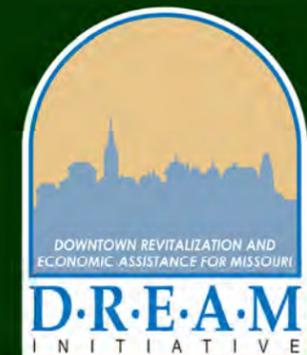


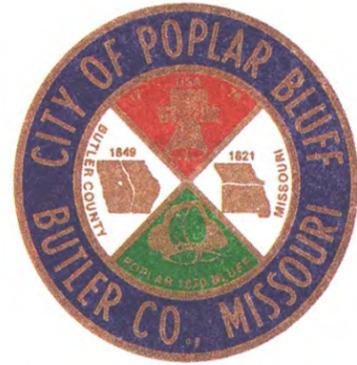
DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

CITY OF POPLAR BLUFF, MISSOURI

MARCH 2012



CITY OF POPLAR BLUFF



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



PLANNING CONSULTANT:



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DREAM Initiative Process



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the Downtown Revitalization and Economic Assistance for Missouri (DREAM) Initiative is to develop a strategic planning vision for Downtown Poplar Bluff that leverages and expands existing resources to obtain additional public and private reinvestment in Downtown.

The DREAM planning process reviewed numerous issues related to the function, structure, and image of Downtown Poplar Bluff. The process identified recommendations to address critical issues with the goal of implementing needed policies and programs, adjusting existing revitalization efforts, and developing sustainable plans for future improvements.

The DREAM Initiative process began with several wide-ranging assessments of existing conditions in Downtown Poplar Bluff. These assessments were used as the basis for various analyses and recommendations developed in each DREAM task as described in this plan. Existing planning documents, such as the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, the 1993 Downtown Master Plan Concept, the 1998 Comprehensive Plan update, and the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, were reviewed to develop this Downtown Strategic Plan. Additionally, the Poplar Bluff Historical Preservation Commission (HPC) produced a Downtown Commercial Historic District Streetscape Concept and Implementation Plan.

The DREAM Strategic Plan is not intended to replace these existing and previous planning efforts, but rather to supplement this planning and function as a resource guide for community leaders as DREAM recommendations and Downtown improvements are implemented. The Strategic Plan provides a multi-year vision promoting innovative, positive, and attainable change for Downtown Poplar Bluff. Participants of the DREAM process, including numerous citizens, Downtown property owners, business owners, civic leaders and City staff, expect the Strategic Plan to be the blueprint that will help transform Downtown Poplar Bluff into a vibrant area in which people live, play and work.

The Downtown Strategic Plan describes the goals developed through the DREAM Initiative and suggests strategies to achieve those goals, including specific projects and action items. The

major goals are listed in each plan section according to the DREAM task wherein they were developed, however high priority goals for Downtown Poplar Bluff include:

Goal One: Solidify Downtown Poplar Bluff, Inc. (DPB) as the lead Downtown organization.

Downtown Poplar Bluff had some revitalization success several years ago with a Main Street organization as the lead group. However the Main Street organization was funded by a special business district that has since expired. Additionally, a Community Development Corporation attempted to lead Downtown efforts, but has also recently dissolved.

The City of Poplar Bluff has been very supportive of Downtown revitalization, as evidenced by projects such as the Black River Coliseum, numerous street improvements, and involvement in the 5th and Vine Apartments. The City also participated heavily in the forming of DPB and the hiring of its Executive Director.

The existing Downtown retail environment pales in comparison to the surrounding business areas, some of which the City has incentivized. Projects such as the Eight Points Development are currently being negotiated. It is critical that the City continues to invest in public projects to support Downtown. Public investments will help raise the level of activity in Downtown to match other areas of the community. Additionally, the Chamber should continue to provide a focus on Downtown through its committees and interconnectivity with the DPB board. This relationship with the Chamber will also help DPB reach beyond the geographic boundaries of Downtown, to involve other investors and volunteers in Downtown events. However, DPB will need to be prepared to support other activities throughout the community, in return.



Butler County Courthouse in Downtown Poplar Bluff.



Downtown Poplar Bluff Post Office.

With DPB established as the lead organization, and demonstrated, visible, support by the City and Chamber, the community will come to see the group as the Downtown advocate. Future activities will support DPB through other aspects, such as organizational funding.

Goal Two: Develop a wayfinding system.

The City should pursue the proposed wayfinding concept as soon as budgetary limitations allow. This project is a visible “win” for Downtown revitalization and will not only help visitors navigate, but will build enthusiasm for Downtown revitalization efforts. It is important that the City work with DPB and the Chamber so that the success of this project is owned by all interested groups.

This project is recommended because it can be initiated inexpensively. The Gateway Signs are proposed at locations that are already publicly owned. Rather than the stone shown in the illustration on page 16, DPB prefers to construct the foundation from a similar brick as used on the existing brick streets. The other elements such as the emblem and district poles and seals should be inexpensive and the project can focus on one district at a time, such as the Coliseum.

The City should be able to fund this important first project, and members of the DPB Board have already expressed an interest in helping obtain donations. This should be an “easy” win for Downtown and its organizations. Illustrations regarding the wayfinding proposal are found on pages 15 to 17 of this plan.

Goal Three: Enhance DPB committees and roles.

With a stable footing for DPB, and a successful recent project, the group can look to expand on its volunteer base. The Economic Restructuring Committee and the Promotions Committee will need to attract enthusiasm and resources. With a project to rally around and complete successfully, each of these committees can demonstrate their worth to DPB, and to the City.

The Economic Restructuring Committee should work to be the link between Downtown property owners and the City. A good first project for the Committee is to build an inventory of information regarding vacant Downtown buildings and lots. The City and Butler County can assist with mapping and parcel data, but this project will require that the Committee members interact closely with the property owners and real estate representatives.

The Promotions Committee should have already developed some community acceptance through its involvement with the Iron Horse Festival. A project for this Committee should be to develop and implement an ongoing survey tool to help understand the demographics of the Black River Coliseum visitors.

Additionally, DPB should develop a Community Committee to draw in residents and students of Poplar Bluff High School and Three Rivers Community College. By tapping into these groups, this Committee will be developing broad community support for future Downtown projects. As with the other DPB Committees, the Community Committee should eventually rally around its own project, but initially could be used to help with all DPB efforts.

Goal Four: Develop a long-term plan to establish Incentives for Downtown, including a Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS) and a Community Improvement District (CID).

For projects larger than the wayfinding system, it is vital to identify funding sources with greater resources. Additionally, sustainable funding streams are required to maintain DPB as the driver of revitalization efforts well into the future. An incentive implementation plan can help guide Downtown leaders and monitor the impacts that incentives have on local development.



Representatives of the City and Downtown Poplar Bluff Inc. attend a planning workshop.

Currently, the City seeks to incentivize development on a reactionary basis, only when a project is imminent. By developing a plan for incentive use, the City will be taking a proactive step, with Downtown revitalization in mind. This activity will lessen the pressure that impending development has on the City Council and will provide for sound decision-making. An incentive plan will also present a long-term vision to the community and may help decrease residential opposition as incentives are pursued in a more orderly fashion with adequate public outreach.

A voter-approved EDS is proposed as a first step for generating funding for economic development uses City-wide, while a CID will provide funding for improvement as well as provide important organizational assistance specifically for Downtown. For these reasons, these mechanism should receive top priority as noted in the Financial Mechanisms section on page 29. The City and DPB will need to coordinate with incentive planning, with the City initiating the efforts and DPB providing the marketing and support information. Other incentives, such as tax increment financing (TIF) should also be considered in the City's funding plan.

The City may wish to include an incentive plan and all pertinent policies in its next Comprehensive Plan update. In this way, sound reasoning can be applied to all developer requests for incentives on a City-wide basis.

Goal Five: Improve Public Infrastructure.

Public infrastructure includes parks, streets, sidewalks, streetscapes, parking lots, plazas, benches, lighting, and landscaping. These elements each have an important role in Downtown's ability to meet the needs of its visitors, businesses, and residents. Public infrastructure must be well planned and properly maintained. The City sends a powerful message to potential investors and visitors by creating positive public spaces in Downtown. If the City allows public spaces to deteriorate, the message changes to one of ambivalence and neglect.

The initial overall effort by the City should be to integrate the design concepts developed by the DREAM tasks and the HPC Streetscape work, into future Downtown improvement plans. The City should carefully plan these improvements, providing an emphasis on improving the brick streets, and installing new curbing, gutters, and sidewalks to complement future design elements. Other large projects, such as burying overhead electric lines or installing new lighting, are understandably forestalled unless funding sources can be identified. However, without plans, the City will have weaker applications as it seeks funding or donations.

Additionally, the parking lots and service areas of Downtown can be enhanced with pavement improvements and landscaping. These areas, particularly around the Black River Coliseum, are the first impression that many visitors have of Downtown and should be welcoming.

Goal Six: Improve User-Friendliness.

This goal was noted in some form during every public outreach effort throughout the DREAM program and by many residents and leaders during interviews. There are two aspects to this goal, the first being improvements to the public infrastructure conditions as noted in Goal Five. The second aspect involves DPB working with private businesses to encourage a better shopping atmosphere. DPB should provide customer service seminars, encourage unified advertising, and develop Downtown business promotions and events that will get the merchants to extend their business hours. This goal will also work to better capitalize upon the visitors of the Black River Coliseum and attendees of other City events that may not be located in Downtown. With the combination of open businesses, Downtown activity, and a more pleasant street and sidewalk, the visitor will develop a better image of Downtown Poplar Bluff.



Uninviting alleyway next to the parking garage in Downtown Poplar Bluff.

Goal Seven: Improve Visibility of Downtown as a Viable Investment Area.

Downtown Poplar Bluff is at a critical point where it must begin to attract investment, businesses, and residents. As the City implements incentives, marketing efforts will need to be initiated. These efforts will include a broad base of media and methods, many of which are very efficient and economical. However, traditional media campaigns will likely rely on the financial resources identified through DREAM and implemented by the City.

Existing tools, such as the Downtown Poplar Bluff website and social network, require improvement to be more effective. Some new tools, involving outreach to visitors and promotion of Downtown's assets, can be developed. The HPC should partner with DPB to develop Downtown walking tours. These tours will raise the visibility of Downtown as a whole and promote Downtown's heritage and architecture.

DPB and the Chamber should also spread the word regarding Downtown successes and include Downtown businesses in regional tourism efforts. DPB should develop material for potential visitors, businesses, and residents. This materials should be distributed widely.

This goal also includes addressing the misperceptions regarding the safety of Downtown Poplar Bluff. If all other aspects are improving, the issue of safety will likely take care of itself. However, DPB can help by constantly encouraging positive press and tirelessly promoting Downtown's successes. The effort to address the safety issue, may be a good project for the newly formed Community Committee.



The Downtown Poplar Bluff Skate Park before construction, top left; other photos show the park under construction.

INTRODUCTION

Through a partnership of state agencies that includes the Missouri Development Finance Board (MDFB), Missouri Department of Economic Development (DED), and the Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC), the Missouri (DREAM) Initiative provides downtown-focused planning services over a three-year period to designated Missouri communities. The State partners retained PGAVPLANNERS, a professional planning and design firm headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, to provide this planning.

These Missouri State agencies recognize that substantial improvements and investments have already been made in Downtown Poplar Bluff, particularly around the Butler County Courthouse. The purpose of the DREAM Initiative is to leverage these local public and private investments to sustain revitalization momentum. The goal of the DREAM Initiative is to revitalize downtown districts and put them back into productive use. The process provides planning assistance that culminates in a Strategic Plan. The DREAM initiative begins with an assessment of the community that serves as the foundation for developing the DREAM tasks and analyses.

The Poplar Bluff DREAM program has resulted in several planning documents and analyses that include:

- Organizational Structure Review
- Land Use, Building & Infrastructure Survey
- Community & Consumer Survey
 - Focus Groups
 - Telephone Survey
 - Visitor Survey
- Building and Streetscape Design Guidelines
- Retail Market Analysis
- Residential Demand Analysis
- Financial Assistance Review
- Destination Assessment
- Marketing Plan

Additional DREAM Initiative tasks included work in community outreach and the creation of this Downtown Strategic Plan.

This strategic plan emphasizes the establishment of new local incentive mechanisms for future implementation, as well as the leveraging of these local sources to obtain funding from State of Missouri and Federal programs. Throughout the DREAM Initiative, ongoing project-specific support was provided by the State Partner Agencies and PGAVPLANNERS.



Poplar Bluff DREAM Study Area.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Effective planning engages in meaningful discussion of important issues with the public. By encouraging and including responses from the public in the planning process, local officials can better support and initiate policy changes and projects that are necessary to drive Downtown revitalization forward. The DREAM Initiative used a comprehensive approach to interact with local citizens and civic leaders. The intent of this public outreach was to uncover issues and perceptions regarding Downtown Poplar Bluff. The planning process included surveys and other communications with the public. Public outreach was also a venue to introduce and build support for recommendations from the Downtown Strategic Plan.

Interviews with Downtown stakeholders and discussions with the public revealed great pride in Poplar Bluff's history and heritage, particularly in regard to transportation. Strong physical elements such as the Black River, Railroad lines and depots, and brick streets present both opportunities and challenges for Downtown. All of these elements must be maintained to maximize their positive traits.

Downtown Poplar Bluff has great potential, but is held back by generally unenthusiastic and apathetic attitudes. Many leaders, residents, and businesses have turned their backs on Downtown and do not appear to feel it is relevant in the everyday life of the rest of Poplar Bluff. This situation has eroded the ability of Downtown to draw investors, visitors, and residents. Local leaders, property owners, and business owners have expressed their frustrations regarding the way Downtown is used and perceived and understand the need to make wide-spread changes for the good of Downtown.

The DREAM Initiative builds on all of these public sentiments to develop sound planning recommendations and strategies that are inspired by the public. These actions and projects are outlined in this Downtown Strategic Plan.

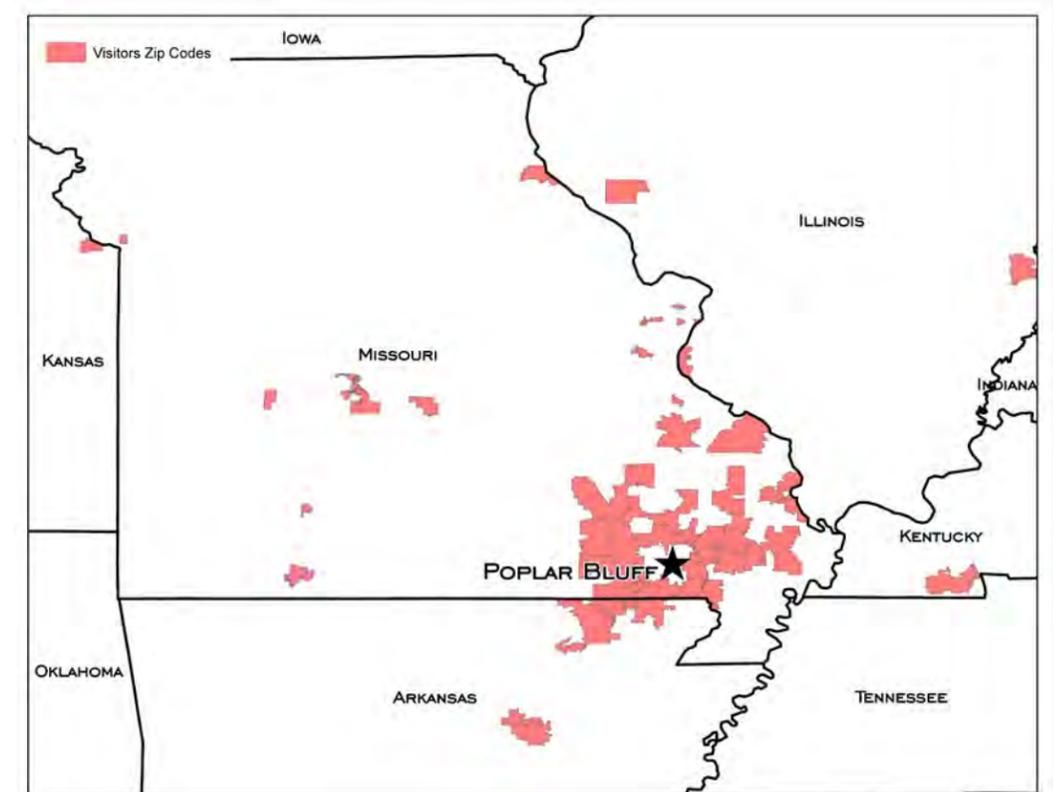
The DREAM Initiative solicited public comments and engaged the community regarding Downtown Poplar Bluff through several activities and methods, including:

- **Initial Assessment Meeting**
Upon being selected as a DREAM community in August of 2007, an Initial Assessment Meeting was scheduled and held on October 25, 2007. The meeting included representatives from the City, Butler County Commission, the Greater Poplar Bluff Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Poplar Bluff Community Development Corporation, along with business owners and residents. PGAVPLANNERS staff and personnel from the DREAM State partner agencies were also in attendance. The City provided a presentation and tour that helped to identify the DREAM planning tasks that would benefit Downtown.

- **Focus Group Meetings**
In May of 2008, discussions of Downtown issues and ideas for improvements were facilitated with four focus groups: City staff and officials; Longtime residents; Business owners; and Newer residents.

The group facilitators encouraged discussion centered around how Downtown is perceived, used, and challenged. The groups suggested ideas as to what public and private improvements can be made to enhance Downtown Poplar Bluff.

- **Surveys**
In the summer and fall of 2008, a telephone survey of residents asked respondents a series of questions about priorities for the improvement of Downtown. The survey tabulated three hundred responses from a randomly selected, statistically representative sample of residents. Just over half of respondents indicated Downtown was moving in a generally positive direction. Participants cited a wide variety of items for improvement, with no one improvement standing out. This indicates that Downtown is at a point where it is critical that improvements are made, ANY improvements. In this situation, it is typically the City that must set the example and lead the revitalization efforts.



Zip code locations of respondents to Poplar Bluff's Visitor Survey.

DREAM Initiative • Downtown Strategic Plan

From 2008 to early 2009, a visitor survey was conducted at various City events and attractions. Volunteers and City staff gathered answers from respondents that did not have a Poplar Bluff zip code, and this resulted in 256 responses. The survey indicated that most visitors only come Downtown for special events. Visitors thought that greater variety in dining, more events, and live music might make them more prone to visit. Only one physical improvement stood out that visitors desired; Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings. All other improvements were a considerably lower priority.

- **Key Stakeholder Discussions**

Conversations were held with representatives of the City, Chamber, Downtown Poplar Bluff, Inc. (DPB), Poplar Bluff CDC, Park District, Downtown property and business owners, and other members of the community to discuss issues uncovered during outreach methods. Discussions occurred throughout the DREAM process and helped develop or influence the revitalization strategies in each DREAM task.

- **Public Meetings**

Beginning with a DREAM Kickoff meeting in August of 2008, several public presentations and meetings were held to review progress on the DREAM Initiative work in Poplar Bluff. Meetings were publicized in the local newspaper and promoted on the City website. Public meetings included:

–DREAM Kickoff Meeting:	Aug. 14, 2008
–Design Kickoff:	Sept. 17, 2008
–Destination Assessment Kickoff:	Sep. 30, 2008
–Poplar Bluff Chamber:	Nov. 10, 2008
–Annual Review Meeting:	Apr. 2, 2009
–First Downtown Development Corporation Meeting:	Sept. 1, 2009
–Annual / Design Review:	Aug. 16, 2010
–Retail Presentation:	Aug. 17, 2010

–Annual Review:	Aug. 1, 2011
–Strategic Plan Workshops:	Aug. 2, 2011 Aug. 17, 2011

- **Press Involvement**

At several of the public meetings, representatives of the local newspaper, the Daily American Republic, were in attendance. Additionally, sample press releases were provided to the City to help generate news stories about the meeting and DREAM tasks.

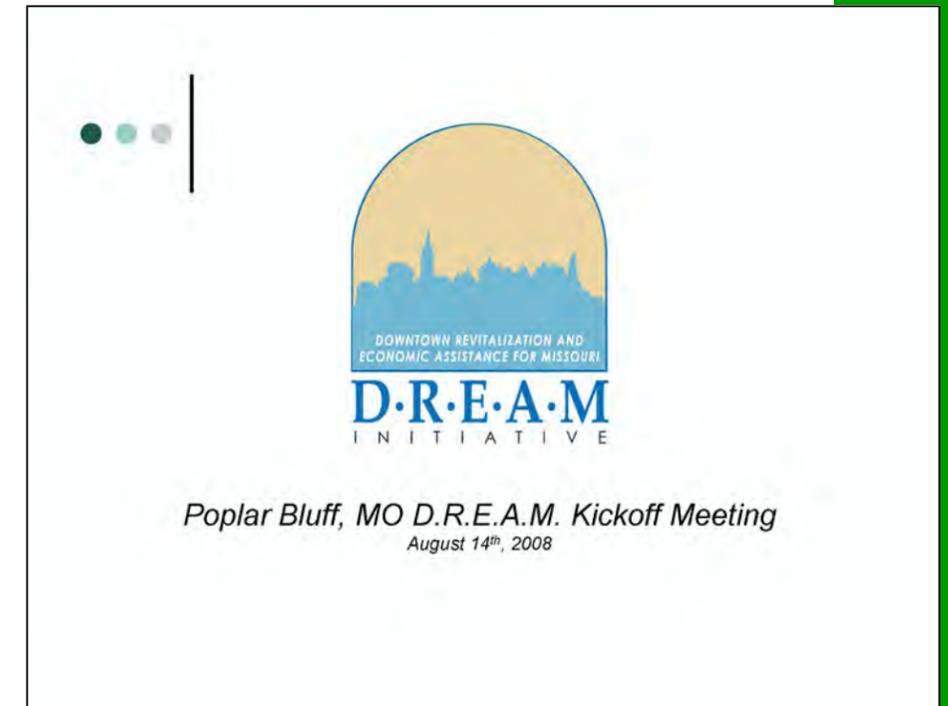
- **Websites and Social Media**

The City of Poplar Bluff, Greater Poplar Bluff Area Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Poplar Bluff, Inc. all host websites or have a social media presence through which they have promoted aspects of the DREAM Initiative, or provided links to DREAM reports. Additionally, the City Council and other City Committees have discussed DREAM documents and some of the minutes of these meetings are available on the City's website.

- **Education and Communication**

The DREAM Initiative process also included seminars to educate and inform the City staff and officials on issues pertaining to Downtown revitalization and planning. The seminars were conducted by the State Partner agencies, PGAVPLANNERS, and other entities, such as the State Historic Preservation Office. Leading practitioners and specialists participated in these workshops, which were held in Jefferson City. Seminar topics included organizational structure, adaptive reuse, retail business development, historic preservation, building design and renovation, façade loans and incentive programs, and engaging public support and community organizations to lead downtown revitalization.

City of Poplar Bluff



Presentation Title Slides from two Poplar Bluff DREAM Public Meetings.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The City of Poplar Bluff was designated a DREAM Initiative community in the late summer of 2007. The planning process commenced in the fall of 2007. The DREAM Initiative provided immediate benefits to Downtown Poplar Bluff through positive news articles and by increasing the City's ability to obtain State funding. Some recent accomplishments in the DREAM Study Area include:

- The formation of Downtown Poplar Bluff, Inc. (DPB) to be the new, non-profit, lead organization. This effort included identification of local matching funds to obtain a \$100,000 Missouri CDBG grant for an Executive Director. DPB also secured numerous local grants and business donations to acquire necessary operational tools such as office equipment, website construction, and social media procedures.
- Attraction of MACO Development, a multi-unit residential development and historic preservation project located at Vine and 5th Streets, in the heart of Downtown Poplar Bluff. The MACO/City partnership also resulted in a new passive park located near the Vine Street development.
- Assisted in obtaining funding and completion of the first phase of the Iron Mountain Depot historic restoration. DPB continues to work with Union Pacific and Amtrak to identify funding for future phases and platform improvements.
- Obtained a \$1,500 grant from the National Trust to conduct required engineering studies for the restoration of the 100-year old Grand Staircase leading from Main Street to the Iron Mountain Depot.
- The Poplar Bluff Library Board of Trustees completed an expansion of the library, located at 318 N. Main Street in the DREAM Study Area.
- The Poplar Bluff Parks and Recreation Department recently began construction of a skate park located in the DREAM Study Area, to be completed in 2012.
- DPB and the City Parks and Recreation Department worked together to provide several new landscape plantings throughout Downtown.
- The community participated in a successful Facebook contest to bring a Union Pacific historic steam train on a tour that included a whistle stop in Downtown.
- DPB worked with the City to develop a new mixed-use zoning overlay for Downtown that will help business and residential uses coexist.

- DPB successfully obtained a stop for *The Way We Worked*; a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit. This effort was through a competitive application to the Missouri Humanities Council and consisted of numerous activities and events in Downtown.
- DPB has encouraged and assisted several recent investments in private property through public meetings regarding historic tax credits, customer service, and façade renovations.
- Establishment of a new annual event; the Iron Horse Festival. This festival drew thousands of visitors from more than a dozen states and included venues in Downtown and along the Black River.
- DREAM Initiative – The DREAM planning process is a commitment of about \$257,000 in funding for Downtown revitalization planning services from the Missouri Development Finance Board, which was leveraged by a 20% local match paid over three years.

In addition to the activities within the DREAM Study Area listed above, DPB has collaborated with other groups to help bring activities and programs to other areas of Poplar Bluff that effect Downtown. Some of these activities include:

- Received a \$50,000 grant from the National Trust to fund exterior restoration efforts at the historic Wheatley School and Museum.
- Successfully added the 400 block of N. Main Street to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Worked with the Poplar Bluff Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee to develop a County-wide tourism website and new campaign initiative based on the National Scenic Riverways.



The MACO development at 5th and Vine Streets in Downtown Poplar Bluff, before rehabilitation.



The MACO development rehabilitation completed.

Task Summaries



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The DREAM Initiative included a review of the organizations with an interest in Downtown Poplar Bluff. The purpose of this task was to understand the roles and responsibilities of these organizations and their impact on Downtown. The goal of this task is to examine how these organizations may be improved or adjusted to ensure that there is an efficient Downtown organization with enhanced capacity that is prepared to implement the projects and recommendations outlined through the DREAM Initiative.

Organizations reviewed for this task included:

- City of Poplar Bluff
- Greater Poplar Bluff Chamber of Commerce
- Poplar Bluff Community Development Corporation
- Butler County Commission

There is great opportunity in Downtown Poplar Bluff. The area includes stately buildings, natural beauty, and outstanding design assets such as the brick streets. Existing Downtown revitalization efforts have centered around the recent construction of the Black River Coliseum. While the facility draws many visitors, Downtown has not been successful at capitalizing on their presence and getting them into other attractions and Main Street businesses. Organizationally, Downtown is bereft of a strong champion to advocate for its businesses and the necessary public improvements that will attract private investors. Downtown leaders have the opportunity to clearly define the roles of the newly formed Downtown Poplar Bluff, Inc. (DPB) as the lead Downtown organization.

As the City deploys its resources, it is critical that support for Downtown is provided. Downtown represents a large infrastructure investment that the City cannot afford to let deteriorate more than it already has. Poplar Bluff continues to enjoy development opportunities in other areas of the City, which should provide resources that can be allocated to Downtown revitalization. The City has demonstrated support by helping to hire an Executive Director for the newly formed DPB, but will need to continue its participation and make public improvements as well.

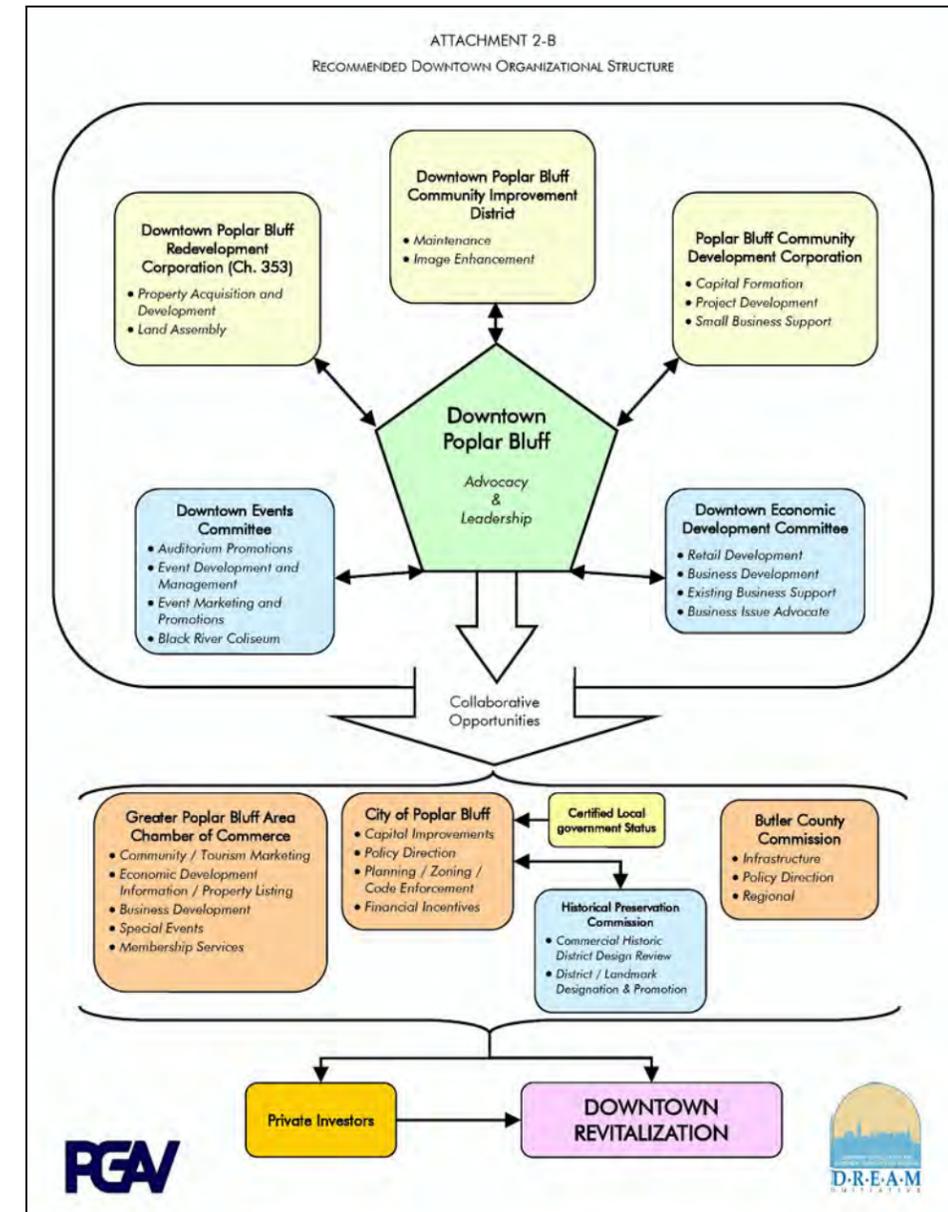
The Organizational Structure Review resulted, primarily, in recommendations to strengthen the existing organizations. Recommendations identified by this task include:

- **Solidify DPB as the lead Downtown Organization.**

Information gathered from the community reinforces the feeling that Downtown is no longer relevant in the minds of residents and that Downtown was active and vibrant when it had a Main Street organization a few years ago. The general feeling is that the City, Chamber, businesses, and residents withdrew support from the Main Street group. The Poplar Bluff Community Development Corporation has tried to fulfill some of the roles left vacant by the Main Street group, but is not properly staffed, trained, or supported. Downtown has suffered without a strong lead organization.

The establishment of DPB in 2009 was a critical step on which the City and Chamber collaborated. The City then applied for CDBG funding and provided a local match to attract and hire an Executive Director for the group. With these elements in place, DPB needs to secure its future. This cannot happen without further support from the City and Chamber.

DPB needs a strong organizational planning effort to ensure support from the City and Chamber and attract volunteers from residents, businesses, and property owners. The City and Chamber, by the ongoing, and public, commitment of resources to DPB will send a positive message regarding the importance of Downtown Poplar Bluff and begin to reverse negative perceptions and apathetic attitudes.



Recommended Downtown Organizational Structure

With the foundation of DPB stabilized, the group can focus much needed attention on engaging the public, enlisting volunteers, business advocacy, developing and reinforcing City policies in regard to Downtown, and raising the visibility of Downtown as a viable destination and business location.

- **Form a Community Improvement District (CID).**
As is noted in the Implementation section, sufficient resources must be obtained for the execution of this Strategic Plan. Local incentive mechanisms such as a Community Improvement District (CID), a Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS), or a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District are effective tools to build Downtown organizational capacity and sustainable funding. Each of these incentives has advantages, disadvantages, and specific qualified uses for the generated funding. However, any mechanism to be implemented requires outreach steps in order to obtain support from local officials and the general public. Effective incentives clearly demonstrate accurate cost and benefit information.

DPB will be integral in efforts to establish any financing mechanism with a Downtown component, but the DPB will be particularly helpful with the public outreach required by a CID. The City and DPB can jointly develop the redevelopment plan and budget, and DPB can help circulate the petition and other information. The City can then take the lead to draft the official documents needed to move forward, demonstrating public support.

The Poplar Bluff Organizational Structure review recommends pursuit of the CID as it can provide effective organizational structure and sustainable funding for the DCA. A CID could generate about \$150,000 annually and brings with it its own board, goals, and by-laws regarding the use of this funding. Eligible CID costs range from public projects to funding for programs and services that can be easily provided by DPB. This recommendation is repeated

in the Financial Mechanisms section on page 29. This repetition is intended to demonstrate the critical need to have a stable, sustainably-funded, organization dedicated to driving the revitalization of Downtown Poplar Bluff forward.

- **Connect DPB with areas beyond Downtown**
DPB already considers a wider area than the DREAM Study Area boundary as its service area. The historic area north of Pine Street includes several residences, the Margaret Harwell Art Museum, the Poplar Bluff Museum, parks, some commercial business areas, and features such as the brick streets. DPB has promoted this area and has obtained some volunteer support from the area, but could take steps to better connect the area with the core of Downtown Poplar Bluff. Ongoing promotion of the events in surrounding areas, that can be cross-promoted with Downtown businesses, can improve this relationship and be beneficial to everyone.

DPB will need to continue and enhance outreach efforts to help the surrounding areas and attractions understand their connection to Downtown and the group. This level of collaboration can extend through traditional avenues such as the Chamber, but DPB should also develop activities such as Downtown mixers or informative programs and invite businesses, individuals, and leaders from everywhere in the City. This effort may run into some duplication by the Chamber, therefore the Chamber should be involved in the planning stage of the events.

However, it is important that DPB not stray too far from the core of Downtown Poplar Bluff. The organization was created to enhance that area, and all activities need to be related to achieving that goal.

- **Ongoing review of roles and responsibilities of DPB and supporting organizations.**
As previously noted, some concerns were identified during the DREAM process regarding the demise of



Examples of Poplar Bluff attractions located near, but not within, the DREAM Study boundary..

the previous Main Street organization. DPB has been formed and has adopted some aspects of the Main Street four-point approach, but is it important that the Board of DPB understand why the previous group failed. The focus groups point to a drawback of support for Downtown. City leaders indicate that an expired special business district had generated the funding stream for the main street group.

DPB needs to be certain that the City is aware of its activities and involved as much as possible in Downtown plans. The DPB Executive Director should be reporting to the City Council on a regular basis and Council Members should be invited to serve on, or attend DPB meetings. The City has provided a commitment to DPB, but the understanding is that DPB will be self-sufficient by that time. Ongoing Chamber support must be secured as well. DPB, the City, and the Chamber are all service organizations and should collaborate to efficiently provides the services that the community requires. However, this may change over time and all groups must be ready to adapt to new conditions.

Activities such as a retreat or series of quarterly meetings between representatives of all these groups are critical to building trust, maintaining the focus on service to the community, and monitoring effectiveness of that service delivery. The City, DPB, and Chamber must be committed to moving forward with a common agenda regarding Downtown.

As DPB stabilizes and attracts volunteers, the Chamber should relinquish some Downtown-specific activities. Some Chamber Committees may overlap with DPB activities. The Chamber should encourage DPB to coordinate all Downtown activities and events.

- **Energize the recently formed Economic Restructuring Committee of DPB.**
Currently the Chamber, through its committees and Executive Director, provides economic development

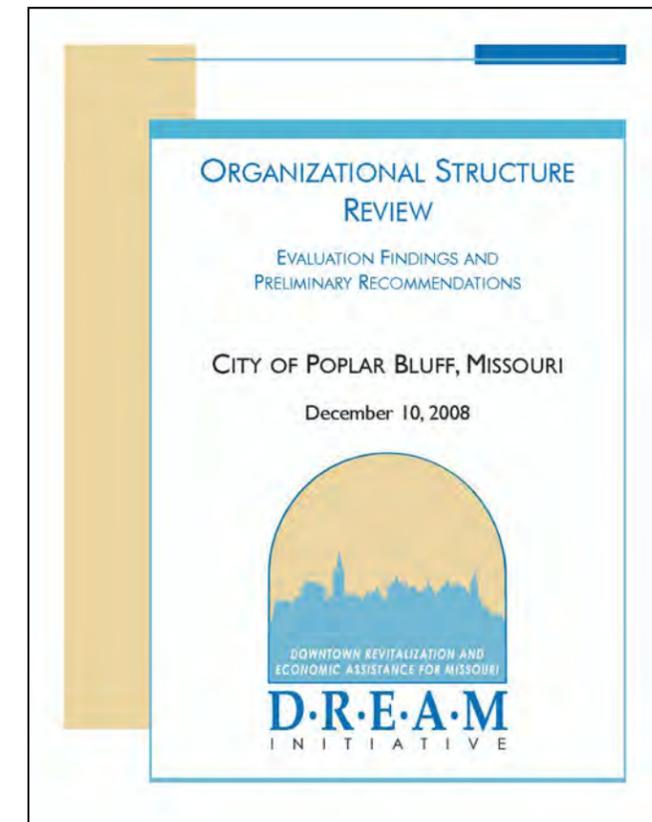
services for the City. DPB has recently formed an Economic Restructuring Committee, chaired by the Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, to focus on attracting and expanding businesses in Downtown. Members of this committee need an action plan to develop Downtown business opportunities into more visible and compelling locations, that are also more readily occupied. The leadership of this important Committee should come from a broad base of engaged Downtown volunteers. The Committee will need to make critical decisions with the good of Downtown in mind, as opposed to a larger area such as the City or region.

This committee should take the lead to develop the vacant site and building database, along with the needed contact information, marketing, and advertising. The group will need to maintain a close relationship with the Chamber and City, and assist in their prospect handling to ensure Downtown is represented as a location option. The committee can develop prospects for Downtown by looking for start-ups or nearby businesses that may be ready to expand, but need an inexpensive place to locate.

To see more information regarding the goals and objectives outlined in the Poplar Bluff *Organizational Structure Review*, December 10, 2008, refer to the Implementation Schedule on page 44 of this Strategic Plan.



The Greater Poplar Bluff Area Chamber of Commerce is an important partner in Downtown revitalization efforts.



Cover of DREAM Organizational Structure Review.

LAND USE, BUILDINGS & INFRASTRUCTURE SURVEY

The Land Use, Building and Infrastructure Survey is an inventory of Downtown Poplar Bluff's existing land use, exterior building conditions and the condition of public infrastructure. The survey was conducted in October of 2008. Conditions are documented in the *Map Reference Handbook* of February 2009, which contains 24 maps of the Poplar Bluff DREAM study area. The maps included in the *Map Reference Handbook* were used throughout the DREAM planning process. The data collected during the survey helped identify the most pressing issues regarding the physical conditions in Downtown and helped to identify future development opportunities.

The maintenance of the information gathered for this survey, along with ongoing reassessment, will continue to provide insight for Downtown Poplar Bluff. The City and DPB can monitor progress and identify new opportunities. If the City can improve capabilities and partner with the County to develop a geographic information system (GIS), this data can be directly updated.

While the goal of this task was to develop information that would feed into other DREAM Initiative tasks, several conclusions can be drawn from the data displayed in the *Map Reference Handbook*, including:

- Based on exterior observation, many Downtown buildings are in dilapidated or poor condition. In some cases this is due to deferred maintenance, but many also demonstrate high-wind damage. The City needs to better monitor these base conditions and should consider adjusting inspection procedures and enhancing the implementation of maintenance and nuisance codes as found in the Building Design and Conditions Section on page 18.
- DPB can help the City with any new procedures by promoting the changes and hosting seminars that provide information about the City's expectations, procedures, design standards, and codes.

- In addition to working with the County, the City should work to expand its mapping capabilities to build upon mapping provided by DREAM. Enhanced City mapping capabilities and planning resources are critical for effective long-term initiatives.
- There are several lots in Downtown Poplar Bluff that are either vacant or underutilized. Some of these lots would be effective as additional green space, but there are a few lots with buildings in poor condition that could be redevelopment areas. These opportunities are noted on the concept map shown on page 37. The City should work to assemble and market vacant and underutilized property to potential residential or commercial developers. Information about these properties should be maintained by DPB.



Poplar Bluff DREAM Map Reference Handbook: Detail of Exhibit 3 Building Conditions.

COMMUNITY SURVEYS

The community survey process was conducted to uncover issues regarding Downtown and learn about local desires and needs. This task gathered information from community leaders, property owners, business people, residents, and visitors to Poplar Bluff, that was used throughout the DREAM planning process.

The survey process used three methods to obtain local views, perceptions and interests. First, the consultant conducted focus groups consisting of key Downtown stakeholders to allow for in-depth conversation on open-ended questions. After that, a random-sample telephone survey was conducted to allow the widest possible public input on Downtown issues. Lastly, a visitor survey was conducted by local volunteers to learn about the City's image and the needs and desires of Downtown Poplar Bluff visitors. The process and results of each method are summarized below:

- **Focus Groups**

Four separate focus groups were conducted to engage stakeholders in open discussion regarding Downtown Poplar Bluff. The groups consisted of City staff and officials, long-time residents, business owners, and newer residents. In each of the groups, discussions included participant's perceptions of Downtown's strengths, constraints, and opportunities for development, as well as the groups' priorities for improvement and desires for new businesses, infrastructure, and services.

Collectively, the groups have mixed feelings about the directions of Downtown Poplar Bluff. For the most part, Downtown is perceived to be moving in the right direction, but some frustration was expressed that there is unrealized potential that could help it even more. Groups noted the need for more businesses, retail, high-end residential space, and improvements to lighting, signage, and overall beautification of the public spaces in Downtown.

Participants viewed Downtown as a provider of business services and center of government. None of the participants considered Downtown a retail center and overall, the groups listed other locations within the community where they did their shopping.

Group participants thought the user-friendliness of Downtown was a critical issue. Improvements to building conditions, one-way streets, safety, lighting, business hours, signage, street and sidewalk conditions, and parking.

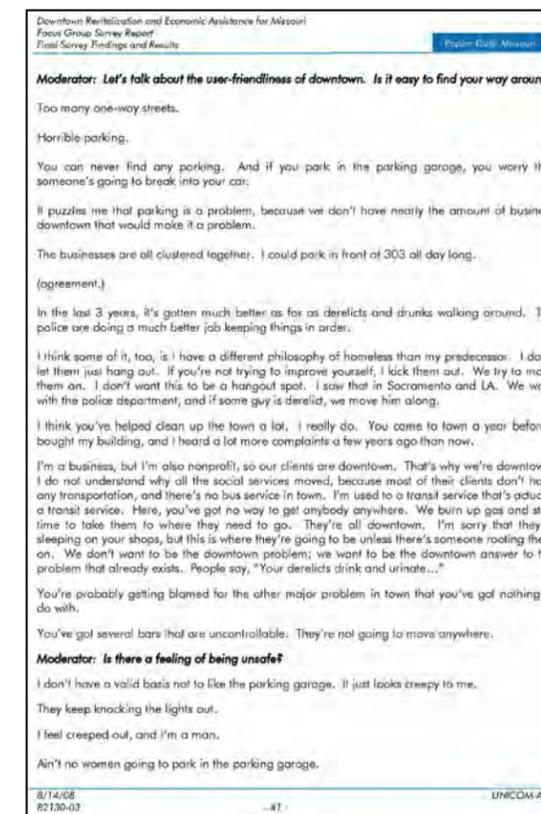
Participants also thought that more retail stores were needed too, but building conditions, lighting, safety, and the street and sidewalk conditions were more often discussed as important priorities.

For the complete report, please see the Poplar Bluff DREAM Focus Group Survey Report dated August 14, 2008.

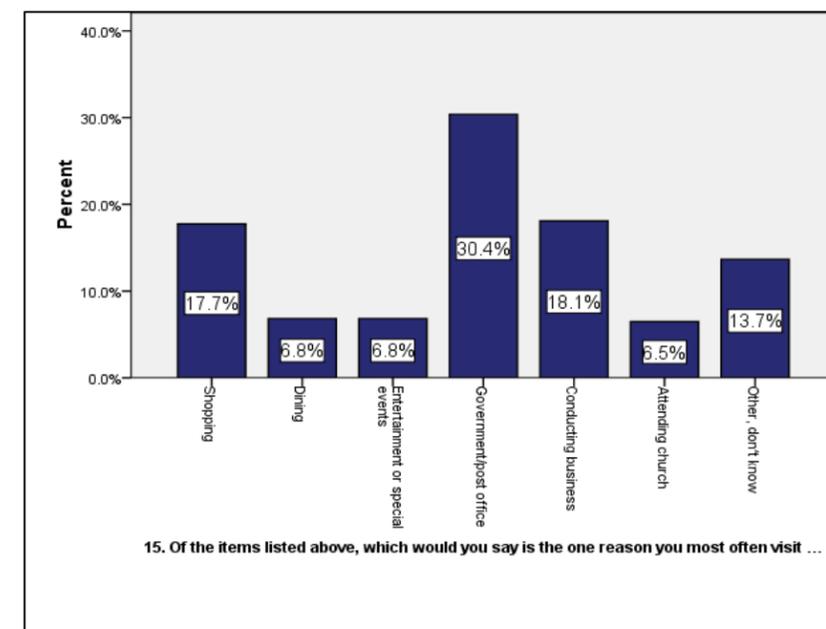
- **Community Telephone Survey**

In the Fall of 2008 a phone survey was conducted to interview a random sample of Poplar Bluff residents regarding their perceptions of Downtown. This type of survey is useful to obtain input from residents who may not necessarily attend public meetings or participate in community organizations. Key points from the survey results include:

- Just over half of respondents (56%) felt Poplar Bluff is moving in the right direction.
- The highest priorities chosen included "improving emergency services" and "fixing major streets." Less than half saw "upgrading parks and recreation facilities" and "retaining the historic character of Downtown" as priorities.
- Residents indicated they primarily use Downtown for government or the post office.



Sample from the Downtown Business Owners Focus Group transcript.



Sample results from the Telephone Survey.

- Suggested business improvements included dining variety, a farmer’s market, an arcade or skating rink, a bookstore, and a clothing store.
- Respondents felt the least positive about Downtown’s existing entertainment and dining options, safety at night, occupied storefronts, and green space.
- Respondents noted what they most wanted to see improvements to pedestrian-friendliness, lighting, building façades, maintaining/smoothing brick streets, and cleaner streets and sidewalks.
- Nearly every improvement was noted by at least half of the respondents, indicating a need for Downtown Poplar Bluff to improve overall.

Refer to the complete Poplar Bluff DREAM Community Telephone Survey Report from January, 2009.

• **Visitor Survey**

In 2008 and early 2009, volunteers conducted a survey of visitors at locations throughout the City. 256 visitors were interviewed and their responses entered into either tablet computers or a website provided for the volunteers. The purpose of the survey was to learn about the perception of Downtown Poplar Bluff and the needs of the City’s visitors. The responses of people residing within the Poplar Bluff zip code were not tabulated. Key points from the survey results include:

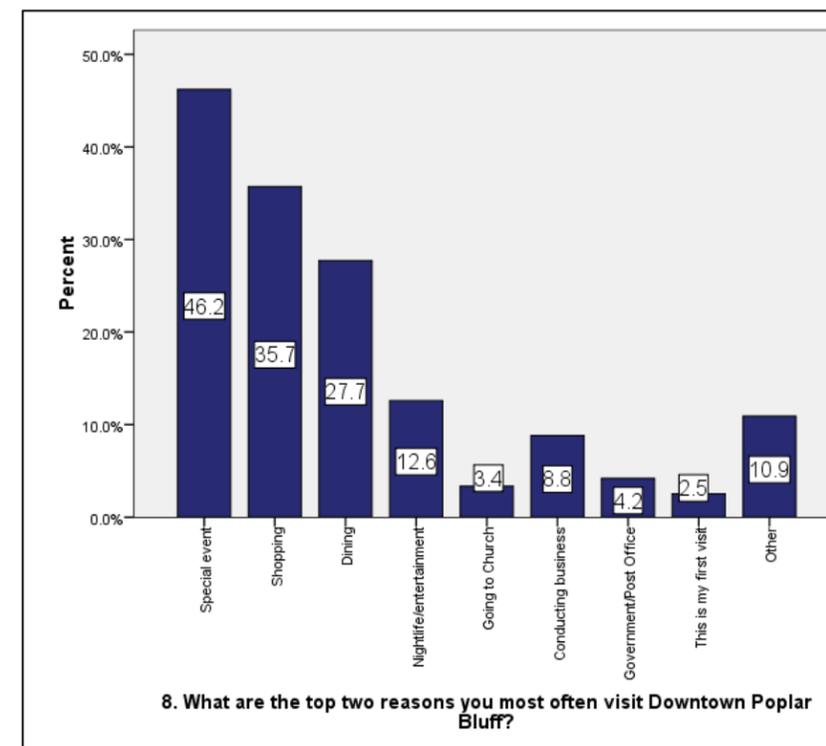
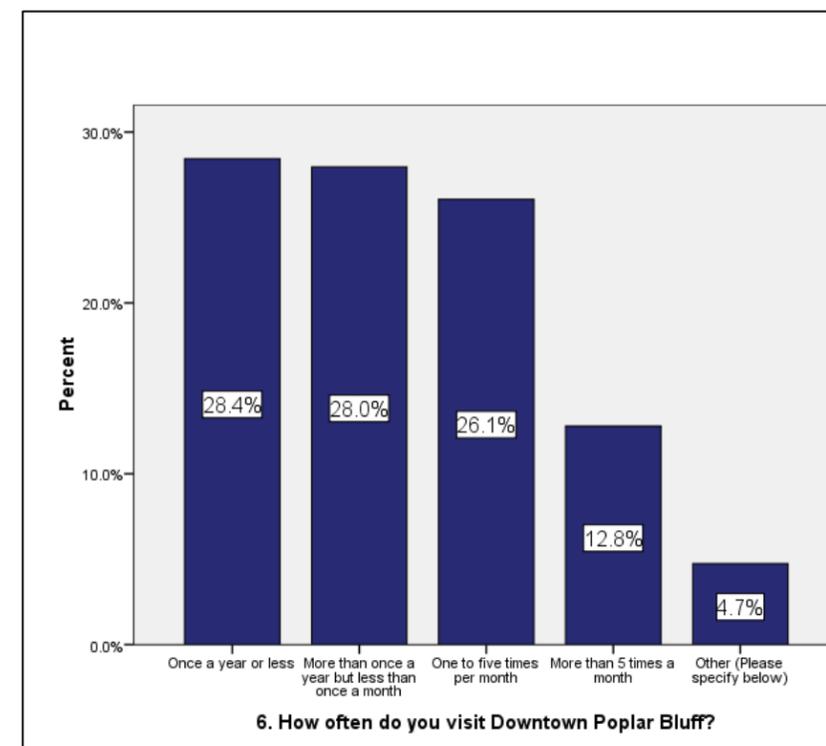
- Over 80% of respondents said they had visited Downtown Poplar Bluff, but less than half indicated they visit at least once a month.
- The Black River Coliseum ranked fourth, behind other special events, visiting family and friends, and shopping in reasons to visit Downtown Poplar Bluff. This is likely in direct correlation to the events at which the volunteers worked to get responses.

- 77% of visitors indicated there were not staying overnight in Poplar Bluff.
- Most visitors interviewed felt Downtown was easy to navigate, and they felt safe during the day. Smaller amounts felt parking was convenient and that they felt safe during the night.
- Very few respondents felt business hours were very convenient, but slightly more than half found them somewhat convenient.
- Nearly 55% of visitors cited that family restaurants would make them more likely to visit Downtown. All other restaurant and entertainment types listed were indicated by less than a fourth of visitors.
- Visitors also indicated that clothing stores and more shops in general were the two items that would make them more likely to visit Downtown.
- Rehabilitation of historic buildings was most often indicated (57%) by visitors as a physical improvement that would make Downtown more appealing. All other physical options listed were indicated by less than a fourth of visitors.

The user-friendliness of Downtown was an issue primarily with local leaders and residents, yet less so with visitors. However, visitors tended to be very infrequent users of Downtown. All aspects of the community see the need for new retail and improved building conditions.

DPB should work to periodically update these surveys and communicate the results to local leaders and businesses on an ongoing basis to help monitor progress and changing attitudes toward Downtown Poplar Bluff.

For complete responses, please refer to the Poplar Bluff DREAM Visitor Survey Report from July, 2009.



Sample results from the Poplar Bluff Visitor Survey.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

This section of the Strategic Plan provides recommendations regarding the streetscape, parking areas, utilities, and other physical public aspects of Downtown Poplar Bluff. The streetscape, gathering places, streets, and sidewalks comprise the outdoor “living room” of Downtown and enhancement to these elements is critical to attract private investors. If the City of Poplar Bluff does not invest in Downtown, neither will private investors. The City will send a strong message that Downtown is important and holds potential by improving and maintaining the public elements.

These recommendations include improvements to the overall atmosphere and care of Downtown, as well as several proposed special projects described in more detail in the implementation section on page 35. These special projects represent ambitious activities set within Downtown Poplar Bluff’s public environment. Recommendations to enhance the overall public environment include:

- **Coordination of Public Improvements with an Overall, Complementary, Design Theme.** Existing Downtown public improvements are functional, but do not necessarily consider aesthetic design aspects. The HPC developed a streetscape concept in coordination with the DREAM Streetscape and Building Design Guidelines task. City officials and staff should review this concept and include these elements in future work. As sidewalks are replaced, plans should include tree wells or lighting standards, fixtures, and other elements that follow the theme of the HPC concept. The HPC, along with DPB, should assist the City with coordination of the streetscape and seek private funding as the City’s schedule for improvements is known.
- **Install a Wayfinding System.** This improvement is also listed as a special project and can be found in the recommendations from several DREAM tasks. Wayfinding can help address a number of issues such as helping visitors find and identify Downtown and its activity centers.

A good wayfinding system will also address some indirect perceptions including parking, traffic, and safety. If residents and visitors know how to navigate Downtown easily and are assured that they are headed toward their desired destination, they will feel more secure in their Downtown experience.

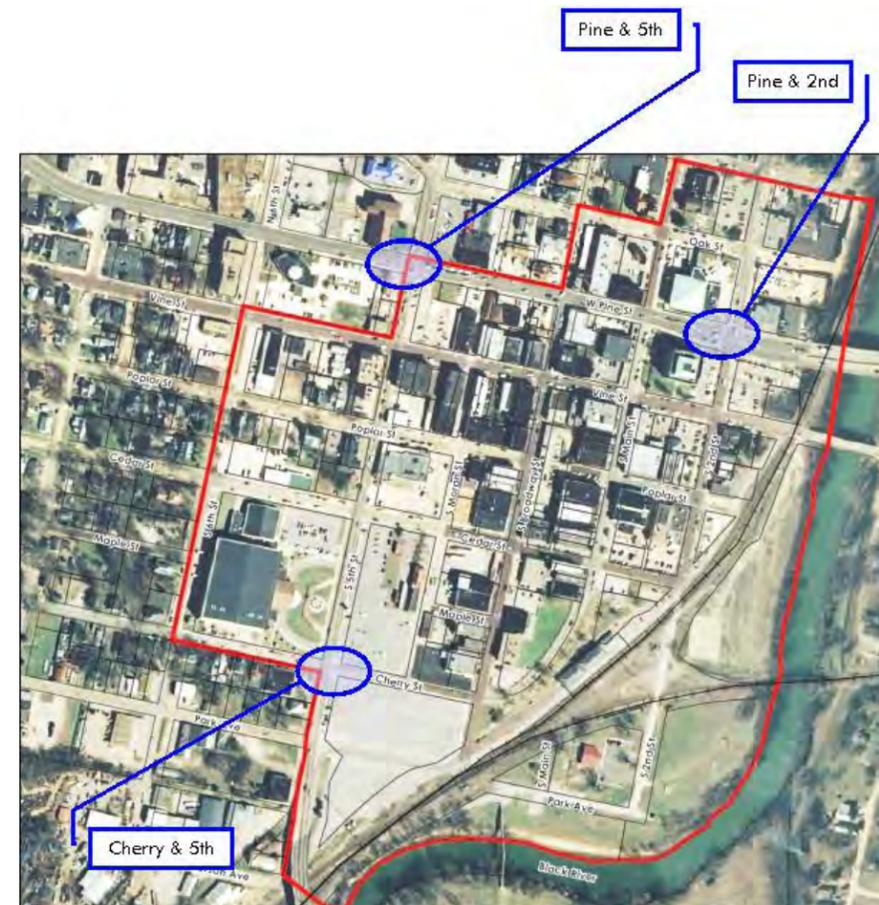
There is no existing wayfinding effort in Downtown Poplar Bluff, however there are several attractions throughout the area. These attractions will benefit greatly from a signage system that introduces Downtown to visitors and directs them efficiently to and from activities and parking lots.

The proposed system begins with gateway signage that announces to visitors when they have arrived in Downtown. The DREAM program has developed a Downtown Poplar Bluff emblem for this purpose and recommends these signs be constructed on existing public property at the key intersections of 5th & Pine, Main & Pine, and 5th & Cherry. The emblem and proposed gateway sign locations are shown on this page and an illustration of the gateway sign concept is shown on the following page. This phase of the wayfinding system should be easily implementable and inexpensive. This is also an important initial step for the City and DPB to undertake to send the message that Downtown revitalization is moving forward.

The next steps of the wayfinding system should include the use of the Downtown emblem along with various district seals, and proximity signboards near major attractions. The wayfinding proposed by this DREAM task suggests the types of district seals and the various geographic areas in Downtown that might be designated and promoted in this manner. Illustrations of the district seals are on page 17.



Proposed Downtown emblem for the wayfinding system.



Proposed locations for Downtown gateway signs.



Proposed Downtown Poplar Bluff gateway sign concept.

- **Develop a Downtown capital improvement program that includes elements such as the brick streets, curb and gutter reconstruction, sidewalk and accessibility improvements, and landscaping of parking areas.** The City should develop plans for these aspects of Downtown, although resources may not be available. The conditions of most of these Downtown elements can be greatly improved if the City will adopt a formal and prioritized, long-term improvement plan.

As the City develops its annual plans, consideration should be given to Downtown elements and a 'triage' type method applied to help determine priorities. For example, when considering sidewalk and accessibility improvements, areas needing minor improvements can likely wait, areas needing major reconstruction are likely underfunded and have to wait, while sidewalks in the middle are in poor enough condition to require attention now before they are in severely deteriorated condition to warrant replacement. Other factors could affect the City's prioritization of these improvements as well. For example, the pavement and landscaping of the Black River Coliseum parking lot may require more attention than parking lots that are used less frequently.

As a very unique historical asset, the brick streets are particularly important for the City to properly repair and maintain. Existing conditions of some of the streets are very poor and there are several areas where the City repair method is to patch the deteriorated area with asphalt. This method is detrimental to the underlying brick, weakens the unique historical value of the streets, and does not fix the problem that caused the street to deteriorate. The City needs to obtain the resources necessary for proper equipment and personnel to remove the bricks, fix the street underlayment, apply new and appropriate sub-base material, and replace the bricks. Adjusting its repair methods will ensure that the brick streets are improved. Asphalt patching may still to be needed as a temporary measure, however,

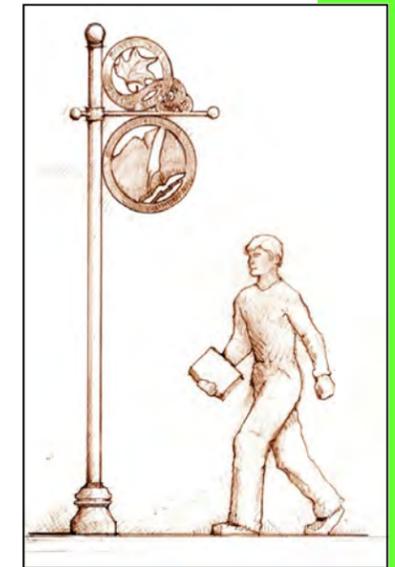
it should be used sparingly and repaired properly as soon as possible. The City can approach the maintenance of the brick streets with a prioritization system as well, focusing on the worst areas on heavily traveled streets first.

- **Add streetscape elements as funding allows.** With the City rededicated to maintenance of the existing public elements in Downtown, efforts can turn to expanding some streetscape elements as funding becomes available.

Enhancements to Downtown such as trees, lighting, benches, underground utilities, and landscaping are suggested in the Downtown Commercial Historic District Streetscape Concept and Implementation Plan developed by the Poplar Bluff Historical Preservation Commission. These concepts will help develop a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere and provide a visible reminder of the City's commitment to Downtown.

Funding for these public streetscape improvements can be generated by several of the local incentive programs noted in the Financial Mechanisms section on page 29 of this Plan. It will be necessary for Poplar Bluff to use these mechanisms to improve Downtown. The past practice of incentivizing retail development on the outskirts of the City must be reconsidered in the context of the impact to Downtown. The City could also structure other incentive districts or City-wide tax streams for the benefit of Downtown revitalization activities. This would be an effective way for other retail development in the City to "give back" to Downtown and ensure the City is vibrant throughout.

A listing of public infrastructure recommendations can be found throughout the Implementation Schedule on page 43. For the complete DREAM report text, as well as the Historical Preservation Commissions Streetscape Concept and Implementation Plan, please refer to the *Streetscape and Building Design Guidelines* from July, 2010.



Suggestions for the use of district seals in wayfinding.

BUILDING DESIGN AND CONDITIONS

The historic character of Downtown buildings is a distinctive feature that helps to provide Poplar Bluff with an identity. DREAM planning efforts seek to leverage this intrinsic Downtown historic character for future revitalization projects.

While historic preservation plays an important role in Downtown revitalization, the City of Poplar Bluff's immediate issue is the condition of its Downtown buildings. The City is working to address zoning and use concerns with an overlay zoning district, however other work should include reviews of maintenance codes and business signage. A renewed focus on the enforcement of these codes will likely be met with some resistance from existing Downtown property owners. However, with DPB promoting the positive aspects of historic preservation and better code enforcement, as well as conducting involved public outreach regarding City codes, supportive property owners will emerge.

Additionally, the City should work to develop a funding mechanism to assist existing Downtown building owners with improvements. City inspectors and code officials should be well-versed in any financial programs started so they can easily connect owners with potential funding programs to help them fix the deficiencies noted in their buildings.

Property owners that are not supportive of efforts to improve Downtown buildings, will likely be the 'problem' property owners. Years of deferred maintenance, disinvestment, and too little attention paid by the City, have likely developed a feeling of entitlement with these owners. Additionally, there are some Downtown Poplar Bluff property owners that are tax-exempt, non-profits occupying prime retail locations. This situation hampers the ability of Downtown to generate tax revenue and these owners will need to be encouraged to relocate or improve the value of their property.

The Streetscape and Building Design Guidelines report, suggests recommendations to buildings that were selected by the community. Illustrations of the 100 to 300 blocks of South Main Street are shown on pages 20 through 24.

Recommendations to address issues regarding Downtown Poplar Bluff buildings include:

- Promote the Benefits and Procedures of Historic Rehabilitation and Property Maintenance**
 DPB should develop methods to communicate with Downtown property owners, contractors, and real estate professionals on a regular basis. Through educational seminars, DPB can inform owners of the history and heritage of their property, as well as connect them with reputable and knowledgeable contractors. The relevant City staff should also be included to help convey the City's expectations regarding inspections and maintenance of property. These important engagement efforts should begin in the spring of 2012 and be conducted annually to help owners prepare for each construction season.
- Review Maintenance and Nuisance Codes, as well as Inspection Procedures and Enforcement**
 The City should consider providing an extra focus on these aspects with regard to Downtown. Downtown has aging buildings that require extra attention through inspections. The City will need to take the lead in reviewing its own codes, policies, and procedures to determine if any adjustments are needed. Too often, code enforcement personnel can fall into a reactive mode, rather than take a proactive approach. For aged downtown buildings, this can mean the difference between simple maintenance issues or severe structural repairs. Inspections should also include rear façades and upper floors.

As the City focuses on these codes and practices, DPB can assist by informing the public and property owners about any procedural adjustments and City expectations. DPB should also organize monthly 'safety walks' with the City's code



Examples of historic architecture found in Downtown Poplar Bluff.

enforcement staff and other City officials. These walks should review outside conditions of buildings and may include assessments of public infrastructure conditions. This type of regular review and assessment of Downtown facilities can help uncover potential problems while they are still minor maintenance issues.

- **Review the City Sign Code**

The City should also review its sign code. During this review it is important to consider the amount and placement of signage that is allowed, with particular regard to Downtown. The HPC should review all sign permits, however some existing signage can be excessive. The procedure to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness for signs exists, but the City and HPC can help encourage businesses to participate in installing attractive signage.

Additionally, some sign methods, such as a building painted as signage, are inappropriate in Downtown. If a mural is to be installed, it should not be allowed to advertise any business or product. Standards that limit the size, number, and style of business signs are needed in Downtown to ensure that the architectural character of the buildings is not weakened.

- **Façade and Building Rehabilitation Incentives**

The City should consider developing a grant program to help existing building owners and attract private, high-quality investment in Downtown. Funding from local sources such as the Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS) or a Community Improvement District (CID) can be dedicated to Downtown efforts. Funding generated by the EDS or CID can provide for activities such as façade improvements, business promotions, events, and Downtown marketing. Building rehabilitation efforts necessary to locate a new business in Downtown would also be eligible for EDS funding. An incentive such as a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district can be used as an incentive for private buildings.

Any local incentive program regarding façade or building rehabilitation should ensure that the improvements meet with the HPC design guidelines before funding is approved.

Local funds generated by these mechanisms can be leveraged for State of Missouri programs such as Community Development Block Grants, Historic Tax Credits, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, and Brownfield Tax Credits. Detail on these funding mechanisms is noted in the Financial Mechanisms Section on Page 29.

More conceptual building design guidelines for Downtown Poplar Bluff's buildings are found in the *DREAM Streetscape and Building Design Guidelines* from July, 2010.



Façade incentives coupled with simple design standards could enhance this Downtown Poplar Bluff building greatly.



Examples of existing business signage in Downtown Poplar Bluff.

305—301 S. Main Street

This section of South Main in Poplar Bluff contains three buildings with great potential, but in rather poor condition. 305 S. Main may be in danger of collapse. 303 and 301 appear much more stable and include many decorative details.

Existing conditions are shown at right with an illustration depicted below.



305 S. Main Street

303 S. Main Street

301 S. Main Street

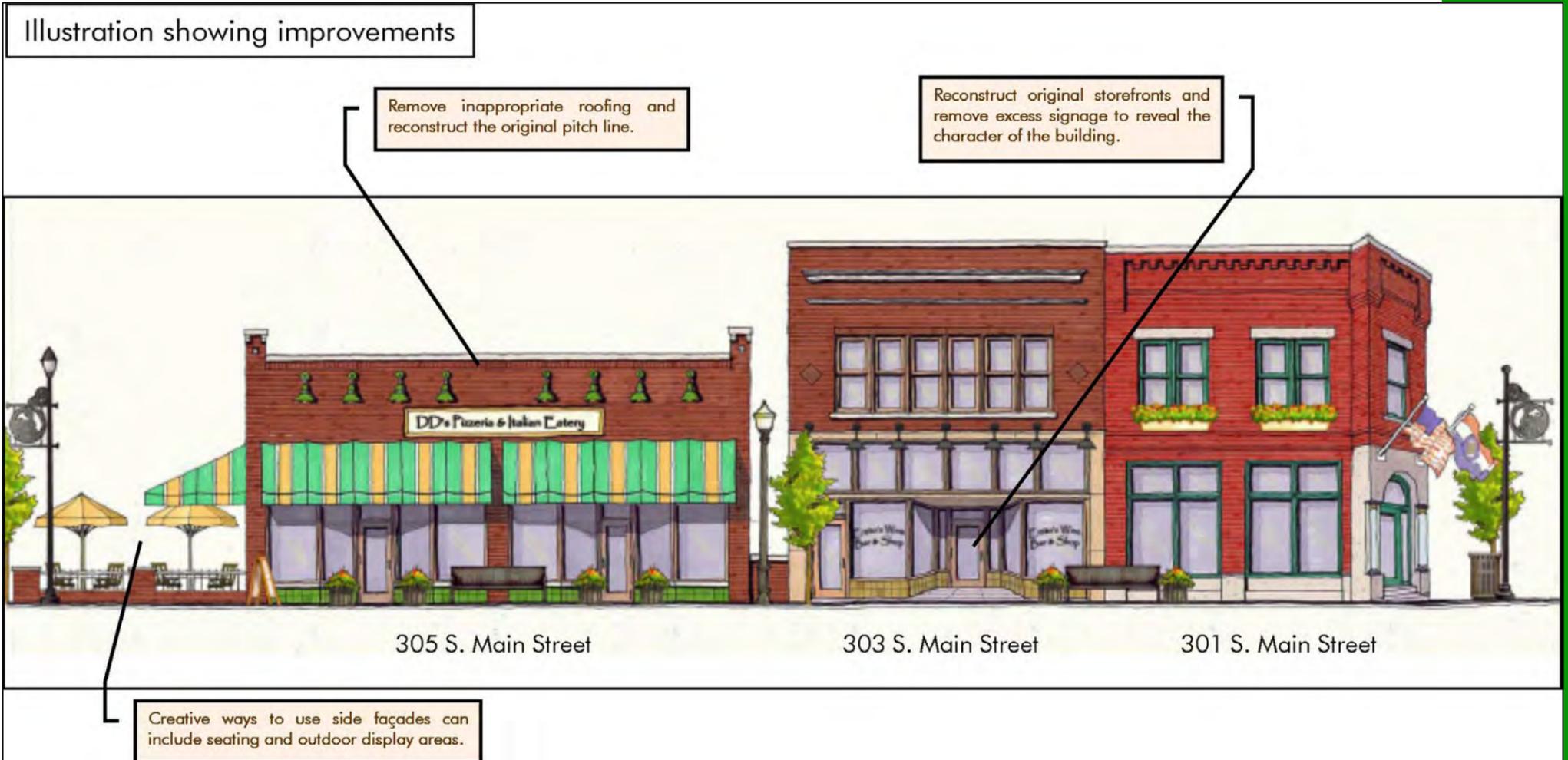


Illustration showing improvements

Remove inappropriate roofing and reconstruct the original pitch line.

Reconstruct original storefronts and remove excess signage to reveal the character of the building.

Creative ways to use side façades can include seating and outdoor display areas.

305 S. Main Street

303 S. Main Street

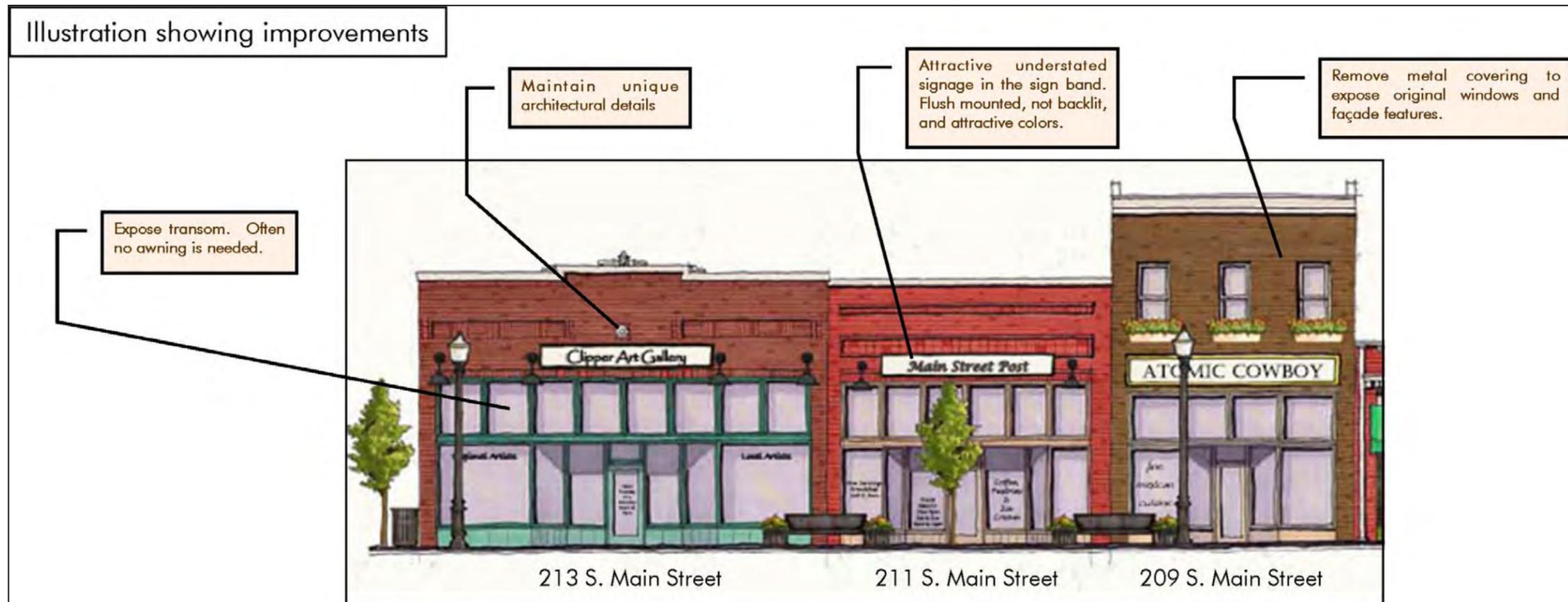
301 S. Main Street

213—209 S. Main Street

The photos shown are the three buildings on the Southern end of the 200 block of S. Main Street.

Again, intricate details can be found on these buildings. In some cases these details are not obvious or they have been covered with an inappropriate material as in the far right photo.

Existing conditions are shown at right with an illustration depicted below.

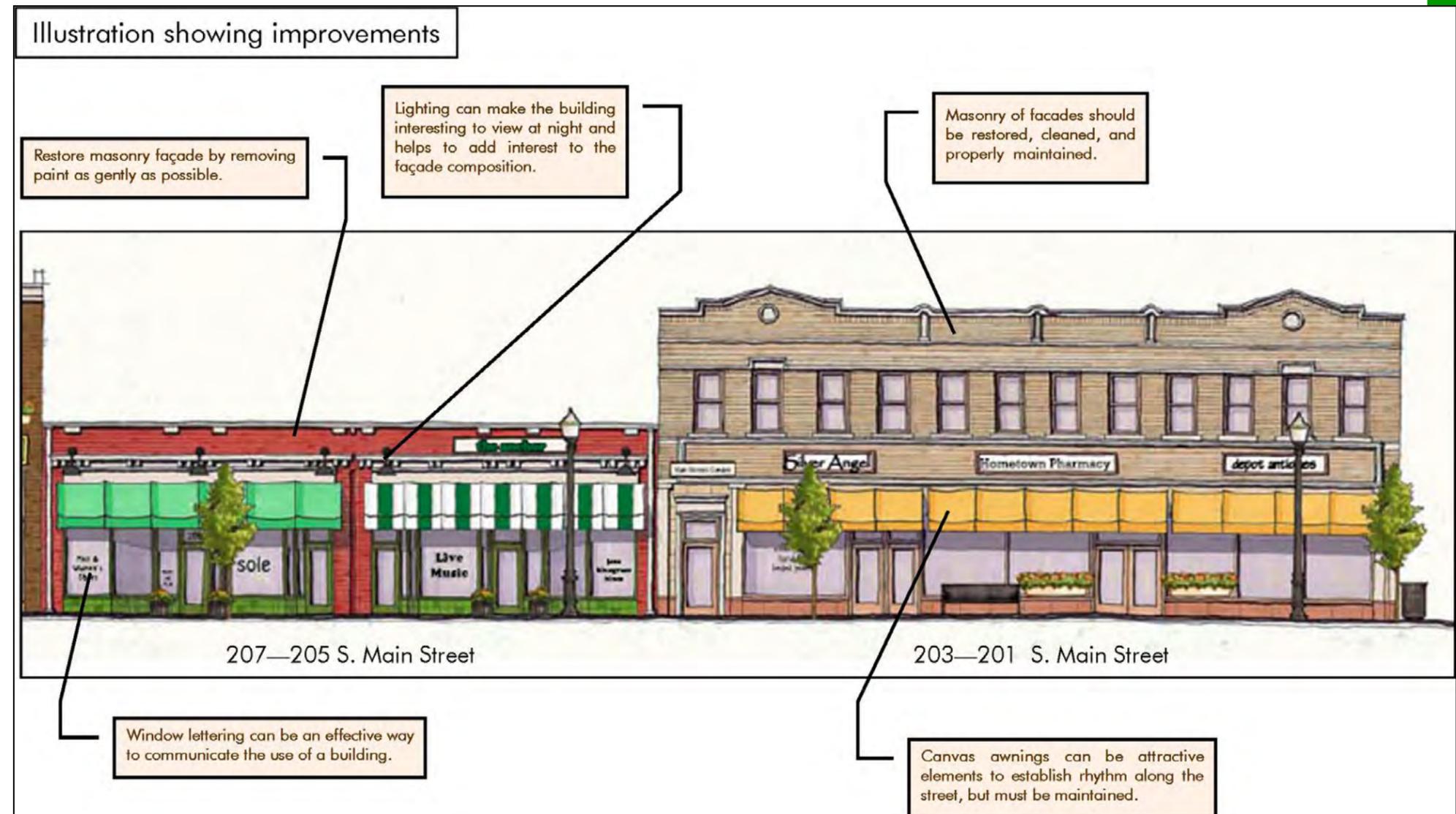


207—201 S. Main Street

These photos show the Northern end of the 200 block of S. Main Street.

The buildings in the middle of the block are rather plain. The building that anchors the block at the North end shows nice details, but is in poor condition due to maintenance. This building also is currently being used for an adult store. The benefits of allowing such a use in Downtown are questionable. This use could be phased-out with proper zoning changes.

Existing conditions are shown at right with an illustration depicted below.



115—111 S. Main Street

These photos show the Southern end of the 100 block of S. Main Street.

These buildings suffer from numerous alterations to their storefronts. Any details they may have are completely hidden. There may be some remaining architectural features under these inappropriate materials. There is a moderate slope to the South along the entire 100 block.

Existing conditions are shown at right with an illustration depicted below.



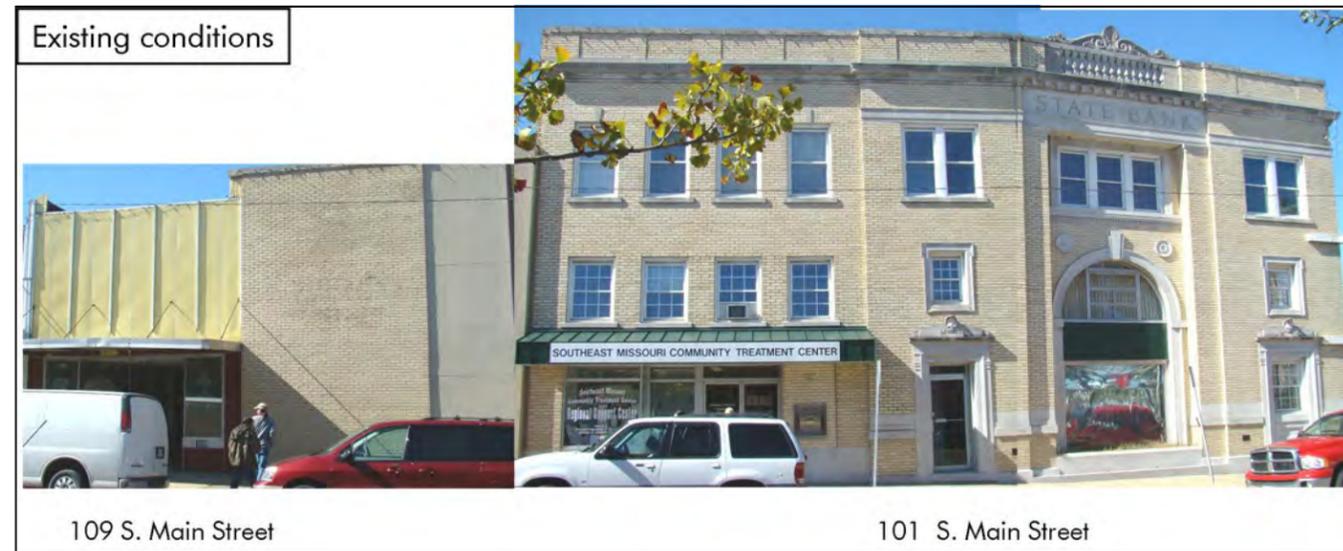
109—101 S. Main Street

These photos show the Northern end of the 100 block of S. Main Street.

The bank building is a tremendous wealth of architectural detail, but presents a blank brick wall directly to its South that breaks up the façade line of the street.

There is a moderate slope to the South along the entire 100 block. The bank building sits on the highest point on S. Main Street.

Existing conditions are shown at right with an illustration depicted below.



RESIDENTIAL MARKET

The residential market surrounding Downtown Poplar Bluff has a strategic relationship to Downtown. It is from these residences that businesses will draw regular customers and events will obtain attendees. Visitors pass through the residential areas to reach Downtown. DREAM provided an opportunity for the Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC) to review the residential market demand of the City. Recommendations were then developed to encourage Poplar Bluff leaders to promote residential projects that can meet any identified future housing demand. Additional recommendations include enhancing quality-of-life amenities in Downtown to attract more residents and a review of multi-family zoning codes regarding the conversion of large single-family homes to multi-family use.

Recommendations regarding these and other residential issues for Downtown Poplar Bluff include:

- **Encourage New, High-Quality Rental Units**
After implementing improved code enforcement procedures and inspection policies, City officials and staff should work to identify housing developers that may be interested in existing sites or available buildings. The recent residential project at Vine and 5th Streets has been a great improvement for Downtown. The City, using information and marketing materials provided by DPB, should seek similar housing developments. Other opportunities for residential development should include live-work arrangements and upper floor apartments or loft-style units. Apartment rental units are an important part of the residential cycle that will help bring people back to Downtown. However, the City must insist on high-quality standards to develop a strong, high-value rental market.

The residential demand analysis indicated there is potential housing demand for 45 affordable family units over the next few years. Family units may not find Downtown living desirable. However, if these new units are developed nearby Downtown, they will still have the opportunity to patronize Downtown stores.

- **Develop Added Downtown Amenities**
In addition to encouraging residential projects that can meet the housing demand identified by the MHDC analysis, the City and DPB should work to improve Downtown living conditions. Enhancements to police enforcement, lighting, the business mix, building conditions, events, and the streetscape will encourage new Downtown residents and develop demand for more housing units. Most of these amenities, such as building conditions, added retail businesses, and streetscape improvements also feed into other DREAM tasks to create a vibrant Downtown atmosphere.
- **Review Zoning**
In addition to adjusting the Downtown zoning, which the City is in the process of implementing, another zoning practice should be reviewed. The City should consider the effect of allowing a large single-family home to be converted into multi-family use. This situation does not enhance the value of the property and typically leads to inferior rental units. There are currently some examples of this conversion in the residential area surrounding the DREAM boundary.

Complete information on the City's housing market can be found in the Poplar Bluff DREAM Residential Demand Analysis, September, 2009.



A Downtown Poplar Bluff commercial property with upper-floor living potential.



This single-family house in Downtown Poplar Bluff has an apartment unit for rent..

RETAIL MARKET

Retail development is an important and visible component of a successful downtown. The Retail Market Analysis undertaken as part of the DREAM Initiative identified challenges and opportunities of retail development, including a detailed analysis of retail supply and demand in Poplar Bluff.

The Retail Analysis identified a total of about 254,000 square feet of first-floor commercial space in Downtown Poplar Bluff, with only about 15,000 square feet in use as restaurant space, about 87,000 square feet as retail space, and another 38,000 square feet of vacancy. Of the total, there is approximately 114,000 square feet of occupied, non-sales tax generating uses in Downtown. When this is added to the existing vacant space, nearly 60% of Downtown commercial space does not generate sales taxes. At the time of the Retail Analysis, the existing occupied retail space was generating about \$4.9 million in annual sales, or \$56 per square foot. The existing restaurants were generating about \$2.9 million in annual sales, or about \$186 per square foot. If Downtown Poplar Bluff can fill the 38,000 square feet of vacant commercial space, it could mean an increase of \$2 to \$7 million in additional annual sales for the City. Additionally, the \$56 sales per square foot rate for retail sales represents stores that sell low-cost, and relatively low-quality, products. Downtown’s retail sales per square foot could be improved by attracting higher-quality retailers with more robust and higher-priced goods that the market will support.

To analyze retail demand, the consultant examined retail spending data for households in a primary trade area (the City limits of Poplar Bluff) and a secondary trade area (households within a 30-minute drive of Downtown Poplar Bluff).

Comparing sales data to demand data provides a measure of the performance of the Downtown retail sector and identifies unmet retail demand. This unmet demand can be compared to specific categories of retail products.

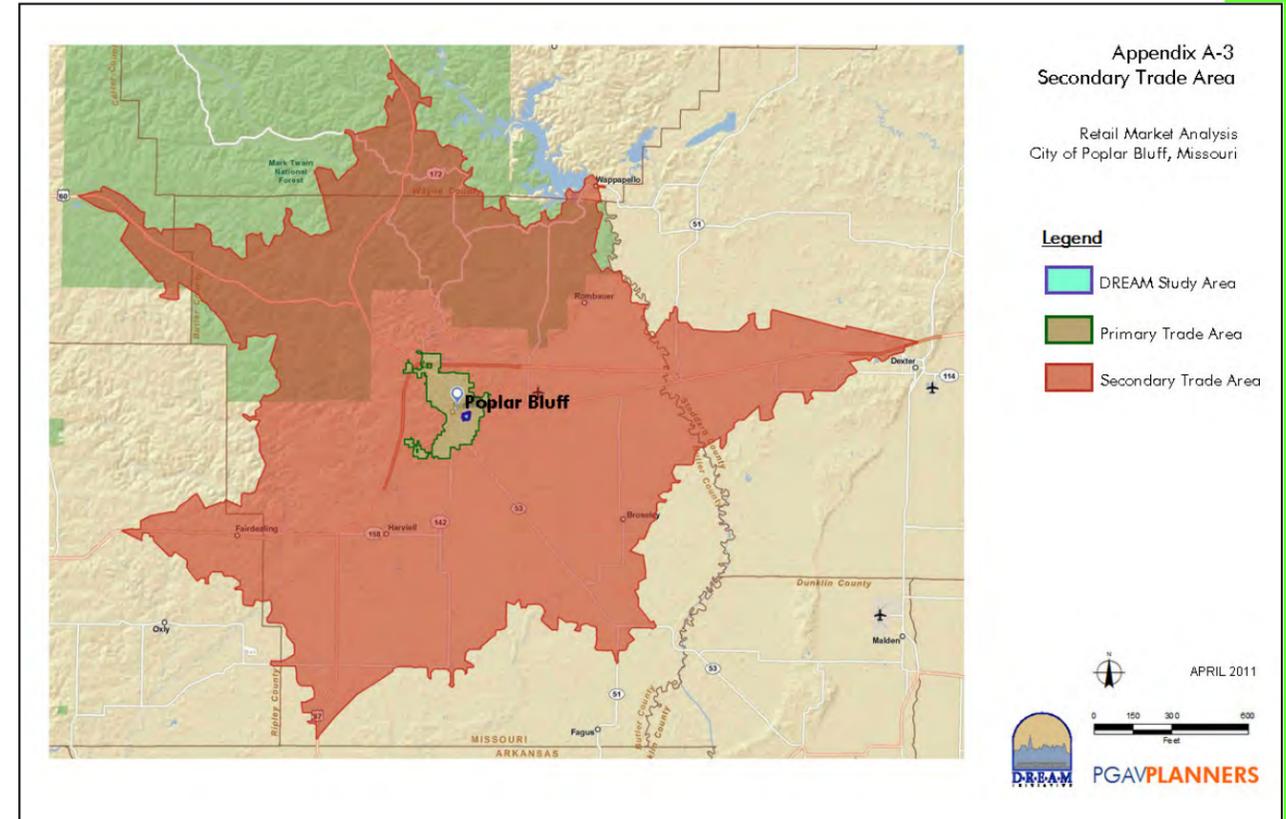
Using this methodology, unmet demand was evaluated to identify retail opportunities for Downtown. Due to the sizeable concentration of existing retail businesses located in the primary and secondary trade areas, Downtown Poplar Bluff is only demonstrating support for 7,500 additional square feet of

unmet retail demand at this time. The retail analysis estimates that this unmet retail demand exists in the categories of “Jewelry, Luggage, and Leather Goods” and “Shoe Stores”. “Grocery Stores” also demonstrated unmet retail demand, but consumer habits and trends rarely show market support for large downtown grocery stores. However, a smaller store, fresh groceries in combination with another retail shop, or a local Farmer’s Market may find success in Downtown. Other categories were identified as having the potential to demonstrate unmet retail demand as revitalization efforts are successful in attracting more residents and higher quality retailers to Downtown. These categories of businesses were compared to the existing average sales per square foot figures to calculate the amount of total retail floor area that could be supported by the marketplace for each. Some categories were combined to represent stores that provide similar products. Additionally, some categories do not demonstrate enough unmet retail demand to support a single store, but are included to show possible product adjustments from which existing retailers might benefit. Retail opportunities for Downtown Poplar Bluff, along with the estimated unmet demand in terms of annual sales, include:

- Grocery Stores (\$16.8 million in unmet demand)
- Clothing, jewelry, luggage & leather stores (\$500,000)
- Shoe Stores (\$46,000)

The categories that may show unmet retail demand as Downtown builds in business and residential density, include:

- Sporting Goods and Hobby Stores
- Electronics and Appliance Stores
- Office Supplies, Stationary, and Gift Stores



The Secondary Trade Area considered for the Retail Analysis; also shown is the Primary Trade Area.

“Used Merchandise Stores” also demonstrate potential unmet retail demand as Downtown revitalization efforts take hold, but these stores do not necessarily improve business quality. The City will need to carefully consider the quality of the used merchandise offered. For example, a store selling high-quality antique furniture is preferable to a consignment shop.

To complete the analysis, vacant spaces were compared with potential store types. The results were illustrated in a Retail Opportunity Map and a listing of the address and available square feet of vacant locations. Specific store types were proposed for each of these vacancies.

In addition to recommendations for existing vacant buildings, the DREAM Retail Analysis also suggested that the City invest in Downtown infrastructure improvements to encourage existing business and property owners and attract new private investment. Downtown is at a competitive disadvantage with the businesses in the surrounding commercial areas. By developing incentive mechanisms for Downtown, the City helps level the playing field between business locations in the City.

As revitalization occurs and retail demand increases, the City should work to decrease the amount of non-retail space in prime ground-floor locations. There are currently many office, service, and social service organizations in Downtown. The City has recognized this and is in the process of adopting a zoning overlay district for Downtown. This action will help Downtown reclaim some prime retail locations and will change the atmosphere significantly over time.

Maps of existing retail locations and the retail opportunities presented by vacant properties are shown on page 28. All of the recommendations for improving Downtown’s retail sector are found in the Poplar Bluff DREAM *Retail Market Analysis Report*, April 2011. Major recommendations include:

- **Focus on Retail Businesses**

As noted, the City should preserve prime ground-floor locations in Downtown for retail businesses. The Economic Restructuring Committee of DPB, working with the City and Chamber should drive prospective stores

that offer products in the areas of unmet retail demand to Downtown. Stores carrying products that include jewelry, luggage, leather goods, shoes, clothing, groceries, sporting goods, hobbies, electronics, appliances, office supplies, stationary, and gifts meet these targeted categories. DPB should also approach existing stores that are located elsewhere in Poplar Bluff that sell these products regarding expanding their operations into Downtown.

- **Increase Restaurant Variety**

The DREAM Community survey work notes that residents and visitors indicate restaurants are a top priority for attraction to Downtown. However, the retail analysis shows an adequate supply of restaurants in the primary trade area. However, eating and drinking places are critical to developing a vibrant Downtown atmosphere. The DPB Economic Restructuring Committee can tactfully approach existing Poplar Bluff restaurants to encourage them to relocate to some of the unique Downtown locations. The Committee should develop information that focuses on specific, “rehabilitation-ready” Downtown locations, such as the Iron Mountain Depot. New start-up restaurants should be encouraged as well, but they may find it difficult to develop a market niche.

- **Improve the User-Friendliness of Downtown Businesses**

Numerous community response indicated that improvements need to be made to make Downtown Poplar Bluff more user-friendly. This includes strengthening the existing businesses, but also expanded business hours, cross-promotions, and improved customer service.

DPB can help businesses address these issues by providing seminars with timely information regarding customer service topics. These programs can also serve to encourage pride in existing merchants.

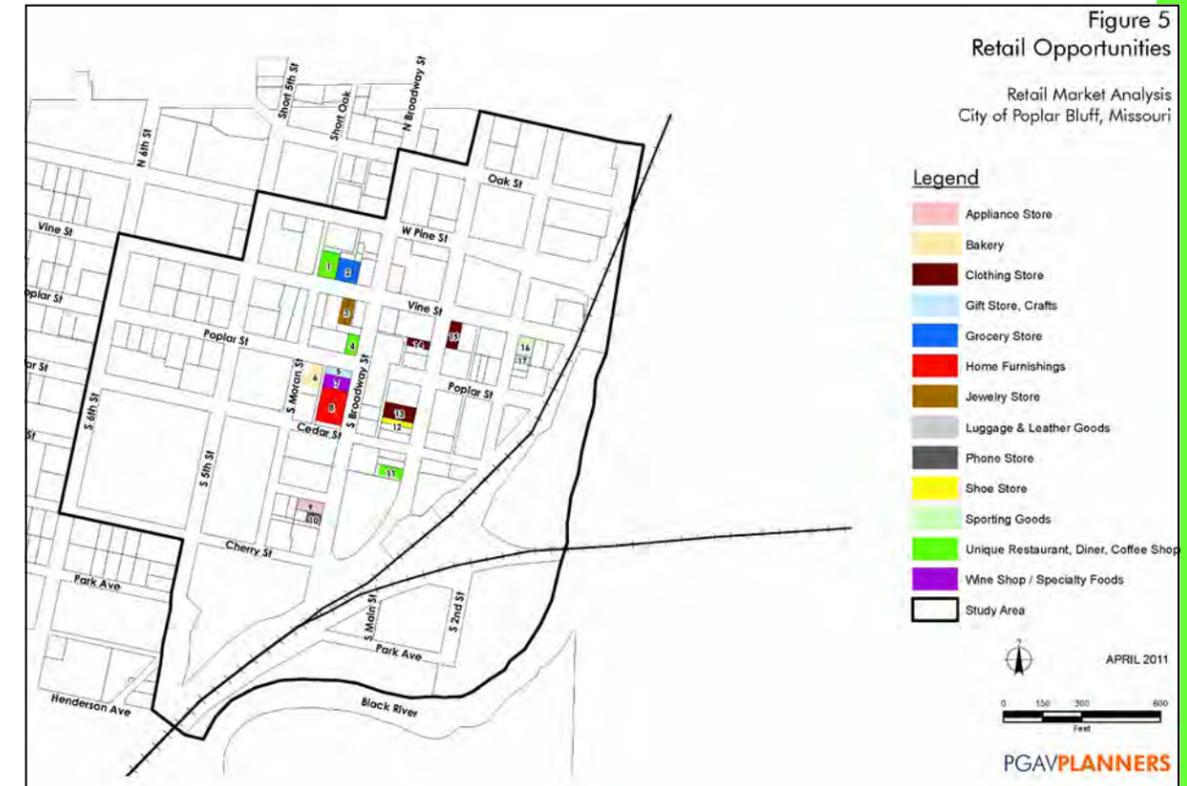


A view of the businesses on Vine Street, looking east from South 6th Street.

- Develop Events to Help Downtown Businesses Capitalize on Black River Coliseum (BRC) Visitors**
 This recommendation is closely related to Destination Assessment and Marketing. The BRC attracts numerous visitors to the Downtown Poplar Bluff area for concerts, trade shows, business expos, and sporting events.

DPB, through an Events Committee, should consider developing festivals during large BRC events. Special events can be very resource intensive, but have great potential to raise the visibility of Downtown. DPB should carefully and strategically deploy its limited resources for Downtown events at times when there are many visitors already in town.

Smaller events may eventually be added to build up to the larger event, but all event activity should be reviewed for efficiency. For example, a signature event such as the Iron Horse Festival, may benefit from getting the attention of BRC visitors a month or two in advance by advertising at the Farmer’s Market.



Existing retail location map is shown at top, retail opportunities in vacant space shown at bottom..

FINANCIAL MECHANISMS

The Financial Assistance Review analyzed several funding mechanisms that are available to Downtown Poplar Bluff to encourage business development, and public or private investments. The intent of this DREAM task was to provide funding concepts for potential projects and programs, along with the preliminary financial data necessary to support the further exploration of these incentives.

There are several potential financial tools available to support Downtown revitalization efforts in Poplar Bluff. These include mechanisms such as a Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS), a Community Improvement District (CID), a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, historic tax credits, low income tax credits, and participation tax credits. While the Financial Assistance Review does not make definitive recommendations about which tools the City should establish, this Strategic Plan acknowledges that some specific funding source should be designated to support ongoing Downtown revitalization efforts.

The Financial Assistance Review provides a catalog of funding options to be considered in brainstorming how to implement various recommendations in this Strategic Plan. The decision on which financial tools are appropriate is determined, in part, by the nature of the potential projects and the willingness of local officials and decision makers to engage in public-private partnerships.

Regardless of the specific financing mechanism, the general goal of the DREAM financial recommendations is to leverage public funds to attract private investment that leads to job creation, business growth, and attractive Downtown buildings and public spaces.

Major financial recommendations and a brief summary of EDS, CID, and TIF follows:

- **Develop an Incentive Implementation Plan**
DPB should task its Economic Restructuring Committee with coordinating efforts with the City to develop a long-range financial mechanism plan that addresses Downtown Funding. This funding plan can eventually

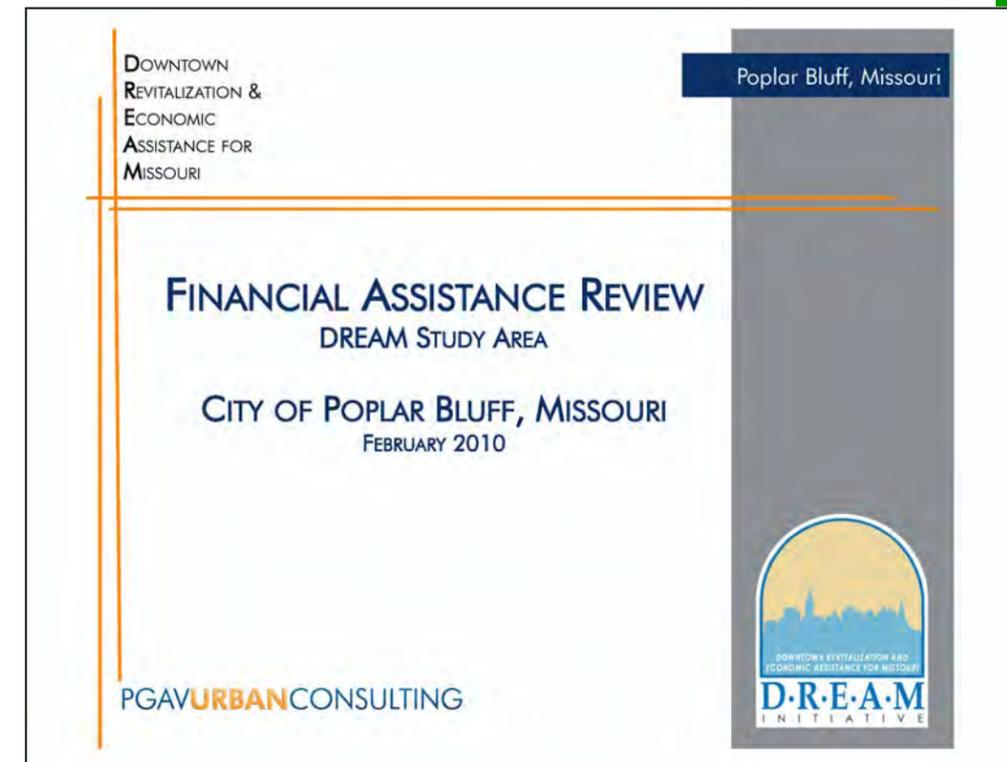
include private funding to attract businesses, but should focus only on public improvements at this time. The City needs to jump-start Downtown revitalization efforts with a large, visible investment in public infrastructure that will encourage the private sector to invest.

DPB should review the composition of the Economic Restructuring Committee and seek to add interested financial and legal professionals. The committee will require professional help to establish a solid plan and take the appropriate implementation steps. Engaged volunteers with this skills could provide needed guidance at a reduced rate for DPB. This committee will also be integral in providing public outreach for incentives and exploring private investment programs at a later date.

- **Establish a Local Option Economic Development Sales (EDS) Tax**

An additional sales tax, up to one-half of one percent, may be imposed by cities in the State of Missouri to fund economic development initiatives. This tax may only be imposed after voter approval by referendum. The tax is relevant to downtown revitalization because the statute provides the municipality with broad discretion in the use of revenues beyond limits on administrative spending and certain other requirements. Establishing this tax can allow for allocating a portion of the revenue to assist in Downtown Poplar Bluff revitalization efforts and support other economic development projects throughout the City.

The Financial Assistance Review projects EDS tax revenue for Poplar Bluff based on the assumption of a one-half of one percent sales tax, and a structure of not more than 25% of the revenues for Administration and at least 20% for City-wide economic development activities such as:



Poplar Bluff DREAM Financial Assistance Review.

- Land Acquisition
- Infrastructure for industrial or business parks
- Extension of streets
- Public Facilities directly related to economic development and job creation
- Providing matching dollars for state or federal grants

The remaining 55% could be dedicated to Downtown projects in the areas of:

- Marketing
- Providing grants or loans to companies for job training, equipment acquisition, site development, and infrastructure
- Training programs to prepare workers for advanced technologies and high skill jobs
- Legal and accounting expenses directly associated with the economic development planning and preparation process
- Developing value added and export opportunities for Missouri agricultural products

Based on historical sales tax generation data for the City of Poplar Bluff, the DREAM Financial Assistance Review estimates that Poplar Bluff could generate \$2 million annually from a one-half percent EDS to be used in the above manner. This revenue source would also be expected to grow over time. The City could also borrow against this revenue by issuing bonds to fund a large project.

Raising the sales tax in the City must be weighed carefully and would require voter approval. It is important that DPB communicate that the benefits of a more vibrant Downtown with greater retail variety and visitor draw will far outweigh any loss of business due to a higher sales tax rate. The EDS is an ideal tool to fund ongoing Downtown revitalization efforts and will refocus attention on the core of the City. By following the recommendations in this Strategic Plan, the entire City will take ownership in Downtown improvements.

- **Community Improvement District (CID)**

With a CID, the municipality, in cooperation with property owners can establish either an additional sales tax within the District boundary, an additional property tax levy, or some combination of both. The funds may be used in the district for a variety of public facilities or improvements, and programs and services such as, business and tourism promotions, refuse collection, and maintenance of public facilities. Since public improvements are the initial focus for Downtown Poplar Bluff, the City should begin the process to form a CID, with assistance from DPB. A CID forms a new administrative board to oversee the district and has involved establishment procedures that will require necessary public outreach by DPB to obtain petition signatures and convince voters.

Based on historical sales and property tax data for the DREAM Boundary, the Financial Assistance Review estimates that a one percent CID sales tax would generate approximately \$85,000 annually. The amount of this funding is anticipated to grow as Downtown revitalization efforts increase business density and sales. The CID could also be structured to levy a \$1.00 property tax assessment to generate another \$20,000 annually, if necessary. A CID also carries with it an annual administration cost.

- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

A TIF District leverages future public tax revenues in a specific area that is determined to be “blighted” or a “conservation” area, and that is not expected to develop on its own and to attract new private investment to that area. In a TIF, property tax, sales tax, and certain other tax revenue from new improvements that occur after establishment of the TIF would go into a fund to be used by the City to pay project costs. A TIF is established for a maximum of 23 years. No existing annual revenues generated at the time of TIF establishment are captured for TIF purposes.

As Downtown Poplar Bluff’s revitalization efforts shift from the public realm to the private realm, TIF could be used in two basic situations. The City could use this

incentive to assist a large private development project, an especially useful tool if there are extraordinary expenses associated with developing the property such as building demolition, negotiating with multiple property owners, or environmental clean-up. Alternatively, the City could establish a TIF district that would cover a specific geographic area, such as the DREAM Boundary, to fund public infrastructure improvements, façade improvements and other public and private projects throughout the district.

The Financial Assistance Review includes revenue projections based on the assumption that a TIF would be established for the DREAM Boundary area. In this scenario, renovation and improvement of private properties would gradually increase the equalized assessed valuation and generate more property tax revenue for the TIF fund, in addition to capturing sales tax increment.

Based on historical sales and property tax data for the DREAM Boundary, a TIF district has little ability to generate income until business density and sales in Downtown increases. However, the TIF revenue could eventually generate about \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually, depending on redevelopment activities. If possible, the District should be established just before some sizeable projects are initiated, to set the base tax years at lower values. Implementation of a TIF District in an area with an existing CID, will also require coordination as some of the CID revenues will be captured as TIF funds. This situation can work nicely as the City of Poplar Bluff transitions from public projects into private incentives.

Detailed statutory requirements and procedures regarding incentive tools available to Poplar Bluff are provided in the DREAM Financial Assistance Review July 2010.

Alternative A

The diagram shows a cross-section of a city block. Vine St. runs horizontally across the middle, and Broadway St. runs vertically on the right side. Buildings with red brick facades and grey roofs are shown. Sidewalks are depicted with various features like trees, benches, and utility poles. The diagram is labeled with 'Vine St.' and 'Broadway St.'.

<p>Demolition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walks and Sub Base (8,100 s.f.) • Curb (560 l.f.) • Excavation for Trees (30 c.y.) <p>Sidewalks and curbs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete (8,100 s.f.) • Control Joints (840 l.f.) • Expansion Joints (960 l.f.) • Concrete Curb (520 l.f.) • ADAAG Compliant Ramp (8) 	<p>Utilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street Lights with Poles (8) • Utility Adjustment • Electrical System • Burial of Overhead Power (250 l.f.) • Stormwater System Adjustment <p>Landscaping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees (4) • Tree Grates (4) • Tree Guards (4) • Topsoil (20 c.y.) • Aggregate Mix in Tree Pits (10 c.y.) 	<p>Furnishings & Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking Striping (144 l.f.) • Crosswalk Striping (320 l.f.) • "District Seal" Signs on Light Poles (4) • Benches (4) • Trash Receptacles (4) • Planters (4)
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A typical block section of public improvements suggested by the Historical Preservation Commission, that are eligible for local funding mechanisms.

DESTINATION ASSESSMENT

Downtown Poplar Bluff is currently a destination for visitors due to the Black River Coliseum, Butler County Courthouse, Post Office, Rodger’s Theatre, Railroad Heritage Museum, The Black River, and other various outdoor recreational opportunities. With improvements as discussed throughout the DREAM Initiative, Downtown can increase its ability to draw visitors and strengthen its business community. After addressing the issues regarding organization, public infrastructure and streetscape, building conditions, funding mechanisms, and the retail market DPB can turn its attention to the elements that attract and serve Downtown visitors.

With Downtown more prepared to receive and serve visitors, attention can be paid to the marketing of Downtown, as discussed in the following section. A stronger capitalization on the presence of existing visitors and expanded events to draw more visitors will begin the solid development of a tourism industry for Downtown Poplar Bluff.

Some Destination recommendations, such as improvements to building conditions, streetscape amenities, and wayfinding are included in other DREAM Initiative tasks. If appropriate, these elements are expanded upon in this section. Regardless, all DREAM tasks are intended to increase the relevance of Downtown economically, including as a destination for visitors.

Primary recommendations from the Destination Assessment intended to enhance Downtown as a destination, include:

• **Add Visitor Kiosks to Downtown Attractions**

The City of Poplar Bluff has made a significant investment in the Black River Coliseum (BRC). This facility attracts a significant number of visitors to its events. The venue is located just blocks from the core of Downtown, but attendees rarely seem to visit Downtown merchants. DPB should develop brochures and informative materials that, when coupled with a new wayfinding system, will encourage a BRC visitor to explore Downtown.

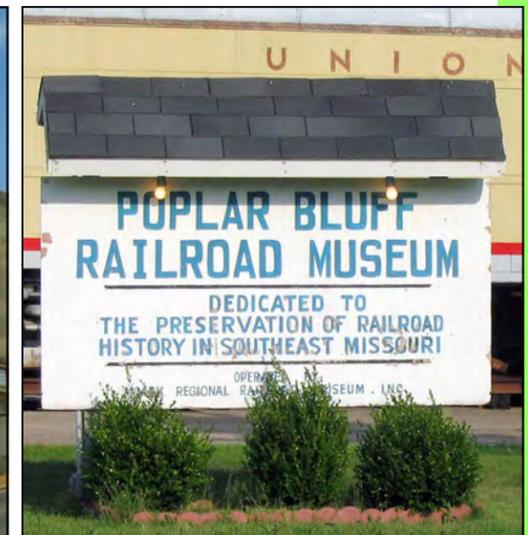
A kiosk does not need to be an expensive installation and may be nothing more than an attractive and eye catching display rack. The BRC is owned by the City, making this an obvious location for an impressive display, but there are other locations in Downtown such as the Rodger’s Theatre, Heritage Museum, Amtrak Depot, and Library, where smaller racks should be used.

DPB, through its Promotion Committee, will have to be vigilant about keeping brochures and flyers in the racks, and ensuring that the information in the racks is approved and current. The Committee should review all racks on a weekly basis.

This type of coordination through kiosks, will also help DPB to encourage Downtown businesses to coordinate store promotions to coincide with City events. Savvy merchants will prepare for the extra visitors that large events bring, and that DPB works to drive into Downtown, by sprucing up their store displays and products and holding promotions of their own. Any materials promoting these types of business activities should also be included in the visitor kiosks.

• **Install Wayfinding**

As detailed in the Public Infrastructure section, Poplar Bluff could benefit greatly from a coordinated wayfinding system. The recommended system will help Downtown to establish a sense of place and will encourage pedestrian activity. Visitors require this basic functional need to be able to navigate safely and with confidence. Signage also reinforces the Downtown boundary and provides information on other attractions in the City. Thematic elements of a wayfinding system can also reinforce the brand that is chosen by the community.



Examples of Downtown Poplar Bluff visitor destinations.

- **Improve Aesthetics**

A central issue for Poplar Bluff, as has been noted earlier in this Strategic Plan, is the condition of Downtown. With the installation of streetscape fixtures and improvements to existing buildings, the City will be addressing this critical issue. Visitors will perceive a welcoming message and feel secure that Downtown can meet their needs.

DPB should also begin a program to place displays in the windows of vacant Downtown buildings, particularly during events. This will help improve the image of the area as well as the building and can advertise DPB in general, coming events, development opportunities, special initiatives, or other Downtown businesses and attractions. The group will need permission from the building owner, but should provide volunteer labor and material costs to install the window displays or banners.

- **Develop Public Restrooms**

The City should consider installing public restrooms in Downtown. This is an important amenity for visitors and also assists local businesses in dealing with large event crowds. Key locations would be along the main streets, near future plazas and park space. Other areas may include the BRC parking areas, Black River shoreline, and the skate park that is currently under construction. The location of these restrooms is important to effectively meet the needs of large amounts of visitors. Restroom locations should also be included on directional wayfinding signs.

Complete information regarding the assessment visit and findings is found in the Poplar Bluff DREAM *Destination Assessment*, from July, 2010.



Skate park location in Downtown Poplar Bluff before construction.

Completed skate park in Downtown Poplar Bluff.

MARKETING

With many of the organizational and physical aspects of Downtown Poplar Bluff improved, City leaders can begin to focus on marketing to potential residents, businesses, and visitors. However, if this aspect is initiated too soon, before Downtown is ready to back-up the message that it sends, then the marketing effort will be ineffective and may actually be harmful to Downtown’s market image. Additionally, marketing efforts affect existing residents and businesses and can instill a sense of pride and place in Downtown.

Effective revitalization efforts acknowledge the need to promote Downtown using a coordinated strategy. Marketing efforts involve a variety of methods and a variety of media. Marketing methods such as paid collaborative advertising will help demonstrate that Downtown is a unified shopping district. Utilization of various kinds of traditional media, as well as new media such as internet and social networking, will help ensure Downtown’s marketing messages reach the intended audiences.

Downtown Poplar Bluff benefits from the BRC advertising of its events, but needs to launch its own efforts. The DPB Promotion and Events Committee should consider launching Downtown’s marketing efforts at the appropriate time after numerous other Downtown aspects are enhanced. The Committee will require adequate funding, and will need to be proficient in a variety of methods and media to promote Downtown. The marketing component of the DREAM Initiative focuses on four primary objectives:

- Increase Community Engagement
- Change Perceptions of Downtown
- Increase Business Investment and Retail Sales
- Increase Tourism to Downtown

These objectives were identified after discussions with local leaders, conducting a situational analysis, and an evaluation of existing Downtown Poplar Bluff marketing. Strategies were then identified to attain each objective. Major Marketing recommendations include:

- **Ongoing Monitoring of Downtown Interests**
DPB needs to understand the organizational forces that impact Downtown and maintain its standing as the lead group. The situation has changed quickly in the past, so DPB will need to be ready to adjust its role in Downtown.

DPB should seek to bring interested groups together, matching their strengths and desired interests to needed Downtown responsibilities. This will help tie DPB to other organizations and should be accomplished through presentations, meetings, media coverage, and face-to-face interviews.

- **Improve the Downtown Poplar Bluff Website**
DPB maintains a website with the address www.downtownpoplarbluff.org. Changes to help improve access to important Downtown information should include:

- Define Downtown as a geographic location to help potential volunteers and investors determine their interest level.
- Add links to www.modream.org and other relevant websites such as the City of Poplar Bluff, Butler County and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Improve the site navigation to keep users on the website, instead of sending to an external site.
- Explain the vision of Downtown; how it is different from today; how DPB is going to get there.
- Improve content on the donation page.
- Rework the events calendar to include more events and a submission form.
- Enable RSS feeds for posts to be automatically emailed to people who sign-up.
- Develop a main and email database from the site using a “keep me informed” button.

The City of Poplar Bluff website could be improved as well. However, DPB is the lead Downtown agency and is the focus of this recommendation.



Downtown Poplar Bluff website homepage.

- **Engage the Community**

There are a few categories of people that appear to be under represented on DPB committees and in Downtown activities. DPB can tap into these groups to develop more volunteers and encourage a broader participation regarding Downtown plans, ideas, and solutions to revitalization issues.

Residents, Poplar Bluff High School students, and students and faculty of Three Rivers Community College should be invited to complete surveys, serve on committees, and help with Downtown events. It is important that these individuals are tasked with responsibilities that will have a real impact on Downtown that they can see. Their input and time is valuable and DPB leadership will need to take them seriously to keep them engaged. DPB should also work to develop some business promotions that will appeal to these groups, and will assist Downtown merchants. Ideally, DPB leadership will identify future volunteers from these groups that will help address the critical issues facing Downtown in a way that elected officials or business owners cannot.

- **Address the Misperception of Safety**

One of Downtown’s critical issues that an engaged community committee made up of residents and students can help tackle, is the image that Downtown Poplar Bluff has regarding safety.

Poplar Bluff leadership has expressed that concerns over Downtown safety are unfounded, however the perception of a high-crime area persists. Fear of crime is the motivator behind this image and The City and DPB can implement certain activities, along with an improved public environment, to reduce this fear.

Information regarding actual crime statistics should be gathered, but will not make for appealing content in marketing materials. DPB should discuss these statistics in face-to-face meetings with individuals and newspaper personnel to encourage positive stories.

Articles about improvements to the streetscape, new events, wayfinding, parking areas, buildings, and green spaces will send a strong, welcoming message to potential visitors, investors, and residents. As more people understand the factual situation in Downtown, events are better attended, and more residents are attracted, safety concerns should lessen.

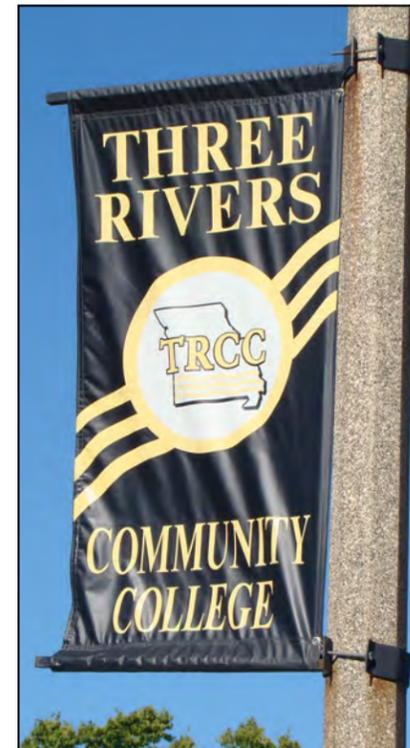
- **Develop Downtown Walking Tours**

To help raise the visibility of Downtown, DPB should work with the HPC to develop walking tours that center around Downtown’s heritage. Brochures that serve as itineraries to guide a visitor around Downtown should be distributed at the visitor kiosks, BRC, Railroad Heritage Museum, and the library. Routes should be identified that not only showcase historic buildings, but also include other facets of Downtown’s heritage such as transportation, architecture, and notable people.

DPB should help produce the walking tour brochures, using information and research that is provide by the HPC. A well planned walking tour brochure will include clear directions, parking areas, restrooms, and a sequential numbering system so a visitor can begin at any point along the route. DPB and the HPC should attempt to route the visitor along scenic areas and past friendly merchants.

- **Promote Infrastructure Improvements**

As revitalization efforts proceed, the City and DPB will need to promote Downtown’s successes to maintain momentum. “No News” is not good news, it is a sign of stagnation. The City can help provide information regarding public infrastructure projects, while DPB should develop advertising and stories that promote events and new and existing businesses. Potential Downtown investors and developers should be included to encourage them that the City is a partner in Downtown revitalization.



Important community engagement can be obtained from Three Rivers Community College and the Poplar Bluff High School (the “Mules”).

Plan Illustrations



IMPLEMENTATION

The DREAM Initiative planning process involved a series of analytical and planning activities for Poplar Bluff that have been outlined in the previous sections of this document. This Downtown Poplar Bluff Strategic Plan ties together all of the recommendations from the various planning components with a set of key goals that will drive Downtown revitalization.

Included in this section are illustrations of planning concepts, public projects, and an implementation schedule. These elements will give community leaders a catalog of action items that will comprise the agenda for Downtown over the next several years.

Included at right is a summary of major activities that each involved organization in Downtown Poplar Bluff should seek to implement through 2014. These activities should serve as a minimum amount of involvement to keep Downtown revitalization moving forward. As these activities are completed and new resources become available, new activities should be added to this list. This is a summary of the necessary first steps.

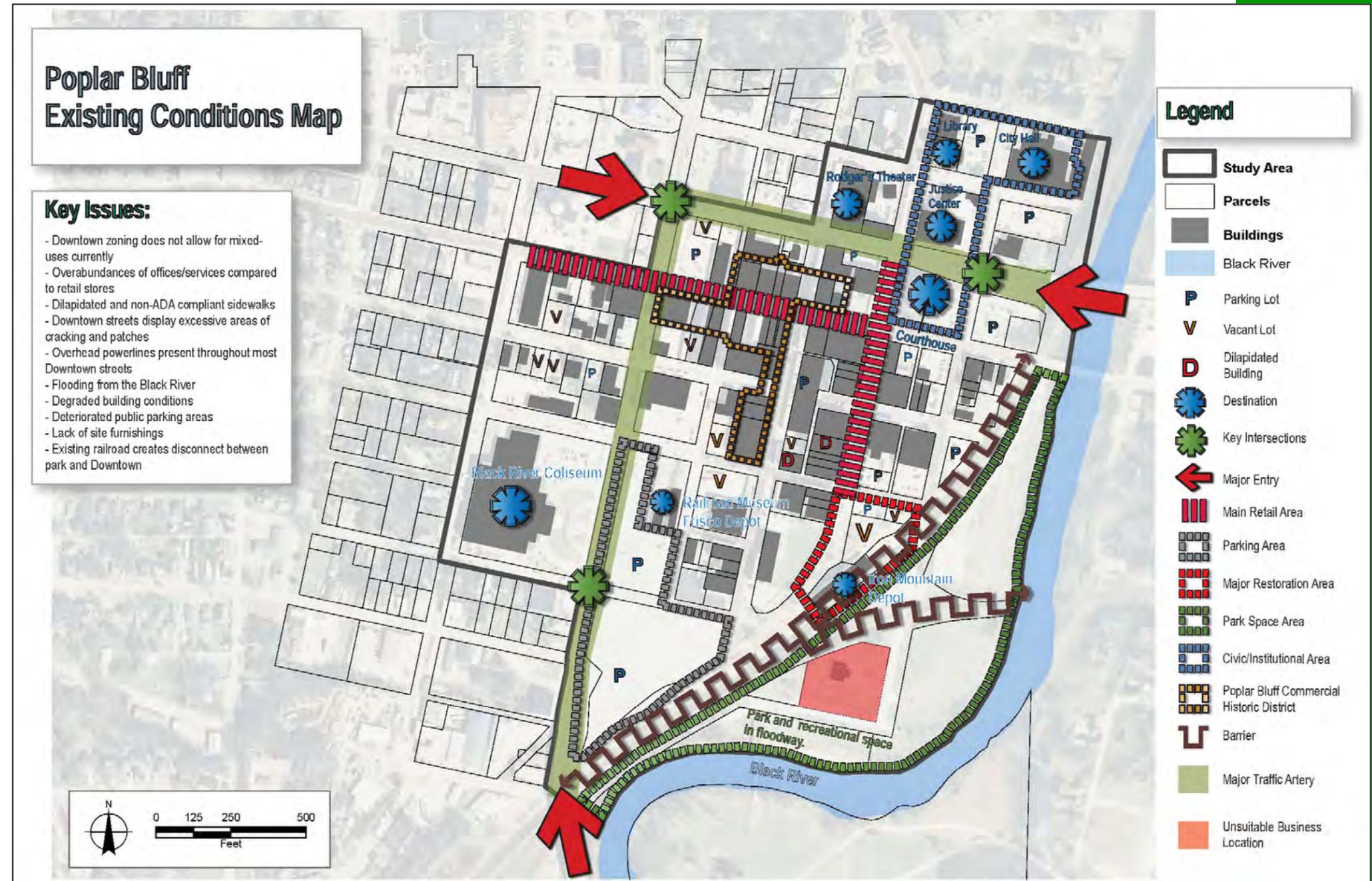
Downtown Poplar Bluff	
2012	Energize Economic Restructuring Committee
2012	Develop and Maintain Information on Available Sites
2012	Form Community Committees
2012	Develop an Ongoing Survey for BRC Visitors
2013	Strengthen and Improve the User-Friendliness of Downtown Businesses
2013	Address the Safety Misperception
2013	Establish Visitor Kiosks
2014	Improve DPB Website
2014	Develop Downtown Events to Attract BRC Visitors
2014	Monitor Downtown Organizational Roles
City of Poplar Bluff	
2012	Coordinate all Public Improvements with a Central, Historically-Complementary Theme
2012	Establish Procedures to Monitor Downtown Building and Infrastructure Conditions
2012	Install a Wayfinding System
2012	Develop Plan for Implementing Incentive Mechanisms
2012	Increase Support to DPB
2013	Develop a Capitol Improvements Plan for Streets
2013	Focus on Retail and Restaurants for Downtown Businesses
2014	Install Improvements to Parking Areas
2014	Improve the User-Friendliness of Downtown Public Infrastructure
2014	Encourage Downtown Living
2014	Review Codes
Greater Poplar Bluff Area Chamber of Commerce	
2012	Promote Downtown Successes
2012	Tie Downtown in to County-wide Tourism Efforts
2012	Help to Connect Downtown Beyond the DREAM Boundary
Poplar Bluff Historical Preservation Commission	
2012	Develop Downtown Walking Tours
2013	Promote the Benefits of Historic Rehabilitation

Existing Conditions:

One of the steps in developing the Strategic Plan was to prepare an Existing Conditions Map that highlights the location of key features, challenges and opportunities in Downtown Poplar Bluff. Specifically, the map denotes the location of destinations, key intersections, entryways, and traffic arteries, the main retail area, vacant lots, and other important elements. This map offers a consolidated “big picture” view of the planning context for Downtown Poplar Bluff and sets the stage for the concept illustrations and special projects.

The Existing Conditions map also lists ten key issues, identified throughout the DREAM process, that relate to Downtown conditions. These issues introduce some general categories into which the DREAM recommendations fall. These include:

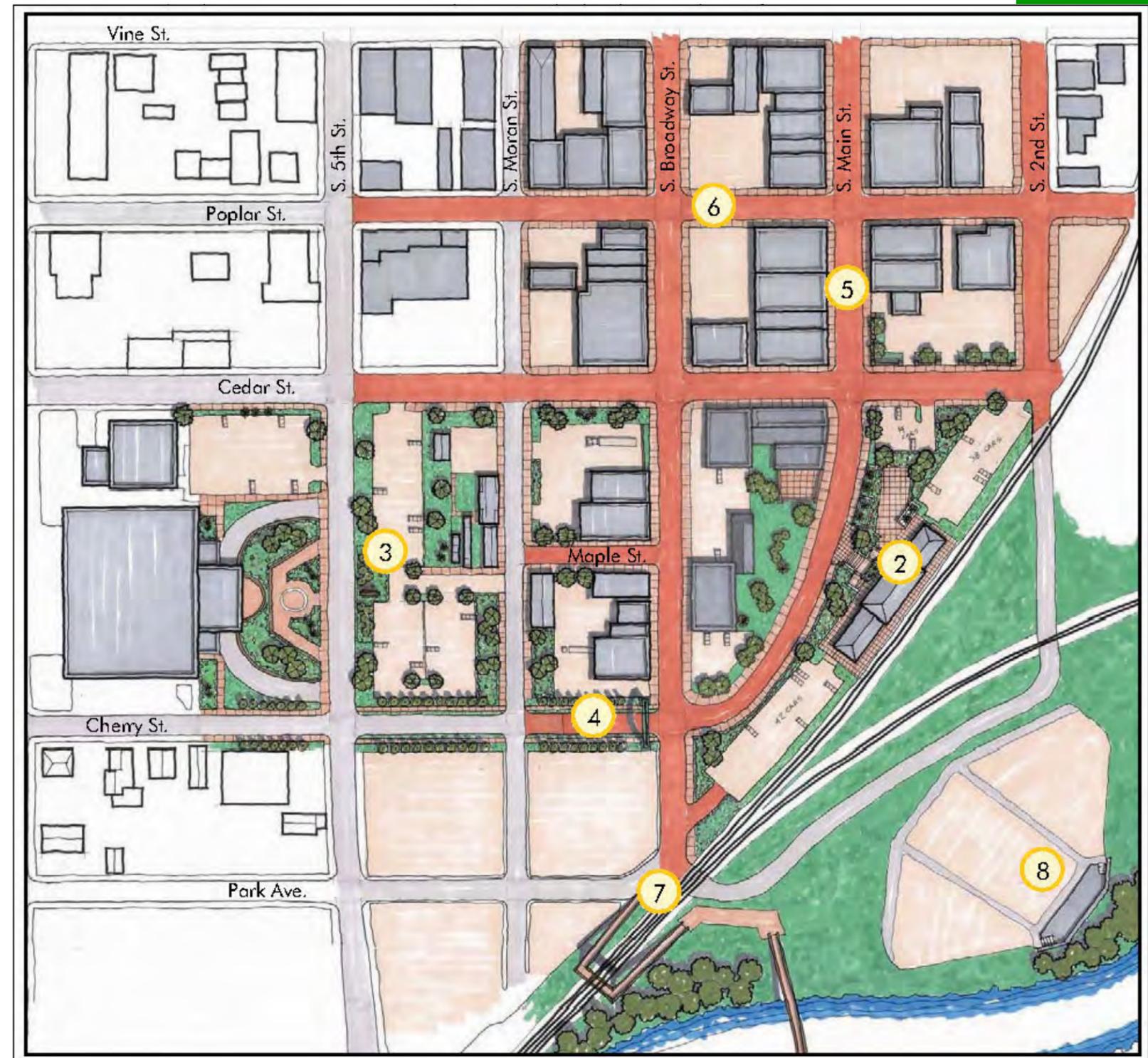
- Develop support for Downtown Poplar Bluff, Inc. and secure the group as the lead organization for Downtown revitalization.
- Improve control over the physical condition of Downtown buildings and infrastructure.
- Preserve and promote Downtown heritage, buildings, architecture, natural features, and scenic views.
- Capitalize on existing visitors to increase retail sales tax revenues generated in Downtown.
- Develop funding tools, initially for public projects, but eventually for use in attracting new businesses.
- Establish Downtown as a viable business center that includes more retail and restaurant variety.
- Encourage Downtown Living.



Concept Plan:

The illustration on this page provides some of the concepts of the Poplar Bluff Downtown Strategic Plan. The overall view of potential improvements allows for general components to be displayed in context. The individual public aspects of this plan will require additional public engagement, technical services, and funding mechanisms to construct and any commercial or residential elements will likely require feasibility studies to attract adequate private investment. The main concepts for public improvements include:

- 1 Wayfinding (Shown in detail on pages 15 to 17): A clear system is needed to direct visitors and help identify Downtown.
- 2 Iron Mountain (Amtrak) Depot and Grand Stair restoration. This project is under construction as funding is identified.
- 3 Black River Coliseum parking improvements. This is an important project in order for Downtown to make a positive impact on the City's visitors.
- 4 Cherry Street archway. Required to welcome and encourage visitors to explore Downtown.
- 5 Brick Street maintenance and restoration. Including some brick element on Main Street, if not uncovering. An alternative to this project is paving the streets, but keeping brick accents where possible.
- 6 Potential removal of parking garage.
- 7 Pedestrian bridge crossing.
- 8 Multi-use amphitheater.



Public Projects:

The publicly funded projects illustrated in the concept plan on page 37, involve a wide range of interested organizations. It is critical that these improvements gain broad support. A sense of pride about Downtown needs to be rebuilt in Poplar Bluff's businesses and residents. Special projects will be installed by the City, however other groups, including DPB, can engage volunteers to assist with ongoing maintenance.

The overall goal of public projects is to spur private development in vacant buildings and empty lots. Downtown Poplar Bluff is not attractive to new investors at the moment and will require improvements to public infrastructure, through the suggested projects, to encourage private developers.

The projects illustrated on page 37 represent a very ambitious program of public improvements for the City. The projects are proposed in a suggested priority that should be attainable and help build enthusiasm and excitement about Downtown.

It is not expected that the City would be able to implement all of these projects in the timeframe of this Strategic Plan. Initially, resources will be scarce and Downtown leaders may encounter resistance to their attempts to increase dedicated resources or implement financing mechanisms. Any such resistance will lengthen the time period required for the completion of the recommended public projects.

The Wayfinding System is described on pages 15 to 17. The remaining public projects area summarized below:

- **Iron Mountain (Amtrak) Depot and Grand Stair restoration:**

This unique area has the potential to be the gem of Poplar Bluff. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places and restoration will transform it into an activity center. The grounds of the station should include improvements to pavement, lighting, and landscaping. Uses to be considered after the restoration is complete should include:

- ◆ Maintenance of the existing Amtrak stop.
- ◆ A small item convenience and gift shop.
- ◆ A restaurant and banquet hall.



Existing conditions of the Grand Stair above. The Iron Mountain Depot condition is shown top right, and is shown with the roof under construction at bottom right.

The boarding platform can also be used for special events and as a launching point for tours such as the recommended walking tours. The platform will also serve as an entryway to the proposed pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks to the Black River.

The restoration of the Grand Stair will put this unique asset back into play for Downtown Poplar Bluff. This feature was traditionally the site of many "goodbyes" and "hellos" for rail travelers. Improvements will again establish the Stair as a meeting place and an outstanding backdrop for photography.

DPB helped secure some funding for the Depot and Stair restoration, but the City will be needed to annex the Depot itself, make the necessary public improvements to the surrounding property, and attract a local restaurant or other active retail user.

Illustrations for these projects are found on the following pages.





Illustration of potential Iron Mountain (Amtrak) Depot restoration.



Illustration of potential Grand Stair and surrounding areas restoration..

- Black River Coliseum parking improvements:**
 The existing environment at the City-owned parking lots for the Black River Coliseum is very barren and uninviting. This provides a poor first impression for visitors attending Coliseum events. Additionally, the Poplar Bluff Railroad Museum uses the same parking areas. Improvements to these lots should be a top priority for the City and Downtown.

Recent landscaping installations will require time to mature, but the City should work to implement additional improvements such as lighting, pavement, sidewalks, curbing, traffic routing configurations, and larger landscaping islands that will provide shade and gathering areas.

- Cherry Street archway:**
 This project is a concept that had been proposed many years ago, but never constructed. The intent was for Main Street to welcome visitors to Downtown via a thriving passenger railroad service. This same concept can now apply to the visitors of the Black River Coliseum by constructing an archway over Cherry Street. This archway will beckon visitors using the parking lots to explore Downtown. The design concept of the archway should integrate with the final wayfinding and emblem design.
- Brick Street maintenance and restoration:**
 This series of projects is discussed in the Public Infrastructure section on page 15. The brick streets in Downtown Poplar Bluff provide a very unique setting that the City should work to properly maintain and improve. Additionally, if the brick surface of Main Street cannot be uncovered, the sidewalks should be reconstructed using a design that incorporates the same brick used on the other Downtown streets. This important design element will unify Downtown and return Main Street to an atmosphere that is more pedestrian-friendly.

- Potential removal of Parking Garage:**
 The existing parking garage at the intersection of Broadway and Poplar streets disrupts the flow of traffic on Poplar. Additionally, many residents indicated concerns about safety regarding the garage in during the DREAM community and consumer survey task. The structure is utilitarian in nature and does nothing to complement the historic nature of the surrounding buildings.

Poplar Bluff should consider the removal of the garage as current parking demand is not great. The resulting lots could be developed or maintained as open space. An illustration of a potential new building in place of the garage is shown on page 42.

- Pedestrian Bridge Crossing:**
 To help connect Downtown and the Iron Mountain Depot with the Black River, a pedestrian bridge is recommended to be constructed that will span the three railroad tracks. This bridge can be an important asset for the proposed walking tours.
- Multi-Use Amphitheatre:**
 Due to flooding risks, the open space along the Black River should be parkland. There is one existing business that should be relocated. The area can be used effectively with a structure such as an amphitheater, that will not obstruct, not be overly damaged by floodwaters. This area can be a location for festivals, music, and other performances with the natural beauty of the Black River as a backdrop.



Existing conditions of the Black River Coliseum parking lots.



Existing conditions of the Parking Garage at Poplar and Broadway.



Illustration of potential Parking Garage redevelopment.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The implementation schedule located on the following pages organizes the projects and programs in categories that relate to the Poplar Bluff DREAM Initiative tasks.

These tasks include: Organizational Structure, Land Use & Building Survey, Community Surveys, Public Infrastructure, Buildings, Retail Market Analysis, Residential Market Analysis, Financial Assistance, Destination Assessment, and Marketing.

Each recommendation is listed by objective, description, responsible party, support groups, starting timeframe, and tools, techniques, and resources. Each of these aspects is proposed for planning purposes and is considered in the context of their relationship to each other and Downtown Poplar Bluff's needs. In some cases, a particular recommendation must be completed before another can begin.

Organizational Structure						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
1 Increase resources available to Downtown Poplar Bluff, Inc. (DPB) to solidify the group as the lead Downtown organization	DPB needs to be reinforced as the lead Downtown group and have additional resources focused on the organization's growth for a long-term revitalization effort to take root.	City	Greater Poplar Bluff Area Chamber of Commerce (Chamber)	NOW	Downtown Poplar Bluff has gone too long without a focus for reinvestment. The City needs to set an example that will send the message to private investors and the rest of the City that Downtown is important and worth improving. This message is received by potential investors as a signal that the City is willing to be a partner in Downtown revitalization and will help protect their investment. The Chamber needs to help send a similar message to the community regarding Downtown as a viable business opportunity.	
2 Develop a Community Improvement District (CID) to bring services and financial support to Downtown.	This is also a financial mechanism recommendation. It is critical that Downtown identify and develop a sustainable funding source that DPB can access for public projects and services. State or Federal funding sources are increasingly more difficult to obtain, so Poplar Bluff will need to establish a local source to improve and maintain its Downtown.	City	DPB	Q2 2012	A CID effort will be initiated by the City, but will require broad support that is obtained from successful public outreach. This aspect of the CID will require adequate time and assistance from Downtown supporters.	
3 Connect DPB with areas beyond Downtown.	The DPB currently considers a wider area than the DREAM boundary that includes historic areas to the North of Downtown. DPB will need to continue outreach efforts to include volunteers from throughout the City and develop cross-promotional activities with attractions located beyond the core of Downtown.	DPB	Chamber	NOW	Mixers or informative programs hosted in Downtown, as well as promotional materials distributed in Downtown for events elsewhere in the City can help everyone understand the importance that Downtown can play and the services it can provide to visitors. DPB will need to lead this effort, with an eventual goal being that Downtown events are promoted at other attractions City-wide.	
4 Periodically review responsibilities of the new Downtown group, and other involved organizations, regarding the efficient delivery of services to Downtown and its businesses, residents, and visitors.	There are several organizations with an interest in Downtown or that provide an activity or event in Downtown. With a strong DPB, these groups should discuss how best to provide their services to Downtown businesses, residents, property owners, and visitors. DPB should lead this effort to keep the focus on Downtown Poplar Bluff.	DPB	City, Chamber, Heritage Museum, Historical Preservation Commission, Black River Coliseum (BRC), others???	Start in Q4 2013	DPB should coordinate a retreat that brings these groups together, discusses issues that are identified in Downtown, and seeks to apply each groups resources to the appropriate issues. Other topics should include membership policies, City response to Downtown issues, and identification of coming events. An alternative to a full-day retreat may be a series of quarterly meetings.	
5 Energize the DPB Economic Restructuring Committee.	Currently, economic development is provided by the Chamber through a committee and the work of the Chamber Director. However, these efforts are provided for the City as a whole with no particular attention to Downtown. This DPB committee should advocate for Downtown economic development tools and provide input and support to the Chamber economic development activities regarding Downtown.	DPB		NOW	This committee should initiate the vacant buildings and sites inventory for Downtown, upon which the Chamber can draw upon to provide information and support for potential prospects. The Committee should also work to develop marketing materials and approach prospects that meet unmet retail demand. Ideal targets for this group are small business start-ups and local stores looking for a place to expand their operations.	
6 Ensure that DPB is communicating with the City Council and Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors	The DPB is currently seen as a committee of the City, however the DPB sporadically reports to the City Council. Additionally, the link between the Chamber and DPB should be developed to ensure both groups are moving in complementary directions.	DPB	City and Chamber	NOW	The DPB should be officially reporting to the City Council on a quarterly basis, with written reports being provided monthly. The Board of DPB should share this responsibility to help the Council understand there are more people involved in the group than just the Executive Director. The Chamber should also invite DPB reporting on a regular basis.	
7 Pursue Adding a development corporation, or adjusting the existing CDC, to fully engage in Downtown development and redevelopment activities.	The existing Poplar Bluff CDC has not conducted development activities, but has provided some advocacy and events. As Downtown business density grows, DPB should consider a development corporation and may want to discuss the ideas of changing roles of the existing group	DPB		As/If Needed	Alternatively a new corporation could be formed when needed.	

Land Use & Building Survey						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
8 Improve City mapping capabilities for online access.	The City should supplement the online Butler County Mapping System with data regarding utilities, land-use, and zoning information to be more useful to prospective businesses and developers.	City	Butler County		The City, as the local utility provider, has utility information and other important data that the County could include on its system. The Butler County Mapping System should also be better promoted, such as linked to the City and Chamber websites. The mapping developed during the DREAM program is also available for the City's use and placement online.	
9 Monitor building and infrastructure conditions.	The City should also develop mapping that allows for the local monitoring of the physical conditions of property and public infrastructure. Building and street complaints should be tracked and mapped to determine areas that require priority improvements and buildings that require a more aggressive approach by code enforcement officials.	City		NOW	Mapping tools of these sort can be invaluable to City Staff and allow a more efficient use of their time and the City's limited resources.	
10 Maintain Information Regarding Downtown Development Sites and Vacant Buildings	New private investors will be interested in vacancies, contact information, and planned projects. It is important for DPB to develop this inventory, with help from the City to maintain the information for Downtown and tie it to available GIS data.	DPB	City		A simple listing of size, location, and contact information can be provided on websites and social media. All information must be kept current and the sites and buildings somewhat 'qualified' that they are indeed, for-sale or lease.	

Community Surveys						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
11 Work to improve the user-friendliness of Downtown Poplar Bluff	The user-friendliness of Downtown was noted by focus group participants and telephone and visitor survey respondents as a major issue. The City and DPB will need to collaborate on initiatives and projects that address this issue. The City is working toward Downtown overlay zoning to address some issues.	City and DPB	Historical Preservation Commission (HPC), Chamber	NOW	Specific concerns noted included building conditions, one-way streets, safety, business hours, lighting, signage, street and sidewalk conditions, and parking. Newer residents and visitors seemed much more concerned about these issues, indicated that longer-term residents simply do not utilize Downtown. The City should tackle the issues of public infrastructure and safety, making improvements that encourage and fit with Downtown's historic architecture. DPB will need to address the issues with businesses and property owners, encouraging improvements that appeal to shoppers and visitors.	
12 Develop an ongoing survey tool to survey visitors of the BRC	The DREAM visitor survey was conducted in 2008 and the Spring of 2009. The BRC draws a large amount of visitors to one place and DPB should monitor the trends and needs of these visitors to understand how Downtown can serve them.	DPB	City	NOW	Such a regular survey instrument can also be administered by volunteers at City events and attractions and will also serve to advertise Downtown a little. The BRC is owned and operated by the City, so DPB will need to develop the survey and coordinate with the City for implementation. A few simple, focused questions about Downtown may gather more responses than the longer survey conducted for DREAM.	
13 Reconvene/expand the DREAM Focus Groups	The groups included the City staff and officials, long-time residents, business owners, and newer residents. It is critical to revitalization efforts that these interested individuals are given future opportunities to volunteer and connect with Downtown activities.	DPB	City	3rd Quarter 2013	By planning a 5-year follow-up schedule, the groups can discuss achievements since the DREAM program began and note challenges for the future. DPB should consider adding some groups, perhaps including a Three Rivers Community College group. An outside, impartial facilitator to conduct the sessions is best so individuals will feel free to speak about any topic.	
14 Conduct telephone survey	Revise the 2009 DREAM telephone survey questions regarding Downtown and conduct another survey to monitor changing attitudes of residents. This survey is for residents only and attempts to present a cross-section of various demographic aspects of the community through quota responses.	DPB	Chamber	1st Quarter 2014	DPB can follow the format previously used, but using a surveying firm and phone bank may also be required. The Chamber may wish to participate if some questions are expanded to include the community as a whole. The survey can be of interest to all of Poplar Bluff's businesses as they seek to understand their largest consumer market; local residents.	
15 Communicate all survey results to Downtown groups, leaders, and businesses	DPB will need to understand the survey results and encourage appropriate actions by Downtown businesses and leaders. Any city-wide results will also be of interest to the Chamber.	DPB	Chamber	Ongoing	DPB and the Chamber can hold joint seminars or brainstorming sessions when significant amounts of information become available. It is critical that this information find its way to businesses that can capitalize on the results.	

Public Infrastructure						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
16 Coordinate public improvements with the overall Downtown design and historic character.	City officials and staff should develop public projects and planning efforts in concert with DPB and the Poplar Bluff Historical Preservation Commission.	City	DPB, HPC	NOW	The City should seek the input of these groups during the design stages of all Downtown projects, and attempt to move beyond installation of utilitarian only facilities to develop 'great spaces' in Downtown. This coordination of all future public improvements is critical.	
17 Install wayfinding system.	This streetscape element can help with parking and traffic, in addition to defining areas of Downtown. Appealing signage also advertises other attractions in Downtown. Funds can be solicited by DPB.	City	DPB	NOW	This project is eligible for CID or TIF funding, but should be fairly inexpensive to implement and can provide a great benefit to Downtown businesses. This is also a project that can be conducted immediately to help develop momentum for Downtown. The City should begin with the gateway signage to give Downtown an identity and then progress to signage around the BRC parking lots. Eventually, the district seals should be installed to help identify Downtown's sub-areas, or the areas surrounding Downtown.	
18 Develop a capital improvement program to expose and properly repair brick streets, along with the other Downtown streets and curb and gutters required for stormwater drainage.	The issue with the existing brick streets is one of proper maintenance. The streets are a great asset to Downtown and should be restored. The City should develop a 'triage' method to help prioritize the streets, leaving projects such as the exposing of the brick on Main Street for a future project.	City		NOW	These projects are eligible for CID or TIF funding as well as grants that range from historic preservation to transportation. Brick streets are an important aesthetic and historic element that Poplar Bluff cannot afford to let deteriorate. While the CID could pay for these projects, the City should work to maintain the most saveable streets with existing funding and seek to make more involved repairs when greater access to funding is obtained.	
19 Improve parking lots and service areas.	An issue voiced by participants in the DREAM community survey work included parking availability. If the City can improve the quality of parking lots and other service areas, people using these areas can feel more secure and the walk to the businesses may seem shorter. DPB can help maintain landscaping once it is installed.	City	DPB	After CID is in place	These projects are eligible for CID or TIF funding and should include landscaping within the areas to 'soften' the impact of the impervious pavement. The City has an opportunity to impress visitors of BRC, but will not do so with poor parking conditions. Included in this recommendation is the parking garage. The garage is dark and sometimes has graffiti in the alleys nearby. This does not encourage a visitor to leave their car and walk around Downtown.	
20 Improve sidewalk and crosswalk accessibility.	Existing crosswalks and some sidewalks are not easily accessible. The brick streets do present an accessibility barrier, but can be improved significantly.	City		After CID is in place	The recent streetscape work conducted by the HPC, identified methods to restore and improve Downtown intersections and the City should pursue these improvements. Although the complete restoration of the crosswalk with bricks still presents an accessibility issue, some of the methods proposed improve the existing conditions. Additionally, sidewalks should be replaced where necessary, to include a brick design element that complements the streets.	
21 Install trees, lighting, benches, trash cans and other streetscape elements as suggested in the Historic District Streetscape Concept and Implementation Plan.	This document, developed by the HPC, proposes a host of streetscape elements, focused on the intersection of Vine and Broadway, the heart of the historic district. The City should begin the physical improvements to public infrastructure at this intersection and expand as appropriate.	City	DPB	After TIF is in place	These projects are eligible for CID or TIF funding and should complement other improvements throughout Downtown. DPB can help maintain landscaping, and potentially help to obtain donors for elements in the streetscape, in return for a commemorative plaque on the item.	
22 Maintain all public infrastructure, property, and facilities that provide a support structure for Downtown buildings.	Downtown revitalization efforts require significant public investments that serve as a catalyst for private involvement. The City will need to constantly send the message to the private sector that the City is supportive of a Downtown investment.	City	DPB	Ongoing	The City and DPB will provide ongoing projects and funding mechanisms to encourage investment in Downtown buildings. DPB will seek interested developers and work with the City to secure the project specifics. Often a developer just needs a streamlined process to reduce the development costs. DPB should also be able to mobilize volunteers to help the City maintain aspects of Downtown such as landscaping.	
23 Bury electric lines or relocate to alleyways.	The City, as the owner of the utility company, has the ability to relocate the power lines underground as streets or sidewalks are repaired.	City		On a block-by-block basis	This project is eligible for CID or TIF funding as available.	

Buildings						
	Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources
24	Promote the benefits and procedures of historic rehabilitation and property maintenance.	DPB should develop programs to introduce Downtown property owners to contractors knowledgeable about historic commercial buildings and to encourage proper building maintenance.	DPB	Chamber	Q1 2012	DPB should provide seminars for property owners. The Chamber could be included to improve attendance, but the topics should be of importance primarily to Downtown.
25	Review maintenance and nuisance codes, inspection procedures, and department practices. The City should focus effort on Downtown as it is the area with aging commercial buildings and infrastructure, therefore it is an area with the greatest need for inspection. Future programs can extend the inspection procedures to residential properties and other areas of the City.	The City should take the lead in this review and take a more proactive approach to identify maintenance issues before buildings become structurally unsound. This includes inspecting upper façades and the sides and rear of a building. Often, a downtown building with an attractive front facade will collapse because of the poor maintenance of the remainder of the structure. DPB can assist with promoting the expectations of the City and informing owners about proper maintenance methods.	City	DPB	Q3 2013	DPB should organize monthly walks through Downtown with City Officials and staff to review building concerns. Top issues should be identified and the City and DPB should develop strategies to deal with them. Downtown merchants and property owners will need to be briefed regarding any changes with inspection procedures. While the City will have to establish these procedures, DPB should help inform Downtown property owners. The monthly DPB/City walks can also assist in identifying problems.
26	Review the City sign code and consider the amount and placement of business signage that is currently allowed, particularly in Downtown.	Again, the City takes the lead with the review, but can also gain some assistance from DPB to balance business interests with aesthetics. Downtown is not a vehicular oriented area and, as such, does not need large signs.	City	DPB, HPC	Q1 2012	Existing signage in Downtown can be excessive and some sign methods, such as buildings painted as signage, are inappropriate for a historic downtown. Standards that limit the number, size, and location, and perhaps style, on Downtown commercial buildings are needed to ensure that signage doesn't detract from the architectural character of the area. Sign permits should be tied in to the HPC Certificate of Appropriateness process.
27	Develop incentive funding for existing building rehabilitations.	The City should develop programs to assist Downtown property owners as they seek to improve their property. This funding should only be provided on the condition that the improvements fit the established design standards.	City	HPC, DPB	Q3 2012	A funding program can begin with the front façade, to which improvements are considered part of the public good. The City could simply earmark general funds with some guidelines for one or two façades per year. The HPC and DPB could help determine the appropriateness of improvements before the Council approves the incentive. Eventually, a funding program could grow to address other building issues. The City will need to consider local funding sources, such as CID and TIF districts, as well as apply for State and Federal funding.
28	Review building codes, practices, and policies to ensure high quality construction City-wide.	City officials and staff should lead a review effort to focus on policies and procedures that ensure the reduction of structural building issues.	City		Ongoing	Issues such as in-fill standards, existing rehabilitations, and building materials are of particular importance to Downtown Poplar Bluff.
29	Monitor the implementation of building codes, practices, and policies regarding Downtown property.	DPB and the HPC feel that current permitting processes are adequately addressing Downtown projects, but there just are not many projects being submitted to the HPC for a Certificate of Appropriateness regarding the Historic District Design Guidelines. As activity picks up, it is critical that this process be followed, reviewed, and adjusted if necessary.	HPC	City, DPB	Ongoing	The HPC will need to keep in constant contact with the City and DPB to ensure issues are caught early and fixed before the historic integrity of Downtown is compromised by an inferior development.
30	Monitor procedures for issuing all Downtown permits and for dealing with unsafe buildings.	The City has had some issues with rehabilitations removing non-historical covering to find architectural features, but the property owner proceeded with the plan and covered up said features again. There are also criteria needed for the HPC to review potential buildings to be demolished. The City should work with HPC to adjust these procedures.	City	HPC	Ongoing	Demolishing damaged buildings is an important effort as some properties will never see new investment or rehabilitation and the property is improved by clearing. The City and HPC should review demolition and rehabilitation candidates together. Another issue pertains to the definition of 'demolition'. The City should insist that foundations are removed and the building site established as a green space until future development is attracted.

Retail Market Analysis						
	Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources
31	Attract businesses that provide products and services that can meet future unmet retail demand. By adding these retail businesses, the business mix will adjust and lessen the impact of the non-retail located in Downtown.	Specific retail categories, as identified in the DREAM Retail Market Analysis task, have demonstrated the potential to generate retail demand for the Downtown Poplar Bluff trade area. Businesses that open or expand their product lines to include these categories make good targets for attraction to available Downtown buildings. The City and DPB should refine their economic development efforts for Downtown to businesses in these categories.	City	Chamber, DPB	NOW	Currently, due to the number of commercial businesses around Downtown Poplar Bluff, there is little unmet demand. The businesses suggested for recruitment may be relocations from other areas within the City. DPB can develop a retail recruitment team to search for businesses in these categories, generate the lead, and make contact with the prospect. Categories include: Jewelry, Luggage, & Leather Goods, Clothing Stores, Gifts, Groceries, and Specialty Foods.
32	Increase the variety of restaurants in Downtown.	Consumers travel for variety. Downtown competes with other areas within the City for restaurant variety. For Downtown to become more of a shopping destination, restaurant variety needs to be increased, but only after improving the overall atmosphere and attracting more retail.	City	DPB		DPB can act as a business advocate and walk potential new restaurants through City processes. The City can ensure that health and building code inspections for Downtown locations get top priority. These efforts are needed for Downtown to be seen as a viable place to locate.
33	Continually encourage Downtown businesses to adopt a user friendly atmosphere that will encourage shoppers and patrons.	Downtown merchants need to be reminded that they inhabit the core of the City and represent an important aspect of the community. DPB can help prepare Downtown Poplar Bluff's businesses to be the best ambassadors to visitors as possible. It is possible that business issues that are common to other merchants in Poplar Bluff or the region can be addressed, so the Chamber may be involved depending on the topics to be addressed.	DPB	Chamber		DPB should develop a program of seminars to deliver important information to Downtown businesses regarding issues such as customer service, expanded business hours, retail marketing, store layout, and product care and placement. The focus needs to be on Downtown stores.
34	Develop a series of Downtown events to capitalize on the BRC visitors.	The events committee of DPB should host festivals during large BRC events in the hopes of attracting attention for Downtown. Downtown revitalization cannot hinge on events alone, and events are resource intensive, but they also raise the viability of the area greatly. DPB must efficiently host such activities and gain the most benefit for Downtown.	DPB	BRC		DPB should coordinate with the BRC and build smaller festivals that draw attention around larger signature events, such as the Iron Horse Festival. Examples include smaller promotional events the month before the Iron Horse Festival, such as a Sidewalk Sale or Farmer's Market. Advertising for the larger event should be distributed at the smaller events.
35	Strengthen and improve the quality of existing businesses.	Often, what draws a merchant to a downtown location is the cost of the property. DPB needs to work with the City to strengthen the core of Downtown businesses, improve property values and rents, and attract businesses that generate more taxable sales. This activity will also generate volunteers, funding, support, and goodwill.	DPB	City	NOW	This is an ongoing effort that can take many forms, some of which have their own recommendations in this Plan. DPB should work to develop programs that encourage pride in existing businesses and property owners. DPB should also be coordinating all ribbon cuttings in Downtown to provide an extra response and demonstrate the vibrancy of Downtown. Other efforts may include streamlined City processes for Downtown businesses.
36	Encourage residential development on upper floors of commercial buildings.	While this recommendation is also noted in the Residential Market section, upper floors filled with residents are important to Downtown businesses and the City should encourage and seek this type of development.	City			The City should attempt to attract developers interested in housing and commercial property. More residents mean a larger market upon which businesses can draw as well as more eyes on the street, making Downtown a safer place to live.
37	Market Downtown Poplar Bluff businesses as a unified shopping destination	As the ability of Downtown businesses to serve visitors improves, DPB will need to fully step into the role of the Downtown champion and develop advertising campaigns and other techniques to market Downtown just as any mall or shopping center would market itself.	DPB			This activity will be a highly visible program that DPB needs to activate and operate successfully. Funding can be provided from the local mechanisms such as CID, with cooperative advertising support from the merchants. This step is critical for Downtown to become known as a district and shopping destination, rather than just a grouping of stores.
38	Improve Downtown lodging.	The City should be ready to act on any opportunities to locate a hotel in Downtown, or to encourage nearby large homes to be used as bed and breakfasts. A steady stream of visitors to the BRC, may very well need closed lodging than what is presently available in the City.	City			The City economic development operations should include discussions with hotel developers. The City should also review zoning to determine if bed and breakfast facilities are allowed and encouraged. This effort will become more pressing as Downtown business density builds, but the City should not lose sight of it.

Residential Market Analysis						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
41 Encourage the development of new, high-quality, rental units in Downtown.	The City should work to identify developers that may be interested in existing sites or buildings for apartments and lofts. DPB can assist with gathering information and providing marketing assistance for these potential investors.	City	DPB		The residential demand analysis projects unmet housing demand for 45 affordable family and senior rental units over the next few years. These segments represent the primary residential markets for Downtown housing. Family units may not desire to be in Downtown, but if they are located nearby, they will still add to the market for Downtown businesses.	
42 Develop added amenities such as pedestrian walkways and plazas and mitigate issues such as parking and traffic, to increase demand for Downtown living options.	The City and DPB should work to develop public projects that increase the residential desirability of Downtown and build future housing demand.	City	DPB		These projects can be funded by the CID, TIF, or other grant options and should address parking, safety, and activities for the permanent residents. These projects are a matter of long-term planning as the area presently shows no market rate rental housing demand.	
43 Review zoning codes to consider if multi-family is an acceptable use in large houses that were originally single-family and if the codes present any barriers to Downtown residential development.	It was noted that there are a few large houses that have been converted to multi-family units. This is typically not a positive conversion for these properties. The City should consider the codes that allowed these situations to occur and determine if this should be allowed to continue.	City			Some of this converted housing is large and architecturally intricate, and not all is within the DREAM boundary. The City can adjust its zoning, which may cause some vacancies initially, to protect these properties and create opportunities for home ownership.	
44 Plan for Multifunctional Downtown.	Downtown Poplar Bluff has some upper floor space that can be used as housing. Property owners should be encouraged with incentives to develop high-quality units to command market rate rents.	City			The City should correct zoning that prevents mixed-uses in the same building. Property owners of should be encouraged to make productive use of the upper floors.	
45 Maintain and improve infrastructure of Downtown and provide police enforcement where necessary to protect this infrastructure investment as well as the residents and businesses.	As public projects are proposed, often they are rejected by city leaders due to issues with vandalism or maintenance, and therefore cities do not accurately apply the correct enforcement resources. The City of Poplar Bluff must understand that new public infrastructure is needed, and that it must be maintained and secured with the proper procedures and deployment of personnel and other resources.	City			More people in Downtown, will mean more people are watching. A vibrant downtown is a safe and populated downtown. If necessary, CID funding can provide added enforcement officials in addition to maintenance funding. Any discontinuance of Downtown infrastructure is essentially the City turning its back on Downtown and giving up on what infrastructure exists; this cannot happen for successful revitalization.	

Financial Assistance						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
46 Develop a long-term incentive plan.	The City and DPB should coordinate efforts to implement the incentive programs necessary for Downtown revitalization efforts. The initial focus should be on funding for visible public infrastructure, with private funding provided at a later date.	City	DPB	NOW	The City will need to initiate the incentives, with DPB providing public outreach. DPB should begin to immediately develop volunteers with funding mechanism knowledge.	
47 Establish a Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS) in the City	The City can establish an EDS of up to one-half of one percent to assist in Economic Development city-wide and dedicate a portion specifically to Downtown Economic Development efforts.	City	DPB	NOW	15% of an EDS dedicated to Downtown Economic Development could generate over \$300,000 annually. The City can conduct economic development activities in the growing areas of the community, such as the Eight Points Development, and provide marketing, grants, and training for Downtown businesses. DPB should assist with communicating information about the tax and specifically that there is no lack of business from an additional city-wide sales tax and that the benefits far outweigh any perceived drawbacks.	
48 Establish a Downtown Community Improvement District (CID) that includes Downtown	As noted in the Organizational Structure recommendations, a CID will provide DPB with sustainable funding for improvements and programming. The City will initiate this incentive and pass the appropriate ordinances, but DPB will be instrumental in providing the needed public outreach. The revenues generated can also be used for public improvements, property acquisition, etc.	City	DPB	NOW	A CID can capture funding from property and sales taxes for a variety of services and projects. A one percent CID sales tax could generate over \$1 million in funding for Downtown projects and an additional \$1.50 in property tax could provide another \$370,000. Proper outreach to communicate the benefits of the CID plan to local residents and merchants is critical.	
49 Establish a Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District	The City should examine the possibility of creating a TIF District in Downtown as a means of supporting/promoting redevelopment efforts. Revenues generated could be used for variety of purposes including public infrastructure improvements, acquisition of property, etc..	City	DPB	2015	If required, a TIF can be implemented to provide about \$650,000 in funding for Downtown improvements. Again, DPB should be tapped to show the benefits of the redevelopment plan.	
50 Develop additional programs to address common issues among Downtown commercial buildings	DPB will need to fill an advocacy role in relations with the City to identify these common issues and encourage the pursuit and development of new mechanisms, such as a Downtown façade loan program, to address these concerns.	DPB	City		City led initiatives such as façade programs can provide a small amount of public funding focused on important issues that can be slowly improved. Concerns like metal façade covering, tuckpointing, electrical wiring, and roofing are examples that the City can slowly help Downtown property owners address.	
51 Leverage local funds to obtain State and Federal funding for projects	The City and DPB should remain vigilant regarding the leveraging of local sources, such as the CID, TIF, and EDS, for State or Federal funding.	City	DPB	Ongoing	As State and Federal funding is declining, Downtown should rely on local funding sources, but still apply for any program into which projects and plans may fit. Plans are critical and if the City can show that the projects address a local need, grant opportunities should occur.	

Destination Assessment						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
52 Add visitor kiosks to Downtown attractions.	Downtown has a number of activity centers that include the Butler County Courthouse, City Hall, City Library, Rodger's Theatre, the Railroad Museum, and the Black River Coliseum. DPB should establish and maintain Downtown information at each of these locations. This recommendation also includes better coordination between events and Downtown merchants to ensure Downtown is ready for large amounts of visitors.	DPB			Information including brochures from other city attractions, parking maps, coupons, business and restaurant listings, and a calendar of events are easily obtained and distributed. The kiosks must be maintained. Information doesn't have to be any fancier than a flyer, but must be timely and helpful to the visitor. Individual store advertising should NOT be allowed.	
53 Install wayfinding system.	As noted in the recommendations for public infrastructure, this streetscape element can help with parking and traffic, in addition to defining areas of Downtown. Appealing signage also advertises other attractions in Downtown. It is vital that visitors find their way to and around Downtown.	City			This project, eligible for CID or TIF funding, should be fairly inexpensive to implement and can provide a great benefit to Downtown businesses. The City should begin with the gateway signage to give Downtown an identity and then progress to signage around the BRC parking lots. Eventually, the district seals should be installed to help identify Downtown's sub-areas.	
54 Improve Downtown Aesthetics	These improvements are critical for Downtown to welcome visitors. The overall atmosphere will change as projects such as special public projects, infrastructure, and private buildings are improved. All of this helps to welcome visitors and encourages the exploration of Downtown. DPB should also begin a program to put displays in vacant Downtown windows.	City and DPB		NOW	Many of these improvements will rely on the City, however DPB should advocate, seek funding, and help with the design process of each project. Most of these projects will also be eligible for the local funding mechanisms of CID and TIF, and some costs may be able to be paid from an EDS. Projects may also qualify for State or Federal funds.	
55 Develop public restrooms.	This is an important amenity for visitors and will assist local businesses in dealing with larger crowds in Downtown. The City should consider future locations for restrooms near small parks or plazas and acquire this property if they become available.	City		Ongoing	This is a planning effort initially, but acquisition costs may be eligible for CID or TIF funding. Key areas along Vine, Broadway, and Main as well as the BRC parking areas, should be considered.	
56 Support the positioning statement of "It All Starts Here" with advertising and promotional campaigns.	DPB should meet with its members and Downtown businesses to refine this statement and develop tools to support this brand.	DPB			Tools should include logos, taglines, and bylines and every Downtown merchant or attraction should be encouraged to adopt the branding.	
57 Pursue the recommended retail and residential improvements.	The City and DPB share many of the recommendations to these Downtown aspects and each group should collaborate and press forward. As the City grows, and attracts developments such as the Eight Points Project, Downtown must improve the viability of its retail and residential sectors.	City and DPB		Ongoing	The recommendations from the residential and retail market reports will help support all DREAM efforts.	

Marketing						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
58 Conduct ongoing monitoring of organizations with a vested interested in Downtown.	DPB needs to maintain its role as the Downtown champion, building on the DREAM organizational structure review to enhance its resources. DPB needs to understand these roles in the context of Downtown and match the strengths of each groups to the issues facing Downtown.	DPB		Ongoing	Effective collaboration will include presentations, meetings, media coverage, and face-to-face interviews to address broader issues and obtain individual and group buy-in.	
59 Improve the Downtown Poplar Bluff website.	While this is a new website effort, there are improvements to be made. DPB should include the Downtown Area boundary, links to other groups and relevant sites such as www.modream.org, explain the vision and add content to the donations page, and improve the calendar of events.	DPB		2014	This effort can evolve slowly, however the improvements are critical. DPB should survey its leadership to determine if there is pro-bono help from within the group.	
60 Form and recruit members for a community committee.	This will help DPB become more solidified as the lead organization.	DPB		2012	The committee should include anyone interested in Downtown. Initial tasks should focus narrowly on a problem...for example, graffiti. An effort should be made to include a broad variety of people from other areas of the City.	
61 Engage Poplar Bluff Senior High School students.	This can build future City leaders and will help DPB reach-out to parents as well.	DPB		2012	This group can be used for planning efforts. Tasking them with a single question can lead to important brainstorming ideas. They can also be used to help at events, but should be avoided as the 'work' committee. They will be more invested if they are involved in the planning stages as well.	
62 Develop mutually beneficial opportunities with Three Rivers Community College.	This can also be in the form of a committee, but may include efforts that students can address during classes.	DPB	Three Rivers Community College	Ongoing	A geography or public policy teacher could be identified and encouraged to develop an assignment for Downtown. The teacher might also serve on a DPB committee.	
63 Address misperceptions about safety with factual information provided through a grassroots effort and media outreach	This is an important issue for Downtown. If visitors are to be made to feel safe and explore the area, Downtown must overcome this image. Leaders suggest that these claims are unfounded, but the image persists. More residents will help, as will consistent, factual, and positive marketing messages.	DPB	City, Chamber, and Police Department	NOW	Accurate statistics must be developed, but typically do not make great news stories. DPB will need to constantly promote the area, interview residents, and reach-out to press regarding the positive changes it is making as an organization.	
64 Create walking tours to showcase Downtown Poplar Bluff's heritage.	These tours can help raise the visibility of businesses and activities in Downtown.	HPC	DPB	2012	The HPC should develop the route and information, with the DPB helping to produce the marketing materials and promotions of the tours. Merchants can also get involved.	
65 Promote Downtown successes to the region.	The City and DPB need to promote improvements. The region needs to know what investments are being made in Downtown, but also city residents.	City	DPB	Ongoing	This is an ongoing effort that begins with the City providing accurate information on projects. The DPB should then develop materials and news stories.	

PGA  **PLANNERS**