



City of Mascoutah Uptown District Plan

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City of Mascoutah, Illinois
Uptown District Plan



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Part One

Introduction / Strategy Summary



Introduction

From its birth as a "railroad station / farming community" in 1837, Mascoutah has evolved in a manner similar to other cities in the United States. Early farm families depended on the community for many of their necessities, i.e. groceries, clothing, hardware, and lumber. The downtown continued as the hub of the community until the post-World War II days when the automobile became a commonality. Shopping, jobs and new commercial construction moved closer to interstates and a larger metropolitan market. Many of the businesses in town felt they could no longer compete. The following three decades brought a slow decline in the number and types of businesses and services offered in the downtown area.

However, over the last decade, Downtown Mascoutah has experienced a "new birth." Several remarkable building renovations have been completed. A Visitor's Center has been established to provide information to residents and visitors alike. The visual appearance of Main Street has been greatly improved by the installation of benches, trash receptacles, planters and street banners. Public art in the form of bronze statues and wall murals have been added, and new private commercial investment have greatly added to the vitality of downtown.

Certain trends, typical to most downtowns, can be found in Mascoutah which have greatly contributed to the success of the Uptown District.

Private Investment – In most communities, downtown property values tend to slide downward as there is a lack of interest or success in finding uses and businesses which can succeed in a downtown environment. In Mascoutah, much of the recent physical improvements to downtown have been driven by the private sector.

Retention of Employment Centers Downtown – The retention of several key employment centers, i.e. banks, post office, city hall, provide a daytime customer base for shops and restaurants.

Creation of Public Uses and Activity Centers – The location of public buildings and activity centers i.e. post office, senior center, civic center, library and city hall, encourage residents using these services to visit downtown and patronize downtown establishments.

Steady Growth – Mascoutah's overall growth and development has been at a steady pace. Important contributable older buildings have not been razed due to development pressure.

Interest to Live Downtown – Downtown Mascoutah includes charming, reasonable housing options. Residents have a desire to live downtown and invest in their homes. This also reduces the pressure to convert residential structures into commercial/business uses.

Ultimately, the reason why a downtown succeeds is its ability to attract "people." Simply put, if an environment is created where people want to live, work and visit, the downtown will continue to prosper.



Summary of Strategies

Land Use – The Uptown District should strive to include a mix of residential and commercial uses. Commercial opportunities should be expanded to portions of Church Street where vacant and underutilized lots are presently zoned Office, Neighborhood Commercial or General Commercial.

Zoning – The Downtown Commercial and Office Zoning Districts are the appropriate commercial districts for downtown which permit "selected" retail sales and service activities that enhance the character of downtown. Areas zoned General Commercial should be rezoned to DC or O Districts. Sign regulations should be reviewed for appropriateness in the downtown commercial districts. To protect the architectural integrity of the downtown, performance standards should be developed to guide the conversion of older homes to retail/office uses.

Parking – There is adequate parking which is fairly dispersed throughout the downtown area. Installing attractive signage to identify and direct visitors to public parking lots is greatly needed. Given that there is sufficient public parking, it is recommended that the zoning code be amended to not require off-street parking in the DC District for each business use.

Traffic – A Traffic Study was completed for the Uptown District in 2004, and the study concluded with several traffic alternatives for Uptown. 1. Given the current traffic levels, continue the use of Main Street as the primary east/west arterial through downtown. 2. Utilize Church and State Streets to carry a portion of east-west traffic through downtown. 3. City should begin planning an alternate east/west truck route around the City bypassing the Uptown area. 4. Removal of parking on Main Street west of Jefferson Street would enhance the traffic flow of Main Street and improve pedestrian safety.

It is also recommended that Market and Lebanon Streets from Main to State Street become one-way streets southbound to eliminate the line of site problem for drivers attempting to pull out onto or cross Main Street traveling northbound. If the one-way street system is implemented, it will allow installing additional angled parking on Market Street.

Historic Structures – Mascoutah's historical structures are one of the most important resources of the Uptown area and need to be preserved. Local historic district status should be explored and rehabilitation guidelines following the Secretary of Interior's Standards should be used to evaluate exterior changes to historic buildings to retain their architectural integrity.

Public Infrastructure – Strategies related to infrastructure and public utilities seek general improvement in conditions of water mains, streets, alleys and SIDEWALKS. Due to costs, improvements will have to be completed in phases. Special assessments should be considered to help fund improvements.

Design Features – Sensitivity to design can compliment and enhance the historical and architectural qualities of the Uptown District. Design features should build on the existing downtown structure to create a convenient and "user friendly" downtown.

Streetscape should be reorganized to incorporate permanent public park-like open space, as well as heavily landscaped parking lots and pedestrian walkways. A Streetscape Improvement Program, comprised of new sidewalks, street trees, landscaping, street furniture and period lighting should be initiated to enhance and unify the Uptown District. The District can also be unified by adopting street graphics and sign standards appropriate for the downtown area.

Project Financing – The City should continue to stay current of the constantly changing State and Federal programs and program requirements to apply for funding to support the projects identified in the Uptown District Plan. It is recommended that Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds from TIF 2B be used to begin the infrastructure improvements and streetscape enhancements for portions of the Uptown District which are located in the TIF 2B.

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Part Two

The Plan and the Process

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Purpose of the Uptown District Plan

Why we are planning?

The purpose of the Uptown District Plan is to provide a series of goals and strategies to deal with the issues that are present in Downtown Mascoutah within the geographic area identified in this plan.

Specifically, the Plan will address the challenges and opportunities identified by staff and participants; formulate goals; and identify projects and programs aimed at addressing these goals in a manner that can be adopted as official City policy.

The plan will be used to guide both public and private investment. The City Council will adopt this plan document as part of the official City Comprehensive Plan. Following its adoption, local officials will have an understanding of the desires of the community and can properly plan for and budget resources to implement the projects and programs recommended in the plan.

Lastly, it is of primary importance for the implementing partners of this plan to recognize that Downtown Mascoutah is a "community of people and businesses" and an ever-evolving entity which makes it necessary to periodically redefine issues, and review goals and implementation strategies to account for changing attitudes and needs. It will be important to conduct "vision" meetings with as many businesses, residents, and property owners as possible every two years to keep pace with the evolution of the Downtown.

The Planning Process

Throughout the planning process the City Manager and staff guided a "stakeholders group" made of primarily Downtown property owners, residents and business owners to review and advise the work produced by staff and a planning consultant. The City hired FGM Architects to facilitate this process.

A survey was conducted through Mascoutah Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Mascoutah, and three stakeholder meetings were conducted. Several other meetings were held with representatives from the Economic Development Commission to refine this planning document.

It is important to note, that attempts in the past produced documents more "narrative" in nature. Staff and the stakeholders felt strongly that this effort to review and make recommendations for downtown projects and programs needed to be "visual" in nature. Strong visual representations accompany this Uptown District Plan to assist in illustrating recommended strategies to promote Downtown Mascoutah and continue its vitality.

It is hoped that this plan catches the imagination of the rest of the community with innovative ideas, visible changes and the image of what can be!

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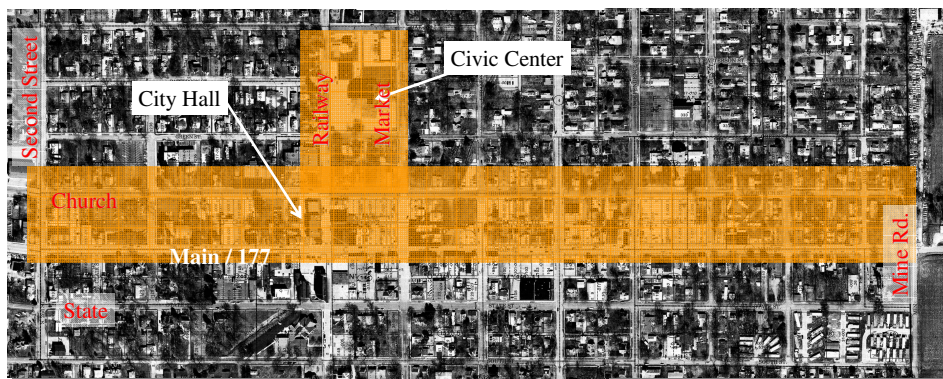
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
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Mascoutah Uptown District

The "Uptown District" is a geographically defined section of Downtown Mascoutah bounded by Main Street and Church Streets from Second Street to Mine Road and the area between Railway and Market Streets from Main to Oak Street. It is hoped that focusing on this particular area will create a "synergy" of public/private improvements which will expand beyond and benefit the entire Downtown area.



 Area of Planning Focus

0 1000 2000 3000
Graphic Scale

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Our Challenges

- Narrow Main Street
- Curb / sidewalk maintenance
- Overhead electric lines
- General building conditions
- Unimproved / underutilized lots



- Poor directional signage for parking areas and public facilities
- Inappropriate signage
- Lack of public gathering/assembly spaces
- No unifying theme to identify district
- Route 177 and Route 4 truck traffic
- Inappropriate General Commercial (GC) District zones
- Aging infrastructure, i.e. water, sewer, alleys, streets
- Two state controlled highways, IDOT constraints
- Little green space / landscaping
- No barrier between vehicular/ pedestrian routes
- Business retention



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- Historic resources / features, i.e. 19th and 20th century buildings, mill.
- Architectural integrity has been maintained
- Strong business community
- Continuity in the streetscape, older buildings intact
- Public areas to improve and "green"
- Location and availability of parking favorable
- Develop a "niche" market
- Anchors located downtown, i.e. city hall, library, post office, senior center, civic center
- Two state highways, highly traveled
- Non-profit organizations promoting downtown

Our Opportunities

- Established businesses
- Strong private investment
- TIF 2B District, financing tool
- Stable downtown residential/housing market
- Commitment to Downtown Mascoutah



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Existing Conditions \ Visual Assessment

Appearance is an important ingredient in a successful downtown program. A survey of the visual elements of the Uptown District was undertaken as part of this plan. The general assessment measured the impact of buildings and the defined urban spaces, i.e. parking areas, open spaces.

- Within the district, Main Street is very narrow, and either the traffic lane or the parking lane is adjacent to the sidewalk. No barrier exists between pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- The condition of the sidewalk pavement is an element contributing to the streetscape. Along Main Street, several sidewalk condition problems were found. Downspouts pour out onto the sidewalks.
- The overhead electric lines also contribute negatively to the streetscape.
- A few buildings were in poor condition and/or have lost their architectural integrity.
- Parking areas generally abut buildings and sidewalks and no area preserved for landscaping or green space.
- Areas between buildings are unattractive.

- Planters, benches, trash receptacles, period street lights, street banners, murals and bronze statues liven up the district.
- Store fronts generally look pleasant and inviting.
- Recent building renovations have retained many of the building's architectural features.
- There are several buildings in Mascoutah which are significant to the history of the community.
 - *The Carriage House*
 - *Mascoutah City Museum*
 - *Tony's Place*
 - *Reitz Building*
 - *500 East Main Street*
 - *Mill building with mural*
 - *Tru-Value Hardware*
 - *Moll Funeral Home*
 - *Nite Deposit*

The “heart” of Mascoutah ...
...is “*Uptown*”

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Existing Conditions

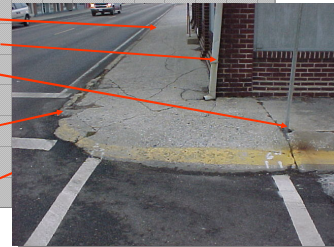
Many architecturally significant 19th and 20th century buildings intact.

Downspouts dump onto sidewalks
Building steps protrude into sidewalk

Narrow sidewalks
Close building proximity to street
Signage encroaches into pedestrian way

Deteriorated curbs / gutters

Deteriorated sidewalks



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Existing Conditions *targeted for improvement*



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