

DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION &  
ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
MISSOURI

DESTINATION  
ASSESSMENT

JULY 2010





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR MISSOURI (DREAM)  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Destination Assessment of the Missouri DREAM Initiative provides an assessment methodology that offers an unbiased point-of-view and applies this fresh perspective to a hierarchy of needs required by visitors for a fulfilling visit to Downtown. Poplar Bluff's market positioning is discussed as is the Destination Assessment Team's (TEAM) visit to the community. Specific recommendations in this report are grouped into categories including marketing, public improvements, retail operations, and events. Each recommendation provides activities that the City and the newly created Downtown Development Corporation can promote, encourage, or implement. An outline of specific recommendations follows:

### Marketing:

- Suggested Positioning: *"It All Starts Here"*
- Coordinate the Positioning Statement
- Add Visitor Kiosks to City Attractions

### Public Improvements:

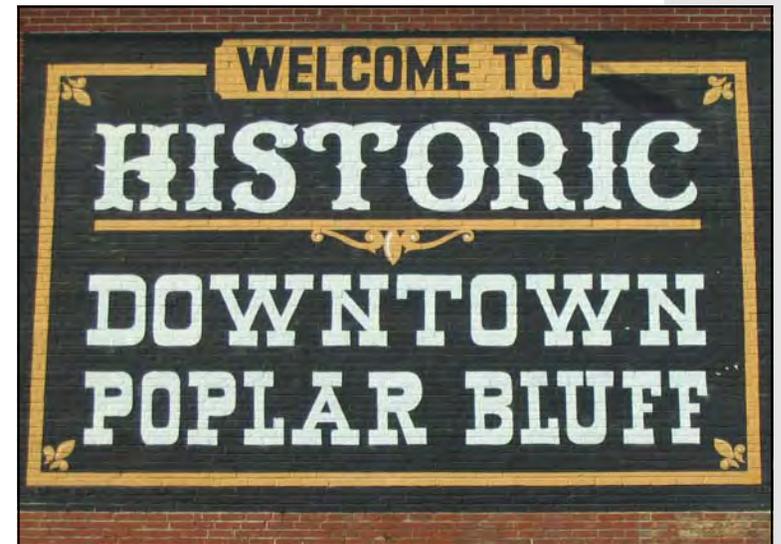
- Improve Signage and Wayfinding
- Archway into Downtown
- Improve Streetscape and Buildings
- Rehabilitate the Amtrak Depot and Grand Staircase Area
- Develop Wiseman Park on the Riverfront
- Provide Public Amenities for Visitors

### Downtown Uses:

- Adjust the Business Mix
- Allow Mixed-Use Residential Living

### Retail Operations:

- Improve Coordination and Communication



While all of the recommendations within this report will help Downtown capitalize on its tourist trade, improvements to signage and wayfinding is the most critical issue. Numerous visitors are already coming to Poplar Bluff and by making Downtown more accessible, the City should see immediate benefits. All of the recommendations in the Public Improvements category should be the community's top priority, as visitors need to be able to find Downtown, navigate within it, and feel safe and welcome while they are there. Without these aspects, other activities are ineffective.

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## INTRODUCTION

The DREAM Initiative concentrates efforts on downtown revitalization because the overall health of the community is greatly influenced by the vitality and viability of its downtown. Moreover, downtown reflects the heritage and human attributes of a community. While much of America becomes culturally homogenized, downtowns should retain their unique identity and reflect the incredible diversity contained within the American city. For visitors, downtowns embody the character of the community and represent treasures awaiting discovery in an atmosphere that does not exist at a large shopping center on the outskirts of town.

The DREAM Initiative recognizes that downtowns exist within a larger context. Visitors may be attracted to destinations in a region, such as a natural or historic feature, but the city's downtown should also be a part of their adventure. For today's downtowns to be viable destinations, they must offer something to attract existing regional visitors such as unique shopping, dining, and recreational opportunities.

The Destination Assessment component of the DREAM Initiative is designed to help a Missouri downtown better understand its potential to derive benefits from tourism. The assessment will formulate a realistic vision for improvements to the local tourist activities. Recommendations to address potential synergies among existing attractions are made to help the downtown capitalize on surrounding assets. Conditions are identified that downtown stakeholders need to address to improve the visitor experience. This task does not produce a marketing piece, nor will it portray only the positive aspects of the community. The elements of this report include a description of the rapid assessment process, a description of initial conditions observed, a review of visitor survey information gathered, and recommendations for improvements. A full listing of visitor attractions considered in this assessment is included in the **Appendix**.

The Destination Assessment Team (TEAM) is a collaboration of representatives of PGAV, the Missouri Division of Tourism, and the Missouri Arts Council. The findings and recommendations contained within this document, while primarily prepared by PGAV, include observations of the tourist experience from involved State agencies. It is anticipated that the Missouri Division of Tourism and the Missouri Arts Council will play an ongoing role in providing technical and financial resources, as applicable.



301 S. Main Street in Downtown Poplar Bluff

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

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

The economic benefits of tourism include job creation, as well as increased retail sales generation, essentially bringing new money into the community. Potential new retail sales from tourism can help counter the inconsistent nature of the retail market. The attraction of new money to the community through an active tourism campaign is an effective economic development strategy. Additionally, existing retailers will benefit from a better understanding of their market area and how to use marketing techniques to communicate with targeted visitor profiles. As the tourism effort grows, merchants will realize the benefits of enhancing their operations to be more visitor friendly, such as expanding business hours and services.

Local residents will benefit from added visitor services. A thriving tourist trade will cause greater money circulation throughout the community. Improved services, infrastructure enhancements, and events will benefit visitors and residents alike. Increased economic activity provides new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and enhanced shopping convenience, choice, and competitiveness. A balanced mix of accessible retail and related services is attractive to residents, visitors, and investors.

These positive effects of a successful tourism industry can resonate through many business sectors, including non-tourism related businesses. In light of the far reaching impacts of a successful tourism industry, and the size of the local industry, tourism should be viewed as a strategic sector. Any economic development strategy or long range planning effort should specifically address the tourism industry and its importance to the local economy.



Existing Brick Streets in Downtown Poplar Bluff

## ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Destination Assessment provides a snapshot of the tourism industry operating in Poplar Bluff, with a focus on Downtown. This “rapid assessment” process consists of reviewing data and marketing materials, visiting the community and its key features, and meeting with community tourism stakeholders. The recommendations contained in this report provide strategic direction as the City and Downtown Development Corporation implement planning and design efforts to help local destinations succeed. Understanding the framework used to evaluate Poplar Bluff’s destinations will provide context for the recommendations.

Development of a tourism strategy, just as any business or product development strategy, begins with an evaluation of the relationship between product and the customer in a competitive marketplace. The analysis of this relationship results in the development or identification of an aspect of the product that will make it a more attractive choice over other, similar products. This feature is called a “competitive advantage” and will give a community an edge over its rivals and an ability to generate greater success. The City should strive for a competitive advantage for its product in areas such as cost, operating efficiency, or service. The competitors in this scenario are other communities attempting to attract the same market.

### Product

The product is Downtown and all of its amenities. Businesses, restaurants, infrastructure, people, streets, sidewalks, parks, events, and other attractions create the product. Specific attractions within the Poplar Bluff DREAM Study Area include the Black River Coliseum, the Black River, Wiseman and Ray Clinton Parks, the Rodger’s Theatre, the Public Library, Butler County Courthouse, and the Poplar Bluff Railroad Museum.

### Customers

Visitors to various attractions in Downtown Poplar Bluff are its customers. Visitors include residents, commuters, and travelers, as well as traditional tourists. Downtown Poplar Bluff must understand these existing visitors and their associated trends. Visitors can be categorized by the reason for their visit, such as:

#### Business Travelers:

Most likely to travel during the week, driven by businesses, primarily basic needs of lodging, restaurants, services, gift shopping, and evening entertainment. There is potential to impress these travelers and gain return visits for pleasure.

#### Family Travelers:

Most likely to travel during the weekend, driven by relatives, less likely to need lodging, primary needs tend to be shops, services, and restaurants.

Ethnic and Cultural Seekers:

Looking for exposure to new experiences, development, and education. Interested in the area's way of life and people. Adventurous and looking for more than basic needs, such as museums, galleries, concerts, festivals, and performances. They are likely to shop for unique items.

Heritage and Passive Recreation Enthusiasts:

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

Active Outdoor Adventurers:

Intense enjoyers of the parks and natural areas. These sportsmen enjoy a wide variety of recreational opportunities. They tend to be outdoorsmen, boaters, hikers, or golfers and they are always on the move. They are devoted and spend significant money on their chosen sport.

Urban Entertainment:

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

## **Market Positioning and Brand**

With an enhanced product and clearly identified customers, the focus turns to identifying how the product is viewed by the overall marketplace, or positioning. Effective positioning is an important component of competitive advantage. Downtown Poplar Bluff must determine a distinct market position that draws on its unique strengths that will set it apart from other destinations. It is essential to understand how customers currently perceive Downtown. Strategies that reposition the product in a market take time, patience, and persistence as long preconceptions are modified.

The preconceptions a visitor has is called the image or brand. A brand is a promise that a product will deliver a particular service or activity in a consistent way. Poplar Bluff must craft marketing strategies that build on existing positive aspects of Downtown and reposition its brand to align with these strengths. It is critical that Downtown is able to deliver on the advertised brand or repositioning will fail. Worse yet, the brand of Downtown Poplar Bluff may become untrustworthy.

If marketing strategies are successful in reaching the intended market and the product is compelling enough to draw visitors, they will carry with them the desired preconceived idea of Downtown's brand. Marketing strategies are discussed and considered in the Poplar Bluff DREAM Marketing task.

Destination brands produce a distinct image in the mind of the customer. Each of the “realms” listed below represents an opportunity to differentiate from the competition and offer a unique consumer benefit. Destinations reach their maximum potential when they leverage all four realms. A description of these four realms excerpted from the October 2007 edition of *Destinology*; published by PGAV, follows:

***REALM ONE—PLACE:***

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

***REALM TWO—EXPERIENCE:***

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

***REALM THREE—MINDSET:***

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

***REALM FOUR—ORGANIZATION:***

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

When people think of Poplar Bluff as a destination, do they long to be in the place, get excited by the experience, aspire to the values represented, and trust the organization behind it? When the answer is “yes” to all four, people will attribute a high value to visiting Poplar Bluff, which relates directly to attendance and financial success.

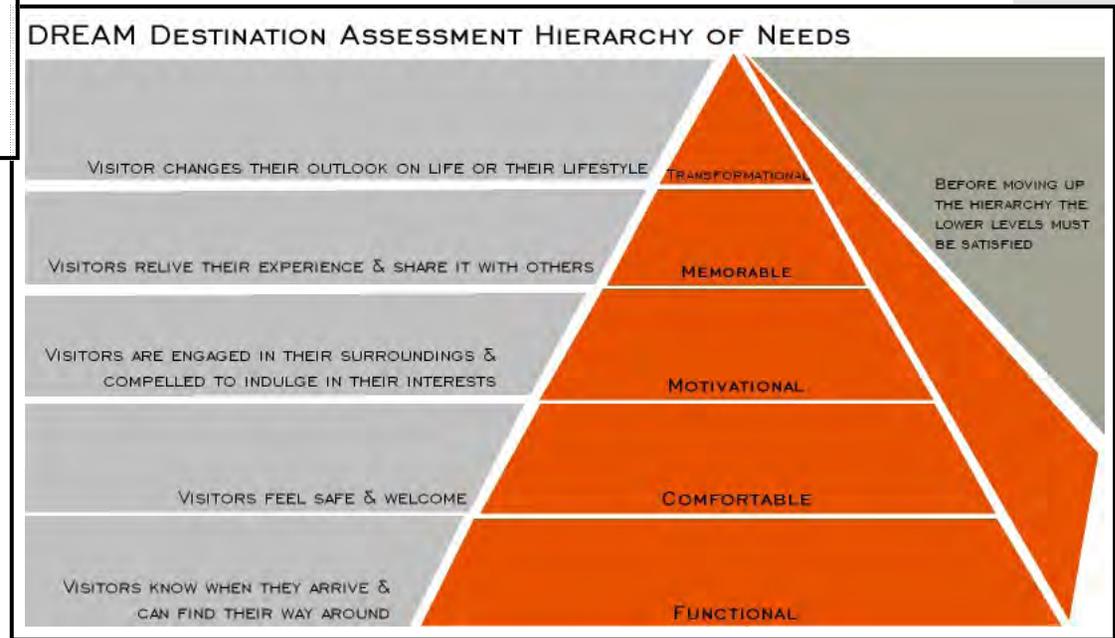
### HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Destinations, and in a larger sense downtowns, are customer-oriented businesses and any product development or marketing decisions should consider the customer’s wants and needs. During the Destination Assessment Kick-Off Meeting, the Team introduced the concept of a destination consumer “Hierarchy of Needs.” This hierarchy illustrates that customers must have their most basic needs met before they can attain higher levels of fulfillment from the destination. This customer focused theme will recur throughout the recommendations for Downtown Poplar Bluff.

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

There are a number of reasons that drive an individuals consumer’s decision to travel and a number of desires that influence their choice of destination. A typical visitor must have very basic needs met before progressing to another level of fulfillment in their experience. For example, if the visitor does not feel safe, they will not engage in their surroundings.

Downtown Poplar Bluff should review if its destination assets are adequately meeting visitor’s needs. Questions to consider for each hierarchy category include:



1. **Functional:** Does the City provide adequate wayfinding to make travel throughout the area easy and somewhat intuitive? Do visitors know when they have arrived in Downtown? Does the City adequately provide basic comforts, such as parking, bathrooms, and a place to rest? Is information about destinations and events easily obtainable?
2. **Comfortable:** Is Downtown Poplar Bluff pedestrian friendly and well lit? Are building facades and streetscapes aesthetically pleasing? Are there numerous lodging and dining options present in the City? Does Downtown provide adequate comforts so that the visitor can relax while away from home?

3. Motivational: Does Downtown Poplar Bluff provide visitors with activities in which to participate? What will motivate the visitor to get out of their car and act? Does Downtown provide a chance to learn, interact, and explore? Is there an opportunity for adventure or escape from their normal lives?
4. Memorable: Does Downtown leave the visitor with positive memories? Do visitors often return to Downtown? Do visitors recommend Downtown to others? Is there positive word-of-mouth about Downtown?
5. Transformational: Are all of the aforementioned needs met? If so, Poplar Bluff has created a fulfilling experience that will imbue the visitor with a valuable new outlook. The visitor will want to return to and reconnect with the destination to relive that positive experience. The visitor will also seek to bring others to Poplar Bluff and share the experience.

In the case of a visit to a large destination like a resort, zoo, or theme park, a single organization manages the visitor experience. This technique ensures a seamless experience that flows smoothly and consistently from parking and restrooms to attractions, food, and shopping. The brand of the attraction is maintained throughout. People have come to expect this level of product and service. Downtown Poplar Bluff can benefit from emulating this model by considering the complexity of Downtown and developing strategies to marketing the area as one destination, albeit with multiple tourism product owners and interests. For example, Downtown can support a coordinated aesthetic presentation, manage a consistent and unified marketing campaign, administer and coordinate special events, and guide businesses toward uniform business hours.

Although Destination Assessment focuses on tourism, many of the report recommendations relate improved quality of life for existing residents and businesses. Many of recommendations of other DREAM Initiative components, such as streetscape improvements, will provide essential infrastructure to support the visitor industry. This synergy of benefits demonstrates the DREAM Initiative's integrated approach to planning that will achieve the best results for Downtown Poplar Bluff.

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## CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE

### ASSESSMENT VISIT EXPERIENCE

In September of 2008, the Destination Assessment Team visited Poplar Bluff, toured the area, visited various attractions, and held a Kick-off Meeting with tourism stakeholders and City officials. The initial impressions of Downtown were free of influence and without any local representative input. Local opinions were solicited at a meeting held the following day. The Team enjoyed meals at local establishments and stayed overnight at the Drury Inn hotel, outside of the DREAM Study Area. Other area attractions were visited as well. Additional research was conducted on several other DREAM Initiative trips and an inventory of area attractions and events was compiled over time. This inventory can be found in the **Appendix**.

Poplar Bluff is located in south central Missouri, about twenty miles from the Arkansas border and just south of Mark Twain National Forest. Although the region is full of natural beauty and agricultural in nature, Poplar Bluff enjoys a richly built environment. The area surrounding Downtown is active and includes strip center retail, hotels, department stores, two hospitals, the public high school, Three Rivers Community College, and numerous small retail and offices. State Highways 67 & 60 converge on the north end of the City and carry the traveler through the surrounding commercial. The two highways separate just west of Downtown and Highway 60, or Pine Street, continues along the northerly DREAM boundary with the Black River framing Downtown to the east and south. However, three sets of railroad tracks effectively separate Downtown from the Black River.

Poplar Bluff does host some large events in or near Downtown. The Butler County Fair is held in Ray Clinton Park, just on the other bank of the Black River. Downtown in Oz, a celebration of the Wizard of Oz movie, had a very successful 2009 debut that saw Downtown transformed into The Emerald City. Other popular events are music concerts and show at the Black River Coliseum and performing arts at the Rodger's Theatre.



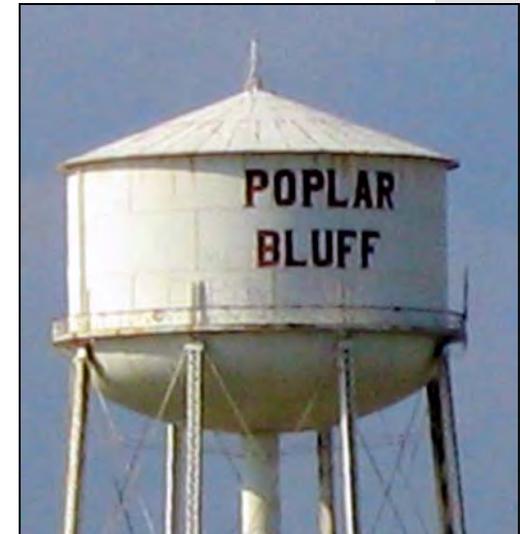
Attractions in  
Downtown Poplar Bluff

The Destination Assessment Team arrived on Highway 67 from the North and had some difficulty approaching the Highway 60/Pine Street turn. A small sign for Downtown on the far left side was the only wayfinding. The Team noted that this intersection is a critical decision point for visitors. Through travelers on Highway 67 should be invited to Downtown. The approach to Downtown on Pine is heavily traveled and highly developed. The roadway is a four-lane, bidirectional thoroughfare with limited shoulder space. The lanes are narrow and the traffic is brisk. The commercial area consists of businesses in buildings characterized by small setbacks that limit visibility on this busy roadway. The Team continued through this area and turned on 5th Street, noting some signage for the Railroad Museum, but none for Downtown overall or the Black River Coliseum.

The Team parked in the public lot at 5th & Vine Street, although not directed there by signage. This lot just seemed the most convenient in which to park and begin walking around. Downtown should consider the appeal of this lot as an initial starting point for a visitor. A directional sign at this location designed to ease the transition from vehicle to pedestrian would be helpful.

The Team walked throughout Downtown and visited several establishments and attractions. There was no real sense of when the team was in the center of Downtown and it was noted that major activity areas like the Rodger's Theatre, Butler County Courthouse, and Black River Coliseum were not concentrated in any one area. The feel of Downtown varied distinctly. The open expanse of the parking required for the Black River Coliseum contrasted starkly with the natural beauty of the Black River and the historic nature of the Downtown buildings. However, Downtown is cut off from the River by three rail lines.

Walking the Study Area was not easy due to poorly maintained sidewalks and driveways. The brick streets were attractive and very unique, but also poorly maintained and sometimes difficult to navigate. At Poplar and Broadway the Team found the parking garage nearly empty. Nearby alleyways presented graffiti and more evidence of poorly maintained public and private property. The Team specifically visited Wiseman Park and the area around the Black River. Team members remarked on the great potential, and poor condition, of the Amtrak Depot and Grand Stairway. There were not many places where visitors can rest and buy general goods or obtain tourist information. Making these amenities available, and close to parking areas, is a basic need for all Downtown visitors.



Overall it was obvious that Downtown is suffering from a large amount of deferred maintenance and a lack of building code enforcement. Many windows on Downtown buildings were boarded-up and there was sparse activity noted. Broken glass littered some sidewalks and, as noted, alleyway conditions were dilapidated. The Team realized that Downtown has dealt with floods and tornados, but much of the deterioration noted appears to have been occurring over many years.

Most shopkeepers were friendly, but there seemed to be an overabundance of services and community assistance offices. The proprietor of one of the restaurants indicated that he was new to Downtown and has tried, unsuccessfully, to get the other restaurants to advertise and cross promote with him. Restaurants were busy at mealtimes, but there were limited places to shop. Several of the bars were active in the early afternoon. The Team did note positive business activity such as relocations or renovations to buildings. There appeared to be people willing to invest in Downtown properties.

The kickoff meeting and interviews were held at the Black River Coliseum. Although the parking area is a large barren area, the Coliseum is quite impressive and includes an aquatic center. The facility is a great asset to the City of Poplar Bluff. The Team took note of upcoming sporting events, conventions, shows, and concerts, but noted no marketing materials for Downtown or other attractions. The Black River Coliseum would be an ideal location for a visitor's kiosk. The annual amount of visitors drawn to the Coliseum should provide a steady customer base upon which Downtown businesses can draw.

The meeting was well attended by a broad range of representatives from businesses that interact with the City's visitors. The lively group had many questions and comments. When asked what characteristics the participants enjoyed in other cities they'd visited, responses included:

- Small shops geared to tourism
- Pedestrian friendly
- Natural beauty
- Family friendly & interactive
- Businesses open later
- Restored buildings & historical focus
- Music and arts
- Events
- Safety
- Learning tourism



Black River Coliseum Aquatic Center

Participants noted existing regional attractions and activities, including parks, antique shops, golf courses, Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, Lake Wappapello, Ozark Scenic Riverways, Mark Twain National Forest, the St. Francis River, and other surrounding wilderness sites. Other regional attractions noted were Three Rivers Community College and the medical facilities. Participants noted that there were many lodging options in the City and felt that Poplar Bluff should be promoted at the 'home base' for visitors interested in these regional attractions.

Concerning Downtown, the group felt improvements should include more emphasis on pedestrians, better coordination of events, better wayfinding, a common design theme, and more shops and restaurants. Promotional opportunities noted by the group included railroad heritage, the Black river, brick streets, outdoor recreation, a walking tour, and performing arts.

The group estimated Downtown building occupancy at less than 50% and observed that existing businesses do not stay open after 5 pm. There was a lot of discussion about lighting and safety in Downtown. Generally, the group felt that City Hall and the Police Department should provide added attention to Downtown by better policing some events and establishments.

The Team noted that participants in the discussion group from specific backgrounds had some valuable insights.

Representatives from the Chamber of Commerce noted:

- The Chamber serves as a visitors center, but it is not located Downtown.
- The Chamber location, at the Highway 60/Pine Street and Highway 67 intersection, is visible, but not easily accessible for visitors heading to Downtown making the eastbound turn.
- The Chamber maintains a community calendar, but they have to beg groups to provide information on their events.
- The Chamber provides business education and training to try to strengthen the City's business sector.



Regional Poplar Bluff Attractions

Discussion participants that were representing area hotels had some interesting insights, including:

- There are several hotel options in Poplar Bluff, but none located Downtown.
- The hoteliers are often asked for a map and a list of local attractions and events, but there is not a marketing piece with this information to provide to patrons, nor is there an adequate visitors or welcome center.
- On average, hotel occupancy during the week is higher than the weekends due to workers and business people.
- The hoteliers are not informed about Downtown events. They would like to be prepared for and help promote events that bring people to town, but there is no overall coordinator with which they can work.

There was discussion concerning the Coliseum and the City's lodging tax. The Coliseum representative reported there are 4-6 paid spectator events per year and the arena has seating for 4,500. The Coliseum works with the Rodger's Theatre for smaller events. The City owns the Coliseum and it is operated by the lodging tax proceeds, using about 25% for promotions. The sizeable amount of parking is required for large events.

The tour of the City concluded with a review of the highways surrounding and approaching Poplar Bluff. From all directions the Team saw little if any signage directing visitors to Downtown from the active commercial areas.



Examples of Poplar Bluff Lodging Options

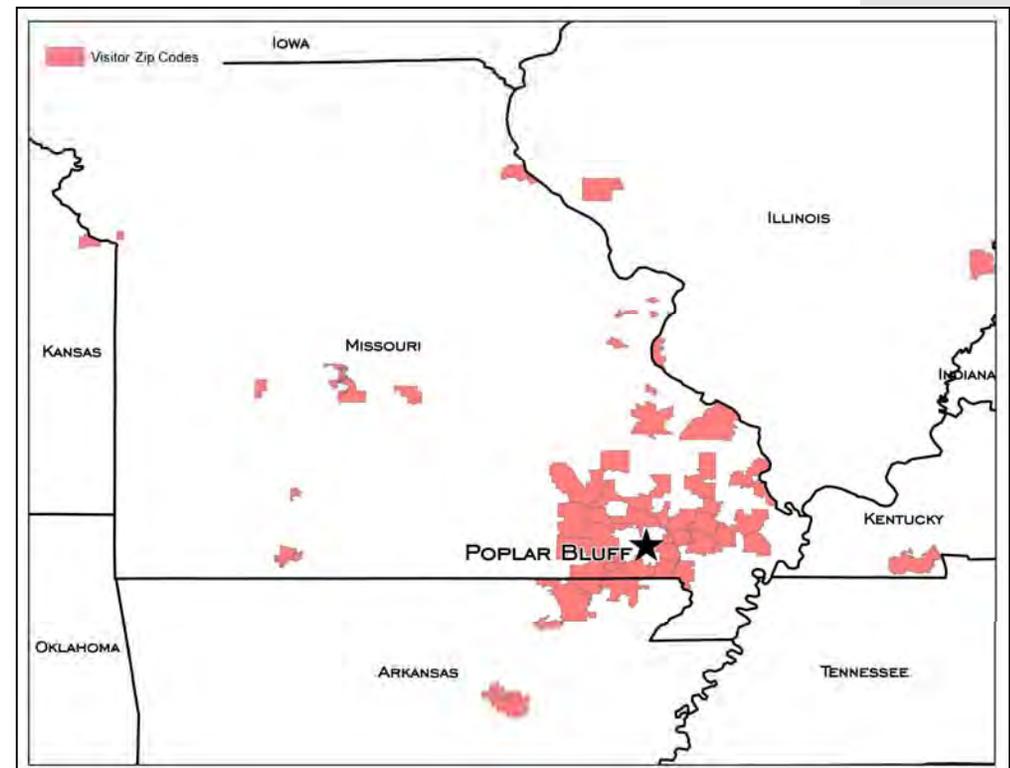
## VISITOR PROFILE

In the latter half of 2008, UNICOM-ARC coordinated with the City of Poplar Bluff to conduct a visitor's survey using local volunteers. The full results of this survey are found in the July 2009 DREAM Poplar Bluff Visitor Survey Report.

Two hundred and fifty-six (256) interviews were completed by visitors from various zip codes surrounding Poplar Bluff. Residents living in the Poplar Bluff zip code of 63901 were excluded from taking the survey as this was a visitor's survey. **Figure 1** demonstrates the geographic location of the respondents and the following overview provides some of the survey information to help identify Poplar Bluff visitor trends.

- About 77% of the respondents indicated they were staying overnight in Poplar Bluff. Responses were ranked:
  - ◇ 71% were staying in a hotel/motel/bed & breakfast in Poplar Bluff
  - ◇ 26% were staying with family or friends
  - ◇ 2% were staying at a campground/RV park
- About 84% indicated they had visited Downtown Poplar Bluff before.
- About 40% of respondents indicated they visit Downtown Poplar Bluff at least once a month.
- Respondents were asked why they most often visit Downtown. The top responses include:
  - ◇ About 48% indicated a special event
  - ◇ 36% said shopping
  - ◇ 28% said dining
  - ◇ 13% said nightlife/entertainment
- About 88% of respondents found it easy to find their way around Downtown Poplar Bluff.
- About 65% indicated that parking was convenient in Downtown.

Figure 1: Visitor Survey Respondent Zip Codes



- Only 56% of respondents felt Downtown business hours were convenient.
- About 81% indicated they felt safe during the day, but that dropped to only 47% at night.
- Respondents were asked what kinds of general businesses would make them more likely to visit Downtown. Top responses include:
  - ◊ About 55% chose family dining and another 19% chose fine dining, for 74% total dining
  - ◊ 26% indicated special events with another 23% choosing specifically family events, for 50% total
  - ◊ 23% chose bands, live music, and concerts
- Respondents were then asked what specific businesses might make them more likely to visit Downtown. Top responses include:
  - ◊ About 42% chose clothing stores
  - ◊ 35% said more shops in general
  - ◊ 19% chose a Farmer's Market
  - ◊ 12% said antique stores
  - ◊ 11% chose an outdoor sporting goods store
- Respondents were asked what physical improvements would make Downtown more appealing to them. Top responses include:
  - ◊ 57% indicated renovation of historic buildings
  - ◊ 26% said better lighting
  - ◊ 24% said to fix the brick streets
  - ◊ 14% wanted better sidewalks
  - ◊ 10% selected removal of one-way streets
  - ◊ 10% chose better signage
- Over 80% of respondents expected to spend less than \$100, exclusive of lodging, on their visit.
- Respondents were asked about their hobbies. Top responses include:
  - ◊ 83% selected antique shopping
  - ◊ 82% selected camping
  - ◊ 79% chose fine dining
  - ◊ 76% indicated retail and boutique shopping

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## **REACHING DESTINATION POTENTIAL**

Poplar Bluff faces many challenges, but it also has many assets in its favor as it seeks to enhance its tourism industry. The region's recreational areas attract visitors from a wide geographic area that includes St. Louis, Missouri and Memphis, Tennessee. The City should be able to leverage major activity centers such as the Black River Coliseum, and serve the region as a tourism hub. By becoming the launching point for regional attractions, the City will serve as a center for entertainment, dining, and shopping.

The fundamental strategy of this report lies in improving Downtown by transforming it into a vibrant commercial district that is relevant to the City as a whole. A successful Downtown will combine shopping, dining, and entertainment to serve visitors and residents alike. Other essential elements for success include a streetscape, wayfinding, adjustments to the retail mix or operations, added events and promotions, and a proactive attitude by local leaders and property owners.

Poplar Bluff can reach its destination potential by implementing a number of strategic improvements recommended in this report. By referring to the "Hierarchy of Needs" and addressing the basic level (Functional and Comfortable), Downtown can build effective tourism strategies. The coordination and efficient use of existing resources to develop compelling attractions is critical to draw visitors from far enough away that they stay overnight in the community. The overnight visitor typically travels more than 50 miles and will generally spend more money than other types of visitors. The recommendations noted below were developed through the contemplation of an overnight visitor's point-of-view and in the context of the "Hierarchy of Needs." These recommendations fall into the categories of marketing, public improvements, Downtown uses, and retail operations.

## **MARKETING**

### **SUGGESTED POSITIONING: "IT ALL STARTS HERE"**

The City website describes Poplar Bluff as the Gateway to the Ozarks and as the entertainment center of the region. This positioning serves the community well, providing a clear benefit to visitors. The City can leverage its location among the numerous lakes and recreation areas to attract visitors from outside the region.

Downtown should develop its own statement, indicating that the beginning of visits and adventures is in the middle of Poplar Bluff; the Downtown. Advertisements for Downtown businesses should be encouraged to use the statement. Local tourism stakeholders should work to attract tour bus operators and coordinate Downtown as a stop. Tours to regional attractions can start in Downtown with a welcoming



Existing Community Entrance Signage

reception by local merchants. This 'opening of arms' can be the key to get repeat visitors, new tour bus stops, and morning or evening meals. Activities of this nature will truly cement Poplar Bluff as the *Gateway to the Ozarks* and Downtown as the place to begin. The City will need to make investments in Downtown elements such as the streetscape, parks, and wayfinding and develop a supportive organizational structure. Downtown property owners must maintain their buildings or remove dilapidated structures. Downtown must be a vibrant place from which to launch an adventure into the Ozarks.

The Downtown Development Corporation should work with local event organizers to consider how an event might be adjusted to support the brand. For example, the "Downtown in Oz" festival can have the Yellow Brick Road begin in the heart of Downtown. Other events such as the Black River Festival should be encouraged to support the brand. As Downtown grows more ready to meet the needs of visitors, this positioning will support other strategies that communicate Downtown's benefits.

COORDINATE THE POSITIONING STATEMENT

Downtown Poplar Bluff should communicate its benefits to potential visitors through an integrated marketing effort. With a consistent message delivered across communications media such as cable tv, radio, print, the internet, direct mail, and word-of-mouth, Downtown can enjoy significant tourism enhancement. The Poplar Bluff partners that interact with the City's visitors must be invited to be involved with the emergence of Downtown as a destination. The City could use some of the revenues generated by the lodging tax to help with Downtown and lodging advertising. It is possible that the marketing duties of the Black River Coliseum could be expanded to include Downtown as a whole. The Downtown Development Corporation should seek to bring representatives from the City, Black River Coliseum, lodging industry, and Downtown merchants together on a regular basis.

ADD VISITOR KIOSKS TO CITY ATTRACTIONS

Poplar Bluff enjoys a significant tourism draw from its existing attractions. Visitors of these activity centers may be interested in what Downtown has to offer, while visitors to the major Downtown attractions such as the Black River Coliseum, Railroad Museum, and Rodger's Theatre may want to know about other City activities. Due to the dispersed nature of Downtown



Poplar Bluff "Downtown in Oz" Festival

attractions, a visitor center is not recommended, however kiosks can meet basic needs by distributing visitor information. A well designed visitor kiosk in the lobby of attractions during business hours will provide information on other businesses and attractions, maps, lodging, and a listing of events. This information can establish a critical link for visitors to extend their stay and make the most out of their visit to Poplar Bluff. If possible, outdoor, weather resistant locations should also be established. This is an efficient strategy to reach a large amount of visitors at multiple locations.

Missouri has several agencies that could potentially help Poplar Bluff achieve its marketing goals as well as enhance other destination efforts. The Division of Tourism can provide technical assistance and cooperative promotions. The Missouri Arts Council can advise on development and promotion of arts-based programs. The Missouri Department of Conservation can assist in the development of programs to encourage participation in hunting and fishing.

**PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS**

IMPROVE SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

It is important that Poplar Bluff establish a sense of place, define Downtown boundaries, and differentiate the Poplar Bluff brand from other cities. Additionally, visitors to the City require simple, clear direction to, from, and around the Downtown. A wayfinding system can accomplish these goals and address basic functional needs for visitors. A coordinated system can improve communication and eliminate confusing visual clutter of non-coordinated signs. Signage also reinforces a sense of place and brand once visitors arrive in the Downtown. The visual style of the graphics can project an attitude that reflects the aspirations of the community.

Elements of a Downtown wayfinding system concept are proposed in the DREAM Poplar Bluff Streetscape and Building Design Guidelines. The proposed system is focused on communicating the boundaries of Downtown and identifying its distinct districts. This system includes monument style primary gateway signs, a Downtown emblem, and seals identifying districts such as the Coliseum District, Depot District, Government District, Historic District, and River District. Three locations are suggested for the gateway signs and the emblems and seals are proposed to be included with various streetscape items and projects. Illustrations of proposed signage are on the following page.



Black River Coliseum



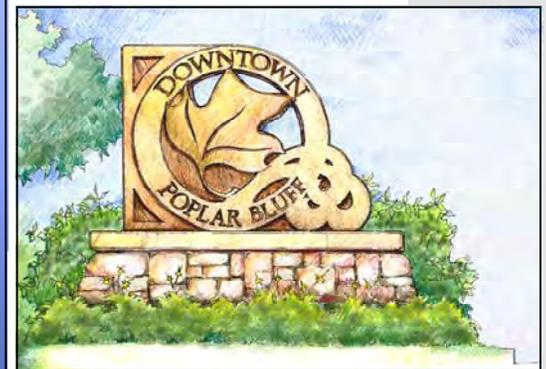
Proposed Downtown Emblem

The City will have to include other wayfinding elements. Visitors to the City will need direction to Downtown in order for the proposed Downtown system to be effective. Better direction to Downtown along Highway 67 and at the turn on Highway 60/ Pine street is critical. Lane markings and direction for travelers on Highway 60 westbound are also needed.

ARCHWAY INTO DOWNTOWN

As noted, the Black River Coliseum is a major activity generator for Downtown. Visitors arrive at the large parking lot, attend their event, and then get in their car and leave. There is no connection between the Coliseum parking area and Downtown. Views from the parking lot include the poorly maintained rear façades of buildings fronting on Broadway, the railroad tracks, and overflow parking to the south being used as tractor trailer truck parking. The only inviting structure seen from the lot is the Poplar Bluff Railroad Museum that has limited weekend hours. Downtown needs to communicate to Coliseum visitors that they are invited to explore its businesses.

The DREAM Streetscape and Building Design Guidelines also propose that the Coliseum parking areas be improved with walkways, landscaping, and a park setting for the Railroad Museum. Another proposed project is an archway over Cherry Street. This mid to long-term project would welcome Coliseum visitors to Downtown and reinforce the positioning that *It All Starts Here* by encouraging visitors to gather and explore Downtown. The proposed Downtown emblem and district seals should be integral design elements of the archway, thereby broadcasting the treasures to be found within. These improvements will turn an existing, functional-only, parking lot into a positive first impression for the numerous visitors of the City's largest attraction. Downtown should be able to capture a portion of this visitor market.



Proposed Wayfinding System Elements

IMPROVE STREETScape AND BUILDINGS

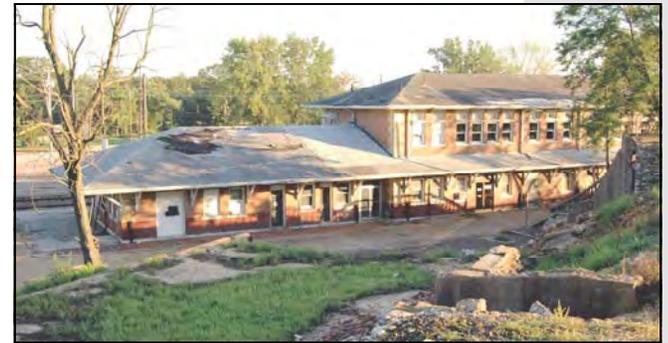
First impressions make for lasting impressions, and the first impression of Downtown will be the streetscape and buildings. Private investment will follow public investment, but property owners need encouragement by the City that all investments will retain their value. Proper maintenance of publicly owned facilities sends this signal to private owners. Downtown infrastructure projects will provide visitors and residents with a positive first impression and a more pleasant experience. It is important that the City focus on maintenance of the existing infrastructure, including the brick streets. As new streetscape elements such as trees, benches, sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping are added it is critical that City maintenance of public Downtown properties is a top priority.

With high quality public improvements, the City can insist on high quality private improvements. Storefront rehabilitation should occur according to historic district guidelines and the City should insist that new construction is complementary to historic buildings. The City, through the Historic Preservation Commission, should ensure private property adherence. Downtown Poplar Bluff has an important asset in its architecture and should leverage this unique character to improve its overall aesthetic quality and raise property values. The City will also need to bolster efforts concerning code enforcement in relation to unsafe buildings and nuisance issues to ensure private property maintenance.

REHABILITATE THE AMTRAK DEPOT AND GRAND STAIRCASE AREA

The Depot occupies a unique and special position in the Downtown fabric. It's location along the rail lines is slightly removed from the core of Downtown and adjacent to Wiseman Park. The Depot is connected to South Main Street by the Grand Staircase. The Grand Stair has a rich history of welcoming visitors to town by rail, and seeing loved ones off. The area provides a link between Downtown's businesses and the beauty of the Black River. The Depot is currently owned by a non-profit civic group attempting to restore it and leased to Union Pacific for Amtrak operations, although on a very limited basis. The Depot is also surrounded by the City, but not annexed. The Grand Stair and surrounding property is owned by private individuals who have expressed some interest in improving their property.

The City should keep the Depot operational as an Amtrak stop, but it is badly in need of restoration. The City should work with the Downtown Development Corporation to annex the Depot and acquire the surrounding property. Drawing on the rich transportation history, the Depot and Grand Stair area can become an important visitor hub for Downtown. The Depot is the



Existing Conditions of the Amtrak Depot and Grand Staircase

central focus, tying in the Black River, brick streets, and a bus stop on S. Main by the Grand Stair. Other activities should be developed such as heritage festivals, a farmer’s market, rail excursions, and train displays. A proposed “Transportation Heritage Walk” includes a pedestrian crossing over the rail lines that will provide a bird’s eye view for train enthusiasts.

The proposed operation of the Depot as a public/private venture incorporates a full-service restaurant, outdoor seating, banquet areas, and a gift shop along with the existing Amtrak stop. A fully restored structure with added facilities may merit more stops and will provide train travelers with a safe area to explore.

These improvements will require a sizeable public investment to attract the private operator, but the activity this area can generate will provide the basis for a very memorable visitor experience and a considerable boost to the surrounding retail businesses. This project is critical to the revitalization of Downtown Poplar Bluff.

DEVELOP WISEMAN PARK ON THE RIVERFRONT

The area along the Black River, directly across the railroad tracks from the Amtrak Depot, is Wiseman Park. This low lying property has limited vehicle access and poor infrastructure. The river periodically floods, making this an inappropriate area for commercial development. Wiseman Park offers a natural setting and picnic area. The City could initiative park improvements and allow the Black River to play a larger role in Downtown festivals and events. Permanent improvements such as a bandstand, picnic pavilion, and walking paths would encourage enjoyment of the space and not be too costly to replace should flood damage occur. The Downtown Development Corporation should also seek to hold festivals at this location and work to tie in Ray Clinton Park on the opposite bank of the river.



Illustrations of Proposed Depot and Staircase Improvements

Although local residents understand the importance of the Black River to Poplar Bluff, a walking trail along the river will present this asset to visitors. A pathway along the riverbank will encourage strolls and interpretive graphic panels could describe the natural history of the river. Lighted archways over the river and trail as they wind through Downtown can reinforce the branding and provide a measure of safety along the pathway. This path should also connect Downtown to other planned City-wide trails.

### PROVIDE PUBLIC AMENITIES FOR VISITORS

Access to public restrooms is a basic need and important to creating a seamless experience. This is particularly important when the City holds large events in nearby venues such as Wiseman Park or Ray Clinton Park. Visitors to special events and festivals require public restroom access in order for the festivals to be successful. Public restrooms can be located in conjunction with facilities such as the Black River Coliseum or City Hall, but ideally will be located nearby the festival venue. The proposed revitalization of the Amtrak Depot or the expansion of the operation of the Railroad Museum could present opportunities to develop public restrooms.



The Museum is a Potential Location for Public Restrooms

### **DOWNTOWN USES**

#### ADJUST THE BUSINESS MIX

Downtown Poplar Bluff does not have a very diverse mix of businesses. Currently offices, social service agencies, crisis housing, taverns, and an adult store combine to create an environment that does not attract shopping activity. Additionally, the residents that patronize these existing uses, tend to repel visitors. These services may be needed by the community, but they should not be located in prime Downtown retail locations. The City should carefully review its zoning ordinances to ensure that future land use will be more conducive to retail and visitor friendly businesses. Additionally the City should work with the Downtown Development Corporation to take advantage of property acquisitions and other opportunities to assist this transition.

#### ALLOW MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL LIVING

Currently Poplar Bluff does not allow mixed-uses in Downtown, effectively preventing the growth of a consumer market for Downtown retailers. Present zoning calls for a property to be zoned wholly commercial or residential. This policy drives residents out of the City center, closer to businesses on the outskirts of the City and away from any Downtown stores. Downtown property owners have been reluctant to invest in their buildings because they cannot lease the upper floors. As a result, most upper floors are vacant showing empty windows to visitors.

An active Downtown includes residents that seek a unique living experience. The City should adopt codes that encourage high quality upper floor developments. Additionally, the City may need to develop incentives due to the massive amounts of deferred maintenance on some of the buildings. Property owners will also likely need some assistance to adhere to Downtown design guidelines, but the outcome will be enhanced property values and contributing buildings capable of generating sustaining rental incomes. Another positive effect is that safety improves with a more permanent residential presence. More “eyes on the street” means more suspicious activity is reported to the authorities as people work to keep their homes secure.

## **RETAIL OPERATIONS**

### IMPROVE COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Poplar Bluff has a diverse mix of attractions and character that make it a unique destination. Downtown attractions must work in concert in order to draw visitors from other locations in the City and region. Improved integration of involved visitor-oriented retailers, service providers, attractions, and event activities is achieved through communication and coordination. Important partners in this effort are the City’s lodging operators who have expressed feelings of poor communication and provided suggestions for effective marketing materials.

It is important that businesses in Downtown Poplar Bluff work together to provide visitors with a positive experience. Improved communication and coordination can help retailers and attractions develop similar hours of operation to encourage visitors to extend their stay, while better meeting visitors’ needs. Merchants should attempt to stay open later than 5:00 pm, particularly during large events. With the business travelers likely at work and other visitors exploring the surrounding area, there is truly little for visitors to do after daylight.

Retailers could also modify or expand their product offerings to address the needs of visitors, taking into account both basic needs and higher needs. Cooperative advertising, attractive displays, and coordinating themes will help create a positive shopping experience which visitors will seek to repeat.

The Downtown Development Corporation should seek to combine entertainment, events, shops, and restaurants to help create a critical mass of activities for Downtown. Currently the Black River Coliseum website lists the Drury Hotels as their suggested lodging option. Other hotels and restaurants should be encouraged to advertise with the Coliseum site as well. The DDC can provide the critical communication link between the major attractions, hotels, events, and businesses so that all of these elements are enhanced.

APPENDIX  
INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

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Inventory of Attractions—CITY OF POPLAR BLUFF		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Entertainment	Black River Coliseum <a href="http://www.blackrivercoliseum.com/">http://www.blackrivercoliseum.com/</a>	A 115,000 square foot multi purpose facility with an attached indoor aquatic and fitness center. The BRC is owned and operated by the City and offers concerts, sporting events, trade shows, performing arts, conventions, and banquets. The Coliseum is capable of seating 5,000 and has several rooms for smaller special events or meetings.
	Bluff Falls Water Park & Family Fun Center <a href="http://blufffalls.com/">http://blufffalls.com/</a>	A 12-acre entertainment park consisting of a water park with a wave pool, water slides, kiddie splash area, and lazy river, an 18 hole miniature golf course, go-kart track, batting cages, arcade, concessions, party rooms, and sand volleyball courts.
	Poplar Bluff Speedway	The 3/8 mile oval red clay high-banked track hosts several motorsports race classes including late model, super street, pure street, cruisers, 4-cylinders, hobby, and open wheel modified. Races every Saturday, weather permitting.
	Rodgers Theatre <a href="http://www.historicrodgers.org/main/">http://www.historicrodgers.org/main/</a>	This 1,000 seat historic theatre is owned by Butler County and under restoration. This venue has a rich heritage and is host to several concerts and stage plays presented by the Stage Company of Poplar Bluff. <a href="http://stageco.org/">http://stageco.org/</a>
Higher Education	Three Rivers Community College <a href="http://trcc.edu/">http://trcc.edu/</a>	The 80 acre campus offers Associate Degrees and certificates in over 40 programs. Current enrollment is over 3,000 students and on-campus housing consists of 46, four bedroom apartments. In addition to the local programs, TRCC provides a wide variety of on-line courses and classroom space for Central Methodist and Southeast Missouri State Universities.  <a href="http://www.centralmethodist.edu">www.centralmethodist.edu</a> <a href="http://www.semo.edu">www.semo.edu</a>
	Poplar Bluff Public Library <a href="http://poplarbluff.org/LIBRARY/">http://poplarbluff.org/LIBRARY/</a>	The facility includes a large catalog of Butler County genealogical information, periodicals, meetings rooms, technological classes, internet access, and children's and youth services.

Inventory of Attractions—CITY OF POPLAR BLUFF		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Lodging	Hotels & Motels	<p>Comfort Inn</p> <p>Drury Inn</p> <p>Guest House International, The Bluff Inn</p> <p>Holiday Inn Poplar Bluff</p> <p>Pear Tree Inn</p> <p>Super 8</p> <p>Most of these options are located on Highway 67 and have associated restaurant facilities or are within a short distance.</p>
Museums	<p>Bloodworth House</p> <p><a href="http://www.claudiafoundation.org/index.html">http://www.claudiafoundation.org/index.html</a></p>	<p>This 1910 red brick Queen Anne style cottage was the home of Claudia Bloodworth, the mother of writer and producer Linda Bloodworth Thomason of “Designing Women” fame. The home has been fully restored and is the headquarters for the non-profit Claudia Foundation; a woman’s enrichment organization. The house is used for a variety of artistic, cultural, and social programs.</p>
	<p>Margaret Harwell Art Museum</p> <p><a href="http://www.mham.org/">http://www.mham.org/</a></p>	<p>Housed in the historic Moore-Dalton House on N. Main Street, the museum houses various collections of a variety of media. The museum also offers special exhibits, classes, tours, events, and a gift shop. The Art Museum is open six days a week in the afternoons only.</p>
	<p>Poplar Bluff Historical Museum</p>	<p>Provides displays on the history of the Poplar Bluff area including information on public schools, area sports, veterans, conservation, the U.S. Forestry Service, U.S. Postal Service, and scouting.</p>
	<p>Poplar Bluff Railroad Museum</p>	<p>Also known as the Moark Regional Railroad Museum, it is located in the restored historic Frisco Depot in the Black River Coliseum parking area. Train displays and photographs depict the railroad transportation heritage of Poplar Bluff. The museum is open on the weekends from 1-4 p.m.</p>

Inventory of Attractions—CITY OF POPLAR BLUFF		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Recreation	Golf Courses	Ozark Ridge Golf Course—Public, 18-holes, par 70.  Westwood Hills Country Club—Private, 18-holes, par 71.
	Municipal Parks	The Poplar Bluff Parks and Recreation Department oversees twelve facilities that include the R.W. Huntington Municipal Pool and Ozark Ridge Golf Course. Services provided include trails, picnic areas, and playgrounds as well as sporting facilities such as soccer and softball fields, basketball and tennis courts, and a lake. Parklands include:  Bacon Park  Black River Park  Ferguson Grove  Hendrickson Park  Hillcrest Park—Contains Huntington Pool  Linc Park  McLane Park  Ray Clinton Park—Hosts the Butler County Fair and Downtown in Oz  Sportsman Park—Lake access  Whitely Park  Wiseman Park—Adjacent to Downtown and Black River
	Swimming Pools	R.W. Huntington Municipal Pool, season passes, Outdoor.  Black River Coliseum Aquatic Center, Membership rates, Indoor.

<b>Inventory of Attractions—CITY OF POPLAR BLUFF</b>		
<b>Type of Attraction</b>	<b>Name of Attraction</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Retail / Restaurants</b>	<b>General retail that may appeal to visitors</b>	<p>There are numerous retailers in the City of Poplar Bluff. A brief listing includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Grand March</li> <li>• New Leaf Flower &amp; Plant Shop</li> <li>• Artfully Framed</li> <li>• Ashley Furniture</li> <li>• Hefner Furniture</li> <li>• La Boutique</li> <li>• Hobbs Nursery</li> <li>• BBC Party Supplies</li> <li>• Factory Connection</li> <li>• The Mix</li> <li>• Embroidery Town</li> <li>• Gift Connection</li> <li>• Ed's Huntin Stuff</li> <li>• Hobby World</li> <li>• Shooters Shack</li> <li>• Hayes Music Store</li> <li>• Pet Adventure</li> <li>• Poplar Bluff Arts Center</li> <li>• Whitworth's Gift Chest Jewelers</li> <li>• Fuller's Jewelry</li> <li>• Tina's American Hairlines</li> <li>• J &amp; J Motor Sports</li> <li>• The Wine Rack</li> <li>• J.R.'s Shoes</li> <li>• Bee Hive Natural Foods</li> <li>• The Oak Store</li> <li>• Petsway</li> <li>• All Star Music</li> <li>• Dennis Outdoors</li> <li>• The Overstock Outlet</li> </ul>
	<b>Restaurants that may appeal to visitors</b>	<p>There are numerous restaurants in the City of Poplar Bluff. A brief listing includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applebee's</li> <li>• Buffalo Wild Wings</li> <li>• Beijing Restaurant</li> <li>• Castello's</li> <li>• Colton's Steak House</li> <li>• Cow Shed</li> <li>• El Acapulco</li> <li>• Exotic Grill</li> <li>• Marble Slab Creamery</li> <li>• Mayas/Las Margaritas</li> <li>• Mike &amp; Zach's BBQ</li> <li>• Myrtle's Place</li> <li>• Rowland Stollen</li> <li>• Tio's Mexican Grill</li> <li>• Windy City Hot Dog Company</li> </ul>

Inventory of Attractions—BUTLER COUNTY AND SURROUNDING REGION		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Lodging	RV Parks and Campgrounds	Bowman’s Chaonia Landing & Marina— <a href="http://www.chaonialanding.com/">http://www.chaonialanding.com/</a> Bullwinkle’s Rustic Lodge & RV Park— <a href="http://www.bullwinklesrusticlodge.com/">http://www.bullwinklesrusticlodge.com/</a> Camelot RV Campground— <a href="http://www.camelotrvcampground.com/">http://www.camelotrvcampground.com/</a>
Museums	Epps-Houts Museum	Located west of Poplar Bluff, the Museum houses artwork and sculpture from 13 countries. Hours are by appointment only.
Scenic Wilderness Areas	Allred Lake Natural Area	This 160 acre natural area is located in southern Butler County. Features include 53 acres of forest, Allred Lake, and a quarter mile trail with a viewing deck. <a href="http://www.mdc.mo.gov/">http://www.mdc.mo.gov/</a>
	Big Cane Conservation Area	This wetland forest is located in southern Butler County. Features include boat access to Big Cane River, fishing, hunting, and primitive camp sites.
	Black River	With headwaters just north of Taum Sauk Mountain, the river stretches into northeastern Arkansas and is a beautiful boating river. Access points include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dan River Access: Located 4 miles southeast of Poplar Bluff it features a 68 acre forest with boat ramp access, fishing and hunting opportunities, and camping.</li> <li>• Hendrickson Access: Located 10 miles north of Poplar Bluff it features a 100 acre forest, fishing, and boat ramp access.</li> <li>• Hilliard Access: Located 2 miles north of Poplar Bluff it features boat ramp access and fishing opportunities.</li> </ul>
	Carmichael State Forest	Located in southern Butler County, this 40 acre lowland forest named after Mac and Zelma Carmichael provides a variety of hunting opportunities.
	Coon Island Conservation Area	Located southeast of Poplar Bluff, this 3,263 acre wetland provides features including boat ramp access to the Black River and Swift Ditch, fishing and hunting opportunities, and primitive camp sites.
	Corkwood Conservation Area	Located in southern Butler County, this 434 conservation area provides camping and hunting opportunities.

Inventory of Attractions—BUTLER COUNTY AND SURROUNDING REGION		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Scenic Wilderness Area	Harviell Access	Located 4 miles south of Poplar Bluff, it features a 35 acre forest, fishing opportunities, and boat ramp access to Cane Creek.
	Lake Wappapello	Located north of Poplar Bluff, over 44,000 acres of public lands and water welcome hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, camping, picnicking, and hiking. Lake Wappapello hosts several special events, visitor center exhibits, and program.
	Mark Twain National Forest	The Poplar Bluff Ranger District manages the regional recreation areas. Activities such as hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, bird watching, biking, and canoeing are available to the public. Facilities includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pinewoods Lake Recreation Area</li> <li>• Markham Springs Recreation Area</li> <li>• Hendrickson Boat Launch</li> </ul> <a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/marktwain/ranger_districts/poplarbluff/">http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/marktwain/ranger_districts/poplarbluff/</a>
	Mingo Wildlife Refuge	Located northeast of Poplar Bluff, this 21,676 hardwood swamp has been established as a National Wildlife Refuge for migratory waterfowl. Activities include hiking, canoeing, fishing, and nature study. <a href="http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Mingo/">http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Mingo/</a>
	Ozark National Scenic Riverways	Created by Congress in 1964, 134 miles of the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers in the Ozark Highlands provide opportunities for boating, canoeing, swimming, fishing and hunting. <a href="http://www.nps.gov/ozar/index.htm">http://www.nps.gov/ozar/index.htm</a>
	Poplar Bluff Conservation Area	Located 2 miles east of Poplar Bluff, this 1,130 acre site features a picnic area, archery range, and fishing and hunting opportunities.
	Ringo Ford Access	Located 10 miles southwest of Poplar Bluff, it features an unimproved boat ramp for access to the Little Black River and fishing opportunities.

Inventory of Attractions—BUTLER COUNTY AND SURROUNDING REGION		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Scenic Wilderness Area	St. Francis River	<p>Located 4 miles south of Poplar Bluff, it features a 35 acre forest, fishing opportunities, and boat ramp access to Cane Creek.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fisk Access: Located east of Poplar Bluff, it features boat ramp access and fishing opportunities.</li> <li>• James Clark Access: This 12 acre site is located in the northeast corner of Butler County and provides a small boat launch and bank fishing.</li> </ul>
	Stephen J. Sun Conservation Area	Located 2 miles east of Poplar Bluff, this 485 acre site provides access to the Poplar Bluff Conservation Area features and includes camping sites.
	University Forest Conservation Area	This 7,149 acre forest is located in Butler and Wayne Counties, 15 miles north of Poplar Bluff. Features include access to Bluewater and Asher Creeks, fishless ponds, a multi-use hiking/horseback/bicycling trail, hunting opportunities, and forest management demonstrations.
	Wilhelmina Conservation Area	Located southeast of Poplar Bluff, in Butler and Dunklin Counties is this 1,475 acre wooded site offering opportunities for bird watching, cycling, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, hunting, small boats, and primitive camping.

<b>Inventory of Regular City Events</b>	
<b>Name of Event</b>	<b>Month Held</b>
Annual Ag Expo (Black River Coliseum)	January
UGMR Mason Dixon Chili Society Cook-off (Black River Coliseum)	February
Indoor Yard Sale (Black River Coliseum)	February
Professional Bull Riding Rodeo (Black River Coliseum)	March
Regional High School Art Exhibit (Margaret Harwell Art Museum)	April
Three Rivers Community College Spring Car Show (TRCC Campus)	April
Merchants Showcase (TRCC Campus)	April
Harwell Mail-In Art Show (Margaret Harwell Art Museum)	May
Taste of the Town (Black River Coliseum)	May
Lake Wappapello Boat Races	May
National Train Day Celebration (Poplar Bluff Railroad Museum)	May
100 Mile Yard Sale (City-wide)	May
“Bonestock” (Ray Clinton Park)	June
“Pictures by the People” Exhibit (Margaret Harwell Art Museum)	July
Black River Festival / Independence Day (Downtown Venues)	July
Butler County Fair (Ray Clinton Park)	August
Poplar Bluff Rodeo (Ray Clinton Park)	September
Iron Horse Festival (Downtown Venues)	October
Fall Arts Festival (Margaret Harwell Art Museum)	October
Halloween Night at the Museum (Margaret Harwell Art Museum)	October

Inventory of Regular City Events	
Name of Event	Month Held
BRC Craft Show (Black River Coliseum)	November
Poplar Bluff Artists' Guild Regional Exhibit (Margaret Harwell Art Museum)	December
Santa Land (Black River Coliseum)	December

Opry at the Rodgers (Rodgers Theatre)	1st Saturday every month
Numerous Civic Club events throughout the year	
Regional outdoor recreation events at venues such as Lake Meade and Lake Wappapello	