

# Neosho, Missouri

DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION &  
ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
MISSOURI



BUILDING AND  
STREETScape  
DESIGN GUIDELINES

MAY 2009





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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REVITALIZATION &  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>IV. STREETScape DESIGN GUIDELINES</b>	<b>29</b>
A. Background	1	A. Street Improvements	29
B. Intent of Guidelines	2	B. Strengthening the Square	30
<b>II. BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES</b>	<b>3</b>	C. Design Coordination	32
A. Downtown Fabric of Buildings	3	D. Infrastructure	32
1) Building Zones	3	E. Pedestrian Access and Sidewalks	33
2) Downtown Fabric—Façade Elements	4	F. Fountains	33
3) Rhythm and Scale	4	G. Signs and Banners	34
4) Alterations	5	H. Parking and Service Areas	35
5) Masonry	6	I. Parking Meters	35
6) Awnings	7	J. Lighting	35
7) Lighting	9	K. Site Furnishings	36
8) Signage	10	L. Landscaping	38
9) Bicycles	12	<b>V. WAYFINDING</b>	<b>40</b>
10) Sidewalk Zones	13	A. Wayfinding Principles	40
11) Outdoor Café Seating	16	B. Wayfinding Components and Examples	41
12) Maintenance of Facades	18	C. Existing Wayfinding and Arrival	44
B. Historic Buildings	19	D. Recommendations	46
1) Original Elements	19	<b>VI. IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>49</b>
2) Storefront	19	A. Recommendations	9
3) Upper Façade	22		
4) Rear Façade	24		
C. Existing Buildings and New Construction	26		
D. Color Guidelines	26		
<b>III. BUILDING DESIGN EXAMPLES</b>	<b>26</b>		
A. City Hall	26		
B. Community Bank & Trust	27		

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The Downtown Square of Neosho came into being throughout the late 19th and early 20th century. Development on the Downtown Square and environs was made up of traditional street front commercial facades surrounding the Newton County Courthouse. The facades of the commercial buildings had a unity of materials, scale, and style. These similarities in design resulted in the appearance of rhythm and order on the square. Complementary patterns and elements were repeated giving each facade a visual connection with its neighbors. This backdrop of buildings created a harmonious public space that was filled with activity and remained intact for generations.

After World War II there was a movement in America to remove all things that were considered old and replace them with something new and modern. In the intervening years subtle, and not so subtle, changes took place that had a commutative effect on the entire architectural environment. Original glass storefronts were removed and replaced with smaller, economical windows and entrances. Upper facade windows were removed or covered up completely. Building cornices and ornaments were removed, in an attempt to “clean-up” the old looking façade. Historic character and qualities were removed and replaced with new and inappropriate materials and design. In some cases, entire buildings have been removed, replaced with new buildings that fail to account for the rhythm and scale of the surrounding buildings and street. The streetscape was not spared either, historic light poles and fixtures were removed and replaced with out-of-scale “cobra-head” fixtures and poles. Altogether, these changes add up and over the years the sense of the main street community space was lost.

The Downtown Square is blessed with a nearly complete storefront façade on all four blocks facing the courthouse, as well as its outside corners. Many towns have lost much of their Main Street buildings and as a result have lost any definition of a strong downtown. Anchoring the Downtown Square is the Newton County Courthouse, a wonderful limestone Art Deco-influenced building. The Courthouse’s position at the center of the block, its median lines establishing a strong directional orientation is a traditional theme in court house designs across the country. While much of the original landscaping is gone, the lush green lawn and large old trees give the block a wonderful park setting in the middle of the downtown core.

## **Intent of Guidelines**

The Neosho Historic Downtown Square has many outstanding attributes to build upon. Beginning with an appreciation of the original architecture on the Downtown Square, and with the introduction of new buildings and structures into the downtown fabric and streetscape, all building and streetscape elements should have the look and feel of belonging in the same composition. This document is a guide to conducting appropriate development aimed at promoting the charm and historic feel of Neosho.

The Design Guidelines contained herein are appropriate for commercial areas of the Historic Downtown District. The principles to be discussed, in many cases, can be altered and adapted to apply to an aspect of the entire town or a specific neighborhood, but care should be taken that the Downtown Square and the overall downtown area should remain unique in character.

The next step is to develop a plan to accomplish the renewal of the Downtown Square. First and foremost, this means improving the design guidelines that will guide new development and rehabilitation of existing buildings to bring back the vitality of the district and restore a sense of civic pride. In order for the Downtown Square to be a success it must respect the tradition of rhythm and unity that existed before, not to create an exact copy of the historic past. Working within the existing fabric of Downtown Buildings the community should develop a sensible approach to the renewal of the district including; the removal of inappropriate materials, adherence to the design guidelines, and developing appropriate streetscape improvements.

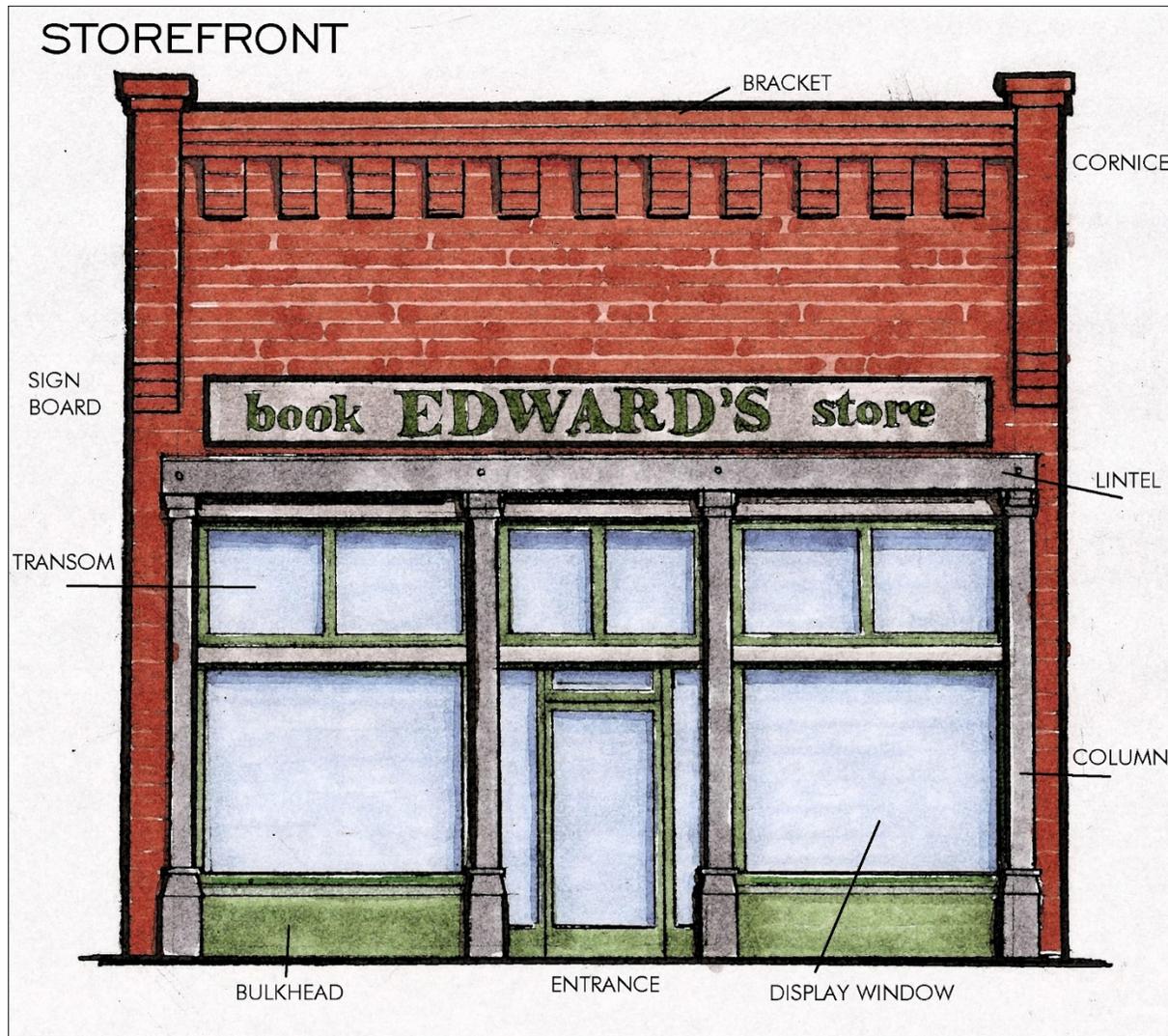
The building facades along with the sidewalks and street make up the outdoor living room of the city. This space is at the center of the community, alive with activities and events. As such, the responsibility of redevelopment falls on the community as well as to both individual property owners and the city. The individual building facades are owned and maintained by the property owners. The street improvements, utilities and sidewalks are the responsibility of the city. An individual owner cannot be expected to invest in redeveloping his building without the city commitment to restore the streetscape and the city can't be expected to make these investments without commitment from the property owners. Both areas must be redeveloped at the same time and pace for a successful redevelopment of the Downtown Square.

Since around 2001, in an ongoing effort to revitalize downtown Neosho, through both private and public means portions of the historic district have undergone restoration & renovation efforts including new street lights, renovated storefronts and new sidewalks. There are many wonderful restoration projects underway on several significant buildings in the Downtown Square, additionally many have been recently completed.

## **BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES**

### **Building Zones**

Improvements to individual buildings will be discussed in the context of three distinct 'zones'; the Storefront, the Upper Façade, and the Rear Façade. The elements of the front façade zones are depicted in this diagram.



**Downtown Fabric—Façade Elements**

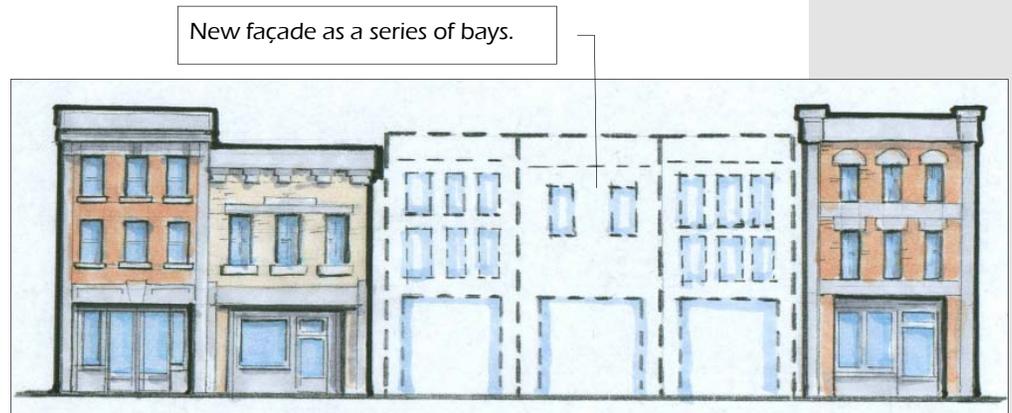
Take care to make sure the different elements of a façade are balanced. Appropriate massing, building and floor heights, proportions, roof lines, materials, and setbacks are critical considerations in new construction. Any future development should implement a design that contributes to the fabric of downtown. Design that will detract from the fabric of the Downtown Square will not be approved.

Other aspects like architectural details, colors, and cornices are important to the restoration of historic buildings, but can be used effectively in new construction as well. Developing a well balanced character between all elements can allow a building to be individual in its character, but at the same time be a complementary thread woven into the overall fabric and feel of downtown.

**Rhythm and Scale**

The defined rhythm of Neosho should be maintained along a street frontage by adhering to uniform lot widths, building widths, and window spacing.

- New infill buildings and structures should maintain the rhythm through proper repetition of details and orientation to the street.
- Vertical elements, entrances, lighting, and other street furnishings can also develop the rhythm of a specific block.



**Alterations**

Inappropriate alterations or additions that disrupt the fabric of the Storefront Zone are not recommended. Not all alterations detract from the Downtown fabric, it is possible that non-historic and new construction can complement the building fabric that has developed, therefore some alterations may not need be removed. Decks, ADA structures, and other 'detachable' alterations can be utilized, but should be as unobtrusive as possible and located on the rear or sides of the building.

As a rule, any and all alterations or additions to the Upper Façade zone should be removed. Alterations in this zone can significantly change the appearance of the face of the building. This includes any and all signs and lighting as these should be restricted to the Storefront Zone. Avoid removing or altering any historic material or significant architectural features.

When removing alterations from the Upper Façade zone, care should be taken during the removal process due to the possibility of damaging original elements hidden behind the alterations. When disassembly of a historic element is necessary, use methods that minimize damage to the original materials.



Original design.



Minor alterations.



Storefront is lost.



Significant alterations.

**Masonry**

Masonry is the preferred façade material for downtown. In most instances metal and wood siding is not an appropriate choice because of its negative effect on the downtown building fabric. These types of siding provide harsh lines, stark contrast, and no relief or warmth to the buildings. If wood was the historic or original material of a building it may be restored.

- If a historic façade has been covered with metal or wood siding it should be removed. Exposing the underlying brick will help re-establish the character of the building and contribute to the visual continuity of the block. Metal cladding often is easy to remove, and only small areas of the underlying material will have been damaged.
- Siding and metal cladding also hide interesting details that can enhance building identity. If, after removing the covering material, portions of the original must be replaced, use a material that is similar to the original in color and texture.
- Masonry restoration, particularly on historic structures, should be done with great care.
- If the masonry has been painted or stained a minimally intrusive removal process should be used.
- Never resort to sand blasting as this will permanently damage the brick.
- Unpainted masonry should remain natural, not painted or sealed.
- Damaged masonry should be repaired or replaced with similar color, texture, and style masonry products.
- Tuck pointing should be done with an appropriate mortar material with a consistent color across the entire façade.
- Masonry replacement and/or repair should only be done with appropriate materials.
- Portland cement as a patch for masonry is unacceptable.



### Awnings

Awnings used in the storefront zone provide shade for merchandise, shelter for pedestrians, and bring a colorful accent to the building front that can be changed frequently and without great expense.

- Mount the top edge to align with the top of the transom, or to align with the framing that separates the transom from the main display window. This will help strengthen the visual continuity of store fronts.
- Roll-up awnings were a common site on historic storefronts and can be used following a similar approach to the original application. If a roll-up awning is not operable, the awning should at least follow the shape of an operable awning.
- Like the storefront, awnings should be confined to the extent of the original storefront opening.
- Awnings should be trapezoidal in profile, not rounded or curved, and a consistent color.
- Awning colors should coordinate with the color scheme for the entire building.
- Awning signage or lettering should be limited to the hanging vertical flap of the awning and be complementary in color to the building.
- Awning signage or lettering should not be allowed where another flush faced sign exists.
- Signboards under the awning intended to assist pedestrians should be a limited, uniform size and complement the awning and building.
- Awnings will wear and should be acknowledged as an operating cost of doing business which can be changed every few years for a fresh look.
- Aluminum and/or steel awnings and structures are not original building elements and typically detract from the overall appeal of downtown façades. It is recommended that these awnings be removed and points of attachment repaired on the building façade.

Improper awnings extending across multiple storefronts



Appropriate awnings establishing rhythm.





Wood Shingle canopies are inappropriate on downtown buildings.



Awning installed too high.



Appropriate use of awnings



Awnings in disrepair



**Lighting**

Buildings should be interesting to pedestrians and motorists at night, as well as by day. A well-lit storefront or rear façade creates a positive impression about downtown. The following lighting conditions can be implemented to enhance the attractiveness and safety of the downtown:

- Use lighting as a design element to draw attention to the entire building, not just the sign.
- Any lighting at the storefront should be used to accent the entrance, signage, or architectural elements as well as provide light for safety and security.
- Light fixtures should be the lowest wattage possible and of a concealed, simple, and non-intrusive design or a style that is appropriate to the period of the building.
- Sign lighting should be balanced in color and intensity with light in display windows.
- Warm-colored light is preferred for all exterior lighting, since this is more pleasing to the eye, and will more easily draw attention to window displays.
- Neon lights and cool fluorescent lights should not be used.
- Lighting on Rear Facades should provide illumination at the entry door as well as along the pedestrian path from the parking area. This lighting should be similar to the lighting in the front.



Inappropriate style of lights



Lighting illuminates the doorway & Spot lights for entrance signage  
St. Charles, Missouri



Use lighting to highlight building

### Signage

Each business must have its own identity while at the same time maintaining the continuity of the district. Appropriate signage identifies the business without detracting from the architecture of the building and the fabric of downtown. Sign types and their locations should be kept simple and consistent for ease of public awareness. Signage should be restricted to the Storefront or Rear Façade Zones.

- The size of the sign should be of an appropriate scale for the building and street. Large signs should not be needed as the signage in a downtown area is more oriented to the pedestrian than the motorist.
- Rooftop, blade, pole, abandoned, neon, electronic message boards, and billboard signage are not recommended.
- Flush-mounted signs that fit within architectural features are preferred. This type of signage helps reinforce horizontal lines along the street.
- Coordinate color schemes with the building front; use HPC approved colors or present colors for approval
- Locate flush signs so they do not extend beyond the outer edges of the building front.
- Where appropriate use existing decorative moldings to define a “sign panel” for flush-mounted signs.
- Locate projecting signs along the first floor level of the façade, not above.
- Place signs near the business entrance, to guide a customer’s eyes to the door.
- Use symbols in projecting signs; these are more easily identified and remembered and will add interest to the building.
- Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs by aligning several smaller signs or grouping them onto a single panel as a directory to make them easier to locate. Use similar forms or backgrounds for the signs to tie them together visually and make them easier to read.
- Always refer to the City’s Sign Ordinance when determining the appropriate signage.



Signboards on Sidewalk  
Hannibal, Missouri



**Signage (continued)**

- Mount signs so they will not obscure any architectural details.
- Sign materials should be compatible with the façade materials.
- Good craftsmanship will pay off in longer service for your sign, and it will convey a stronger image to the public. Select high quality materials: Signs are exposed to extreme weather conditions, and a deteriorating sign presents a poor image to customers.
- Encourage the use of “custom” designs that portrays a business as being unique. Mass-produced signs, especially rectangular plastic panel ones with internal lighting, fail to make a lasting impression.
- Illuminate signs in such a way as to enhance the overall composition of the façade.
- External lighting cast from period style, non-intrusive fixtures is preferable to internal sign lighting.
- Awning signage or lettering should be limited to the hanging vertical flap of the awning and be complementary in color to the building.
- Awning signage or lettering should not be allowed where another flush faced sign exists.
- Signboards under the awning intended to assist pedestrians should be a limited, uniform size and complement the awning and building.



Free-standing entrance sign  
St. Charles, Missouri



Flush mounted sign over store entrance  
Washington, Missouri

### **Bicycles**

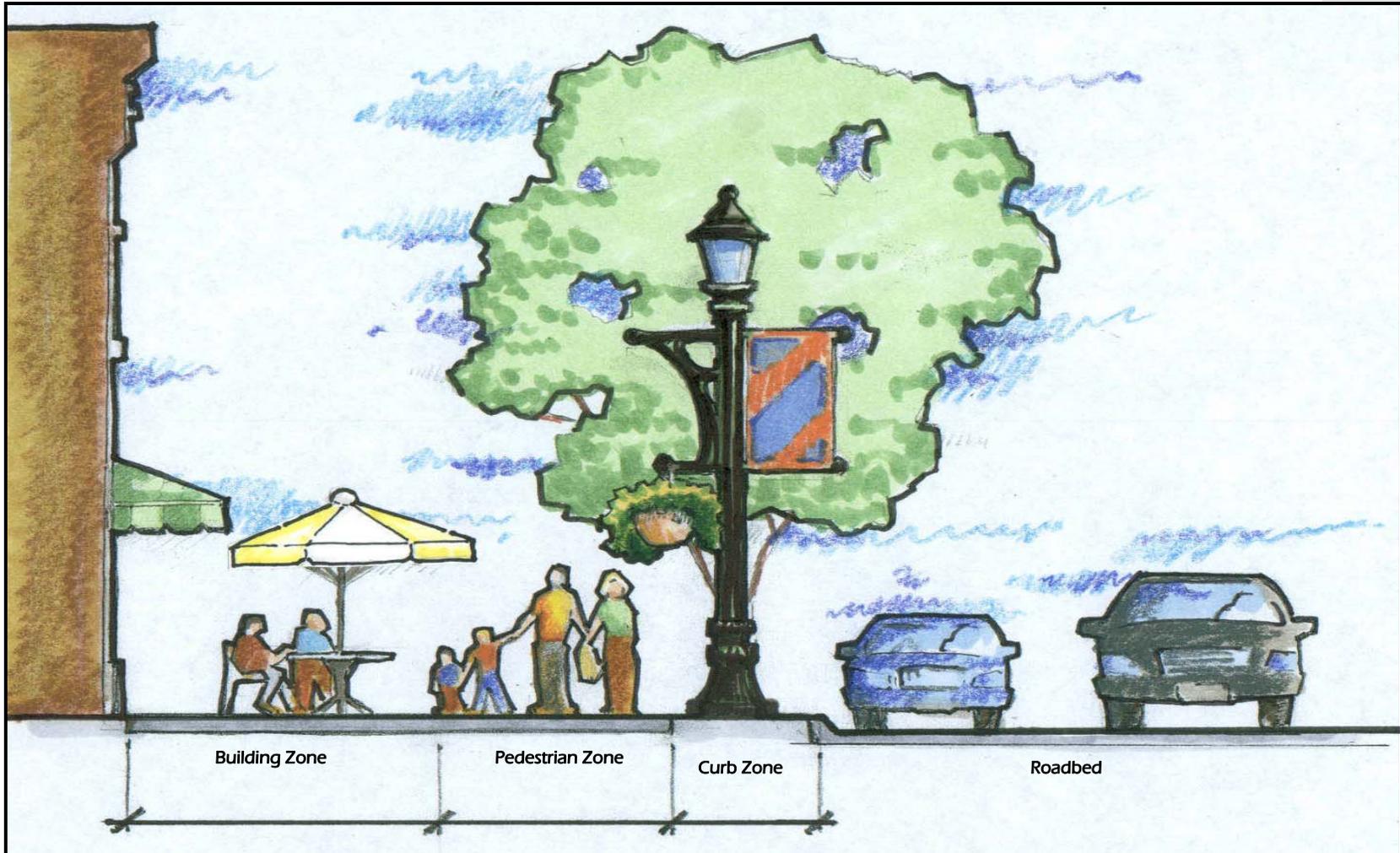
A downtown area should be pedestrian friendly and bicycle friendly as well. Concerns for a bicyclist should include routes of travel, clearance, type of traffic signals, traffic lanes, signage, drainage grates, and curbing obstacles, and parking.

- Bicycle parking racks should be a uniform and integral component of the downtown furnishings.
- Racks should be located at useful activity nodes and on all four corners of the courthouse square.

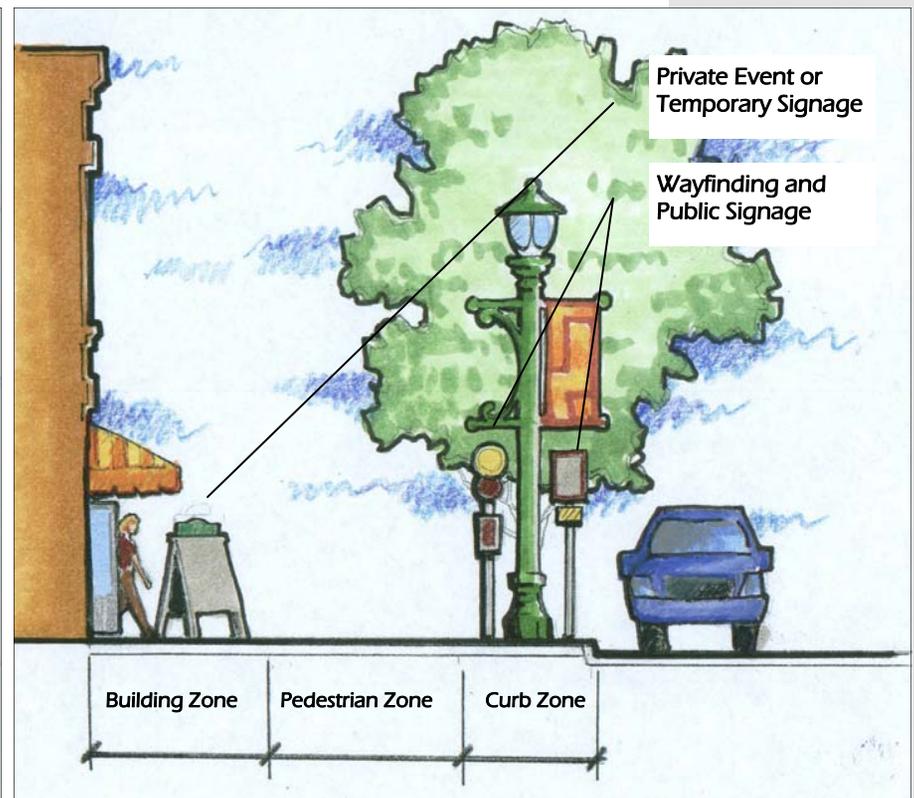
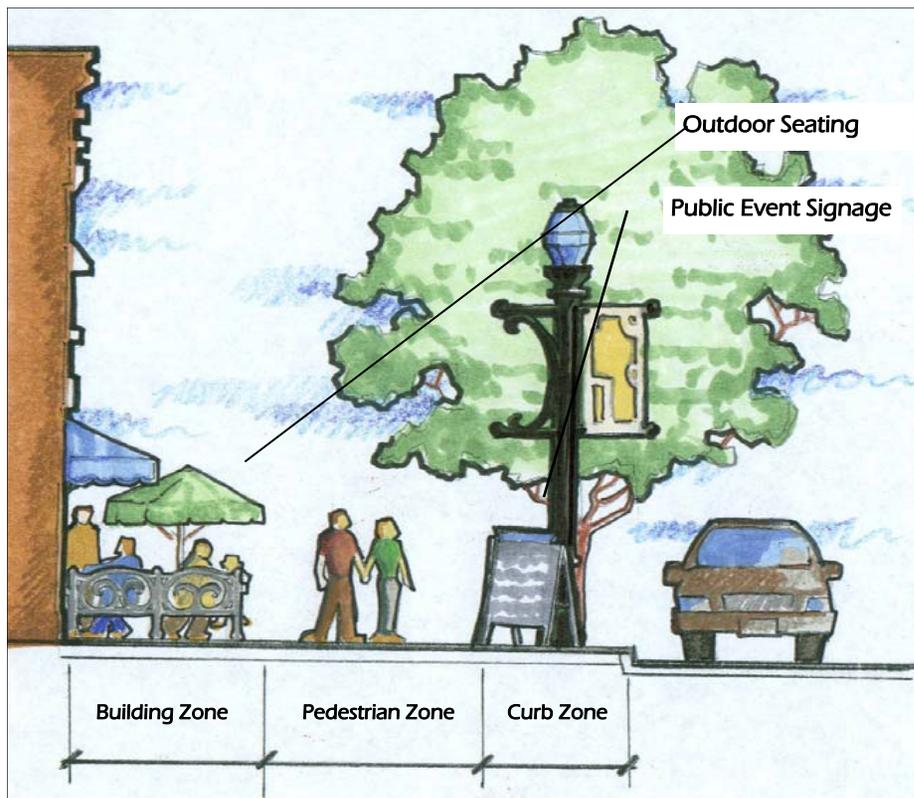


**Sidewalk Zones**

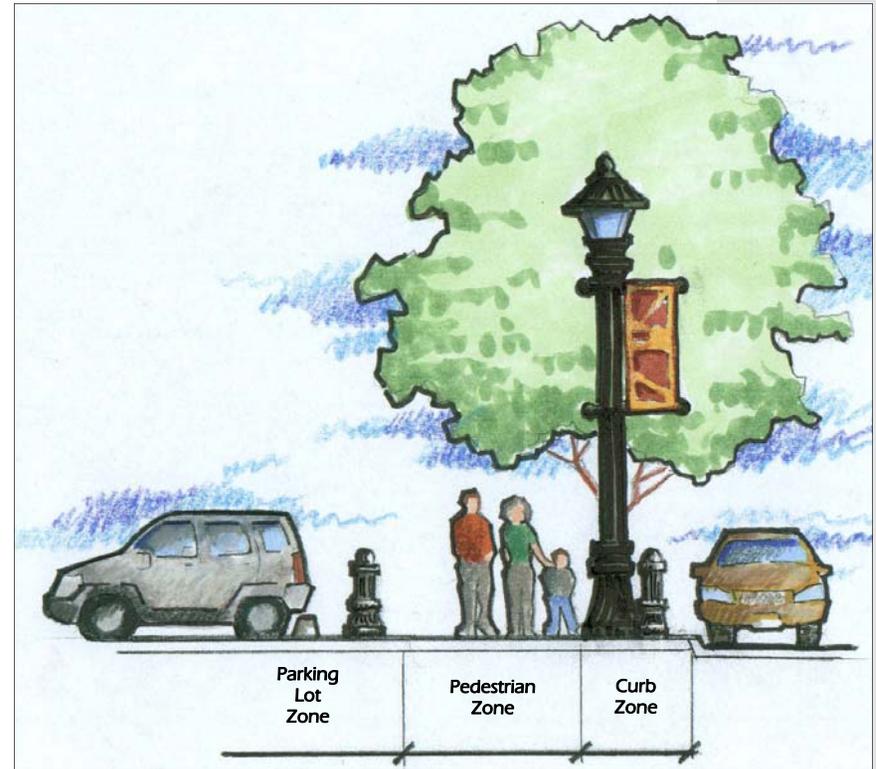
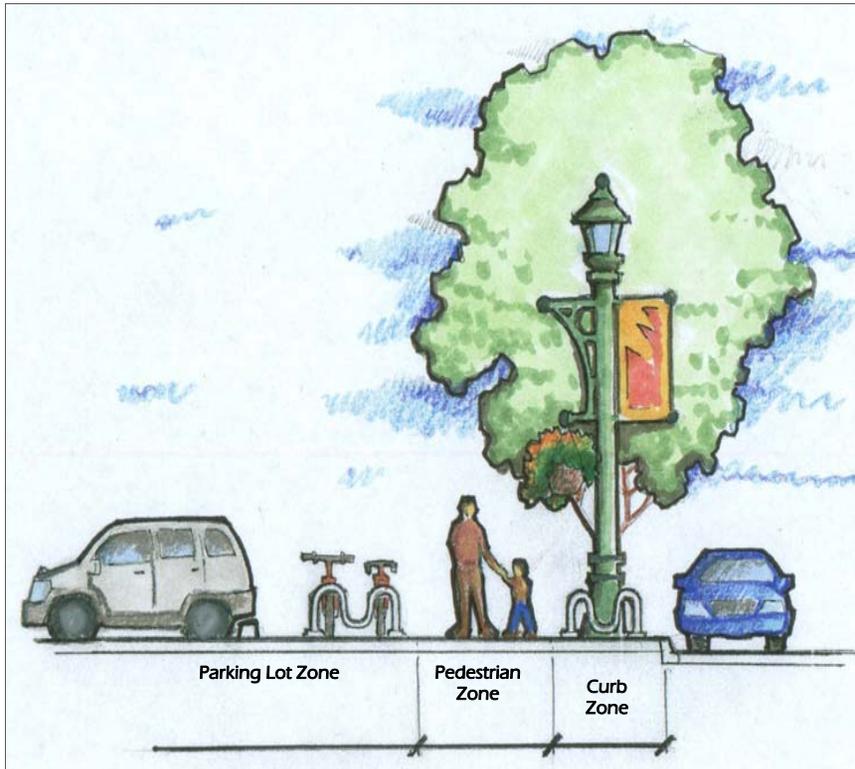
Appropriate zones in front of a building should be maintained. The Building Zone, Pedestrian Zone, and Curb Zone all have unique characteristics that should be regulated to ensure that private elements do not adversely impact public



- Aside from ADA accessible pavement improvements, Streetscape Amenities should remain clear of the Pedestrian Zone and allow for free movement of pedestrians. These elements will enhance the pedestrian experience, but must not obstruct them.
- Businesses should be informed on the importance of maintaining Sidewalk Zones. Each business should care for the zones within their building's street frontage.



- Items such as bicycle racks, bollards, and benches can add to the streetscape
- Businesses should consider providing and maintaining such elements within their Building or Parking Lot Zones to enhance service to their patrons.

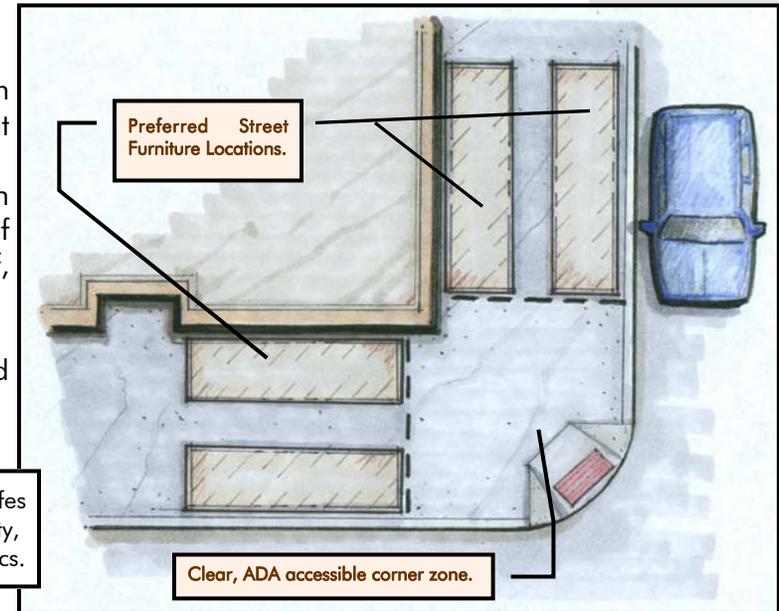


**Outdoor Café Seating -**

Outdoor Café or sidewalk seating is an exiting tool that adds to a vibrant impression about downtown. Seating areas for restaurants should be encouraged, but monitored by the City. A proper arrangement will:



- Be located in the sidewalk area fronting the restaurant.
- Allow a clear and unencumbered path along the sidewalk for pedestrian traffic or be located close enough to the building. In either case the sidewalk must maintain ADA compliance. The restaurant owner is responsible for keeping the sidewalk and this pathway clear at all times.
- Areas adjacent to the building should not block entrances or exits to the building.
- Provide a clearly defined area connected with the restaurant.
- Utilize appropriate umbrellas or other patron covering in a uniform color, matching the building colors, and with only the restaurant name. Any other wording or message should not be allowed.
- Temporary outdoor seating material must be kept in top condition to provide an attractive image for the restaurant and all of downtown. Such furnishings should be durable, weatherproof, and sturdy enough to prevent movement by winds.
- Plastic furnishings should not be used.
- Furnishings should be stored in a secure location inside at the end of the day.
- At least one sturdy trash receptacle should be provided.



Outdoor Café Seating -



**Maintenance of Facades -**

Facades, particularly restorations, may need extra care and maintenance.



## Historic Buildings

### Original Elements

Any original element or material that still exists, particularly on the storefront, should be retained if possible. Original elements provide a historic value that can not be replaced. Prisms glass in transom windows or a decorative wooden door with beveled glass are examples of original materials.

Replacement of missing architectural elements should be based on accurate duplications of original features. When an entire detail must be reconstructed the new material should match the original in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Where reconstruction of an element is impossible because of a lack of historical evidence, then a new design that relates to the building in general size, scale and material may be considered. Use design elements that reflect the building's style. A simplified interpretation of similar features on comparable buildings may be acceptable.

### Storefront Entrance:

- The entrance door should be recessed to emphasize the entry, provide a bit of shelter and remove the open door from the path of pedestrians on the sidewalk. These areas also repeat rhythm of shaded areas along the street helps to identify business entrances.
- If the original recessed entry has been removed, consider establishing a new one.
- The recessed entrance door should also be ADA compliant.
- The door should provide a view into the building as well as a sense of openness. Solid doors should be avoided.
- Consider using an accent color on the door.



**Windows:**

- Preserve any of the large panes of glass that make-up the original store front if they still exist. These transparent surfaces allow pedestrians to see product and activity inside.
- Any new or replacement storefront should be built of similar materials compatible with the original façade design and craftsmanship.
- Wood framing similar to the original is preferred but metal framing with the appropriate historic profile is acceptable.
- Clear insulated glass with low 'E' coating is a good choice for replacement storefronts.
- Tinted or reflective glass and interior reflective films should not be used on the storefront.

**Spandrel Panels:**

- Maintaining the original spandrel panel, if it exists, is preferable but if the panel is missing, reconstruction using old photographs as a guide is acceptable.
- Coordinate the color scheme of the spandrel panel with other façade elements.
- If original design information is not available, another option is to design a simplified panel using appropriate materials such as painted wood or metal.



Recessed entrance with detailed kick plates creates an inviting experience for the consumer  
Washington, Missouri



Historic Storefront  
St. Charles, Missouri

**Transoms:**

- These bands of glass are found on many buildings and they often align at the same height in a block. Maintaining this line will help to reinforce a sense of visual continuity for the street.
- When transoms are covered and original moldings and window frame proportions are concealed, the impact of the store front is weakened. If the interior ceiling is now lower than this glass line, move the dropped ceiling back from the window to maintain its historical dimensions.
- Some transoms have hinged panels to allow natural ventilation. Restore these to working order where feasible. Used in combination with ceiling fans these operable transoms can be very effective in improving comfort levels when full air-conditioning is not as necessary.

Buildings which preserve the transom



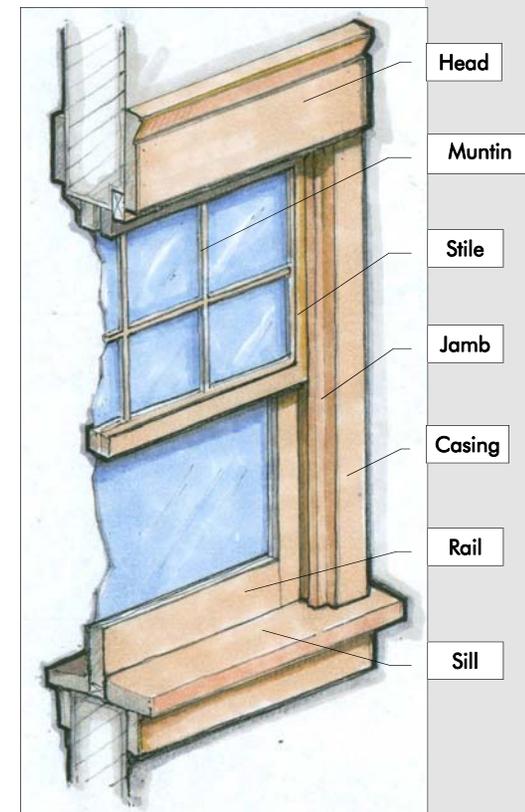
Great example of a façade with intricate details well restored and maintained.



## Upper Facade

### Windows:

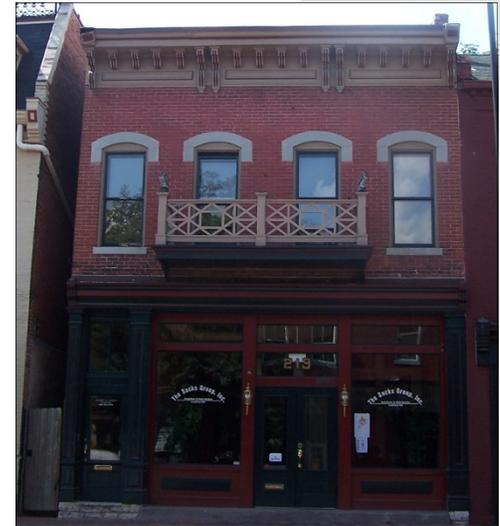
- Typical upper windows are vertically oriented and uniformly spaced across the building front. This rhythm of upper story windows is an important unifying feature of downtown, because it is repeated on most buildings.
- Any windows covered by masonry infill, wood panels, or mismatched windows should be removed.
- If the original window still exists, it should be restored to serviceable condition when possible.
- Replace only missing portions of original elements where feasible. Sometimes trim elements and other materials must be removed in order to repair or refinish them. Always devise methods of replacing the disassembled materials in their original configuration. Code trim pieces, for example, so you can replace them accurately.
- Installation of interior storm windows should be considered.
- If the existing window is beyond repair an appropriate replacement window of the same size and profile should be installed.
- Use design elements that reflect the building's style. A simplified interpretation of similar features on comparable buildings may be considered.
- Window shades or curtains in colors that coordinate with accent trim should be encouraged.
- If the ceiling is lower than the window head, pull the ceiling back from the window to keep the original height at the window.



**Cornice and Architectural Details:**

- Replacement of missing cornices or architectural elements should be based on accurate duplications of original features. In the event replacement is undertaken, the new material should match the original in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Photographic evidence is a good source for research.
- If the cornice is missing, a similar cornice of like size and scale should be installed.
- If no evidence exists as to form and detail, the reconstructed cornice should be as simple and non-intrusive as possible.
- If the cornice is intact it should be repaired and maintained as required.
- Where architectural details have been removed, look at photos for details to use as patterns for new designs.
- Where exact reconstruction of details is not feasible, consider developing a simplified interpretation of the original, in which its major form and line is retained.

Maintains stylistic elements  
St. Charles, Missouri



Shutters (or blinds) are encouraged on upper level windows. They should be proportioned that if closed they would completely cover the window. Shutters can also provide accent color that ties in with street level design.  
Washington, Missouri



Rehab that preserved ornamental cornice work at the top of the building  
Neosho, Missouri

### **Rear Façade**

The rear facade typically faces an alley and provides access for deliveries and pick-up. In some cases customer parking is provided behind a building and entry to the business through the rear elevation is desirable. Attention to the appearance of the rear elevation can be extremely important to the quality of the customers' shopping experience. Consider how image can be improved here, while accommodating service functions.

#### **Entry Door:**

- The rear door should no longer be just for service but used for customers and should project a sense of openness and welcome.
- Customers might also feel a loyalty or sense of 'special access' by using this door and the business can build on this loyalty by catering to that customer and improving that experience.
- A new door and hardware with a large area of glass may be considered.
- A small canopy or awning may provide some shelter.

#### **Upper Rear Façade:**

The upper rear facade elements should be treated similar to the front. Too often this is a façade that is neglected and allowed to deteriorate.

- Windows should be restored or replaced.
- Gutters and downspouts should be in good repair and painted.
- Use materials and colors that coordinate with the main façade so customers will learn to recognize both entrances are related to the same business.
- Use a smaller version of the front sign to identify the rear entrance.
- New exit stairs and balconies can enhance the marketability of second story space, especially when these lead out onto parking lots located on the back side of the building.

#### **Fences:**

- Fences should be designed to harmonize with the surrounding structures in both scale and color.
- Some materials which may be appropriate include masonry, wood and wrought-iron.
- Chain-link fence is not recommended.



Rear Entrance & Upper Rear Façade are well cared for and inviting



Good rear entrance and landscaping

**Trash, Ancillary Structures, & Utilities:**

- Trash containers should be placed in an enclosure or behind a screen.
- Enclosures and screens should harmonize with the surrounding buildings in scale and color.
- Landscaping can also be used to screen air-conditioning condensers and utility transformers.
- Use solid wood or masonry partitions, lattice screens, or hedges to screen trash areas.
- Any ancillary structures should match the surrounding buildings style and scale. These structures must be maintained well.
- Keep electrical service boxes and conduits in good repair and painted.
- Use a color scheme on the screens that matches that of the rest of the building.



Screened waste receptacles or large dumpsters



Regulations for refuse haulers can be established and enforced to prevent situations like this.

### Existing Non-Historic Buildings and New Construction

Some buildings in the Downtown Square do not have historic features or ornamentation. Many were built with simple fronts. These buildings and any new construction should implement the following standards:

- New construction should be of design considerate of traditional storefront elements described in these guidelines or on nearby historic buildings that contribute to the fabric of downtown.
- Use a simple design, complementary to the downtown, with three basic elements; a unified paint and color scheme, an awning, and non-intrusive signage.
- Emphasize horizontal features that can align with other buildings.
- Utilize a simple cornice, a band of color, a sign panel or an awning edge that can line up with similar elements on the street nearby.
- Some newer buildings downtown are set back from the street, with space in front for parking. These buildings are intended to relate to cars more than pedestrians. Landscaping elements should be used that will enhance the rhythm and front position of adjacent buildings.

### Color Guidelines

Use color to your advantage. Some of the most noticeable improvements are achieved simply with a fresh paint job. The most effective and economical schemes often start with the natural colors of the building materials themselves as a base, such as the native red of many brick buildings. The following techniques should be encouraged:

- Use only one base color for the majority of the background wall surface, but use a different color for accents. Do not paint a building entirely one color.
- Base colors should be muted earth tones or pastels; See HPC approved color palette
- Look for “built-in” features of the façade that can be highlighted with an accent color.
- Window frames, sills, moldings, and cornices are potential elements to dramatize with a contrasting color.
- Use bright colors only in small amounts. Place them at the first floor level to direct the customer’s eyes to the business.
- Consider accent colors for signs, awnings, and entrance doors.
- Earth tones will hold their color well, as will darker pastels. Check for color stability in ultra-violet light; some colors, such as red, tend to be unstable and will shift in hue over time.

Colors match surrounding buildings



Block that follows same basic design principles  
St. Charles, Missouri

**BUILDING DESIGN EXAMPLES**



- Use horizontal cladding band to complement vertical columns
- Use horizontal band to provide bold color and building identity
- Signage to be simple and easy to read
- Street trees to provide vertical edge to street



## **BUILDING DESIGN EXAMPLES**



- Restore or create façade with a fenestration of windows
- Use fabric awnings to create depth and give color to façade
- Establish cornice on top of building
- Use of brick and masonry details (limestone, terra cotta, etc) to highlight details of building design
- Signage should complement the building materials and be of appropriate scale



### **STREETSCAPE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The term Streetscape typically refers to exterior public spaces located between the building facades on one side of the street and the building facades on the other side of the street. An organized streetscape with combined lighting and way-finding signage is more efficient and user-friendly for visitors to the Downtown Square.

As illustrated in Figure 1 the Existing Neosho Downtown Square is formed by the four streets, Spring, Washington, Main and Wood Street. The vehicular traffic is routed into two very wide lanes in a one-way loop, going counterclockwise around the Courthouse. Parking is angled on both sides of the street with the cross walk located mid-block instead of the corners. Overhead electrical and telephone lines have been mostly relocated off the square in the latest city infrastructure improvements. Curbs were repaired and a brick paving strip was introduced along the sidewalks along with new street lighting along the street. ADA compliant curb cuts were also implemented.

#### **Street Improvements**

In order to create a friendly pedestrian atmosphere conducive to a civic and retail presence, the vehicular traffic around the square needs to be addressed. The existing streets widths are overly generous and enable a “racetrack mentality” around the square. The width of streets could easily be reduced by 8 to 12 feet and still allow for two lanes of one-way traffic to flow. This would have a traffic calming effect allowing pedestrians to feel much safer crossing the street, as well as, quieting the street activity in consideration of outdoor strolling and dining.

Figure 1



**Strengthening the Square**

Narrowing the streets by 10 feet and creating a brick paved landscape strip should be considered by the city. This strip would widen the sidewalk space in front of the downtown shops and businesses to allow for outdoor dining experiences, outdoor displays, a row of shade trees to walk under, flower boxes and streetscape furniture for pedestrians to enjoy. This strip would not change the existing layout or traffic flow, but will calm traffic to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Trees along the front of retail storefronts have always been an issue of contention by shop owners. The problem of blocked signage, falling leaves, bird droppings and maintenance has resulted in many trees being removed from these areas.

However, by proper selection and placement, colorful ornamental trees will enhance the pedestrian experience tremendously and still allow signage visibility and minimum maintenance. In the summer trees will provide shade for pedestrians strolling along the sidewalks, and with the right selection, flowering blossoms in the spring. Trees with smaller leaves can be selected to minimize fall cleanup, but still provide colorful autumn foliage, and in the winter, the bare branches can provide attractive holiday lighting.



Neosho was once famous for its wonderful flower boxes, and the widened sidewalks and landscape areas would provide the perfect space for flowers to return to the square. These colorful plantings should be arranged to shield the pedestrian from the front bumpers of cars parked along the street and allow for placement of street furniture seating areas .

Brick pavers should also be used to more strongly define existing features, like the crosswalks at the midpoints of the block. This strip could be raised to act as a gentle speed bump as well as architecturally define the County Courthouse's grand meridian markers (the north/south, east/west orientation lines prevalent in many courthouse designs across the country.)



### **Design Coordination**

A comprehensive design approach to the Downtown Square will result in a more successful project. A district can display a sense of order and rhythm through the repetition of design elements on buildings and street furnishings. A sense of arrival should exist upon entering the Downtown Square.

- The district should have well lighted and maintained streets and walks.
- Particular care should be devoted to the main entries and corridors as these will be the first impressions of the downtown area.
- Good, clear signage provides an invitation to enter and visit attractions.

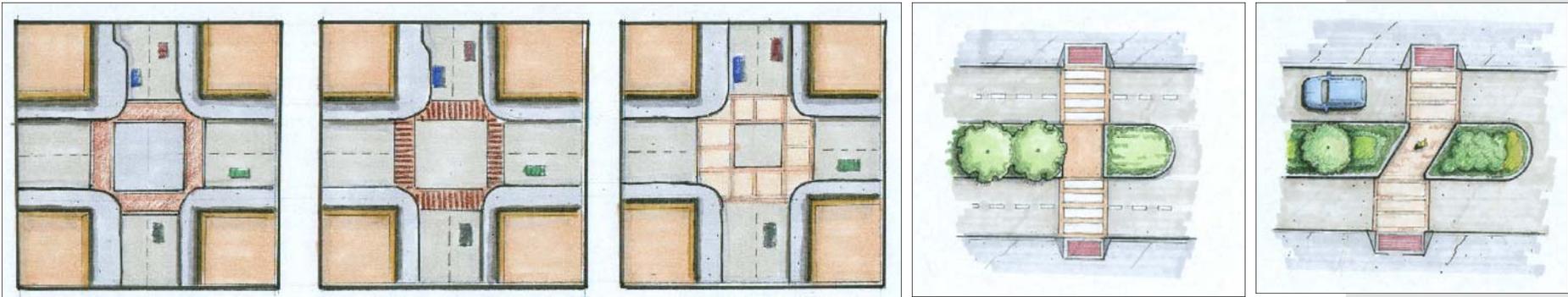
### **Infrastructure**

- Curbs should be in good repair and a consistent material along the street. There should be no gaps or areas of uneven elevation along the curb line. At all street intersections there should be ADA compliant curb cuts.
- Poorly working or non-existent storm drains can create an undesirable situation at street intersections when runoff water collects in large pools. This condition makes pedestrian access virtually impossible and must be corrected.
- A public works project should be considered in connection with any other work such as sidewalk, curbs or street pavement to minimize street closings and maximize cost savings through economies of scale.

**Pedestrian Access and Sidewalks**

- A clean, clear and well lit pathway for pedestrians should be provided from any remote parking area to the Downtown Square. This pathway will also need to comply with Federal ADA Accessibility Guidelines.
- Sidewalks should run continuously through an entire block to create a clearly defined pedestrian pathway and minimizing conflicts between people and vehicles.
- All roadway crosswalks should be clearly marked with signage and striping.

Suggestions for sidewalk alignment and designation.



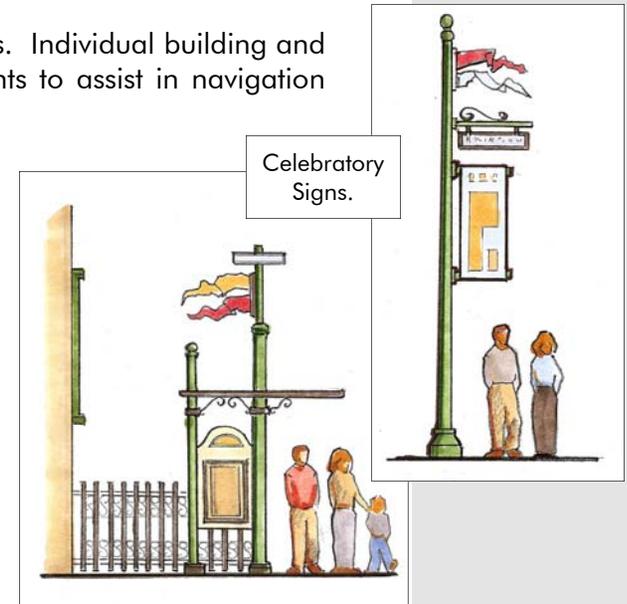
**Fountains**

Neosho’s natural springs should be an inspiration for streetscape improvements and pedestrian amenities in the Downtown Square. The introduction of fountains could enhance the four corners of the courthouse block and relate to the natural springs found in Neosho. By locating these mini-plazas on the corners of the courthouse block, it creates a stronger definition of the parking lanes and allows pedestrian access to the corners of the block for easier street crossing. These fountains could be simple bubblers out of the sidewalk that provide a refreshing respite in the summertime.

### **Signs and Banners**

Signage should be used to identify, define and promote the downtown area and its activities. Individual building and business signage discussed in Section II. A. 8) and wayfinding techniques and components to assist in navigation through the area will be addressed in Section V.

- Street name signs should be chosen and installed that are distinctively different from the street name signs located in the rest of the community. This will reinforce a feeling of 'place' in the downtown.
- Street address signs should be uniform throughout the downtown area and prominently displayed. Merchants can be encouraged to adopt the same type of sign.
- The style of the street name and street address signs should complement if not match completely. A 'historic plaque' type can provide a very elegant touch. The style, font, and colors of these signs should be easily read.
- Banners and other temporary signs should be allowed, but restricted as to size, prevalence, and length of display.
- Hung from the light poles, seasonal banners or decorations approved by the City can tie the downtown area together.
- Banners can also add a sense of excitement while providing information about upcoming events or festivals.
- Banners should be well designed and are most effective with a simple design, repeated throughout downtown, minimal lettering, and no sponsor panels.
- The banner brackets used for these banners should be maintained by the City and only for use by the City.
- Banners should be changed on a regular schedule and replaced as needed.
- Balloons, pennants, and other distracting sign novelties should not be allowed in the downtown area.
- Murals must have an artistic component and are allowable by City approval only.



### **Parking and Service Areas**

- Adequate parking to support business and retail tenants must be provided. Street parking will accommodate some but not all of the required parking spaces.
- Well lit and landscaped parking lots on previously vacant property near Downtown is a good solution for additional parking spaces.
- Provide planting buffers at the edges of parking lots or use decorative paving to define the site border.
- Include landscape islands throughout the lot. This will improve the aesthetics as well as the storm water run-off.
- Side or rear locations off the main street are preferred for parking lots.
- A clear and well lit pathway for pedestrians from any parking area in the Downtown Square should be provided.
- The street, alley and sidewalk pavement should be in good condition with no tripping hazards for pedestrians.
- Crosswalks should be clearly marked and free of landscaping and other obstacles to provide a clear view for traffic.
- Care must also be taken that lots are policed in the evening as they will tend to become a gathering place for youth. This, in and of itself is not a bad thing, but it will make any visitors or evening patrons nervous about using the lot.

### **Parking Meters**

Parking meters can contribute to the overall sense of clutter, therefore coordination with other elements should be considered. The economic benefits of revenue from parking meters is often offset by the costs to enforce the meter limits and the unseen costs of discouraging customers from parking in downtown.

- Meter poles should be of the same design as light and signage poles.
- To reduce the clutter from the number of poles, two adjacent parking spots should share one pole.

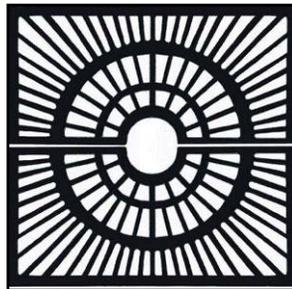
### **Lighting**

Lighting of the Downtown Square should provide the minimum illumination required by the Missouri Department of Transportation for the road surface.

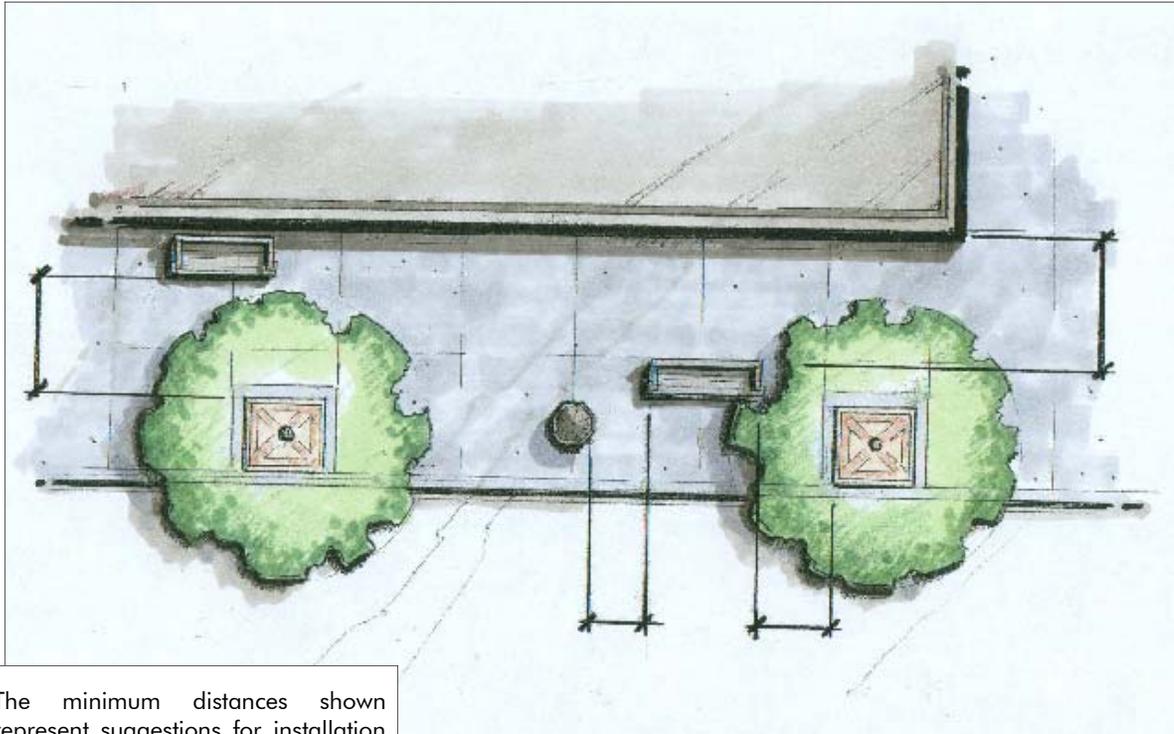
- The sidewalks should be provided with pools of light at a higher level of illumination than the roadway.
- Storefront lighting can add to the pedestrian walkway illumination.
- Street lighting should be on pedestrian height poles and project light down onto the sidewalk not out into second floor windows.
- Lighting should be uniform in style, type, height, and brightness throughout the area.
- The antique replica light poles are not preferred unless it can be shown that they previously existed, however, the style used in the current streetscape plans should be continued as a theme throughout the downtown.
- Lighting poles with brackets for banners or electrical outlets can effectively display temporary or seasonal City approved decorations.
- An overall lighting design strategy should be developed to ensure appropriate lighting levels.
- The lighting plan should not neglect parking areas, rear entrances, and alleys.

**Site Furnishings**

- Benches within the streetscape encourage social interaction which contributes to a successful neighborhood.
- Planters and window boxes provide color and can be a volunteer rallying point if maintained by a local club or organization.
- Public art and sculpture can provide an inspirational atmosphere in which people enjoy lingering.
- Trash receptacles provide a place to dispose of potential litter.
- Grouped together, such furnishings will enhance the downtown and provide a gathering place for pedestrians.
- Furnishings should be coordinated with light and sign poles to present a unified look to the streetscape.



**Site Furnishings**



The minimum distances shown represent suggestions for installation placement. Actual distances may vary due to site conditions.

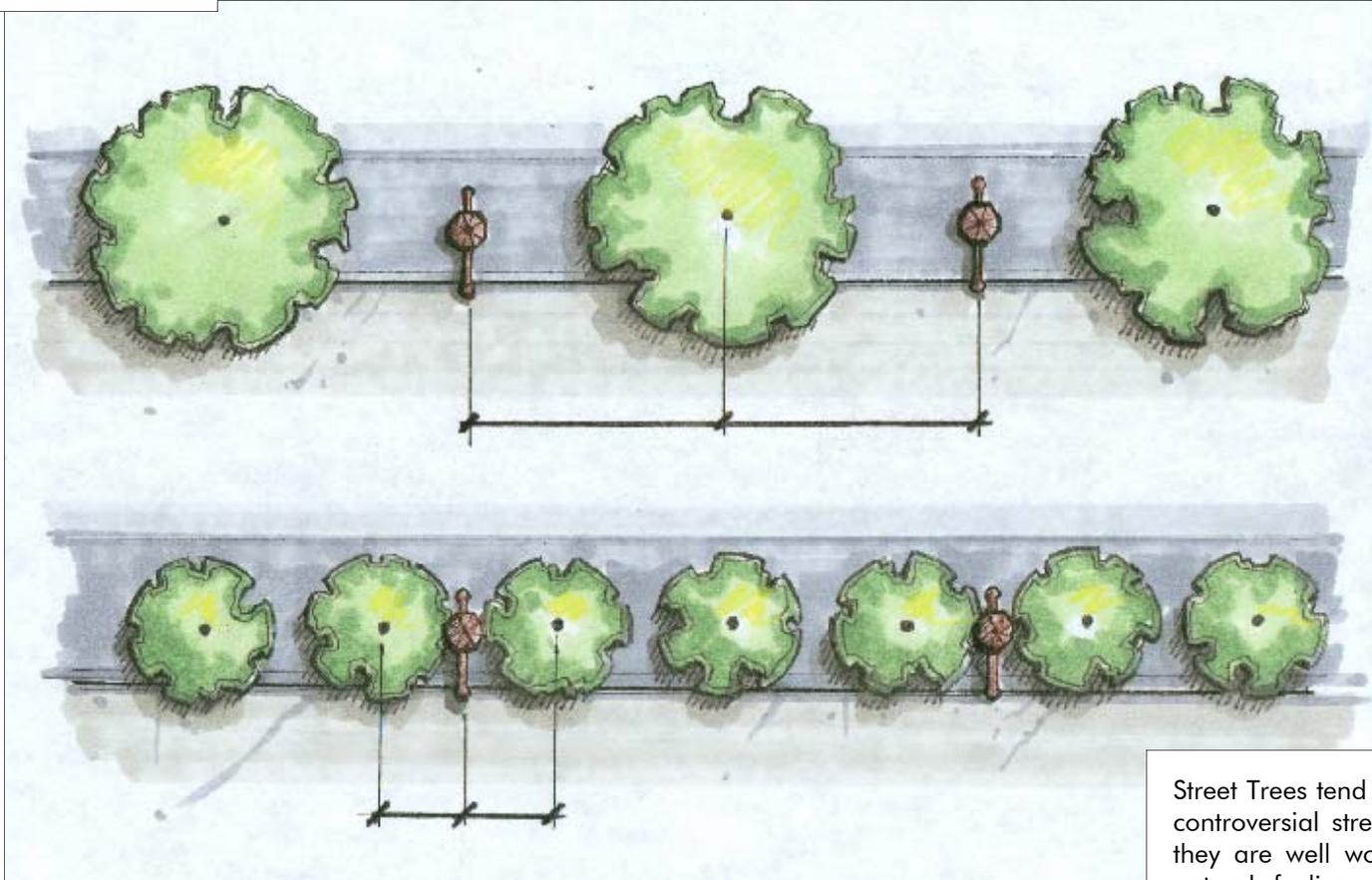
### Landscaping

- Landscaping zones can also be identified along side streets to complement, but not obstruct building facades.
- If landscaping in front of a business is desired, plants in movable containers should be considered where no available landscape strip is present. Containers should never be placed in the pedestrian pathway but rather immediately adjacent to buildings or curbs.
- Trees work best when planted in groups or islands where they can thrive on larger volumes of soil.
- Trees and shrubs should be of and hearty variety common to the region but specified at a size which will allow a minimum of seven feet of clearance before any lateral branching begins.
- The fullness of the tree should be considered to avoid excessive roosting of birds.
- Fruiting berries or other intricacies of a tree's annual cycle should be a maintenance and clean-up concern.
- Trees should also be chosen for their root growth structure. Care should be taken to select varieties with downward growing roots, not lateral growth that will damage surrounding concrete features.
- Shrubs should be massed in groupings of five to seven plants with no more than two different species within a planting bed.
- Locate plantings in traditional areas of the site. For residential buildings, plantings along fences, walks, foundations, and at porch edges are good locations.



**Landscaping**

The minimum distances shown represent suggestions for installation placement. Actual distances may vary due to site conditions.



Street Trees tend to be one of the most controversial streetscape elements, but they are well worth the trouble. The natural feeling provided by correctly placed, selected, and cared for trees is critical to connecting with pedestrians.

## Wayfinding Principles

Wayfinding is an indispensable tool for directing travelers to destinations while at the same time creating a positive first impression. The term wayfinding was originally coined by Kevin Lynch in his seminal 1960 book *The Image of the City*. Lynch presented the concept that people use a cognitive map to move through their environment to their destination. Wayfinding develops a system to assist travelers in interpreting the map.

Wayfinding systems have been used for many years in institutions such as colleges and corporate headquarters. As it is commonly recognized today wayfinding helps travelers *find* their *way* to the destination, in this case Downtown.

In relation to community planning and specifically to downtown Neosho, the goal of the wayfinding system is to make the journey to Downtown as transparent and seamless as possible. Furthermore, by taking a comprehensive approach in developing the wayfinding system it can reinforce the community's unique identity and sense of place. This can be accomplished through four main aspects that can be controlled and enhanced through appropriate design and building codes:

### **Architecture:**

- Visual clues of buildings and other features of a street aid people in knowing their location and the direction of their destination without the use of signage.
- Strong architecture, such as the Newton County Courthouse, serve as landmarks and orientation points. These points are often destinations as well as starting points and other wayfinding techniques should exploit this aspect.
- Buildings themselves have visual aids that draw our eyes to where we expect an entrance or a shop window to be located.

### **Sight Lines:**

- The motorist will feel most comfortable in maintaining visual contact with his or her destination and will want to make as few direction changes as possible.
- Clean, clear lines down streets at key intersections should be maintained.
- Avoid allowing buildings to encroach or block these lines.
- Repetitive landscaping and furnishings can enhance and draw the eye down these streets, but care must be taken that these items do not obstruct important navigational landmarks.



Wayfinding kiosks can be an easy to spot element of the downtown pedestrian system.

**Lighting:**

- Lighting can be used to encourage routes and pathways.
- Warmly lit sidewalks and streets draw the customer onward. Warmly lit storefronts and entrances draw the eye and provide the customer with the information needed to get to the business.
- A repetitive line of lighting can be a very effective navigation tool.
- Poor lighting causes missed information and leaves an unsafe impression.

**Signage:**

- Uniform signage at important decision points is a critical element of downtown wayfinding.
- Excessive signage will lessen the effectiveness of individual signs. Fewer, easy to read, appropriately placed signs are preferred.

## Wayfinding Components

Wayfinding systems are made up of components that create an arrival sequence to the Downtown. The system consists of common themed signs, of various types that direct travelers to attractions. All too frequently existing wayfinding systems are inadequate. Typical problems with existing wayfinding systems include:

- Lack of accuracy, with arbitrary sign location
- Visual clutter from too many signs and foliage
- Lack of focus in directing traffic to Downtown
- Diffuse allocation of signs, across many “entrances”
- Signs that lack charm, or are standard DOT
- Routes actually direct travelers around Downtown
- Signs are too small and consist of different sizes, colors, and types

A successful wayfinding system is made up of many components that can be utilized in a variety of configurations. Some communities may require only a few of the components or can gradually add components into a complete system. Determining how many of the components a wayfinding system needs, depends upon the size, number and type of Traffic Corridors and Key Transportation Nodes within the system.

Key Transportation Nodes are significant sites that require directional signage. The Nodes are typically located at major road intersections or crossings, and have a high amount of traffic relative to the area. Key Transportation Nodes are the likely locations for placement of Primary Gateway, Trailblazing, and Proximity signs.

There are many different types of transportation corridors, descriptions of three relevant to wayfinding in Downtown Neosho follow:

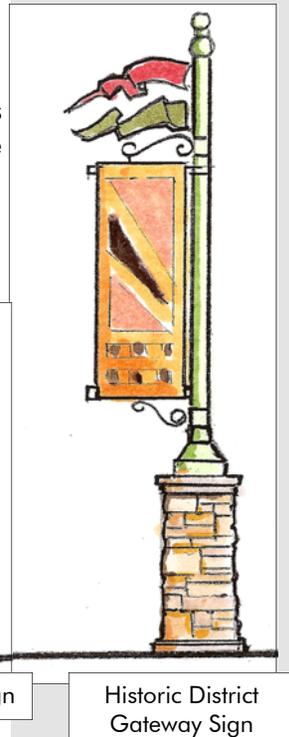
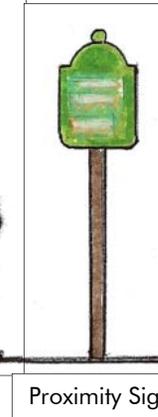
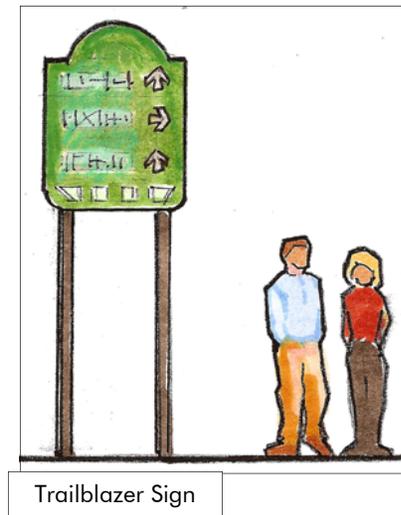
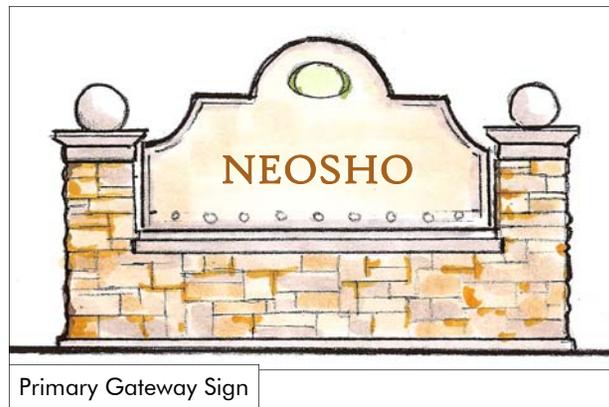
- Historic District Corridor— The central component and primary focus of the streetscape improvements and wayfinding system. This corridor includes the final approach, as well as the main arteries of the historic district. Signage types for this corridor typically include Historical District Gateway and Proximity signs.
- Residential/Commercial Entry Corridor—The areas immediately surrounding Downtown, a secondary focus for streetscape improvements and primary focus for residential improvement programs. Usually contain a small to moderate amount of commercial businesses, converted residential, and residential. Signage types for this corridor typically include Trailblazing and Proximity signs.



Commercial Entry Corridor—Typically the beginning of the wayfinding system for travelers. The corridor consists of commercial and institutional uses and should focus on simple design treatments that reflect the scale and traffic. Signage types for this corridor typically include Primary Gateway and Trailblazing signs. As stated earlier, a successful wayfinding system is made up of many components, including but not limited to:

- Primary Gateway Sign—Serves as the “Welcome” to a visitor, creating the first impression of the community. The sign should be significant, serving as a landmark.
- Trailblazer Sign—Utilitarian purpose combined with unique branding and design elements. Attractions to consider as destinations on Trailblazer Signs include; Downtown, Historic Districts, museums, event areas, government offices, parking, colleges/universities, and visitor centers. Signs should be located at or near a key transportation node.
- Proximity Signs—In close proximity of the attractions these signs direct visitors to the destination.
- Historic District Gateway Sign—Creates a boundary for the Historic District, should be used within the Historic District Corridor. These signs should reflect the size, scale and character of the architecture within the district.

All signs and banners included in the wayfinding system should have a simple and uniform design. Above all, the signs need to be brief and easy to read with large type face, appropriate coloring, and adequate character spacing. The wayfinding system signs should be unique and stand out in their surroundings. The automobile perspective should be taken when placing signs. The sign guidelines should be developed using the Uniform traffic Control Devices Standard.



### Existing Wayfinding and Arrival

With the rerouting of US 71 to the west, the City of Neosho is confronted with the problem of putting the Historic Downtown Square “back on the map” so to speak. This can be accomplished, in part, by making the Downtown Square more accessible and easier to find from the highway and major arterial roads around the City. Considering the location of the Highway and high traffic counts, illustrated in Figure 2, this examination will focus on the approach to the Downtown Square from the West.

Entering Neosho from the North via US 71 a traveler is directed off the highway, east on Business 71. Continuing on Business 71 the traveler enters the city immediately before a railroad overpass. At this location a Primary Gateway type sign welcomes travelers to the City of Neosho (see Figure 2). This location is significant, and therefore the sign should be significant as well.



Figure 2  
Existing City Welcome Sign, the large bush has been removed from the site, improving visibility.



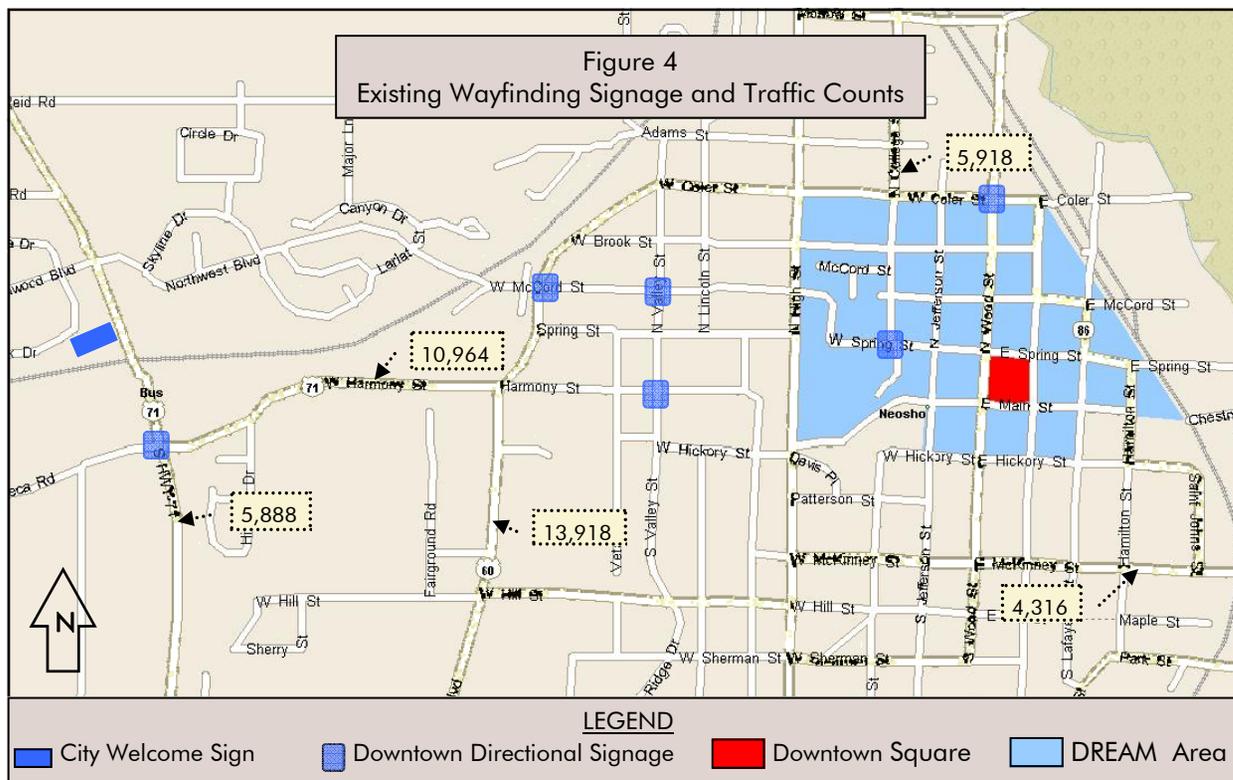
Figure 3  
Existing directional signage at Business 71 and Harmony, Neon CBD sign was under repair at the time this photo was taken.

After passing the welcome sign a traveler quickly arrives at a major three-way intersection directing the driver to turn left onto Harmony Street. At this intersection, there is currently a neon “CBD” sign and green Business District sign indicating the direction to the Downtown, as illustrated in Figure 3.

The traveler will then continue to the intersection with Neosho Blvd. There are many distracting signs at this busy intersection but no directional signs for Downtown. This lack of wayfinding assistance leaves a traveler confused, due to the large amount of commercial development located on the Boulevard and lack of commercial development continuing on Harmony. Essentially a traveler feels as though they should turn onto Neosho Blvd. but have no directional assistance.

If the traveler continues straight on Harmony the next directional sign is located at Valley St. The sign directs the traveler to turn left onto Valley St., heading North. The traveler is then directed to turn right, onto McCord heading East. McCord will lead the traveler into downtown, after turning into Spring St. A final sign located near Spring St and College St. informs travelers to continue on their current path to Downtown.

Additional wayfinding signage directs travelers who head North on Neosho Boulevard, from the intersection with Harmony. The signage is located at McCord St. directing travelers East to Downtown. After turning onto McCord street, the visitor will follow the street, making the jog onto Spring Street through Big Spring Park and straight to the Downtown Square. Also, signage is located at the intersection of Coler St. and Wood St. directing travelers South to Downtown.



## Recommendations for Wayfinding

In order to put Downtown Neosho “back on the map” a wayfinding system should be developed that replaces the existing system. The existing system does not support the wayfinding needs of a revitalized Downtown, or build upon the momentum achieved through Downtowns improvements.

The proposed route to Downtown begins from Route 71 for the same reasons indicated in the previous section. While not immediately necessary, the wayfinding system could grow to include signage at the exits from US 71, beginning the branding, promoting destinations, and reassuring travelers as they proceed onto Business 71.

Travelers will then approach the entrance to the City, where the existing City Welcome Sign is located. This site is a significant entry point for travelers. The sign should be improved to a City Gateway Sign that matches the brand of the area. Perhaps a water-fall feature, reinforcing Neosho’s Osage Indian translation, “clear and abundant water” and logo City of Springs. Figure 5 is a simple illustration of this concept using Neosho’s City Logo. It is important to keep in mind that a welcome sign is a visitors first impression of the city and sets the expectation level for the rest of the town.



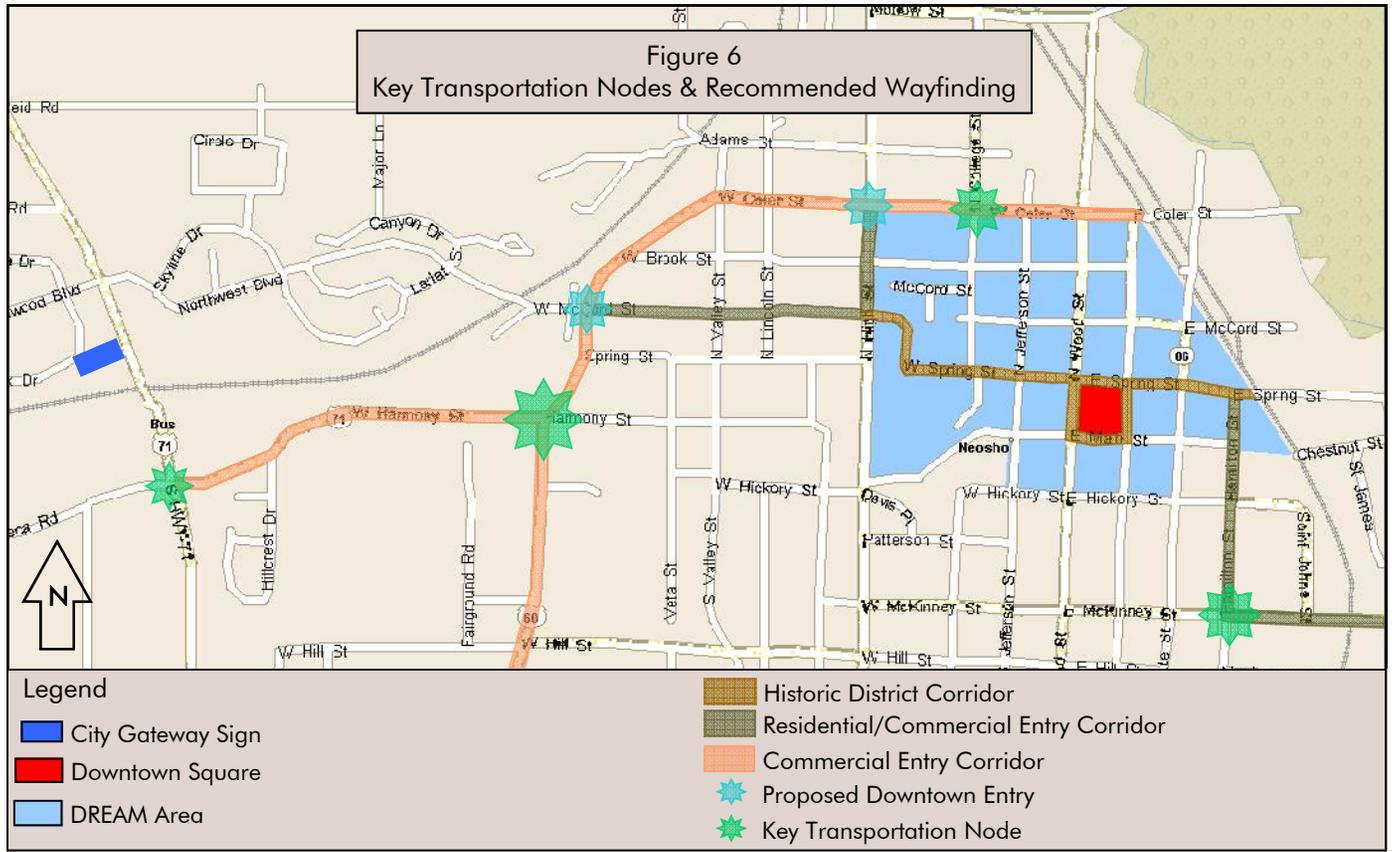
Figure 5  
Potential design concept for a City Welcome Sign

From the City Gateway Sign travelers will arrive at the intersection of Business 71 and Harmony St. As illustrated in Figure 6 this intersection is a key transportation node and entry point into the Commercial Entry Corridor. While the existing neon sign is attractive, historic, and retains local values this location requires additional signage. The importance of this intersection suggests that a Trailblazer Sign is required at this key transportation node and important directional point. Signage should direct travelers East onto Harmony St.

After turning onto Harmony St. travelers enter the Commercial Entry Corridor which leads to the most important Key Transportation Node of the wayfinding system; the intersection of Harmony St. and Neosho Blvd. This intersection sees the highest average daily traffic counts of the roads surrounding Downtown and requires directional assistance. Trailblazing

signage should be utilized at this intersection to direct travelers North onto Neosho Blvd., to the proposed Downtown Entry Points at either McCord St. or High St.

The reason for two proposed Downtown Entry Points results from characteristics of each intersection. The Entry Point at McCord St. is an obvious choice due to its proximity to the Key Transportation Node at Neosho Blvd. and Harmony St. Additionally, this route would take advantage of directing travelers through Big Spring Park entering Downtown from Spring St. The Spring St. route is the most desirable as it provides the most scenic entry to Downtown. However, if a traveler leaves Downtown backtracking through this route they are forced to make a nearly blind left turn onto Neosho Blvd. from a stop sign. This intersection would be significantly more attractive as the main Downtown Entry Point if a stoplight is



installed. Additionally, the Residential/Commercial Entry Corridor on McCord St. between Neosho Blvd. and Spring St. will require a lot of improvements to create a positive and safe entry experience.

The Entry Point at High St. and Coler St. is desirable as it allows the traveler some additional time after the turn from Harmony St. to arrive at the next directional change. This extra distance may also allow for congestion relief between the two busy intersections. This Entry Point benefits, as does the McCord Entry Point, from the scenic Big Springs Park and Spring St. approach to Downtown. An additional benefit of this Entry Point is that the Residential/Commercial Entry Corridor between Coler St. and Spring St. is only 2 blocks long. Those two blocks will be more economical in terms of streetscape and building improvements and have some existing significant and attractive buildings and landmarks.

While not the main entry route for Downtown Route 86 is an important component of the wayfinding system. Relevant to Downtown, there are two Key Transportation Nodes involved for travelers using Route 86 . Southeast of Downtown there is a Key Transportation Node at the intersection of Mckinney St. and Hamilton St. At this location there is a significant amount of daily traffic and it is located between two major destinations; Downtown and the National Fish Hatchery. The second Key Transportation Node for Route 86 is North of Downtown at the intersection of Coler St. and College St. At this location there is a significant amount of daily traffic and it is located adjacent to downtown. These two Nodes should use Trailblazer or proximity Signs to direct residual traffic to attractions.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Recommendations**

The first step towards implementing the recommendations contained in this report is to continue to build public support and buy-in. Effectively communicating the benefits of the building and streetscape improvements will help to mitigate misunderstanding and opposition. Explaining the positive impact to the community as a whole, beyond Downtown will help to garner broader community-wide support. And strategically maintaining visibility and positive momentum will keep these recommendations and the overall downtown revitalization program successful.

- Begin the process of adopting the Design Guidelines pursuant to the Historic Preservation District that covers Downtown Neosho. This process should be public and provide the opportunity for additional public input from the business and property owners affected.
- Begin the process of developing the wayfinding system. Charge the HPC or a Wayfinding Committee with the project oversight. The committee should meet with major attraction owners/managers, tourism officials, government officials to discuss which attractions should be included in the signage system. (Specifically, those listed on the trailblazer and proximity signs) Next determine the amount of money that is available from those participating groups and identify other mechanisms to fund the improvements. The DREAM Financial Assistance Review and Strategic Plan will address funding in greater detail. Finally, contract with a sign company to develop the appearance, manufacture and installation of the signs.
- Continue the Phase I and II Streetscape Improvements that have begun on Spring street through CDBG funding. Again, additional improvements will be taken into consideration in the development of the Strategic Plan.
- Begin the process of identifying banks interested in participating in Building Façade Renovation Loan programs. These programs can be low interest loans funded by banks and sometimes grants and can be used to encourage façade renovation that is consistent with the guidelines of this plan.
- The City should review its code enforcement practices and ordinances to see if adjustments or improvements are necessary. Effective practices will include regulations that:
  - ◇ Address more than just safety concerns. This is an appropriate tool to ensure aesthetics as well.
  - ◇ Secure the condition of the downtown structures for longevity. Quality construction practices must be insisted upon.
  - ◇ Promote the conservation and efficient use of resources. “Green” and other energy efficient, innovative building methods should be considered and can be required through codes.

- ◇ Are firmly enforced. This will demonstrate to future developers that their development risk will be minimized because Neosho will insist on the same quality of structures surrounding their investment property.
  - ◇ Can be flexible if reasonable variations will not compromise quality or other construction aspects. Any governmental process needs to be able to bend for unusual situations.
  - ◇ Recommendations for improvement to the Historic District Ordinance should be implemented
- Understand that in order to create the resources that will ultimately achieve the goal of a successfully revitalized downtown, it is important to understand that additional taxes, districts, or legislation may be required. The benefits created for downtown by these new mechanisms should far outweigh any new costs to the residents, property owners, or consumers.
  - The Historic Preservation Commission should organize a seminar series aimed at area contractors and downtown property owners concerning appropriate restoration procedures for downtown buildings. The main speaker can be obtained from, or suggested by the State Historic Preservation Office, the City can present these guidelines, and a business, perhaps a bank, could sponsor lunch.
  - The Downtown Neosho Alliance should work with the City and Chamber to develop a sponsorship program whereby individuals or businesses can “buy” specific street furnishings for public use. A catalog can be printed that will show the costs of items, which should include installation and a plaque with a message from the sponsor. The City should do all installations and will maintain ownership.
  - The Downtown Neosho Alliance, and City should create a formal “Adopt-a-spot” program whereby the burden to maintain landscaping and other maintenance can be adopted by civic groups and clubs throughout the downtown area. The City should supervise, but allow the volunteers freedom to install flora, remove litter, and do other minor repairs and clean-up on a quarterly basis. The City should post a plaque indicating the adopting group at the spot and the Chamber and Downtown Neosho Alliance should recognize the groups in newsletters and other opportunities.

These “first steps” will provide the necessary momentum and understanding necessary to continue the revitalization efforts. Additional, steps and action items will be included in more detail as the DREAM Strategic Plan is formulated and the recommendations that concern complementary issues are addressed.