avenue. The state-of-the-art facility is designed to accommodate everything from intimate gatherings and corporate meetings to large-scale events with regional, national, and international appeal, making it a true destination for residents and visitors alike.

The LINC will bring together an upscale full-service hotel, pedestrian bridge to downtown Ames, retail shops, restaurants, apartments, and inviting green spaces — all woven into a dynamic, walkable hub at the heart of Ames. In many ways, The LINC represents the most transformative development this city has ever seen, reshaping not just a corridor, but the community's sense of place and possibility.

Learn more or submit questions about this project at

AmesEventCenter.com



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Your ultimate *Ames Staycation Guide*

SOMETIMES AN OUT-OF-STATE TRIP JUST ISN'T IN THE CARDS — AND THAT'S WHERE A STAYCATION COMES IN. WHETHER IT'S A WEEKEND RESET OR A FUN DAY OUT WITH FAMILY, AMES HAS EVERYTHING YOU NEED.

Stay in Ames

The first step is getting out of your own house! **The Gateway Hotel & Conference Center** and **The Spark by Hilton** are both great picks, each offering newly refreshed spaces following recent renovations. Booking even one night somewhere local can completely shift your mindset from "regular weekend" to "actual getaway."

Slow down and start fresh

Start your morning slowly with coffee and breakfast at **Potter's Café & Eatery**, a cozy downtown spot made for enjoying conversation and coffee.

If you're feeling more active, a morning walk or bike ride around **Ada Hayden Heritage Park** is a beautiful way to ease into the day.



Get out and explore

Reiman Gardens makes for a peaceful afternoon, and the butterfly wing alone is worth the visit.

Downtown Ames is home to great locally owned boutiques, and the **Octagon Shop & Gallery** is a must visit.

For something more active, try an escape room at **No Escape Iowa** or friendly competition at **Inside Golf & Games**.

If you'd rather unwind, grab a blanket and head to **Brookside Park** – sometimes doing nothing somewhere pretty is the whole point.

Dinner and wind down

Wallaby's Bar & Grill is a local favorite for a casual, delicious dinner and drinks.

If you're looking for something more elevated, **Aunt Maude's** has been a beloved Ames staple for good reason.

Catch a show at **Stephen's Auditorium** or the **Ames City Auditorium**.

Cap the night with a locally crafted beer at **Alluvial Brewing** or a glass of wine at **Della Viti** wine bar.

2026 AMES AREA EVENTS

SPRING

ST. PATRICK'S DAY *(March 17)*

LUKE COMBS CONCERT AT JACK TRICE STADIUM
(April 11)

PRAIRIE ROSE RENAISSANCE FAIRE (AMES
RENAISSANCE FAIRE) *(April 18-19)*

PIZZA PIE LOOZA *(May 8-9)*

515 DAYS *(May 15)*

REIMAN GARDENS SPRING ENCHANTMENT



SUMMER

AMES MAIN STREET FARMERS' MARKET
(May through October)

DOWNTOWN ART WALK *(June 11)*

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION
(July 3 Fireworks)

POST MALONE & JELLY ROLL CONCERT AT JACK
TRICE STADIUM *(July 17)*

FARM PROGRESS SHOW *(Sept. 1-3)*

SWIMMING: FURMAN AQUATIC CENTER

SUMMER MUSIC SERIES THROUGHOUT AMES



FALL

DOWNTOWN MUSIC WALK *(Sept. 17)*

OCTAGON ART FESTIVAL *(Sept. 27)*

AMES DOCUMENTARY FILM FEST *(Sept. 27)*

DOWNTOWN WITCHES WALK *(October 8)*

REIMAN GARDENS' SPIRITS IN THE GARDENS
(October)

BOONE & SCENIC VALLEY RAILROAD'S PUMPKIN
EXPRESS *(Select Weekends)*

CYCLONE FOOTBALL



WINTER

SMALL BUSINESS WEEKEND *(Nov. 27-30)*

DOWNTOWN SNOW MAGIC KICK-OFF *(December 3)*

MERRY & BRIGHT HOLIDAY WEEKEND *(Dec. 3-6)*

REIMAN GARDENS' WINTER WONDERSCAPE
(December Weekends)

BOONE & SCENIC VALLEY RAILROAD'S SANTA
EXPRESS *(Select Weekends)*

WINTER SPORTS AT SEVEN OAKS

CYCLONE WINTER SPORTS

DISCOVER
Ames IA

**COMMUNITY
GRANT PROGRAM**

Since 2007, Discover Ames has administered a community grant program, distributing more than \$1.3 million to local organizations. This year, 45 special events will receive a total of \$127,000. You can thank our visitors for this support – grant funding comes from a portion of the local hotel/motel tax.

Events range from a renaissance faire in Ames to a pizza fest in Nevada, from an art festival to the annual 4th of July fireworks show. These diverse events share a common thread – they enhance quality of life for residents and help put Ames on the map for visitors.

Application for 2027 grants are due in October. You'll find requirements and an application form at discoverames.com/community-grant.



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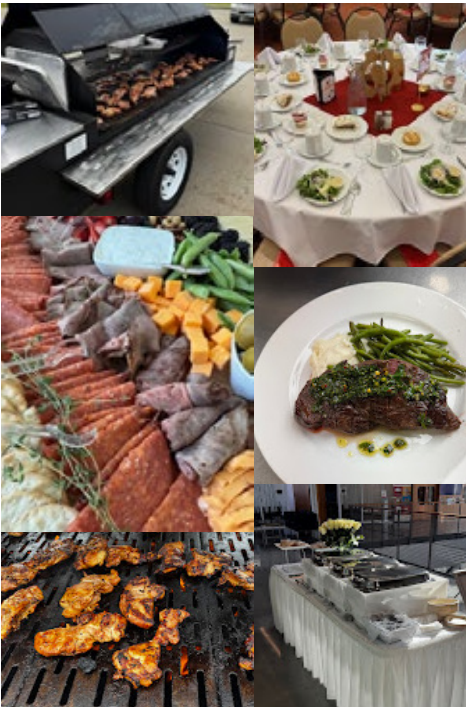
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[WHATCHASMOKINBBQ.COM](https://whatchasmokinbbq.com)



2026 DISCOVER AMES COMMUNITY GRANT RECIPIENTS

Enjoy these 2026 community-grant-supported events!

- AAPI Heritage Month Celebration
- Ames Community Art Council 50th Birthday Party
- Ames Documentary Film Festival
- Ames Fly-In 2026
- Ames Main Street Farmers' Market
- Ames Midnight Madness 5K/10K
- Ames Pridefest 2026
- Ames TUBACHRISTMAS
- Ames Turkey Trot
- Ames Wrestling Camps
- Anime Ames
- Bethany Life Charity Golf Classic
- Bill Bergan 5K on the 4th
- Campus Service Day
- CASA Holiday Art Sale
- CASA Spring Open House
- Celebrating the Reed-Niland Corner
- Dancenter Dancer Showcase
- Disney's Newsies Jr.
- Eco-Theatre Festival
- Friendship Ark Tropical Sangria Escape
- Goldfinch Room at Reiman Gardens
- Independence Day Fireworks
- KHOI Fundraising Concert
- Lincoln Highway Days 2026
- Nevada Community Rodeo
- Nevada Truck and Tractor Pull
- Octagon Art Festival
- Opening Night Hors D'oeuvres
- Pizza Pie Looza
- Prairie Rose Renaissance Faire
- Scandinavian Days
- Semiquincentennial Celebration
- Senior Variety Show: 30 Years in the Spotlight
- Snow Magic Kick Off Event
- Special Olympics Iowa Summer Games
- Spirits in the Gardens
- Step Into Story Books
- Story County Fair Concert
- Taste of Campustown
- The Howling
- Twelfth Night, Early Music Ensemble
- WinterFest
- Zeering Days Celebration



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