

CHAPTER 6 – JOPLIN'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

Joplin's neighborhoods are the city's strength as a community and a desirable place to live. Growing outward from the downtown core, most of Joplin's neighborhoods date from the early twentieth century and have great appeal. Neighborhoods are the city's most significant historic resources.

The streetscape character of Joplin's neighborhoods is very appealing. Streets are developed in a neighborhood grid pattern with alleyways in the center of most blocks for rear access to residential lots. Concrete curbs and sidewalks are present in most places. Some streets retain brick sidewalks, and remnant brick street paving can be seen in some locations. Many lots have low stone retaining walls due to the sloping topography. Street trees have grown broad and tall, providing strong character, a sense of scale, and shade.

Joplin's neighborhoods feature a wide variety of housing types. Joplin's housing types and styles were studied in a 2008 National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form funded through the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office. The city's most prominent neighborhood, Murphysburg, was designated as a National Register Historic District in 2015. Even Murphysburg, however, has a wide variety of building styles, types, and sizes. Joplin's neighborhoods tend to be solidly middle class. Historically, the county's wealthy families tended to live in Carthage, the county seat.

Most neighborhoods, regardless of economic condition, tend to have residences that are small in scale. Some are very small, representative of Joplin's mining history and the city's working class residents of the early twentieth century.

Additions and modifications have been undertaken on many homes over the years, but a significant number retain their historic integrity. Small size means that homes tend to be affordable in today's markets, perhaps a reason for Joplin's low median home value in comparison to state averages.

Many residents do not consider their neighborhoods historic, but they are. Joplin's most important historic preservation goals can be achieved by addressing the appropriate treatment of neighborhoods. This can be undertaken using a variety of programs and means.

Neighborhoods make up the fabric of the city and blocks make up the fabric of a neighborhood. When the fabric is strong, the city or the neighborhood is strong. If the fabric becomes frayed, wears down and tears, the city or neighborhood becomes weak and susceptible to accelerated decline. The most successful strategies in neighborhood revitalization involve repairing and re-weaving neighborhood fabric, block by block. To do this, a neighborhood revitalization strategy must engage and empower residents while providing city action and support in strengthening neighborhood fabric. Through neighborhood planning, strengths should be reinforced; key assets and anchors should be identified and protected; and weaknesses should be isolated, addressed, and re-positioned as strengths.

The most important strategy for neighborhood revitalization is to encourage and support private sector home ownership while helping residents appreciate neighborhood character. Because Joplin's houses tend to be small, charming, and affordable, they have a natural market in young families, couples, singles, and seniors. Neighborhood attributes that attract such markets—walkability; public amenities such as parks, playgrounds, and trails; neighborhood schools; neighborhood churches; and neighborhood shopping—are key components of the mixed-use and community concepts of the city's 2012 Comprehensive Plan. These resources do not need to be built from scratch—they already exist in Joplin's historic neighborhoods.

Two reports undertaken in the wake of the 2011 tornado have studied Joplin's housing market in detail (Novovradac 2012; Bowen 2014). They note a range of neighborhood and housing issues typical of mid-sized cities, including high rental occupancy (45.4%) and high vacancy rates (13.7%). Of Joplin's 23,943 housing units, 15,637 (73.3%) are single family detached dwellings. Approximately 32.5% of the city's houses are reported to have been constructed before 1950, most in the early twentieth century.

Maintenance is an issue in almost every Joplin neighborhood. Houses that are well maintained sit next to neighbors that are neglected. It is not clear to what extent this is a rental maintenance issue vs an issue of low income or of mere neglect, but improving home maintenance will help improve the marketability of houses in historic neighborhoods. Appropriate maintenance for historic homes is an important historic preservation issue and is discussed in Chapter 3 in review of the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards*.

This Historic Preservation Plan suggests that a comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization is good for Joplin's economy and will be good for

historic preservation. Chapter 6 emphasizes goals 1-Community Identity, 3-Economy and Quality of Life, 4-Community Engagement, and 7-Neighborhood Revitalization presented in *Chapter 3, Preservation Approach*. The plan supports the city's Neighborhood Services initiative as a centerpiece of its preservation approach and a means through which neighborhood revitalization can be achieved. Recommendations for Joplin's neighborhoods are organized under four topical headings:

- Neighborhood Organization and Engagement;
- Neighborhood Planning;
- Targeted Neighborhood Revitalization; and
- Promoting Good Maintenance.



Joplin neighborhoods have a wide variety of historic homes.

6.1 NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION AND ENGAGEMENT

A primary strategy for the preservation of historic resources in Joplin is neighborhood revitalization led at the grassroots level by residents and home owners. Through neighborhood revitalization initiatives, home ownership will increase, property values will rise, and individual historic homes will be better appreciated and cared for.

The city's role is to do everything within its power to (1) improve the character and quality of neighborhoods, (2) empower homeowners to organize and collaborate in neighborhood improvement initiatives, and (3) attract markets to Joplin's neighborhoods. This work can be organized in part through the city's Neighborhood Services program in partnership with other city departments, local

organizations, and—most importantly—local homeowners themselves. The recommendation below address the organization and engagement of residents and homeowners in Joplin's neighborhoods.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1.A: Identify bounded neighborhoods throughout Joplin that are viable natural community units to which local residents feel an affinity and that can serve as an organizing structure for planning and grassroots action.

- Identify local **Individual Neighborhoods** throughout the city of Joplin which residents feel a part of and which can serve as cohesive units for homeowner interaction and collaboration. The Neighborhood Services Division has recently identified thirty-two individual neighborhoods for consideration. Work with local residents to confirm appropriate geographical boundaries, names, and possibilities.

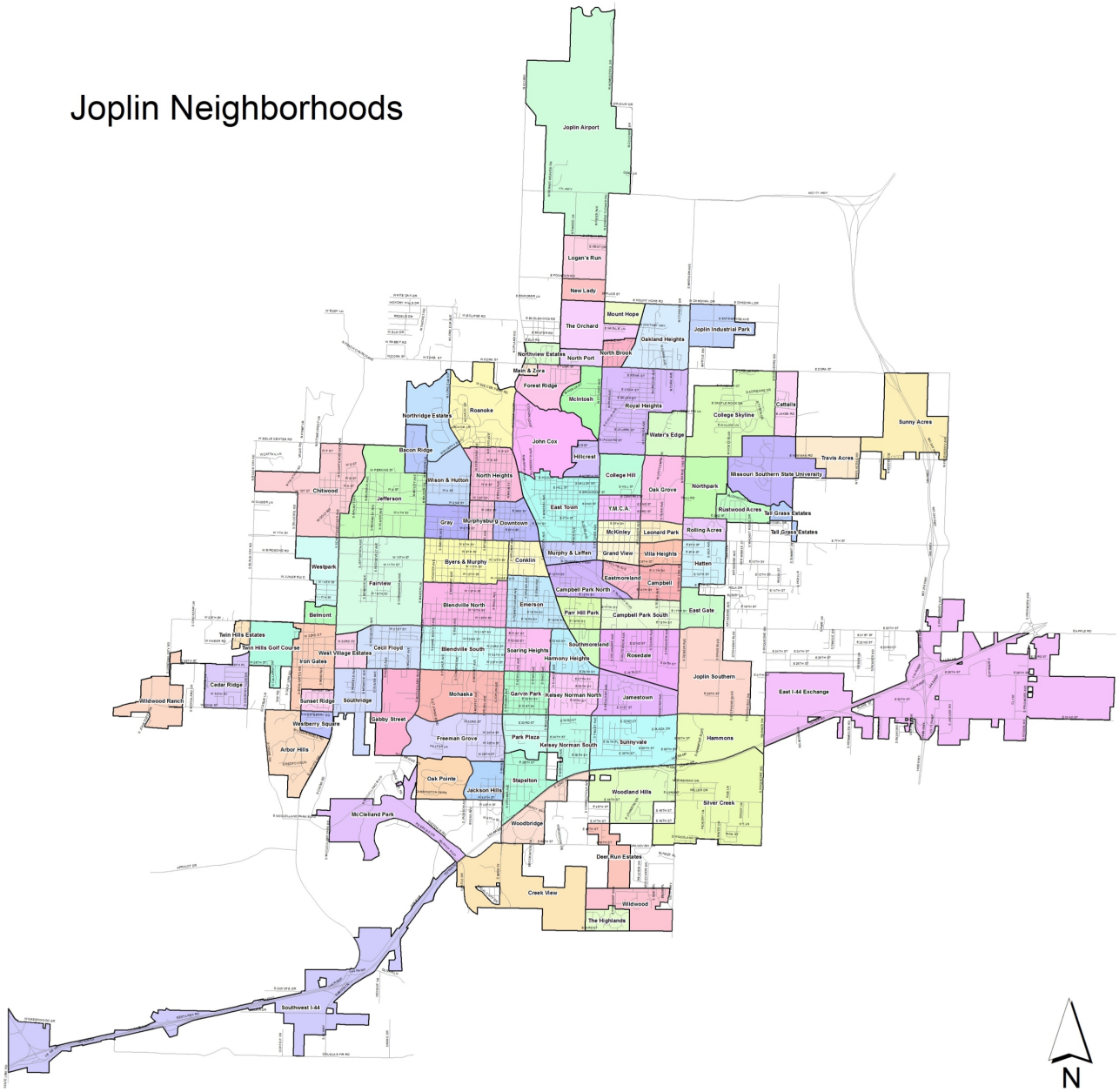
- For planning purpose, identify larger **Neighborhood Planning Areas** in Joplin that combine individual neighborhoods that are in proximity to each other; are connected; and share common character, attributes, amenities, and interests. Use Neighborhood Planning Areas to coordinate community planning initiatives and to encourage individual Neighborhood Associations to communicate and collaborate with each other.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1.B: Create a culture of neighborhoods in Joplin by supporting the establishment of Neighborhood Associations as forums for grassroots leadership in neighborhood and community revitalization.

- Support the establishment of **Neighborhood Associations** in the individual neighborhoods identified within Joplin. Provide a city-wide organizational structure through which they may work. Empower residents to form and grow effective Neighborhood Associations through which residents may be encouraged to identify and work on issues pertinent to their area.

- Establish a city-wide **Neighborhood Advisory Council** to serve as a leadership entity representing Neighborhood Associations throughout the city. Have the Council organize the Roundtable noted below, serve as an information conduit for Neighborhood Associations and residents, and advise the city on policy and planning matters.

- Provide organizational support for Neighborhood Associations through the **Neighborhood Services Division** of the Planning Department. Proactively encourage and assist Neighborhood Associations in becoming effective grassroots organizations. Provide staff assistance, guidance, and small amounts of funding to active Neighborhood Associations for basic administrative needs such as meeting organization and communication with residents.



Joplin neighborhoods identified by the city's Neighborhood Services Division.

- Establish a **single point of contact** within Neighborhood Services to be a liaison for Neighborhood Associations in communication with the city and coordination with city neighborhood revitalization and planning programs.

- Establish a guidebook and conduct local workshops to promote **best practices** for Neighborhood Associations that can be adapted to individual neighborhood circumstances.

- Establish a city-wide **Neighborhood Association Roundtable** through which Neighborhood Associations can network with each other. Conduct a series of three to four **yearly workshops** in which Neighborhood Associations gather to share information and experiences and participate in technical assistance programming.

- Create a network of **mentoring relationships** in which organizationally successful Neighborhood Associations advise and assist developing Neighborhood Associations. Coordinate the mentoring through the Neighborhood Advisory Council and Roundtable.

- Support a **Neighborhood Involvement Initiative** in organizing and conducting work and clean-up programs as a means of encouraging the involvement of local residents in their Neighborhood Associations.

- Create a program of **small grants** available to active Neighborhood Associations for special projects that support neighborhood revitalization goals.

- Create an **awards program** to recognize and publicize Neighborhood Associations' successes. Feature one of the annual Roundtable workshops noted above as an event to present the awards.



Many of Joplin's residences are small, some are tiny, like these two side-by-side homes. They have great character and are suited to particular markets.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1.C: Identify a range of possible programs and ideas that Neighborhood Associations can use to encourage grassroots participation and engagement.

- Consider using a system of **Block Captains** to organize residents block by block within a neighborhood and to serve as points of contact, conduits, or representatives for local residents. Each Block Captain could be in charge of a few blocks and help involve and engage residents in community activities.

- Implement an **adopt-a-neighborhood** program in which a neighborhood institution such as a church or school partners with residents for clean-up activities, events, and community service initiatives.

- Conduct annual **clean-up events** in which neighbors gather for a specific project or general clean-up in public areas.

- Implement a volunteer **neighbor-to-neighbor** program in which a dedicated corps of volunteers helps elderly or other neighbors to address smaller housing and yard maintenance issues—painting, porches, gutters, lawn care, etc.—that help maintain existing homes and prevent a broken window cycle of poor maintenance breeding poor maintenance.

- Implement a **homeowner recognition and appreciation** program to recognize residents who beautifully landscape or care for their houses or yards or who volunteer, provide leadership, or simply add character to a neighborhood.

- Create a **marketing initiative** for neighborhoods. Install entrance signs at neighborhood gateways or on city street signs. Identify and promote neighborhood assets that residents show off to others. Engage local realtors with information on neighborhood organization and character that can be provided to prospective home buyers. Include contact information for the local Neighborhood Association that prospective home buyers can use to learn more about the neighborhood.

- Create **neighborhood brochures** for current residents and **welcome packets** for new residents. Neighborhood brochures can tell the neighborhood's story, highlight its assets, and provide basic contact and other information. Welcome packets can include phone numbers and locations of the neighborhood schools, churches, businesses, community centers, parks, trails, and any other neighborhood assets and services. Neighborhood brochures and welcome packets can promote a sense of community and identity, educate new residents on neighborhood services, and encourage community involvement.

- Encourage neighborhood leaders to attend **educational and training sessions** on community engagement.

- Organize **neighborhood events** such as picnics in the park, children's playgroups, or block parties.

- Form a **neighborhood history** group. Install interpretive signage and artwork in public places within the neighborhood. Prepare an interpretive brochure and walking tour. Prepare and distribute histories of the neighborhood. Install interpretive wood or metal plaques with historic names and dates on historic homes or properties.



Planning can identify neighborhood conditions, opportunities, and strategies for revitalization.

6.2 NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

Neighborhood planning undertaken by the Planning Department with public participation should be a basic, ongoing tool for community revitalization and renewal.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.A: Within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan, undertake a long-term program of neighborhood planning to study neighborhoods, identify issues and opportunities, and determine strategies and actions for neighborhood revitalization.

- Prepare **Neighborhood Plans** for the Neighborhood Planning Areas noted above as well as for Individual Neighborhoods as appropriate. Use Neighborhood Plans as a guide for coordinated implementation of the city's neighborhood revitalization programs. Begin with Planning Areas of need but also with the most possibility for success. Include a strong public

process to engage residents in the planning process. Neighborhood Plans should include:

Introduction and Purpose – background and purpose for the planning work, including any unique aspects of neighborhood character or organization.

Historical Overview – story of the neighborhood's physical development; use the neighborhood histories in the 1990 preservation plan and 2008 Multiple Property Documentation Form as points of reference.

Neighborhood Conditions and Assessment – description of general landscape character, health profile, land use and zoning, circulation patterns, housing profile and conditions, public infrastructure, public facilities and amenities, and public safety; prepare a summary of issues and opportunities.

Vision and Goals – vision, goals, and priorities for the neighborhood as derived through engagement and conversations with residents.

Neighborhood Revitalization Plan – strategies, recommendations, and actions for neighborhood revitalization organized by key topics that need to be addressed, including neighborhood identity, character, circulation, infrastructure, housing, amenities, and programming; identify specific target areas within the neighborhood where projects could be undertaken that could have a broader neighborhood-wide impact.

Implementation Plan – phasing, roles, responsibilities, and funding for implementation of the plan's strategies and actions.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.B: Prepare Neighborhood Health Assessments on an annual basis as a means of tracking change, identifying need, and setting priorities.

- Use criteria associated with five to seven appropriate **health indicators** in preparing Neighborhood Health Assessments that rate each neighborhood in the city. Such indicators may be related to people, public safety, economic opportunity, housing, and livability.

- Devise a **scoring system** through which the health and condition of individual neighborhoods can be assessed. Use and adapt models established by other communities experienced in performing neighborhood health assessments.

- Use health assessments for individual neighborhoods in **neighborhood planning** as a means of measuring progress.

- Prepare an **annual summary and report** on neighborhood health, including information on individual neighborhoods and city-wide. Identify positive and negative trends. Provide the assessments to City Council and to Neighborhood Associations.



Street trees create neighborhood character. The city's urban forestry program is important to Joplin's quality of life.

- Use the annual reports to **inform the work** of Neighborhood Associations and to coordinate, calibrate, and adjust city planning priorities and activity.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.C: Use historic preservation concepts and best practices as a core component of neighborhood planning with the goal of preserving and appropriately treating historic residences and enhancing neighborhood character.

- Undertake **historic resource surveys** of neighborhoods as part of the preparation of neighborhood plans. Identify building types, styles, integrity, condition. Identify and map historic residences and other buildings using electronic data collection, formats, and GIS mapping to be included as layers within the city's GIS database and mapping.

- Coordinate the neighborhood historic resource surveys with the standards and survey guidelines of the **Missouri State Historic Preservation Office**. Include an historical overview in each survey that establishes its context with respect to Joplin's historical development as outlined in the 2008 Multiple Property Documentation Form.

- Undertake neighborhood historic resource surveys under guidance of the **Historic Preservation Commission**. Certified Local Government grants may be used to undertake the neighborhood surveys (see Chapter 4).



New development in Joplin is in need of many more young trees for the future.

- Prepare **design guidelines** for residential buildings in Joplin that can be applicable within neighborhoods throughout the city. Include guidelines for the appropriate maintenance, repair, and replacement of historic building fabric; additions and alterations to historic buildings; and the construction of new homes in an existing historic context. Make the guidelines available to residents, builders, and developers. Encourage Neighborhood Associations to make the design guidelines widely available to their residents (see Recommendation 6.4.A below).

- Encourage use of the design guidelines in treatment decisions by residents for the **maintenance and rehabilitation** of historic housing and for the design of new infill housing in neighborhoods.

- Use the **Secretary of the Interior's Standards** for the Treatment of Historic Properties as the basis for the design guidelines (see Chapter 3).

- Prepare the design guidelines with input and oversight by the Historic Preservation Commission and Missouri State Historic Preservation Office. A **Certified Local Government** grant may be used to fund the preparation (see Chapter 4).

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.D: Use Neighborhood Conservation Districts to be developed through the Planning Department as a means through which Neighborhood Associations may guide change in a manner that supports and enhances neighborhood character.

- Develop an **ordinance and process** for the creation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts to establish standards and guidelines for improvements within neighborhoods where the ordinance is adopted. Only implement Neighborhood Conservation Districts upon the initiative of the residents of the individual neighborhoods where they are to be created.

- Work with Neighborhood Associations to identify **character defining features** and attributes of their neighborhoods which should be preserved.

- Upon request, work with Neighborhood Associations that are interested in adopting a Neighborhood Conservation District to guide and preserve neighborhood character. Organize a **neighborhood process** for creation and approval of a conservation district. Create standards and guidelines customized to the individual characteristics of the neighborhood and stated goals of residents.

- Encourage the **recognition of historic attributes** as a component of neighborhood character in neighborhood planning, the development of conservation districts, and the treatment of neighborhood landscapes. Use the Secretary of the Interior's *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* as a methodology for the analysis of character defining features in neighborhoods and as a philosophical basis for their treatment (National Park Service 2013). Analysis of landscape characteristics should include:
  - Spatial organization and land patterns,
  - Views and vistas,
  - Topography,
  - Natural systems and features,
  - Vegetation,
  - Circulation,
  - Buildings and structures,
  - Small-scale features, and
  - Special considerations.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.E: Examine the city's Zoning Ordinance for provisions that have a negative impact on neighborhood character, health, and viability. Correct such provisions in the pending Zoning Ordinance update.

- In particular, look for provisions that encourage the **conversion** of single family residences to apartments. Such provisions may be the result of inappropriate zoning district designations or may be an unintended consequence of zoning or use provisions. This trend should be reversed.

6.3 TARGETED NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

Joplin's city government includes a number of departments with differing responsibilities that together impact the character of neighborhoods and local quality of life. They include Fire, Health, Parks, Police, Public Works, Economic Development, Building, Neighborhood, and Community Development Departments and Divisions. In planning for Joplin's neighborhoods, the activities of all city departments can be used to help foster change. It is important that these city departments and their programs be coordinated in their potential impact upon neighborhood character and health.

This section recommends identifying targeted areas within neighborhoods where city projects and initiatives can be combined and focused to create positive change. The recommendations of this section should be coordinated with those related to neighborhood planning in section 6.2 above.

Potential focus areas should be identified through neighborhood planning and through dialogue with neighborhood residents. Existing conditions should be assessed, and locations where the most impact can be realized should be selected. A variety of programs and resources from different city departments and funding resources can then be brought to bear on those selected focus areas.

Projects and resources might include infrastructure improvements, tree planting, park maintenance and improvements, trails, home maintenance assistance, home rehabilitation, new infill housing, private sector financial incentives, community events, and others as appropriate. Private and non-profit projects and resources can be sought as well, particularly those of anchor institutions located within the neighborhood.



Local schools are neighborhood anchors and attract home buyers.

It is recommended that two neighborhoods be selected for concentrated planning and programming to be undertaken over a two-year period. Implementation projects would be phased and continue for longer as appropriate. After the first two-year period, a second pair of neighborhoods would be selected through a competitive application process to begin planning for a second two-year period, and so on, as more neighborhoods are engaged over time. Impacts can be assessed on a yearly basis, especially through annual neighborhood health assessments, and programs can be adjusted.

As outlined below, selected neighborhoods be should those that have strong local leadership in place capable of marshalling involvement and action from local residents. It is suggested that one low-income neighborhood and one moderate-income neighborhood be selected to participate within each two-year period. Selected neighborhoods should be those where efforts will make a difference and transformation is possible. Other neighborhoods should be made aware of the criteria and conditions for selection and should be assisted in working to meet those criteria and conditions through the Neighborhood Services program discussed in section 6.1 above.

Federal and State Assistance and Support

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides support to low income neighborhoods across the country, and Joplin neighborhoods have benefited from the city's participation in their programming. Joplin receives Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) that the city uses primarily for infrastructure improvements within designated low income neighborhoods. In 2016, the city received $390,701 for neighborhood revitalization activities.



Churches also strengthen neighborhoods and serve as anchors for neighborhoods.

Joplin also uses CDBG funding to support programs related to the homeless and for other public service activities. Funding also supports staffing in the city's planning department to enable work on neighborhood revitalization.

Funding received by the city through HUD's HOME program provides money for direct action in meeting Joplin's affordable housing needs. Programs undertaken in partnership with non-profit organizations include housing rehabilitation projects and the construction of new housing. Approximately $357,000 was spent on HOME projects in Joplin in 2016.

Finally, Missouri's Abandoned Housing Act, enacted in 1993, permits courts, upon petition, to transfer ownership of vacant, neglected, tax-delinquent properties to nonprofit organizations for rehabilitation, a mechanism used by communities to address unnecessary blight that is adversely affecting older neighborhoods. In order to be eligible, a property has to be vacant for six months, delinquent on taxes, and a nuisance to the community. Joplin has begun to use this state act to rehabilitate neglected houses in low income neighborhoods using a portion of its CDBG funding. Once complete, the rehabilitated house is sold back into the private sector, a material improvement in neighborhood revitalization.

City programs are important to the preservation and appropriate treatment of historic residences throughout Joplin and may be used for targeted action in specific neighborhoods. The resources available through city departments are important tools that can be marshalled to spark and provide momentum toward positive change.

RECOMMENDATION 6.3.A: Through the Planning, Development, and Neighborhood Services Department, select two to three neighborhoods every two years for targeted planning, projects, and support for revitalization.

- Select neighborhoods with current **active leadership** and community support for targeted action.
- Have the **Neighborhood Services Division** take the lead in day-to-day contact and communication with local leaders and residents.
- Work with local leaders to establish a strong and lasting **Neighborhood Association**.
- Include a strong **public participation** process to gather public input, empower residents, encourage participation, and emphasize local responsibility.
- Use the Neighborhood **Health Assessment criteria** and process to help determine needs and gauge success.
- Concentrate upon improving **private sector appeal and investment**. As primary goals, work toward conditions where home ownership is increased, property maintenance improves, real estate market interest increases, property values rise, infill housing is encouraged, and residents are engaged.

- For each two-year period, select at least one neighborhood that is on the **verge of success** and would benefit from added support and assistance.

- For each two-year period, select at least one neighborhood that is a **Neighborhood Improvement District** qualified for application of federal HUD and CDBG funding.

- Work with each neighborhood to determine **needs,** priorities, direction, and actions.



Vacant buildings of good quality are located in many Joplin neighborhoods.

- Prepare a **Neighborhood Plan** for each selected neighborhood as outlined in section 6.2 to assess existing conditions, develop programming, and guide the implementation of short, medium, and long-term projects.

- **Coordinate implementation** of Neighborhood Plans across city departments through the Neighborhood Working Group noted below. Use city infrastructure maintenance and capital improvement projects to directly support neighborhood revitalization.

- Use the **Secretary of the Interior's Standards** for the Treatment of Historic Properties to guide planning and treatment decisions for historic buildings and landscapes in neighborhood revitalization (see Chapter 3).

- Use **design guidelines** for Joplin's residential neighborhoods, discussed above, in neighborhood planning and implementation, including the implementation of infrastructure improvements; the treatment of historic houses; and planning related to the placement, form, character, and appearance of infill housing. The purpose of the use of design guidelines is to reinforce historic neighborhood development patterns and overall community character.

- Have the **Historic Preservation Commission** participate in neighborhood planning and the monitoring of rehabilitation treatments undertaken through neighborhood revitalization.

RECOMMENDATION 6.3.B: Coordinate the work of the various city departments that have an impact on neighborhood character both for targeted neighborhoods and city-wide. Use the services and resources of all of the departments in the development of neighborhood plans and their implementation.

- Create a **Neighborhood Working Group** under Joplin's Planning Director with representation from the various city departments and programs affecting neighborhoods. Define roles and responsibilities. Through the Working Group, involve the departments in neighborhood planning and project implementation.

- Make the Neighborhood Working Group responsible for **coordinating projects** and initiatives related to neighborhood revitalization.

- Use the city's Public Works programs to implement **targeted infrastructure improvements** identified in the city's Neighborhood Plans with the goal of encouraging private sector investment and revitalization (see Recommendation 6.3.C below).

- Use the city's **Community Development Block Grant** and **HOME** programs for targeted projects in lower income neighborhoods as part of the broader revitalization strategy.

- Develop a policy for identifying and preserving **historic streetscape infrastructure**, including brick streets and sidewalks, in locations where they are still present. Identify historic streetscape infrastructure components and character defining features in Neighborhood Plans. Include streets, sidewalks, curbs, inlets, alleys, retaining walls, street trees, signage, and other streetscape components. Involve all city departments planning for, maintaining, and undertaking projects where historic materials may be disturbed.

- Recognize the importance of mature street trees to the appealing character of historic neighborhoods. The role of the city's **Forestry Program** in maintaining existing street trees and planting new

replacement trees should be supported. Best practices for the urban landscape environment should be followed.

- Use **community policing** to establish connections between the Police Department and residents of neighborhoods in making neighborhoods safe. Engage Neighborhood Associations in policing forums with local residents. Identify problem areas within specific neighborhoods. Develop combined city/neighborhood approaches to addressing identified issues and areas. Consider developing neighborhood watch programs, if appropriate.



Poor maintenance impacts neighborhood character and lowers property values.

RECOMMENDATION 6.3.C: Use coordinated city infrastructure projects and other initiatives within specific selected Focus Areas to serve as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization.

- Through Neighborhood Plans and work with targeted neighborhoods, identify specific **Focus Areas** where concentrated public investment has the potential to create a critical mass of improvements, to visibly transform, and to have impact in stimulating investment by adjacent property owners.

- Use targeted Focus Areas to help increase property values and **leverage positive change**.

- Identify potential Focus Areas for investment through **analysis, planning, and discussion** with residents. Emphasize needs identified by residents.

- Identify **anchors** within neighborhoods that provide solid points of support and contribute to a neighborhood's identity, health, and stability. Existing anchors may include community institutions; sites of long-term private investment; and neighborhood amenities that attract residents, serve as destinations, lend stability, and help make areas appropriate for residential investment. Anchors may include schools, churches, parks, trails, commercial areas, stable groupings of homes, etc.

- Identify areas within the neighborhood that are **strong**, stable, exhibit staying power, and have attracted recent investment.

- Identify **underachieving areas** that have the potential to become stronger given an appropriate stimulus.

- Identify **areas of weaknesses** with the highest concentrations of negative conditions such as low homeownership, poor maintenance, vacant/boarded houses, poverty, substandard infrastructure, and high crime.

- Identify strategies that will **dilute the concentration** of weak areas, giving surrounding areas a greater chance to revitalize on their own. The less concentrated that weak areas become, the fewer the social problems that develop and the less entrenched the weakness will be.

- Implement a coordinated package of **targeted public investment** in selected Focus Areas that have the potential to be transformed. Link these areas to adjacent anchors and areas of neighborhood strength. Address issues of need or weakness that, if changed, have the ability to allow the area to transform. Select areas and actions that will leverage private investment, attract homeowners, and provide benefit to the greatest number of people possible.

- Customize the plan to the neighborhood to meet the needs and possibilities of the specific Focus Area. **Concentrate the investments** to have a clear and visible impact. Avoid diluting the investments by spreading them too thin or over too wide an area. Each Focus Area may require a different combination of strategies, actions, and investments.

- Include the use of **Community Development Block Grant** funding for targeted infrastructure improvements in Focus Areas within low income neighborhoods to generate positive change.

- Use **HOME** funding to support non-profit organizations implement home **rehabilitation projects** for existing houses and new **infill housing** to fill gaps in neighborhoods in Focus Areas with low income pockets. Make sure that work is in accordance with design guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards*, reinforcing existing neighborhood character.



Good maintenance makes properties appealing and saleable.

6.4 PROMOTING GOOD MAINTENANCE

Encouraging the appropriate maintenance of historic homes in Joplin's neighborhoods by private homeowners is the most important and effective way to preserve historic buildings and historic neighborhood character. Most historic residences in Joplin are small in size and relatively easy to maintain. By providing good information through a variety of forums, appropriate historic preservation principles and techniques can be made more common among the city's homeowners.

The poor maintenance of residential properties has been a problem in every historic neighborhood in Joplin. In some cases, maintenance issues are due to poverty, and in other cases to a culture of neglect by specific property owners. Poor maintenance has been a particular issue for rental properties, an especially frustrating circumstance for surrounding homeowners. That poor maintenance is an issue in every historic neighborhood is testament to the egalitarian and mixed-income nature of Joplin's neighborhoods, which is an asset.

Issues related to poor property maintenance need to be raised and addressed first by surrounding homeowners, and Neighborhood Associations should be a forum for addressing this issue. In some cases, neighbors have found that poor property maintenance on a specific property was a solvable issue at the neighborhood level, simply by working with the property owners or by providing assistance, such as to an elderly homeowner who was not capable of performing or paying for maintenance work.

Raising maintenance issues to the city level should be a last resort, but sometimes it is necessary. Poor property maintenance makes neighborhoods unattractive to

prospective buyers and lowers property values. Aside from appearance and economics, blight can be an issue of health and safety.

Joplin has a Housing Code that requires that residential properties be kept in good maintenance and repair.[1] The city also has a Dangerous Buildings ordinance that addresses buildings in all use categories that are a danger to public health and safety.[2] In both ordinances, the city has authorization as a last resort (after repeated notices and citations) to make needed repairs and to file a lien on the property to recover the costs. The Dangerous Buildings ordinance is under the jurisdiction of Joplin's Building Board.

An aggressive effort to enforce the Housing Code was made in 2007 but was resisted by the owners of rental properties. Since then, enforcement has been limited to the most dangerous and egregious situations. The experience was an impetus to initiate the city's neighborhood Services program, engaging residents at the grassroots level.



Neighborhood Associations should lead the effort to achieve compliance with housing maintenance standards and codes.

Going forward, it is important that property maintenance concerns be initiated by residents in local neighborhoods. Issues should be examined on a case-by-case basis, and efforts should be made to resolve them locally, if possible. Neighborhood Associations should be used as forums to raise and resolve problems using best practices for neighborhood engagement.

[1] Joplin Code of Ordinances, Chapter 26, Article XII; the Housing Code was adopted in 1971 and should be updated.

[2] Joplin Code of Ordinances, Chapter 26, Article IX.

When raised to the city level, local support is important in enabling effective action. Neighborhood Associations should play an important role here as well, identifying issues and organizing residents to speak up. An effective code enforcement policy supported by local residents is an important means of preventing the worst conditions that can adversely affect a neighborhood and lower property values.



Principles outlined in design guidelines can help homeowners make good home maintenance decisions.

RECOMMENDATION 6.4.A: Provide information and support to homeowners on the appropriate maintenance and treatment of historic residences and historic building fabric.

- Prepare **design guidelines** for residential buildings in Joplin as discussed above focused on the appropriate maintenance and treatment of historic building fabric. Include guidelines for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of historic building fabric; additions and alterations to historic homes; and the construction of new homes in an existing historic context. Make the design guidelines available online. Promote their use in a variety of forums. Encourage Neighborhood Associations to make the design guidelines widely available to their residents (see Recommendation 6.2.C above).

- Use **Neighborhood Associations** as a way to promote interest in the significance of historic residences and the appropriate maintenance and treatment of historic building fabric. Conduct programs and workshops in neighborhoods for the benefit of local residents.

- Through **Historic Preservation Commission programming**, discussed in Chapter 4, conduct **city-wide workshops** on the maintenance and treatment of historic building fabric. Provide forums where homeowners can consult craftsmen and obtain information and technical assistance on their specific issues.

- Provide **technical assistance** to selected Neighborhood Associations that have reached a level of achievement as a special service and recognition. Recruit architects and craftsmen to provide advice to individual homeowners within the neighborhoods on an organized volunteer basis.

RECOMMENDATION 6.4.B: With active neighborhood support, provide code enforcement services to require minimum standard levels of building maintenance and support neighborhood revitalization.

- Make the **code enforcement staff** a central part of the Neighborhood Working Group discussed above. Underscore the important role they play in preserving neighborhood character, stabilizing property values, and protecting public safety. Adapt policies and procedures to support the goals outlined in Neighborhood Plans.

- Have the code enforcement staff **participate** in the development of Neighborhood Plans, particularly in the identification of neighborhood issues and the assessment of building conditions.

- Engage **Neighborhood Associations** with demonstrated local support in requesting that code enforcement services be provided within their neighborhoods.

- Enforce the city's **Housing Code** that requires the maintenance of housing to basic minimum standards to prevent blight, maintain public safety, and preserve surrounding property values.

- Prepare **criteria and guidelines** for the maintenance and securing of vacant buildings in Joplin. Publicize the criteria and guidelines to landlords, realtors, contractors, Neighborhood Associations, and others. Use the criteria and guidelines in code enforcement.

- Review code enforcement procedures. Adopt **procedures** and provide the **resources** necessary to resolve code violations swiftly, consistently, and fairly.

- Adopt code inspection policies to emphasize **early intervention** and the stabilization, protection, and maintenance of threatened buildings with the goal of preventing the need for demolition. Be proactive.

- Create an **Intervention Fund** through the Planning Department that can be used to stabilize threatened buildings in residential neighborhoods either as a grant or code enforcement action.



An intervention fund can help stabilize threatened buildings worth saving.

RECOMMENDATION 6.4.C: In coordination with and with support from Neighborhood Associations, use regulatory means to support the interests of local residents in the maintenance and revitalization of their neighborhoods.

- Expand use of Missouri's **Abandoned Housing Act** to transfer the ownership of vacant, neglected, tax-delinquent properties to nonprofit organizations for rehabilitation, returning neglected properties to private ownership as homes that contribute to the character, quality, and life of the neighborhood.

- Establish a **rental license program** to register and inspect rental properties in single family residential zoning districts to ensure that properties comply with minimum city maintenance standards as established by code. Obtaining a rental license would be the responsibility of the property owner, be obtained on a yearly basis, and include a minimal yearly fee. Apply fees to code enforcement activities. Inspections of rental properties and rental units would be undertaken every three years by the city's code enforcement staff.

- Establish a yearly **vacancy fee** to apply to properties that remain vacant over an established period of time. Apply the fees collected to code enforcement activities.

- Adopt a **demolition-by-neglect ordinance** with funding for the abatement of code violations.

- Establish **permit fees for demolition** equivalent to the annual property tax due for the property being demolished. Assign revenues collected to the Intervention Fund. All buildings approved for demolition should be **documented** in drawings and photographs to standards to be established by the Historic Preservation Commission.