

***JUST LISTEN TO THE MUSIC OF THE TRAFFIC IN THE CITY
LINGER ON THE SIDEWALK WHERE THE NEON SIGNS ARE PRETTY
HOW CAN YOU LOSE?***

I sheepishly acknowledge that I am old enough to remember Petula Clark asking that question in the 1960's in her hit song entitled "Downtown." My response to her question in 2005, Joplin, Missouri is that, with a theme and a unifying vision linking structures, streetscaping, parking and amenities is we can't lose. Tonight we will establish that theme and identify that vision and initiate the rebirth of downtown Joplin.

Arguably, downtowns are the most recognizable part of any city. Downtowns harbor the history and heritage that reflect the early stages of a community. Therein lies the perceived weaknesses of downtowns, that most were laid out in a pre-automobile era creating space constraints that have led to their decline. Here tonight, I espouse that our perceived shortcomings are just strengths in disguise. I submit to you, the early origins of downtown Joplin and the attendant history, architecture and ambience are the foundation on which we will build. Interestingly enough, our resources indicate the trend in malls these days is towards "Lifestyle Centers." Lifestyle Centers are open-air shopping plazas with sidewalks and overall layout resembling city streets. According to the International Council on Shopping Centers, 17 "Lifestyle Centers" are scheduled to open in 2005. The buildings and settings in our downtown exude a charm and uniqueness that most modern facilities have difficulty rivaling. Wouldn't it be nice if Joplin could offer

an alternate life experience to the hectic pace of Rangeline and the surrounding area by carving out an enclave to provide a respite from the complications and over-stimulation of modern life? The vision would be an eclectic blend of niche commercial offerings, restaurants, entertainment opportunities, professional office space and residential alternatives. There needs to be a variety of reasons to come downtown. The downtown area when fully developed, will not necessarily compete with Rangeline, but rather complement this strength of our city and create a synergy whereby we could avail ourselves to more tax revenue from the many daily visitors in our town, which would in turn be reinvested in other areas of the city. Truly, the vision is a dual offering of a restored downtown to counterbalance Rangeline connected by the fulcrums of 4th and 7th Streets.

The 2003 Joplin Citizens' Survey indicated that 74% of the City's citizens said we need to redevelop the downtown area. This percentage rose some 10 points over a similar survey performed in 1998. The most recent Joplin 20/20 citizen-driven envisioning process revealed the revitalization of downtown as one of the most important goals for the future of Joplin. Downtown revitalization was one of the top goals for Joplin City Council as established at the August 15, 2003 and June 18, 2004 planning retreats.

This should come as little surprise to the listener, as our current downtown consists of a significant number of vacant storefronts, some decaying buildings, parking concerns and inconsistent and inconvenient infrastructure. These conditions are

clearly evidenced by recent press attention given to the problems experienced by two of the 9 buildings in the entire city, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the old Carnegie Public Library located at 830 S. Wall Street, and the Rains Brothers Building located at 906-908 S. Main St. The problems experienced by these two buildings are telling us something. They are telling us the time to intervene and demonstrate the value of historic preservation through the creation of a comprehensive redevelopment program with standards and incentives, is now, before more architectural treasures are lost. Joplin City Council, through their foresight in the placement of our new City Hall, along with the redevelopment of the Frisco Building, have established the basis for this program to be implemented. A secondary benefit of the redevelopment of downtown Joplin is to lessen the impact of urban sprawl.

Another important point needs to be made at this juncture. Just as code enforcement plays a significant role in the image Joplin conveys in our economic development efforts, so too does the condition of our downtown. Joplin competes with many other cities for the limited number of economic development opportunities available these days. We have to make sure every aspect of our community transmits a positive image to the business scouts that are sent to evaluate our community. They have to feel comfortable with the thought that we are investing in all areas of our community before they are convinced to invest in our community. Why should they take that risk? They will just go to the next city on their site visit list. There is a great deal of discussion about taking Joplin to that

next level and targeting jobs that might pay more than some that we currently offer in our community. I would submit to you here, this evening, that we cannot be fully successful at either goal, until we revitalize downtown Joplin.

As we start to define this vision for downtown Joplin please don't limit your appreciation of the great potential of our downtown by our current circumstances, for that is the essence of vision.

Redeveloped downtown Joplin needs to present an environment that is safe, attractive, comfortable and inviting to residents and visitors alike. If we accomplish this, we will create a setting that establishes its own momentum, generates tax revenues to be reinvested in our community and creates job opportunities.

How do we accomplish this?

The first order of business is to establish a public-private partnership with downtown businesses and property owners to demonstrate our shared commitment and a pledge of our joint resources to redevelop our downtown. Towards that end, with the help of Main Street Joplin, I contacted a list of downtown stakeholders to meet with me to discuss certain aspects of the plan. This group was a subset of active downtown entities that served as a focus group for the redevelopment plan. This was the first step in the formation of a city-downtown stakeholder partnership and I'm pleased to say the response was very positive.

You have heard me say before a successful downtown redevelopment plan needs to contain 4 basic components:

- 1) Improvement of structures**
- 2) Improvement of streetscaping**
- 3) Improvement of parking (and transportation considerations)**
- 4) Improvement of amenities (the enhancement of appearance and offerings to attract people)**

STRUCTURES:

As I stated previously, the core strength on which we build our redevelopment plan, is the historic architecture and character of the buildings in our downtown area. If we don't act now, we run the risk of adding to the number of architectural "intrusions" in our center city. This name is common downtown parlance for modern buildings that replace older structures that destroy the scale, balance and symmetry of our downtown blocks. I don't want to make specific references here and don't want to offend anyone but do want to illustrate the impact these buildings have. Most would agree that they are the missing or chipped teeth in an otherwise potentially-beautiful smile. The most essential ingredient in protecting our buildings and preventing further intrusions is the implementation of design review guidelines.

I am proposing that City Council adopt the design review guidelines originally established by Thomason & Associates for Joplin in August of 1992 and recently modified by City staff to meet our current needs. Interestingly enough, the President of Main Street Joplin, at the point in time these guidelines were originally developed, was the City Council's own Bob Harrington.

These guidelines “provide property owners with a planned approach to revitalization through the use of proper rehabilitation and maintenance techniques and design parameters for compatible new construction.” They are essential for creating the look and atmosphere we seek in downtown Joplin. Those of you that have seen the Loop Book I brought with me from Piqua, know the vast improvement opportunities presented through these standards. The basic core theme of the design review guidelines is to restore the buildings to their original grandeur to the extent possible. Desired improvements to the buildings will be governed by the removal of timeworn 60's –70's improvements, that often mask the true beauty of the buildings.

For the purpose of scope at this point, it is important to establish a definition of downtown. Let me caution listeners, I am not trying to limit the perceived or real understanding of downtown's boundaries, but merely establish a reasonable initial target area on which we can add on in the future. At this point, we are defining downtown as Main Street from 1st Street to 10th Street. More specifically, we are targeting a three-block initial demonstration area of 4th Street to 7th Street. This

will allow an example of the downtown vision to be realized for citizens and visitors alike, on which we will expand both north and south and east and west. I propose that we call this area the “Sunshine Lamp District” to pay homage to Joplin’s origins and create the mood we are trying to establish. A sunshine lamp was the name given to the attachments to the miner’s caps that burned lard oil and kerosene. Just as the sunshine lamps illuminated the miners’ work, so to will this district light the way for the redevelopment of the entire downtown Joplin area.

A design review board would be convened to oversee the implementation of the guidelines. This board would be comprised of 7 members, a majority of which would be downtown business and/or property owners as well as representation by the Historic Preservation Committee.

In trying to achieve the look sought by the redevelopment plan, the City would make available a grant for the refurbishing of the facades of the building according to the guidelines. In keeping with the public-private partnership, the City would contribute through CDBG monies up to 50% of the amount of the exterior improvement to qualified applicants. The capped limit for this grant would be \$25,000 per building. The City’s recently passed 5-year CDBG program reflects our commitment to this approach.

In addition, the inducement for building improvements can be increased by the utilization of the 353 Program, which allows for 10-year abatement on all property taxes and 50% for an additional 15 years. (Give examples)

Another tool available to assist private building improvements is the Joplin Capital Corporation, which is a consortium of area bankers, who group together to provide “gap financing” for qualified projects ranging from 5,000-50,000 dollars.

New state legislation is being approved to make available another asset to the City to assist in our efforts. The State Legislature has passed a bill referred to as MoDESA LITE. Following our initial project, Council can create an overlay district whereby any additional tax revenues produced above and beyond that initial year can be deferred to public improvements and possibly fund exterior building improvements. This revenue stream becomes critical as the plan presented here this evening is directed at storefronts, which will produce the funding source to allow upper story development. This revenue stream can also be used for future streetscaping and parking improvements as the redevelopment advances over time.

STREETSCAPING

The City’s portion of the public-private partnership will be in the streetscaping. The streetscaping design is as important to creating the historic atmosphere desired as the improvements to the buildings. Streetscaping plays the

key role in creating the warm, inviting and accessible atmosphere essential to your center-city success.

What I propose as a streetscaping theme are the same specifications utilized in the past city I managed, which played a large part in Piqua receiving the Governor's Award for Excellence for Downtown Redevelopment in 2003. These plans call for a brick paver strip nearing the curb, reconstructed concrete, pedestrian level streetlights that eerily resemble streetlights in Joplin in an earlier part of the 20th century, street trees, trash receptacles and benches. All are tied together in period-style motif. Utilizing existing plans saves Joplin the cost of paying to develop them. In addition, I have worked successfully with them in the past and I will personally vouch for the beauty of what these plans will produce.

There are additional benefits to this streetscaping design including the shaving off of the extended islands, creating 42 new on-street parking spaces in the area from 4th to 7th Street. This adjustment alone creates more than twice the amount of existing on street parking from 4th Street to 7th Street. Carrying the streetscaping theme to 8th Street will result in 9 more spaces. In addition, I am recommending the implementation of angle parking on portions of 5th Street, which will add an estimated 14 new spaces and provide an option for those who experience difficulty parallel parking. At \$12,000 per space for deck construction, this equates into a cost avoidance of \$780,000. Hanging flower baskets will be installed on the

poles to beautify downtown, as will American flags placed on poles on holidays, and white lights will be wrapped around poles at Christmas time.

We will apply for a JOBS NOW Grant to help fund these improvements. We would have to make a fund balance allocation to complete the second block of the streetscaping yet in 2005, but do have the resources to do so. Even with this shifting of city funds, we can only do 2 blocks of streetscaping this year, if we receive the grant. However, in doing so we can position ourselves for Federal assistance. In Senator Bond's June 3, 2005 letter to me following his recent visit, he states that Joplin's "financial commitment" ... "would be a big help to us in selling of the importance of this project to our colleagues." As I stated previously, depending on the speed of the investment in downtown, future improvements could be funded with assistance of the MoDESA LITE economic development tool.

PARKING & TRAFFIC-The following changes include input from the HNTB Study and work by City Employees.

- 1) Re-route truck traffic-Down 7th Street to Murphy Blvd through Landreth Park and back onto Highway 43. This will take place in 2006 as a result of roadway improvements necessary on Murphy Blvd.
- 2) Reduction of speed limit of 5 mph from 1st Street to 10th Street.
- 3) Free but regulated parking—money now paid for permitted parking can be invested in the buildings themselves
- 4) Allow market to dictate parking utilization

- 5) Add angle parking on 5th Street-14 spaces
- 6) 65 new on-street parking spaces, which includes on-street parking additions from 4th – 8th Streets and the new angle spaces on 5th Street
- 7) Shortest to longest duration-Starting with shortest duration in front of businesses on Main Street. Second longest on side streets, third longest directly behind buildings and so forth.
- 8) Well-signed area leading to parking lots.
- 9) Streetscaping to parking lots
- 10) Double the fines for parking violators.

AMENITIES

The fourth component of a successful downtown plan are the amenities added to the area that help create the historic atmosphere you need to instill which will in turn, stimulate the visitors necessary for a vibrant downtown. Everything we do downtown needs to be geared to obtaining that atmosphere. Fred Kent- President of the “Project for Public Spaces” said in an April 2005 article in *Governing Magazine* that “we need places that people feel comfortable in and connect to, that they can be affectionate in, smile, laugh, engage, tell stories”

Here are different things we should pursue in no particular order:

- 1) Establish recreational trails leading into the downtown-*show map*.

Downtown would be the hub or the destination of a series of 9 recreational

trails in these locations throughout the city. People could easily access these trails and walk, jog, blade or ride a bike into our revitalized center city. We propose to install at least one route per year.

- 2) Develop a mural program for prominent walls in the downtown area.**
- 3) Install the previously-mentioned flower baskets and flags on the light poles.**
- 4) Re-establish an old-fashioned beat cop to increase the level of confidence in security for downtown patrons.**
- 5) Establish an old-fashioned animated Christmas display in the Newman Buildings 6th Street window display to re-start the old tradition of families going downtown to look at the window decorations during the holidays.**
- 6) Install a town clock in future streetscaping plans.**
- 7) Establish rotating street sculptures reflecting Joplin's mining heritage (miners) (Thank Mrs. Landrith)**
- 8) Consider using the existing lights to create gateway effect as you enter the downtown**
- 9) Investigate prospect of licensed street vendors, carriage rides and street entertainers**
- 10) Get permission from the railroad to paint 4th Street overpass with thematic downtown logo with eastside saying "Historic Downtown Joplin 1.8 Miles Ahead" and Westside saying "Rangeline Retail Area .2 miles Straight Ahead".**
- 11) Continue the historic marker designation program on all downtown buildings to allow for walking tours.**

- 12) Propose the redevelopment of the Union Depot as new home of the Joplin Museum creating a logical anchor for the entire historic downtown experience.**
- 13) Market Route 66 as part of the attraction to downtown.**
- 14) Consider re-establishing the popular pre-WWII Fiesta celebration**
- 15) Restore ghost art or the faded ads of yesteryear on the sides of certain downtown buildings.**
- 16) Consider staging arts and crafts fairs and other outdoor-oriented events in downtown Joplin.**
- 17) Pursue National Historic Register designation for more buildings in the downtown area**
- 18) Market the downtown area with the tagline “The Past is Present in Downtown Joplin”**

As we near the end of our presentation here this evening, I want to make what I think is an important observation. I would argue that all cities, including Joplin, have a generational obligation to preserve buildings that reflect their community’s heritage for future generations. We have a chance here this evening and in the near future, to establish a preservation ethic, that will be the first step to saving these treasures for those that follow us. Wouldn’t it be wonderful for your grandchildren to have had the opportunity to walk with you through the corridors of the eight story high Connor Hotel, the Keystone Hotel,

which housed Joplin's first elevator and the House of Lords building? These buildings are irreplaceable. We cannot allow the Carnegie Public Library, the Rains Brothers Building, the Joplin Union Depot and many other structures to be added to the roles of the ghost structures that I just mentioned.

In closing I believe the interest in investment in downtown Joplin is out there. There are a number of ideas currently in the discussion phase. I think that once we identify our vision and create direction that such investment will occur. Once we take that initial step, the redevelopment effort will create its own momentum and allow us to realize our goals. There may be some aspects of the plan you may not agree with, as no plan could please everyone on all counts, but the important thing to keep in mind is the need to move forward in order to establish this momentum.

VIRTUAL REALITY PRESENTATION

AGENDA ITEM