

# DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

CITY OF AURORA, MISSOURI

JULY 2012



CITY OF AURORA



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 plan for Downtown Aurora to guide future actions and leverage limited resources to induce public and private reinvestment. The DREAM Initiative planning process reviewed numerous issues related to the function, structure, and image of Downtown Aurora. 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. DREAM began with several assessments of existing conditions in Downtown Aurora. These assessments were used as the basis for various analyses and recommendations developed in each DREAM task as described in this plan.

The DREAM Strategic Plan is not intended to replace previous planning efforts, but rather to supplement existing 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 Aurora. 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 Aurora into a vibrant area.

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 Aurora include:

**Goal One: Foster and promote the collaboration of Downtown interests, with a focus on Main Street Aurora (MSA) emerging as the lead organization for Downtown**

MSA will provide most of the leadership and resources necessary to implement this Downtown Strategic Plan. Therefore, it is imperative that this organization be

develop broad public support and involvement, as well as continued support from the City. MSA also needs to work with the Chamber and appeal to area businesses, not just Downtown businesses. All of these groups are currently working for the good of Downtown, however MSA should emerge as the lead group to ensure an ongoing focus in the future. The Chamber and City serve much broader areas of the community and, from time-to-time, may need to divert resources from Downtown to other areas. MSA should work to solidify its support structure and attract more volunteers and sustainable funding, such as the proposed Community Improvement District in Goal Two.

### **Goal Two: Establish the Downtown Aurora Community Improvement District (DACID)**

A Community Improvement District (CID) will provide a dedicated funding source for improvements in Downtown, as well as a level of organizational stability. The DACID should be established as a political subdivision, rather than a nonprofit corporation, and be supported by a 1% sales tax. It is anticipated that the DACID could generate about \$75,000 annually to support the activities of MSA and will allow for other expanded Downtown services, operations, and projects.

### **Goal Three: Develop a Downtown Façade Improvement Program**

The City, with help from AHS, has already implemented a Business Assistance Revolving Loan Program to help businesses locate in Aurora. A companion program to this would be a Façade Improvement Program that assists Downtown property owners with specific improvements to their buildings. Such a program can also be loan-based or could potentially be a matching grant. The City should work with AHS and MSA to define the criteria and assistance parameters and then identify a small amount of funding in the current fiscal year. MSA should also seek donations and promote the program so that it may be expanded in the future. AHS should be involved and improvements should meet some simple design standards.



Aurora Post Office



Aurora City Hall

**Goal Four: Develop a community-wide wayfinding system**

The entire City of Aurora can benefit from added wayfinding to help travelers find the City from Interstate 44. Downtown will benefit and the attractions in and around Downtown should as well. A wayfinding system should have a unified theme and components that include gateway monument signage, directional signage, and proximity signs. An effective system will guide vehicles to parking lots and pedestrians from parking lots to Downtown attractions. Wayfinding can also help address issues such as safety and lack of parking. Wayfinding improvements should be woven into the City's existing streetscape plans and may be funded by a local incentive mechanism such as the proposed DACID.

**Goal Five: Increase Downtown marketing**

MSA will need to accept the role of collectively marketing Downtown as a unified shopping district. MSA should focus on several marketing tasks, including:

- Development of a Downtown Events Committee.
- Development of a Downtown Aurora Website.
- Cultivation of a core group of Downtown leaders.
- Integration of MSA outreach efforts into all regular events in the City.

MSA should also seek to capitalize on the City's existing visitors. People are already in town for various restaurants, events, and recreational reasons and Downtown needs to learn to attract them. MSA can also create additional support marketing materials for retail attraction, residential development, event promotion, and retail maps to following the unifying theme.

**Goal Six: Promote the benefits of historic preservation**

MSA and the City should assist the AHS with promoting the merits of historic restoration of Downtown buildings. Downtown Aurora has a wealth of heritage which, if not properly preserved, will be lost. The AHS can do a number of things to promote the need for preservation such as historic walking tours, assistance with property research, and encouraging adherence to simple design standards. The AHS and MSA should monitor Downtown property owners' attitudes toward preservation.

**Goal Seven: Encourage development of upper floor spaces for residential/office**

Increasing the Downtown residential population will create a built-in market for retail businesses and a vibrant, safer, atmosphere. Additionally, first-floor spaces in Downtown buildings should generally be reserved for retail uses to maintain the pedestrian walkway on the street frontage.

Downtown Aurora has a significant amount of upper-floor vacant space, particularly around the intersection of Madison Avenue and Olive Street. The City and MSA should work to attract investors willing to convert these upper floors into residential and office uses and also to streamline approval processes for these projects. A potential funding source for common access structures can include the proposed CID and the proposed

Façade Improvement Program can assist a property owner with upper-floor, exterior improvements. However, such improvements should adhere to some simple building design guidelines as proposed in DREAM.



Ribbon Cutting in Downtown Aurora

**Goal Eight: Expand Retail Development**

It is important to develop a business attraction package, along with incentives, to interest new retail businesses in Downtown Aurora. Additionally, MSA should work with the City to help strengthen the existing businesses and encourage them to expand. MSA should also consider creating an economic development subcommittee to support the City Manager and spearhead the retail development effort. However, the existing board of MSA should initially be trained and charged with providing this support. Ultimately, the goal will be to create the desired retail mix in Downtown; however, it is first important to create the critical mass of retail. Filling first-floor vacancies and eventually replacing service uses on first-floors are critical efforts. Eventually, Downtown Aurora should focus on its niche of outdoor activities and the arts to build the unique retail mix necessary to become a shopping destination.

**Goal Nine: Consider other incentive mechanisms**

In addition to the proposed CID and Façade Improvement Program, the City should remain open to implementing other mechanisms such as a city-wide Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS) or a Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district. These mechanisms could generate a significant amount of funding for Downtown redevelopment activities and larger public infrastructure and private projects.

**Goal Ten: Address Downtown land-use conflicts**

The City and MSA should maintain an open dialogue with Downtown businesses, particularly industrial uses, to address issues arising from any conflicts. It is important that these companies are aware of revitalization efforts and understand they have a role to play in Downtown's resurgence. When these businesses seek to expand or renovate, they should be provided the DREAM design concepts and encouraged to undergo aesthetic improvements. Additionally, representatives from these companies should be invited to participate on Downtown committees and volunteer at events. They are a part of Downtown, until they reach a point and need to relocate to a larger facility.



Madison Avenue in Downtown Aurora

## 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 DREAM Initiative provides downtown-focused planning services over a three-year period to designated Missouri communities. The State partners retained PGAV Planners, a professional planning and design firm headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, to provide this planning.

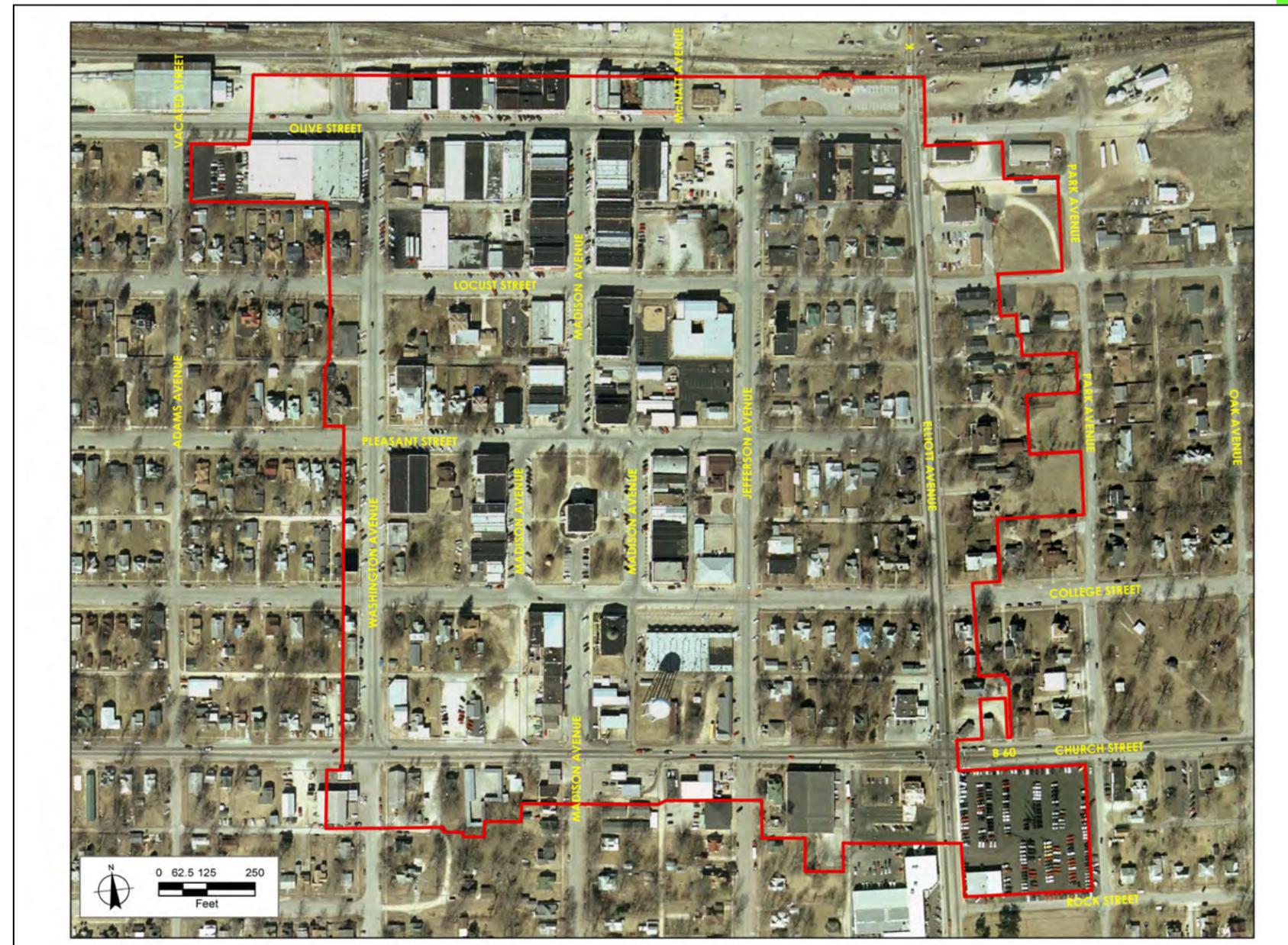
These Missouri State agencies recognize that substantial improvements and investments have already been made in Downtown Aurora. The purpose of the DREAM Initiative is to leverage local public and private investments to sustain revitalization momentum. The goal of the DREAM Initiative is to revitalize 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 Aurora 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
- Building and Streetscape Design Guidelines
- Retail Market Analysis
- Residential Demand Analysis
- Financial Assistance Review

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 PGAV Planners.



Aurora 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 Aurora. 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 Aurora's heritage. Downtown Aurora faces significant opportunities and challenges. Downtown leaders will need to have a clear vision of the projects that that community will accept and the risks that it will not. Balancing these aspects will help Downtown accentuate its positive traits and enhance its relevance to Aurora citizens. The DREAM Initiative builds on existing 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 Aurora 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 held later that fall. The meeting included representatives from the City, MSA, and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, along with business owners and residents. PGAV Planners staff and personnel from the DREAM state partner agencies were also in attendance. The City staff members provided a presentation and tour that helped to identify the DREAM planning tasks that would benefit Downtown Aurora.

- **Focus Group Meetings**

In March of 2008, discussions of Downtown Aurora issues and ideas for improvements were facilitated with four focus groups: Business Owners; Chamber Members and Directors; Longtime Residents, High School Students, and Downtown Residents; and City Staff, Council, and Media.

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 Aurora.

- **Telephone Survey**

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. While less than half of respondents indicated Downtown was moving in a generally positive direction, about 12% responded they didn't know. This may indicate a need to better promote Aurora's successes to gain momentum and enthusiasm among City residents. Participants also cited a wide variety of items for improvement, with few improvements standing-out significantly more than others. This may indicate that Downtown is at a point where any improvement can have a sizeable impact. In this situation, the City that must set the example and lead the revitalization efforts with public investments.

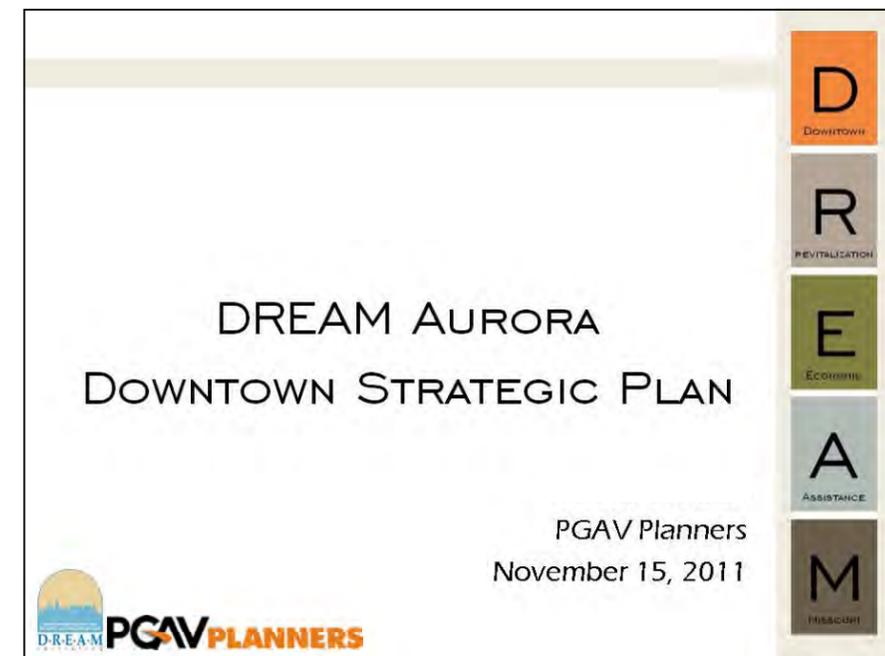
- **Key Stakeholder Discussions**

Conversations were held with representatives of the City, Chamber, MSA, 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 May of 2008, several public presentations and meetings were held to review progress on the DREAM Initiative work in Aurora. Meetings were publicized in the local newspaper and promoted on the City website.
- Press Involvement**  
 At several of the public meetings, representatives of the local newspaper 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 Aurora and the Chamber both 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, PGAV Planners, 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 Aurora website homepage.



Presentation Title Slide from an Aurora DREAM Public Meeting.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The City of Aurora 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 Aurora through positive news articles and by increasing the City's ability to obtain State funding. Some recent accomplishments in the DREAM Study Area include:

- Demolition of dilapidated commercial and residential structures that were detrimental to downtowns revitalization.
- Successful use of the Aurora Downtown Business Assistance Program that has assisted several business locations and façade improvements.
- Successful new Downtown events, that were well promoted and attended.
- Phase one of streetscape improvements with Phase two identified and designed.
- Construction of a fountain at City Hall.
- DREAM Initiative—The DREAM planning process is a commitment of about \$243,000 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.



Example of façade and streetscape improvements in Downtown Aurora.



Recently constructed fountain at Aurora City Hall.

# Task Summaries



**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The DREAM Initiative included a review of the organizations with an interest in Downtown Aurora. The purpose of this task was to understand the roles and responsibilities of these organizations and their impact on Downtown revitalization efforts. The goal of this task is to determine how these organizations may be improved or adjusted to ensure that there is an efficient structure 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 Aurora
- Main Street Aurora (MSA)
- Aurora Chamber of Commerce (Chamber)
- Aurora Historical Society (AHS)

There is great opportunity in Downtown Aurora. The area includes stately buildings, natural beauty, and outstanding design assets. Existing Downtown revitalization efforts have centered around the recent streetscape improvements.

Organizationally, Downtown is lacking a strong champion to advocate for its businesses and the necessary public improvements that will attract private investors. MSA is focused on Downtown, but lacks the structure and financing to make it an effective lead agency. City leaders have the opportunity to clearly define the roles of MSA as the lead Downtown organization and also to obtain greater involvement from the Chamber and AHS.

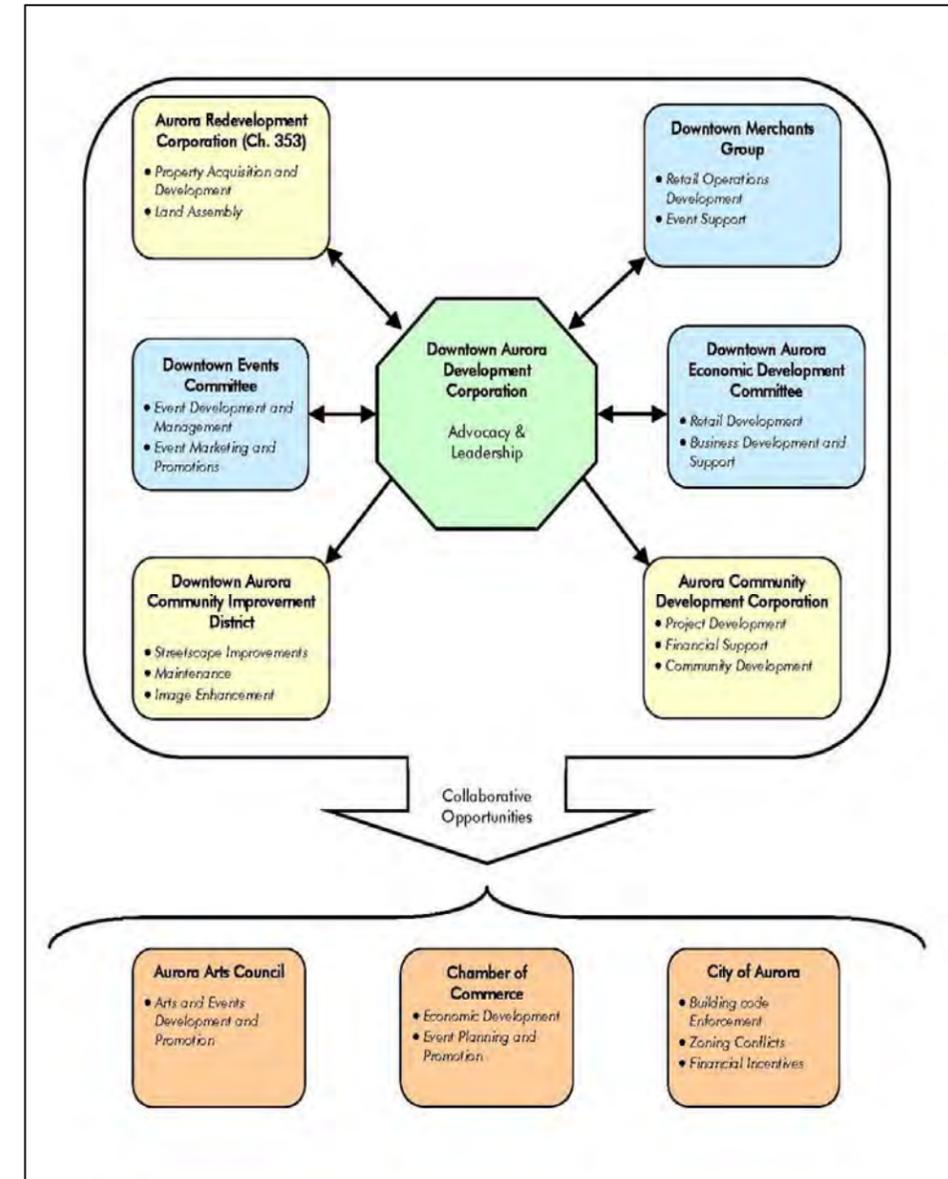
As the City deploys its resources, it is critical that support for Downtown is provided. Downtown represents a large infrastructure investment that the City cannot afford to let deteriorate more than it already has. Aurora continues to enjoy development opportunities in other areas of the City, which should provide resources that can be allocated to Downtown revitalization.

The Organizational Structure Review resulted in both recommendations to strengthen the existing organizations, and to form some new organizations. Primary Recommendations identified by this task include:

- **Solidify Main Street Aurora as the lead Downtown Organization**  
Information gathered from the community reinforces the feeling that Downtown is no longer relevant in the minds of residents. MSA has fulfilled some Downtown revitalization roles in the past, but was marginalized by a previous City administration. However, under recent City leadership, support for MSA has been renewed and the group rejuvenated. The City should continue and increase its support of MSA. However, it is also critical that MSA identify sustainable funding sources and expand its volunteer base to maintain its support structure well into the future.

Downtown Aurora 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 MSA will send a positive message regarding the importance of Downtown and begin to reverse negative perceptions and apathetic attitudes.

With the foundation of MSA stabilized, the group can focus its attention on engaging the public, enlisting volunteers, business advocacy, promoting Downtown heritage, developing and reinforcing City policies, and raising the visibility of Downtown as a viable shopping destination, residential area, and business location. The City Manager also conducts Economic Development activities, and an improved MSA should be able to assist and expand those efforts in collaboration with the City staff.



Recommended Downtown Organizational Structure

- **Create the Downtown Aurora Community Improvement District (DACID)**

The Downtown Aurora Community Improvement District (DACID) will provide an extra level of public service to the DREAM Study Area. The DACID will channel private sector energy towards the solution of public problems. The DACID will collaborate with MSA, the City, and the Chamber to provide public development financing options resulting from new private investment. This enhanced funding capability will help Main Street Aurora meet revitalization objectives. Funds generated by DACID should be used to provide district marketing, administrative support, event promotions, infrastructure, Downtown beautification, and encourage redevelopment of buildings.

The DACID will have the ability to contract with MSA to provide administrative and technical services for ongoing administration of the DACID, but this will immediately require appropriate staff and training to be available at MSA.

A Community Improvement District (CID) can be organized as a non-profit corporation or a political subdivision, however forming a political subdivision is recommended for the DACID, as it provides a more stable revenue source. Forming a CID requires a signed petition submitted to the hosting municipality that includes:

- Property owners owning more than 50% of assessed value of real property
- 50% per capita of all owners
- Boundaries of the district
- 5-year capital and service plan outlining purpose of district
- Cost estimates of improvements

A political subdivision CID may be funded by levying a tax on property, charging a fee for a business license, or charging an additional sales tax. Funding provided by DACID to MSA will strengthen the capacity of the

group to expand its marketing and promotion programs and materials, increase the existing Business Assistance Program, help the City develop a Façade Improvement Program, assist the Aurora Historical Society (AHS) with promoting Downtown’s heritage, and focus on retail and business attraction.

The October 2008, DREAM Financial Assistance Review for Aurora contemplates that a 1% Sales Tax only CID could generate approximately \$75,000 annually for Downtown revitalization programs, development activities and projects. Information regarding the DACID is included in this task section due to the organizational benefits it provides. Other potential sources of MSA support are included in the Financial Mechanisms Section on page 22 of this Plan.

The City should begin the process to establish a CID and MSA can assist with the public outreach required to inform the citizens and property owners of the mechanisms benefits

To see more information regarding the goals and objectives outlined in the *Aurora Organizational Structure Review, July 2009*, refer to the Schedule of Recommendations on page 29 of this Strategic Plan.



Examples of Aurora attractions located in and around Downtown Aurora..

**LAND USE, BUILDINGS, & INFRASTRUCTURE SURVEY**

The Land Use, Buildings, and Infrastructure Survey is an inventory of Downtown Aurora’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 December 2009, which contains 21 maps of the Aurora 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 Aurora. The City 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. 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 and Streetscape Design Section on page 14.
- MSA can help the City with procedures by promoting any policy changes and hosting seminars to provide information regarding the City’s expectations of Downtown property owners, 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 a few lots in Downtown Aurora that are either vacant or underutilized. 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 primarily along Church Street and are shown on the Concept Map found on page 27. 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 City.



Aurora 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 Aurora, that was used throughout the DREAM planning process.

The survey process used by PGAV Planners included 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. The process and results of these methods are summarized below:

- **Focus Groups**

Four separate focus groups were conducted to engage stakeholders in open discussion regarding Downtown Aurora. The groups consisted of: Downtown Business Owners; Chamber Members and Chamber Director; Long-time Residents, High School Students, and Downtown Residents; and City Staff, Council, and Media. In each of the groups, discussions included the participant’s perceptions about Downtown, priorities for improvements, and desires for additional businesses or services.

The groups described Aurora as a family-friendly town, with a strong sense of community, a strong work ethic, and a focus on supporting their children in high school sports. The town is near a number of lakes, and has an abundance of parks. Aurora is within easy driving distance, about 30 minutes, of larger towns such as Springfield, Joplin, and Branson. Historically, Aurora was a mining town, and its downtown thrived.

The participants felt that in many ways Aurora is moving the right direction, but that there are still improvements to be made. Most participants felt that the improvement they have seen in Aurora has happened within the last 5-7 years. They discussed the

expansion of Wal-Mart into a Supercenter, which is bringing shoppers into Aurora from neighboring towns. They also cited a five-phase Downtown Development Plan, which is in progress and currently beginning phase two. The participants saw this plan as a major improvement to Downtown. Further, they mentioned individual instances of people rehabilitating old buildings and expanding their businesses.

In discussing ways that Aurora’s development is less positive, the participants suggested that there is a lack of communication and cooperation between the City government, the business owners, the property owners, and the Chamber. They felt that if these groups could collaborate and work together more productively, Aurora would move even further in the right direction.

For the complete report, please see the *Aurora DREAM Focus Group Survey Report* dated March 25, 2008.

- **Community Telephone Survey**

In the Spring and Summer of 2008 a phone survey was conducted to interview a random sample of Aurora residents regarding their perceptions of Downtown. Three hundred (300) interviews were completed, and a sample of this size yields an overall error margin of ±5.7%. Key points from the survey results include:

- For the community as a whole, respondents placed the highest priority on repairing streets, improving emergency services, and upgrading parks and recreation facilities.
- Most respondents indicated that they visit Downtown Aurora once a month or more.
- A majority of respondents said they most often use Downtown for the government or post office, for dining, and for conducting business.

*Downtown Revitalization and Economic Assistance for Missouri  
Community Survey Telephone Report  
Final Survey Findings and Results*

Aurora, Missouri

**SECTION III  
OVERVIEW OF DATA**

In August 2008, UNICOM • ARC conducted a telephone survey of residents in Aurora Missouri, drawn from a sample of residents throughout the community. The purpose of the survey was to learn about public perceptions of and priorities for the downtown area in collaboration with the DREAM Initiative.

Three hundred (300) interviews were completed, and a sample of this size yields an overall error margin of ±5.4%. This Overview of Data provides raw frequencies to the questions. We give exact wording of each question, editing only some instructions in the interest of space. The list is sorted where appropriate and the most prevalent response is bolded in each section.

		%
1. Thinking about the Aurora, Missouri area, would you say things are moving in the right direction or off track and moving in the wrong direction?	right direction	48.7%
	wrong	26.0%
	mixed	13.7%
	other, don't know	11.7%

I'm going to read a list of things that might be done to improve the quality of life in a given area. For each of the following items, please tell me how high a priority you would place on each by using a 5-point scale. If you think the item should be a top priority, rate it a 5. If you think it should be a very low priority, rate it a 1. Of course, you can use any number between 5 and 1.

	Mean	Very High priority (5) %	total high priority (4-5) %	3 %	total low priority (1-2) %
4. Improving emergency services	3.82	42.0%	59.0%	17.7%	17.3%
3. Repairing major streets	3.80	38.3%	62.3%	20.3%	15.7%
5. Upgrading parks and recreation facilities	3.60	31.7%	57.3%	20.7%	20.3%
6. Attracting more big box retail development	3.57	38.7%	52.0%	21.7%	22.3%
2. Revitalizing the Aurora downtown area	3.47	31.3%	48.3%	28.0%	21.7%

December 2008  
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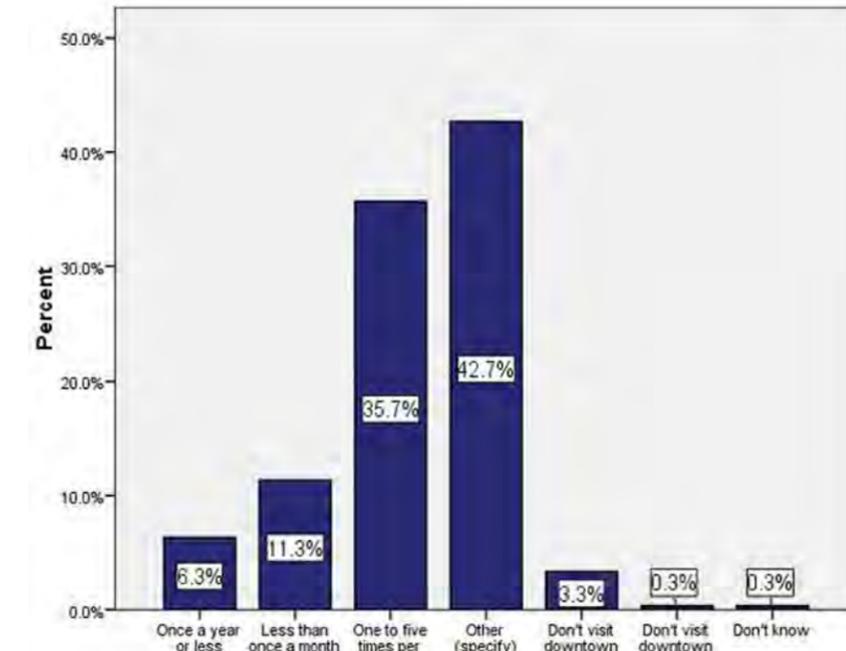
UNICOM-ARC

Sample results from the Telephone Survey.

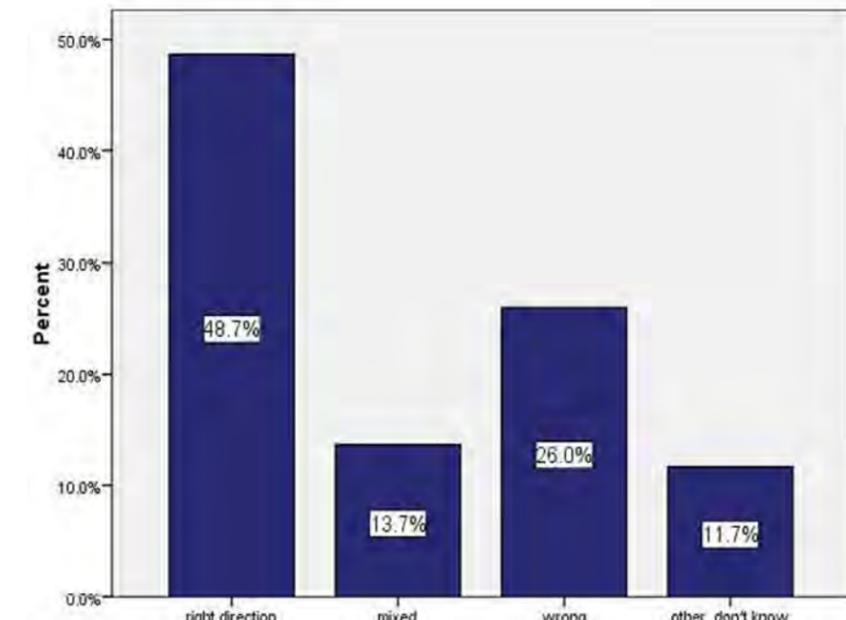
- Regarding Downtown in its current state, a majority of respondents felt good about the quality of parking, business hours, streets, signage, sidewalks, dining options, and preservation of historic structures. Respondents viewed available green space, the mix of businesses, occupied storefronts, and entertainment options less favorably.
- Respondents placed high priorities on adding family or casual dining options, clothing stores, and a bakery Downtown.
- Among several potential Downtown improvements, respondents placed a high priority on improving building façades, making the area more pedestrian-friendly, and improving safety.
- A majority of respondents felt that upper-floor living space, either rental units or condominiums, would be a welcome Downtown improvement.
- A majority of respondents receive their information about Downtown Aurora through local newspapers and word-of-mouth.

Refer to the complete *Aurora DREAM Community Telephone Survey Report* from December, 2008.

MSA 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 Aurora.



7. How often do you visit downtown Aurora?



1. Thinking about the Aurora, Missouri area, would you say things are moving in the right direction or off track and moving in the wrong direction?

Sample results from the Aurora Telephone Survey.

**BUILDING AND STREETScape DESIGN**

The historic character of Downtown buildings is a distinctive feature that helps to provide Aurora with an identity. The public features of Downtown include the streets, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and other furnishings. DREAM planning efforts seek to combine the intrinsic historic character found in Downtown Aurora’s buildings with attractive public investment. These elements are then leveraged to induce future revitalization projects.

The Aurora Historical Society (AHS) is co-located with the Chamber and has worked to preserve and leverage the historic assets of Aurora. A significant accomplishment was the establishment of the Downtown Revolving Loan Program. This Program resulted from a collaboration among the City, AHS, and local banks and businesses to provide low interest loans to business owners. Successful loans and the program itself must be continually promoted, and recapitalized.

Additionally, the City and MSA obtained CDBG funding and in-kind services to complete construction of Phases I and II of the existing Downtown Aurora Streetscape plan. This Plan includes multiple phases along Madison Avenue from Highway 60/Church Street to Olive Street. Plans include replacement and enhancement of sidewalks, curb and gutter, accessibility ramps, decorative lighting, trash receptacles, benches, and planters. This streetscape design will serve Downtown well into the future. However the City and MSA should expand the plan to include a wayfinding system that will assist both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

While historic preservation and streetscape improvements play an important role in Downtown revitalization, the City must also address the conditions of its existing Downtown buildings, whether historic or otherwise. Some Downtown commercial buildings are suffering from years of deferred maintenance. In some cases, the building has been altered so extensively, that it is impossible to assess the true condition of the building because of inappropriate covering materials. Concern over building conditions should not stop with the commercial properties. This problem extends to the conditions of surrounding housing stock as well.

The City should consider 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. MSA should work to promote the positive aspects of building maintenance, historic preservation and better code enforcement, as well as conduct needed public outreach regarding City codes, inspection policies, and expectations. Supportive property owners will emerge and assist the effort.

Property owners that are not supportive of efforts to improve Downtown buildings, will likely be the ‘problem’ property owners. Years of disinvestment and too little attention paid by the City, have likely developed a feeling of entitlement with these owners and they will need special attention.

The design concepts expressed in this report suggest specific recommendations to buildings that were selected by the community. Illustrations of 106-108 S. Madison Avenue; the West Side of the Square (301-309 S. Madison Avenue); 1-13 W. Olive Street; and 228 S. Madison Avenue are shown on pages 15 through 18 of this Strategic Plan.

Recommendations to address issues regarding Downtown Aurora buildings include:

- **Expand the Capabilities and Programs of the Aurora Historical Society (AHS)**  
MSA should work with the AHS to increase the visibility of Downtown Aurora’s historical features. Historic preservation is currently on a hit-or-miss basis conducted by heritage-minded property owners. The City does not have a local preservation ordinance, design standards, or official commission.

At one point an application for the “Aurora Commercial Historic District” for registration on the National Register of Historic Places was completed. However, as of the date of this Strategic Plan, the district has not been approved. MSA and the AHS should monitor the feeling of Downtown property owners and continue this effort if attitudes toward a



Examples of historic architecture found in Downtown Aurora.

designated district change. However, the benefits of preservation should still be promoted and MSA and the AHS can maintain and update a survey of Downtown historic resources.

With the guidance of MSA and the AHS, the City may one day take the step of approving a local preservation ordinance and forming a preservation commission. A preservation ordinance will encourage historic rehabilitation, and discourage inappropriate building alterations, in Downtown Aurora. This sends a very strong message to the development community and potential investors that the City is willing to protect Downtown property values.

- **Review City Codes, Inspection Policies, and Enforcement Procedures in the Context of Downtown Property Maintenance**

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, MSA can assist by informing the public and property owners about any procedural adjustments and City expectations. As with encouragement of historic rehabilitation, stronger attention to City codes sends potential Downtown investors a positive message that the City is willing to protect the value of Downtown properties.

Recommendations to address issues regarding Downtown Aurora’s streetscape efforts, include:

- **Add a Wayfinding System**

Downtown Aurora is located south of Interstate 44 along Missouri Highway 39. The route to Downtown Aurora is fairly circuitous and crosses a major rail line along the north side of the DREAM Study Area.

Overall, the City should consider improved wayfinding signage along Highway 39 to assure visitors they are heading toward Aurora. However, for Downtown, the City should design and construct a wayfinding system. Wayfinding can enhance certain Downtown perceptions, such as safety and parking. Additionally, wayfinding will help give Downtown Aurora an identity and, if well-designed, will reinforce the Downtown’s character, existing streetscape design, and chosen marketing brand.

A complete wayfinding system will include gateway monument signs at entrances to Downtown, as identified on the Concept Map found on page 27. Directional signage should also be used to help visitors navigate from main thoroughfares to parking areas and on to the attraction. Properly designed and placed directional signage will also limit the impact of visitor traffic on the residential neighborhoods surrounding the core of Downtown.

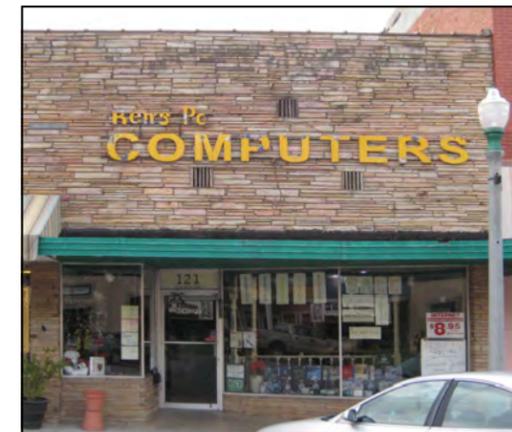
- **Continue Streetscape Plan**

The City has made good progress on the five-phase Downtown Improvement Plan. With the improvements leading from Olive Street to the Courthouse completed, the City and MSA have launched into the next phase, which should be complete in 2012. The Plan is well-designed and should serve as a guiding document for Downtown.

More conceptual building design guidelines for Downtown Aurora’s buildings are found in the *DREAM Streetscape and Building Design Guidelines* from March, 2012.



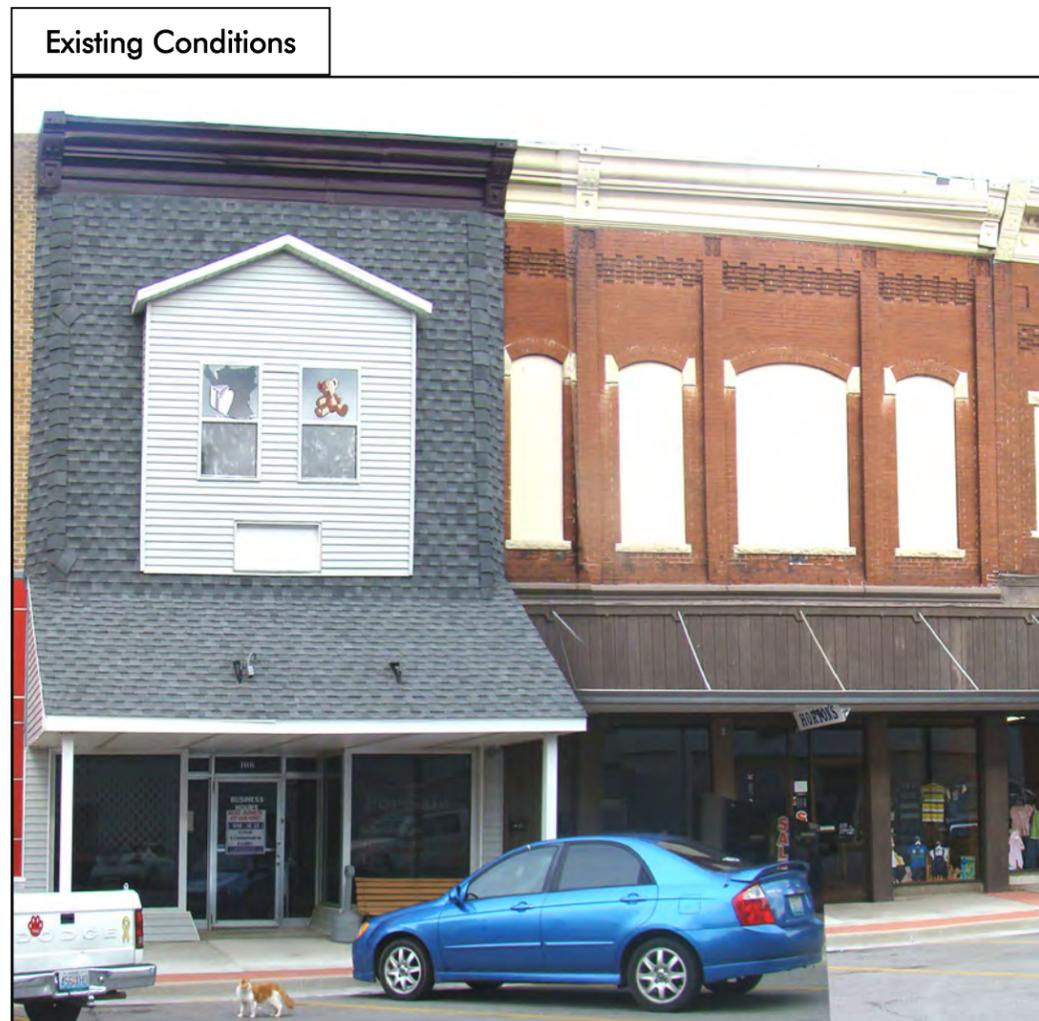
Façade incentives coupled with simple design standards could enhance this Downtown Aurora building greatly.



Examples of existing business signage in Downtown Aurora.

106-108 S. Madison Avenue

- Remove siding & shingles
- Restore original 2nd floor windows
- Restore original entrances
- Restore 2nd floor entrances
- Remove metal & shingled awnings
- Utilize canvas/fabric awnings
- Streetscape of lights, trees & site furnishings



West Side of Square: 301-309 S. Madison Avenue

- Remove metal canopies
- Restore original 2nd floor windows
- Restore original entrances & storefront windows
- Use more compatible paint colors
- Remove paint from masonry facade
- Utilize canvas/fabric awnings
- Streetscape of lights, trees & site furnishings

Existing Conditions



Illustration Showing Improvements



1-13 W. Olive Street

- Remove frame & metal canopies
- Restore original 2nd floor windows
- Restore original entrances & storefront windows
- Use more compatible paint colors
- Utilize canvas/fabric awnings
- Streetscape of lights, trees & site furnishings

Existing Conditions

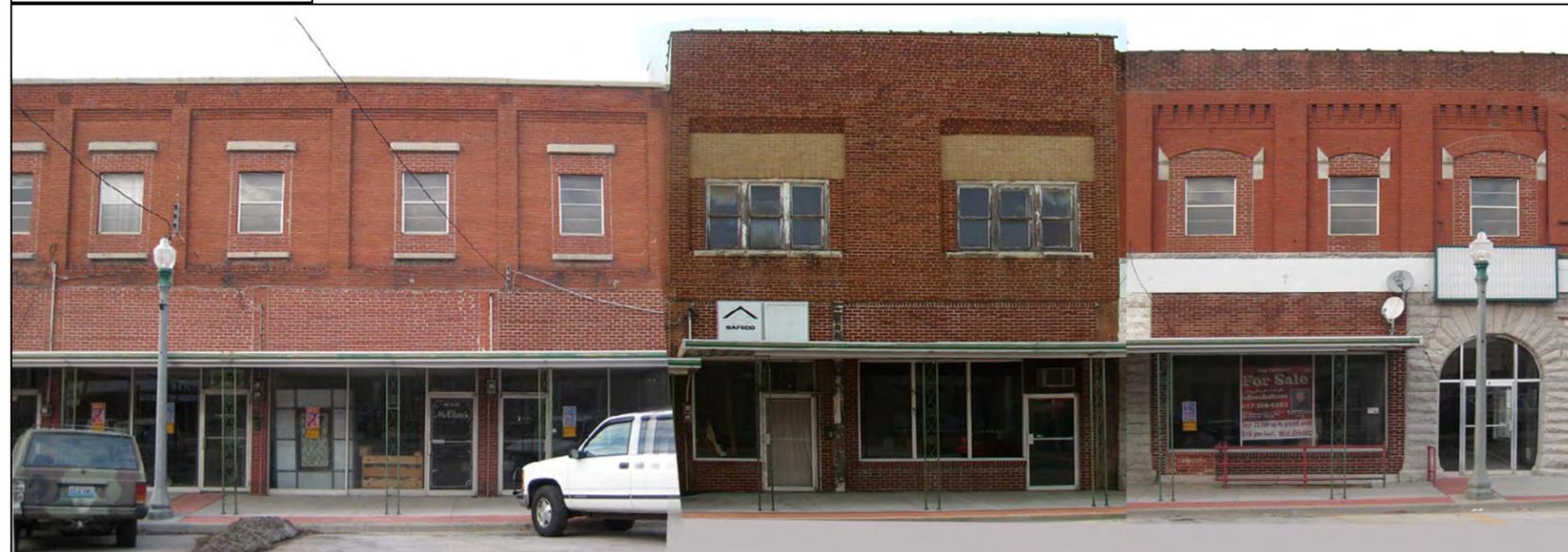


Illustration Showing Improvements



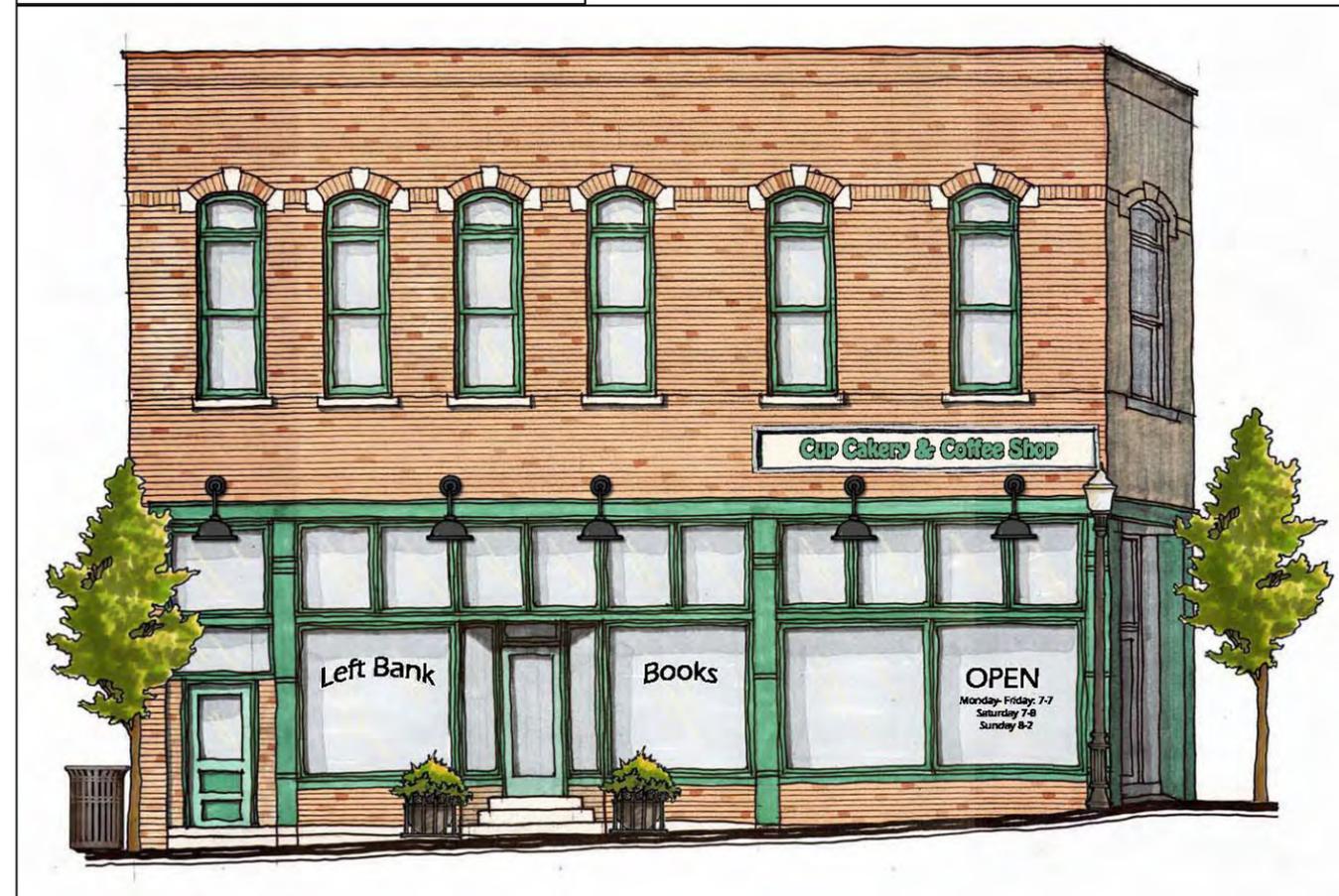
228 S. Madison Avenue

- Remove metal canopies
- Restore original 2nd floor windows
- Restore original entrances & storefront windows
- Use more compatible paint colors
- Remove paint from masonry facade
- Utilize canvas/fabric awnings
- Streetscape of lights, trees & site furnishings

Existing Conditions



Illustration Showing Improvements



## RESIDENTIAL MARKET

The residential market surrounding, and within, Downtown Aurora has a strategic relationship to Downtown. It is from these residences that businesses will draw regular customers. Visitors must also 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 Aurora leaders to promote residential development that can meet future housing demand. Additional residential recommendations include enhancing quality-of-life amenities to make Downtown living more attractive to 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 include:

- **Encourage New, Senior Affordable Rental Units**  
The MHDC residential demand analysis indicated that the affordable family rental market occupancy is soft, but that there is potential housing demand for about 43 affordable senior units over the next few years. 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 City should seek to locate specific housing developments that show future demand, in Downtown locations. However, the City must insist on high-quality units.

MHDC also found that the upper floor, loft-style rental and condominium market that fuels a resurgence in many downtowns has not begun in Aurora. However, there are opportunities for this housing in the multi-story buildings located primarily at the intersection of Olive Street and Madison Avenue. Downtown Aurora has a significant amount of upper-floor space that could be converted into residential units. The City should encourage and be prepared to assist investors interested in developing these properties for residential units, however the ground floor of Downtown buildings should always be preserved for retail uses.

- **Develop Added Downtown Amenities**  
In addition to encouraging residential projects that can meet the housing demand identified by the MHDC analysis, the City and MSA should work to improve Downtown living conditions. Downtown features that residents find appealing include improvements to police enforcement, lighting, the business mix, building conditions, events, and the streetscape. Enhancements in these areas will encourage new Downtown residents and develop demand for more housing units. Most of these amenities, such as building conditions, added restaurant and retail businesses, and streetscape improvements also feed into other DREAM tasks to create a vibrant Downtown atmosphere.
- **Review Zoning**  
The City should consider the effect of allowing a large single-family homes to be converted into multi-family use. This common practice does not typically enhance the value of the property and may lead to the creation of inferior rental units. There are currently some examples of this conversion in the residential area surrounding the DREAM boundary.
- **Encourage Residential Maintenance and Improvement**  
The City and MSA, while maintaining a focus on commercial buildings, should also encourage residential property owners to properly maintain and upgrade their buildings. MSA should research and develop a Neighborhood Home Repair Program to include local charities and volunteers willing to help residents learn to property care for their homes. The Home Repair Opportunity Program (HeRO) provided by the MHDC should be applied throughout Downtown Aurora.

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



Examples of housing in Downtown Aurora.

# DREAM Initiative • Downtown Strategic Plan

## 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 Aurora.

The Downtown Aurora retail analysis identified about 403,500 square feet of existing first-floor commercial space. About 97,500 square feet of this space is currently used as retail and about 16,500 square feet used as restaurant, for a total of 114,000 square feet. At the time of the retail analysis, this existing 114,000 square feet of occupied retail and restaurant space was generating about \$4.9 million in sales annually, not including sales from auto dealers, gasoline stations or non-store retailers. Retail sales are generating about \$42 per square foot, and restaurant sales about \$36 per square foot. Including vacant office and service space, there is about 113,000 square feet of first-floor vacancy in Downtown Aurora. Using the sales per square foot numbers identified above, this vacancy amount represents the potential of an additional \$4.7 Million in annual sales to the City of Aurora.

To analyze retail demand, the consultant examined retail spending data for households in a primary trade area (the City limits of Aurora) and a secondary trade area (households within a 18-minute drive of Downtown Aurora). 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.

Unmet demand was evaluated to identify retail opportunities for Downtown. The primary opportunity for Aurora is to attract retail stores which can make use of the existing vacant space in Downtown. There are many vacant storefronts, which would be suitable for specialty retail stores. To accommodate larger retailers requiring more contiguous square feet of first-floor space, multiple storefronts may be combined. As noted previously, there is significant upper floor space available in Downtown Aurora. The City, using incentive programs, may wish to encourage service-oriented businesses to move to currently vacant upper-floor space. The retail analysis

estimates that Downtown Aurora could support an additional 521,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space by capturing the secondary trade area's unmet demand in specific retail sectors. These categories represent retail opportunities for new merchants as well as for existing retailers to expand their floor area or add new product lines. Retail opportunities for Downtown Aurora, along with the estimated unmet demand in terms of annual sales, include:

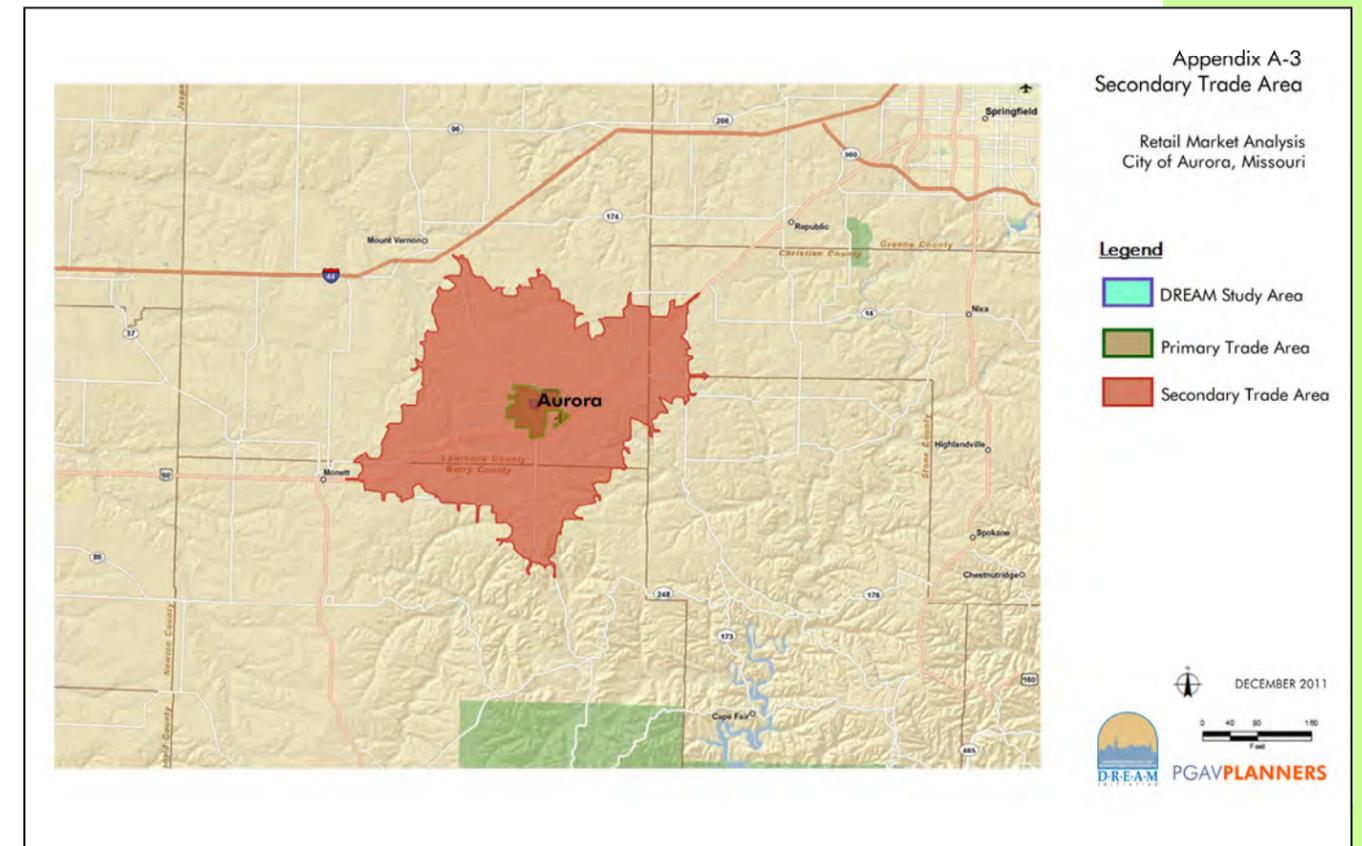
- Grocery Stores (\$5 million)
- Limited-Service Eating Places (\$4.1 million)
- Full-Service Eating Places (\$3.3 million)
- Building Material and Supplies Dealers (\$2 million)
- Electronics & Appliance Stores (\$1.7 million)
- Health & Personal Care Stores (\$1.2 million)
- Furniture Stores (\$820,000)
- Clothing Stores (\$810,000)

The Concept Map shown on page 27 of the Implementation Section was developed regarding the likely areas in which commercial development might occur. The Concept Map illustrates that the existing area along Madison Avenue and Olive Street provides most of the vacant space and that some opportunities exist to the south of the DREAM Study Area along Church and College Streets.

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.



A view of Downtown Aurora



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

Recommendations for improving Downtown’s retail sector are found in the Aurora DREAM Retail Market Analysis Report, March 2012. Primary recommendations, many of which could be funded by local incentive programs such as a CID, include:

- **Create a Downtown Business Attraction Program**  
Encourage retail uses on the first-floor of all mixed-use and commercial buildings. In the short-term, it is important for the City to focus on filling Downtown vacancies with retail stores. In the long-term, focus should shift to creating the right mix of retail stores. MSA should assist the City with the effort to recruit new businesses by using retail market information and developing a Retail Attraction Program. The program should include:
  - Goals for attracting targeted retail stores and filling vacant ground-floor spaces
  - Information on financial incentives, such as the existing Downtown Business Assistance Program, to assist the start-up of new businesses
  - Pertinent information regarding the Downtown retail and real-estate markets

MSA should also work with the City to improve aspects of the development process. Currently, the City Manager conducts these activities, but could use support from a subcommittee of MSA. The City provides community profile and vacancy information on its website, but MSA can help promote the availability of this information to business prospects and can also help the City promote the Downtown Business Assistance Revolving Loan Program to potential new investors. Additionally, MSA and the City should work to streamline the business permitting process for Downtown prospects.

Downtown Aurora is also a significant local restaurant destination. Residents from surrounding community often cite Downtown Aurora’s restaurants as reasons to visit. A Business Attraction Program should build upon this strength and seek to locate more restaurants and supporting shops.

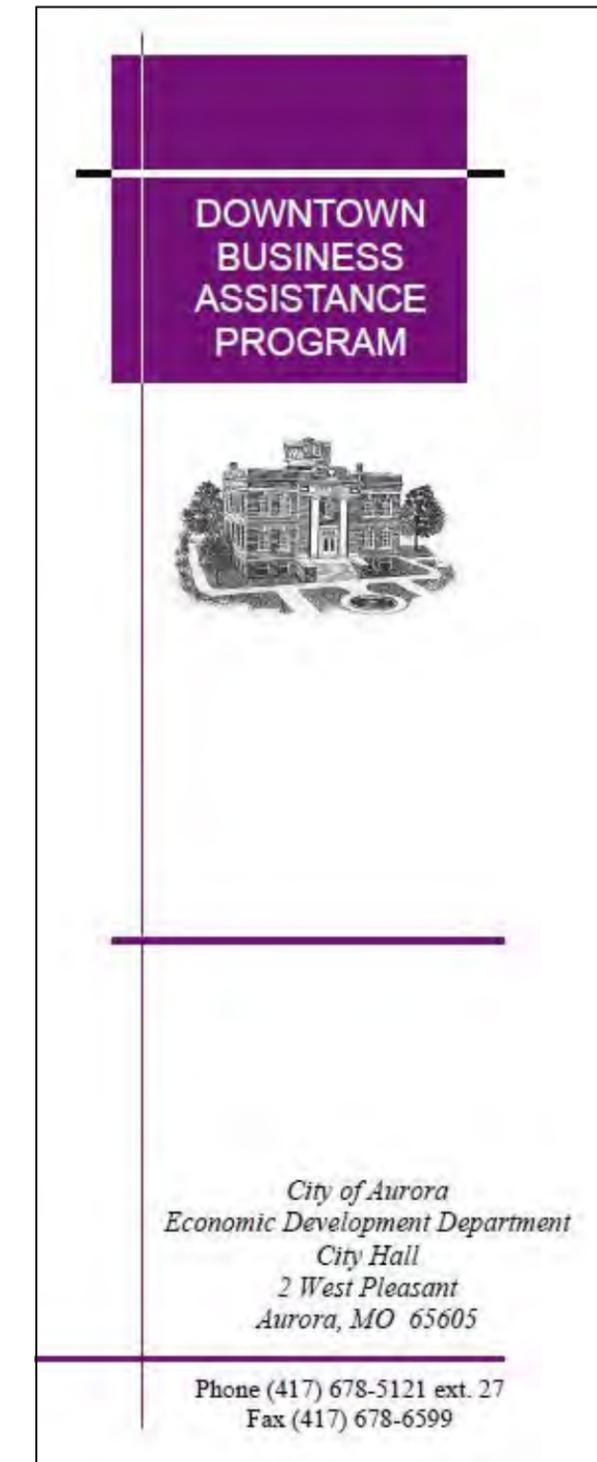
- **Strengthen Existing Businesses**  
MSA should coordinate a formal retention program. The Mayor and City Manager should join Downtown leaders in visiting the largest businesses on some regular basis. These visits will help uncover issues, identify problems, and spread goodwill.

MSA should also develop a program to help existing businesses improve business operations. Such a program should seek to educate and inform Downtown retail business owners about product differentiation, product presentation, window displays, and importance of hours and days of operation, and how service and quality of product differentiate them from big box or franchise stores. MSA can develop seminars for businesses that seek to enhance Downtown’s overall effectiveness and user-friendliness.

- **Develop a Marketing Campaign for Downtown Retail**  
Programs to increase marketing and collectively market Downtown businesses should be developed. Promotions should include shopping events that encourage the businesses to participate and will help brand the entire district of Downtown as a shopping destination. These promotional efforts should target residents of the secondary trade area.

MSA should create brochures that highlight the unique experience and retail stores in Downtown. These brochures should be distributed to residents and visitors and inform the public about existing stores, new stores, hours of operation, and special events. Additionally, the group should launch campaigns electronically and over social media outlets. MSA should also consider retaining a professional advertising service to ensure the broadest and most effective coverage of its advertising.

All of these marketing efforts could potentially be funded through a local incentive mechanisms, such as the proposed CID.



A brochure detailing Aurora’s existing Revolving Loan Program for Downtown businesses.

## FINANCIAL MECHANISMS

The Financial Assistance Review analyzed several funding mechanisms that are available to Downtown Aurora 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.

Aurora has initiated a Downtown Business Assistance Program Revolving Loan Fund. This provides a very critical first step in attracting Downtown businesses, however, also as previously noted, the program should be expanded to include building improvements. Additionally, there are several potential financial tools available to support other public and private Downtown revitalization efforts in Aurora.

As noted in the Organizational Structure Section on page 9, Downtown should initially consider the implementation of a CID. This program will allow for maximum flexibility and help add an important layer of organization for Downtown efforts. Other mechanisms such as a Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS), a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, historic tax credits, low income tax credits, and participation tax credits, should be pursued after the CID is in place. This Strategic Plan recommends that, after the proposed DACID, the City consider an EDS and Downtown TIF district 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 used, a general goal of DREAM is to leverage public funds to attract private investment that leads to job creation, business growth, and attractive Downtown buildings and public spaces. Information regarding the establishment of an EDS and TIF district, after the Downtown CID, includes:

- **Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS)**  
An EDS is an additional sales tax, up to one-half of one percent, imposed by cities in the State of Missouri to fund economic development initiatives. This tax requires voter approval by referendum. An EDS 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 Aurora revitalization efforts and support other economic development projects throughout the City.

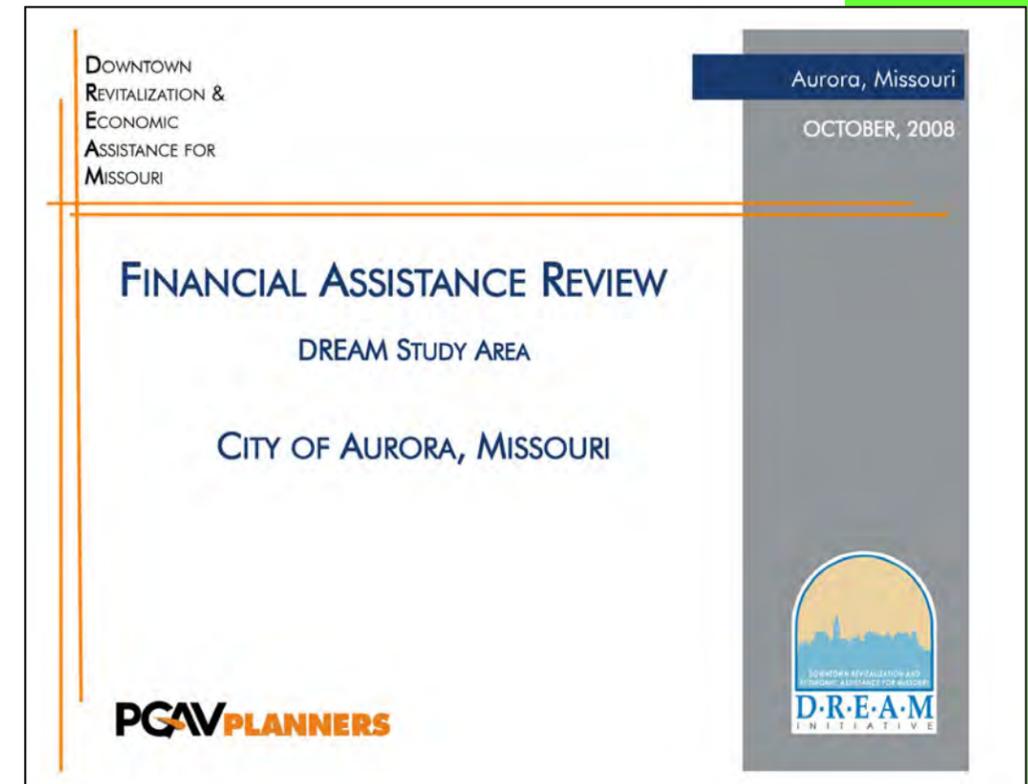
The Financial Assistance Review projects EDS tax revenue for Aurora based on the assumption of a one-half of one percent sales tax. This Strategic Plan proposes a structure slightly different than that of the Financial Assistance Review, but still within the State Statute requirements.

The proposed EDS structure includes not more than 25% of the revenues be used for administrative expenses and at least 20% used for City-wide economic development activities such as:

- 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/federal grants

Some, or all, of 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



Aurora DREAM Financial Assistance Review.

- 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 Aurora, the DREAM Financial Assistance Review estimates that Aurora could generate about \$140,000 annually from a one-half percent EDS to be used in the above manner. If the entire 55% were allocated to Downtown, about \$75,000 could be available. This revenue source would also be expected to grow over time and 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 MSA 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 certain 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.

- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District**

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 Aurora’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 \$30,000 to \$80,000 annually, depending on redevelopment activities. If possible, the District should be established just before some sizeable projects are initiated, to set the base tax year at a lower value. 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 Aurora transitions from public projects into private incentives.

Detailed statutory requirements and procedures regarding incentive tools available to Aurora are provided in the *DREAM Financial Assistance Review October 2008*.

**MARKETING**

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.

MSA should consider launching marketing efforts. Such a campaign will require adequate funding, and volunteers will need to be proficient in a variety of methods and media to promote Downtown. The marketing work conducted under the DREAM Initiative focused on three primary objectives:

- **Expand Downtown Retail Sales/Business Investment**
- **Strengthen Main Street Aurora**
- **Encourage Tourism in Downtown**

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

- **Establish a Downtown Events Committee**  
MSA should create a subcommittee, that includes representation from the Chamber and City to coordinate Downtown events. Several groups hold events throughout the year and MSA can assist these groups and maintain information that will help promote these activities, and therefore will help promote Downtown overall.
- **Develop a Downtown Aurora-focused Website**  
MSA should partner with interested stakeholders to develop a website and give an identity to Downtown. Such a website will inform visitors and residents, provide a method of public input, and promote Downtown events, shops, and restaurants.

- **Establish a Core Group of Downtown Leaders**  
MSA must remain a strong, sustainable organization to drive revitalization efforts well into the future. The group needs to reach-out to local media, partners, and residents to help solidify its role as the Downtown champion. New leaders and volunteers should be cultivated constantly from new businesses or other Downtown interests. MSA should also seek out area students to involve in solving Downtown issues. All of these groups will provide potential advocates and volunteers for Downtown activities.
- **Integrate Downtown Outreach Efforts into All Regular City Events**  
MSA will need to have a presence at all City events for a few years. Any event held in the City, regardless of location, should be considered as an outreach opportunity. The goal of the group should be to get Aurora residents to rethink their perceptions about Downtown and MSA.

Additionally, MSA will need to bolster some events and create new activities that will support the new message Downtown sends to residents. There needs to be a reason for a resident to change their shopping patterns and “give Downtown a try”. If Downtown sends the message that it is trying something new and residents do not see that change, the resulting damage to Downtown’s image could be serious.

Potential activities that MSA should consider include one evening a month where Downtown stores stay open later, movie-related events in collaboration with the Princess Movie Theatre, and a rejuvenation of past festivals. Respondents to community surveys noted Ye Olde Mining Days, Houn Dawg Days, and the Aurora Winterfest as events that they enjoyed attending. Each of these should be considered and reinvented for Downtown.



The Aurora Chamber of Commerce website homepage. Neither this site, nor the City’s make any mention of Main Street Aurora.

- **Capitalize on Existing Visitors**

MSA should develop promotions that are targeted at a few groups already visiting Aurora or the region, in an attempt to introduce Downtown to these visitors. Visitor segments such as high school sports attendees, outdoor sports enthusiasts, and extended family members of residents each have different needs to which Downtown can appeal.

As noted, Downtown Aurora also has a local restaurant following from residents of surrounding towns. MSA should coordinate cross-promotion efforts to encourage these diners to stay and explore other Downtown attractions and businesses. The participating restaurants can benefit by providing enhanced service to their customers, creating a greater sense of loyalty.

- **Use Existing Assets to Appeal to New Visitors**

MSA can also develop advertising that specifically targets the nearby residential markets of Springfield, Joplin, and Branson, Missouri. The residents of these communities can be encouraged to take day-trips to Aurora to visit popular restaurants, thereby expanding the marketing reach of Downtown.

Additionally, the City should consider advertising area hunting and fishing opportunities to Branson visitors. Methods such as social media can reach these visitors and help them extend their stay in Branson to include a trip to Aurora. MSA can then also encourage this expanded market to visit Downtown.

- **Develop Downtown Walking Tours**

To help raise the visibility of Downtown, MSA should work with the AHS to develop walking tours that center around Downtown's heritage. Maps that serve as itineraries to guide a visitor around Downtown should be distributed throughout the community. Routes should be identified that not only showcase historic buildings, but also include other facets of Downtown's heritage such as architecture and notable people.

MSA should help produce the walking tour maps. A well planned map will include clear directions, parking areas, restrooms, and a sequential numbering system so a visitor can begin at any point along the route. The map should attempt to route the visitor along scenic areas and past friendly merchants.



Aurora community events.

# Implementation

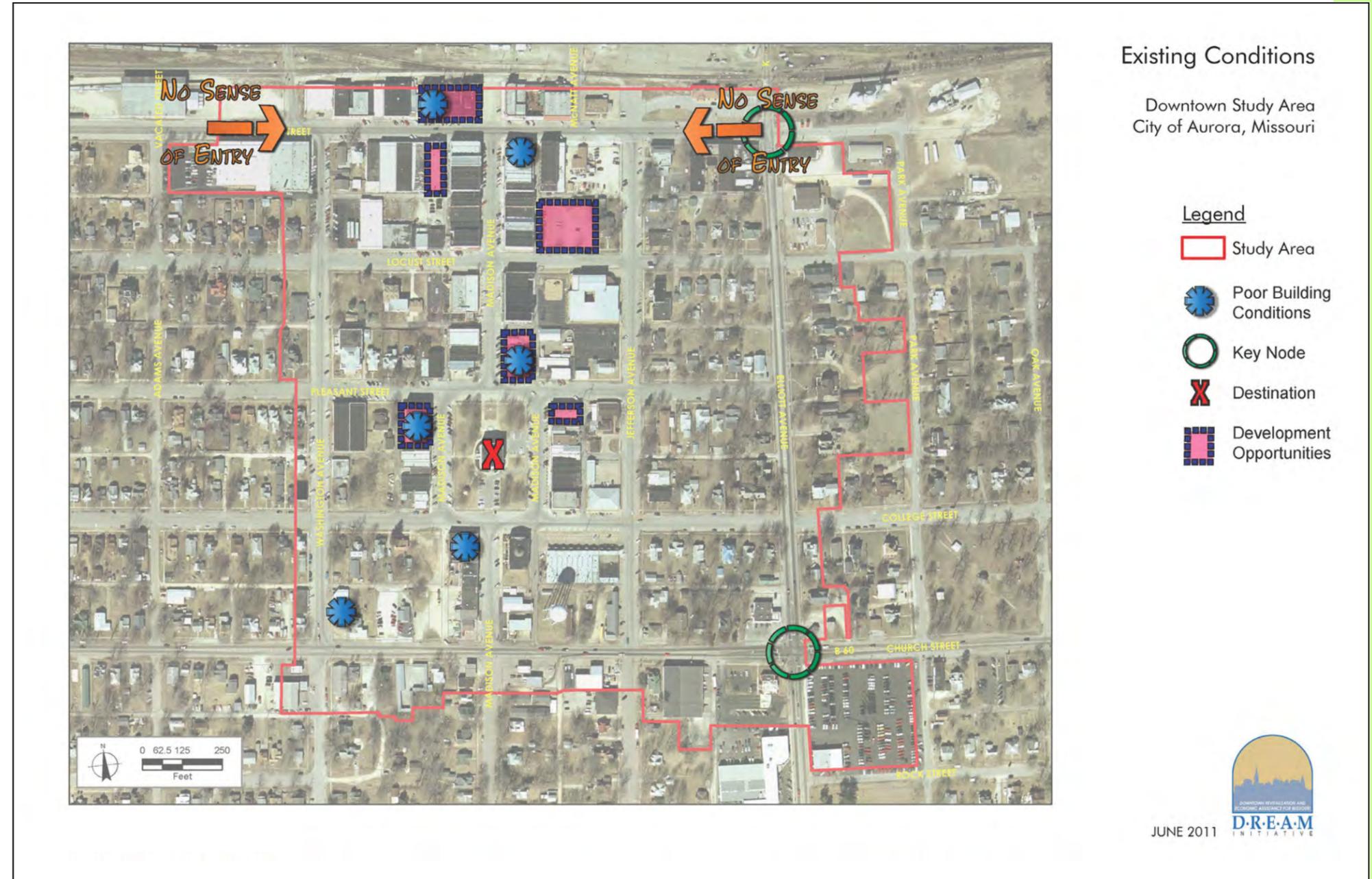


**EXISTING CONDITIONS**

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

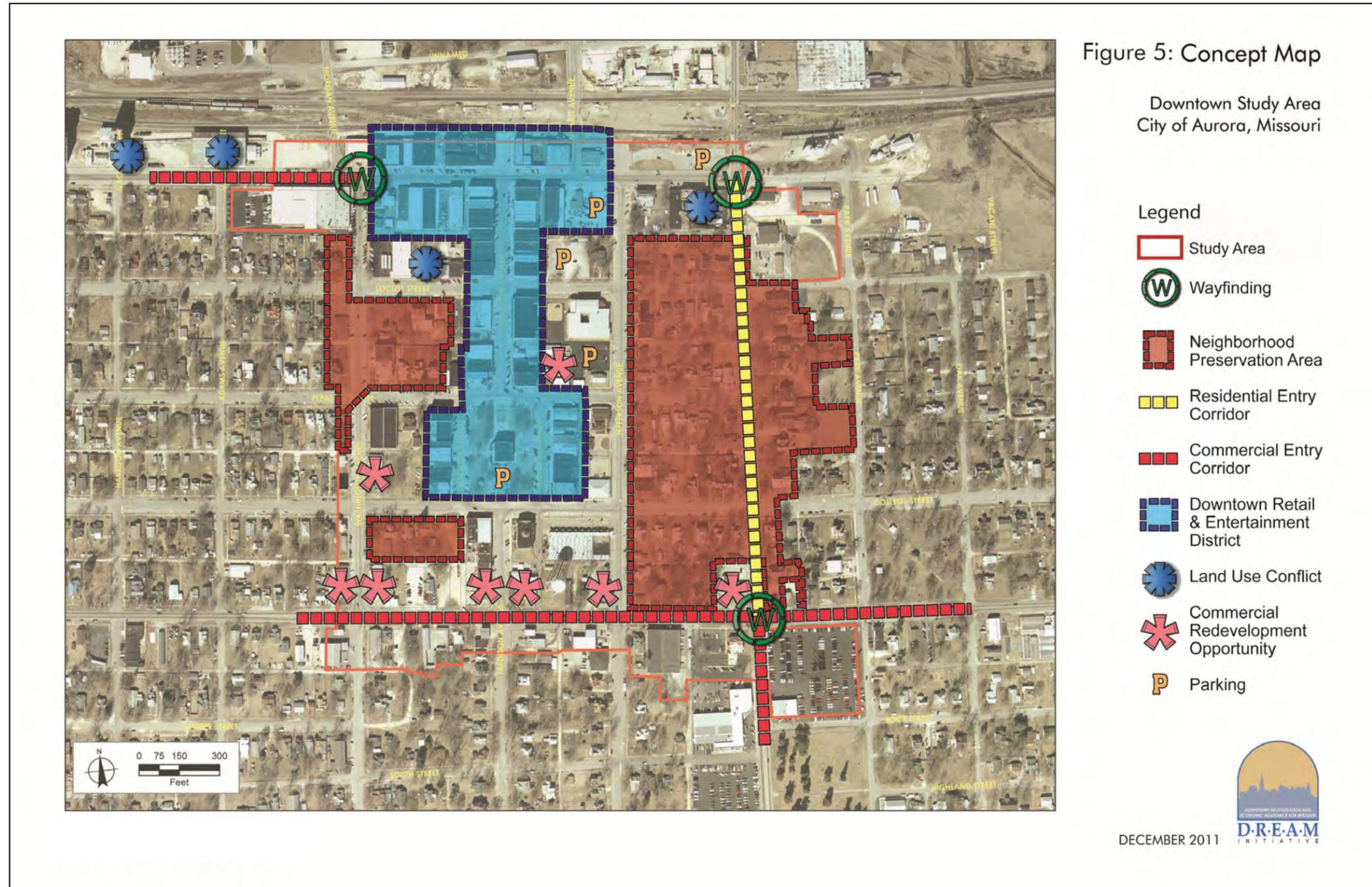
Included in this section are illustrations and an implementation schedule. These elements will give community leaders a catalog of action items that will comprise the agenda for Downtown over the next several years.

One of the steps in developing the Strategic Plan was to prepare an Existing Conditions Map (shown at right) that highlights the location of key features, challenges and opportunities in Downtown Aurora. Specifically, the map denotes the location of destinations, key intersections, entryways, and traffic arteries, the main retail area, vacant lots, and other important elements. The map offers a consolidated “big picture” view of the planning context for Downtown Aurora.



**CONCEPT MAP**

The illustration on this page provides some of the concepts of the Aurora 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.



### SCHEDULE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The schedule located on the following pages organizes the DREAM recommendations in categories that relate to the Aurora DREAM Initiative tasks.

These tasks include: Organizational Structure, Land Use & Building Survey, Community Surveys, Buildings and Streetscape Design, Retail Market Analysis, Residential Market Analysis, Financial Mechanisms, 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 Aurora'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	Reestablish and solidify Main Street Aurora (MSA) as the lead Downtown organization	Downtown Aurora needs a stable, susstained leadership organization willing to meet the challenges of Downtown revitalitation. Main Street Aurora has fulfilled this role to some extent, but has recently had its own challenges. Strong Downtown-centered leadership is required and it is preferable to invigorate the existing leadership, as opposed to starting a new organization.	MSA		NOW	MSA had been marginalized by recent City administrations and a new group was being considered. However, under the recent City leadership, MSA has been rejuvenated. This support should continue and increase and MSA should seek new roles and funding sources to keep its support structure intact well into the futue.
2	Establish a Downtown Aurora Community Improvement District (DACID)	A CID will provides organizational and financial enhancemnets that are focused on a specific area. A CID is formed by ordinance after a petition filing of property owners. Funding for a CID is provided by Special Assessments, Propoerty Taxes, up to a 1% sales tax, or some combination thereof. A CID can fund public facilities and improvements, a variety of public services, and blighted building demolition or rehabilitation. The CID boards annual budget must be approved by the City.	MSA	City and Chamber	2nd Quarter 2013	The DACID is proposed to be formed as a political subdivision to provide maximum flexibility for funding sources. This formation will require the members either be appointed or elected. The DACID should consider a 1% sales tax. It is estiamted that the DACID could generate \$75,000 annually for Downtown activities. The DACID will require significant public outreach. The City should assist with the initial effort and then MSA should be involved heavily in promoting the petition and the benefits of the CID.
3	Form a Downtown Events Committee as a subcommitte of MSA	MSA should develop a committee that includes representation from the Chamber and City. This committee should help coordinate all Downtown events and encourage civic groups wanting to hold an event. The Committee should also maintain a calendar and could potentially develop into a marketing committee for Downtown.	MSA		NOW	The MSA Board could fulfill this function initially, but by charging a new committee with such a task, MSA will also be expanding its outreach and volunteer support structure. As the committee begins to market or hold its own events, funding from the CID may be appropriate.
4	Form a Downtown Economic Development Committee as a subcommittee of MSA	MSA should develop this committee to work with the City Manager regarding prospects in Downtown Aurora. This committee will need to be smaller and consist of appropriate professionals that will interact well with a prospective investor. The Mayor, local lenders, realtors, and executive officers of manufacturing firms can be effective committee members.	MSA	City	1st Quarter 2013	The MSA Board could fulfill this function initially, but by charging a new committee with such a task, MSA will also be expanding its outreach and volunteer support structure. As the committee begins to develop marketing materials for prospects, funding from the CID may be appropriate.
5	Form Aurora Arts Council	MSA should convene a meeting with the City and Chamber representatives to consider the formation of an Arts Council. Such a program can support Downtown revitalization efforts and enrich the community. An effective Arts Council can improve the community's quality of life and add to a sense of place for Aurora.	MSA	City and Chamber	1st Quarter 2014	The Missouri Arts Council and the Missouri Association of Community Arts Agencies should be consulted as well. "Arts" in Aurora might be defined in a number of ways. For examples, a focus could be given to music, sculpture, painting, or performance, rather than a broad combination of all media.
6	Increase communication between Downtown merchants and other attractions in the region	The Downtown merchants need a voice. MSA should seek ways to keep all Downtown businesses and stores plugged-in to the region. Effective marketing methods are discussed under the marketing section of this schedule of recommendations and will include cross-promotion and collaborative marketing.	MSA	Chamber	NOW	By keeping Downtown businesses informed, retailers should be able to improve their productivity and sales volume. Potentially, a merchant group could be formed, but MSA should seek to meet the promotion needs of Downtown. A simple Downtown newsletter is an ideal place to start.

**Land Use & Building Survey**

Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources
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7	Enhance mapping capabilities available on Aurora websites	Potential Downtown investors need a location to view available buildings and sites. The City has listings on www.locationone.com, and parcel information can be obtained from Grundy County. However, this important information can be combined and maintained by MSA volunteers.	City	MSA	4th Quarter 2013	The existing websites of the City and Chamber do not have specific Downtown mapping functions. Either site could include listings of Downtown parcels and vacant properties, however eventually this task would be moved to the MSA website. Funding for the design and hosting of this information could be derived from the CID.
8	Monitor building and infrastructure conditions	Using the information developed during the DREAM program, the City should include this information in its mapping data to help track and resolve building and street complaints.	City		NOW	These types of tools can assist the City in prioritizing capital improvement projects and will allow for a more efficient use of limited resources.
9	Maintain information regarding Downtown development sites and vacant buildings	In addition to the website listing, MSA should maintain other materials that provide information on Downtown opportunities.	MSA		NOW	A simple listing of size, location, and contact information can be produced immediately and provided through direct mail, email, or social media. All information must be current.

**Community Surveys**

Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources
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10	Reconvene the DREAM Focus Groups	The original groups included representatives from Downtown business owners, chamber members, long-time residents, high school students, Downtown residents, City staff, City Council, and media. It is critical that these people remain engaged in Downtown activities.	MSA		1st Quarter 2014	This timeframe is an approximately 5-year follow-up on the original groups. Discussions should start with changes since the last groups met. MSA should look for an impartial volunteer or outside facilitator to conduct the groups and encourage conversation.
11	Conduct a visitor survey	MSA, with the help of the City and Chamber, should consider conducting a visitor survey over the course of several months to understand and record the perceptions of visitors to Aurora.	MSA	City and Chamber	3rd Quarter 2012	The survey does not need to be focused on Downtown or occur at only Downtown attractions, but there should be specific questions about Downtown to help MSA and Downtown businesses understand the visitor market. A simple paper survey can be conducted and tabulated by volunteers.
12	Conduct a telephone survey	MSA should revise the DREAM telephone survey questions and consider resurveying the City's residents.	MSA		1st Quarter 2015	This timeframe is approximately a 7-year follow-up to the original survey. MSA may need to use a surveying firm and phone bank to reach the quota levels for a random sample.
13	Include ongoing web surveys and polls on the MSA website	As an alternative to the telephone survey, MSA may wish to conduct a web survey or other ongoing website polls to monitor residents' perceptions of Downtown Aurora.	MSA	City and Chamber	4th Quarter 2012	This survey method will be less involved and expensive than the phone survey, but the results will likely suffer as there is no control over the respondents. The City and the Chamber should assist MSA by providing links on their websites and helping promote the survey.
14	Communicate all survey results to Downtown groups, leaders, and businesses	The knowledge gained through the survey methods is useless if Downtown is not informed and encouraged to adapt to changing conditions. MSA should review and understand the results to present them to the appropriate audiences. Additionally, the Chamber will be interested in any City-wide information collected.	MSA	Chamber	Ongoing	MSA and Chamber could hold joint meetings or seminars for Aurora's businesses and attractions. Additionally, the two groups may wish to adjust their events based on information obtained.

Building & Streetscape Design						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
15 Promote the benefits of historic preservation	The Aurora Historical Society is the only group currently promoting the history of Aurora. A historic district was attempted, but not approved. There is no preservation commission and Downtown property owners are currently not viewing such an effort positively. Downtown Aurora must preserve its heritage. Numerous studies have shown that historical rehabilitation has a positive effect on property values. A property need not be restored, but should undergo a rehabilitation that is complementary to the surrounding original and restored buildings. This will develop a cohesive Downtown theme and sense of place.	AHS	MSA	NOW	The AHS should begin this effort immediately with support from MSA. A simple approach to survey and catalog significant Downtown buildings should be launched. Eventually, a non-binding designation of approval by the AHS and MSA could be developed for specific properties. The groups might also try to enlist the aid of a local sketch artist to show what a building used to look like. Eventually, the property owners attitudes may change and a more formal preservation effort could occur.	
16 Encourage increased property maintenance for Downtown buildings	The City is responsible for zoning, code enforcement, and inspection policies. Downtown is the oldest area of the City and, as such, has buildings that are likely in the worst shape overall. The City must make an effort to improve these buildings before they are lost. The extra attention to Downtown is justified and methods can be developed to soften the City's approach to requirements as well as assist property owners with improvements.	City	MSA	1st Quarter 2013	The City will have to conduct reviews of codes and policies, but the MSA can help promote City procedures and expectations to Downtown property owners. The City Council should fully support building and inspection staff and work to increase training resources. City staff should try to prevent simple maintenance issues, that may be considered cosmetic, from becoming serious issues in the future. The MSA could also establish "safety walks" to review potential issues that building inspectors should monitor.	
17 Develop community-wide wayfinding	Finding Aurora, and Downtown Aurora, from Interstate 44 is an indirect route of travel. The City should encourage wayfinding along Highway 39 to assure visitors they are approaching the City. Within the City, wayfinding should be installed to direct visitors to Downtown and help identify and announce Downtown to the traveler.	City		2nd Quarter 2014	The City should develop this system and could use CID funding after the CID is in place. A complete system should include gateway monument signs at Olive Street and Washington Avenue, Olive Street and Elliot Avenue, and Elliot Avenue and Church Street. Directional signage should also be used at other Downtown intersections. Properly designed and placed directional signage will also limit the impact of Downtown traffic on surrounding residential properties.	
18 Develop a Façade program	This recommendation is also a financial mechanism recommendation. The City currently has a revolving loan fund for businesses, but should consider developing a program to restore Downtown façades. Building façades are an important part of the public space in a downtown. Such a program can also include side and rear elevations.	City	AHS and MSA	2nd Quarter 2013	This program can start small. The City can identify specific expense categories, eligibility criteria, and other program terms. It is suggested that the program be a grant capped at a specific dollar value and require the property owner to match the amount. The City could begin with a few thousand dollars and tackle one facade at a time. Eventually, the CID could fund larger projects and help market the program. Additionally, all projects should be approved by AHS and MSA until a historic preservation commission is formed. Access to this funding should be on the condition that the property owner is making positive, complementary, historic rehabilitative changes.	
19 Continue Streetscape Improvements	The City is following a 5-phase streetscape plan and has successfully constructed phases 1 through 3. These improvements should be continued and the elements well-maintained and expanded if possible.	City		Ongoing	Funding for future phases could come from the CID after the CID is in place.	
20 Promote the conservation and efficient use of resources and green building techniques	The City should review sustainable design principles and work to adjust its codes, building requirements, and site review policies to encourage future developments to approach a more efficient design.	City		Ongoing	The City and its review committees need to have a 'hands-on' approach to building activity in Aurora. Businesses and developers can't just be left to their own devices and be expected to create high-quality developments. Often these investors must be educated about innovative and efficient new methods and it falls to the City to do this educating, because it is the City that will have to live with the development for many years.	
21 Develop an "Adopt a Spot" program to involving civic groups and clubs in maintaining Downtown landscaping and litter removal	The City can increase streetscape services and amenities, but the Downtown merchants and area groups can share in maintenance efforts. If a bench is placed in front of a store, it is to the benefit of that store to help maintain the bench.	MSA	Chamber	3rd Quarter 2012	MSA and the Chamber can work together to develop a system where groups can adopt blocks or intersections of Downtown. The City may wish to supervise or train the volunteers, but should then allow the groups to provide quarterly maintenance on their own. A non-binding contract should also be signed with the organizations and plaques and other recognition provided whenever possible. Events such as Chamber dinners and MSA Annual Meeting are ideal to recognize these volunteers.	
22 Develop a sponsorship program for Downtown streetscape elements	The City can benefit from allowing groups and individuals to 'buy' streetscape elements in return for a donation plaque on the component. This effort provides a method of involving local residents and groups and spreading-out the costs of expanding the streetscape.	City	MSA	4th Quarter 2012	The City should provide the information and set the prices in an easy-to-read catalog format and MSA should promote the program. MSA could also develop a drive among its members and give a prize to the member that 'sells' the most streetscape elements in a given time period. The City, MSA, and Chamber should all have this catalog on their websites and one person should be designated at the City who can accept these donations and order the plaques and streetscape components.	

Retail Market Analysis						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
23 Encourage retail uses that demonstrate unmet retail demand	Downtown Aurora can benefit by attracting retail stores that can meet unmet retail demand for the market area. A business that can meet unmet demand should have an increased chance of success. These categories include: Grocery Stores; Restaurants; Building Materials and Supplies Stores; Electronics and Appliance Stores; Health and Personal Care Stores; Furniture Stores; Clothing Stores; Office Supplies, Stationary, and Gift Stores; and Lawn and Garden Equipment and Supplies Stores.	City	MSA	NOW	The City and MSA should work together to develop information and methods to target businesses in these categories. Integrating this program with specific marketing and promotion strategies could allow for the City to fill the existing vacant first floor space and generate excitement with residents and customers. Additionally, MSA should work with existing retailers to expand or add product lines to meet the demonstrated unmet demand.	
24 Form a Downtown Economic Development Committee as a subcommittee of MSA	MSA should develop this committee to work with the City Manager regarding prospects in Downtown Aurora. This committee will need to be smaller and consist of appropriate professionals that will interact well with a prospective investor. The Mayor, local lenders, realtors, and executive officers of manufacturing firms can be effective committee members.	MSA	City	1st Quarter 2013	The MSA Board could fulfill this function initially, but by charging a new committee with such a task, MSA will also be expanding its outreach and volunteer support structure. As the committee begins to develop marketing materials for prospects, funding from the CID may be appropriate.	
25 Create a Downtown Business Development Package	Prospective businesses will require a set of information regarding potential locations in the City. Often a prospect has reviewed online information and still has further questions. Through a collaborative effort between the City, Chamber, and MSA, Aurora should develop this information and be prepared to respond quickly to potential business prospects.	City	Chamber and MSA	3rd Quarter 2013	The City will need to lead this effort to develop information on incentives, City processes, real estate data, labor and consumer markets, and contact information. Once developed, MSA and the Chamber should work to maintain the information.	
26 Strengthen existing businesses	A primary source of economic growth is from existing businesses. The City, MSA, and Chamber all have a vested interest in seeing existing businesses thrive and succeed. Additionally it is considerably easier to keep a business than to attract a new one. For all of these reasons, Downtown Aurora must strengthen and maintain its existing businesses for revitalization efforts to succeed.	MSA	City and Chamber	1st Quarter 2014	MSA should launch a formal retention program whereby the Mayor, City Manager, and members of MSA visit Downtown employers. Once a month, this group should set-up a meeting with a representative of the business and discuss its issues and challenges. MSA should also develop a program to educate and inform retail business owners about product differentiation, product presentation, window displays, and importance of hours and days of operation, and, most importantly, customer service. An ongoing seminar program should be effective and will also use topics of concern that are identified through the retention visits.	
27 Increase marketing & collectively market Downtown retailers	Traditional advertising can be cost prohibitive to many retailers. Downtown Aurora can be marketed collectively more efficiently, as a unified shopping district. This effort should also include promotions and events and will help brand Downtown as a shopping designation in the minds of area residents.	MSA		4th Quarter 2013	Using funds generated by the proposed CID or other sources, a cooperative advertising campaign should be pursued on behalf of Downtown retailers. Brochures highlighting Downtown's unique stores should also be developed as well as electronic and social media campaigns. Shopping-oriented Downtown events such as sidewalk sales and monthly evening shopping nights should also be pursued. Downtown Aurora should consider hiring professional advertising assistance for these tasks.	

Residential Market Analysis						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
28 Encourage the development of senior affordable rental units	The residential analysis shows there may be demand for 43 senior affordable rental units over the next few years, while other residential markets appear soft. The loft-style ownership market, which typically follows a strong rental market, has not yet developed.	City		NOW	The City should encourage potential residential developers to consider upper-floor developments. There is significant upper-floor opportunity in Downtown Aurora at the intersection of Olive Street and Madison Avenue.	
29 Develop added Downtown amenities to increase future residential demand	Downtown Aurora should seek to improve living conditions and add features, services, and businesses which will increase the 'livability' of Downtown and develop future residential demand.	City	MSA	Ongoing	This is an ongoing effort that will include many facets of Downtown revitalization including streetscape enhancements, added police enforcement, adjustments to the business mix, improvement of building conditions, and new events. Nearly every Downtown project should be approached from the viewpoint of its affect on Downtown residents.	
30 Review applicable zoning and building codes	City codes can present unintentional barriers to develop and have unexpected consequences. There are a few cases in Downtown Aurora where buildings are suffering from poor conditions.	City		Ongoing	The City should diligently review codes and consider the effects of policies that may create problems. A common issue is allowing large, single-family homes to be converted for multi-family use.	
31 Encourage residential maintenance and improvement	Many of the residences surveyed in the DREAM Study Area exhibit poor conditions or deferred maintenance. As was noted with commercial properties in Downtown, the City should firmly and fairly enforce maintenance codes to prevent maintenance issues from become serious health and safety hazards.	City	MSA	Ongoing	The City, with support from MSA, can seek programs to help residents such as the MHDC Home Repair Opportunity Program (HeRO). MSA could also provide important home maintenance information to residents.	

Financial Mechanisms						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
32 Establish a Downtown Aurora Community Improvement District (DACID)	A CID will provides organizational and financial enhancemnets that are focused on a specific area. A CID is formed by ordinance after a petition filing of property owners. Funding for a CID is provided by Special Assessments, Propoerty Taxes, up to a 1% sales tax, or some combination thereof. A CID can fund public facilities and improvements, a variety of public services, and blighted building demolition or rehabilitation. The CID boards annual budget must be approved by the City.	MSA	City and Chamber	2nd Quarter 2013	The DACID is proposed to be formed as a political subdivision to provide maximum flexibility for funding sources. This formation will require the members either be appointed or elected. The DACID should consider a 1% sales tax. It is estiamted that the DACID could generate \$75,000 annually for Downtown activities. The DACID will require significant public outreach. The City should assist with the initial effort and then MSA should be involved heavily in promoting the petition and the benefits of the CID.	
33 Develop a Façade program	This recommendation is also a financial mechanism recommendation. The City currently has a revolving loan fund for businesses, but should consider developing a program to restore Downtown façades. Building façades are an important part of the public space in a downtown. Such a program can also include side and rear elevations.	City	AHS and MSA	2nd Quarter 2013	This program can start small. The City can identify specific expense categories, eligibility criteria, and other program terms. It is suggested that the program be a grant capped at a specific dollar value and require the property owner to match the amount. The City could begin with a few thousand dollars and tackle one facade at a time. Eventually, the CID could fund larger projects and help market the program. Additionally, all projects should be approved by AHS and MSA until a historic preservation commission is formed. Access to this funding should be on the condition that the property owner is making positive, complementary, historic rehabilitative changes.	
34 Research a Local Option Economic Development Sales Tax (EDS)	Previous recommendations included a CID and a Façade Improvement Program. These recommedations are the primary financial mechanisms recommended. However, the City should consider increasing funding sources to support more development activity.	City	MSA	As needed	The City should consdier this mechanism as it could generate \$ 140,000 annually of which \$75,000 could be dedicated to certain Downtown economic development activities. Other project in the City would benefit from this incentive as well. MSA should work with the City to identify uses and promote the benefits of the incentive.	
35 Research Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	Previous recommendations included a CID and a Façade Improvement Program. These recommedations are the primary financial mechanisms recommended. However, the City should consider increasing funding sources to support more development activity.	City	MSA	As needed	Again, the City should consider this mechanism for larger Downtown public and private projects. A TIF in Downtown Aurora could generate from \$30,000 to \$80,000 annually. A TIF will require some coordination with the proposed CID.	

Marketing						
Objectives	Project/Program/Action Item	Responsible Party	Support Groups	Time Frame	Tools, Techniques & Resources	
36 Form a Downtown Events Committee as a subcommittee of MSA	MSA should develop a committee that includes representation from the Chamber and City. This committee should help coordinate all Downtown events and encourage civic groups wanting to hold an event. The Committee should also maintain a calendar and could potentially develop into a marketing committee for Downtown.	MSA		NOW	The MSA Board could fulfill this function initially, but by charging a new committee with such a task, MSA will also be expanding its outreach and volunteer support structure. As the committee begins to market or hold its own events, funding from the CID may be appropriate.	
37 Develop a Downtown Aurora website	The City and Chamber have websites, but there is not a Downtown-focused site nor is there a page dedicated to Downtown Aurora. Potential investors and visitors identify Downtown as the image of a community. A Downtown website will also help define the Downtown organization.	MSA		4th Quarter 2012	MSA should partner with other stakeholders to help give Downtown Aurora a virtual identity. The information on a website will encourage visitors, investors, and residents and provide information regarding events, shops, and restaurants. A website can also be used to gather public input. A potential funding source for website design is the proposed CID, but MSA cannot afford to wait. If Downtown can establish this presence now, it can be an important tool to assist with the CID outreach. MSA should survey its volunteers for this task.	
38 Integrate Downtown outreach efforts into regular City events	A constant visible presence is needed for community wide acceptance of the Downtown organization. Downtown should be accepted by the entire community. The Downtown group should spend some volunteer resources broadening its volunteer base and reaching interested businesses and individuals that may not be located in Downtown.	MSA	Chamber	1st Quarter 2012	MSA should set a goal to attend all 2012 events as a group. The organization should have a booth, distribute flyers, or provide representation to event committees. The Chamber will accept additional volunteer help and will be happy to recognize where those volunteers come from. MSA may need to bolster some City-wide events or create new events to invite people Downtown.	
39 Capitalize on existing visitors	Visitors already in Aurora need a reason to consider a trip into Downtown. These groups are already in town and are more likely to be attracted to a Downtown business or event.	MSA		Ongoing	MSA needs to know when large amounts of visitors are in town for any reason. Markets such as high school sports attendees, outdoor sports enthusiasts, and extended family members of residents can be identified and targeted through various advertising methods. However, Downtown must have open stores and be ready to meet these visitors' needs.	
40 Appeal to new visitors	Aurora's assets need to be promoted to nearby markets to capture and expand the reach of Downtown businesses. Other non-geographical markets can also be tapped.	MSA		Ongoing	MSA should develop advertising methods that target residents of the nearby communities of Springfield, Joplin, and Branson, Missouri. This advertising should encourage day-trips to Aurora and build upon an already strong restaurant appeal. Other advertising should focus on outdoor sports opportunities in Aurora.	
41 Develop Downtown walking tours	A well-designed, self assisted walking tour can be a very attractive element that encourage a visitor to explore Downtown.	MSA	AHS	2nd Quarter 2012	MSA should work with AHS to develop such a tour focused on Downtown's history and heritage. This will promote Downtown as well as history. A companion map of the route should also be produced and include stops at 'visitor friendly' merchants. Additionally, if an Aurora Arts Council is begun, there could be Downtown Arts stops on the tour.	

**PGA V PLANNERS**