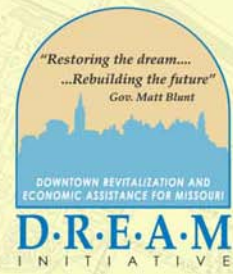


**Downtown Revitalization
Economic Assistance for Missouri
APPLICATION**



**Downtown Revitalization Economic Assistance for Missouri
APPLICATION**

SECTION I – APPLICANT INFORMATION	
City: St. Joseph	County: Buchanan
MAYOR OR CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL: Ken Shearin	
ADDRESS: 1100 Frederick Ave. Room 309 St. Joseph, MO 64501	
PHONE NUMBER: (816) 271-4640	E-MAIL: mayor@ci.st-joseph.mo.us
SENATE DISTRICT: 34 th District Charles Shields	REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT: 27 th District Edward Wildberger
CONTACT PERSON: Clint Thompson	
ADDRESS: 1100 Frederick Ave. St. Joseph, MO 64501	
PHONE NUMBER: (816) 271-4787	E-MAIL: cthompson@ci.st-joseph.mo.us
SECTION II – NARRATIVE QUESTIONS	
<p>1. Describe your downtown as it exists today. Include information regarding business mix (service, retail, etc), residential units, government buildings, vacancy rates, physical shape of structures, quality of public infrastructure, historic significance, other special features, and general use by the public (events, etc.).</p> <p>Downtown St. Joseph is an area of the community that is beginning to show signs of new life. The urban core of the community went through a period of decline. Not unlike other communities across the nation, our downtown suffered from urban sprawl and, ultimately, the urban renewal program that caused the final demise of the area. During the urban renewal period, we lost many of our prominent, historic buildings to demolition. They also changed many of the streets to one-way because of the addition of a pedestrian walking mall. When the mall was removed, they left the one-way streets which leads to confusion when trying to navigate the downtown streets.</p>	

Government Buildings & Business Anchors - Our downtown was probably spared a complete exodus because of the existence of the Buchanan County Courthouse and City Hall. These entities are large employers and are located in historic buildings predominately located in the Central Business District. According to the last census, we have approximately six thousand people employed in the downtown area. We also have two State office buildings located in downtown. We have a large Federal building that houses the Post Office and the satellite office of Congressman, Sam Graves as well as several other offices. In addition to the governmental buildings, we also have several service oriented business located downtown. Our local newspaper, the St. Joseph News-Press has their headquarters located in a historic downtown building. Hillyards, inc., a national manufacturer of industrial cleaners and supplies has their corporate headquarters and some of their manufacturing facilities located in five historic buildings. Wire Rope, Corporation has a large manufacturing facility located on the edge of the downtown district. Other service industries located in the central business district include: Family Guidance and the Samaritan Center (counseling services), several law offices, insurance, banks, restaurants, a YWCA with an aquatics center, YMCA, convenience store, telemarketing companies, printing companies, several bars and taverns, a dentist office and a newly remodeled full service Holiday Inn Hotel.



Buchanan County Courthouse



New Law Enforcement Center Annex.

The City of St. Joseph and Buchanan County joined forces in 1983 with the vision of creating a Law Enforcement Center that would be home to the St. Joseph Police Department and the Buchanan County Sheriff's Department. That "vision" became a reality when the building was completed in May of 1984. In 2004, both entities worked cooperatively again to construct a new addition to the existing building. The building addition was complete in the spring of 2006 and represents a 4.9 million dollar investment in the downtown community.

Retail - The retail market downtown is very weak. We currently have a couple of home decorating stores, a few antique stores, book store, flower shop, catholic gift shop, women's second hand clothing, a health food store and coffee shop, military clothing and supplies store, bridal salon, furniture store, portrait studio and two stained glass stores.

Residential - With the assistance of the State's historic tax credits and MHDC tax credits, we have had a resurgence of residential units in the last few years. By utilizing a combination of these programs, Jeffrey Smith Development and Carlson-Gardner Development have added one hundred and twenty new loft style apartments downtown in the last five years. This represents approximately 20 million dollars in investments in the community. By using the historic tax credits alone, Foutch Brothers, LLC and MRW Development have added an additional fifty one market rate residential units. These developments represent an additional six million dollars in investment to the central business district. There continues to be a strong demand for housing in the urban core with very few vacancies and a waiting list at some of the larger complexes. We also have a large senior housing project located in the heart of our community known as the

Fountains at Corby Place. This turn of the century building was the former grain exchange and has been completely renovated into market rate senior housing. Currently, we have over three hundred residential housing units within our target boundary area.



Regarding downtown vacancy rates, we have very few buildings that are empty. However, we have several underutilized buildings (some of which appear vacant from the street). Many of the buildings are used for storage or only one floor is currently used leaving a tremendous amount of space that could be productively used for other purposes.

With the use of tax credits and other programs, we have successfully revitalized several downtown buildings. However, we have a tremendous amount that still need to be fixed up and transformed back to their historic grandeur.

Infrastructure - On the subject of public infrastructure, we are in need of some improvements. Our sidewalks are in need of replacement in areas as well as the curbs. We need to revamp our parking signage system because the proliferation of excessive signage makes it confusing to know where to park. The parking garages are very dated and could use new lighting.

St. Joseph History - The history of the community is one of our major assets. We have guests from all over the world come to our community to tour our historical sites and see the magnificent architecture we have to offer. St. Joseph was the home of Pony Express and played a significant role in westward expansion. We have two large statues downtown to recognize these historic events.



Celebrate Downtown - Downtown continues to be the civic center of the community. As such, it should reflect the pride of St. Joseph. All major parades still come through downtown. The largest city festival, Trails West! Is held at Civic Center park on the grounds of City Hall the third weekend in August. We have an event area in the midst of downtown called "Coleman Hawkins Park at Felix Street Square" where we host several downtown festivals and events. The "Coleman Hawkins" Jazz Festival is held on this site the third weekend in June. Other major events held on this site include live music concerts every Friday night in June and July, an Apple

Blossom Festival held the first Saturday of May, and a “City Lights” Festival held the Saturday prior to Thanksgiving. This area is also used for smaller events and a venue for citizens to gather and talk, have lunch or just relax.

2. Describe your community's vision for your downtown. How was this vision derived (public participation)?

Return to Vibrancy - The St. Joseph community has a progressive vision for the downtown area. The vision is for downtown to return to its' glory days by becoming a vibrant area to work, live and visit. Citizens want the downtown to be a center of activity where pedestrians are seen on the streets going to businesses to shop, dine or be entertained. . The vision for downtown includes charming eclectic places to dine, not the generic chain restaurants that are prevalent in every community. The community wants “niche” retailers that sell goods that cannot be obtained readily anywhere else. Specialty niche retailers would be an enticement to encourage more tourism and create more revenue for St. Joseph and the state. Cultural tourism has become prevalent throughout the country and St. Joseph could position itself as a destination for travelers thus creating an economic base for the region. Entertainment dollars are very important to the health of any community and the idea of an entertainment district in the downtown is very appealing. Entertainment districts in other downtown communities have created a fun, energetic environment for those towns. By completing an entertainment district, and offering great, unusual places to eat and shop, we would also position ourselves to become a destination area for conventions and large meetings. To build a conference center in the downtown would attract meetings from all over the state and country. By utilizing the historic characteristics of the downtown with the charm of the riverfront, we could become a really cool place to have meetings and conferences.

Connecting with Young Adults and MWSU- We would also like to reconnect with the youth of the community by creating an arts campus in the downtown area. Our college is located away from the downtown and this would be of great assistance in bringing the University into the heart of the city. The University would benefit because an interesting and progressive site for its art and graphics department could be created thus providing a recruiting tool for art school by giving students a location that has character, gallery space and studio space.

Downtown would also be a very cool place to live with numerous people residing in the grand, historic buildings. Living downtown has become the popular thing to do with the young, professional group. With our stock of large buildings, we could create critical mass of persons living in the area. It has been the dream of the community for a long time to create neat living spaces similar to the ones that have been added in many successful downtown revitalization projects across the country. People living in the downtown will help support the retail and entertainment venues needed to make a destination environment.

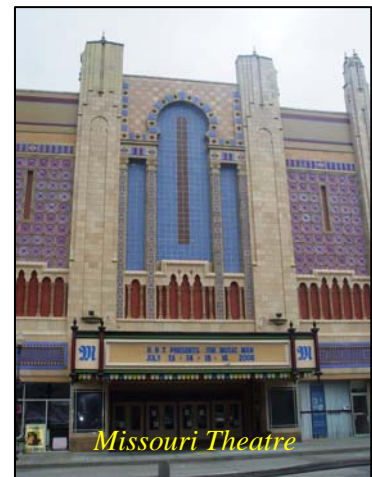
By creating a critical mass of people living in the central business district, it would be necessary to add a grocery store and pharmacy to service their needs.

St. Joseph Downtown Partnership - The St. Joseph Downtown Partnership was formalized in January, 1998. The Partnership is several entities working together to create positive progress downtown. The mission of the St. Joseph Downtown Partnership is a collaborative effort of

individuals and organizations committed to maintaining the vitality of the downtown area. Dedicated to improving the heart of the city, the Partnership provides collective leadership to focus on economic development, promotion and preservation of downtown. With this mission as the focus, the Partnership requested the assistance of the city of St. Joseph to develop a master plan for downtown development. The city council agreed that a “vision” would help create the momentum for positive change downtown. Several groups bid on the project and LDR International, Inc. was chosen. LDR’s strength regarding this project was their high success rate in communities of similar size. We wanted a plan that we could achieve, not one with pretty pictures to put on the shelf. With this objective as our focus, we developed a consensus building process to create the “vision” for our downtown. Representatives from LDR did one on one interviews with members of the community to determine the current perspective on downtown and the future prospects for the area. Then, they did a series of work shops with the Downtown Partnership board and a “cross section” of individuals that served as the steering committee for the project. They concluded the process with a series of three town hall meetings to gain input on the plan as it was in the various stages of development. The result was that the community owned the “vision” of what downtown could be. We did a slide presentation depicting the ideas from other communities as they could relate to our own community. This made an impact on the civic organizations and other groups that we presented it to. This is when the “vision” of downtown began to change. The entire process took over a year.

3. What specific unique opportunities exist for your downtown?

Opportunities Abound - We have tremendous opportunities in our downtown. The historic significance of many of our buildings is a major asset. We have one of the few intact (and beautifully restored) theatres from the turn of the century in our Missouri Theatre. Our arts groups here are phenomenal from the perspective of the community size and they utilize this venue. We have a performing arts association, Robidoux Resident Theatre group, Symphony and many other not-for-profit arts organizations that take advantage of this magnificent theatre. The Missouri



Missouri Theatre



Missouri Valley Trust Building

Valley Trust Bank Building was constructed in 1859. It is one of the few completely intact banks available in the

country. The building has been used in movies and, most recently, in a documentary for the history channel. Wholesale Row is a block of architecture that is unique and the only intact block of this architectural type in the country. It now has been completely redeveloped into loft apartments and a great Cajun restaurant is in one

of the buildings. There are many more architecturally interesting buildings in our downtown that would be excellent for mixed use. Some are being rehabilitated, but we don’t have a “complete” area with the exception of Wholesale Row that has been done. We could create real impact by doing a section at a time. We are blessed with a large downtown but that comes with its challenges as well.

Riverfront Development - Another tremendous opportunity for the downtown community is the riverfront. Our community has been working on riverboat development for several years. The St. Joe Frontier Casino was originally docked at riverfront park directly adjacent to the downtown. When the rules changed about riverboat casinos, they relocated and built a facility about three miles north of the original location. The city constructed softball fields directly to the north of the Casino and the state put a boat launch in to the south. The city capped a large landfill site and created a large parking lot. Then, the city constructed the river walk that runs from the Casino south to the old riverfront park. This amenity is getting more and more popular. The city has plans to construct a nature center on the river and they are currently working on a Living History Preserve. The Nature Center is being financed in part by a one million dollar challenge grant from the Missouri Department of Conservation. Continued development of the river front would have a positive impact on the downtown.

Brownfields - A key opportunity for the downtown is the Brownfields area directly south of the downtown boundaries. This area represents 144 acres available for redevelopment. The area has received a national designation by the EPA. The downtown will receive numerous benefits by cleaning up this area and redeveloping it for business.

Civic Facilities & Redevelopment - We have a Civic Arena that is also located downtown. This is a good venue for small concerts, sporting events, large banquets, company events and meetings. One of our “visions” for downtown has been to build a conference center and connect it with the arena to attract larger conventions to our community.



The hospital in our community, Heartland Health, is consolidating all their services to their facility on the east side of the community. The downtown campus was old and landlocked, therefore limiting their ability to expand and add new services. They are in the process of demolishing the old hospital with plans to redevelop the area. The “Uptown Project” is the name of this initiative to construct new housing on the former hospital site. The Uptown Project also initiated a plan to rehabilitate the neighborhood to the north of the property, upgrading the entire area.

Location and Ease of Access - Access is another key opportunity for our downtown. We are located directly off interstate 229 which is connected to interstate 29 to both the north and the south. Highway 36 is located directly south of the downtown and feeds into interstate 229 as well. We have a small airport five minutes from downtown. And the Kansas City International Airport is literally only half an hour away.

Parking in the downtown is also an opportunity for us. We have plenty of parking available in the downtown business district. We are working with downtown business and property owners to modify parking so that it is more of an asset to public use.

4. What weaknesses or barriers exist to the successful redevelopment of your downtown?

One of the major weaknesses or barriers to the successful redevelopment of our downtown is a dedicated funding source to assist us in obtaining the projects we need for downtown as well as the maintenance of those projects once they have been completed. We have limited resources dedicated to downtown redevelopment and do projects as the funding becomes available, therefore, we are unable to make a dramatic impression.

Our downtown is cut off from the riverfront by the double decker highway and a set of railroad tracks. We have worked on a plan to reconnect the river front to downtown but have not isolated a funding source to make it a reality. The Holiday Inn hotel guests and downtown residents suffer from the blaring of train horns at all hours of the night. We would like to see a quiet zone in place for the downtown district.

Lack of Pedestrian Friendly Environment - As is typical in most downtown settings, parking is a major concern. Businesses complain about the lack of on street parking and the condition of the parking garages. Probably the most complaints are about the parking enforcement. Even though we do not have a parking problem (we have sufficient room in the garages and on street), we have the perception of a problem and a lack of amenities conducive to inspire patrons to walk in our downtown district.

We have a lack of pedestrian scale in our central business district. Businesses are negligent about keeping a tidy appearance around the property they occupy. Complaints of trash and dirty windows are common. Many of the businesses do not have “open” windows creating a sense of seclusion rather than an open, inviting atmosphere to the pedestrian. This also makes the buildings seem vacant even if they are not. We have very few “outside” venues offering patrons the opportunity to be outside and creating a more welcoming atmosphere. The appearance of downtown is not visually appealing. There is a lack of trees and landscaping that add softness and color to the massive amounts of concrete.

Security seems to be an issue as we have a food kitchen located in the heart of the redevelopment area and a group of homeless persons that hang out. The food kitchen is located on one of the main streets coming into our downtown and the clientele have a tendency to cast a negative light on the visitors entering the area.

Currently, we lack a commercial draw to the business district due to the lack of a group of shops located in close proximity to one another. While we have a few nice eating establishments, we do not have enough to generate a “destination” for dining.

5. Is there an existing effort to promote downtown revitalization? If so, describe the efforts and include levels of public and private participation.

Downtown Organizations Come Together - Yes, in 1997, five organizations formed the St. Joseph Downtown Partnership to serve as an umbrella organization for downtown revitalization. Several groups have a vested interest in the revitalization of the downtown community,

however, their efforts were not coordinated and sometimes duplicated. Five of these organizations came together to create a unified voice for the downtown area as well as be responsible for its administration and operations. These organizations were the City of St. Joseph, The St. Joseph Area Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Association (comprised of downtown merchants), the Special Business District and the St. Joseph Convention and Visitors Bureau. They created a nine member board of directors that include representatives from their prospective groups and representatives from large business, the banking community, architectural and medical professions. This created a well rounded view of what is needed to have a successful downtown rehabilitation program. Four of the groups (the City of St. Joseph, the St. Joseph Area Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Association and the Special Business District) fund the organization.

Each year, the board of directors for the organization has a planning session to establish goals for the organization. These goals are established according to the mission statement of the group and include long range and short range objectives.

Downtown Team Formed - In 2006, the City of St. Joseph organized a downtown team comprised of two city council members, the city manager, the city economic development manager, the city project manager, the director of the Downtown Partnership, the CEO of the Chamber of Commerce and the chamber economic development manager. The purpose of this group is to select a few key goals and dedicate their efforts toward achieving them in a timely manner.

6. Describe the interest level of the downtown business community, including property owners, tenants, organizations (chamber of commerce, etc.) toward a downtown revitalization effort.

Current Funding Options - The downtown business community and downtown tenants are extremely interested in a downtown revitalization effort.

In 1990, the downtown property owners created a Special Business District. They voted to impose a tax of eighty five cents per one hundred dollars of appraised value on their properties to create a funding source to remove the downtown pedestrian mall. This was an effort to curb the continued deterioration of the downtown business community. The tax had a sunset of seven years and the property owners have renewed the tax twice. After the removal of the mall, the tax has been dedicated to capital improvements and maintenance downtown.

The St. Joseph Banking community has organized an "Urban Core Capital Corporation". Several of the banks have contributed funds available to provide "gap" financing for projects that need additional help not covered by SBA and conventional loans. This can be used as an incentive to get more small businesses to locate downtown.

The St. Joseph Downtown Partnership recently completed a survey to downtown businesses, residents and property owners. In this survey, the respondents indicated that they were generally in favor of paying additional taxes for downtown improvements.

7. Do you have a written redevelopment plan, land use plan, comprehensive plan, economic development plan or capital improvement plan that addresses the downtown? Please attach a copy.

Yes, we have a downtown master plan and a precise plan which are both attached.

8. Have you completed projects that are consistent with that plan? Please describe.

Some Goals Already Met - Yes we have completed several projects that were outlined in the plan and we are in the process of working on additional goals as the resources become available.



One of the objectives of the plan was to create a “sense of place” for the area. To assist in creating this atmosphere, it is necessary to portray the message that you have “arrived” in the central business district. The plan outlined three areas or “gateways” that should portray a positive visual image as visitors enter the area. One of these areas was the entry from I-229 north bound to Edmond Street. The intersection of Third and Edmond Streets off this ramp included a vacant lot on the southeast corner. It was determined that this lot should be converted to a green space area. We successfully transformed it into gateway park. This was a perfect example of a public private partnership. A private entity purchased the lot, the city provided the funding for the design and the infrastructure and donations from the private sector provided the funding for the “Journey West” statue that now sits prominently in the park. At the conclusion of the project, the owner of the lot donated it back to the city. The St. Joseph Downtown Partnership funded maintenance of the park with private donations.



Downtown streets should be two way whenever possible. The reason for this is because two way streets slow traffic and create a more calming effect. Two way streets also create an ease of downtown access and less confusion for visitors trying to find businesses and attractions in the area. When the downtown pedestrian mall was constructed, some two way streets downtown were converted to one way to divert traffic around the mall. We have been successful in getting the 3rd and 4th Street one way streets converted back to two way streets.

Downtown Parking - Parking is always an issue for downtown areas and we are not unique. The Master Plan called for a revised parking strategy for downtown. The St. Joseph Downtown Partnership and the St. Joseph Downtown Association worked closely on this project about three years ago. The intent was to establish a plan that would address the needs of the business community and still create enough revenue to cover the expenses of the parking garages. We submitted the plan to the city and several of the proposed changes have taken place, however, it is still a work in progress.

Uptown Project - Heartland Hospital has initiated the “Uptown Project” to redevelop the site of their former hospital buildings and the surrounding neighborhood. The site of the former hospital will be turned into residential housing consistent with the recommendations in the downtown master plan. Below is a conceptual drawing relating a desired result of the revitalized Heartland West Campus.



Pedestrian Enhancements Needed - The downtown pedestrian environment is lacking amenities. Typically, the sidewalks are narrow and do not contain landscape elements and furnishings like benches, trash receptacles and pedestrian oriented signage. The Special Business District worked with the City of St. Joseph and the Federal Government in implement “period street lighting” on many downtown streets. The City passed a Capital Improvements Sales Tax in 2003. From the sales tax money, downtown received funding to do some streetscape improvements as outlined in the master plan. This money is only sufficient to do one street but it is a start. Improvements will be in accordance with the gateway park so that eventually, we will be consistent throughout the entire area.

Historic Preservation - Preservation of our historic properties is a priority for our downtown rehabilitation efforts. The master plan addresses this issue and encourages the rehabilitation of historic structures to maintain and improve the character of the community. The City of St. Joseph has worked with many downtown property owners to restore the facades on their buildings. They have utilized funding as a loan to property owner to encourage façade improvements. In 2003, the St. Joseph Downtown Partnership conducted a fundraiser to purchase and restore a dilapidated façade in the Wholesale Row District. After the Partnership acquired the property, the city assisted in providing the funds to restore the property. At the conclusion of the restoration process, the property was sold to a developer that built a building behind it and converted it to loft style apartments.

9. This initiative proposes to create the following outcomes:

- **Re-establish density and the re-use of existing properties in the downtown central business district**
- **Increase property values in the downtown central business district**
- **Increase sales tax revenues in the downtown central business district**
- **Re-establish a sense of place in the community**
- **Attract private investment by leveraging state resources with other public and private funds**

Please tell us how you would propose to meet these outcomes.

Continued Growth Needed - The community has been successful leveraging state, local and federal tax credits into creating residential housing in the downtown area. We continue to explore opportunities for additional projects to continue this trend. By establishing more residential density in the central business district, we can strive for our goals of getting the right kind of retail to enhance the downtown area. We are targeting a grocery store, drug store, additional restaurants and entertainment venues and “niche” business ventures that flourish in a downtown environment. By getting the density of residents to support these ventures, we have a better chance that they will be successful.

By investing in the historic downtown properties, we continue to see the property values in the downtown area increase. Continued investment will make more of an impact on the square footage rates that existing properties can command.

Tourism Important to Downtown - Continued investment in rehabilitation of historic properties will also have a positive impact on tourist traffic. Right now, we get a tremendous amount of people that come to our community to experience our history and fantastic architecture. The Downtown Partnership and the Convention and Visitors Bureau worked together to create the historic walking tour brochure to assist this growing trend of cultural tourism. By inviting visitors to our community from other states and countries adds to the total sales tax dollars in the downtown, community and state. The increase in tourism will add support to needed downtown businesses and make them success for our existing population to come and experience, thus increasing the total sales tax revenue in the central business district.

Existing Incentives - Many of the projects that we have done in the downtown have been accomplished by putting together a package of incentives. We have a group of banks that have

combined resources to create a fund for low interest loans to assist in the “gaps” that are associated sometimes with these packages. We will continue to work with investors to leverage their money with local, state and federal incentives to make their projects work.

10. By definition, DREAM communities are those that are prepared to not only participate in the investment required to secure their future, but also to sustain the effort. Describe what financial, personnel and other investments you are prepared to commit to a downtown revitalization effort.

The City of St. Joseph receives an allotment of Community Development Block Grant Funding. A portion of that funding has been dedicated to downtown improvements.

The current Capital Improvements Tax sunsets in 2008, the city will request the citizens of the community extend that tax. We would propose that additional downtown improvements be included in the new round of tax money.

The City of St. Joseph has been successful in utilizing TIF financing for major community projects. Currently, we have two TIF projects in the downtown area, the Heartland Hospital property and the redevelopment of the Holiday Inn Hotel.

The Special Business District has property tax revenues that are utilized for downtown capital improvement projects and the maintenance of some of those projects.

The City of St. Joseph will investigate the possibility of raising the hotel/motel tax.

The City of St. Joseph has explored a possible MoDESA project.

SECTION III – REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

- Complete copies of existing plans
- A map clearly designating the downtown area proposed for redevelopment
- A resolution from the city authorizing the application and describing local commitments

SIGNATURE

DATE

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS FORM TO:

Missouri Department of Economic Development
Business and Community Development Division
PO Box 118
Jefferson City, MO 65120

