

# Sedalia, Missouri

DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION &  
ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
MISSOURI



MARKETING PLAN  
MAY 2009





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR MISSOURI (DREAM) PROGRAM SPONSORS:



PLANNING CONSULTANT



DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION &  
ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
MISSOURI

MARKETING PLAN

---

*This Page Intentionally Left Blank*

---

# DOWNTOWN SEDALIA

## MARKETING PLAN

Prepared by  
5-Star Public Relations & Marketing, Inc.

---

*This Page Intentionally Left Blank*

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>TARGET MARKET ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>OBJECTIVES, GOALS, &amp; STRATEGIES.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Objective 1 .....	5
Monitor Residents & Market	
Objective 2 .....	7
Capitalize on Unique Characteristics	
Objective 3.....	9
Promote Positive Perceptions	
Objective 4.....	11
Increase Shopper, Diner, and Visitor Activity	
Objective 5.....	14
Strengthen Business Environment	
Objective 6.....	16
Increase Population	
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>17</b>
SWOT Analysis	

---

*This Page Intentionally Left Blank*

---

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City of Sedalia has successfully maintained its population base, improved services, and expanded commercial opportunities. However, Downtown presents an opportunity for improvement. The aged buildings and infrastructure are burdensome as City services try to maintain a positive, well-kept atmosphere. Through the DREAM Initiative, Downtown's potential to fill these buildings and become a prime location for shopping, living, and visiting can be realized. A key component to the revitalization of Downtown is marketing. Downtown Sedalia needs to market its assets, improvements, and progress to build positive momentum in revitalization efforts. A unique identity for Downtown must be established and promoted to the appropriate audience.

This marketing plan identifies six primary objectives for Downtown Sedalia, each with goals, strategies, and target markets. Taken together, these six objectives promote one key message—**Sedalia is a unique, exciting place to shop, visit, live, or run a business.**

Scott Joplin Festival



The six primary marketing objectives for Sedalia are:

#### **Objective 1: Monitor Residents & Market**

Monitor residents and visitors attitudes toward Sedalia to develop marketing messages and track effectiveness of marketing materials.

#### **Objective 2: Capitalize on Unique Characteristics**

Determine Sedalia's competitive advantage and use it to promote the City.

#### **Objective 3: Promote Positive Perceptions**

Promote a positive perception of Downtown Sedalia in the minds of local and regional residents.

#### **Objective 4: Increase Shopper, Diner, & Visitor Activity**

Recreate and reinforce Downtown Sedalia as a viable place where both residents and visitors can meet their needs and wants.

#### **Objective 5: Strengthen Business Environment**

Increase business and retail development and take steps to ensure longevity.

#### **Objective 6: Increase Population**

Increase the residential and daytime population in Downtown.

All six objectives are vital to the successful marketing and revitalization of Downtown and necessary to maximize Downtown Sedalia's potential. While each objective provides a benefit singularly, the synergy created when implemented together produces the greatest return to the residents, businesses, and property owners.

This Marketing Plan addresses the need for ongoing monitoring of Sedalia’s market and suggests strategies to capitalize on unique features of Downtown. The Marketing Plan also recommends promotions and methods to strengthen the business sector, and assist with increasing the Downtown population.

A consistent advertising campaign is needed to build awareness among target markets. A sustained advertising campaign builds product recognition momentum, resulting in greater impact of marketing messages. Without ongoing, focused advertising, the message becomes disjointed, momentum is lost, and fewer results are achieved for the dollars spent.

Downtown Sedalia needs a dynamic website that focuses on opportunities for tourism, entertainment, shopping, business, and housing.

The key tools noted above, an ongoing marketing campaign and a dynamic website, are aspects of each objective and are applicable to multiple strategies.

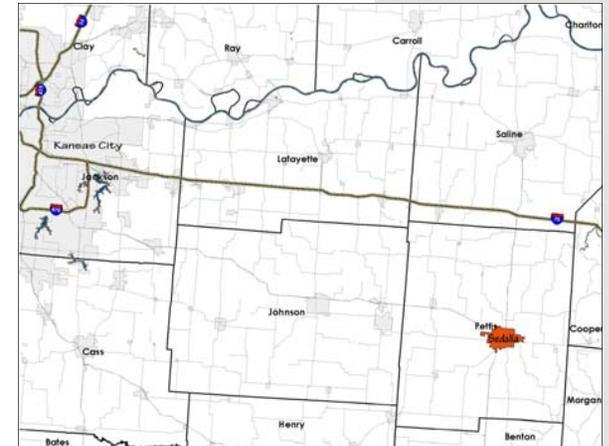
It is unlikely that Downtown stakeholders will be able to implement everything in the marketing plan at one time, it is important to identify the goals and strategies that will be most beneficial and efficient to Downtown.

In addition, it should be recognized that not all new initiatives will be successful when first tried. Time is needed for the target market to discover and accept the message and in some cases, may require adjustments in the Marketing Plan.

**SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

The residents of Sedalia are described in the DREAM Community Survey as friendly and warm with a great spirit of volunteerism. The City is described as a safe place to raise children with a focus on music and art. The atmosphere in Downtown Sedalia provides an “old-world” feeling due to many multi-story historic buildings. Many of the most impressive buildings are in the Sedalia Historic Commercial District. The number of historic buildings in Sedalia and the magnificent architecture provide a high degree of distinction and visitor appeal.

Throughout the year, Sedalia hosts many events that bring residents and visitors to Downtown; including the Scott Joplin Ragtime festival. In addition, the City is home to the Missouri State Fairgrounds and is a trailhead for Katy Trail State Park. There is great potential for Downtown to draw on the visitors of these attractions for shopping, entertainment, and events.



Sedalia is the County Seat of Pettis County and the Courthouse is a well maintained, distinctive structure in Downtown. Services, retail, and lodging are located nearby and the City has initiated various parking and wayfinding improvements. In addition, the City is very supportive of a developing arts district and is pursuing

opportunities to construct an artist's incubator facility near City Hall.

Business hours in Downtown Sedalia are not customer friendly. Most shops are only open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. even though the Hotel Bothwell brings in overnight visitors to Downtown. Retail that closes in-step with the standard work day contradicts the desired perception of Sedalia as a viable destination for consumers and promotes Downtown as a "service only" area.

Sedalia has developed competing retail areas to Downtown, typically with more direct access from a highway. Downtown has not developed a competitive advantage to help it compete with these surrounding retail areas.

Although several buildings have undergone rehabilitation and improvement, many Downtown buildings still need significant façade improvements. Property owners need assistance and education in updating historic buildings and making historically accurate and appropriate improvements. Several buildings are boarded-up or vacant and detract from a safe, walkable Downtown.

The City has taken steps and demonstrated its commitment to Downtown with efforts such as the aforementioned arts district and the recent establishment of the Sedalia Mid-Town TIF District.

5th Street Brew Pub



### **TARGET MARKET ANALYSIS**

The target markets have been identified to assist Downtown Sedalia in directing marketing efforts. As the marketing campaign develops and the strategies are implemented, it is important to understand how effective each initiative is at reaching the intended markets. Consistent communication with these markets is crucial to maintaining visibility.

### **Primary Market**

An effective marketing plan for a community is targeted, in large part, at its residents and local businesses. By recruiting this market as "salespeople", not only will other plan objectives be more successful, but other revitalization efforts will be enhanced. It is important for residents to feel proud and supportive of their community enough to tell other people.

It is important to build support in the Primary Market for Downtown and this base of support can be expanded to the Secondary and Tertiary Markets.

The following categories compose the Primary Market:

- Local Residents: People residing Downtown and the Sedalia zip code;
- Area Residents: Includes people who live within 50 miles of the Sedalia zip code;
- Downtown workforce; and,
- Downtown Business Owners.

### Secondary Market

As the marketing message spreads through the Primary Market, it will be important to expand the campaign to reach more people. The definition of a "tourist" is a visitor from at least 50 miles away. This visitor will generally spend more money than other types of visitors.

The Secondary Market includes:

- Regional Residents: Those who live 50-100 miles away from the Sedalia zip code; and,
- Local & Area Entrepreneurs.

### Tertiary Market

Downtown Sedalia should ultimately reach potential tourists looking to escape for even longer visits, potential permanent residents, and development investors. This Tertiary Market consists of:

- Tourists within a 350 mile radius;
- Retirees & Baby Boomers; and,
- Real Estate Investors.

### Communication Channels

The following avenues can be used to communicate with the primary, secondary and tertiary markets:

- Website;
- Newsletter;
- Ads;
- Special Event Brochures;
- Top 10 Things to Do in Sedalia;
- Newsprint/Press Releases;
- Signage/Wayfinding;
- Flyers/Brochures;
- Community Meetings;
- Radio, and;
- Visitor Information Centers.



## **OBJECTIVES, GOALS, & STRATEGIES**

### **OBJECTIVE 1: Monitor Residents and Market.**

Through continued use of informational tools such as a Downtown specific website, surveys, and focus groups monitor residents and visitor attitudes.

**GOAL: Develop, adapt, and adjust marketing techniques and tools to changing conditions to keep Downtown's marketing efficient, fresh, and effective.**

**Target Markets: Local Residents, Regional Residents, Visitors.**

Strategy: Conduct regular community-attitude surveys, via phone, mail, or in person, of the various target markets to measure perceptions and behaviors of the following areas:

- Opinions of Downtown Sedalia
- Awareness of products and services available
- Awareness of Downtown plans
- Information sources
- Frequency of visits to Downtown
- Shopping patterns in Downtown
- Reasons for visiting, or not visiting, Downtown
- Likelihood a respondent would recommend Downtown
- Ideas for improvement

Strategy: Develop a Downtown website to be the central source for culture, entertainment, and hospitality information. The site should include the ability to track visits, link to business sites, and provide up to date

Downtown information. A dedicated SDDI staff member should maintain the website. The website should be constantly promoted, updated, and reviewed. Browsing habits of visitors to the website are indicative of what information people interested in Downtown Sedalia need. This website will not just serve as a monitoring device, but as a key promotional tool. Development of a high-quality website is, therefore, a key strategy and should be a top priority for Downtown Sedalia. Suggested categories for the website include:

- Entertainment – Nightlife, Music, Events, & Special Attractions
- Dining - Restaurant/Bar Locations
- Shopping - Retail Locations
- Tourism and lodging information
- Links to City and Chamber websites
- A central calendar (community calendar) with a comprehensive list of all Sedalia events

By developing this site to serve as an “online concierge” it will provide residents as well as visitors with important information. The site must be easy to navigate, visually appealing, exciting, and current. Downloadable content should be available in pdf format so site visitors can share this information with family and friends. This content should include all brochures, calendars, event flyers, and registration forms.

The website should be promoted with other marketing materials and registered with internet search engines. Search engine keywords should include: Sedalia; Pettis County; Missouri; Katy Trail; Scott Joplin; Ragtime; Liberty Center; SDDI; Missouri State Fair; Carnegie Library; Bed Races.

**Strategy:** Develop and conduct opinion surveys relative to Downtown that are coordinated and available on existing City and Chamber websites. Responses should be collected and reviewed through the websites. The questions should be changed often to keep Sedalia’s “virtual visitors” interested in Downtown.

**Strategy:** Establish an organized Marketing Committee from a broad base of volunteers to review all marketing and outreach efforts. SDDI should lead this effort and solicit critical, honest discussions concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of Downtown marketing materials.

**GOAL:** Assist merchants in adapting their marketing techniques to better attract customers to Downtown Sedalia. This will also give the Downtown leadership an opportunity to encourage local businesses to adopt the Downtown Brand.

**Target Markets:** Downtown Businesses, Visitors.

**Strategy:** SDDI, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, should provide educational meetings and seminars for Downtown business owners. Website information should be shared to help Downtown merchants understand how to adjust their product lines or services.

**Strategy:** Encourage business owners to promote the Downtown website and provide links to their own websites. Merchants can also survey customers for information to compare with the Downtown site for additional insight.



Hotel Bothwell Coffee Shop

**OBJECTIVE 2: Capitalize on Sedalia’s unique characteristics.**

A common thread through all of Downtown Sedalia’s marketing tools should be a focus on unique characteristics. Some of these characteristics include:

- Scott Joplin
- Art and Music Festivals
- The Katy Trail and Recreation
- Architecture
- Diversity

The DREAM Destination Assessment considered these characteristics and suggests a brand for Downtown Sedalia as “The Entertainer”. If the City adopts this brand it will be important to encourage Downtown businesses, shops, museums, parks, events, and other attractions and features to support the brand.

The City’s characteristics need to be promoted outside the community as they appeal to visitors, potential residents, and potential businesses. It is important to market these characteristics to existing residents and businesses. Local support will require pride in Downtown Sedalia. Educationally oriented materials about Downtown will enable local residents and businesses to become promoters for Downtown.

Current travel trends indicate that leisure travelers require increasingly more compelling reasons to travel. This means Downtown Sedalia must set itself apart from competing destinations and cater to its visitors needs. By seeking to improve their visitor’s experience, the community and residents will benefit and become an integral part of the Downtown promotions effort.

Another trend working in Sedalia’s favor is a growing desire of young people to live, work, and visit cities that are diverse. Sedalia has a very unique African-American history tied to Scott Joplin. Downtown has benefitted from the promotion of this heritage. The City should continue to find new angles or fresh ideas in presenting this heritage.



Scott Joplin Festival Parade

**GOAL: Strengthen the chosen Brand for Sedalia to create a cohesive image for Downtown that is both easily recognizable and interesting to target audiences.**

**Target Markets: Local Residents, Regional Residents, Businesses, Visitors.**

Strategy: Define Downtown through the use of wayfinding and streetscape components. Use elements such as lighting, site furnishings, landscaping, street art, and gateway signage.

Strategy: Develop a Downtown Sedalia “package” containing only current material that can be easily tailored to the specific needs of the user. The package should include materials such as the current calendar, brochures, maps, coupon book, and other printed material.

SDDI should take responsibility for editorial content, appearance, and assembly of the package and all Downtown organizations should assist with distribution.

The suggested components include:

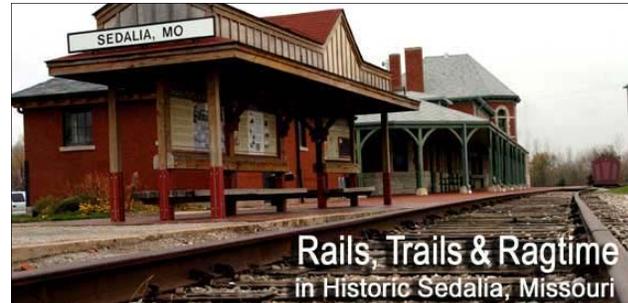
- The folder featuring “The Entertainer” theme to tie all the inserted pieces together. As the brand changes for Sedalia, or should SDDI choose not to use the recommended brand, the strategy of a marketing package can still be used.
- A main booklet or brochure that profiles the community, useful to potential residents and businesses, and graphically appealing to visitors.
- A Downtown map indicating attractions, parking, and location of major highways.
- A quarterly calendar of events.
- A listing of City-wide lodging options, Downtown restaurants, and unique shops and attractions. Names and phone numbers are critical and websites with brief descriptions are helpful.

Strategy: Review existing events for their uniqueness and make adjustments to themes, promotions, and event details as necessary. All events in Downtown should feature the Downtown Sedalia brand. Not every event should be completely focused on the desired theme, but all should reinforce it. For example, “The Entertainer” brand would imply including music at most Downtown events. Local service clubs should be encouraged to use the brand for events such as fundraisers.

Strategy: Develop traditional marketing mechanisms such as a logo and slogan, while also considering more unique options.

The City of Sedalia’s current slogan is “Home of Rails, Trails, & Ragtime” and this will complement “The Entertainer” Brand for Downtown. Downtown leadership should seek to find a slogan as well and may consider emphasizing:

- The arts community by promoting art as entertainment
- Founder’s Plaza / Railroad Station...“Where the world meets Sedalia”
- Ohio Street and the Streetcar heritage
- The Katy Trail and Depot connection as “Exercise can be fun!”



Downtown should develop a logo for use on entryway signage and wayfinding. This will set Downtown apart from the rest of the City. The logo should be simple, but have components that would be recognizable separately. Overall it should retain its visual integrity when reduced or enlarged and be able to be recognizable from a distance and as a black and white copy. Potential components of a Downtown Sedalia logo might include:

- Musical instruments and notes
- Streetcar
- Bicycle
- Diversity symbols (hands shaking)

**GOAL:** Expand awareness of Sedalia’s existing unique features to surrounding residents, businesses, and nearby frequent visitors through promotion.

**Target Markets:** Local Residents, Regional Residents, Businesses, Visitors.

Strategy: Encourage visits from area schools, church groups, youth groups, scouts, etc. by contacting teachers and group leaders with information on Sedalia’s history, art, music, cultural offerings, African-American history, museums, the Katy Depot and Katy Trail, and other attractions and events.



Appealing to youth and youth leaders can be very effective in spreading the knowledge of Downtown’s attractions.

Strategy: Fully support Sedalia’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration effort in 2010. This Celebration should build throughout the year with several events ending in a large event late in the year. The history of Sedalia should be an ongoing theme, but “The Entertainer” brand should be supported in Downtown. The City should be prepared to present its best image by completing physical projects, removing eyesores, and ensuring adequate parking, wayfinding, and other amenities.

Different event components may develop into recurring events after the Anniversary Celebration and this should be encouraged. There are numerous groups that should be encouraged to develop or participate in activities, including:

- Carnegie Library
- Pettis County Museum
- Historical reenactments
- Liberty Center
- Scott Joplin Foundation/Festival
- Hotel Bothwell/Lodge
- Katy Trail
- Chamber of Commerce
- City Parks
- Missouri State Fairgrounds



The venues for the 150th Celebration events can move throughout the City, but Downtown should be a focus.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Promote positive perceptions of Downtown Sedalia.

**GOAL:** Establish the identity of Downtown Sedalia in the minds of local and regional residents as a diverse, creative, and exciting neighborhood.

**Target Markets:** Local Residents, Regional Residents, Businesses.

Strategy: Begin a communication campaign that stresses the heritage and diversity of Downtown. Use numerous mediums to reach the residents, such as a newsletter, radio, and newspaper ads.

Strategy: Encourage cultural events that will appeal to minority populations and promote a celebration of diversity and unity. Trends have shown that more and more young people and creative-types are seeking out diverse cultures as their homes.

Strategy: SDDI, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, should develop a “youth council” program. The council would include a diverse group of young people, led by SDDI staff, who are encouraged to become involved in Downtown issues. The group can identify one problem at a time and meet for a specified period of time to try and develop solutions. At the end of the program a report is provided for the SDDI, Chamber and City to review. The group should propose their solution at a City Council Meeting with press coverage. Then a new group starts on a new problem.

**GOAL: Increase the awareness of the positive progress and beautification accomplishments that have occurred in Downtown Sedalia. Increase the awareness of improvements that are planned.**

**Target Markets: Local Residents, Regional Residents, Businesses.**

Strategy: Create a section on the Downtown website that highlights plans and improvements for Downtown. Regular and ongoing communication can be achieved by informing the public of completed projects, those

under construction, and projects in the early development stages. Residents should also be able to sign up for email updates on Downtown projects.

**GOAL: Improve the appearance and appeal of Sedalia businesses and buildings.**

**Target Markets: Businesses, Building Owners.**

Strategy: Encourage business owners to add flower boxes to their storefronts, paint façades, and fill vacant display windows. By implementing these minor improvements the Downtown becomes more inviting to residents and visitors. Merchants should also decorate their stores for the holiday season and special events. Building owners must be made aware of façade improvement programs and other financial assistance available for building improvements.

Strategy: Develop a merchant education program to help improve the presentation of merchandise in shop windows.

It is vital to remind shop owners of the importance of maintaining an attractive presentation of their merchandise if they are going to be competitive with other businesses. Ultimately, an attractive presentation can dramatically affect a business’ bottom line.

Strategy: Fill vacant store fronts with local art, signage promoting Downtown, or other displays. If storefronts remain vacant make sure they are maintained.

The Downtown ‘flow’ of storefronts is also currently interrupted by several projects. This is necessary and

only a temporary interruption. A more serious issue can occur with City zoning codes allowing too many service businesses fronting on Ohio or the other main thoroughfares. A balanced mix of businesses should be maintained.



Artists can display work in empty storefronts

**Strategy:** Maintain upper floor windows so the area appears more vital, healthier, and safer. Currently upper floor windows are unattractive. When windows on the upper floors are in good repair and well-decorated, the area will give an impression it is in a stage of revitalization.

**Strategy:** Start contests for the most attractive shop window to encourage Merchants to improve window displays. The contest and judging can be kept within the business community, SDDI, or involve visitors. Including the public in voting can be a promotion and encourage shopping Downtown.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Increase the number of shoppers, diners, and visitors to Downtown Sedalia.

**GOAL:** Increase awareness of what products and services are available in Downtown Sedalia.

**Target Markets:** Local Residents, Regional Residents, Visitors.

**Strategy:** Keep residents aware of new dining and shopping opportunities in Downtown. SDDI should publish a newsletter to accomplish this goal and should include coupons and special promotions to Downtown's businesses.

If possible, the newsletter should be mailed to residents and available at retail locations throughout Sedalia. The newsletter should also be available on the Downtown website in electronic format. Create an e-mail listing in order to distribute the newsletter in a broad, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly way.

**Strategy:** Visitors to the State Fairgrounds will need a clear indication of what businesses exist in Downtown and clear wayfinding signage to get there. SDDI has sponsored shuttles from the fairgrounds to Downtown. That practice should be reviewed for its benefit to Downtown. Although the fairgrounds generate numerous visitors and activity, it is typically



Ohio Street Retail

self-contained and does not attract a demographic visitor that shops Downtown.

Strategy: Other attractions in Sedalia like the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art should be promoted with Downtown and the burgeoning Arts District. Promotions at the museum should encourage visitors to go to the Downtown galleries and festivals.



Daum Museum of Contemporary Art

Strategy: Consider different media alternatives such as outdoor advertising along major approaches, coupon books, advertising kiosks, and campaigns such as “Shop Sedalia First” aimed at the local residents. Direct mail efforts can include targeted marketing campaigns for Jefferson City and Kansas City markets.

Strategy: Marketing to the bicycle culture can be an effective way of spreading the word about Downtown Sedalia. Although the Katy Trail is a great resource, most sport bicyclists are not shoppers or diners. However, events at the Katy Depot can draw cyclists from the trail and encourage them to explore more of the City.



Cyclists in Sedalia



Advertising on the trailhead bulletin board informs the cyclists what businesses are “cyclist friendly”. Merchants should remain positive, understanding that cyclists may not buy that day, but may return to make a purchase.

For families using the Katy Trail, the Katy Depot is more important as it is likely a starting and stopping point. For these cyclists, the availability of restaurants and services is likely the most important factor.

Merchants should consider offering “free shipping” for purchases by cyclists. Also items such as water and nutritious snacks should be sold in nearly every store.

**GOAL: Position Downtown Sedalia as a “hot” place for entertainment, where people who enjoy Ragtime like to visit.**

**Target Markets: Visitors.**

Strategy: Build on previous successes to bolster the positioning of any new events or attractions. Events such as the State Fair, Scott Joplin Festival, and the holidays of Christmas and St. Patrick’s Day are already attracting many visitors to Sedalia.

Visitors to these events need to know what else there is to do in Downtown. A marketing tool themed as “The Top 10 Things to Do in Downtown Sedalia” could be developed and distributed to area hotels. Packages could also be assembled to include lodging, a restaurant, transportation, and admission to a Downtown attraction like an art gallery or concert. These should be packaged annually so visitors to Downtown’s website can build their own trip online.

Strategy: The Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival has the ability to attract many African-American visitors that might enjoy other events and attractions. This is a well defined demographic that Downtown could cater to and encourage. Multi-cultural events, ethnic food festivals, and other celebrations of diversity and heritage can draw large crowds.

The festival should be reviewed annually for potential adjustments to increase its visitor draw. Too often successful events stagnate and just become perpetual, even if still successful monetarily. The Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival has a good base, fits in with “The Entertainer” brand, and has the potential to grow.

**GOAL: Extend shopping hours in Downtown Sedalia.**

**Target Markets: Local Residents, Regional Residents, Visitors.**

Strategy: Encourage Downtown merchants to extend store hours during event days to take advantage of additional visitors. Incentives could be available from the Chamber or SDDI in the form of extra advertising.

Merchants should be encouraged to extend hours one day a week during the summer. This event can be combined with live music or a Farmer’s Market and will promote shopping after the workday for local employees.

Judged Fashion Show at Scott Joplin Festival



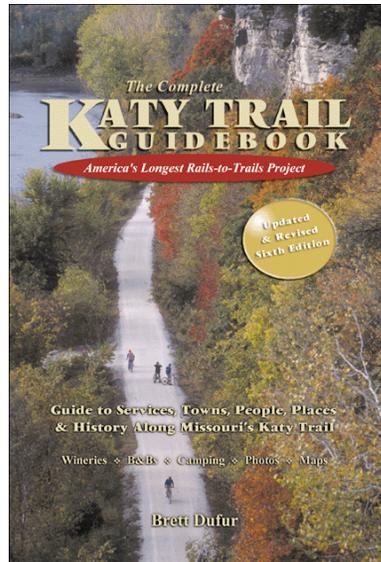
Strategy: The City should consider allowing street vendors and performers in Downtown during large events. These performers and vendors can be limited to certain areas, but will promote a vibrant atmosphere that visitors will notice and residents will enjoy.

**GOAL:** Increase attendance at historical attractions.

**Target Markets:** Local Residents, Regional Residents, Visitors.

Strategy: Promote Sedalia’s Heritage Trail by developing a GPS coordinate tour and promote on the Downtown website. This blending of history with current technology can appeal to a broad variety of enthusiasts. Specific points and suggested photo opportunities, more in depth information, and nearby shops and restaurants should be noted throughout the tour.

This touring method could also be developed into a scavenger hunt where, during a specific month, website visitors are encouraged to visit certain locations and obtain small gifts or pieces of information from merchants. A completed scavenger hunt form submitted to the last location can make a visitor eligible for an entry into a prize drawing.



**OBJECTIVE 5:** Strengthen the Downtown Sedalia business environment.

**GOAL:** Increase education and resources to current and new business owners.

**Target Markets:** Businesses.

Strategy: Merchants should be informed of their customer’s needs, and understand how to meet those needs. SDDI and the Chamber should develop educational business seminars.

Strategy: Develop cooperative marketing and advertising components for Downtown merchants. SDDI can coordinate and manage an advertising campaign or discuss this idea with the local newspaper. A banner ad that promotes the consistent unified Downtown brand and offers individual merchant spaces can be an ongoing promotion.

Grand openings or major reopening projects in Downtown should receive extra attention. Ribbon Cuttings and press releases to surrounding press agencies can help spread the word in a wide area and build goodwill between the business and the City, as well as the Downtown groups.



Local Florist

Strategy: Develop a formal business visitation and retention process that includes representatives of the Chamber, SDDI, and the Mayor. These visits should be scheduled with the business owner or manager in advance and take no more than 30 minutes. No business is too little. One or two Downtown businesses should be visited a month, issues identified, and any concerns addressed immediately. A follow up call should be made by the SDDI within two weeks of the visit.

Downtown business owners will not always attend general meetings, but a scheduled visit to talk about their issues will send the signal that the Downtown leadership feels that they are important. This method will also uncover problems in a more private setting where issues are resolved before they are too large or require a more visible action.

Strategy: SDDI will need to make certain that they are not just holding meetings for events and parades, but are addressing issues that are important to the Downtown merchants. Businesses need to realize a value for their involvement in SDDI.

**GOAL:** Physically improve the Downtown Sedalia business atmosphere.

**Target Markets:** Businesses.

Strategy: The City should continue to review the processes that affect the Downtown businesses and property owners. The City should prioritize initiatives that provide the most benefit on the largest number of buildings. City resources are limited and the amount of

building stock in Sedalia is large. Existing conditions viewed during previous DREAM Initiative visits seem to indicate issues with property maintenance and a lack of attention to aesthetics.

Reviews of maintenance, code enforcement, wayfinding, parking lots, sidewalks, lighting, and other infrastructure should be conducted from a visitor’s viewpoint. This is particularly important in preparation for larger events. The City can, and should, require a maintenance level above just being safe for the public.

Downtown businesses and property owners need to know that the City of Sedalia supports them, but that they must adhere to the City Maintenance Code. SDDI and the Chamber should help provide education of City standards and can also initiate a “Pride in Sedalia” campaign. If property owners can take care of their buildings better, the burden on the City should decrease.



Municipal Building



**OBJECTIVE 6: Increase the population of  
Downtown Sedalia.**

**GOAL:** Increase awareness of housing opportunities in  
Downtown.

**Target Markets:** Local Residents, Potential Residents.

Strategy: Articles and news releases highlighting quality building rehabilitations and available upper floor residential space should be distributed to the local press agencies on a regular basis. Photos of these building conversions and “loft tours” should be developed to help build excitement about Downtown living.

Strategy: The City should seek to increase quality housing units in the upper floors of Downtown buildings. Downtown units tend to be larger and appeal to young professionals and retirees. These units are near shopping, dining, and entertainment and truly help to establish a lifestyle center. Testimonials of Downtown dwellers should be included in marketing materials used to recruit population.

Strategy: Downtown Sedalia should be promoted as an ideal retirement location as building renovations and lofts become available. Selling points for Sedalia to this market segment should include proximity to social services, medical care, and outdoor recreational opportunities as well as low-cost, historic building stock.



Commerce Building



Downtown Sedalia architecture

# APPENDIX

## SWOT Analysis

---

*This Page Intentionally Left Blank*

---

## Sedalia Strengths

The Community is becoming more aware of the improvements taking place Downtown and believes the city is trying to improve the district.

There are a number of organizations that work to promote the city and Downtown. These organizations include the Chamber of Commerce, the Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Pettis County Community Partnership, Downtown, Inc., and Liberty Center Tourism Coalition. Although there have been some turf wars in the past, lately there has been more cooperation.

*Revitalizing and marketing the Downtown is too big of a job for any one organization. Since all these organizations have limited personnel resources, it is important that there is a coordination of efforts across all these organizations. In that way, it is possible to maximize the aggregate financial and personnel assets of these groups. Possibly a commission could be formed from representatives from each of these key organizations. This commission would then be able to develop and coordinate Downtown promotional efforts to their maximum potential.*

Sedalia gets a lot of business from Marshall. Generally they come to Sedalia to eat because there is no place in Marshall to eat.

*It would be good to build on this opportunity. Ads along Interstate 70 and near Hwy 65, and north of I-70 along Hwy 65 would reach much of this market. Also, Marshall is 27 miles away from Sedalia. Once people have driven that far for dinner, it is very likely they would like to make an evening of it. If certain nights could be promoted as "Downtown Nights" and the majority of shops stay open later on these evenings, this would be a good attraction to visitors from Marshall and other small towns.*

There are several Downtown restaurants. Including Malone's on Main, the Ivory Grille, Maple Leaf Tea Room and Ivy Cottage. Not all of them, however, are open for evening business.

Sedalia has a remarkable regional hospital, which is the second-largest employer in the region and uses incredible technology for a hospital of its size. It is currently looking for more physicians because the region is aging.

*This is an important factor for businesses and retirees looking to relocate. It should be promoted when marketing to these target markets.*

The Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival is Sedalia's most successful event, drawing about 3,000 to 5,000 visitors each year. The majority of these visitors are not local and half of them come from outside Missouri. To this point the African American community hasn't embraced Scott Joplin or the festival. Festival promoters are trying to work with a website that caters to high-income, well-educated African Americans.

*Since this is Sedalia's biggest event, it is important to work with Downtown business owners and educate them on the importance of taking advantage of the opportunities this large number of visitors offers them. To date, many have closed their shops during the festival because they don't want to deal with the crowds. Currently, there has been little promotion of Downtown events to local residents. It would also be good to include venues that would draw more local residents to the festival. In the past, there were some concerts in the park that were well attended by local residents, but they were dropped. Locals need to develop new, positive experiences with visiting Downtown. In that way, they will more readily consider trips Downtown for shopping or dining. Also, events Downtown that draw locals gives them first-hand exposure to the positive changes taking place Downtown and what Downtown has to offer. More promotion to affluent African Americans of the festival and Scott Joplin's association with Sedalia would especially be appropriate during February, which is Black History Month.*

Sedalia's Christmas parade is one of the largest in Central Missouri, and draws about 8,000 visitors. The kickoff is held on Thanksgiving Eve at Bothwell Hotel with a spectacular lighting of the hotel. The parade has been held since 1999, but the last five years fireworks were added.

*It would be good to build on the momentum the Christmas parade sets by extending the Christmas celebration to run from Thanksgiving Eve through the weekend before Christmas. This would be a good time to promote visiting Downtown to area residents. Every Friday and Saturday night between Thanksgiving and Christmas would be part of the celebration. It will be important that the majority of shops and restaurants be open on these nights.*

*During the evening hours, various caroling groups could be in the central Downtown. It would also be good if some street vendors could sell hot chocolate, wassail, roasted nuts, etc. Possibly not-for-profit groups would be interested in doing this to raise money. To compliment the historic ambience of Sedalia's Downtown, the celebration should center on a specific time period in Sedalia's history—from the cattle-drive era to Ragtime in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. All vendors should be in period costumes that are in keeping with the time period chosen that year.*

*Character actors relating to the chosen time period or a well-known Christmas story (i.e, The Gift of the Magi, or The Little Match Girl) can be positioned at different locations around the central Downtown area. Have the characters each tell their part of the story. Visitors can collect "trading cards" from the different characters at each location or have their pictures made with them.*

*It would also be nice if there could be a Christmas-themed play at the Liberty Center Theater that runs on these weekends. Visitors could also be given a card that must be stamped at different shops or locations, and once they collect all the stamps they would be eligible to drop the card in a drawing for a prize.*

*There could also be street performances at different times. Local drama groups or drama departments at local colleges or high schools would provide a good source for character actors who like to ham it up in front of an audience.*

Other smaller special events held are: St. Patrick's Day Parade and Bed Races (only draws about 100 to 350), Christmas in July Art Show, Lions Club Blues & BBQ Festival, DARE car shows (countywide draw of about 500 to 1,000), Sedalia Kennel Club Dog Show & Obedience Trial.

*The St. Patrick's Day Parade and Bed Races is one of Sedalia's oldest events which was better attended in the past. It would be worth examining what changes might have resulted in the decreased popularity of this event. Look to see if changes were made in the day and time of day it was held, the organization that is running it, when and how the event was promoted, changes in entrance fees or who can enter the race, entrance rules, etc. Since it is somewhat unique to Sedalia and is actually held Downtown, it could be a good tool for bringing local residents back to Downtown events.*

*Unfortunately the Christmas in July Art Show, Sedalia Kennel Club Dog Show, and the Lions Club Blues and BBQ Festival are not held in Downtown. While they bring visitors to Sedalia, unless special effort is made to steer some of these visitors to the Downtown, they won't help build Downtown businesses. Not only will visitors not be enticed to shop or dine Downtown during the event, they won't be in the Downtown to see what amenities are offered. Effort should be made to add complimentary venues in the Downtown during these events, and promote them at the main venue areas. General promotion of the Downtown at the time and location of these events would be advisable.*

Robert Woolery Memorial Pow-Wow is a three-day event held in July.

*This is a good event that would have extended geographic appeal. Unfortunately, it is held at the State Fairgrounds with no complimentary features slated Downtown.*

Trick or Treat is well attended and attracts about 2,500 to 3,000.

*This is a great way to bring local residents Downtown.*

The USCF Racing Criterium is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year. It is an evening event with about 150 bicycle racers and a large spectator group. There have been problems with promotion of this event. It is privately sponsored and hosted.

Just Us Girls was better attended last year than this year. The comments last year were good. Don't know how to account for the drop. Did raise the door price from \$1 to \$7. Will do again but will drop the price down to \$2.

*Unless extra amenities were added to warrant the \$6 increase, it's fairly certain that the higher door price kept a lot of participants away, especially in light of the fact that the comments the year before were very positive. Other things to consider would be if the day of the week or calendar date/ weekend was changed. Also, look at what other events might have been held at the same time that would compete for the same target market.*

*Also look at where and when it was marketed. This is a perfect event for bringing local women into the Downtown and needs to be promoted locally. Good lead time is needed for promotion so women who might be interested would have time to make arrangements to attend.*

Recently did a bridal fair and charged \$2. It was well attended.

*Be sure to pay attention to when this event is held. The majority of weddings are held during the summer months and you can figure that brides generally take 6-9 months to plan their weddings.*

Missouri State Fair is held for 11 days in August. In addition to the Fair, the Fairgrounds host multiple events throughout the year.

*The crowds that attend events at the State Fairgrounds provide an opportunity to move visitors into the Downtown. The demographics and specifics of State Fair Attendees also represents a weakness that is discussed later. The Fairgrounds are self-contained and the attendees generally do not look for other activities, and do not stray far from the Fairgrounds. Downtown might wish to be cautious of efforts to include this attraction as it may drain resources and provide limited payoff.*

*Still efforts should be made to promote the Downtown in the vicinity of the Fairgrounds. When events are held at the Fairgrounds, complimentary activities should be held in Downtown. Clear signage and messages promoting Downtown can be the foundation of a stronger connection with the Fairgrounds.*

*Downtown merchants should be informed of the demographics of the large groups that are scheduled to come to Sedalia for special events, groups that will visit the State Fairgrounds, or for sporting events and tournaments. If business owners are informed of the types of things these groups tend to buy, they can be sure to display and highlight their products accordingly. Notifying merchants ahead of time of when large groups will be in town will also give them time to prepare to handle the larger crowds, and might reduce the number of merchants who close their shops because they don't know how to deal with a large volume of visitors.*

There are a lot of music programs in Sedalia and they are well attended. There are band concerts in the parks in the summertime. Liberty Park provides a great draw for a band concert. Roughly 20,000 people can go to the symphony and it has been running for 72 consecutive years.

*Area residents have historically shown an appreciation for music-based events and entertainment. More events of this type held in the Downtown area would be good. Paducah, Kentucky has a "Downtown after Dinner" event where one night a month live music is performed in the City's Downtown. St. Charles, Missouri has similar events from late May until early October, called "Hot Summer Nights" where not only is live music performed, but portions of the streets are closed off and area restaurants move tables outdoors. Events similar to these are good possibilities for duplication in Downtown Sedalia. It will be important to encourage Downtown shops to stay open on these evenings so people will be able to browse the shops while they are Downtown.*

Sedalia is the largest community outside of St. Charles with the Katy Trail, and it is the only area that has an equestrian part of the Katy Trail. The Katy Trail is bringing in more families on bicycles into Sedalia. Cyclists are out biking either for leisure or sport.

*As more leisure cyclists visit Sedalia via the Katy trail, they could be steered into Sedalia's Downtown. To do that, it will be important to mark clear and safe access routes into Downtown for bicyclists, and provide bike racks for them to lock up their bikes while they shop.*

*Sport cyclists have very different needs than leisure cyclists and will likely not be interested in shopping, exploring, etc. Sedalia could become a trailhead for these cyclists by creating "cycle friendly" places to begin and end their workout.*

*To entice more cyclists to the Katy Depot and Sedalia's Downtown, it might be good to put a sign along the trail indicating restrooms, soft drinks and snacks are available at the depot, such signs would be permitted by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. A kiosk along the side of the trail with information about Sedalia might also be a way to interest cyclists in visiting Downtown.*

Downtown is coming back as the center for night life in Sedalia.

The Heritage Trail takes visitors through the Downtown and along all the Heritage/Legacy sites. It is heavily promoted through the Chambers, with a lot of exposure to it at the depot. There is an excellent brochure for use on the walking tour and an audio CD for use on the tour is also available.

*Since the Heritage Trail takes visitors through Downtown it would be good to actively promote it to visitors. It would be good to also provide them with a map that shows some of the unique shops and restaurants that are along the route or close to some of the points of interest along the trail. In that way, visitors might extend their tour of the Heritage Trail into a shopping trip. Also, it would be good to promote the Trail to bicyclists who travel the Katy Depot.*

Sedalia has a great parks system. The parks are well-maintained and easily accessible. There is a lot of beautification work in parks and along the streets with flower beds.

*It would be nice if there could be a coordinating theme with the City parks closest to Downtown and the public right-of-way areas in the Downtown, in relation to the beautification and flowers/landscaping.*

Liberty Park is one of the prettiest parks in the City with a beautiful stone bridge and wonderful rose garden. The park also has a nice children's train that has been there 60 years, and draws people back to the park so their children and grandchildren can ride the train. In addition, there are nice playgrounds and a historic convention hall at the park. The park is generally packed on weekends, and a Trout Derby that is held in the park is growing. Part of the Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival was previously held at Liberty Park, and was well attended by local residents.

*Liberty Park holds good appeal to local residents. Since many local residents attended the portion of the Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival that was held at the park, it would be good to revive that practice. Currently, the Festival isn't well attended by locals. Other music and family-oriented events that would appeal to local residents could be held at Liberty Park. Some of these events should provide a way for Downtown merchants and restaurants to showcase their products/services.*

The City has a skateboard park that draws skateboarders from about a 30-mile radius.

Sedalia is 30 minutes from a major recreational area and Lake of the Ozarks. The gyms and group exercise classes at the State Fair Community College are open to the community and residents often take advantage of the equipment, track, and exercise classes. The City also has very nice swimming pools.

*These are all quality-of-life features. Along with the high-quality parks system these things should be promoted in any efforts to attract retirees or new businesses/industries to Sedalia.*

For a town of Sedalia's size, the movie theater is as nice as any in Kansas City.

There is a local daily paper, a local weekly news paper and a Sedalia Magazine. All the local media have covered DREAM well and other positives about the City.

Sedalia Downtown Development, Inc. (SDDI) handles media contacts and has a newsletter it distributes.

*A newsletter is good for communicating with Downtown business owners. A printed newsletter will probably be read more by its recipients than an online newsletter, but online or electronic versions can be emailed efficiently.*

*The local news media has been good to pickup news releases they've received.*

*A newsletter for residents would be an extremely valuable tool. It could be as simple as a two-sided 8.5" by 11" piece that is included with the City's*

*utility bills three to four times a year. The keys are consistency and reach.*

The Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors' Bureau have several excellent printed pieces. Especially nice pieces are the Visitors Guide and the Sedalia's Heritage Trail piece.

*These and several other excellent pieces are available at the Katy Trail Depot, but unfortunately not in other areas of the Downtown. They provide excellent information that could encourage visitors to stay in town a bit longer to see other amenities Sedalia has to offer. It would be good if some kind of printed piece could be made available at all or most of the shops and restaurants in the Downtown. Since both of the above-mentioned pieces are probably somewhat pricey, it might be necessary to create a piece that costs a little less for wider distribution throughout the Downtown. It is also important that good promotional pieces are placed in racks or at kiosks in the area around the State Fairgrounds in order to steer visitors from that area into the Downtown.*

Sedalia's Convention and Visitors' Bureau has a community calendar on its Web site.

A streetscape project is underway that will include angled parking around the courthouse and brick utility channels on the edge of the sidewalk and in the cross walks.

The City has begun cleaning up the properties it owns in Downtown.

Ohio Street, which is the main street through Downtown, has a nice curve to it and is lined with attractive buildings.

Downtown Sedalia has numerous multiple story buildings. This represents great growth potential.

Downtown Sedalia is moving slowly in the right direction. People are buying and renovating old Downtown buildings and there is renewed interest in revitalizing Downtown. Over the last 10 years they have done 36 façade re-facings.

**(According to focus group comments)** There is a funding program that matches dollar for dollar up to \$5000 toward façade renovations. Building owners, however, have to follow guidelines to qualify for the money. This has created some political problems because some people haven't been made to follow the guidelines. Applicants "have to be willing to jump through hoops in order to get the money."

*Since façade renovation is such an important part of revitalizing the Downtown, it is important to make a proactive effort to make sure as many building owners as possible are able to take advantage of this program. This will probably mean actively promoting the program to Downtown business and building owners, providing easy-to-understand literature that explains the process step by step, and also designating someone who is responsible for working with building owners from beginning to end to make sure the owners are able to take maximum advantage of the program with minimum problems. It is not to the City's advantage to just say the program is there and works if people follow the rules. Steps need to be taken to assist building owners to make the program work more smoothly in Sedalia. The comments made in the focus group study seem to indicate that there has been some disillusionment and frustration with the program by building owners.*

*Business owners and building owners can be intimidated by all the rules and exceptions that are frequently characteristic of programs of this type. If too many building owners try to participate in the program and are frustrated or feel let down by all the "hoops they have to jump through," they will talk to other owners and discourage them from even trying the program. When this happens, the City and Downtown are the ultimate losers. At the same time, the City must insist on recipients compliance with the design guidelines and other applicable City codes. If future investment is to be attracted to Downtown, it is important that future investors know their projects are not at risk by neighboring buildings that are deteriorating.*

*Also, when building owners hear of problems other building owners have had, they might make false assumptions about these programs and decide*

*that participation in it is more trouble than it is worth. To them, the time they have to spend working through these programs is time taken away from their business. They may look at it as only a \$5,000 payoff, but if it takes so much time for them to obtain the \$5,000 that they could have made \$10,000 focusing on their business, they could decide it's not worth it. It will be important to educate building and business owners on the latent economic payoffs that can be anticipated as a result of such programs. These payoffs, or benefits, frequently take the form of increased property values, increased customer appeal, and increased appeal of the entire Downtown as more of the buildings are improved and revitalized.*

People in town are buying buildings where they have their own shop downstairs and live upstairs. This reduces the number of out-of-town, absentee landlords and adds more residential population Downtown.

**(According to focus group comments)** When it comes to building renovations, there is a City code for the amount of layers you can have on the roof of a building. The City has recently begun enforcing this.

*Consistent code enforcement is going to be a key part of revitalizing the Downtown and is important to all parts of Sedalia as well. It is going to be important to work with building owners on correcting decades of neglect to some buildings. In dealing with historic buildings, workable exceptions to some of the codes may be needed to make it possible for building owners to return structural integrity without destroying the historic characteristics of the building. A campaign to educate property owners on the economic benefits of historic preservation could be helpful.*

According to a consumer survey conducted in 1999, 57 percent of the respondents said they probably would recommend a visit to Downtown to a friend, and 22 percent said they definitely would recommend it.

According to a business survey conducted in 2000, 65 percent of the participants reported an improvement in sales volume in the past five years. They gave the highest ratings for Downtown in the areas of friendliness and price of goods. Forty-seven percent reported that if they relocated they intended to relocate within Downtown.

*Although almost half of the participants said they would relocate their business in Downtown, more than half evidently would not keep their business in the Downtown area if they decided to relocate, even though the majority of the participants indicate their sales volume has improved in the past five years. It would be good to know why these business owners would not stay Downtown, and work to address these issues.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Groups described Sedalia as a friendly, warm, and welcoming small town, especially because of its people. Sedalia was also described as a safe place to raise children.

**(According to focus group comments)** Sedalia residents have a great spirit of volunteerism and helping others through its churches and civic organizations. Participants said if you ask for volunteers in most areas you will get them, or you will get donations. For example, they have a mentoring program at public schools that started out with five percent of people being mentors and it is now up to 45 percent and growing.

**(According to focus group comments)** The basic things the community holds in very high regard are education, healthcare, economic development, arts, recreation, social services, and local government.

*It will be important to foster and possibly increase the public's support for economic development, local government and the arts as work continues with Downtown revitalization, especially since these three areas are key components. Frequent communication with the public about the positive things planned and going on in the Downtown will be important.*

*Although news releases will undoubtedly be part of this communication plan, more will be required. A newsletter, Web site, and special cable programming are all other ways to get information to the public. The more people know about the good things that are happening Downtown, the more likely they will be to support Downtown revitalization and the more likely they will be to come Downtown and checkout for themselves what is happening.*

Sedalia sits at the intersection of Highways 50 and 65, and is only 16 miles south of Interstate 70. This provides convenient access from Kansas City, Lake of the Ozarks, Springfield, Columbia, and St. Louis.

*Promotion of Downtown Sedalia along Interstate 70 could encourage visits from local motorists who frequently are in the Interstate 70/Highway 65 area. Promotions along Highway 65 could extend as far north as Marshall and as far south as Warsaw. Along Highway 50, promotions could cover the area from Warrensburg on the west to Jefferson City on the east. The purpose to these promotions would be to encourage area residents to make day trips to Sedalia.*

*When creating a billboard ad, it is important to remember that people need to see and comprehend the message in about 3 seconds maximum. For that reason, the picture should do the selling more than the text. Motorists don't have much time to read text as they drive along a highway.*

*For some of the larger special events, it would be advisable to do significant promotion of them in the Kansas City, Columbia, and Jefferson City areas. These areas are close enough to make day trips to Sedalia convenient.*

Because both rail and highway access is convenient from Sedalia, it provides attractive transportation amenities for recruiting manufacturing companies that might want to relocate.

People visit Downtown for some specialty shopping, banking, and for business related to the courthouse.

*There are already a number of people who go into Downtown on specific errands. It will be important to add amenities and opportunities that encourage people to linger in the Downtown, rather than just run in and out for errands. Since many people probably run errands Downtown while on their lunch break, outdoor dining opportunities might be one good way to entice people to stay longer. Other things that would encourage people to linger longer would be attractively landscaped green areas where people can relax and enjoy the ambience of Downtown. The more inviting Downtown becomes, the more likely it is these visitors will extend their business trips to Downtown to include some leisure time spent there.*

Business owners Downtown are generally friendly and welcoming. This makes Downtown an attractive and friendly place for visitors.

There are a lot of historic homes available in Sedalia.

*The historic homes of Sedalia would be good to promote to people wanting to relocate. Some ways to do this would be to write articles about historic homes in Sedalia that have been restored and how many historic homes are available in Sedalia. Then pitch these articles to magazines and newspapers.*

*Also, it might good to have something on one of the websites about Sedalia that features the historic homes and buildings aspect of Sedalia. The Web site could include pictures, articles about restored homes and buildings, etc. It might also be nice to include some of the history connected to these buildings if historic figures stayed or lived at them in the past. The Web site could also have a list of historic buildings for sale in Sedalia.*

Sedalia has a fair diversity of income levels. **(According to focus group comments)** It is pretty much a blue-collar town, but split between the blue-collar east side and the not quite so blue-collar west side. The upward-mobile people live in Walnut Hills. The median household income, however, is below the state and national levels.

Sedalia's population has remained stable at 20,000 for a hundred years.

Voters just passed a bill to build a new high school and for the first time it involved increasing salaries in that election. Also, the City government is looking at wages and comparing them to those in other towns. The result has been a lot of wage increases for workers in Sedalia.

Sedalia has formed a Tourism Coalition.

*If the Coalition has widespread representation across the organizations in Sedalia that work to bring visitors and commerce into Sedalia, it can be tremendously beneficial to maximize results and reduce duplication of efforts. A coalition of this sort can also ensure that the efforts and events of one group don't conflict with what another group is trying to do. A key to its success will be to ensure all interested parties have a place at the table.*

The restoration of the Katy Depot was a catalyst to Downtown restoration. The Visitors Center and Chamber of Commerce office are located at the Katy Trail Depot. The Depot has wonderful displays and some good printed, promotional pieces about Sedalia. The Depot is located adjacent to the Katy Trail, which attracts many visitors.

The media is usually good to print information for calendar events. Also, if it is a new event, they can get an open-microphone radio interview about it.

The Liberty Center is a very active umbrella organization for the arts and it is located in the Downtown area. The Liberty Center Theater has been renovated and is owned by the Liberty Center Association for the Arts. Annually they have about five productions of their own that run about three weeks each, and then do two to three leased productions that are only one to two nights each. Generally they fill the house several times, which holds about 300. Also have musicians and poets and holds creative writing classes for seniors. Grant money goes through the Liberty Center.

*The Liberty Center's cultural arts activities add to the quality of life amenities Sedalia can offer area residents. It also fits well with Sedalia's plan to establish a solid cultural-arts atmosphere in Downtown. It would be good if artist galleries, artistic-craftsmen-type shops, art/music supply shops, or any other specialty shops that deal with the arts could be concentrated near the Center so as to create something of a cultural arts district. This could help strengthen the draw for all of these types of shops and points of interest, since there is probably a significant overlap in each of their target markets.*

Founders Plaza is planned as an extension of the Amtrak railroad. It is a three-block development buffer area on Ohio St. that will be an open-air park with markers that denote the founding of Sedalia.

Downtown Sedalia has one of the most beautiful Carnegie libraries in the state.

## Sedalia Weaknesses

Downtown businesses close at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. with only a few open later. This is not user friendly since anyone who works regular business hours, but does not work Downtown, has no chance to explore or shop Downtown. According to a consumer survey conducted in Sedalia in 1999, 59 percent of the population worked 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.—the same hours Downtown shops are open. **(According to focus group comments)** Participants felt that businesses should at least be open until 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. on weekends or when the Scott Joplin Festival or the State Fair is occurring. During the Scott Joplin Festival many shops are closed.

*For Downtown to become a destination there has to be shops and services open when people want to visit them. This is especially true during special events. Downtown merchants have to be educated as to the benefits of evening hours.*

*Possibly merchants could open later on Fridays and Saturdays so they could stay open until at least 7 or 8 p.m. Another option would be to close for a few hours in the afternoon and then remain open later. Specific nights of the week can be promoted as "Downtown Nights." A significant number of merchants will need to agree to remain open on these nights to make it worth shoppers' time to come Downtown on these nights. This could be started slowly with maybe only the first weekend of the month, and then expanded to other weekends and evenings as both shoppers and merchants catch onto the idea.*

There are some businesses that close during events because they don't want to deal with the crowd. Many businesses in Sedalia close during the State Fair. This year, some stayed open and learned that the Fair does draw business into Downtown.

**(According to focus group comments)** During events, there are few Downtown businesses open later that cater to people at the events.

*Downtown merchants need to be educated on how staying open later for special events can lead to more business later. Currently, many of the business owners in the Downtown don't understand that a large number of "lookers" during special events can eventually generate more sales as the public becomes familiar with what the Downtown has to offer. They only see it as an advantage or disadvantage based on immediate sales during the event. In addition they may not be aware of the best ways to present and promote their products and services during special events in order to take maximum advantage of the opportunity.*

*An educational component that would help business owners identify and take advantage of these types of opportunities could be helpful. A newsletter distributed to Downtown businesses would be one good tool in this education effort. Another possibility would be an educational DVD series focusing on specific aspects of running a small business in Downtown. With this type of a series, business owners could work through the series at their own pace and fit it into their own schedule. Most of these businesses are run by the owner. Since the owners must be there to keep the business open, a frequent complaint is that they don't have time in their schedule to attend special classes. A series of this type would help small-business owners understand how to grow their business. Many small businesses are run by just the owner, and if the owner doesn't know how he/she would be able to manage more business, it is tempting to do things that will ensure the business doesn't grow beyond what can be handled by a one-person operation. A business series and possibly even a business coach could help some business owners realize they can successfully grow their business.*

**(According to focus group comments)** People who attend the Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival only come for the festival and don't shop in the Downtown. A few of the people who attended the festival this year made the comment that this was the first time the community opened up to them.

*When many of the shops are closed during the festival, there is little chance for visitors to shop Downtown. Also, according to the comments made by attendees, it seems like in the past many business owners have been less than welcoming. Education of business owners on how to take advantage of the opportunities festival attendees present will be important and is discussed in more detail above.*

The State Fair, while it draw a lot of visitors, is waning in attendance. In addition the type of person that attends a State Fair is not a lingerer of the Downtown. They are interested in the events and the nearly self contained atmosphere at the Fairgrounds.

*Any efforts to attract these visitors to Downtown need to be compelling and an efficient use of the limited Downtown resources. Ways to reach these groups might be through the hotels, fair programs and flyers, or City website. Also clear wayfinding from the Fairgrounds area to Downtown will be important.*

Currently the City is not doing much to promote Downtown because they don't feel what is there is appealing. They are aware that improvements are necessary to draw people back to Downtown.

*While it's not good to promise more than can be delivered, it is important to promote to local residents the improvements taking place Downtown and make them aware of the long-term plans. As people hear more about the positive things happening Downtown, they will be more likely to want to come Downtown and themselves to see what is happening. A good marketing plan is also aimed at local residents, not just visitors.*

*Also, if aesthetic improvements can be focused in a particular area of Downtown and then mushroom out from there, it would provide a specific point where local visitors can be directed to see and appreciate what is happening Downtown. (i.e. attractively landscaped public parking area with benches and green space nearby) Small improvements made over a wide geographic area are less noticeable and seem like less progress than a number of small improvements concentrated in a small area.*

Restaurants have had a tough time remaining viable Downtown. Currently there are about six choices of restaurants open Downtown during the day, and only about four choices open in the evenings.

*More dining choices, especially in the evening, are needed to help make Downtown a destination for visitors.*

There really aren't any family-friendly shops in the Downtown.

*Family-oriented shops bring families into the Downtown and open more possibilities for other family-oriented shops and services. Since young families tend to be heavy consumers, specialty shops that cater to their wants and needs would be good additions to Downtown. Such shops would include ice-cream parlors, sporting goods stores, toy and hobby shops, dance studios, pizza parlors, video-game arcades, etc. Although Downtown doesn't need more low-end flea-market shops, high-end children's clothing consignment shops would be a good addition. Bringing family-oriented shops and services to Downtown will be especially important if the Boys' & Girls' Club can be kept Downtown.*

Parking Downtown is a problem during festivals. A lack of parking will inhibit large events.

*Running shuttles from other parking lots in the City might alleviate this problem during large events.*

There has been a lot of conflict over parking spaces, especially around the courthouse. Some suggestions have been that police limit parking to two hours in the Downtown. From a visitor's perspective, a major problem is not knowing where they can park. **(According to focus group comments)** there is a big gravel parking lot behind one building, but nobody knows to park there.

*A lot of the problem with the parking could be alleviated by identifying and providing public parking lots. Currently, there aren't good signs directing motorists to the public parking lots, and many of these lots are in very poor condition. Well-marked, attractively landscaped and well-maintained parking lots in Downtown would make a big difference in the parking situation. While limiting street-side parking to two hours near the court house might be a good idea, it might be advisable to have longer time limits on parking in locations farther away from the court house. If shoppers have to worry about running back to their cars and moving them every two hours, they won't stay Downtown very long.*

**(According to focus group comments)** There is street parking and small lots behind some businesses. Focus group participants mentioned, however, that parking may be one reason people find places like Wal-Mart more convenient. They might walk the same distance from their cars, but because they can see the front of the store from where they park, they perceive it as closer.

*Improved and beautified lots throughout the Downtown, and lots that are well marked will help remove some of the negative perceptions about Downtown parking. The local public also needs to be educated on the truth of the actual distance between parking spaces Downtown and the entryways to the stores, versus where they have to park in a crowded lot at Wal-Mart and other large retailers.*

*An apples-to-apples comparison of parking convenience, however, is of less importance than developing Downtown as a pleasant, safe place to shop and spend time. Significant inconvenient parking will drive people away, but as Downtown develops its own distinct identity and offers visitors a unique experience, they will mind less about walking a few extra steps because they will be Downtown for the experience and niche shopping and services.*

There are some low-end flea-market-type shops Downtown that appear very run down both outside and inside. Too many of these types of shops in the Downtown could discourage true antique dealers from wanting to open a shop Downtown.

*The most significant problem with these shops is their run-down appearance. This is an issue that can be addressed through maintenance codes. As property in the Downtown improves and becomes more valuable, fewer of these types of shops will probably be able to open Downtown.*

Sidewalks are in very bad condition in places. **(According to focus group comments)** Downtown isn't really user-friendly for senior citizens, especially when there is snow, and they would much rather be dropped off at Wal-Mart than walk around Downtown.

*Snow and ice is not a consideration most of the year. Poor sidewalks and no handicapped-accessible ramps at corners and into shops, however, will keep seniors, people in wheel chairs, and even parents with children in strollers away from Downtown. These issues need to be addressed as much as possible.*

*Downtown's appeal, however, will have to be developed along a different line from Wal-Mart's appeal. Wal-Mart promotes itself on the basis of convenience and low prices. It is important to resist the temptation to compete with Wal-Mart in these areas. Downtown has to develop its unique identity and create an "experience" for visitors to the Downtown. The Downtown "experience" is created through the types of shops, the ambience, the shop managers, etc. It's along these lines that Downtown can promote itself as an attractive alternative to the large chain stores and malls.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Most people around Sedalia won't support stores or restaurants unless it's a chain. Part of Sedalia's problem is that people don't care enough and won't spend money Downtown.

*In recent years, there has been little promotion of Downtown to local residents, and as such, more local promotion is needed. Promotions should include events that target residents. During these events, it will be important that shops remain open so locals can browse shops and become better acquainted with the products and services that Downtown offers.*

*In addition, Downtown stores haven't maintained convenient hours for local shoppers. It's important that shop owners realize stores and restaurants exist to serve the needs of consumers—consumers don't exist to serve the needs of stores and restaurants. Downtown business owners need to be educated on the importance of identifying and then serving the public's needs.*

There is a problem with business turnover Downtown. Part of this problem is due to the fact that many Downtown buildings are dilapidated and therefore can't be rented for much. If businesses think the rent is cheap enough, they are okay with trying it and maybe only being around for a few months. In addition, many Downtown business owners have a business, but don't have a business plan and don't understand how to run a business. This also results in a high turnover of businesses.

*The low-rent issue attracting entrepreneurs without sufficient funds to see a business through is something that will remain a problem until property values and rental rates Downtown begin to increase. If businesses are allowed to only remain open a month or two, turn a quick profit and then move on, they will continue that practice.*

*Most entrepreneurs, however, would like to know they have at least a reasonable chance of making money or at least breaking even when they open a business. Education and business-planning assistance for businesses wanting to open in the Downtown could help some of these entrepreneurs to both see and address the weaknesses in their plans, or help them decide against opening the business at all. Special business-development assistance for Downtown businesses, such as the business coach and DVD series discussed earlier, could not only increase the success rate of businesses in Downtown, but also make locating a business Downtown more appealing to entrepreneurs.*

A business survey conducted in 2000 showed that business owners rated Sedalia lowest for merchandise displays and variety of goods. Seventy percent thought window displays were somewhat responsible for attracting customers and 21 percent thought they were largely responsible, yet only 6 percent of them relied on window displays to promote their business. Fifty-one percent relied on word of mouth to promote their business.

When business owners were asked if they would like information or assistance in specific areas, very few indicated they wanted help. The percentages wanting help were as follows: two percent wanted help with business plan development, four percent wanted marketing assistance and in-store promotion ideas, two percent wanted financing assistance, and four percent wanted help on retiring or transitioning their business.

*Unless there has been a big change in the Downtown business owners, it will be hard to help them learn better business skills. If these survey results are accurate, most of the business owners aren't even following business-promotional ideas they believe are valid, yet they don't want help.*

*It is possible, however, that something else was going on and the answers about wanting help are more a reflection of the business owners' perception of the group or individuals administering the survey than of their true feelings about getting help. Unless that can be determined to have truly been the case, it would be advisable to proceed slowly with trying to help business owners improve their business-management skills. A newsletter that contains suggestions for managing and growing a small business and that is sent to Downtown business owners would be a good start. The DVD series mentioned earlier in this section would also be good, but presenting it and promoting it to Downtown business owners will need to be handled carefully.*

There is a lack of regular, quality communication with local residents. The City doesn't have a newsletter it sends to residents. In addition, although it has 240 to 250 full-time employees, it doesn't have an employee newsletter. The police department, however, does have its own newsletter.

*A City newsletter that goes to all residents can be an extremely valuable tool in changing residents' attitudes and habits, and would be beneficial for any communication/marketing campaign the City might undertake. To change attitudes and behaviors, the information needs to be more ongoing and consistent than can be accomplished when you are dependent on a newspaper editor deciding whether and how to cover the information.*

*It's also important to keep City employees fully updated on information about the City and the positive things that are happening. Area residents consider City employees experts on what is really happening in the City and often will believe them before they will believe information that comes from elected officials, the City administrator or department heads. An employee newsletter ensures City employees have accurate information about what is going on. Well-informed employees can be an extremely valuable communication tool for reaching the community.*

Events are generally covered in the newspaper after the fact so they can have photos. Unfortunately, this does nothing for bringing more visitors to the actual event.

*A City newsletter would enable the City to promote the events prior to their occurrence and bring more locals to the event. (see above for comments on the need for a newsletter)*

Downtown has poor lighting and signage, which makes it hard for visitors to get into and around Downtown.

Downtown Sedalia is not visible from an interstate highway, which means there is little likelihood of people just deciding to stop in and see Sedalia. It does, however, sit at the intersection of Highways 50 and 65, and is only 16 miles south of Interstate 70.

*Promotion of Downtown Sedalia along Interstate 70 could encourage visits from local motorists who frequently are in the Interstate 70/Highway 65 area. Promotions along Highway 65 could extend as far north as Marshall and as far south as Warsaw. Along Highway 50, promotions could cover the area from Warrensburg on the west to Jefferson City on the east. The purpose to these promotions would be to encourage area residents to make day trips to Sedalia. When creating a billboard ad, it is important to remember that people need to see and comprehend the message in about 3 seconds maximum. For that reason, the picture should do the selling more than the text. Motorists don't have much time to read text as they drive along a highway.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Business owners don't go to association meetings because they only address parades and events. They want a building committee to address issues more seriously about building and business permits and such. Also, many of them say they are unable to attend because they have to run their business during the meetings.

*To be effective in revitalizing the Downtown, the Downtown association will need to listen and respond to concerns Downtown merchants want addressed. This might mean expanding the focus in some areas. When Downtown-business owners see that there are meetings that address needs and concerns they consider important, they will be more willing to participate. Although the resulting focus and structure may be different than what association leaders originally envisioned, it will be more effective in resulting in positive change because there will be more buy-in by Downtown business owners.*

*If the meeting times are a problem with many of the business owners, it might be a good idea to adjust or alternate the times to enable these business owners to attend at least some of the time. A regular newsletter that recapped discussions and decisions made at the meetings and is distributed to all Downtown businesses could also help keep business owners up to date and possibly interest more Downtown businesses in becoming involved in the association.*

There doesn't seem to be much of an information-push happening, especially with local residents. Residents and visitors have access to a lot of information about what is happening Downtown, but only if they seek it out. A lot of information is available through the Chamber of Commerce and the Convention and Visitors Bureau, but only people who subscribe to publications or make an effort to stop in at the Katy Trail Depot know what events are going on Downtown. Not a lot of local people attend Downtown events, especially the Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival. Currently it's not promoted much locally.

*A more proactive push is needed to get information to local residents. Although a lot of good information is available, according to the DREAM survey, locals aren't getting information from the Chamber of Commerce Web site. Local residents need to be kept apprised on what is happening Downtown—from revitalization and improvements to shopping, cultural, and entertainment opportunities. It's especially important to proactively promote special events to locals, and not just the largest events. Any event or activity that would bring locals into Downtown needs to be actively promoted to them. Local residents aren't likely to become interested in changing their shopping habits and patronizing Downtown shops if they aren't brought into the Downtown and see for themselves the improvements and what it has to offer.*

There are a lot of boarded-up buildings along E. Main by the bridge and in many other places of Downtown. This gives a very poor image of Downtown and makes it seem deserted and unsafe. It also discourages viable businesses from wanting to locate in Downtown, especially in these areas.

*While Downtown buildings can, at times, need to board-up broken windows due to accidents, they should never be allowed to leave them in this condition for months at a time. Ordinances are needed and should be enforced that force building owners to replace broken glass and only allows boarding up a building for a specified period of time.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Repairs and renovations of buildings are another priority, however there are many difficulties facing building owners in repairing and renovating buildings. Groups suggested that grants and other funding opportunities should be explored to encourage more people to buy and renovate.

*A number of funding opportunities, such as special revolving funds for Downtown revitalization, low-interest loans, tax credits, etc., already exist or could be created locally to assist with building repairs in the historic Downtown area. Most business owners, however, are intimidated by working through the processes necessary to obtain these types of assistance, and they are often unaware of what is available. It would be helpful to have someone associated with the Downtown revitalization whose job is to help business/building owners find and obtain these types of financial assistance tools.*

Most upper level windows are empty or boarded. Even in the renovated buildings with businesses on the ground floor, the upper floors appear vacant.

*It would give a better presentation of the area if upper-story windows had blinds, curtains, or shades that were in good repair. The second-story*

*window appearance, however, is a minor consideration until the disrepair of the street-level appearance has been addressed.*

Many Downtown buildings are only used for storage. Property taxes have been so low they were cheap enough to just use as storage units. Taxes have been reassessed so property owners will find it more expensive to maintain a building Downtown without making it productive.

*While increased property taxes will make it less attractive for building owners to just use the building as a storage unit, enforced maintenance codes would also make it less likely people would want to use Downtown property in this way. The City should review its zoning code and determine if “warehouse or storage uses” should really be a permitted use in the Downtown zoning district.*

*With vacant store windows, it would be better if they were filled with a large, colorful poster promoting Downtown. Another possibility could be to rent out the window space in vacant stores as ad space for other Downtown businesses. Either of these options would make the area seem more vital.*

There are some people who are living on the upper stories of Downtown buildings, but they have left the first floor vacant. Situations such as this reflect badly on the general appearance of Downtown.

*Downtown buildings should be required to have a presentable, finished and appropriate appearance to their downstairs windows. Several options could be outlined that would be workable for residents who want to live Downtown, but wouldn't detract from a desirable appearance in the Downtown.*

The original DREAM application has a table that shows only 7 structures in Downtown were built since 1981. There is room for new construction, but choice spaces are not available and most spaces are small, single spaces. Although a few multiple spaces exist, those generally need demolition to build on them. Areas around the Downtown also have not developed much lately.

*Incentives are needed to encourage new construction in Downtown. It will be important, however, that the new construction be required to fit in with the look of the historic Downtown. It might also be necessary to gain control of the larger building sites that require demolition and conduct the demolition so that these sites can be marketed to developers looking for larger spaces.*

The backs of some buildings, from Osage and Ohio streets, are not visually appealing, although they are good buildings with good businesses. The backs of the buildings across from the Amtrak depot look bad and many are boarded-up. This creates a bad first impression when people arrive Downtown.

*Cleaning up and beautifying areas behind buildings would help a lot. Also, it would be nice to have murals painted on the backs of some of the most visible buildings. This would add interest to the Downtown as well as tie in with Sedalia's desire to attract more artists to the Downtown. The murals could depict different aspects of Sedalia's history, significant historic residents of Sedalia, etc. If several buildings are in a row, such as the ones across from the Amtrak station, it would be good if they covered a timeline in Sedalia's history. Boarding up of buildings should never be allowed as a long-term solution to broken windows or other building problems.*

**(According to focus group comments)** The railroad station has been a drain on Sedalia. The Union Pacific just walked out one day and there were still schedules and papers around. Then drunks began to take over the place and the station became trashy with graffiti on walls, floors and in the bathrooms.

Although the station has been cleaned up a bit, it still presents a very poor, uninviting image of Sedalia. In addition, there is a problem getting into Downtown from the depot. There are no sidewalks leading from the train station Downtown, and part of the way would require walking on a badly rutted gravel shoulder of the road.

*Since the railroad station is some visitors' first impression of Sedalia, it's important that both the station and the area around the station be beautified. It serves as Sedalia's front door for people who like to travel by train and also for visitors who enter Sedalia from the north on Hwy 765. In addition, Sedalia is one of the stops Amtrak makes between Kansas City and St. Louis. If the station and the area immediately surrounding it presented a more appealing image of the City, it's possible people who regularly travel that route might decide to visit Sedalia.*

*Although there have been discussions on putting a brochure rack or kiosk at the station or even staffing a visitor's desk there during the times trains come into Sedalia, nothing has been finalized. There have also been some plans on improving the station, but at this time financing isn't finalized.*

*Because of the significant role the railroad station and its surroundings play in shaping visitors' impressions of Sedalia, it is important that the problems with the train station be addressed. The multi-faceted nature of the problems surrounding the station will most likely require the collaboration of several community organizations to address the issues. Possibly a committee with representatives from multiple community organizations could be created to develop and implement a plan that would address the issues.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Need to have enforcement from building inspectors to make sure that people working on their buildings are following the rules – there are people that aren't and there is no consistency. Have seen people pour concrete that doesn't match what they did two years before. Absentee building owners are also a problem that needs addressing, because many won't keep up the maintenance on their buildings.

*Without rules and the willingness to enforce them, there won't be consistency in Downtown – not everyone will voluntarily do what is right for the area. Property values Downtown will continue to suffer as long as some building owners are allowed to let their buildings deteriorate. It will be important to work with building owners to help them make needed improvements, and to make the allowances necessary to make the improvements feasible and affordable for the historic buildings found in the Downtown. Building owners will also need to be educated on how building improvements Downtown is the only way to stabilize their Downtown property investments.*

*Some owners, however, will still fight spending money on renovation. In these instances, the City will need to be willing to make some Downtown business owners mad because of code enforcement. Property values and Downtown's appeal will continue to lag as long as some of the buildings are allowed to deteriorate.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Safety is an issue that needs to be addressed. There is some crime Downtown—not a lot of big crime, but little things that could drive customers away. People can go to Wal-Mart or a strip center and feel a level of comfort there. They need to feel safe when they come Downtown.

*Better lighting in the evenings, cleaning up the Downtown area, and enforcing building maintenance codes will all go a long way to giving Downtown a more vital, and therefore safer feel for visitors.*

*In addition, a more visible police presence would help. This could be accomplished through officers on foot or motorcycle. Mounted patrols are also good for calling attention to police presence, and are particularly well suited for special events. They are also very effective public relations tools. Positioning police sub stations throughout the Downtown would be another good tool. Many Quick Trip convenience stores in the St. Louis area have a small area (generally just a table or desk) set aside where officers can sit, fill out paper work and have a cup of coffee. Signs are placed in the windows of the convenience stores identifying them as Police Sub Stations. These sub stations provide a feeling of safety for the public as well as a deterrent to criminals. If several businesses in the Downtown would allow small police substations of this sort to be located in their stores, it would create the impression of increased police presence in the Downtown.*

*Another approach that might help would be a "Downtown Business Watch" program. It works similar to a Neighborhood Watch program, but it is for businesses. Participating businesses put signs in their windows stating that they participate in the Business Watch program. Again, the purpose is to send a message to the public that everything is being done to keep Downtown a safe, crime-free area, and send a message to criminals that their chances of being caught are increased.*

*Also, as shopper activity increases Downtown, so will safety.*

**(According to focus group comments)** The City wouldn't allow zoning for Bed and Breakfasts in the Downtown.

*Except for Hotel Bothwell, all of Sedalia's lodging accommodations are outside of the Downtown area. This is unfortunate since the Downtown has so many interesting historic buildings in it and historic homes near it that would make appealing Bed & Breakfast accommodations. Providing visitor accommodations in the Downtown would by necessity bring visitors to Downtown shops and businesses. This might be something that should be reconsidered.*

There are no public restrooms Downtown. Visitors who need to use public restroom facilities would probably have to leave the Downtown and it is unlikely they would return afterward. The less time people can spend in the Downtown, the less likely they are to spend money.

*Since City hall is located Downtown and has public restroom facilities, signs could be placed in the Downtown directing people to those restroom facilities. Also, a Visitors' Center in the central part of Downtown that had restrooms, information, and maybe even complimentary coffee would be a good addition.*

Infrastructure improvements are needed in the Downtown to make it more appealing. **(According to focus group comments)** Street and sidewalk repair are priorities, as well as landscaping to beautify the streets and sidewalks. Weeds are growing around and in alleys and trash needs to be picked up. Currently, some sidewalks are cracked and the streets are inconsistently paved.

*While some Downtown improvements, such as rehabbing buildings, will take a while to accomplish, there are many smaller, cleanup projects that would quickly give Downtown more visual appeal. These types of projects should be addressed as soon as possible. Also, because these projects are smaller and cost considerably less, they would be ideal projects for local organizations to adopt.*

## Sedalia Opportunities

Many small business owners need help with marketing and advertising efforts because they have only a limited amount of money to spend on it. One reason businesses move out of Downtowns and located close to large retailers, such as Wal-Mart, is so they can ride on the advertising coattails of large retailers that bring in the traffic. In this way the small businesses don't have to spend as much of their own budget on advertising.

*Promoting Downtown as a whole through a joint advertising budget would help small individual businesses in the Downtown. Possibly an advertising co-op could be created. The advertising funds could be collected through membership in a Downtown merchants' association in combination with other funding sources. To make membership appealing, members would receive more specific mention in ads and also on the Downtown association's Web site.*

There has been an increase in the Hispanic population for the past 10 years. There has also been an increase in Ukrainians, Russians, and a lot of Eastern Europeans.

*This increased cultural diversity will provide opportunities to build more niche shops Downtown. Good options would be Hispanic grocery stores and ethnic bakeries. Other possibilities are shops specializing in jewelry, artwork, and home décor from Hispanic and Eastern European countries.*

*Special events focusing on the different cultures would also be good, if enough members of these cultural groups would want to participate. The event could offer booth space to vendors selling products and food from these cultures. Music presentations from these countries would also be good to include. Often, ethnic musicians are anxious to perform at events of this type in exchange for the opportunity to sell their CDs.*

Both focus group and community survey participants indicated they would like to see boutique-style shops develop Downtown. Neither group placed a high priority on bringing big retailers Downtown. Also, focus group participants indicated they would particularly like to see restaurants, theaters, and art galleries develop Downtown.

*This priority on the types of shops that are desired Downtown fits well with what Downtown can become. It is unlikely Downtown will be able to bring in a large retailer, but through specialty shops and products large retailers don't carry, Downtown can offer shoppers a unique shopping experience they can't get at the malls or at Wal-Mart. In addition, the art galleries would provide a good tie with the vision to create an arts district in Downtown. A key will be attracting a good mix of specialty shops.*

*One possible way to attract the right mix of businesses could be through a virtual business incubator. A list of preferred businesses should be developed, and then some assistance and support could be given to businesses wanting to open in the Downtown and that are on the preferred list. Unlike a business incubator that is in a single building, the businesses would be in different buildings throughout the Downtown. One form of assistance could be to partially subsidize the rent for the first year, with the monthly rent based on a percentage of the business's gross receipts. The rental assistance could be done with an option to buy the building. The virtual incubator could also be set up so that local investors can buy shares in different businesses.*

There is a big church focus in Downtown and many local residents come to the Downtown on Sundays. Most shops and restaurants, however, are closed on Sundays. It would be good if shops and restaurants could stay open at least one Sunday afternoon a month so residents who are in the Downtown on Sundays can extend their Sunday visits.

*To start, it would be good if one Sunday afternoon a month a majority of the shops and restaurants could be open in the afternoon, possibly from noon until 5 p.m. These special Sundays could be promoted as "Sedalia Sundays" or something like that.*

*A possible promotional tool shops and restaurants could use on these Sundays would be an extra discount for people who present their church bulletin at the time of the purchase. This would help motivate people who are already in or near the Downtown to stay and shop for a while. Also, afternoon Gospel Music concerts in the Downtown would provide a good draw on these days. Concerts could be held outdoors or in Downtown churches. There*

*could also be locations throughout the Downtown where individual performers, quartets, or instrumental ensembles could perform. The goal would be to make an extended visit Downtown an inviting experience for the families and individuals who are already in the area.*

There are a lot of distinctive churches in the Downtown that people might like to see.

*It would be nice if three to four times per year several of the churches would be open in the evening and offer music concerts at them. All the participating churches would be open on the same evenings, but possibly there could be two different concert times scheduled in each church. That way, visitors could go to more than one concert.*

*On these evenings, it might also be nice if there could sometimes be art displays in the Downtown of sacred-based art. (MOCRA, the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art in St. Louis features this type of art)*

**(According to focus group comments)** It was suggested that on one evening a week or on Sunday evenings, some of the streets in the Downtown be blocked off beginning at 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. and vendors be allowed to set up booths and tables. There could also be music, dancing, and food for sale on these evenings.

*This could be promoted as an open-air market in Downtown, but it would be important to get some of the businesses to stay open on these evenings. Ultimately the goal is to increase the revenue and viability of the businesses in Downtown. This would have to be limited to warm weather and to begin with it might be advisable to start with only one or two evenings a month until local residents begin taking advantage of these entertainment opportunities. The City of St. Charles has something similar it does during the summer months, called Hot Summer Nights. On those nights, some of the streets are blocked off, stages are set up for music concerts, and many of the Downtown restaurants move tables out onto the sidewalks and into the streets.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Participants said they would like more dining options, both for sit-down meals and for grabbing a quick-bite. They also said these restaurants should stay open later to draw a dinner crowd. This desire was echoed by the results from the community survey, which indicated 84 percent of the participants placed getting more casual dining in the Downtown as either a top or a high priority.

*The need and desire by the public for more eating establishments in Downtown seems to be clear. This will be important information to use in attempting to attract more eating establishments into Downtown. This information should also be used to encourage existing restaurants to extend their hours. If they realize that other restaurants will come to Downtown and take much of the business by providing more customer-friendly hours they might be more receptive to extending their hours.*

*Once the renovations to convert the Fox Theater into office space are complete, there will be increased need for dining establishments in the Downtown, both for lunch and after business hours for dinner.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Participants indicated they would like to see a bakery or donut shop located Downtown, and they also mentioned they would like to see a coffee shop open Downtown.

*Bakeries would provide good destination locations. Coffee shops also are good for impulse spending and encouraging visitors to linger a bit longer in the Downtown, especially if they have outdoor dining on nice days. It should be noted, however, that a coffee shop didn't rate high on the community survey the DREAM Initiative conducted, so it might not be a destination draw for locals. A coffee shop Downtown could, however, provide a good draw for people already in Downtown conducting business. It would also provide a good draw for Downtown workers, especially once the Fox Theater has been renovated and turned into multiple independent office spaces. In addition to daytime hours, Downtown coffee shops will need to have early morning hours so workers can go there before they go to work.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Restaurants should stay open later, particularly during the Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival and the Missouri State Fair. One business owner mentioned he has a shop Downtown and during the Scott Joplin Festival he stays open until 8:00 pm and “it’s alive.”

*Education of business owners on how to take advantage of extra people in town during these events would be helpful. Many small businesses are run by just the owner, and if the owner doesn’t know how he/she would be able to manage more business, it is tempting to do things that will ensure the business doesn’t grow beyond what can be handled by a one-person operation. A business series and possibly even a business coach could help some business owners realize they can successfully grow their business.*

*A newsletter distributed to Downtown businesses would be one good tool in the education effort. Another possibility would be an educational online or DVD series focusing on specific aspects of running a small business in Downtown. With this type of a series, business owners could work through the series at their own pace and fit it into their own schedule. Most of these businesses are run by the owner. Since the owners must be there to keep the business open, a frequent complaint is that they don’t have time in their schedule to attend special classes. In addition, it would be good to set up onsite advertising/sponsorship opportunities for Downtown restaurants and businesses during these two events.*

*Since the area around the Fairgrounds attracts thousands of visitors all year long, it would be good to have clear signage to direct visitors to the Downtown. This will be especially important if complementary events and venues can be planned for Downtown when large events are held at the Fairgrounds.*

*Another way to assist Downtown merchants would be to inform them of the demographics of some of the large groups that are scheduled to come to Sedalia.*

**(According to focus group comments)** In the past, Friday nights were the nights that the stores stayed open.

*It’s important that locals again begin to think of Downtown first as the place to go and be. For this to happen, Downtown retailers and restaurants need to coordinate and provide at least one night per week when visitors can find most of the shops and restaurants open. A good start to this would be to have “Sedalia Summer Nights” or “Downtown Nights” on either Friday or Saturday nights, from May through September.*

*It would also be helpful if retailers could offer special sales or promotions on those evenings to further lure shoppers into Downtown and away from the chain stores. Also, during the summer months, if there could be music in the Downtown or other entertainment options on these nights, it would make a trip Downtown more of an entertainment activity and draw more people. Friday evenings might be a good evening to start this practice, especially if there will be entertainment options included. One promotion line for this could be “Downtown Friday nights are back!” Later, once shoppers begin to catch onto visiting Downtown in the evening, the evening hours could be expanded to a second evening of the week.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Some business owners chose to locate their businesses Downtown because of its proximity to the courthouse, which would draw lunchtime business.

*According to the community survey conducted by the DREAM Initiative, 73 percent of area residents are in the Downtown at least one time per month, and close to 39 percent are in the Downtown more than five times per month (the majority indicated they were there to go to the post office or for a government-related errand). With a significant number of people going Downtown for errands, it will be important to add amenities and opportunities that encourage people to linger, rather than just run in and out. Since many people probably run errands Downtown on their lunch break, outdoor dining opportunities might be a good way to entice people to stay longer. Other things that would encourage people to linger longer would be attractively landscaped green areas where people can relax and enjoy the ambience of Downtown. The more inviting Downtown becomes, the more likely it is these visitors will extend their business trips to include some leisure time spent there.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Groups suggested the possibility of connecting stores together to create some sort of indoor mall or walkway that ties the stores together and draws people into other stores. Groups believed it was possible to join five or six buildings together with at least one strong anchor merchant that would draw people. (suggestion include a discount-type place). Parking would be available on both sides. This “Downtown mall” could also include restaurants, cafes or coffee shops. An example that was mentioned was a place in Detroit called Trapper’s Alley. It had been an old Downtown area where fur traders used to take their furs. It was enclosed and escalators were placed on the street going to a second floor with different specialty shops.

*Convenient parking and required customer-friendly hours for shops in this mall will be extremely important. It won’t do well if when visitors come to it many of the shops are closed. This would especially be the type of shopping area you would want open Friday nights, Saturdays and Sundays.*

*One option for the anchor business to this shopping area could be an artist mall that provides booth/display space for multiple artists. It would be important that there are requirements set for the presentation style and types of items displayed in each vendor’s area. What you want to avoid is an artist that tries to fit so much into his/her space that it looks more like a jumble sale than an art sale.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Participants indicated they wanted to have some sort of funds available for business incubation buildings. They felt that would draw more businesses into Downtown, especially if there are people who are on the edge of doing something. This would develop artificially low rent for these businesses. In addition, participants believed it would be important to help the businesses develop a business plan and to give them instructions on what to do to achieve success.

*See virtual business incubator and educational suggestions earlier in this section.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Need to find a way to get people to come back Downtown to shop because there is nothing unique about going to Wal-Mart or Penny’s. People will drive miles to another store just to see if they have something different.

*Downtown shops can’t compete with the variety and prices shoppers can find at Wal-Mart and major retailers in strip centers. Its draw will depend on creating a unique “experience” in Downtown. Shopping Downtown has to become an experience and the experience of visiting Downtown is how it needs to be marketed. It will be important to focus on ways Downtown is different and the experiences Downtown offers.*

*It should be noted, however, that there already is a large percentage of the population coming into Downtown every month. They just aren’t staying to shop or eat. Once Downtown becomes more inviting, they will be more likely to extend these errands into some leisure time spent Downtown.*

Focus group participants and the majority of the community survey participants indicated they would like to see clothing stores Downtown.

*Small clothing stores would have a hard time remaining viable in Downtown because they would be competing with large retailers. To attract customers, these clothing stores would have to offer something unique. An option may be to encourage a single merchant to feature clothing lines of several independent designers. It would be good if these designers could come from the different Missouri colleges that offer degrees in fashion design. A clothing store of this type would also fit well with the vision to create an art center in Downtown.*

*Another clothing option could be high-end children’s and women’s clothing consignment shops. The key would be that the stock sold in these shops has to be top quality and like new. Otherwise you just end up with another flea-market type shop.*

Music and music events have been tremendously popular in Sedalia.

*It might be a good idea to look at having a music festival of the three types of American music born in Missouri: Kansas City for Jazz, Sedalia for its ties to Scott Joplin and Ragtime, and St. Louis for Blues. By including the three different genres, the event would hold wide appeal and be something that could be promoted across the state.*

*On a smaller scale, but something that would bring more locals into the Downtown would be to offer free evening or Saturday afternoon concerts in the Downtown during the summer. One good location would be on the Courthouse lawn. If these concerts are held in conjunction with a special night of the week that Downtown shops and restaurants stay open later, it would provide an added draw for bringing residents Downtown.*

In 2010 Sedalia will celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A committee has been developed and is working on ideas.

*It will be important to have representation on the committee from a wide selection of organizations. A logo and tagline needs to be developed early in the process so it can be used with everything.*

*The celebration of the anniversary should be throughout the entire year with banners in the Downtown, special articles carried in the news papers about the City's history and the celebration. If possible, it would be good to have a special Web site with anniversary information on it linked to the other City-related Web sites.*

*Although the celebration should be recognized throughout the entire year, it should climax with a large-scale event—possibly in October since that is the month Sedalia was founded. Smaller celebratory events could be held at other times throughout the year, but it is important that they don't overshadow the main event or drain volunteer resources to the point that the main event suffers.*

*Looking at Sedalia's history will be an important component of this celebration, and would provide a good opportunity to hold a "Founder's Day" celebration. For the celebration, use character actors to interact with the visitors. Some of the persons who could be characterized would be Harry S. Truman, Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd, and Jack Oakie.*

*There should also be different venues throughout Downtown that would include music, authors, storytelling, films, etc. There was a book written called "The Long Ohio Street" that is about Sedalia's history and the woman who wrote that book grew up in Sedalia. She would be good to have as a guest speaker and for a book signing.*

Sedalia was a railroad town and a cattle town, and Sedalia's Rawhide Days used to be very popular. The event lost popularity due to some mismanagement of funds and has been discontinued. The Chamber and the Convention and Visitors Bureau are overseeing this.

*Since Sedalia is promoted as the home of Rails, Trails and Ragtime, it would be good to revive this popular event. It would be worth the effort to identify what the problems were that led to the mismanagement of funds and take steps to correct these problems. It might mean creating a multi-organizational committee and turning the management of the event over to that committee, but since the popularity the event has been established in the past, it shouldn't be dropped due to problems that arose. It will also probably require some promotion as the "New Rawhide Days" so people who had a bad experience with the previous event will know changes have been made. This would be an especially good event to revive for the 150-year anniversary celebration.*

Sedalia has parades Downtown, with people coming from all areas, but five minutes after the parade ends, it is over and all the shops are closed. People don't have anywhere to go so they leave.

*It will be important to work with shop and restaurant owners to stay open for special events, such as parades, that occur Downtown. It would also be good to broaden the venues to keep people Downtown – add music, magic acts, clowns, contests, kid's inflatable activities, etc. That way, it makes it worth the merchants' time to stay open.*

Jack Oakie, who was a film star from the 1920s into the 60s, is from Sedalia. Some of his most famous films were from the 30s and 40s.

*A film festival featuring Jack Oakie would be ideal for the Scott Joplin Center (located in the old Uptown Theater), once renovations are complete. A perfect time to test its appeal would be during the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Since Jack Oakie is not a readily recognized name, it will be important to include some of his films that included big-name stars, such as Charlie Chaplin, Carole Lombard, and Judy Garland.*

Sedalia is promoted as the "Home of Rails, Trails and Ragtime," but the only event that celebrates these aspects of Sedalia's heritage is the Scott Joplin Festival.

*It would be good to hold events that highlight the other two aspects of Sedalia's history. A revival of Rawhide Days would address the Trails portion.*

*Not much, however, has been done to address the railroad's role in Sedalia. Founder's Plaza would be the natural location for an event. Some possibilities would be a model-train collectors' swap meet, collectible train memorabilia, concerts featuring train-themed songs, etc. It might be good to hold different parts of the event in two different locations—Founder's Plaza and the grounds surrounding the Katy Trail Depot.*

Sedalia also had a streetcar in operation and that heritage could also be the focus of a festival or promotional effort for Downtown.

Soccer tournaments bring in people for whole weekends during fall, spring & summer.

*It would be good to have promotional/sponsorship opportunities for Downtown businesses at these tournaments. Also, promote Downtown in general at these tournaments and have Downtown merchants offer discounts to people from the tournaments who visit their shops.*

*Also, the number of families coming to Sedalia's Downtown for sports and recreation opens opportunities for family-oriented businesses. In addition, it makes it important to introduce family-friendly events and encourage families to come Downtown for other reasons.*

The MO 50 is a 50-piece juried competition of Missouri artists, held at the State Fairgrounds. The grand opening of MO 50 is also the kickoff to the State Fair.

*This might be a good time to hold complimentary art events Downtown. One possibility would be Artists in the Park, where artists are able to set up booth space and sell their work. Another option would be an art fair held Downtown with artists' displays set up on the sidewalks. It would also be good to host an Art Crawl at this time and allow visitors to visit a number of art galleries in Downtown. Cultural events in Sedalia have a history of being well attended and having a regional draw.*

The Uptown Theater Building on Ohio Street will become the Scott Joplin Center. Once renovations are complete and the Center opens, it will contain a 42-seat theater and house performing arts, concerts, film festivals, offices, and a museum. At the focus group discussions, an example of a similar theater in Los Angeles was mentioned, where they have an old-time movie night with sing-along, slides, comedy, and then intermission. Then they have a feature film, either silent or with sound, that isn't any competition to the main theaters.

*If it is ready on time, this would be a perfect location for some of the events for Sedalia's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.*

The Katy Trail runs right through Sedalia and is a popular outdoor recreation area for visitors and residents.

*Since so many leisure bicyclists visit the Katy Trail it would be good if you could bring bike trails into Downtown from the Katy Trail. To do that, it will be important to mark clear and safe access routes into Downtown for these bicyclists, and provide bike racks for them to lock up their bikes while they shop or dine Downtown.*

*To entice more cyclists to come into the Katy Depot and hopefully find information that would interest them in visiting Downtown, it might be good to put a sign along the trail indicating restrooms, soft drinks and snacks are available at the depot. A kiosk along the side of the trail with information about Sedalia's historic Downtown might also be a way to interest leisure cyclists in visiting Downtown.*

There is a local public access cable channel, but the City doesn't produce any programming for it.

*The cable channel provides a perfect opportunity to promote events and what is happening Downtown to local residents. Possibly programming could be developed by interns and volunteers. It might also be possible to find grant money to purchase the video equipment.*

The City has a website, and a website for Sedalia's Downtown is being developed. In addition, the Convention and Visitor's Bureau has a site and the Chamber also has a site.

*It would be good to have a portal page that could link to all these sites. Also, it would be good if there could be cross links between the sites. Between them, there is a lot of valuable information, but it would be easier to get to if cross links were offered.*

*It will be important to drive the traffic to these sites through an information campaign. The community survey conducted by the DREAM Initiative indicates that people are not using these websites to obtain information about Sedalia.*

The signs currently directing visitors to the Downtown are the state signs on highways and a gateway sign on Highway 50. The primary entrances into Sedalia are Highways 765, 65, and 50.

*Better signage is needed to direct visitors to a Visitor Information Center, which at this time would be the Katy Trail Depot. It might also be good to have a satellite Visitor Information Center located more centrally in Downtown. (an ideal location would be near the Ohio and Broadway intersection)*

*Also, enhance the primary entrances to Downtown with distinctive streetscape features that would appear throughout the whole Downtown area. Ways to do this would be with a Downtown logo that is used on banners and placing the banners throughout the whole Downtown. The logo would also be used on directional signs in Downtown. Other ways to distinguish Downtown would be coordinated flower boxes/baskets, street lights, street signs design and poles, etc. The goal is to create a unique look and feel to Downtown that will set it apart from shopping at strip malls and other places in the area.*

The Daum Museum has an international collection of contemporary art, is open year round and attracts 26,000 visitors annually—mostly on a national level. Visitors to the museum tend to be hard-core art aficionados, but probably don't get out into the rest of the community much.

*These visitors need to be moved into Downtown with information about art galleries located there. Possibly a promotional piece about artists with galleries in Sedalia could be created and placed at the museum.*

The City is looking at creating an art district along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street where there are mostly abandoned buildings. Most artists, however, won't want to set up a gallery to show and sell art. They would just use the building as their home base. A committee has been created to attract artists. Banks are supporting the effort, and there is a lot of community support of the idea.

*While locating artists in Downtown would help occupy abandoned buildings, unless they have hours when the public can visit their galleries, the draw for Downtown hasn't been increased. It would be best if these artists either maintain their own gallery hours or if there could be a gallery where many of these artists work is displayed. A common gallery could be established as a central location for artists without an attached gallery or from elsewhere in Sedalia. Additional artists will add to the critical mass of such an effort and help improve the chances of success.*

*If there can be times when the majority of the galleries could be open to the public, it would provide an opportunity for an Art Crawl, or a First Friday event when people can go from gallery to gallery to view art.*

The Fox Theater will become a corporate development/multi-use office space.

*This will add people in the Downtown during the day and open opportunities for diners, coffee shops, delis, etc.*

The Commerce Building is being converted into a 25-unit low-income housing complex. It will also contain a community gathering area. This brings more people, and especially families, into Downtown.

*This development opens opportunities for drug stores, a small grocery store, budget-priced shoe stores, etc. It also makes it more important to have family entertainment opportunities in Downtown. A playground and green space near the development would be a good compliment to the housing complex. It would also be good to offer low-cost, family-friendly entertainment such as outdoor movies. Options such as this will make living Downtown more appealing to families.*

**(According to focus group comments)** The family age group is the growing percentage of Sedalia's population, and families are looking for activities they can do together. Anything that involves children packs the house. However, although there are a lot of things to do that Sedalia offers, not many local families are taking advantage of them.

*Since the local market exists for family-oriented activities, it is important to discover why these activities aren't well attended by families, and take steps to change that. One thing to look at is how the opportunities are being promoted. How much lead time are families given about upcoming events? What communication channels are used, and are these the best channels to use for this market? It will also be important to be proactive in developing events that are family friendly.*

*A City newsletter mailed out to area residents or at least placed in stands around the City would be an almost indispensable tool in any campaign that is aimed at changing attitudes and behaviors. It could be as simple as a two-sided 8.5" by 11" piece that is included with the City's utility bills. The keys are consistency and reach. The newsletter can also let local residents know where online they can find the kind of information they want.*

*For instance, the Convention and Visitors Bureau website has information suggesting itineraries for day-trips in and around Sedalia. According to the DREAM community survey, however, local residents are not using City-related websites to obtain information. Although only one of the trips currently listed would be suitable for families, similar itineraries could be created that would focus on what families can do.*

*A newsletter could also list suggested events and outings for families and keep local residents informed of events that coming up in the near future. Another promotional tool would be creating a booklet of "50 Things to Do in and Around Sedalia." The booklet could be made available at the Katy Trail Depot, City Hall, and online.*

**(According to focus group comments)** An example was given that in Warrensburg they rebuilt their lofts above the businesses and a lot more professionals moved in down there. The thought is that if you get professionals living Downtown, they will want places to stay open later and restaurants.

*Professionals living in Downtown will want different goods and services than people who move into the low-income units. This needs to be kept in mind when considering placement of businesses coming into Downtown, especially if they are being helped through a business incubator program.*

There are grants available to assist property owners in historic and depressed areas, but most property owners don't understand what is available or how to go about applying for a grant.

*A grant writer that understood what grants are available to the Downtown would be beneficial. Possibly the Downtown association could find one who would be willing to write some grant applications on a consignment basis. If the grant is awarded, the writer gets a percentage of the grant. This amount would be added as part of the grant.*

**(According to focus group comments)** The City has brought together different meetings and groups of people to attract larger businesses and address their needs. Something like that is needed for small business owners.

*It could be helpful to create a committee of small business owners, bank representatives, and City representatives to look at the needs of small businesses in Sedalia and then develop a plan to meet those needs. This committee could also develop and/or implement plans to attract small-business entrepreneurs. Since these types of businesses are how Downtown will be built, ongoing strategies will be needed to bring them to Sedalia and make them a success.*

According to the community survey conducted by the DREAM Initiative, 88 percent of the respondents said that it was either very or at least somewhat important that Downtown Sedalia retains its historic character. People are starting to take pride in the architecture Downtown.

*This is an excellent support base for preserving the historic integrity of Sedalia's Downtown. One problem with Downtown has been people have become ashamed of what it has become. As more is done to restore the historic buildings Downtown, it will be important to keep local residents informed of the progress so they can take pride in what is happening. A community pride campaign is needed to change people's attitude about Downtown and make them proud again of Downtown's rich historic atmosphere and architecture. A campaign of this sort will need to include multiple channels of communication, including news releases sent to newspapers and magazines, a newsletter, radio interviews, ads, presentations at*

*organizational meetings, and Web site information.*

Slightly over 50 percent of the participants in the community survey conducted by the DREAM Initiative placed a high priority on revitalizing Sedalia's Downtown. Only 45 percent put a priority on attracting more big-box retailers.

*This provides a good base of support for revitalization and local interest in Downtown. This support and interest among locals should be fostered and encouraged. Consistent communication with locals will be important.*

Because of its connection to the Missouri State Fair, Sedalia has an agricultural connection not common to most municipalities. Also, most people today are removed from farm production.

*This might be a component of Sedalia's history to consider highlighting during the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. If enough interest is shown in it at that time, it could be built on for future events.*

Sedalia has great architecture. **(According to focus group comments)** There are a number of really big older homes that you can tell were incredible at one time. At this time, these homes have been divided into apartments, but there is a move on to rezone some of those areas and reverse them back to single family homes.

*As historic home and building renovations are being done, it would be good to promote these renovations through articles submitted to newspapers, magazines, and television programs. The articles would be about historic homes that have been restored and how many historic homes are available in Sedalia. People who would read these articles or watch these programs might become interested in moving to or investing in historic property in Sedalia*

*Also, it might good to have something on one of the websites about Sedalia that features the historic homes and buildings of Sedalia. The website could include pictures, articles about restored homes and buildings, etc. It might also be nice to include some of the history connected to these buildings if historic figures stayed or lived at them in the past. The website could also have a list of historic buildings for sale in Sedalia.*

The Carnegie Library-Sedalia Public Library is promoted through Chamber pieces and the Visitor's Guide. It is City owned and not promoted otherwise.

*Since the library is located in the Downtown area and would bring more people Downtown, better promotion of the library is needed. It would be good to hold events and presentations at the library that would be of special interest to families. Also, the library would be a good venue for storytelling and other activities related to special events held in Downtown.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Whenever they fix the streets and put new parking in front of the courthouse it will make that area of Downtown a lot more open and easier to access. Some calculations have been done and indicate it is possible to double the parking there with no more space, just by changing the configuration of the parking and how people drive.

**(According to focus group comments)** Suggested a little bus or trolley that ran up and down the street and dropped people off.

*A trolley would enable people to park in a parking lot, and then go several places Downtown without moving their car, which could result in longer visits. Trolley stops should be at public parking lots, parks, and main points of interest in the Downtown. This also feeds into the streetcar heritage.*

## Sedalia Threats

The Boys & Girls Club just got a grant with regional programming and will need a new facility. There is the question of how to keep them Downtown.

*It will be worth significant efforts to keep the Boys & Girls Club Downtown. This and other services that focus on families are good draws for local families. They also provide good support for any other family-oriented businesses and services that may want to locate in the Downtown. In addition, when parents drop off their children for activities at the Club, they might choose to pass their time Downtown while waiting for the activities to end. If services like this, that have an automatic draw for local families, move out of Downtown, there is less reason for locals to come Downtown on any regular basis.*

**(According to focus group comments)** All of the shopping has moved west of Downtown, closer to Highway 65, and the conveniences and prices of stores like Wal-Mart have “devastated” small businesses. The main shopping areas are Wal-Mart, Thompson Hills, and the State Fair Shopping Center – all include national chains. Many businesses left Downtown when the shopping moved west; retail disappeared from the whole town. In addition, businesses that did not choose to locate Downtown typically chose to put their businesses closer to the highway for more visibility.

*As national chains move out of Downtown, taking with them large advertising budgets, it becomes more likely small businesses will follow them in order to ride on the advertising coattails of these large chains. Individually, small Downtown businesses don’t usually have the advertising dollars needed to draw shoppers away from the convenience of shopping with and near the large chain stores. In addition, small businesses generally can’t compete with the large chains in the areas of variety and price.*

*To change shoppers’ habits, Downtown stores and Downtown as a whole will need to focus on providing an “experience” and “appealing atmosphere” that shoppers can’t find with national chains. Part of providing the “experience” for shoppers will be to identify the Downtown’s unique identity traits and work to ensure those traits are reinforced in a myriad of ways anytime someone visits the Downtown. Downtown merchants will need to be included on this effort and educated on the importance of their role and how collectively they can unify and reinforce this image and turn Downtown into a more profitable business location for everyone.*

*Also, an advertising co-op for Downtown stores can help individual shop owners stretch their marketing dollars and bring shoppers into the Downtown. A unified advertising campaign of Downtown as a whole can be useful to change the habits of shoppers and reintroduce them to Downtown as an appealing place to shop, dine, and conduct business.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Residents shop at chain stores such as Wal-Mart, JC Penney, or Kmart for the convenience of parking right in front of the store and having everything one needs in a single place.

*Small businesses such as the type that generally fill Downtowns today usually can’t compete with large chains on the basis of price and variety. They need to appeal to shoppers on the basis of unique merchandise, personal service, and a more interesting and enjoyable shopping environment and experience. As Downtown develops more aesthetic appeal and shopping there becomes an “experience” in itself, it will be important that the differences in shopping Downtown are promoted to local residents.*

*Also, people probably walk just as far from car to store when they park at the edge of parking lots at large chain stores as they do when they park a half a block or so away from a store Downtown. The extra distance is often just a matter of perception and can be addressed with a public information campaign. If the surroundings Downtown are attractive, however, walking a few extra steps becomes less significant.*

**(According to focus group comments)** There is a four-lane highway all the way to Kansas City now and at the Summit, which is only a half an hour away from Warrensburg, they have built up shopping centers that used to be tiny strip malls.

*As more of these types of shopping options become available and convenient for area shoppers, it will become increasingly important that Downtown develop and promote a unique atmosphere and experience for visitors. It will also be important that local shoppers be made aware of*

*the shopping opportunities that exist in Downtown Sedalia and be educated on the actual cost of driving miles from home to shop. The few dollars saved can quickly be offset by gas costs and time constraints. In addition, often residents forget that the sales tax dollars they spend in neighboring communities finance improvements in those communities and not their own community. It's like using your income to pay for improvements on your neighbor's house. This will require an ongoing "Shop Sedalia First" campaign to educate the public.*

**(According to focus group comments)** One of the things that works against what Sedalia is doing right now is the market study that's been done – it really identifies the west corridor, but does not talk about the eastern much, other than need. The north is non-existent in the study.

*It's easier to focus on areas that have already shown promise and grow; but in the long run, allowing other business areas to die and fall into decay will impede and can eventually undermine the stability of the whole business community in the City. This approach to the welfare of the City's multiple commercial districts is similar to what happens in residential neighborhoods when some homes are allowed to deteriorate while other homes are kept up and improved. The overall effect is a devaluation of the entire neighborhood.*

*If the prevailing development approach has been a concentrated focus on one promising area to the exclusion or detriment of other areas, especially Downtown, it will be essential to reeducate local business investors and community leaders on the potential Downtown still holds. Also, community leaders need to understand how the economic health of the whole community suffers when some commercial areas are ignored. The DREAM Initiative will help to reeducate business and community leaders on the potential the Downtown still holds.*

*A multi-faceted educational campaign aimed at community leaders and the general public, and which focuses on the interdependence of commercial areas in relation to the economic health of the whole community, would be helpful. A campaign of this type can help change the attitudes of community leaders and generate more public support of efforts to maintain the viability of all the City's commercial areas.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Participants agreed that low-end flea-market-type stores are not the types of businesses that will attract visitors.

*If too many of these types of businesses move into Downtown, they will set the tone for Downtown and visitors' expectations. This could make it harder to attract higher-end businesses.*

There are a lot of empty buildings in Downtown. Some have the whole front façades missing and are just boarded over.

*In addition to the unsightliness of empty buildings in varying states of disrepair, they make Downtown seem unsafe and will discourage visitors from coming Downtown. This is especially true for out-of-town visitors when the buildings are located at main entrances to Downtown, because they set a bad tone overall. For instance, the buildings when one approaches Downtown on Hwy 765 from the north and the buildings across from the Amtrak station are in poor condition. It will be imperative that steps are taken to ensure business owners keep up the appearance of the outsides of their buildings.*

The Missouri Trust Building is one of the most distinctive buildings Downtown. Currently it is gutted and empty. A purchaser is needed to save the building.

*Since this is one of the most recognized and distinctive buildings in Downtown, its loss would be significant.*

**(According to focus group comments)** The more historic buildings that are lost puts Sedalia in a negative situation with historic district taxes.

**(According to focus group comments)** Businesses haven't been producing profits to put back into the building – they've got other things to spend money on.

*If building owners aren't required to maintain minimum maintenance standards, there will always be the temptation to use profits someplace other than building repair and maintenance. In the long run, this is a self-defeating approach, because the more the building deteriorates, the less appealing it is to shop or do business there, and the more real estate values fall.*

*Business owners who own their building need to be educated on how façade improvements can help their bottom line in the long run. They also*

*need help finding and working through financial aid programs that would help them with larger repairs. Repairing windows and painting, however, are things even small businesses should be able to afford, and would go a long way to improving many of the buildings.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Repairs and renovations of buildings are a top priority, but there are difficulties facing owners in repairing and renovating buildings. Groups suggested that grants and other funding opportunities should be explored to encourage more people to buy and renovate.

*A number of funding opportunities, including revolving funds for Downtown revitalization and tax credits, exist or could be created locally to assist with building repairs in the historic Downtown area. Most business owners, however, are intimidated by working through the processes necessary to obtain these types of assistance, and they are often unaware of what is available. It would be helpful to have someone associated with the Downtown revitalization whose job is to help business/building owners find and obtain these types of financial assistance tools.*

**(According to focus group comments)** A problem has been out-of-town property owners who resist direction with regard to their property – they don't care.

*This will always be a problem unless sufficient maintenance codes are developed and enforced.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Some corporations have trouble with older buildings. One person mentioned he had to do some environmental studies to prove there wasn't any asbestos. This cost him about \$5,000 just to get the okay to buy the building.

**(According to focus group comments)** Groups feel that building codes and renovation rules should be stringent enough to ensure a high quality, but flexible enough not to discourage people from getting involved in renovation. With all the damages done, many people have just walked away because they couldn't afford to fix the building with the existing ordinances. People might not invest in buildings. There are codes now in place for historic buildings, and every code always has exceptions for historic buildings, but nobody wants to give exceptions due to liability. Many of the building rules are prohibitive for anyone. To rehab old buildings you have to look at them as different rather than new construction.

*Unless building-code compromises for historic buildings can be found, Downtown is in danger of losing more of its historic buildings, because people can't afford to fix them. Exorbitant repair costs most likely will result in a continued drop in real estate prices Downtown, because renovations cost so much once an investor purchases a building.*

**(According to focus group comments)** The only recourse the City has when a building is dangerous is demolition.

*As stated above, the loss of more historic buildings will weaken the Downtown's position as a historic tax district. In addition, the historic buildings are part of Downtown's biggest appeal.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Not only the façades on the main Downtown streets, but also the buildings all around Downtown should be redone and made brighter, as anything visible from Downtown becomes part of visitor's impressions of Sedalia's Downtown

*Building-maintenance codes should be enforced beyond the perimeters of Downtown. As long as Downtown buildings are closely surrounded by residential housing that is in disrepair, investors will probably not feel secure in putting significant funds into Downtown properties.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Ninety percent of the building projects and renovations Downtown depend on where you can get money, and people are having a hard time with local banks. They don't seem to want to help.

**(According to focus group comments)** Buildings are falling in, due to excess tar on roofs – the Russian building fell and made safety questionable Downtown, and now the Clinton building is falling. There needs to be some serious money put into buildings to stabilize them so they can be developed into lofts and such. Currently buildings are listed at \$40,000 to \$45,000, but to repair them takes about \$300,000 of "tender loving care." Most of the buildings Downtown are going to cost just as much to redo as it would cost to build a new building.

*Unless a way is found to help Downtown building owners finance needed renovations, Sedalia is in danger of losing many of its historic buildings.*

**(According to focus group comments)** To create a good look for Downtown, you need to exercise control over the look of the buildings, the facades, etc.; but you will have some pushback from people saying it is their building and they should be able to do what they want with it.

*This will always be something of a problem and when elected officials are pressured by constituents to relax or remove regulations and controls, it is tempting to give into the pressure. Allowing every building owner to have sole discretion over the appearance of their building, however, is not in the best interest of the Downtown or the City in the long run. Resistance to restrictions can be lessened through demonstrating to business and building owners that the City is willing to work with them on finding solutions that improve the appearance of Downtown while still considering the funding limitations small businesses face.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Have to address the sewer system – nobody knew where one sewer line hooked onto anything – there is no map.

*This issue will continue to be a frustration that building owners and developers will face as they renovate and build Downtown. If too many of these types of frustrations exist, owners may decide significant improvements to Downtown properties aren't worth the problems they present.*

**(According to focus group comments)** A negative about Sedalia is that there is very little influx of people from outside of Sedalia; when you live, work, and breathe all in the same area some things tend to go unnoticed.

*The same families remaining in the community with little outside influx often results in favoring status quo over change. In addition, it locks the vision for the community to recapturing the Downtown of 20 or 30 years ago, rather than taking an honest look at opportunities as they exist today and how to make the most of them. It will be important to educate the public on the new possibilities available to Sedalia and move away from trying to recapture the past.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Participants focused their discussion most on Downtown's past—Downtown was once crowded with people on Fridays and Saturdays, stores were open late, restaurants were open, there were two theaters, and much more shopping.

*Focusing on the past too much can cause you to miss out on current and future opportunities. (see comment above)*

Attendance at the state fair is beginning to decline.

*Fewer people coming to the state fair will mean fewer opportunities to steer visitors into Downtown from the fair grounds.*

Amtrak has bad reputation for delays.

*Falling customer satisfaction with Amtrak will mean fewer people willing to use Amtrak as transportation for a pleasure trip to Sedalia. This is a statewide problem due to most Amtrak routes also being used as freight routes. There is likely not a solution outside of State level lobbying for legislation.*

**(According to focus group comments)** Groups felt that if Downtown expands its shopping, restaurants, and residences, then parking will be an important issue that has to be addressed.

*Parking accommodations have to stay one step ahead of the need. If more people start coming Downtown and have trouble finding sufficient parking, or find parking lots that are in disrepair, they will stop coming and it will be harder to convince them to come back.*

**(According to focus group comments)** There are a lot of problems with the school system that are hopefully going to be fixed over the next few years. (only mentioned by one person)

*While this might not be an issue with attracting tourism, it would be an issue with attracting young families and larger businesses to Sedalia.*