

Additional ornamental lighting planned for Iowa Avenue in Dunlap

DUNLAP, Iowa — Additional ornamental lighting is coming to Iowa Avenue this year as the City of Dunlap continues its efforts to improve safety, accessibility and the overall appearance of the community's main corridor.

Shorter, 10-foot black ornamental lights will be installed along Iowa Avenue from the corner of Eighth Street to the corner of 12th Street during the spring and summer months. Plans call for three lights per block on each side of the street, extending decorative lighting from the downtown business district toward the school.

The project will be funded through Iowa West Foundation funds secured by the Dunlap Grants Committee in partnership with the City of Dunlap.

Jeni Martens, Dunlap Grants Committee representative, said the project reflects the committee's focus on long-term, community-wide improvements.

"As a grant committee, we look for projects that strengthen community identity," Martens said. "Extending decorative residential lighting that matches our revitalized downtown helps create a unified look and feel throughout the entire community. It's a simple improvement that makes a big visual impact for years to come. These upgrades help every neighborhood feel cared for and included in the broader revitalization efforts, reinforcing our sense of community pride."

City officials say the goal is to enhance Main Street's aesthetics while improving pedestrian safety, particularly for students and families walking to and from school.

City Council member Mike Gunia said the lighting will create a noticeable and welcoming impression.

"Our town's going to look a lot nicer with uniform lights going the whole Main Street," Gunia said. "We're just trying to brighten things up. People coming into town are going to see the lights all the way up to the school. It's going to be noticeable."

Martens said unified lighting also serves a practical purpose beyond appearance.

"One of the reasons the committee supports unified decorative lighting is that it improves both the beauty and the safety of our neighborhoods," she said. "Consistent, well-placed lighting enhances visibility and encourages evening activity, helping residents feel more comfortable walking after dark."

The upcoming installation builds on improvements completed along Iowa Avenue throughout 2025. As part of a state-led project, the Iowa Department of Transportation

replaced sidewalks, updated concrete parking along Main Street and resurfaced the highway.

City Council member Mike Bonsall said the improvements have already made a difference.

“This current street project has made Main Street look better,” Bonsall said. “There’s been some hiccups along the way that they’ve had to resolve. It’s a state-run project, so some of the decisions take longer than what we’re used to, but at the end of the project, it will make the town look better.”

As part of that project, 14-foot black ornamental lights were installed throughout the downtown business district, matching decorative lighting previously added to the westernmost block of Iowa Avenue.

Bonsall said the additional 10-foot ornamental lights planned for installation later this year are intended to address safety concerns beyond the downtown core.

“I go to a lot of home basketball games and it’s really dark around the school,” he said. “I feel it will make it safer for home and visiting fans to have the lights along the sidewalk.”

Martens said the lighting improvements also represent a thoughtful investment in the community’s long-term vitality.

“Decorative residential lighting may seem like a small change, but it contributes to curb appeal, supports property values, and ties our community identity together,” she said. “That’s the kind of thoughtful, multi-benefit investment the committee aims to fund.”

Gunia said the recent improvements highlight the importance of grant funding in a small community.

“If we don’t have someone to help with grants, the projects get stopped. They don’t happen, and we’ve had some good projects happen,” he said. “The street project was one heck of a big thing happening for this town.”

City officials say the new lighting installation represents the next step in a broader effort to invest in Dunlap’s infrastructure while improving safety, walkability and visual appeal for residents and visitors.



