

# Saugatuck, Douglas Receive Prestigious National Trust Honor

## Local Communities Named Among This Year's Dozen Distinctive Destinations

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In one of the biggest awards ever bestowed locally, the National Trust for Historic Preservation Tuesday named Saugatuck-Douglas, Michigan one of its 2009 Dozen Distinctive Destinations.

Since 2000, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has annually selected communities across the United States that offer cultural and recreational experiences different from the typical vacation destination.

From dynamic downtowns and stunning architecture to cultural diversity and commitment to historic preservation, the selected destinations boast a richness of character and exude an authentic sense of place.

The title of Distinctive Destination is presented to cities and towns across the country that offer an

national level, the dedication that both Saugatuck and Douglas have to preserving our cultural heritage as it pertains to tourism and the reasons that visitors come here," said Fairchild.

"It recognizes our emphasis on - and stewardship of - the arts, architecture, agriculture, the ecology and preservation of our greatest asset: the lake shore. It will give federal weight to our efforts to curtail opportunistic development from outside sources."

Local business leaders and politicians gathered on Tuesday morning for a presentation of the award at the CVB. Gathering people was a challenge due to the secrecy of the award. Although Fairchild was notified of the recognition, she was not able to announce the award until members of the National Trust presented the award. Guests celebrated with rare Swiss, French, German and Argentine artisan cheeses at the CVB office.

The City of Saugatuck held a reception from 12 - 5 p.m. with desserts and coffee.

The City of Douglas will celebrate with a traditional English tea on January 19 from 4 - 6 p.m. at Douglas City Hall.

Both Saugatuck and Douglas mayors joined the celebration on Tuesday.

They sat alongside Senator Birkholz, State Rep. Bob Genetski, as well as members of the CVB.

"We're really proud and appreciative of Felicia's efforts," said Saugatuck Mayor Barry Johnson. "This is just one more accolade that will give us more recognition in the Midwest and nationally. This award is another reason to let people know what we already know - this is a great and historic place to live and visit."

Douglas Mayor Matt Balmer echoed Johnson's comments. "I am really proud of the citizens in this area, everyone from Felicia, to the Historical Society and members of the community. I am so proud that they take an interest."

Balmer also hoped that the award would attract more people to the area.

"We have a lot to offer here," said Balmer. "This recognition is a true testament

to the area - both its residents and historic dunes and landscape."

The positive nods rippled through both cities on Tuesday.

"All of us associated with the City of the Village of Douglas

shops and restaurants make it a perfect getaway for a day, a weekend or even a season.

"Saugatuck-Douglas offers visitors a chance to enjoy history, art, outdoor recreation and spectacular natural resources," said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "Few vacation destinations provide such an extraordinary combination of tourism opportunities all in one location."

The release also highlighted the area's distinctive art community.

"Saugatuck-Douglas has long had a reputation as the ultimate sanctuary for artists. The area is commonly referred to as the 'Art Coast of Michigan' and is one of the top 25 art destinations in the United States.

"The mix of galleries in and around Saugatuck-Douglas comprises a vibrant kaleidoscope of the artistic experience. From classical to contemporary, fine art to crafts and textiles, the selection rivals metropolitan galleries.

"Today, the community's artistic heritage endures through the Oxbow Summer School of Painting's affiliation with the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, which evolved from a preservation project to save an abandoned pie factory."

The National Trust also recognized the true scenic beauty of the two communities and the sheer number of activities available for tourists and locals alike.

"For those seeking rugged adventure or simple beach pleasures, activities abound on the two waterways surrounding Saugatuck-Douglas. Scenic parks dot the harborfront, an old fashioned stern wheeler shuttles passengers along the river past the ghost town of Singapore and foot passengers can catch a ride on board the last Victorian hand cranked chain ferry in North America.

History buffs can tour the SS Keewatin - the last luxury liner to sail the Great Lakes - or visit the area's award-winning Historical Museum where exhibits trace the roots of the area's earliest settlers."

The lodging and dining options in the area was also highly

noted.

"The Saugatuck-Douglas area is celebrated throughout the Midwest for its exceptional lodging, diverse dining and one-of-a-kind shops. Several bed-and-breakfast inns are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. An array of dining establishments line the streets, from upscale to casual, including a corner store soda fountain where hand-creamed sodas and malted shakes have been a specialty for 84 years.

"The retail community celebrates quality, variety and personality, from trendy clothing and accessories to house wares, local wines and gifts."

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Dozen Distinctive Destinations annual list. To date, there are 120 Distinctive Destinations located in 43 states throughout the country. To see a



Attending the celebration is (l to r) State Rep. Bob Genetski; State Sen. Patty Birkholz; Douglas Mayor Matt Balmer; CVB Executive Director Felicia Fairchild; Saugatuck Mayor Barry Johnson



Saugatuck Mayor Barry Johnson

authentic visitor experience by combining dynamic downtowns, cultural diversity, attractive architecture, cultural landscapes and a strong commitment to historic preservation and revitalization.

In each community, residents have taken forceful action to protect their town's character and sense of place.

Saugatuck-Douglas Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Felicia Fairchild drafted the application in August 2008 after the urging of local resident Bill Hunt.

In a period of two weeks, Fairchild helped find support.

The application was supported by letters from Senator Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck), the City of Saugatuck, the City of the Village of Douglas, The Saugatuck Dunes Coastal Alliance and the Historical Society.

"The Visitors Bureau spearheaded the initiative to receive this award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation because it acknowledges and reinforces, on a

organization are delighted that we were named to the 2009 list of 'America's Dozen Distinctive Destinations' by the very prestigious and esteemed National Trust for Historic Preservation," said Douglas City Manager David Kowal.

"Receipt by Douglas of this very celebrated designation is a testament to the enormous and incalculable efforts of innumerable dedicated, devoted and uniquely diverse individuals and organizations throughout our great community that continually and selflessly contribute in countless different ways to make our city one of the finest in the nation. We are most humbled by and grateful for this very grand honor."

The release from the National Trust recognizing the two communities reads in part, "For more than 100 years, visitors have sought refuge from the stress of everyday life in the resort community of Saugatuck-Douglas.

"These neighboring harbor towns, nestled near the shore of Lake Michigan, are defined by steep, rolling dunes to the west and lush orchard country to the east.

"Today, the 19th century architecture forms the basis for the area's old world charm, but the lakeshore community's scenic beauty and singular collection of art galleries,



Douglas Mayor Matt Balmer

complete list, visit [www.PreservationNation.org/ddd](http://www.PreservationNation.org/ddd).

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit membership organization bringing people together to protect, enhance and enjoy the places that matter to them.

By saving the places where great moments from history - and the important moments of everyday life - took place, the National Trust for Historic Preservation helps revitalize neighborhoods and communities, spark economic development and promote environmental sustainability.

With headquarters in Washington, DC, 9 regional and field offices, 29 historic sites, and partner organizations in all 50 states, the National Trust for Historic Preservation provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to a national network of people, organizations and local communities committed to saving places, connecting us to our history and collectively shaping



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