

Neosho, Missouri

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

DESTINATION
ASSESSMENT



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The DREAM Initiative concentrates efforts on downtown revitalization because the overall health of the community is greatly influenced by the vitality and viability of its downtown. Moreover, downtown reflects the unique attributes of a community—its heritage, its people and its future. While much of America becomes culturally homogenized, our downtowns should retain their unique identity and reflect the incredible diversity contained within the American story. For tourists, downtowns embody the character of the community and represent hidden treasures awaiting discovery.

The DREAM Initiative recognizes that downtown exists within a larger context. Tourists may visit a city for destinations outside downtown, such as a nearby natural or historic attraction, but downtown should be a part of their adventure. In order for downtown to be viable as a tourist destination it must offer unique shopping and dining opportunities and recreational opportunities.

The Destination Assessment component of the DREAM Initiative will help Neosho better understand its potential to derive benefits from tourism. Many communities already enjoy a significant economic impact from tourism, while others have fledgling tourist industries. In either case, the assessment will help formulate an aspirational *and* realistic vision for the future. Recommendations will address potential synergies among existing features to capitalize on Neosho's Downtown and the surrounding area's tourism assets.

The "Destination Assessment Team" is a collaborative effort among representatives of PGAV, the Missouri Division of Tourism, and the Missouri Arts Council. The findings and recommendations contained within the Destination Assessment, while primarily prepared by PGAV, represent a coordinated effort to address the "tourist" or "visitor" experience from independent consultants and key State agencies involved in tourism and the arts. It is anticipated that the Missouri Division of Tourism and the Missouri Arts Council will play an ongoing role in providing technical and financial resources, as applicable.

This assessment will assume, as numerous Neosho officials, residents, and businesses noted in early meetings, that the style of tourism Neosho desires to promote is of a controlled, sustainable, orderly nature. The City would like to avoid the connotative meanings attached to the word 'tourist' and are more interested in the characteristics described by the word 'visitor'.



THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

A vibrant tourism trade offers many potential benefits to a community. Tourism can help enhance the image of an area, increase local pride, and improve quality of life. As an industry, tourism is recognized as an important component of a diverse economy providing employment, redevelopment, and investment opportunities. All together, tourism can help to build a distinctive, unique, and productive community.

Welcome to Neosho, Missouri, also known as the city of springs. Neosho is in the Missouri Ozarks at the junction of US Highway 71 and US Highway 60 in the southwest corner of Missouri. It is nestled among cool, clear, natural springs and an abundance of lush foliage. In the late '50's, Neosho became known as "The Flower Box City" through a city beautification program that has grown and flourished. Please explore our web site and see what Neosho has to offer! (City of Neosho Web Site)

The economic benefits of tourism include job creation, as well as increased retail sales generation, essentially bringing new money into the community. The potential new retail

sales from tourism can help to counter the changing nature of the retail environment, which has generally led to a decline in sales tax revenues over the last few decades. While this effect is felt community-wide, it has had a particularly strong impact on many small downtowns. The attraction of new money to the community through tourism is an effective strategy to deal with the financial gap left by these trends as new money travels into and circulates throughout the community.

The positive effects of a successful tourism industry resonates through many business sectors, including non tourism related businesses and the local community. The positive impacts will be felt by local businesses and residents alike. Local residents will benefit from added or improved visitor services and infrastructure, increased employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, and improved shopping convenience and increased choice. A well balanced mix of retail and services will make Downtown a destination, attractive to residents, visitors, and investors.

In light of the far-reaching impacts of a successful tourism industry, and the size of the local industry, tourism should be viewed as a strategic sector in Neosho's economic future. Any Economic Development strategy for Neosho should specifically address the tourism industry and its importance to the local economy.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Destination Assessment provides a snapshot of the tourism industry operating community-wide, with a focus on Downtown. The “rapid assessment” process employed consists of reviewing existing data and marketing materials, as well as conducting field work, visiting the community, its key destinations, and meeting with tourism leaders. This report and the recommendations contained herein should serve as a foundation, providing strategic direction for Neosho as it moves toward destination success. Understanding the framework used to evaluate Neosho’s destination potential will provide a useful context for the recommendations and suggestions for improvement.

Development of a tourism enhancement strategy, just as any business or product development strategy, begins with an evaluation of the relationship between product and customer in a competitive marketplace. The analysis of these relationships results in the development or identification of a competitive advantage. A competitive advantage gives a community an edge over its rivals and an ability to generate greater success. The more sustainable the competitive advantage, the more difficult it is for competitors to neutralize the advantage. Competitors in this scenario are other communities that are attempting to attract in whole, or large part, the same target market.

Product

For the purposes of this analysis the product is Downtown, its amenities and environ including: businesses, restaurants, museums, infrastructure, people, streets, sidewalks, parks, events, etc. Downtown is evaluated in terms of a theme park or resort, striving to provide the same level of services. Downtown needs a balance of businesses and amenities that address, at a minimum, the basic needs of customers. A key to a successful product is maintaining focus on the primary product, service, or destination strengths, while at the same time adapting to changes and taking advantage of opportunities.

The Destination Assessment will identify areas in need of improvement that will overlap with other DREAM Initiative tasks. Those tasks will be noted and addressed in greater detail in their corresponding analyses.

Customer

The customer, in this evaluation, is the visitor or patron, including residents of the community, neighboring areas, traditional tourists, etc. The community must understand who their current customers are, who is currently visiting Downtown and why, as well as who, they might be able to target and how. To understand and target customers, it is helpful to categorize visitors. A common categorization of visitors is by the reason for their visit:

Business Travelers—Most likely to travel during the week, driven by businesses, primarily basic needs of lodging, restaurants, services, gift shopping, and evening entertainment, potential to impress and return for pleasure.

Family Travelers—Most likely to travel during the weekend, driven by relatives, less likely to need lodging, potential needs of services and restaurants, general shopping.

Ethnic and Cultural Seekers—Looking for exposure to new experiences, development, and education. Interested in the areas 'way of life' and people. Adventurous and looking for more than basic needs. Museums, galleries, concerts, festivals, and performances. Likely to shop for unique items.

Heritage and Passive Recreation Enthusiasts—This visitor enjoys the scenery and feel of the area more than the interaction with the people. They are more inwardly focused and reflective. Their needs are similar to the culture seeker, but are just as likely to enjoy a drive through town to look at architecture or a walk in the local parks.

Active Outdoor Adventurers—Intense enjoyers of the parks and natural areas. These sportsmen enjoy a wide variety and are not always young. Outdoorsmen, boaters, hikers, or golfers; they are on the move. They are devoted and spend money on their chosen sport.

Urban Entertainment—The shoppers, team sport spectators, college visitors, night owls, or amusement park attendees. They tend to travel in groups and have a higher expendable income. Internet connectivity and cell phone access is important to them.

Market Positioning and Brand

Once an understanding is reached on exactly what the product is and who the customers or target markets are, the focus turns to identifying the market positioning. An important component of a competitive advantage is a distinct market positioning and brand—something that draws on the strengths of the destination, its authenticity, and leverages customers' desire for unique experiences.

It is essential to understand how customers currently perceive the destination, especially relative to competitors. This perception is the community's image or brand. The destination must craft a strategy that builds on the positive aspects of its current image and, if necessary, repositions it to a more advantageous and competitive position. Repositioning takes time, patience and persistence as it typically involves modifying previously held perceptions about your destination.

Customers carry a preconceived idea of the destination's brand. The brand represents what people think of you—your image. The destination's brand is important as it is essentially a promise to provide a product or service in a consistent way.



Destination brands have four distinct components that make up brand image in the mind of the customer. Each component represents an opportunity to differentiate from competition and offer a unique consumer benefit. Destinations can reach their maximum potential by leveraging all four components.

REALM ONE—PLACE:

If you visit the Empire State Building, you go to a building with the city surrounding it. Up at the observation tower, the **place** becomes an oasis high above bustling Manhattan. What benefits does the place provide for the guest? Some people like the high energy feeling of being in the city, but they may also like taking a break from the intensity. People go to a destination. It exists in a physical place. A destination should try to get the most out of the power of its place.

REALM TWO—EXPERIENCE:

Hike in the canyon. Ride the coaster. Attend a show. People want to *do* something at a destination—something unique, something to brag about, or something to share. The experience of a destination can provide key benefits to guests and a fundamental part of its brand. A destination can reach its full potential when it promotes the benefits of a unique experience and delivers.

REALM THREE—MINDSET:

Sometimes a destination epitomizes or evokes an attitude, value, or mindset that has meaning beyond the physical limits of the site. Colonial Williamsburg set out to “own” the concept of Colonial America, and people might feel more patriotic just thinking about it. When a destination can symbolize an aspirational concept, it can form a powerful connection with its guests. The destination becomes a touchstone for the concept and people return to renew their connection with it.

REALM FOUR—ORGANIZATION:

What role does the organization behind the destination play in the brand? The Niagara Parks emblem conveys tremendous trust among regional guests who want to spend their money with the organization that helps preserve the nature and heritage of Niagara Falls. The organizational dimension of a destination may also make a big difference to future employees, donors, business partners, granting agencies, or other organizations. People want to associate with a cause or organization they feel good about, one that expresses their own values and aspirations.

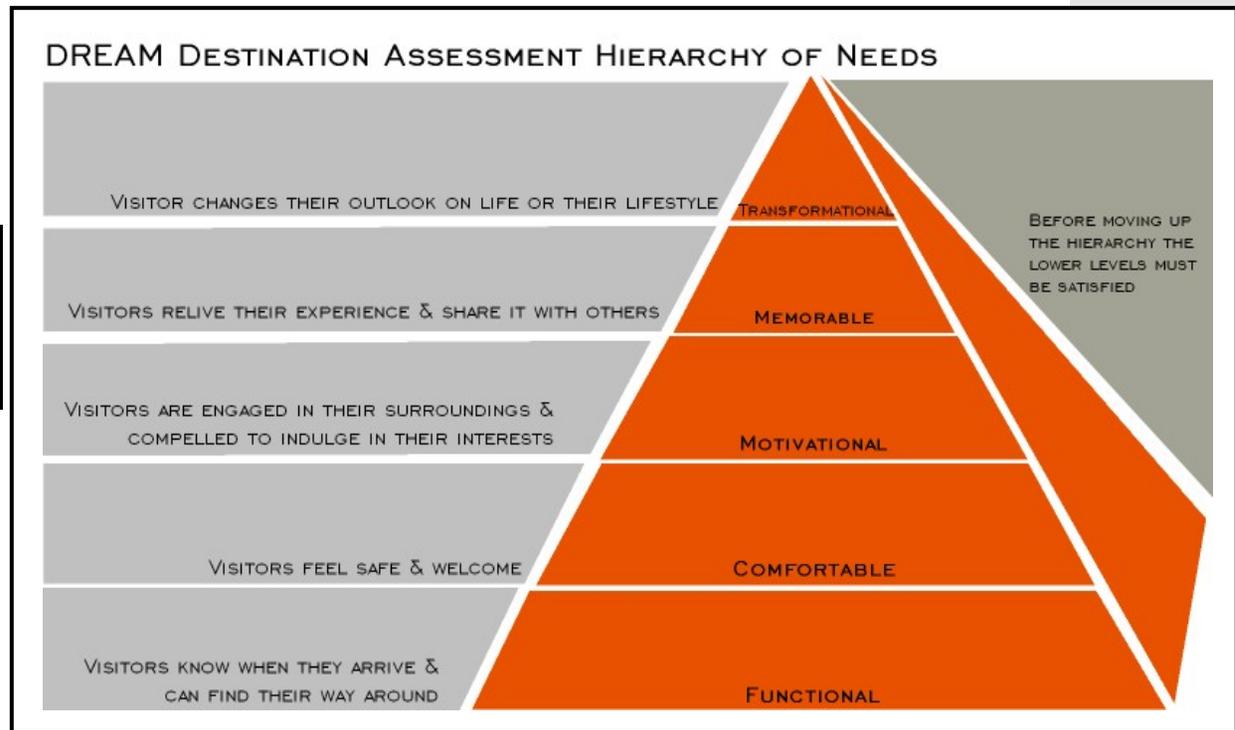
When people think of your destination, do they long to be in the place, get excited by the experience, aspire to the values represented, and trust the organization behind it? When you can answer ‘yes’ to all four, people will attribute a high value to your destination brand. That value is your destinations’ competitive advantage, which relates directly to attendance and financial success.

HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Destinations and, in a larger sense, downtowns are basically customer-oriented businesses and therefore should always take the customer point-of-view. As stated earlier, when destinations conduct product development and determine marketing decisions they must address what the customer wants and needs. During the Destination Assessment Kick-Off Meeting, the Destination Assessment Team introduced the concept of a destination consumer “Hierarchy of Needs,” which hypothesizes that customers must have their most basic needs met before they can attain higher levels of fulfillment. This customer-focused theme will recur throughout the recommendations for each community.

For the purposes of this Destination Assessment, PGAV uses the hierarchical scheme shown here, listed from bottom to top, to illustrate and describe the motivations of the typical, “downtown” Missouri tourist.

There are a great number of reasons or desires that drive an individual consumer’s decision to travel and their choice of destination. The “Hierarchy of Needs” describes the requirements a typical visitor has to have met in order for them to have a fulfilling destination experience. Questions a destination community may ask themselves regarding whether or not their community’s destination assets meet these needs are:



1. Functional: Does the City provide adequate wayfinding to make travel throughout the area easy and somewhat intuitive? Do visitors know when they have “arrived”? Does the City adequately provide basic comforts, such as parking, bathrooms, and a place to rest? Is information about destinations and events easily attainable?

2. **Comfortable:** Is the downtown pedestrian friendly and well lit? Are the building facades and streetscape designs aesthetically pleasing? Are numerous lodging and dining options present throughout the municipality? Does the downtown provide adequate comforts so that the visitor can relax and get away from home?
3. **Motivational:** Does the downtown provide visitors with activities in which to participate? What will move the visitor to get out of their car and get involved? Does the downtown provide a chance to learn, interact with others, and an opportunity for adventure or escape?
4. **Memorable:** Does the downtown leave the visitor with positive memories? Do visitors repeatedly return to downtown? Do visitors recommend a visit to downtown to others? Is there positive word-of-mouth about downtown?
5. **Transformational:** If the City meets the aforementioned needs, then they've created a fulfilling experience to the visitor, which, hopefully, will positively change the visitor; thus imbuing the visitor with not only a valuable rejuvenative experience, but also a new and positive outlook on life. The visitor will want to return to and reconnect with the destination to renew that positive outlook in the future. The visitor will actively seek to bring others and share the rejuvenative experience.

In the case of a visit to a destination like a resort, zoo, or theme park, a single organization manages the tourist experience to ensure a "seamless" experience; one that flows smoothly and consistently from parking and restrooms to attractions, food and shopping without breaks in the "brand." People have come to expect this level of product and service. Destination communities would benefit from emulating this model to the degree they can, considering the complexity of their destination environment (i.e. multiple tourism product owners and interests). For example, Destination communities can develop organizational structures that support a coordinated aesthetic presentation of downtown; manage a consistent and unified marketing plan; administer special event planning; and guide businesses towards consistent business standards (i.e. uniform business hours).

Although Destination Assessment focuses on tourism and arts, many of the recommendations promise to improve quality of life for both visitors and residents. Conversely, many of the recommendations in other parts of the overall DREAM initiative, such as streetscape improvements and traffic management will provide essential infrastructure to support tourism. This synergy of benefits illustrates the key strategy of the initiative—that an integrated approach to planning and implementation will achieve the best results for Neosho.

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE

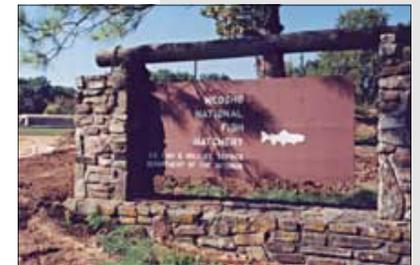
ASSESSMENT VISIT EXPERIENCE

Neosho and the surrounding area of Newton County have many of the features we look for in a successful destination—natural beauty, unique attractions, historic architecture, numerous events, reasonable transportation access, and a sense of place. Located within a short drive from key feeder markets in Missouri and border states, we found the City with little trouble. However, finding downtown Neosho was a little more challenging. There was a noticeable lack of signage directing travelers to downtown or major area attractions. The approach to downtown, from Highway 71 is mostly newer strip commercial with little unique appeal. However, when we reached the entrance to downtown through Big Springs Park, we enjoyed a unique and dramatic experience. While signage or monuments marking the entrance to Downtown would be helpful, you are immediately aware you are arriving in the Historic Downtown, again Neosho has retained a sense of place from its heritage and natural features.

We found several area attractions to have national or international appeal, particularly the George Washington Carver National Monument and the Neosho National Fish Hatchery. We were also very impressed by the amount of Thomas Hart Benton lithographs and murals, some of which we viewed at City Hall. The Downtown square has a number of retail establishments, as well as several vacancies and business services occupying first floor space. There was a noticeable lack of restaurants and short hours of operation. Overall the appearance of Downtown Neosho is pleasant, but with a few streetscape improvements can greatly be improved.

While walking around Downtown we found that the shaded spring-fed streams offered a break from summer heat and added to the Downtown charm. Big Spring Park provides a beautiful setting for events, informal gatherings, or just for a walk. Our initial feeling was that the beauty and charm reminded us of Weddings and may present a growth area for this site and Neosho in general. Morris Park wraps around much of downtown within a few blocks of the town square, almost connecting to Big Spring Park. Fly fishing, wading and picnic locations makes Neosho's streams, springs and parks a unique asset within a downtown location.

It is important to note that many of the area attractions and natural features would appeal to residents as well as visitors, an important component of successful tourist destinations for smaller communities.





On our visit to the Neosho National Fish Hatchery we found a unique destination that combines the popularity of fishing and provides a family-friendly destination within a few blocks of the historic square. As a federal facility listed on the Fish and Wildlife web site, the hatchery helps generate visitor awareness far beyond the local area. The new visitor center, when opened, will complement the daily tours offered now and will provide Neosho with an ideal promotional opportunity. Even with the new visitor center, the Neosho National Fish Hatchery seemed underutilized as a destination asset.

Traveling from Downtown to the newer retail commercial area, we encountered the 27-hole public golf course that attracts players from the region and serves the local community. We also visited the new airport terminal, which

provides another way for visitors to travel to Neosho and includes a small aviation exhibit. The proposed addition of air shows would provide another event product with broad appeal.

Neosho has several compelling attractions within the community and nearby. The natural beauty of the area makes it appealing to all. Transportation access is reasonable and planned for improvement. The combination of historic structures and natural features within the downtown core provide a unique blend that visitors look for.



CURRENT POSITIONING

Neosho currently has a scattered and diffuse positioning in the tourism market. After utilizing a number of different tag lines, logos, and brands over the years the true positioning of Neosho is clouded. This is evident by the many different themes that are still being utilized throughout the community. Marketing materials, websites, and even residents and business owners hold onto the past positioning trends while at the same time being slow to embrace new direction. In order to successfully transform Neosho's position the community must embrace the chosen direction. This will take time and concerted effort, but with effective promotion the clouds can be removed and Neosho's position in the marketplace can become clear.

REACHING DESTINATION POTENTIAL

General “Brand” Strategy



Neosho can take several specific steps to more fully reach its potential as a destination. The community has many compelling attractions, but it could make significant improvements to the overall aesthetic quality of downtown.

Neosho can significantly improve awareness by focusing on people already passing through the area for other reasons, such as outlying attractions, signage along major highways in the region, and the addition of a visitor center on US 71 near the Missouri-Arkansas border to welcome northbound travelers.

More events could steer visitors to downtown where the community can demonstrate its pride. Possible events could focus on family fishing or water play, building on the equity of the fishery and streams. As Neosho clarifies its tourism messaging, front-line workers—in restaurants, service stations and lodging properties—can become ambassadors for the city.

SUGGESTED POSITIONING

Neosho: City of Springs

Neosho has most recently positioned itself as the “Flower Box City” which conveys beauty and simple pleasures and represents pride in the community. However, flower boxes are no longer prevalent throughout the community and seem to be mostly forgotten. A visitor traveling to the “Flower Box City” may be disappointed by the lack of flower boxes and feel misled.

Neosho must continue its concerted effort in focusing on its natural springs and unique attributes. While natural springs alone do not make Neosho unique, the combination of its different attributes do. Natural springs and their presence in downtown, the fact that downtown surrounded by parks, and the US National fish Hatchery combine to make Neosho unique. Focusing on these attributes will provide the unique positioning and competitive advantage that Neosho needs to compete in the tourism industry.



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

There are different levels of recommendations that Neosho can follow in order to reach its destination potential. Strategies range from better integration of existing community resources to adding more cultural events and attractions. Addressing basic (Functional & Comfortable) needs of visitors and coordination of existing resources and attractions can have a significant impact in helping Neosho realize its potential to its local community and region.

Restore Springs and Leverage Water



Neosho has several springs in the downtown area, yet only Big Springs is easily accessible to the public or visitors. Springs signify many positive images in people's minds, and a downtown surrounded by springs can create a magical image. If visitors from the region, especially Kansas, visit Neosho because it is cooler in the summer, more springs help reinforce that attribute and character.

Neosho has the makings of a "natural water park." Water parks are one of the fastest growing family attraction products types. Opening more springs will only enhance the potential of the concept. Using the natural features in a "water-park event" could be a low cost way to establish the product offering.

Improve Signage and Wayfinding

It is important that the City build on its existing sense of place, define the boundaries of downtown, point out attractions, and distinguish and reinforce the brand of Neosho. There should be simple and clear directions to the downtown area. Attention should be given to improving the appearance of the corridor from Highway 71 and other important corridors addressed in the Building Design Guidelines and Streetscape concept. Improving the corridors to the downtown district will help welcome both residents and tourists. Signage and wayfinding is a basic functional need that will provide direction to the historic downtown, featured attractions and events, and guide visitors throughout the community.

Improve Streetscapes and Buildings

First impressions make for lasting impressions, and the first impressions of Downtown are the streetscapes and buildings. Buildings, infrastructure conditions, and streetscape amenities in the historic Downtown should be improved to provide the visitor, and residents, with the best first impression possible and a more pleasant experience overall. Streetscapes should be improved with attention paid to wayfinding, sidewalk repair, benches, lighting, and beautification. Storefronts in the downtown area should be well maintained and where possible restored, with consideration given to the historic qualities of downtown. Improving these comfort elements will improve visitors' first impressions, as well as the whole downtown experience for visitors and residents.

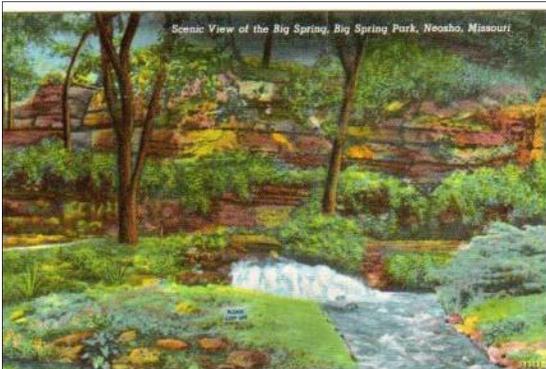


Create Park Connections through Downtown

Downtown Neosho is nearly surrounded by parks, which makes up an important component of Neosho's competitive advantage. The parks provide a very lush, vibrant feeling, but lack connections. Not only are the parks disconnected from each other, they are disconnected from Downtown too. Effort should be made to connect the parks and Downtown through trails, parkways, coordinated streetscape improvements and signage. As it is now, a visitor can stand in the square and not realize the parks are only a few blocks away. The downtown streetscape plan should include landscape to create shaded pedestrian zones that reinforce the "cool" benefit of visiting downtown. This also means that springs should be returned to the square.

The opening of the Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center, in 2007, strengthens Neosho's image around nature and wildlife-based attraction with a well known brand name. Utilizing this regional attraction and connecting it to the parks throughout Downtown Neosho can be an effective means to accomplish this goal. Trails can be creatively connected to other attractions in and around Neosho. For example a trail connecting the George Washington Carver Museum to Downtown Neosho or the school that he walked to every day could be successful.

Develop Arts Programs



Arts programs provide a natural extension of the recommended positioning and competitive advantage of Neosho. Arts programs provide additional activities for residents and visitors and can often be accomplished with minimal capital investment, and there are a number of grants and technical assistance programs available from the Missouri Arts Council. As the birthplace of one of the nation's most famous muralists Neosho is positioned to capitalize greatly and quickly on its existing base. (The feasibility of a Benton museum should be examined in the Downtown Area.) The natural beauty of the parks and springs will provide inspiration to visitors and artists alike. Once there are enough arts activities and critical mass is reached, arts activities will become a significant component of Neosho's Attractions.

Neosho truly has untapped potential in the appeal of Thomas Hart Benton. Murals alone do not offer sufficient attraction value to lure most visitors. Neosho should consider additional ways to leverage its famous citizen, such as the addition of a museum, event or other attraction product. A feasibility study should be conducted to test the appeal of developing a collection of Benton works and lithographs and related material. Developing a museum may be challenging, but an affordable step in the near term could include a simple structure (or existing structure or host facility) with a Benton theme, built to overlook a stream or scenic view.

Leverage Unique Assets

Downtown Neosho is strategically located among many significant attractions, which can provide supplemental tourism benefits. The George Washington Carver National Monument and Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center are two of the closest and are excellent regional attractions which Neosho can capitalize on. Downtown Neosho can draw more benefit from its proximity to these attractions by strengthening the link to downtown. For example, a museum or permanent facility in the downtown area where Carver walked to school could draw visitors and represent a grander vision related to the ideal of education.

Neosho National Fish Hatchery



Improve the physical connections to and encourage community support for the US National Fish Hatchery. The Hatchery draws many visitors to Neosho and is tied to the fabric of the community. In addition to wayfinding improvements connecting Downtown and the Hatchery, a connection between Downtown and the park system through trails and signage should be considered.

In order to protect and improve the Hatchery there should be strong public involvement and support. The new visitor center promises to generate more attendance, however it was only achieved through great public support. When the new visitor's center is built, steps should be taken to use the positive momentum and press to develop and kick-off additional programs in conjunction with the Hatchery.

Develop Visitors Centers

Providing information to visitors is a vital component of a successful destination. Expansion of US Highway 71 is evidence of its increasing importance as a transportation route and a significant opportunity to target out-of-state visitors. Neosho should appeal to the Missouri Department of Transportation to develop a visitor center along US Highway 71 at the exit for Neosho. Neosho, Newton County, and the adjacent Missouri counties would benefit from increased visitor awareness of the regional points of interest.



Provide Public Amenities for Visitors

Access to public restrooms is a basic need and important to creating a seamless experience. This is particularly important in consideration of the fact that Courthouse Square and the surrounding blocks host events and festivals in the downtown area. Public restrooms can be located in conjunction with the courthouse or city hall. Furthermore, the facilities could be developed to provide shelter, a place to rest, and possibly the opportunity to purchase simple conveniences.

Coordinate Downtown Businesses and Area Activities

Neosho has all the pieces to create a unique destination, however these attractions must work in concert in order to be successful. Again, in order to provide a more seamless experience, there should be increased coordination of businesses and services within the local tourism industry. A simple way to improve tourism industry integration is through increased coordination of visitor-oriented retailers, service providers, attractions, and event activities. It is important that all businesses in Neosho work together to provide visitors with a seamless experience. Improved communication and coordination through a local ad-hoc tourism commission or committee can help retailers and attractions develop similar hours of operation to encourage visitors to extend their stay and provide a seamless experience while better meeting visitors needs.

Relocate Justice Center

The Newton County Courthouse is a significant asset to Downtown Neosho. The Courthouse is not only extremely attractive, but drives traffic to Downtown. However, for all of the benefits of the Courthouse the Justice Center component presents an obstacle to a tourism enhancement strategy. The Justice Center in the downtown square creates a frightening situation for some visitors. As illustrated in the hierarchy of needs, people must feel safe in a destination before they can aspire to higher experiences. An effort should be made to identify ways to mitigate the negative impact of the center.



Increase Number of Attractions and Retail Offerings

Attention should be paid to the number and variety of shops and restaurants within the historic Downtown. Filling empty storefronts, with particular attention to the types of retailer, will help create a more seamless shopping experience and provide necessities to visitors. With limited restaurant offerings, retailers closing their doors around 5:00PM, and no movie theatres, there are truly few other activities to keep visitors in town beyond their main purpose. It is also very important that new and existing stores offer goods that complement the needs of visitors, as well as residents.

The DREAM Retail Market Analysis, will assist in identifying retail gaps and make suggestions for current deficiencies in the Neosho downtown. Once targeted retail sectors are identified, retail development and attraction strategies are put in place to meet those needs. For example, business types that support the desired positioning of downtown or address deficiencies in the Hierarchy of Needs should be top priority.

Retail Operations Improvement

The shops and restaurants in Downtown Neosho can benefit greatly by improving their retail operations and productivity. This can be accomplished through a variety of means, including increasing communication, improving product offerings and displays, and coordinating hours and events

Retailers should modify or expand their product offerings to address the needs of visitors, taking into account both basic needs and higher needs. Particular attention should be paid to the specific visitor being targeted and their corresponding needs. Additionally, providing attractive displays and coordinating themes and hours of operation will help create a positive shopping experience.

Increasing communication between tourism-oriented retail, hotels, and other attractions in and around Neosho will allow retailers to improve productivity through their increased knowledge of the market. For example, retailers can adjust their hours of operation to open only when necessary. Retailers could base this decision on when the sales volume at attractions and other retailers is highest or when large events are being held.



CONCLUSIONS, IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE WORK

Neosho has made significant progress in the renovation of Downtown and has many improvements and transformational projects underway. Neosho enjoys a rich mix of arts and regular events that convey a vibrancy that encourages people to visit and stay. Many of the higher level needs of the Destination Hierarchy can be addressed by Neosho. Downtown Neosho and the surrounding region provide memorable, motivational, and comfortable experiences through the existing destination assets. In some cases, individuals may even reach transformational experiences.

However, Neosho's greatest and most immediate impediment are the very "basic" of the Hierarchy of Needs; that is, the need to create a safe and comfortable space using wayfinding, signage, and providing public amenities. Downtown is continuing to be beautifully and historically renovated. But, if visitors can't find Downtown, they will go to another town or pass through. Additionally, if visitors cannot find the basic necessities they need to be comfortable, or do not feel safe during their visit, they may not stay long or return. In order to enhance the existing tourism assets, these basic needs should be addressed.

Another immediate need, more of an operational need, is improved communication and partnership. Many of the recommendations contained in this report can be accomplished through improved communication among the tourism industry participants and stakeholders. By taking the operational viewpoint of a single destination, as opposed to separate competitors, all interested parties will recognize the benefits of working together. Additionally, once a few partnerships are established, more will happen naturally as competitors begin to recognize the benefits.

Overall, Neosho will be able to reap the benefits of a "quick win" by addressing the recommendations that focus on the "basic needs" and "social experiences" of the visitors' Hierarchy of Needs. Specifically, improving signage and wayfinding and visitor amenities will provide all visitors with a level of comfort and sense of place that will encourage them to visit and stay in Downtown. A formal "Wayfinding" planning process will assist in identifying the key locations and look and feel of appropriate signage. DREAM's assistance through the Streetscape Guidelines will assist the City in providing wayfinding and aesthetic improvements within the Downtown District. In addition, improving wayfinding and signage in Downtown will make it easier for visitors to enjoy the dining and shopping after a long day of playing in the parks.

**APPENDIX
INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS**

Inventory of Attractions		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Historic Sites/ Points of Interest		
Historic Sites/ Points of Interest	Historical Downtown	A large portion of downtown Neosho is listed as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places, including the Second Baptist Church, built in the Victorian Gothic style of 1896. Neosho's history is well-documented with historical markers, making a local heritage tour simple.
	The George Washington Carver National Monument	The first national monument to recognize the scientific accomplishments of an African-American in agricultural science. Video presentation, museum, interactive Carver Discovery Center, and nature trails, as well as guided tours.
	Thomas Hart Benton Home	Neosho was the boyhood home of famed American artist Thomas Hart Benton. A collection of original Benton Lithographs are on display at City Hall.
	Newton County Courthouse Mural	A five-panel mural on the main floor of the Newton County Courthouse. The mural is a chronological history of the county.
	Centennial Mural	Located in the Municipal Auditorium.
	Skaggs Tile Mural	Located on the Mills Park Centre Building in Big Spring Park.
	Newton County Historical Park	Includes the Newton County Historical Society Museum (former Sheriff's home and county jail), Newtown County School No. 111, and pre-Civil War Log Cabin.
	World's Largest Flower Box	A railroad gondola car turned flower box. It is 66 feet long, eight feet wide and 44 inches deep. Located in Morse Park.

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Inventory of Attractions		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Parks and Recreation	Big Spring Park	One of the most photographic scenes in Neosho and a popular wedding site. Features beautiful gardens, picnic tables, a floral clock and a children's wading pool.
	Neosho National Fish Hatchery	Established in 1888. The oldest of 65 hatcheries operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
	Morse Park	Facilities include baseball fields, tennis courts and soccer fields. In addition, picnic areas and an R-V Park are available.
	Public Canoeing and Hunting	Numerous canoe and campsite available through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elk River Outfitters • Big Spring River Outfitters • Indian Creek Outfitters
	Neosho Municipal Swimming Pool	Olympic size swimming pool.
	Freeman Southwest Family YMCA	New 41,000 square-foot facility in the Crowder area. State-of-the-art facility is home to an indoor swimming pool, fitness center, gymnasium and racquetball courts, game room, exercise studio, and daycare center.
	Recreation Center	Provides tennis courts, a gymnasium, and meeting rooms. Tennis, softball, little league and basketball are just a few of the additional activities.
Golf Courses	Neosho Municipal Golf Course	Planned around Crystal Springs. Recently expanded to 27 holes.
Arts & Entertainment	Newton County A & M Fairground	Home to fairgrounds, carnivals, fairs & exhibitions.

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Inventory of Attractions		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Higher Education Centers	Neosho 6 Cinema	Movie theater.
	Crowder College	A wide array of associate degrees, professional certificates, career and industrial training, community education opportunities, interactive television and on-line courses. Includes The Business Training and Development Center.
	Ozark Bible Institute and College	Trains men and women for ministry.
	Missouri Southern State University (Joplin)	A state-supported, comprehensive university offering programs leading to the bachelor's degree and to selective master's degrees in collaboration with other universities.
	Missouri State University (Springfield)	Major university offering 150+ undergraduate programs and 40+ graduate programs.
	Drury University (Springfield)	Institution of higher education offering 63 undergraduate majors and 32 undergraduate minors.
	Ozark Christian College (Joplin)	Trains men and women for Christian service through an undergraduate Bible college education.
	Messenger College (Joplin)	Christian four-year residency institution with general education, music, and ministerial programs.
	University of Arkansas (Fayetteville, AR)	Institution of higher education offering 78 major fields of undergraduate study, 86 master's degree programs and more than 50 doctoral programs.

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Inventory of Attractions		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Shopping	Antiques	Blue Moon Antiques & Collectibles Courthouse Square Antiques & Collectibles JMT Enterprises Lost-N-the 50s Classic Car Sales & Museum My Sister & Me Antiques & Collectibles Neosho Gifts Etcetera
Accommodations	Hotels/Motels/ Inns	Best Western Big Spring Lodge Booneslick Lodge Executive Inn Flower Box Motel Neosho Inn Plymouth Rock Motel Super 8 Motel
	R.V. Parks	Hickory Creek R.V. Park