

DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION &  
ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
MISSOURI

JANUARY 2012

# FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Jackson, Missouri



**PGAV** PLANNERS





DOWNTOWN  
REVITALIZATION &  
ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE FOR  
MISSOURI

JANUARY 2012  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC  
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PROGRAM SPONSORS:



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## SECTION I INTRODUCTION

As part of the research for the DREAM Initiative, PGAV Planners conducted five focus groups in Jackson, Missouri. The purpose of these groups was to learn more about the priorities of the Jackson community regarding Uptown. The five groups included:

- 1) Uptown Property Owners
- 2) City Residents
- 3) Area High School Students
- 4) Business Owners
- 5) Elected and Appointed Officials

Potential participants of all the groups were invited by the City to attend a group meeting at a time and place that attempted to be convenient. Property Owners and Residents were invited to an evening meeting at the Chamber of Commerce offices. The High School Student session was held after school at Jackson High School and included students from other area schools. The Business Owners and Elected and Appointed Officials meetings were held in the evening at City Hall. Group attendance ranged from 2 to 12 participants.

The local DREAM contact and other City Officials only attended the last meeting for their focus group. Members of the staff of PGAV Planners were the only attendees at each group in order to facilitate the discussion and ensure that participants felt free to speak on any subject with impartial observers.

A discussion guide was developed for each group to encourage conversation. Several questions were common to all groups, but there were some specific questions that were unique to each group. The discussion guides were developed in advance of the group meetings using input from the DREAM contact and information obtained during the DREAM Initial Assessment Meeting held on November 4, 2010. The meeting facilitators did not necessarily ask every question on the discussion guides, but used them to initiate discussion and to keep the flow of the conversations on the topic of Uptown issues. The discussions of each group were recorded both electronically and manually by the facilitators.

Sections II through VI of this report provide the discussion guide and a discussion summary of the meetings with names and other identifying remarks omitted. Section VII provides some key observations gleaned from meeting with the group participants.

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## SECTION II UPTOWN PROPERTY OWNERS

### A. DISCUSSION GUIDE

This group was the first meeting held and was lightly attended. Some questions would be repeated in other groups and some were specific to the property owners. The questions asked of this group included:

- 1) How pedestrian/user friendly is Uptown?
- 2) Are you involved in Uptown revitalization efforts? How?
- 3) How strong is the demand for leased space?
- 4) Are there any common maintenance issues?
- 5) Why are you an Uptown property owner?
- 6) What public improvements are needed?
- 7) What additional businesses are needed?
- 8) How would you feel if incentive mechanisms were used for Uptown?

### B. DISCUSSION SUMMARY

#### How pedestrian/user friendly is Uptown?

Due to the nature of its hills, Uptown is hard for the handicapped or elderly to access.

There are many curb cuts.

It's fairly pedestrian friendly.

People cut through parking lots and do not use the sidewalks.

Trucks have destroyed the curbs in places, in particular at Washington and High Streets.

Sidewalks should be the responsibility of the City, but they say it the owners' responsibility.

MODOT has banned wide loads for trucks through Uptown.

Crosswalks are not clearly marked.

The Y shaped crosswalk from High Street to the Courthouse Square is difficult to use.

In the past, City Staff had recommended a four-way stop at Missouri & Main, but the Council voted it down. It should be done.

**Do you rent your property? How strong is the demand for space in Uptown?**

Yes. The nature of Uptown rental suites tends to be good-quality. I estimate about 80-90% of space is currently occupied.

Improvements to Uptown would increase demand for space.

I have been here 10 years and primarily rent office space. I do have one former restaurant space currently available.

With regards to my sense of other property, it is a fairly good market. Rents on some buildings are pretty low, even \$10-20 per square foot.

There are typically high electric bills on commercial properties. Deposits are required for City utilities and this makes it difficult for businesses that are just leasing space to start-up.

**Are there common maintenance issues?**

I wish there was a way to clean-up bad properties.

Trucks have regularly taken out power lines in Uptown, although the City has service restored within the day.

There are some locations where the power lines “look like a rat’s nest”. The City should try to clear this up and be more efficient in power line installation.

The City has made public improvements. I have no real complaints.

The charge for sewer service is determined by water usage. So watering my landscaping or lawn, especially in the summer, is not considered. I use water that does not drain into the sewer system.

**How involved are you in Uptown revitalization efforts?**

I’m fairly involved.

**Why are you an Uptown property owner?**

I had to relocate from West Main Street because space there was limited. I liked what I saw in Uptown.

I was able to purchase a three-story brick building. The cost to do this was a major factor in our locating here. When all was said and done, it was an advantage to be located close to City Hall and the Courthouse.

I like the aesthetics in Uptown. I like older buildings. I own a building in Frohna that is Circa late 1800’s. Also, the central location is hard to beat. The Uptown appeal is also good. My business is related to antiques, so the historic appeal fits perfectly.

You cannot beat location – everything is within walking distance.

I wish there was a way to promote Uptown to others outside of Jackson. The Homecomers event helps some, but it's not enough.

### **What public improvements are needed?**

We need better marketing of Uptown.

Attract new businesses to increase variety.

Use incentives for new businesses. Make it possible to afford revamping old space rather than building new spaces.

Hopefully, parking will become an issue. We need directional signage to and from existing parking lots. Long-term, the City might need a parking garage. Other cities have parking garages.

Additional streetscape and lighting improvements like what they installed on High Street – benches, hanging flower baskets, etc. This attracts people and businesses.

Expand the streetscape improvements to Main Street, from Hope Street to Missouri Street.

And also expand to include streets around the courthouse. The Courthouse grounds should also be improved.

I think any parking garage should be designed carefully to match the historic district.

Prevent the semi-trucks from traveling through Uptown.

It would not be that easy to get rid of trucks. They could use Old Orchard Road instead, make it a truck route.

There are changes planned by MODOT for one-ways and turn lanes. We will lose some parking spaces.

On days that court is in session, it is hard to find parking. Students used to park in Uptown, but now park on the school parking lot.

We have lost parking spaces over the years, for safety reasons mainly.

The City should investigate the feasibility of a parking garage and evaluate locations.

### **What are some specific suggestions for new businesses?**

Find another family-style restaurant. A restaurant would do a good lunch business.

A great mix for a restaurant would be to have an inexpensive lunch and a nice dinner.

The First Friday event in Cape Girardeau is an example of the kind of draw Downtown areas and restaurants can have.

There are specialty restaurants here in Jackson, just not in Uptown.

A good example of a restaurant with a good draw would be the Gordonville Grill. The owner remodeled the existing building and people travel from all around to eat there.

Find some specialty shops that would attract higher-end customers.

An antique shop – would need a big enough building. Cape Girardeau has several antique shops next to each other, making them a collective destination.

Existing businesses could grow into specialty shops over time.

Some buildings have upstairs and downstairs that could be used together to make for a larger store space.

### **How would you feel if Uptown incentives were used?**

In Cape Girardeau, they ask business owners to pay, not property owners. Incentives need to be paid for by those receiving the benefit.

Grants or a tax rebate could be used as long as it is paid for by those it benefits.

Taxes don't go away once they are approved.

There are too many regulations to construct a loft apartment due to the International Building Code, egress requirements, and earthquake requirements. We have to have more approvals to construct on upper floors. There is some demand for residential loft apartments, but regulations make it costly to do this type of development.

Contractors have to be licensed in the City, which makes it more expensive. Rather than requiring this, the City should just inspect at the end of construction.

### **Any other thoughts?**

There is a limited amount of property available in Uptown.

Through smarter regulations and the use of incentives, the remaining buildings could be used in Uptown.

Turning residential to commercial could also occur.

## SECTION III CITY RESIDENTS

### A. DISCUSSION GUIDE

This group was held immediately after the Property Owners group, making it the second focus group meeting. This session was also lightly attended. The questions asked of this group included:

- 1) How pedestrian/user friendly is Uptown?
- 2) How do you describe Jackson to others?
- 3) How do you describe Uptown?
- 4) Where do you take visitors?
- 5) Why did you move to Jackson?
- 6) What do you do for entertainment and recreation?
- 7) Where do you shop?
- 8) Do you know how much sales tax you pay?
- 9) What is employment like in Jackson?
- 10) How do you get information about Uptown?
- 11) How has the housing market changed?
- 12) Would you consider living Uptown?
- 13) What public improvements are needed?
- 14) What additional businesses are needed?
- 15) How would you feel if incentive mechanisms were used for Uptown?

### B. DISCUSSION SUMMARY

#### How pedestrian/user friendly is Uptown?

The Businesses in Uptown should have at least one evening of longer business hours for working people, especially the ones along High Street.

Traffic has improved recently in Uptown.

70-80% of the businesses need to stay open later. Uptown is a ghost town at night.

Uptown needs other types of businesses too, more variety.

I never shop in Uptown, there is nothing to bring me up here – it's dead.

I spend very little money Uptown.

### **How do you describe Jackson to others?**

Jackson is expanding, not a quaint little town, spreading out, it is hard to bring the businesses together.

The City is clean. There are a lot of churches. We like to think we are friendly (but we are not always).

We are the "City of beautiful homes, parks, schools, and churches".

The school system is A-1 (quality).

We have many new buildings being built.

We need businesses like clothing/department stores.

The City needs to finish the East Jackson Blvd. lighting project – there is a gap there. (not in Uptown)

The City is progressive, but we have stiff competition in Cape Girardeau.

Visitors like Jackson.

Good park system, good programs for kids – ball fields, possible future civic center.

If you live here, you will be proud.

Shopping is not much, but it is a nice place to live.

Not much to do in Jackson. I spend most of my restaurant dollars in Cape Girardeau.

### **How do you describe Uptown?**

We try to support Jackson businesses like the Hickory House Restaurant (not in Uptown).

Need more businesses and stores for people to walk around and spend a couple of hours.

Cape Girardeau has a lot of shops to visit.

### **Where do you take visitors?**

Tractor's Restaurant on High Street.

High Street Station.

I don't bring folks to Uptown. We go to the Chinese place, Mexican place, Delmonico's, Hickory House, Buchheit's, or ball games. Jackson is a good football town.

People go to the Courthouse, McKendree Chapel, etc.

There's a soccer tournament in the spring.

Bridal shops – two in Uptown and one out on the highway.

Boutique-style businesses will be the future of Uptown.

I used to take people to ride on Iron Mountain railroad.

People attend the churches, like Bethel Baptist, they visit old cemeteries.

We have a lot of new subdivisions.

New industry is coming in, but we need to plug people into Jackson, not Cape Girardeau.

### **Why did you move here?**

I moved from Northern Illinois, Jackson has more "new" development coming to town vs. where I'm from.

Jackson is a "21st Century Mayberry".

They roll the sidewalks up at night, but that's the way some folks like it.

### **What do you do for entertainment and recreation?**

There are two 18-hole golf courses and 9-10 ball fields.

The park system has about 100 acres of parks and lighted football and soccer fields.

One time we had an opportunity with a tour bus stop. The bus was full of women attending a Ladies Elks convention. We had to take them to Cape Girardeau because there was not enough to do in Jackson.

For indoor facilities, the school district steps up in the winter, there is no other place.

There are two bowling alleys, though, with 10-12 lanes each. That's unusual for a town our size.

### **Where do you go to shop for everyday stuff? Specialty items?**

We go to Wal-Mart for everyday items. No surprise there.

For specialty items, we go to Cape Girardeau.

### **Do you know how much sales tax you pay when you shop?**

It is close to 7% in Jackson.

Cape Girardeau has a 1% restaurant tax, which makes it more like 9% in Cape Girardeau.

In the CID's, taxes are even more in Cape Girardeau, but we still shop there because of the variety.

### **What is the job market like in Jackson?**

There is not a large turn-over at local businesses. It's pretty steady.

There's a company expanding. They are hiring 50+ people for their new factory. They are expanding because they are getting a new machine. This location will be only the second machine in the world like it. It should be coming by January 2012.

Jackson has changed from a low wage town to a higher wage. Mainly this is due to people being employed by Proctor and Gamble. One result of this is the new brick houses in town. Proctor and Gamble employs about 2,000 locally.

The schools are new. They just completed a \$19M expansion of the High School.

### **How do you get information about Uptown? And about events in the City?**

The Cash Book Journal, a local newspaper. There's a column in the paper for Uptown.

The Southeast Missourian Community Calendar.

The City puts a notice on the utility bills. There's a Town Crier electronic newsletter too.

[www.semoball.com](http://www.semoball.com)

There's a sidewalk sale coming up being advertised on the radio. The stations are cooperative, but someone has to step-up to organize something like that. The businesses will participate, but there's nobody willing to go around and sign them up.

There is one spot, at the intersection of Main and Hope Streets, where everybody puts out their signs. It looks messy.

### **How has the housing market in Jackson changed over the years?**

We are holding up better here than a lot of places. There are not a lot of foreclosures locally and we still have developers building houses. It seems like there is a gap in \$160K to \$500K homes.

Jackson is one of the few towns growing. Home values are higher here than in Memphis, Tennessee.

### **Would you consider living in Uptown?**

I would if the lofts were nice, but extensive rehabilitation is needed on a lot of the buildings to allow for residential.

There is no covered parking and the Uptown buildings are not conducive to that.

The buildings have not been maintained well throughout the years.

If there were more neighborhood businesses, it would help.

I wouldn't want to be the only guy on the street after 2 pm.

### **What additional businesses / public improvements are needed?**

There is no music store here. We have to go to Cape Girardeau. All those kids in the school bands, go out of town to rent their instruments.

For the corner lot where the old bakery was - use as a deli and coffee/donuts, with an apartment above.

There is no morning through mid-afternoon restaurant.

Getting retail is challenging.

The City should expand the streetscape improvements around the Courthouse, Barton and Court Street. Also put in pavers in the crossings.

The insides of existing businesses need to be improved to make them look alive.

The Uptown businesses aren't taking advantage of the courthouse.

Combine courthouses and move them to Jackson; the county seat. We are the only county where the courthouses are not located in the county seat; they are in Cape Girardeau. We need five court rooms too. Such a facility could be built in front of the jail with a parking structure that would benefit Uptown businesses. Put multiple stories on top of the parking garage and the prisoners don't have to go outside to attend court or be transferred. I've talked with several people about this idea.

### **How do you feel about incentives for improvements?**

The community recently voted and passed a sales tax to support the fire station. The school bond issue was also well supported. There's always some opposition, but the benefits of the tax need to be shown well.

I would need a specific project to support additional taxes.

I think a sales tax would be easier to approve.

### **Other ideas?**

We need to get more businesses in Uptown. We need more variety. But the problem is that there are a lot of empty buildings in Cape Girardeau; where the businesses would rather locate.

Uptown building owners need to put lights in upper floor windows until about 9:00 pm to make it appear that the buildings are occupied. We could also improve the three LENCO storefronts and light them, maybe put some displays in their windows instead of leaving them blank. The whole building looks vacant.

We need a walking tour of Jackson, with plaques at the various historic sites such as the Rock House, Masonic Lodge, site of the first telephone call between Cape Girardeau and Jackson, Riverfront, Jones Drug Store, etc.

## SECTION IV AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

### A. DISCUSSION GUIDE

This group was held during the afternoon of the day after the earlier two groups at Jackson High School. Quite a few students attended and participated in a very lively discussion about Jackson. This was easily the best attended session. The questions asked of the students included:

- 1) What things do you like about Jackson?
- 2) How is it to walk around in Uptown?
- 3) What do you use in Uptown? What do you go there to do?
- 4) What would make you go to Uptown more?
- 5) What would you change about Jackson? About Uptown?
- 6) Where do you take visitors?
- 7) What public improvements are needed?
- 8) What additional businesses are needed?
- 9) Do you have opportunities for work in Jackson?
- 10) What do you do for entertainment and recreation?
- 11) Where do you and your family shop?
- 12) What events do you like to attend?
- 13) How do you get information about Uptown?
- 14) What do you see for the future of Jackson?
- 15) What are the differences between Cape Girardeau and Jackson?

### B. DISCUSSION SUMMARY

#### What things do you like about Jackson?

It's not too big; it's a small area.

The residents are very supportive of kids, the schools, and the sports teams.

There are a lot of sport choices for us.

There's also a historical factor. I like the buildings and the heritage of Jackson.

#### What do you use in Uptown? What do you go to Uptown to do?

I go there for T-shirts, dresses, church. I have a lot of shirts made for sports teams and clubs at school. We get our dance dresses and things like that.

That Homecomers event was fun.

Tractor's Restaurant on High Street.

I use the Bank.

There's a new gaming store I go to.

And the building with the Horse needs to stay!

### **What would you change?**

There's a problem with that four-way stop. You can't cross there and it gets backed up forever- All the way to the Sonic on Hope Street.

The worst times are right after school, also at lunch time in summer.

There is not enough parking by Andrew Jackson's, Tractor's-the businesses on High.

It's pretty inconvenient to get to those businesses if the parking lot is full.

I like how the parade goes through Uptown. Don't change that.

### **Where do you take visitors?**

We go to Cape Girardeau. (Laughter)

We go there to eat. We need more eateries in Jackson, more Mom & Pop restaurants.

We go to the movies and Kaleidoscoops – an ice cream store in Cape Girardeau.

I like the holiday window displays in Cape Girardeau. They used to have that in Jackson's business windows, but they don't anymore.

FBLA – Christmas - dress up as Santa/elves near courthouse.

### **What additional businesses / infrastructure is needed?**

We need more businesses on the other side of High Street (west side).

I just don't like streetscape on High Street. It's not historically accurate. I don't like the feel, more like East Coast character.

We need active businesses that are open later than 5 pm.

Some buildings are not fully used in Uptown.

### **What about the idea of a music store?**

It would have to be as good as the Cape Girardeau store. Maybe a branch of Shivelbine's.

I don't think there would be that much of an opportunity for a music store.

### **Opportunities for work?**

I think a lot of kids leave to find work. The City of Jackson can't keep all the professionals here; there is not enough opportunity.

People do come to Doctors here from other places too.

### **What do you do for fun?**

I swim, so I spend my days at the pool in summer. I go to Cape for swim meets though, sometimes three times a day.

A lot of us do that. The school programs bus us there, then we might go back with our parents shopping later. We spend too much time going there for things we should have here in town.

Cape Girardeau has a Community Center.

A Civic Center would be good! (Agreement) It would be great to have swimming and racquetball, etc. Have something like "the bubble" – it is a white greenhouse they put over the pool at the Junior High in Cape – everyone used to have their birthday parties there.

I go to the bowling alley.

### **Where do you and your family shop usually?**

Again, Cape Girardeau mostly. The mall for tuxes, etc.

Target, TJ Max, Kohl's. (In Cape Girardeau)

St. Louis sometimes.

Garber's is in Cape Girardeau, there used to be a Men's retail store in Sikeston.

I use the dress shops here in Jackson. I know people come from Perryville, Sikeston, and Cape Girardeau for prom dresses, etc.

### **What events do you like to attend?**

I like the parades and other events like the Homecomers.

I go to football games. It would be good to have an Easter Egg Hunt.

**How do you get information?**

Sometime the newspaper, usually word of mouth.

Online.

I don't know, I just know. I guess because the events happen every year.

The Farmer's Market is nice. There was a Car Show with it – the second and fourth Saturdays I think?

But they moved the Farmer's Market. Now it is at the band shell. I think there was an issue with parking.

I liked it in Uptown better. If they had one huge car show, it would be better. They should block off the streets like they do for Homecomers.

**What would draw you?**

Paintball.

Laser tag inside an old building.

Ultimate Frisbee.

Summer league sports for older kids.

**How is walking in Uptown?**

It is safer in Jackson than in Cape Girardeau. There are lights and families outside. I wouldn't feel safe walking around Cape at night.

There are nice people who work in local businesses.

**Do you need parks in Uptown?**

No. The current parks are close enough to Uptown.

**Other Issues?**

They put gravel on the streets in the winter, it gets in my brakes.

## SECTION V BUSINESS OWNERS

### A. DISCUSSION GUIDE

This group was held in the evening and had the poorest attendance of the five meetings. The two business owners that attended were very talkative, but concerned that more of their colleagues didn't participate. The questions asked included:

- 1) How pedestrian/user friendly is Uptown?
- 2) Why are you an Uptown business owner?
- 3) How healthy is Uptown retail activity?
- 4) Are there any businesses missing that are needed Uptown?
- 5) How do you communicate with your customers? Where do you advertise?
- 6) Where do you find your employees?
- 7) Are there obstacles to opening or expanding a business in Uptown?
- 8) Are the City and Chamber helpful?
- 9) Is the community supportive?
- 10) Do you have any building maintenance issues?
- 11) Do you maintain information on your customer market?
- 12) How would you feel if incentive mechanisms were used for Uptown?

### B. DISCUSSION SUMMARY

#### How pedestrian/user friendly is Uptown? What would you change?

Parking is an issue.

The beautification of High Street also created parking spaces.

There is still a problem with residents and workers parking in prime retail spots all day long. The City should enforce the two-hour parking limit. Buildings with residents above the business are an issue. The Mayor initially came by and promised to enforce the parking, but this has not happened.

New parking lots have not been added for adaptive reuses as they have changed. Leases do have requirements for parking, but it is not necessarily required by the City that there be a certain number of required spaces for a business. A letter should be sent out about enforcement.

Most of the businesses have very limited hours. Several of us did try to have one night a week being open later. I would be willing to stay open for some nights, but we need more participation. Cape Girardeau has the First Friday event. I do stay open on Saturdays. Tractor's acts as an anchor and brings people to Uptown.

I have been open on Monday's and that has been successful.

It is important for businesses to listen to customers.

It is tough to coordinate amongst the businesses.

The holidays are high sales times to stay open later.

Customer feedback has been good.

### **Why are you an Uptown business owner?**

I had a store in California that was in a small downtown area and I liked it. I like the unique shops and feel of Uptown. I saw a business come up for sale and bought it. I considered Cape Girardeau, but they have some challenges in their Downtown.

Parking was better than the alternative location outside of Uptown. The location is closer to seniors and easier for them to drive to. So we closed the outskirts location and kept the one here in Uptown.

Jackson people are very supportive and loyal.

### **How healthy is retail activity?**

People go to Uptown for a purpose, not to browse. I wish we had more restaurants and shops to make it a destination.

Jackson has always been conservative in terms of price points. I feel like the economic downturn hit us last year. Our business is now going toward more personal accessories. Even in the tough economy, women want to treat themselves. There are several jewelry stores in Jackson. One closed and we are filling the niche.

### **Businesses needed?**

A bakery/deli, or a donut shop. A place to buy pies, like Pie Bird or Willies.

There would be overwhelming support for a bakery.

If we could get women to spend an afternoon in Uptown, have lunch, and go to a couple of shops, that would greatly improve business.

There is a really great bakery in Paducah, and one in Perryville.

Antique store; Cape Girardeau has those and art galleries.

A crafts store.

**How do you advertise?**

My website.

An email blast.

Newspaper, TV, or print.

Facebook too.

Direct mailings – I have a 900-name list.

We sent out postcards for our open house.

We have tried to do some cooperative advertising for Uptown Jackson businesses. We do get together sometimes on advertising for the sidewalk sale on the radio and in the Cash Book Journal. But there's no set campaign or structure.

We could do a billboard.

On the four-way stop corner – we should have a sign with slider signs that can be updated periodically.

We should also have one at a point where you come into Uptown.

**Where do you find employees?**

It would be nice to get pre-pharmacy degreed employees, for internships. Customer service skills are an important factor.

I want a hardworking person with a good personality.

We are covering things with family members right now.

There could be continuing education on this issue.

**Are there obstacles to opening or expanding your business?**

The City has been pretty good about explaining procedures out step-by-step. We have not had issues with the City. We have stores in other places where it is not that way. We have not made major changes, however.

Parking enforcement would be appreciated.

**Does the City or the Chamber do ribbon-cutting ceremonies?**

They did this for our opening and reopening.

I was a little disappointed when we opened. There was not a welcome from the Chamber or anything. No plaque or ceremony, just a request to join. We need to be as supportive as possible for new businesses. But I don't hear from the Chamber except for when it is time to pay dues. They should touch base and give support to local businesses.

Can the Chamber do events, like the sidewalk sale, through the radio station?

**Is the community supporting businesses in Uptown?**

Yes.

It was a little rough when I was new, but It has gotten better. Uptown merchants are a unique breed – they can feel threatened by new businesses opening. Creating an excitement between business owners would be a good thing.

I have heard some property owners are raising rents and causing businesses to move.

We don't need offices or hair salons; we need specialty gift shops and restaurants. But it's scary to open a business right now in this economic climate.

**Do you have any building maintenance issues?**

Our landlord is on top of issues immediately.

With old buildings there is always something to fix, nothing major for our building, however.

**Do you keep information on your customers?**

We are constantly coming up with new programs to communicate with them. We have a guestbook and a wish list where our customers can request that we carry certain items.

We have Health Fair events.

**What are your thoughts on incentive tools for local businesses?**

I have seen TIF used in other communities very well. It would be very helpful if the City could encourage façade improvements or clean-up – to bring in more businesses.

We had an awning that was so deteriorated it was embarrassing, but we had to shell out the money for a new one, even though we couldn't really afford it.

We have the worst carpeting. It would be great to have wood flooring; assistance for these types of projects, on the interior, would be helpful.

## SECTION VI ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

### A. DISCUSSION GUIDE

This was the last group meeting conducted. The meeting had good attendance that included the DREAM contact. In addition to the questions asked of this group, the facilitators shared some of their initial impressions from the earlier meetings. The group was talkative, but concerned about the poor turnout for a few of the other meetings. The questions asked of this group included:

- 1) How pedestrian/user friendly is Uptown?
- 2) What additional businesses are needed?
- 3) What public improvements are needed?
- 4) Is the zoning and other regulatory requirements for Uptown adequate?
- 5) Are there any common maintenance issues in Uptown?
- 6) Is it easy for a business to start-up in Jackson?
- 7) What are your plans for Uptown?

### B. DISCUSSION SUMMARY

#### How pedestrian/user friendly is Uptown? What would you change?

Average – good sidewalks, but not good business hours.

I'd say below average. We have parking and traffic issues and other problems that impact our ability to attract businesses.

What is it we want to focus on?

We have crosswalks, but it is hard to cross the street.

I think there is ample parking, but poor lighting and lot conditions discourages people from walking too far. People don't want to walk anyway, we should make it as nice as a walk for them as possible.

There also needs to be clear signage to and from the parking areas. This would help with car traffic. They need to know what lots they can park in so they don't circle around.

Employees tend to park in front of their own businesses. The owners need to be encouraged to ask their employees to park where it won't impact anyone.

There are few residents in Uptown, but they have not impacted parking.

### **What additional businesses would be successful?**

We need a coffee house with internet access. There is nowhere to go in the mornings.

The State liquor laws restrict liquor sales within 100 feet of a church. This is a problem for Uptown. Jackson ordinances have to match the State law on this, but it can really hurt a commercial area. I'm not saying I want a bunch of bars, but a restaurant in a downtown should be able to serve drinks with dinner.

We need a mix of day-time and night-time businesses.

We have a bridal niche going, but those are not regular items that bring people to Uptown on a consistent basis. The same is true with other niche businesses. Tractor's is the exception. It draws a crowd often, but they are not open for breakfast.

We need retail businesses in Uptown, not offices.

A full-service bakery.

A movie theatre – second run, with \$1.00 ticket price.

### **Would the current zoning allow for these uses?**

Yes, it would.

We should look at the types of businesses that used to be in Uptown. Things like a clothing store, movie theatre, etc.

People in Cape Girardeau don't come to Jackson to shop, but people in Jackson go to Cape Girardeau often. Our stores struggle because of that.

The sales taxes are higher there, but people go for the variety.

It has to be a niche store to survive in Uptown.

### **What is different about Jackson from Cape Girardeau?**

Jackson is more rural-oriented.

Jackson is more of a Mayberry-type, family town.

Jackson has a safer, secure feeling.

There are places in Cape Girardeau that I would not go.

### **What public improvements are needed?**

We need to continue with the additional phasing of the streetscape that is on High Street. This would improve and help unite the Uptown area, especially the courthouse, Barton, High, and Hope Street. Hope Street has no sidewalks and no separation between street and parking.

We need sidewalk crossings that are elevated with bump-outs and landscaping. This and the MODOT improvements should help the flow of traffic. But MODOT isn't going to do anything aesthetic.

We also need to bury the overhead electric lines. And light the parking lots behind the buildings with decorative lighting.

We currently have no parking lot surface standards. There are some gravel lots and other places that are called "parking" but really aren't safe.

### **Does Uptown have any specific maintenance issues?**

There are a few undersized water lines in the City.

We have issues with snow removal and storage. There's nowhere Uptown to go with the snow. We have to try to melt some of it, so we have started using more salt during the winter. Also, the street sweepers don't work below freezing.

The age of Uptown buildings means it is often cost prohibitive to rehabilitate. Especially if you are a small store start-up or aren't offering products with a high profit margin.

Using the upper floors would be good, but that means enforcing fire separations and taking other fire-suppression measures. Perhaps there is a way around each individual building's issues. ADA is another issue with rehabbing second floors.

The City needs to research building codes and be ready to help in the rehabilitation of Uptown's buildings.

Promote the use of back entrances to the buildings.

I wish there was less regulation, but these have been passed down to us.

### **How easy is it for a business to open up?**

An Enhanced Enterprise Zone is coming to the City. There is also a TIF district on Main, but it's out by the Interstate. We are not using any incentive tools in Uptown.

We should try to make Uptown a designated arts district. Maybe put in murals – use an incentive for them.

There is a Historic District in place, but we need design standards.

**What are your dreams for Uptown / Why did you run for office?**

I want a place where my child would want to come back to and raise a family.

I think we have a good Council that works together.

“Rozier’s” would be the kind of store to get Uptown – general and clothing store.

I would like to see all empty buildings filled with thriving businesses. Empty buildings don’t scream out “success!” We should match empty buildings with business prospects.

I would like used bookstores, but I think that’s a tough business today.

Uptown should focus on high-quality merchandise. We have some high-quality stores going right now and need to maintain that level of quality.

Jackson is really just a bedroom community. Our niche is the schools, both public and private. They are good schools and attract growth. Businesses need to be aware of this demographic, namely families with kids, with some retirees, and market to them.

People are loyal to Jackson. Residents try to keep money in Jackson.

Buchheit’s located here, used the TIF District, and is paying off their bonds early.

A recycled sports store would be a good addition.

**Does Uptown have a parking schedule?**

We have one, but common parking can count towards the total. We try to address the problem but still have issues.

**Any other thoughts?**

We need a restaurant like Susie’s in Sikeston; it’s a boutique restaurant and a true destination.

## SECTION VII KEY OBSERVATIONS

Overall, it was discouraging that there were not more attendees in the City Residents, Building Owners, and Business Owners groups. However, those that participated were very helpful and talkative. The poor attendance may mean a general sense of apathy regarding Uptown. Alternatively, it could also be a symptom of poor communication regarding Uptown efforts, which can be easily remedied with better outreach methods.

It was very refreshing and encouraging meeting with the High School Student group. This group had a lot to say and touched upon some very complex issues. They were well-spoken and all genuinely liked Jackson. Many of them also disliked the fact that they had to travel to Cape Girardeau for shopping or other reasons. One student stated that sometimes she makes the trip several times in a day because some classes or school activities are only available at Cape Girardeau facilities.

The group participants described Jackson as a family-focused town, with a strong sense of community, a friendly and giving spirit, and a strong school system. The town has some recreational opportunities and parks, however other opportunities are nearby. Jackson is in close proximity to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, which many of the participants felt is both a positive and a negative. Participants felt Jackson was safer than Cape Girardeau.

The main shopping areas in Jackson are Uptown and a few retail concentrations primarily located along corridors connecting Jackson with Cape Girardeau. Much of this commerce is on the outskirts of town. Many of the participants noted that they want to do their shopping in town, but often the variety they require is not available. The participants in the City Resident group knew the sales tax rates of Jackson and Cape Girardeau when asked. They acknowledged that the sales tax in Jackson was 2% less than Cape, but that the draw due to the variety of the shops in Cape overcame any decline in sales due to a higher sales tax.

According to the groups, people come from neighboring towns for employment and the labor market has held up well. The job market in the Jackson area may be shifting to better paying jobs due to large company locations such as Proctor & Gamble. People from neighboring communities and other out-of-town visitors typically do not come to shop at Uptown businesses, but county facilities and associated services around the square are used. Jackson is the county seat of Cape Girardeau County. Cape Girardeau County is the only county in Missouri where the courtrooms are not located within the county seat. In Jackson's case, county residents must go to Cape Girardeau for many courthouse functions.

There are a few restaurants in Jackson, but few in Uptown. Tractor's Restaurant does a good business and draws people to High Street. Participants felt that a wider variety of restaurants, particularly a breakfast restaurant, would help Uptown. The groups mentioned a number of reasons that they visit Uptown, but the most prevalent reasons were the courthouse, Tractor's Restaurant, churches, and schools. In general, the participants felt that there are not many reasons beyond these to visit Uptown.

The participants' major concerns about user-friendliness were in regard to traffic, parking, and business hours. They also mentioned a lack of signage and a need to expand the existing streetscape beyond High Street to the streets around the courthouse. No one seemed to feel Uptown Jackson was unsafe, but they didn't necessarily want to live there. The business hours in Uptown Jackson, according to the participants, are problematic, especially regarding evenings and weekends. Most of the shops are open only from 8:00 or 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on weekdays, which makes it difficult for people who have jobs with a regular weekday schedule to shop in these businesses. Some shops are also closed on Mondays and weekend hours are also limited.

Participants felt that getting new businesses in Uptown was important. They suggested a variety of new businesses including restaurants, a bakery, a music store, antique stores, art galleries, craft stores, and a movie theatre. One aggressive idea was proposed to consolidate the County courts and relocate them from Cape Girardeau back to Jackson, the county seat. Another major focus in the discussions was parking. The same idea of consolidating County courts included the construction of a parking garage. However, other participants felt that parking wasn't as much of an issue and that if the Uptown atmosphere were just improved more that people would enjoy walking more. Several participants felt that there could be more landscaping provided in Uptown. Some participants also mentioned that Uptown windows should have nice displays and lighting, even if the building is vacant.

Most participants felt that building owners needed some encouragement to work on their buildings and that this was an important effort that the City should attempt. Some participants also felt it was important to clean-up and bury the overhead power lines, but other groups didn't mention utilities at all. Building and business owners noted there are some hurdles to being in Uptown, including utility bill deposits and other permitting requirements. One business was disappointed in the Chamber of Commerce and felt that they only heard from them when it was time to pay their dues. The building and business owners felt that all Uptown improvements would help their businesses, but would like to see more marketing of Uptown as a whole.

Several participants mentioned the Homecomers event and some noted the Farmer's Market and car shows. Several students were disappointed that some of these events were being moved from Uptown. Building and business owners noted that someone needs to better coordinate these events and advertising for promotions such as the Sidewalk Sale. Some of the participants in the City Residents group had ideas for new events such as a historic walking tour of the City. They felt activities such as this would give area visitors an opportunity to experience Jackson and not just Cape Girardeau.