

CHAPTER 5 – DOWNTOWN JOPLIN

Downtown Joplin developed rapidly as a prosperous commercial and transportation center for the Tri-State Mining District in the early twentieth century. By the 1920s, the downtown core was a large commercial and industrial area stretching from the railroad lines along Joplin Creek on the east to Pearl Avenue on the west and from 1st Street on the north to the rail yards at 10th Street on the south. The downtown area included buildings of many sizes and types: retail, hotel, office, commercial, religious, institutional, industrial, and warehouse. It was a mature urban center.

Because it was a commercial and transportation center for the entire Tri-State Mining District, Downtown Joplin was significantly larger than would be expected for the actual population of the city. This factor presented both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the quality of the building stock is excellent both in design and construction. On the other hand, the City of Joplin does not have the level of population or economic activity on its own to keep the downtown core thriving.

With the decline of the mining industry following World War II and the subsequent shift of retail and business activity to suburban commercial corridors in the 1950s, Downtown Joplin experienced decline. Urban renewal from the late 1950s into the mid-1970s saw the demolition of whole city blocks leaving large open areas within the downtown core. The limited number of new construction projects that followed did not fill the gap, and many of the open areas remain today.

As a consequence, a number of blocks at the northeast corner of downtown and on the western side one block off of Main Street are vacant. Several new buildings were constructed in the northeast as well as along Main Street itself. On the positive side, these open areas provide space for parking that would not otherwise be available in a pre-automobile building pattern. And there is ample potential for future infill construction.

A backlash to demolition in part led to the creation of Joplin's historic preservation program in 1986. A comprehensive survey of existing historic buildings in the downtown area was completed in 1988.

In the early-2000s, the city undertook an ambitious downtown revitalization initiative. A Vision Joplin 20/20 Downtown Revitalization Task Force was created to mobilize leadership and coordinate revitalization efforts. A Downtown Joplin Revitalization Plan was prepared in 2002 creating a vision, strategies, and recommendations for implementation. Streetscape improvements were installed along Main Street. The city rehabilitated the Newman Brothers building in the center of downtown for its municipal offices in the heart of Downtown Joplin. Reinvestment was supported by the business community as well.

Joplin created the Sunshine Lamp District along Main Street as a local historic district and design review district to encourage the appropriate rehabilitation of historic downtown buildings. A local Main Street program, the Downtown Joplin Alliance, was created to attract and support retail uses and activate the Main Street corridor. Between 2006 and 2011, small National Register Historic Districts were created in portions of downtown to facilitate the rehabilitation of historic buildings using federal and state rehabilitation tax credits.

The efforts to revitalize Downtown Joplin have had considerable success. Yet the sheer size of the downtown area has remained challenging. Commercial, retail, and business activity has continued to favor sites along the city's expanding commercial corridors at the city's edges, east and south of downtown. The 2011 tornado shifted the city's priorities to the recovery effort, and the momentum for downtown revitalization paused. Nonetheless, private sector entrepreneurs have continued to invest in downtown buildings and programs.

Chapter 5 of the preservation plan recommends refocusing upon revitalization of Downtown Joplin and its surrounding historic neighborhoods as central components of the city's growth and development efforts. Revitalization should embrace the renewed sense of community that grew during the recovery and apply its energy to community revitalization and enhancement city-wide.

Chapter 5 emphasizes goals 1-Community Identity, 3-Economy and Quality of Life, and 6-Downtown Joplin presented in *Chapter 3, Preservation Approach*. It supports concepts outlined in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan related to promoting mixed-use development, forging physical connections, and encouraging high quality development standards. The Historic Preservation Plan embraces concepts and strategies outlined in the 2002 Downtown Joplin Revitalization Plan and proposes that they be revisited and refined.

Recommendations for Downtown Joplin are organized under four topical headings:

- Planning for Downtown;
- Activating Downtown Joplin;
- Project Support and Realization; and
- Facilitating Adaptive Reuse.



Downtown Joplin (Google Earth).

5.1 PLANNING FOR DOWNTOWN

Joplin has been implementing a successful program of downtown revitalization since 2002. However, efforts have been preempted by the tornado and the need for recovery. It is time to refocus on the whole of Joplin, combining recovery programs with revitalization of the entire city. Of central importance is the need to strengthen and solidify community identity in the wake of the recovery and the community spirit it engendered. Joplin is being reborn.

Concentration on the revitalization of Downtown Joplin should be renewed and reinvigorated based upon the experience of the past fifteen years, building upon current initiatives. Because of the large size of downtown—perhaps three times as large as the city's population would normally support—progress will be incremental and will take time. However, it is suggested that Joplin should focus future growth on the infill and revitalization of older portions of the city as opposed to continued growth around the edges as a fundamental concept of the Comprehensive Plan. This preservation plan suggests the reinvigorating planning activities for revitalizing Downtown Joplin.

The 2002 Downtown Joplin Revitalization Plan

The recommendations for Downtown Joplin developed over the course of preparation of this preservation plan reiterate and reinforce many of the recommendations that were made in the 2002 Downtown Joplin Revitalization Plan (city of Joplin 2002). (This preservation plan's recommendations were developed before the planning team had access to the 2002 plan.) The significant downtown revitalization steps that the city and its partners undertook prior to the 2011 tornado were largely based upon the 2002 plan, though they adapted to evolving conditions.

Implementation of the 2002 plan was coordinated by a Downtown Revitalization Task Force with participation by a variety of downtown stakeholders. That structure and recommendation are reiterated here. It is suggested that the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce lead the Task Force and play a leading role in guiding implementation efforts.

Three reasons relate to this suggestion: (1) the Chamber's proven experience in working with, attracting, and retaining businesses in Joplin; (2) the Chamber's responsibility in implementing the city's overall economic development strategy; and (3) the focused role that the Chamber can play in facilitating projects and initiatives within the larger downtown area especially in the areas away from Main Street. The next section of this chapter, suggests that the Downtown Joplin Alliance (also a key member of the Task Force) have the primary responsibility for business support and development within the Sunshine Lamp District along the Main Street corridor.



Downtown Joplin's revitalization was initiated 2002.

It is important that downtown revitalization be an integrated component of the city's overall economic strategy. As part of the city's strategy, the Action Plan created for the 2002 Downtown Joplin Revitalization Plan includes a series of goals organized under three themes: Connection, Animation, and Renewal. Several of the 2002 goals that remain particularly relevant are discussed here.

Connection

- ***Improve the connection between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods by improving the visual and physical transitions.*** —The importance of residential use to the economic viability of Downtown Joplin is recognized by this goal from the 2002 plan. Streetscape improvements and the revitalization of the historic Murphysburg neighborhood are steps toward its implementation.

- ***Promote Downtown connections through the use of distinct, clear signage and the promotion of easily identifiable gateways and landmarks.*** —Joplin has implemented a limited signage and wayfinding program that focuses on Downtown. However, signs are few in number and not necessarily strategically located. The preservation plan recommends a much more robust wayfinding initiative as part of the city's branding and identity. It should include not only street signage, but trail, bicycle, interpretive, and identity signage. This is discussed further below and in Chapter 8.

Animation

- ***Strengthen retail activities and opportunities for expansion and new commercial ventures in Downtown.*** —The Joplin Downtown Alliance was created to implement a Main Street program to support existing

retail businesses and attract new businesses. Revitalization of this program is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

- ***Support Downtown activities by increasing the Downtown population through promoting and supporting living opportunities.*** —This goal also recognizes the importance of residential use to the vitality of Downtown Joplin. Proposed actions in 2002 related to this goal included redevelopment of existing buildings for residential use as well as attracting new mixed-use development downtown, in concert with the 2012 Comprehensive Plan. These proposed actions remain relevant today.

  Entrepreneurs who have developed recent projects downtown have found a market for loft apartments and condominiums in downtown historic buildings. Attracting residential development to the downtown core, especially west of Main Street, is an important and reachable goal.

- ***Promote Downtown living by stabilizing existing neighborhoods within and surrounding Downtown.*** —The 2002 plan identifies the existing residential neighborhoods west of Byers Avenue and south of 10th Street as important to the downtown core. The recent initiative to revitalize Murphysburg west of downtown through its designation as both a National Register historic district and local historic district is an important step in implementing this goal. Signage, banners, and neighborhood organization and programming have reinforced Murphysburg's identity.

  The 2002 plan also recommends the creation and support of neighborhood associations, which is now being implemented through the city's Neighborhood Services program and is discussed in the next chapter.

- ***Support social service programs and charitable housing opportunities through the expansion and interrelationship of institutional uses and programs.*** —Several social service organizations are present at locations within the downtown core. The work of these organizations is extremely important in serving the homeless, the poor, the mentally disabled, and others facing difficulties. In addition to addressing the critical needs of these populations, their work can help mitigate and reduce conflicts with other downtown uses.

  In some instances, social service organizations occupy older, poorly maintained buildings that do not adequately serve their needs. It has been proposed that a central location be developed for these organizations with new, modern facilities that would better support their work. The older buildings would then be available for adaptive reuse and revitalization.

- ***Use landmarks and attractions to draw patrons to Downtown and increase Downtown activity.*** —The designation of the Sunshine Lamp District, a local historic district along Main Street, has implemented aspects of this goal, including the use of design guidelines and design

review downtown. A comprehensive interpretive initiative with Downtown Joplin as a focus area, as outlined in Chapter 8 of the preservation plan, would implement related recommendations from the 2002 plan.

- ***Develop a major activity/community center within Downtown.*** —The city and local stakeholders have begun staging public events at Memorial Hall, re-establishing the historic building as an activity center downtown. Outdoor events on Main Street and cultural events at the Spiva Center and elsewhere have had a similar effect.

  However, this recommendation of the 2002 plan would be fully addressed through implementation of the proposed Performing Arts Center and events park around Memorial Hall, a current initiative of Connect2Culture. The Performing Arts Center is an example of an initiative with backing and momentum that could have an important impact on Downtown Joplin and be of benefit to the community as a whole.

  The preservation plan also supports development of a new home for the Joplin Museum in proximity to the Performance Arts Center, which has been under discussion. This recommendation is addressed in Chapter 8 in relation to a city-wide interpretive presentation with Downtown Joplin as a key focus area.



Main Street has been activated through the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

Renewal

- ***Develop strategies and incentives for renewal based on land use and compatibility.*** —The 2002 plan divides Downtown Joplin into a set of mixed-use, entertainment, government, industrial, commercial, and residential districts, each with its own brief list of redevelopment strategies. This is an important concept that can help focus recruitment and revitalization efforts. The identified districts remain relevant, but should be revisited, rethought, and better defined based upon current markets, building types and resources, and the experience of the past fourteen years.

  As discussed throughout this chapter, because of the large size of Downtown Joplin, progress will be incremental and must focus on viable initiatives that have energy and support on a project-by-project basis. It will help to have an overall plan and strategy for each downtown district, with target areas and target projects that can make a difference over time. Consistent with concepts adopted in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan, the 2002 plan recommended the development of design standards, revitalization policies, and development incentives tailored to each downtown district.

  As a result of observations and discussions in preparing this preservation plan, it is suggested that new residential housing—both adaptive reuse and new construction—be a particular focus of the area west of Main Street from Joplin Avenue to Byers Avenue in addition to the office/institutional focus recommended in the 2002 plan. East of Main Street, from Virginia Avenue through Grand Avenue, an office/industrial/technology focus is suggested, which has also been an objective of the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce.

- ***Create opportunities for redevelopment and infill as a means of stimulating reinvestment in Downtown.*** —The 2002 plan recommended identifying redevelopment opportunities both in terms of individual targeted buildings to which businesses and entrepreneurs could be attracted and as targeted areas for redevelopment as a coordinated public/private initiative.

  The recommendations of this chapter include the identification of target projects for marketing to businesses and entrepreneurs. The area of Main Street between 7th and 10th Streets is recommended as a targeted redevelopment area in conjunction with development of a Performing Arts Center on adjacent blocks to the west.

- ***Use financial incentives and programs to promote reinvestment and renewal in Downtown.*** —As a historic preservation plan, this document highlights the potential use of federal and state rehabilitation tax credits as financial incentives in support of private sector revitalization projects. Other state economic incentives might be available as well and are familiar to some local entrepreneurs. The City of Joplin should consider financial incentives that it could offer to help spur development, whether

through tax or other financial vehicles or through specific project-related actions. The reconstitution of the city's Tax Increment Financing program focusing on downtown revitalization is recommended when initiatives of the current program have been paid off.

- ***Improve the visual appearance and physical maintenance of public and private space within Downtown to improve the function and the overall success of Downtown.*** —The City of Joplin appears to have a very good program of cleaning and maintenance in Downtown Joplin, particularly along Main Street and adjacent streets and parking areas. Streetscape improvements implemented in conjunction with the Sunshine Lamp District enhance the character and appearance of Downtown. The implementation of a Commercial Improvement District for Downtown Joplin would support the maintenance and appearance of downtown as well as other possible initiatives and is discussed later in this chapter.



The Sunshine Lamp District, a local historic district, established a downtown identity.

Identity and Wayfinding

Identity and branding have been topics of interest for stakeholders during the preparation of this preservation plan. As development of this plan has been undertaken, the Joplin Convention and Visitors Bureau has been involved in a parallel process of strategic planning that has included the consideration of rebranding. Identity and branding are incorporated into a number of the recommendations outlined below and should be coordinated with all of the various related activities of the city and its partners.

Key concepts of this preservation plan are that Joplin's historic character is central to the city's identity and that promoting Joplin's identity will reinforce public

awareness of and appreciation for the city's historic resources. Community character and identity are important selling points in attracting new businesses, new residents, and visitors.

Ongoing work on identity and branding should incorporate initiatives that the city has already implemented—including the Sunshine Lamp District and the limited amount of wayfinding signage that has been installed along road corridors, all of which is of high design quality. Organizations that should be involved include the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce, Joplin Convention and Visitors Bureau, Downtown Joplin Alliance, and others—all should be using the same branding and graphic identity on behalf of the city. Graphic identity all of the graphic formats used by the city and its partners in communicating with residents and visitors—logos, signage, publications, websites, promotional materials, etc. Joplin's arts organizations should also be involved in the initiative, providing support, advice, and creative content.

It is recommended that Joplin's wayfinding system be greatly expanded and that it be encountered by visitors immediately upon exiting the interstate and at other points of entry. Wayfinding signage is an important means of communicating the city's graphic identity and character. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan that the city is beginning to prepare should include implementation of an expanded wayfinding initiative for bicycle and pedestrian trails as well as for parks and public spaces making use of Joplin's graphic identity.

Chapter 8 outlines recommendations for implementing a city-wide interpretive presentation which would include use of a variety of exhibit and graphic formats. All should incorporate the city's graphic identity.



Main Street's Route 66 pocket park combines identity, art, and interpretation.

Below are recommendations on planning for the revitalization of Downtown Joplin, building on past initiatives and incorporating historic preservation concepts.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.A: Reconstitute the Downtown Joplin Task Force under the leadership of the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce to refocus, plan, and guide downtown revitalization efforts.

- Incorporate revitalization of Downtown Joplin as a core strategy in the city's long-term **economic plan**.

- Ask the **Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce** to coordinate the overall process in its role in implementing the city's economic plan. The Chamber's role is to encourage new businesses to locate in the downtown area, particularly in areas east and west of Main Street.

- Include other **key organizations** such as the Downtown Joplin Alliance, Connect2Culture, downtown businesses, and city institutions as members of the Task Force.

- Retain a professional financial and development **consultant** to help guide planning efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.B: Review and reinforce Joplin's identity and branding for use in public communication, economic development, and marketing.

- Undertake a **community visioning** process through which residents and organizations city-wide can be engaged in the identity and branding process. Cultivate community interest and buy-in using the process to build momentum toward implementation.

- Focus on **Downtown Joplin** as the center of community identity with connections and changing character city-wide.

- Create a **graphic identity** for Joplin perhaps using concepts and graphics that have already been successfully developed. Create guidelines for use of the graphic identity in signage, publications, online media, and other formats.

- Prepare a city-wide **wayfinding** plan to be implemented over time using the graphic identity. Build upon but significantly expand the wayfinding signage that has already been installed. Include parks, trails, and bikeways in the wayfinding system.

- Implement a **wayfinding** plan specifically for **Downtown Joplin**. Assess the existing wayfinding signage and related installations downtown for gaps and additional desired enhancements to be planned and implemented.

- Include implementation of designs for **gateways** to downtown as recommended in the 2002 Downtown Joplin Revitalization Plan. Design gateways for other entranceways to the city, such as at US I-44 interchanges.

- Prepare a phased **implementation plan** for use of the graphic identity in city-wide signage, publication, and media formats.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.C: Review and update the 2002 Downtown Joplin Revitalization Plan based upon the progress and experience of the past decade.

- Review **progress and changes** in downtown revitalization that have taken place since preparation of the 2002 plan.

- **Assess strategies** and recommendations for business development, connection, animation, and renewal based upon experience.

- Assess the various **planning districts** and uses proposed in the 2002 plan. Revise concepts as appropriate.

- Actively support the development and promotion of **anchor attractions** downtown. Collaborate with each attraction in determining and promoting their roles in downtown as a destination. Include all organized programs for promoting Downtown Joplin. Provide visibility and support for projects as they seek funding for implementation.

- Identify **target projects** including both public projects that would enhance and key private projects that might serve as an anchor for future development.

- Focus on **mixed use** concepts as outlined in the 2012 Comprehensive plan. Strongly encourage residential projects and components of mixed-use projects especially on the west side of the downtown district.

- Identify **underutilized historic buildings** that could be adapted to new uses. Seek businesses and uses that could be appropriate for those buildings. Support entrepreneurs willing to undertake such projects.

- Focus on the **adaptive reuse** of historic buildings using federal and state tax credits.

- Prepare and begin implementing a **marketing strategy** and plan for cultivating and attracting businesses and residential developers to downtown.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.D: Undertake preparation of a master plan for Main Street between 7th and 10th Streets and Virginia and Joplin Avenues.

- Prepare a **physical master plan** of the entire six-block area showing prospective uses, design options, and public improvements. Include cost estimates. Include both public and private lots, uses, and investment.

- Coordinate planning with master planning for the **Performing Arts Center** and Spiva Center being undertaken by Connect2Culture for the blocks around Memorial Hall.

- Work with **social service organizations** to consolidate operations in a location and facilities that are more conducive to their needs. Actively support the work of these organizations. Free existing historic buildings for appropriate redevelopment.

- Consult with **potential developers** with interest in projects in the area.

- Focus on **mixed use** development, physical connections, and development guidelines as outlined in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan.

- Focus on the **adaptive reuse** of historic buildings within the area.

- Include a phased **implementation plan**. Identify funding opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.E: Consider reconstituting the city's Tax Increment Finance program to support investment in downtown revitalization when the current program is paid off.



Streetscape enhancements have significantly imporved the quality of Main Street.

5.2 ACTIVATING DOWNTOWN JOPLIN

A core strategy to the revitalization of Downtown Joplin is activating the downtown streetscape and making it a place that residents and visitors want to be. Downtown Joplin should be a regional visitor destination.

Ideas for activating Downtown Joplin were introduced in the 2002 Downtown Joplin Revitalization Plan, and began to be implemented in subsequent years. Revitalization efforts have grown and reached a point where Downtown Joplin has created an identity, attracted businesses, and is recognized as a distinctive place within the city. But downtown revitalization has yet to reach critical mass and fully realize its potential.

With a renewed focus on downtown revitalization, it is time to reassess and refresh the organizational and programmatic initiatives that have bred success in Joplin's downtown revitalization efforts so far. Among the most important tasks at hand are building organizational capacity, making sure that downtown businesses are engaged and enthusiastic, and making sure that the interests of downtown businesses and other stakeholders are effectively represented.

Downtown Joplin Alliance

The Downtown Joplin Alliance was created during the city's initial revitalization initiative in the mid-2000s with the idea of being a downtown business advocate implementing strategies of the Main Street Four-Point Approach. Its mission states that the Downtown Joplin Alliance is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of the downtown community as a thriving, safe and attractive center of art, history, enterprise, commerce, culture, residence, and entertainment.

In recent years, with the city's attention focused on tornado recovery and not on downtown revitalization, the Downtown Joplin Alliance has struggled with its mission and programming, not fully engaged with the National Main Street idea. With limited funding and a part-time staff, the Alliance has concentrated primarily on its Third Thursday public events, a street fair held downtown each Thursday evening from March through October. Third Thursday has been a public success, drawing residents downtown for music, food, and fun, and has raised Downtown Joplin's profile. It has been the Alliance's primary source of funding, and managing the event has severely limited the organization's ability to accomplish other goals.

Nonetheless, the Downtown Joplin Alliance is well-positioned to refocus its programming and be a principal advocate for revitalization of Downtown Joplin. As a key member of the reconstituted Downtown Joplin Task Force discussed in the previous section, the role of the Downtown Joplin Alliance should be to concentrate upon the success of the Main Street corridor—the Sunshine Lamp District—and its local businesses. In contrast, the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce should focus on business recruitment, development, and revitalization in other areas of downtown. The Downtown Joplin Alliance should work under the guidance and supervision of the Task Force.

How to accomplish a transformation of the Downtown Joplin Alliance was a topic of discussion with the Alliance and other downtown stakeholders during the planning process. Key needs are to (1) become reconnected to specific strategies and techniques of the National Main Street Program, (2) fully engage with and become the representative of the downtown business community, (3) build staff capacity in order to be capable of implementing effective programming, and (4) rebuild the trust of city leaders and stakeholders through its actions.

In consultation with the Missouri Main Street Connection, it was determined that the best way begin would be to undertake training, mentoring, and outreach by implementing programming offered through a People Energizing Places Grant.

Main Street Training, Support, and Outreach

Missouri Main Street Connection, Inc. is the licensing partner and Main Street Coordinating Program for the State of Missouri with the National Main Street Center. The organization manages Missouri's official Main Street Program.

Missouri Main Street Connection's *People Energizing Places (PEP) Grant* is offered in partnership with the Missouri Department of Economic Development to assist Missouri communities in developing and implementing programs using the Main Street approach. Staff of Missouri Main Street Connection have been familiar with Joplin and its downtown revitalization initiative and have been in consultation with the Joplin Downtown Alliance.

PEP grants assist Main Street organizations with training and expert guidance to become more effective in their programming. The grant is a targeted two-year program that provides specialized training, focused initiatives for sustained revitalization, and technical expertise tailored to advance the Main Street organization's downtown development work. The grant program is the perfect vehicle to assist the Downtown Joplin Alliance with engagement, capacity building, and program development. The cost of the program over the two-year period is $38,425, 75% of which is provided by the grant and 25% ($9,600) is provided locally.

The Main Street Approach applies a historic preservation-based, *volunteer-driven* economic development strategy to grassroots organizations. The approach has decades of proven experience in yielding impressive results in communities of all sizes and in all places. The Main Street Approach advocates a return to community self-reliance and the redevelopment of Main Street program areas based on traditional community assets: personal service, local ownership, a unique physical environment, and a sense of community. It is an incremental, long-term, total community effort.[1]

Implementation of the PEP grant program involves undertaking an initial assessment and charrette with community stakeholders through which the downtown area's primary issues, goals, assets and opportunities are identified; current programs are evaluated, and the best course of action is determined. The

[1] People Energizing Places Grant Program and Application, Missouri Main Street Connection; 2.

assessment and charrette are a means of re-engaging with downtown businesses and stakeholders, involving them in the Main Street idea and helping to rebuild their relationship with the Alliance. Through outreach and engagement, stakeholder priorities for the two-year grant period are outlined. With stakeholder priorities established, a two-year action plan is developed to reach identified goals for downtown stakeholders, the Sunshine Lamp District, and the Downtown Joplin Alliance.

Over the two-year period, Missouri Main Street Connection provides ongoing guidance to the Downtown Joplin Alliance and downtown stakeholders in the implementation of the action plan. Technical visits are included to provide on-site assistance tailored to the needs and interests of Joplin's downtown district. Visits can be used in a variety of ways, such as providing consultation or training to staff and stakeholders related to retail/business consultation, event development/festival training, marketing, promotion, recruitment, historic preservation, or other subjects as needed. Training is available on the Main Street Approach for staff, stakeholders, and community leaders.

The goal of the two-year program is to assist the Downtown Joplin Alliance and its partners and stakeholders in implementing the Main Street Approach with measurable positive results for the Sunshine Lamp District and Downtown Joplin. The grant program will assist stakeholders and the Downtown Joplin Alliance in qualifying as an accredited community of the National Main Street Program. Through these efforts, local businesses will be engaged, the benefits of the approach will be realized by community leaders, and the role of the Downtown Joplin Alliance will be reinvigorated.

In realizing of these efforts, recommendations for activating Downtown Joplin include the following:

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.A: Support the mission of the Downtown Joplin Alliance in supporting and promoting businesses in Downtown Joplin.

- Use a **People Energizing Places Grant** from the Missouri Main Street Connection and Missouri Department of Economic Development to engage local stakeholders, undertake training, and assist the Downtown Joplin Alliance in building capacity and implementing a Main Street program.

- Fully **engage with local businesses** to identify their issues, needs, interests, and opportunities. Fully involve local businesses in the operation, management, and programming of the Downtown Joplin Alliance, using the Alliance to serve their interests.

- Aggressively **market and promote** Downtown Joplin as a regional destination. Expand the Downtown Joplin Alliance and City of Joplin websites to provide complete information, create linkages from other websites, and create printed pieces using the city's identity and brand that can be adapted as new businesses are introduced.

- As the entity responsible for implementation along Main Street and the Sunshine Lamp District, provide **Downtown Joplin Alliance** with the resources needed for successfully supporting and promoting businesses and the Sunshine Lamp District.

- Provide funding for **full-time staff** for the Downtown Joplin Alliance. Provide funding for marketing and implementation.

- Provide active ongoing strategic and marketing support to the Downtown Joplin Alliance through the **Downtown Joplin Task Force** and **Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce** as part of the city's economic development plan.

- Monitor and improve ongoing activities on a regular basis. Provide an annual report to City Council on progress, strategies, and resource needs.



The engagement of local businesses is key to successful downtown revitalization.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.B: Use the Main Street Four-Point Approach for continued revitalization of the Sunshine Lamp District.

- Use the **People Energizing Places Grant** to obtain training, guidance, and support for the Downtown Joplin Alliance and downtown stakeholders in implementing the Main Street Four-Point Approach. Determine how the approach best applies to conditions in the Sunshine Lamp District and Downtown Joplin.

- Use the **Main Street** approach of organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring in implementing the vision for Downtown Joplin. Downtown stakeholders have already taken substantial measures to embrace this approach. Incorporate historic preservation and adaptive

reuse as central components of that vision. Network with the Missouri Main Street Connection and other Main Street communities to find out what has worked for them.

Under the Main Street approach:

- **Organization** establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various stakeholders within the downtown district. By getting stakeholders working toward common goals, the Downtown Joplin Alliance and its partners provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy for Joplin's downtown investment initiative.
- **Promotion** creates a positive image that builds community pride and improves consumer and investor confidence in downtown. Advertising, retail promotions, special events, and marketing campaigns help sell the identity and promise of Downtown Joplin to the community. Promotions communicate Downtown Joplin's unique characteristics, business establishments, and activities to residents, visitors, shoppers, investors, potential businesses, and property owners.
- **Design** involves creating a high quality environment for workers, residents, and visitors, taking advantage of the visual character of Downtown Joplin—including public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials. The Sunshine Lamp District's streetscape improvements implemented in the mid-2000s along Main Street have implemented this concept and convey a positive message about the downtown district and what it has to offer.

  Design activities also include assuring good maintenance practices in downtown, enhancing the district's physical appearance through the rehabilitation of historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, educating business and property owners about design quality, and long-term planning for phased physical improvements and connections to adjacent neighborhoods
- **Economic restructuring** strengthens Downtown Joplin's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding successful businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business owners, and attracting new businesses that the market can support. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property helps boost the profitability of the area. The goal is to build a downtown that responds to the interests and needs of Joplin's residents and visitors (National Main Street Center 2016).



Downtown Joplin is a center for quality dining, an important market for revitalization.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.C: Focus on attracting new retail uses along Main Street.

- Create a coordinated approach to **attracting prospective businesses** downtown. Research successful businesses that could serve as anchors and occupy historic buildings. Develop incentive packages that will appeal to interested businesses and demonstrate the city's commitment and support. Organize city leaders and stakeholders to meet with and recruit interested businesses and entrepreneurs. Celebrate each new business that decides to locate downtown.

- Identify **appropriate uses** that tend to be successful in the downtown core.

- Work to **support and retain** existing businesses.

- **Actively recruit** prospective businesses that fit desired profiles.

- Seek sources of **funding support** such as low interest loans for small businesses.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.D: Plan and implement a full program of weekly, monthly, and yearly community events city-wide and for Downtown Joplin.

- Expand the number and scope of **outdoor events** held downtown and in parks and public sites throughout Joplin. Create a city-wide effort. Ask the Joplin Convention and Visitors Bureau to lead the effort in coordination with the Joplin Downtown Alliance, Connect2Culture, and other

organizations. Provide funding to support these community events. Use the events to engage residents, maximize exposure, feature attractions, and draw visitors.

- As part of the city-wide initiative, support the **Downtown Joplin Alliance** in organizing a **full program of events** for Downtown Joplin. Build on the success of Third Thursday. Begin to add new themed events to attract varied audiences especially on weekends.

- Work with **Connect2Culture** to organize cultural events at various venues in Downtown Joplin, including outdoors, as part of the annual program.

- Support **private entrepreneurs** in organizing special events in Downtown Joplin.



Joplin uses art in creating its distinctive identity.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.E: Continue to install public art throughout the Downtown Joplin.

- Support incorporation of high quality and engaging **interpretive elements** and **public art**. Use a coordinated city-wide interpretive plan as the basis for design and implementation of the planned interpretive enhancements. Feature downtown anchor attractions in the interpretive presentation.

- Work with the **Spiva Center** for the Arts, Connect2Culture, and the Chamber's Art in Public Spaces program to identify projects, funding

sources, and artists to undertake public art projects that enhance the quality and character of Downtown Joplin.

- Prepare a comprehensive **plan for public art** within the downtown area that can be implemented over time. Identify sites and themes that can be marketed to potential funding sources.

- Prepare an **interpretive plan** for Downtown Joplin that can be implemented over time. Include wayside interpretive exhibits, themed public art, publications, and other media. See Chapter 8.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.F: Implement a Community Improvement District in Downtown Joplin to provide funding for organization, programming, and special projects.

- As the downtown revitalization program develops and begins to yield measurable results, **work with local businesses** throughout Downtown Joplin to create a Community Improvement District that can fund the work of the Downtown Joplin Alliance and downtown programs of benefit to businesses.



Downtown revitalization was initiated with the city's investment in the rehabilitation of the Newman Brothers Building on Main Street as the new Joplin City Hall.

5.3 PROJECT SUPPORT AND REALIZATION

During the course of preparing this Historic Presentation Plan, a number of potential projects were identified within Downtown Joplin. As noted, change downtown will continue to take time and will occur on an incremental basis, project by project, over the long term. Each potential project plays an important part in implementation of the overall strategy for Downtown Joplin.

The city and its partners should work together in planning for downtown revitalization by identifying the most important and viable projects to undertake and focusing coordinated efforts toward their realization as resources become available. A number of key projects being considered for Downtown Joplin are outlined below.

RECOMMENDATION 5.3.A: In planning for downtown revitalization, identify projects that have the most potential to be realized and to be catalysts for future growth and investment.

- Offer the Joplin Library site to **Missouri Southern State University** for development of its arts program if it is interested. This project has great potential to be a downtown anchor and to bring life to Main Street.

- Support Connect2Culture and the Spiva Center for the Arts in their efforts to develop a **Performing Arts Center** in the blocks adjacent to Memorial Hall. Coordinate planning and development with adjacent areas of Main Street. This project could be a major downtown attraction and realize the 2002 plan's recommendation for a downtown cultural center.

- Support the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce in developing a **center for technology** and training in advanced manufacturing west of its downtown offices.

- Continue to support the **Newman Innovation Center** as an incubator for new business in Downtown Joplin.

- Identify a site for relocation of the **Joplin Museum** to Downtown Joplin, perhaps as part of a new master plan for Main Street between 7th and 10th Streets adjacent to the Performing Arts Center proposal. See Chapter 8 on planning for the museum.

- Work toward the stabilization of the **Union Station** structure as an open air venue for events in conjunction with enhancement of the public park and open space within the valley of Joplin Creek.

- Relocate the various **social service organizations** in the downtown area to a site with new buildings and facilities more appropriate to their needs and provide them support to better serve their clients. Relocation will free historic buildings they now occupy for development and adaptive reuse.

- Identify **key historic buildings** throughout downtown that are appropriate for commercial or residential rehabilitation and adaptive reuse and should be priorities for redevelopment. Focus on attracting developers for these sites.



This high quality historic building on the east side of Downtown Joplin is well suited for adaptive reuse for offices, residential, or other uses.

5.4 FACILITATING ADAPTIVE REUSE

The City of Joplin, Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Joplin Alliance, and community stakeholders should encourage and facilitate the adaptive reuse of historic buildings in Downtown Joplin by making private sector investment attractive, easy, and rewarding. Downtown Joplin's historic building stock should be a key selling point in attracting downtown investment.

Potential investors not familiar with the rehabilitation of historic buildings should have confidence that the rehabilitation process is not overly complex or costly. Investors who have experience working with historic buildings should know that the city and other stakeholders understand the rehabilitation process and have developed protocols to facilitate investment.

The use of federal and state rehabilitation tax credits is key to making many adaptive reuse projects financially viable and an attractive investment. The city and its partners should take concrete steps to take advantage of federal and state incentives to achieve public policy goals through private sector investment to the benefit of city businesses and residents.



Joplin has several vacant apartment buildings that can be rehabilitated to provide needed residential housing on the west side of downtown.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4.A: Encourage and facilitate the adaptive reuse of historic buildings in Downtown Joplin through private sector investment.

- Establish a **city policy** to encourage and facilitate the adaptive reuse of historic buildings. Coordinate city governmental departments in facilitation of the adaptive reuse policy.

- Make downtown's historic character and historic buildings the **centerpiece** of the downtown investment strategy by making Downtown Joplin an attraction for residents and visitors.

- Actively support **non-profit and private sector projects** focused on the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings in Downtown Joplin. Seek state and federal funding that can help leverage private sector investment in special cases. Use Community Development Block Grant funds strategically for public improvements that support qualified private and non-profit projects that are in the community interest.

- Prevent further **loss of historic buildings** in Downtown Joplin. Do not permit further demolitions. Enforce maintenance codes for vacant or underutilized buildings (see Chapter 6).

- Recruit small businesses and restaurants in **street level** commercial spaces. Encourage the adaptive reuse of the **upper floors** of historic

buildings in Downtown Joplin for residential use. Coordinate city governmental departments in facilitation of the adaptive reuse policy.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4.B: Expand the existing National Register Historic Districts in Downtown Joplin to include the entire downtown area encompassed in the 1986 survey of downtown.

- Consult with local **property owners** to outline the benefits of National Register designation and the use of federal and state rehabilitation tax credits. (See the discussion of National Register and local historic districts in Chapter 4.)

- Provide **technical assistance** to property owners and investors unfamiliar with the use of state and federal rehabilitation tax credits in the form of information, encouragement, and general guidance. Identify private sector consultants capable of advising investors and assisting with the rehabilitation tax credit process.

- Consult with the **Missouri State Historic Preservation Office** on the most efficient way to enlarge the downtown National Register Historic District.

- Use the 1988 survey and 2008 **Multiple Property Documentation Form** to facilitate preparation of the National Register nomination.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4.C: Create a protocol for building permit review processes for historic buildings in Downtown Joplin.

- Bring together representatives from code review, planning, the fire department, and other city offices as a **redevelopment review team** to work directly with property owners and developers on a case-by-case basis.

- Have the team meet with owners and developers onsite early in the planning process to identify and **address building code compliance issues** related to historic buildings. The team would be available to work with owners and their architects throughout the design process to find solutions to code compliance issues that adapt to building conditions and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards* while protecting public safety.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4.D: Refine and further develop the façade improvement program for historic buildings downtown with technical assistance and matching grants.

- Create a **Design Review Committee** of local architects and designers familiar with historic preservation principles and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards* to provide advice to property owners considering changes to their facades.

- Provide city funding for a modest façade improvement **grant program** available to property owners complying with downtown design

standards. (An existing city program using CDBG funds is said to be little used due to federal wage requirements.)

RECOMMENDATION 5.4.E: Work with local banks on special terms for loan packages for qualified investors to encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings in Downtown Joplin.



Third Thursday attracts residents and visitors to bring Main Street alive.