

Downtown Redevelopment Plan



Downtown Redevelopment Plan

Russellville, Alabama

May 1, 2017

Prepared by the City of Russellville and The Russellville Downtown Redevelopment Committee with assistance from the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG) for the City of Russellville, Alabama. Prepared with financial assistance from the Economic Development Administration, Planning Partnership Investment #04-83-06903.

Acknowledgements

The City of Russellville and The Russellville Downtown Redevelopment Committee prepared this Redevelopment Plan with the assistance of the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG), Main Street Alabama, and Civil Group, LLC.

Development of the plan was overseen by the Mayor, City Council, and The Russellville Downtown Redevelopment Committee. The plan was reviewed by the City of Russellville's Planning Commission and adopted as guidance for the city's comprehensive plan.

Mayor and City Council

The Russellville Downtown Redevelopment Committee

Russellville Planning Commission

Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments

Franklin County Chamber of Commerce

Main Street Alabama

Russellville Utilities

Civil Group, LLC.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF GOALS AND

OBJECTIVES.....6

Introduction.....6

Downtown Redevelopment Area Boundaries6

Development History.....7

Redevelopment Plan Goals and Objectives.....8

 Design Objectives

 Economic Objectives

 Promotions Objectives

 Organization Objectives

Planning Process.....9

Document Organization.....9

Conclusion.....9

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS.....10

Existing Land Use10

Focus Area Comparisons.....11

Physical Scale of Downtown12

 Building Height

 Block Size

 Density (Floor to Area Ratio)

 Density (Building Frontages Per Block)

Historic Structures.....14

Ownership Characteristics14

Commercial Building Types.....15

Businesses Located Downtown.....15

Residential Development.....15

Roadways.....16

 Downtown Streets

 Traffic Counts

 Intersection Controls

Parking.....17

 Parking Vacancy & Availability

 Parking: Existing Parking

 Infill Development & Parking Potential

Pedestrian Facilities.....18

Socioeconomic Characteristics.....19

DESIGN.....20

Community Connections: Gateways,
Signage and Image Corridors20

Transportation and Access: Downtown
Streetscapes and Parking.....21

Buildings and Lots21

Design Objectives and Strategies.....21

ECONOMIC VITALITY.....28
 Economic Vitality Objectives and Strategies.....29
PROMOTION.....32
 Promotions Objectives and Strategies32
ORGANIZATION.....34
 Organization Objectives and Strategies34
CONCLUSION.....35
 Appendix A: Implementation Strategy.....36

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Introduction

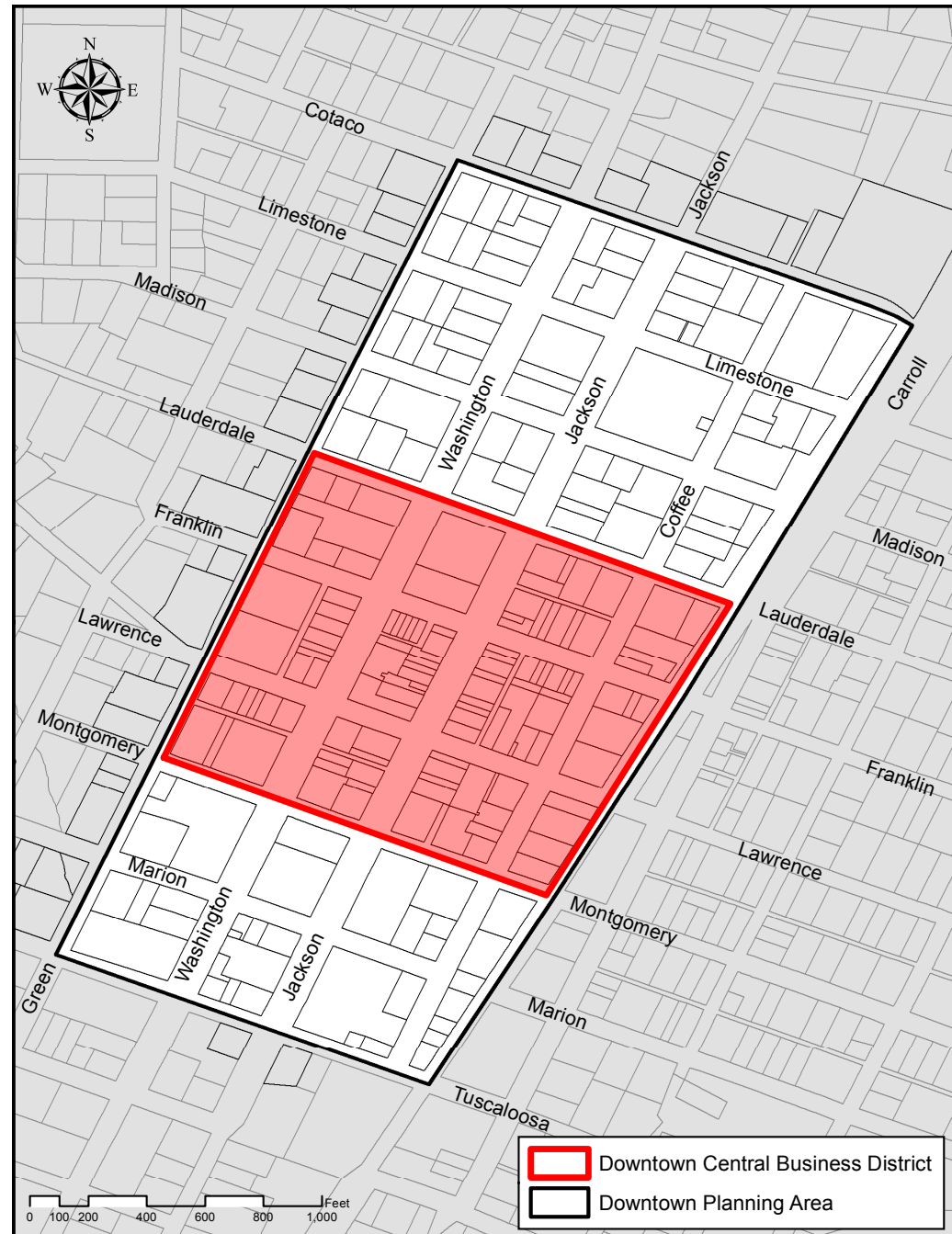
The Russellville Downtown Revitalization Plan is designed to provide guidance to public and private investment in the historic and cultural center of the City of Russellville. The plan takes a holistic and comprehensive approach to downtown redevelopment, utilizing the National Main Street Program's four-point approach to downtown revitalization. It includes strategies for Design, Organization, Promotion and Economic Vitality as means of improving opportunities for business growth and civic opportunity for downtown Russellville.

Downtown Redevelopment Area Boundaries

The study area for the Russellville Downtown Revitalization Plan includes a downtown core area and a secondary area surrounding the core. Together, these areas include the primary historic districts of the City of Russellville.

The downtown core includes a twelve block area with 117 buildings, primarily downtown businesses. The secondary area includes institutional, governmental, and other service-oriented businesses and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Both areas are centered by Jackson Avenue, the main street of the city. The design and character of these areas make up the central, historic downtown and the original neighborhoods of the City of Russellville.

The core study area is bounded on the north by Lauderdale Street, on the south by Montgomery Street, on the east by the Norfolk Southern Railroad and on the west by Green Avenue. The secondary study area extends north to Cotaco



Street and south to Tuscaloosa Street with the railroad and Green Avenue as its east-west boundaries.

Development History

Downtown developed as the civic, institutional, and cultural heart of the City of Russellville. From the time the city was founded, the area around Jackson Avenue grew to become a center of trade and government. The City of Russellville was incorporated November 27, 1819, shortly after Franklin County was founded, and just before Alabama became a State. A town square was laid out on the west side of Jackson Avenue in the blocks that are bordered by Lawrence, Franklin, Washington (the original route of the Jackson Military Road), and Jackson Avenue. Russellville served intermittently as the county seat throughout the early history of Franklin County until the seat was moved back in 1890. Several courthouses were destroyed by fire before the current courthouse was constructed.

Over the next several decades, downtown continued to be the commercial heart of the City as well as a necessary destination for outlying communities for shopping, services, and governmental activities. As traffic increased along Jackson Avenue downtown, pressure grew to relocate U.S. Highway 43 to an outer bypass to accommodate increased traffic and to provide a regional thoroughfare through Russellville. New growth occurring along the new highway removed commercial opportunities from downtown. As a result, downtown suffered a similar decline to that experienced in small towns nationwide.



In response to decades of stagnation and threats to the appearance and integrity of downtown Russellville, the city set out to design a plan to redevelop the district in order to preserve its character, appearance, and vitality.

Redevelopment Plan Goals and Objectives

The Russellville Downtown Revitalization Plan is based on the following four goals:

- Create a downtown district that is attractive and inviting to visitors and residents.
- Diversify economic opportunities downtown to stabilize properties, structurally and economically, and to enhance the district's appeal for future investments.
- Promote downtown as a frequent destination for events for both residents and visitors.
- Organize stakeholders to sustain activities downtown.

To accomplish these goals, the following objectives have been established to measure success. Objectives are divided into four categories according to the Main Street four-point approach.

Design Objectives

1. Designate a downtown redevelopment district to become the main focus of downtown activities.
2. Preserve the character of buildings in downtown Russellville.
3. Encourage mixed use development in downtown Russellville.
4. Improve streetscapes throughout downtown.
5. Improve gateways and thoroughfares leading into downtown.
6. Improve downtown infrastructure.

Economic Objectives

1. Retain and support existing businesses.
2. Recruit new businesses desirable to downtown.
3. Encourage activities and land uses that foster business success.
4. Diversify downtown activities to support daytime, nighttime, and weekend commerce.

Promotions Objectives

1. Develop effective, cooperative marketing techniques for downtown.
2. Host a variety of downtown events throughout the year.

Organization Objectives

1. Establish a non-profit community organization to coordinate downtown redevelopment activities.
2. Establish funding sources and a work plan for the organization.

Planning Process

The Russellville Downtown Revitalization Plan was developed through a participatory planning process involving multiple stakeholders to produce a coordinated work plan for the future of downtown. The plan was initiated by the Russellville City Council in April of 2015 under contract with the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments.

Next, a Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee was established to approve the overall approach and to provide stakeholder expertise from citizens and organizations across the city. The Steering Committee was to provide oversight in preparing the plan, its process, and recommendations. Members represented public officials, local financial institutions, downtown business owners, and citizens. The membership is listed in the Acknowledgments in the forward to this plan. The Steering Committee provided overall direction for the plan, reviewed drafts, and made recommendations throughout the process.

Next, the public was engaged throughout the process in a series of presentations and public hearings held during the planning process. The first provided a broad overview of the purpose and need for downtown planning. Second, Main Street Alabama was invited to present information on the Main Street four-point approach to downtown success. Finally, the existing conditions and recommendations were presented for public review and comment. A final public hearing before the Russellville Planning Commission presented the final draft of the plan, which was adopted and forwarded to the City Council for final approval.

Document Organization

The Russellville Downtown Revitalization Plan is organized into six additional sections. The next section includes an review of existing conditions critical to the plan, its purpose and need, and a summary of major conclusions and recommendations. The following four sections address the National Main Street Program's four-point approach to Design, Economic Structure, Promotions, and Organization. The plan concludes with an Implementation Strategy that details the plan objectives, outlining important tasks, lead and support organizations, expertise, and timeline.

Conclusion

The Russellville Downtown Revitalization Plan provides a detailed blueprint for coordinating resources for improving downtown Russellville's business and civic opportunities. It assesses the resources and existing characteristics of downtown, details an overall vision and approach to downtown redevelopment embodied in the Main Street four-point approach, and provides guidance for multiple stakeholders including public, private, and non-profit entities to take leadership in the redevelopment of downtown Russellville.

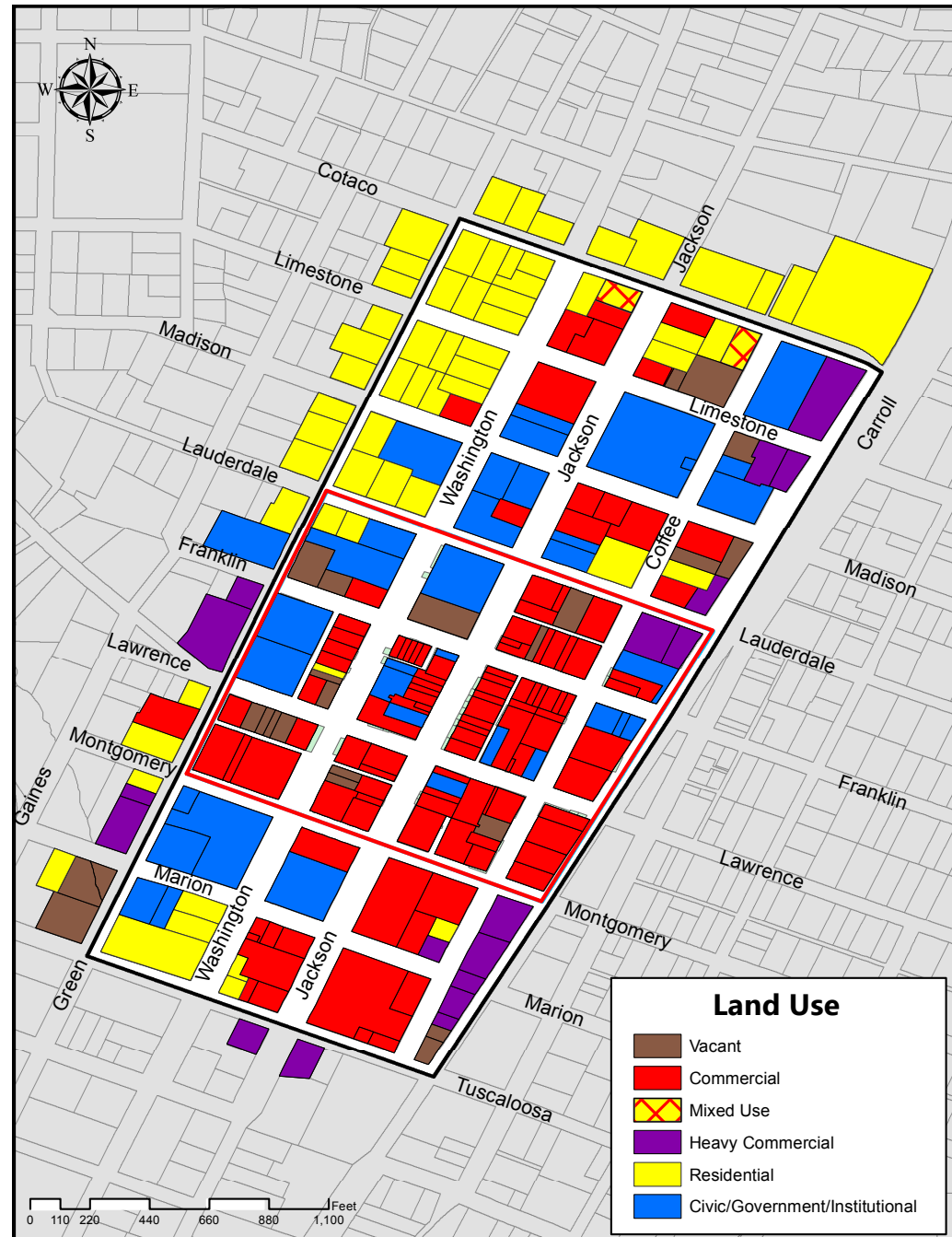
BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing Conditions

As the center of the City of Russellville, downtown is an important focal point for civic and commercial life. Existing conditions underscore the centrality of downtown Russellville in several ways, framing it as a unique location in town with a distinctive character and history that is critical to Russellville's cultural narrative and identity. Downtown is one of the most densely developed locations in Russellville, with the greatest potential value per acre for property. Density, walk-ability, and value are all intricately linked with historic value and character in downtown Russellville in ways that reinforce the need to preserve and promote downtown.

Existing Land Use

Land use in Russellville's downtown is largely commercial and civic, bordered by residential all around. The core area, consisting of the central 12 blocks of downtown, has a historic commercial pattern of close-fronting brick buildings with one to three stories, which is familiar to small town downtowns across the region. These buildings are largely occupied by retail and service commercial land uses, with scattered civic and governmental buildings like churches and public buildings. A number of the buildings stand vacant in the core district. A number of incompatible heavy commercial (light industrial) uses, largely automotive sales and service, are present in the downtown core, which detract from the appearance and aesthetics of downtown. There are very few residences in the downtown core, but those that



are present are single-family structure. There is no residential mixed use downtown.

Heavy Commercial and vacant properties should be carefully redeveloped over time in patterns that reinforce traditional downtown character.

Outside of the downtown core, land uses are retail and service commercial, civic/institutional and residential. While structures lack the design characteristics that make the downtown core unique to Russellville, these land uses contribute to downtown by attracting residents to governmental and civic uses. The entire area is



tied together with consistent topography, grid streets, and sidewalks throughout most of the study area.

Study Area

| Land Use by Parcel | Parcels | % of Parcels |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|
| Residential | 36 | 16.59% |
| Commercial | 111 | 51.15% |
| Civic/Institutional | 35 | 16.13% |
| Mixed Use | 2 | 0.92% |
| Heavy Commercial | 12 | 5.53% |
| Vacant | 21 | 9.68% |
| Total | 217 | 100.00% |

Downtown Core

| Land Use by Parcel | Parcels | % of Parcels |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|
| Residential | 3 | 2.59% |
| Commercial | 81 | 69.83% |
| Civic/Institutional | 16 | 13.79% |
| Mixed Use | 0 | 0.00% |
| Heavy Commercial | 2 | 1.72% |
| Vacant | 14 | 12.07% |
| Total | 116 | 100.00% |

Study Area

| Land Use by Acre | Acres | % of Area |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|
| Residential | 9.44 | 16.36% |
| Commercial | 21.28 | 36.89% |
| Civic/Institutional | 18.08 | 31.34% |
| Mixed Use | 0.47 | 0.82% |
| Heavy Commercial | 3.75 | 6.50% |
| Vacant | 4.67 | 8.09% |
| Total | 57.69 | 100.00% |

Downtown Core

| Land Use by Acre | Acres | % of Area |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|
| Residential | 0.47 | 2.23% |
| Commercial | 11.37 | 53.85% |
| Civic/Institutional | 5.53 | 26.20% |
| Mixed Use | 0 | 0.00% |
| Heavy Commercial | 0.74 | 3.51% |
| Vacant | 3 | 14.21% |
| Total | 21.11 | 100.00% |

Focus Area Comparisons

Auburn, AL and Athens, GA are “college towns” with vibrant downtowns. Although the market is different, the downtowns have similar characteristics, with similar sizes and linear appearances in the core commercial districts.



Downtown Russellville, AL
Commercial Core
Blocks: +/- 7
Acres Commercial Property: +/- 12
Linear Miles of Walkable “Storefront”: +/- 2.97



Downtown Auburn, AL
Commercial Core
Blocks: +/- 4
Acres Commercial Property: +/- 40
Linear Miles of Walkable “Storefront”: +/- 1.5



Downtown Athens, GA
Commercial Core
Blocks: +/- 14
Acres Commercial Property: +/- 35
Linear Miles of Walkable “Storefront”: +/- 2.5

Physical Scale of Downtown

The downtown district is characteristic of traditional downtowns throughout the region, with close fronting buildings that are one to three stories in height. The structures are mostly brick and occupy the majority of the parcels on which they sit. This creates a scale of development with regular, proportionate openings at intersections and a high number of building fronts per block. This character, defined by block sizes, building heights, spacing and massing of structures is unlike any other location in the City of Russellville.

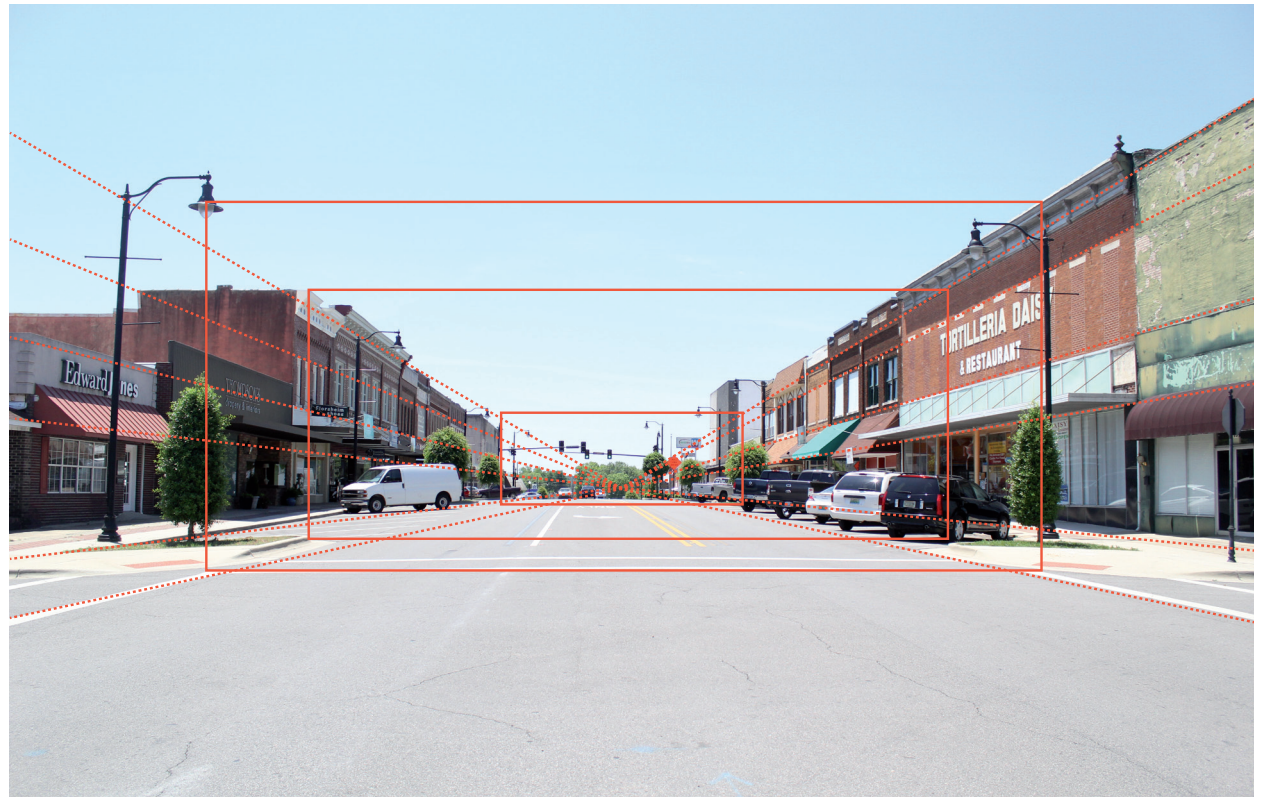
A **perspective drawing** can be a useful tool for illustrating the similarities and differences in downtown buildings. Perspective drawings give an appreciation of scale, proportions and distance in the images shown. A linear perspective is based on the idea that objects that are closer appear larger and those farther away appear smaller. Parallel lines drawn away toward the horizon will appear to vanish into a single point. This allows viewers to recognize and understand the parallel placement of features that are both near and far. Linear features in downtown include parallel sidewalks, floor heights, window alignments, and roofs. Although the details of each building may vary, heights are generally very similar.

A horizontal perspective allows comparisons of features that are parallel within the same plane, and between plans, stretching to the horizon. Horizontal perspective allows comparisons of materials and mass within and between similar cross-sections of the streetscape, stretching toward the horizon. In downtown, building widths are proportionate, usually in

frontages of 25 to 30 feet or multiples thereof. Compatible and harmonious buildings have materials that are consistent across frontages, mostly made of brick, as are window height, spacing, mass, and coloration.

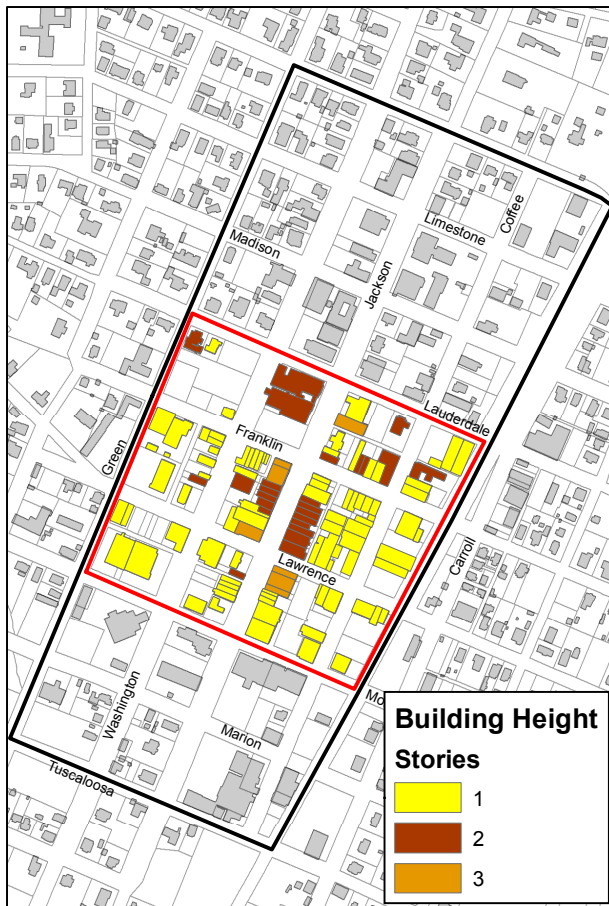
Exact repetition of features is not aesthetically appealing nor desirable, but general repetition lends a sense of harmony and place to the downtown landscape. Windows in place of flat walls, awnings at regular heights, the alignment of two and three story building heights, uniform spacing and width of streets, intersec-

tions, parkings, crosswalks, and travel lanes: these features define the visual surroundings of downtown and leave a sensory impression upon visitors that they are in a unique place with features that are well-designed and proportioned for the needs of the individual. These places have harmony, or **eurythmia**- a graceful and agreeable atmosphere, which should be the ultimate design goal and guiding principle of all downtown projects.



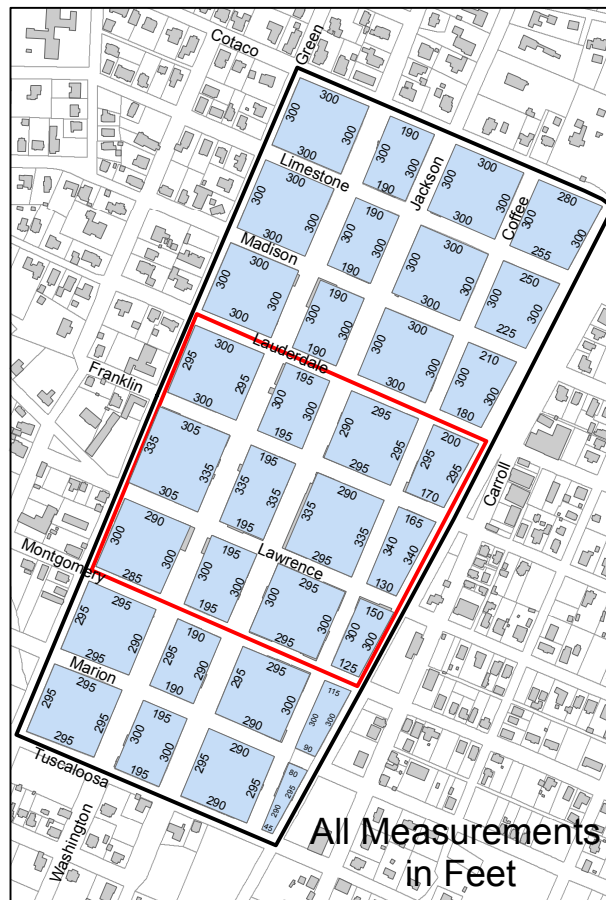
Building Height

Building heights downtown are from one to three stories, stacked vertically within the footprint of each lower floor. Each building is proportionate in height and width. The vertical features are broken by horizontal lintels or sills, rows of windows, or other wall features. Balconies are absent in the original upper stories.



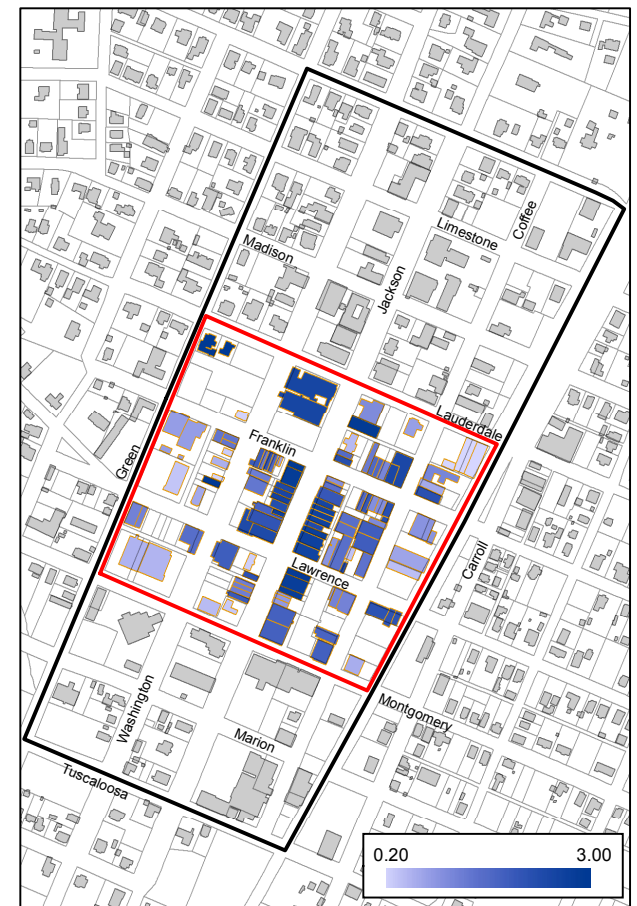
Block Size

Downtown blocks are short and regular, typically square or slightly rectangular. These lengths provide for regular street grids, allowing vehicular and pedestrian circulation while maximizing the level of access to buildings and structures downtown. This block length is ideal for walkability and for encouraging pedestrian engagement downtown.



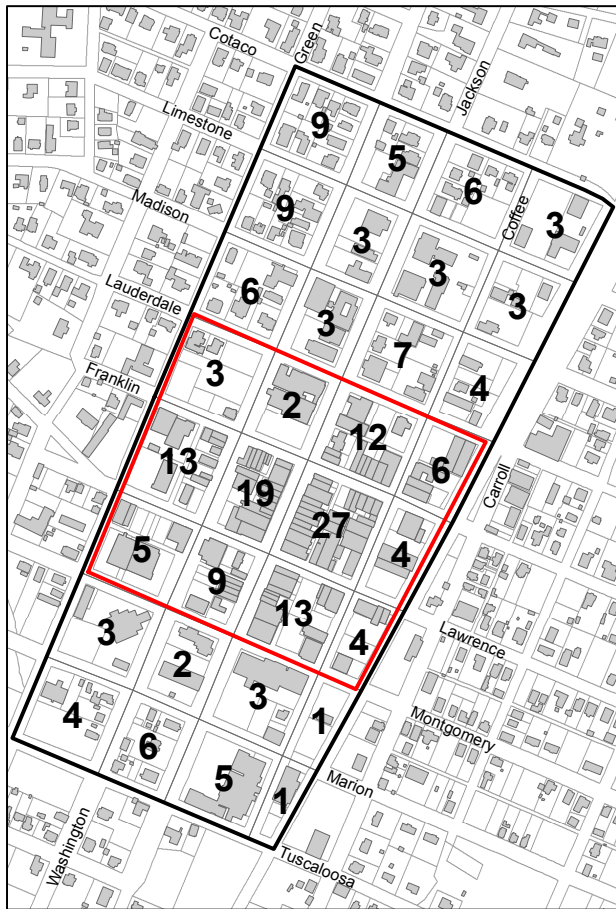
Density (Floor to Area Ratio)

Building density is often measured as a ratio of the floor area of buildings to the total area of the parcel upon which the buildings rest. The higher the value, the more densely developed the parcel is and, generally, the greater the economic activity per square foot of land area is likely to be in a downtown area.



Density: Building Frontages Per Block

Similarly, more densely developed downtown areas tend to have a higher number of store frontages upon each block. This creates a greater variety in the built environment, more interesting views and walking opportunities, and more opportunities for varied commercial activity downtown.



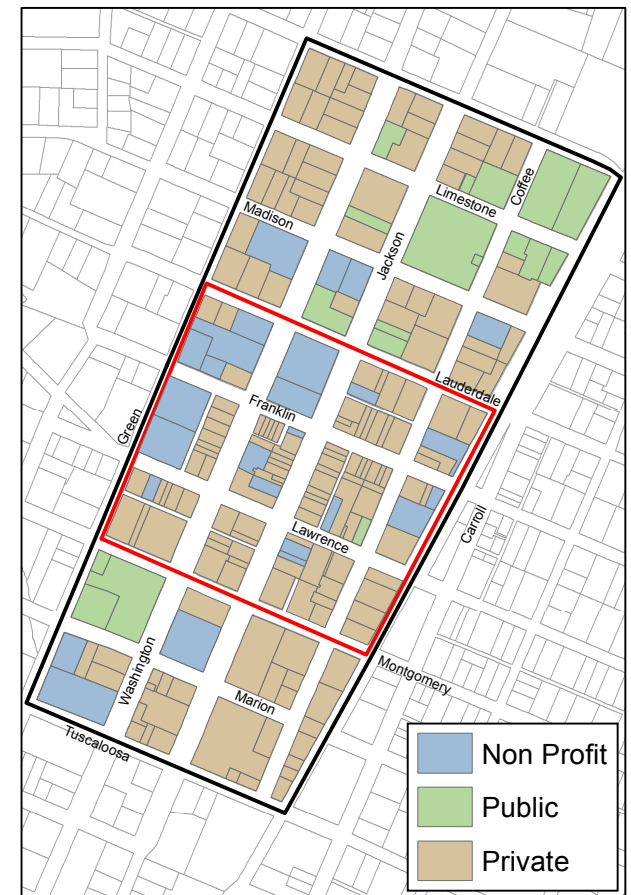
Historic Structures

A large number of buildings downtown are of an age and character that are likely to qualify as historic. The collection of buildings are indicative of a historic commercial development in an era of state and national history and would, very likely, also constitute a historic district, qualifying for redevelopment tax credits. A fuller exploration of these structures and their historic meaning and significance is warranted.



Ownership Characteristics

Downtown parcels and businesses are owned by private, non-profit, and public entities. Private properties are most often the ones to change ownership and to provide opportunity for improving the character of the downtown district. Meanwhile, public and non-profit lands provide stability and stable attractors for visitors to downtown.



Commercial Building Types

Downtown Russellville is home to an impressive number of existing businesses that make it a local destination for shopping and retail as well as professional and personal services. The mix of institutional uses related to local government encourages related professional services, which in turn generate other support services.



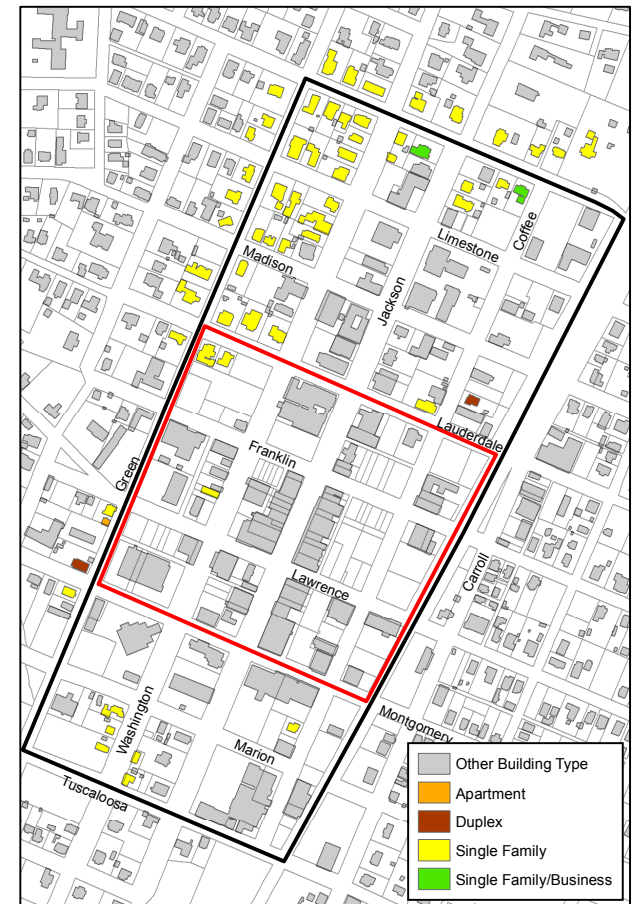
Businesses Located Downtown

These provide a firm foundation, but a key missing opportunity are those activities that extend beyond regular business hours. To capture the greatest economic potential downtown, Russellville should encourage growth of business opportunities that extend throughout the hours of normal business and into the evening.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1st Franklin Financial | Dollar General | Pelloqueria |
| Absolute Storage Solutions | Edward Jones Financial | Barbershop |
| Avenue Salon & Boutique | El Quetzal Buena Vista | Pollo lo Quillo |
| Beautiful Girls Boutique Latina | Emmanuel Furniture | Rebecca Green |
| Bolton Furniture | Foster Service Center | Thompson Attorney |
| Candy Store Lore | Grissom Cleaners | Restaurant El Quetzal |
| CB&S Bank | Jimmie's Hair Style | Ronnie's Recreation |
| Coffee | La Bella | Rose's Variety |
| Street/Antonio's Variety | Lanny Norris Insurance | Roxy Theater |
| Cypress Electric | Mas Income Tax Service | Sinclair Lawrence Insurance |
| Davis Realty & Associates | McCullar Reed Barber Shop | SWEDA |
| Delicia's | Mexico Bakery | This & That Flea Market |
| Destination Restaurant | Mimi's Cleaner | Thompson's Interiors |
| Discount Autos/Tienda de Descuentas | Monchi's | Tienda Family |
| Variedades | N&L Nail Salon | Tortilla Dasiy & Restaurant |
| | Napole's Barber Shop | Valley Credit Union |
| | Neil Taylor Attorney | Valley Foods |
| | Palmetto Salon | Variedades Emmanuel |

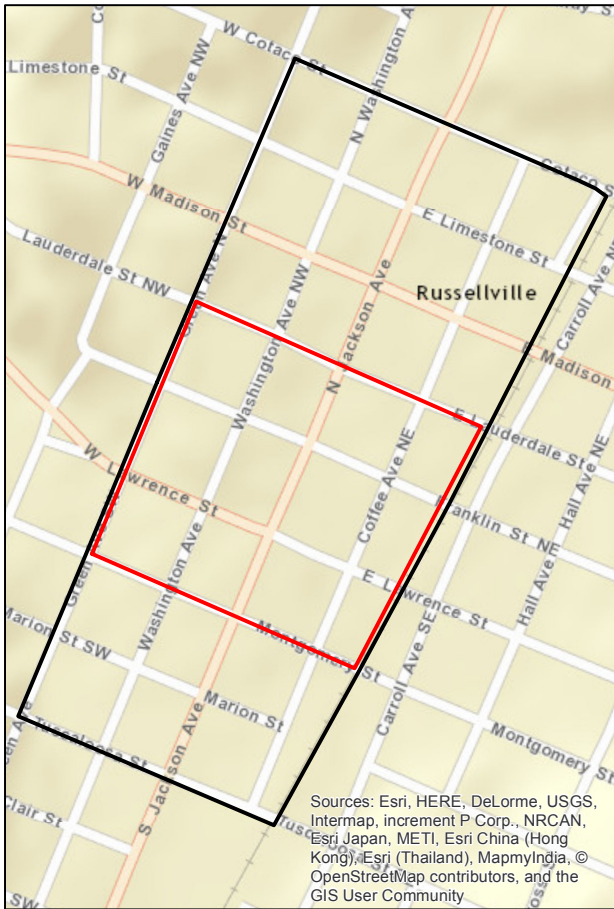
Residential Development

There is very little residential property within the study area and none that is of higher density. The downtown core has a few single-family residential structures, but no apartments in the area, which would sustain higher rents and promote greater commercial and service activity downtown.



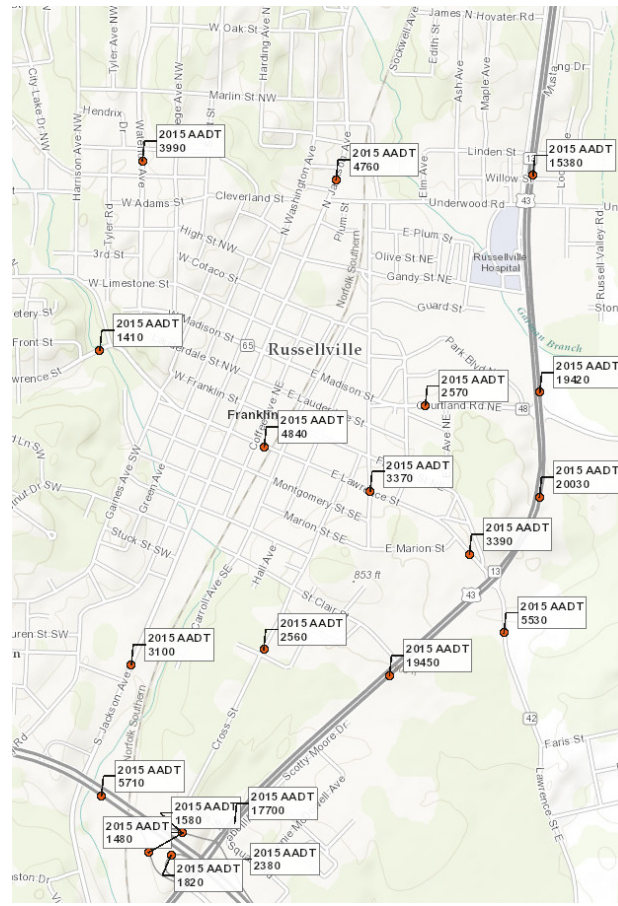
Downtown Streets

Downtown's street network is a regular grid built around two-lane collectors. Major traffic flows enter and exit along Jackson Avenue and Madison and Limestone Streets to downtown. Street networks are sufficient to convey vehicles with minimal congestion.



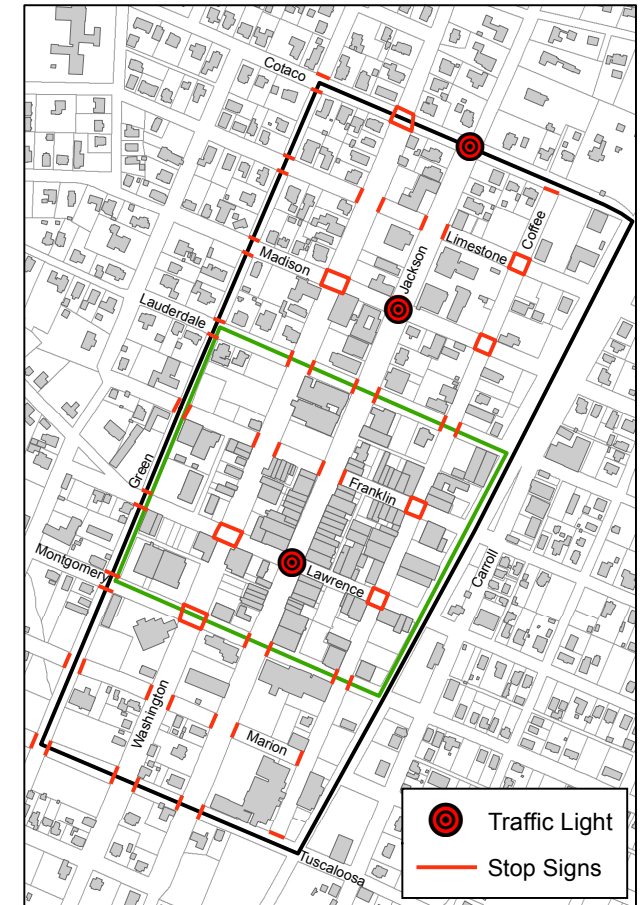
Traffic Counts

Downtown Russellville attracts almost 5,000 individual trips per day. Meanwhile, traffic along the U.S. 43 corridor is almost 20,000. These counts set a standard for the type and variety of businesses that can be attracted to downtown. Higher counts are naturally more attractive to higher volume businesses, but are less conducive to harmonious development downtown.



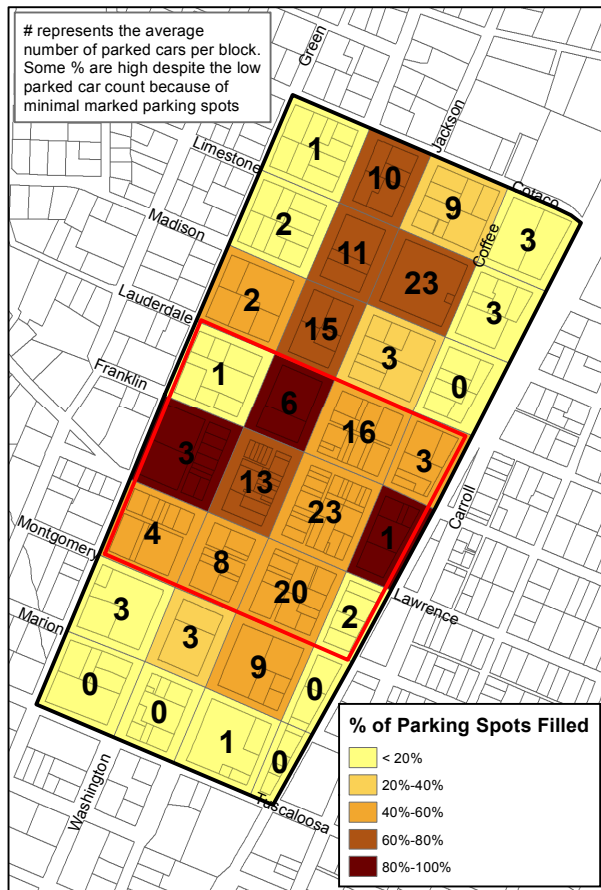
Intersection Controls

Intersection controls downtown are designed to assign right-of-way and to allow uncongested, safe flow of traffic. Too often, however, they are used to address speed control and are not necessarily warranted by line of sight and crash incidences. Where used, signals and controls should be well thought-out and consistently designed, with similar characteristics for posts and lighting throughout downtown.



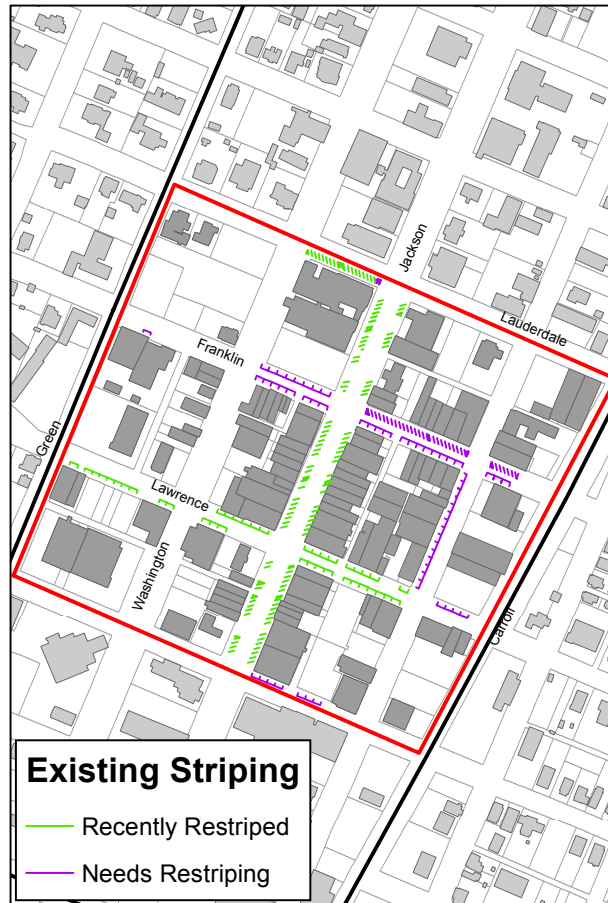
Parking Vacancy & Availability

Adequate parking is one of the major concerns in downtown redevelopment efforts. Parking in downtown Russellville tends to be concentrated around the courthouse and a few blocks in the central core. The lowest vacancy is found around the courthouse, but parking is readily available elsewhere in the study area.



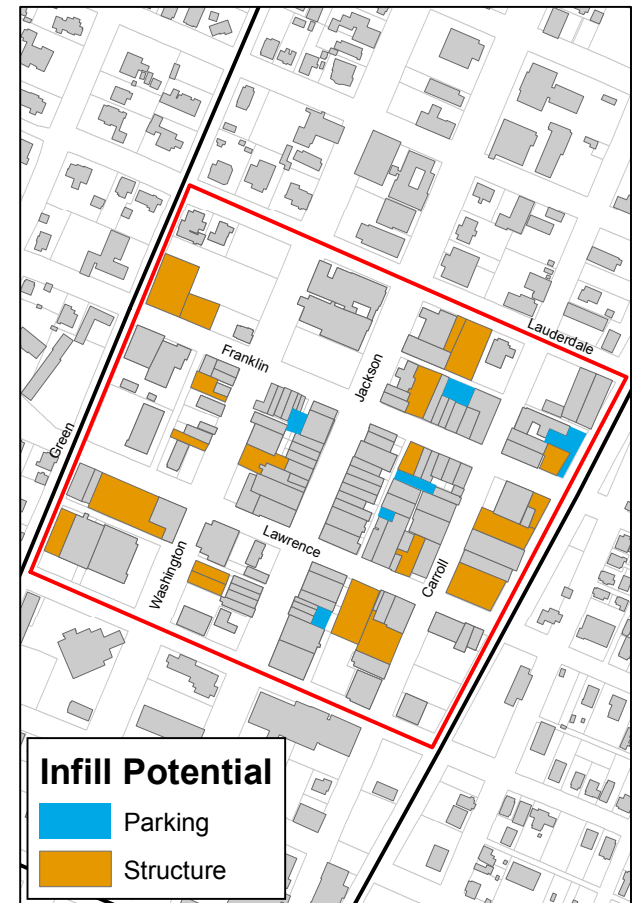
Parking: Existing Parking

One relatively easy and inexpensive method for improving the visual character of downtown as well as the appearance of available parking (and parking safety) is to re-stripe parking areas along streets that are currently unmarked. This gives an orderly and maintained appearance as well as helps regulate efficient parking downtown.



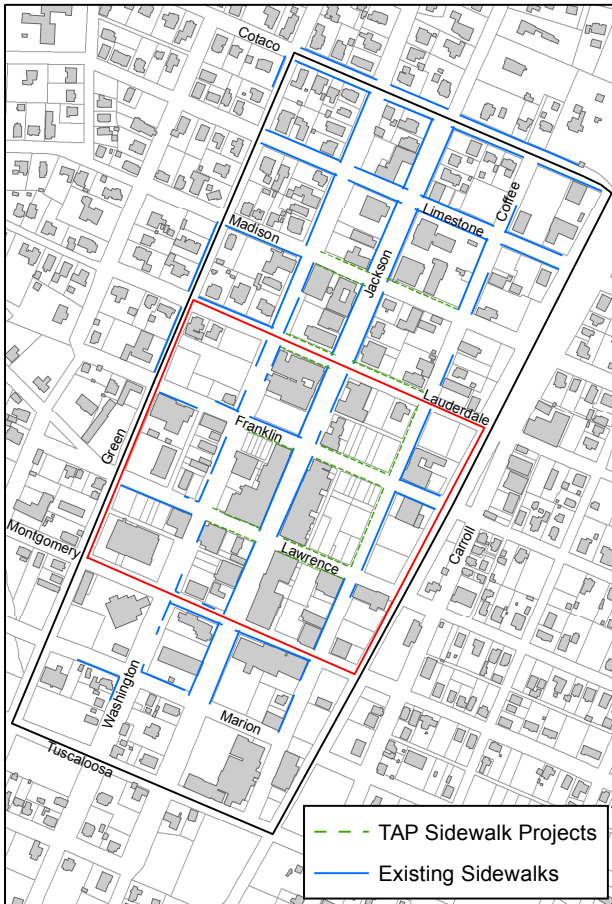
Infill Development & Parking Potential

Vacant lots and open spaces in downtown Russellville provide opportunities for new construction in accordance with downtown design principles. The illustration below shows how new buildings can be placed on corner lots and between existing buildings in styles that complement exiting development. Infill parking can be used to expand the number of available spaces where buildings are less fitting.



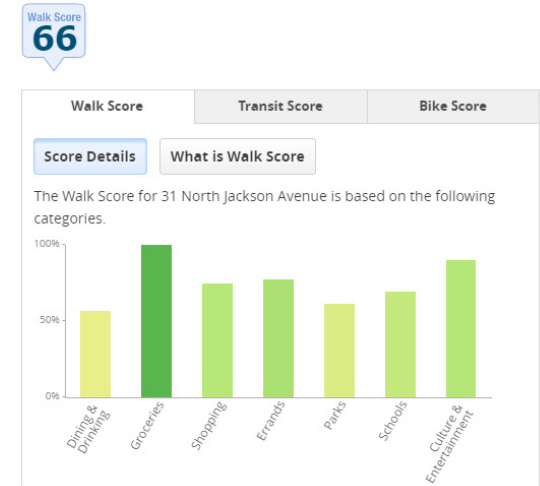
Pedestrian Facilities

Sidewalks are essential in downtown Russellville. They are the primary conveyance between parking areas and various downtown attractions. Designing and expanding safe and attractive sidewalks is an area of public investment with a high return in downtown redevelopment efforts. The city has several new sidewalk projects under way.



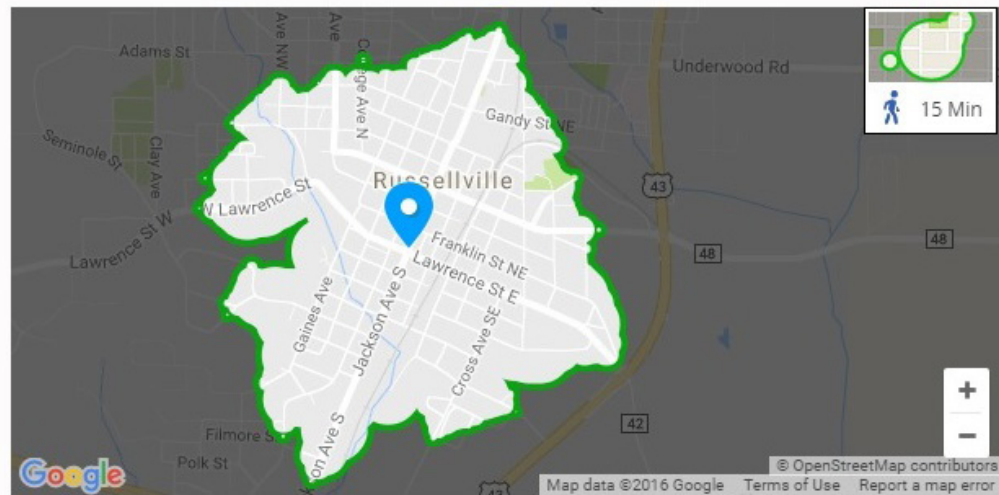
Pedestrian accessibility in downtown Russellville is fairly high compared to other parts of the City and to other cities in the region. Walk Score, a website dedicated to scoring pedestrian accessibility, gave the area a Walk Score of 66 out of 100, which indicates that most daily needs are present within a short, walkable distance. A walk time of 15 minutes from downtown will carry an individual across the full extent of the downtown sidewalk network and give opportunities for dining, grocery shopping, some recreation, and other amenities. Improving the network outside of downtown will increase walkability, while improving the offerings downtown will encourage greater pedestrian activity downtown.

Scores for 31 North Jackson Avenue



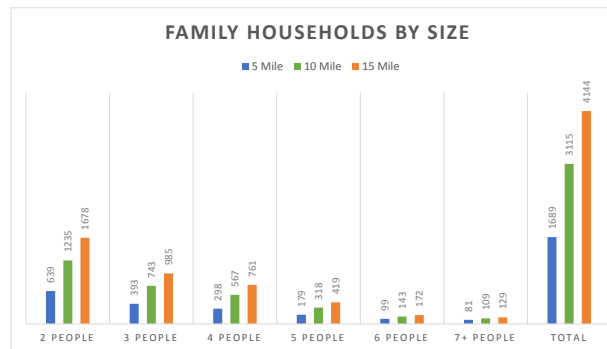
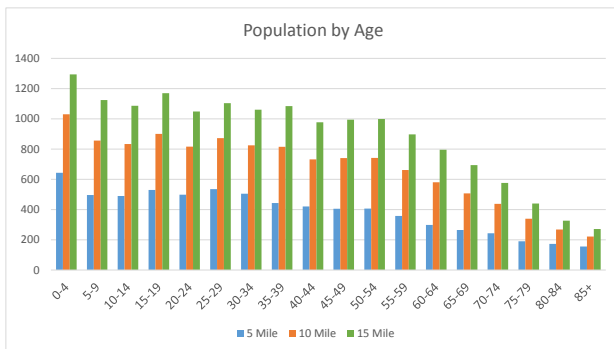
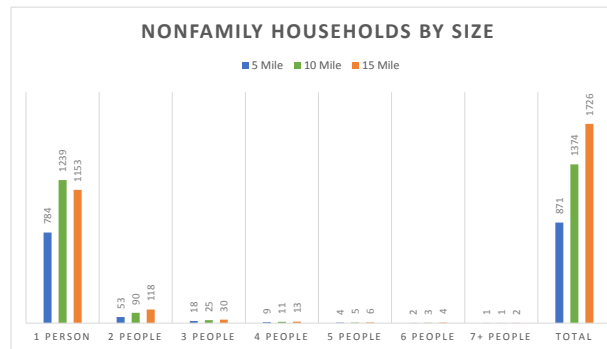
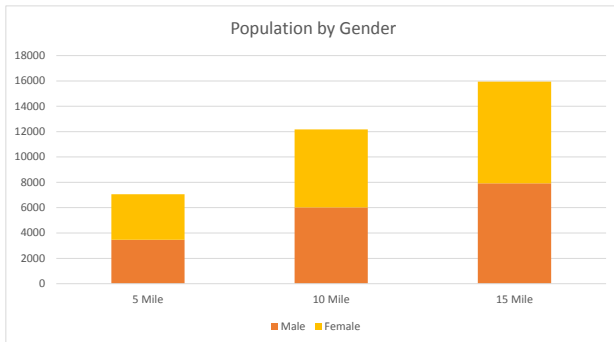
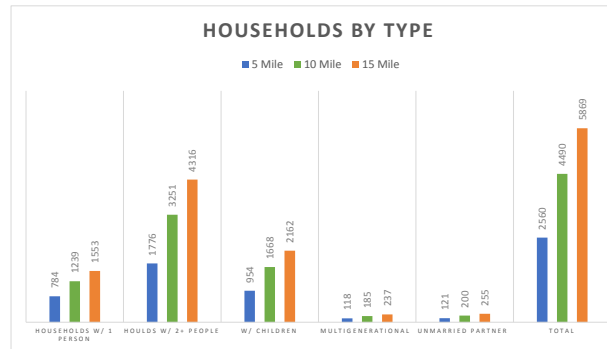
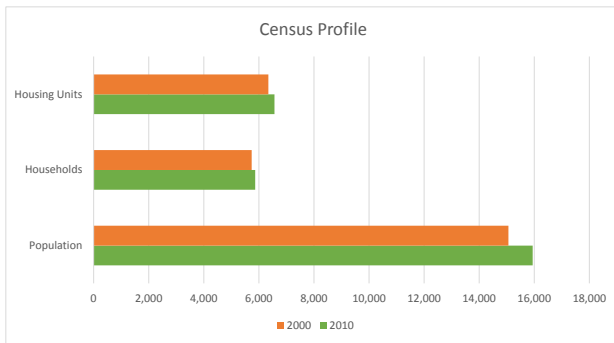
Travel Time Map

Explore how far you can travel by car, bus, bike and foot from 31 North Jackson Avenue.



Socioeconomic Characteristics

Population and income characteristics for Russellville and the surrounding area are provided below for distances reachable in 5-minute, 10-minute, and 15-minute drive times by vehicle. These are common sources of data reviewed by potential new businesses to decide on new investments.



| Population by Race | 5 Mile | 10 Mile | 15 Mile |
|--|--------|---------|---------|
| Total | 7,056 | 12,179 | 15,943 |
| Population Reporting One Race | 6,901 | 11,941 | 14,644 |
| White | 4,562 | 8,669 | 11,798 |
| Black | 620 | 887 | 1,027 |
| American Indian | 68 | 104 | 134 |
| Asian | 17 | 33 | 39 |
| Pacific Islander | 3 | 6 | 8 |
| Some Other Race | 1,631 | 2,242 | 2,638 |
| Population Reporting Two or More Races | 155 | 238 | 299 |
| Total Hispanic Population | 2,165 | 3,053 | 3,646 |

| Total Housing Units by Occupancy | 5 Mile | 10 Mile | 15 Mile |
|--|--------|---------|---------|
| Total | 2,855 | 4,980 | 6,566 |
| Occupied Housing units | 2,560 | 4,491 | 5,869 |
| Vacant Housing Units | 289 | 489 | 697 |
| For Rent | 120 | 186 | 237 |
| Rented, Not Occupied | 4 | 8 | 11 |
| For Sale Only | 52 | 82 | 103 |
| Sold, Not Occupied | 7 | 17 | 25 |
| For Seasonal/Recreational/Occasional Use | 15 | 31 | 70 |
| For Migrant Workers | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Vacant | 91 | 165 | 251 |
| Total Vacant Rate | 10.80% | 9.50% | 10.70% |

| Households by Tenure & Mortgage Status | 5 Mile | 10 Mile | 15 Mile |
|--|--------|---------|---------|
| Total | 2,560 | 4,491 | 5,869 |
| Owner Occupied | 1,398 | 2,745 | 3,777 |
| Owned with a Mortgage/Loan | 827 | 1,613 | 2,177 |
| Owned Free & Clear | 570 | 1,132 | 1,600 |
| Average Household Size | 2.75 | 2.69 | 2.69 |
| Renter Occupied | 1,162 | 1,746 | 2,092 |
| Average Household Size | 2.64 | 2.62 | 2.65 |

| Income Data | 5 Mile | 10 Mile | 15 Mile |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| 2015 Median Household Income | \$32,657 | \$37,002 | \$37,557 |
| 2020 Median Household Income | \$36,127 | \$39,896 | \$40,517 |
| 2015-2020 Annual Rate | 2.04% | 1.52% | 1.53% |
| 2015 Per Capita Income | \$16,223 | \$17,674 | \$17,961 |
| 2020 Per Capita Income | \$17,632 | \$19,247 | \$19,599 |
| 2015-2020 Annual Rate | 1.68% | 1.72% | 1.77% |

DESIGN

Design is the process through which ideas are translated into reality. It takes many forms depending on the discipline. In downtowns, design is the process of assessment, planning, and execution through which the built environment encourages and reinforces the positive economic, social and cultural activities that are important to community life and cultural identity.

Good design rarely happens by accident. It occurs through careful thought and planning about the interactions and outcomes that are desirable in a location. As people interact with downtown, from their initial impulse to visit and throughout their time downtown, the design of the downtown and the visitor's experience can and will shape their actions and reaction to their environment. The experience will shape what people do and what they spend- time, money, consideration, civic engagement- in the downtown. Therefore, this plan offers an assessment of existing conditions affecting downtown and a series of recommendations regarding design as it relates to positive improvements in downtown Russellville.



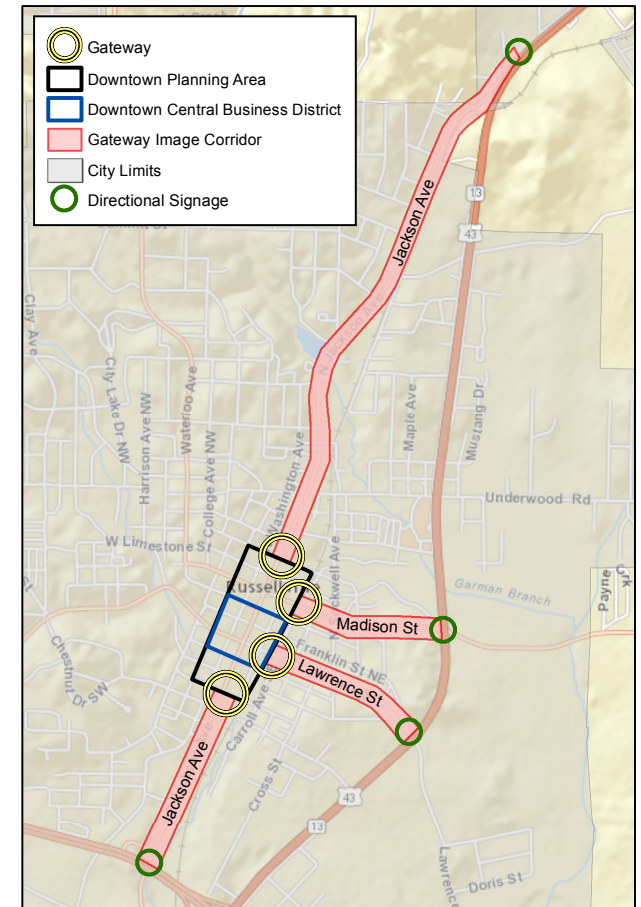
Community Connections: Gateways, Signage and Image Corridors

The downtown experience begins from the moment the individual decides to visit the district. Whether that visitor is a resident of the city (or even the downtown district) or a visitor to the city, there is a need to provide continuity throughout their travel to and from downtown. This requires that travel corridors be designed with downtown in mind. Major approaches should be redeveloped to provide transitions leading to downtown. This is a vital and often overlooked piece of the development puzzle in many towns.

Design should become more image conscious and consistent with downtown standards the closer to downtown one gets. First, community gateways need to provide consistent edges that alert visitors to their location in the city. Gateways should start at the outer limits along major highways (U.S. Highway 43 and U.S. Highway 24). Next, signage and gateways leading from major highways to local collectors streets should alert travelers to the presence of downtown Russellville. Areas along these collectors (Tuscaloosa, Lawrence, Franklin, Madison, and Limestone) should be zoned and landscaped into "image corridors", which provide for a safe, low-speed, and aesthetically pleasing approach to downtown.

Street design should transition from auto-oriented to pedestrian oriented the closer one is to downtown, with narrower driving lanes, fully developed pedestrian facilities, and landscaping. Land use should transition along these routes as well, with auto-intensive uses in outlying areas along major highways, transition

areas supporting residential and light commercial, and more intensive commercial, retail and service-oriented, and residential land use concentrated closer to and within the downtown district. Typically, these land use patterns are supported and encouraged by local zoning and other development codes. All of this reinforces the visitor experience that they are arriving at a place that is distinctive, vibrant, and treasured in the community.



Transportation and Access: Downtown Streetscapes and Parking

One important feature of most downtowns is the distinctive street pattern, which developed prior to the rise of automobiles as the primary form of transportation and provided for a traditional grid pattern. The strength of the grid and the adjacent public improvements is that it facilitates short pedestrian trips more effectively than other street designs while maximizing the use of available space for private development. Traditional streetscapes include travel lanes for vehicles and sidewalks.

Modern adaptations around this call for additional landscaping and street trees, accessibility for people with disabilities, accommodations for parking and amenities for visitors including street furniture for disposal of refuse and to allow places to sit and enjoy the downtown environment. Traffic calming is appropriate to create a safe space for pedestrians, including narrower streets, well-marked crosswalks, bump-outs, and traffic devices (signals and stop signs).

Parking design is an issue that attracts considerable attention in downtown discussions. Business owners' concern for customer convenience drives a lot of the discussion of where to put vehicles, despite evidence that customers will adapt to shopping in a downtown that offers unique variety, marketable goods at competitive prices, and a user friendly experience.

Fortunately, Russellville has adequate parking. A parking survey showed that vacancy at various times during the day averaged around 40% in the commercial core of downtown (and 15%

around the courthouse).

The vision for the future of Russellville's downtown includes lots of demand for parking, so strategies to address the need for additional parking should include adequate 'self-policing' by business owners, striping additional parking on immediately adjacent streets, and the installation of satellite parking adjacent to downtown or in the rear of existing structures. With concern to parking, shortages are a good "problem" downtown and indicate successful planning and design!

Buildings and Lots

The downtown grid street pattern influenced the division of parcels of land into individual lots and in turn influenced the architectural styles of buildings in downtown Russellville. Most of the buildings in downtown were constructed in the four decades period prior to World War II. They were designed to maximize the frontage and availability of useable space and, as such, were built densely from lot line to lot line in adjacent rows. One and two story simple brick boxes are the most common building type in downtown Russellville. These durable, adaptable structures are the architectural staple of downtown, and many of them possess artistic flourishes that are not easily reproduced. Collectively, the buildings are the most valuable assets of the downtown district because, once lost, they cannot be replaced without incredible effort.

The greatest care and effort must be exercised in planning to revitalize downtown Russellville in order to protect and preserve these structures! Many of the strongest recommendations

of the Russellville Redevelopment Plan are intended to protect these valuable cultural and historic resources.

Design Objectives and Strategies

To accomplish the foregoing, the Russellville Downtown Redevelopment Plan calls for the following Design Objectives and Strategies. The Objectives are designed to be 'big picture' outcomes, while strategies are intended to be action-oriented steps that reinforce desirable outcomes for downtown:

- 1. Designate a downtown redevelopment district to become the main focus of downtown activities.**

- D.1. Draft and adopt a resolution or ordinance designating a downtown redevelopment district.**

The district will serve as the focal point of investments in downtown Russellville. By designating the district, the City establishes that other investments city-wide will be coordinated with the needs of downtown. In addition, the district designation becomes the informal framework for other activities such as infrastructure improvements, business support services, design guidelines and zoning ordinances, and other tools and activities that guide growth and development downtown.

2. Preserve the character of buildings in downtown Russellville.

D.2. Adopt appropriate design standards and zoning regulations for downtown.

Zoning is the primary means through which a local municipality can influence land use decision and the characteristics of buildings. Zoning allows a city to designate districts throughout the incorporated area and to specify which uses are permissible and impermissible as well as the lot coverage, spacing, massing, and height requirements of buildings. The characteristics of traditional downtown buildings can be influenced by zoning with respect to building footprint, height, and other features.

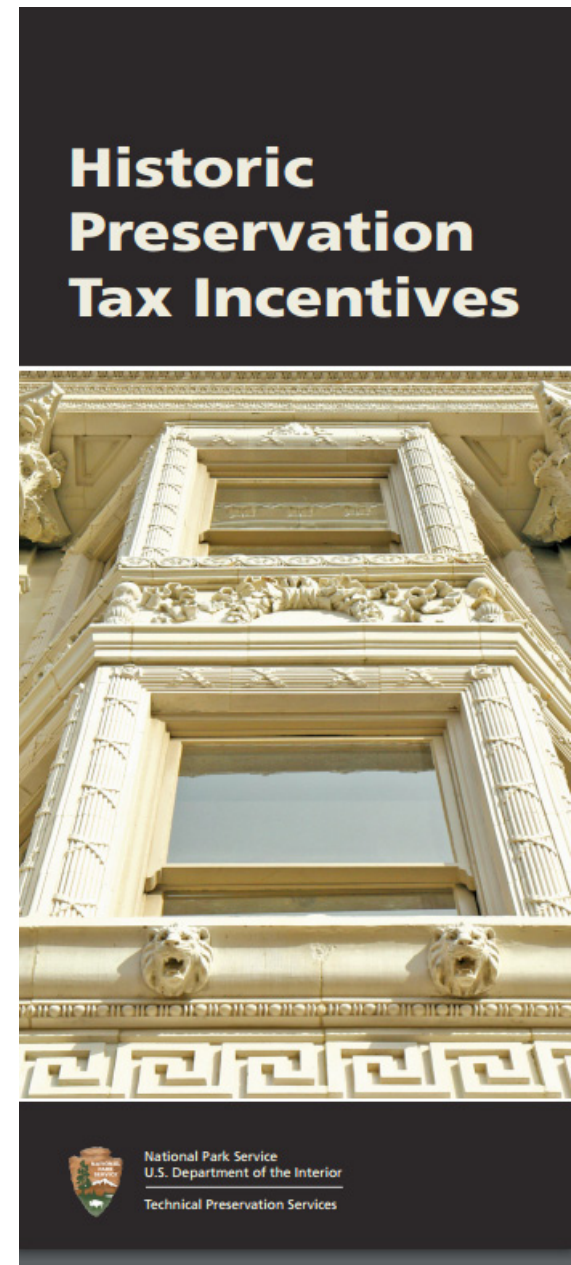
Design guidelines are an additional tool available to ensure additional protection of downtown character. By requiring a review process for new construction or major renovations, the city may exercise influence over architectural features, choice of building materials, and other facets of construction to maintain compatibility in development and redevelopment of structures. Design guidelines are typically adopted as part of a historic preservation program or may be incorporated into the city zoning ordinance.

Once configured, design guidelines and zoning amendments should be adopted according to state and local procedures to become local municipal code with the force of law.

D.3. Survey and register a downtown Historic District for access to historic preservation tax credits.

Federal tax credits for historic preservation are available to owners with properties that meet certain criteria. A primary criterion of these tax credits is for the property to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of a historic district. Although individual significance is a possibility for contributing historic properties, it is often easier to establish the historic value of a broader district, such as downtown. Tax credits are available for commercial and mixed-use projects where greater than 50% of the floor area of the building (on all stories) is devoted to commercial use. Credits come in two forms: a 20% tax credit for rehabilitation of certified historic structures that are income-producing or a 10% credit for non-historic structures that were placed in service prior to 1936 and are non-residential.

In addition, donation of historically significant real-estate to a non-profit may qualify as a federal tax deduction under IRS regulations. Some states, including Alabama until recently, offer state tax credits for historic preservation. Restoration of these credits would assist downtown redevelopment projects in Alabama's municipalities. Finally, historic preservation credits may be combined with other tax credits for low-income housing and/or New Market Tax Credits.



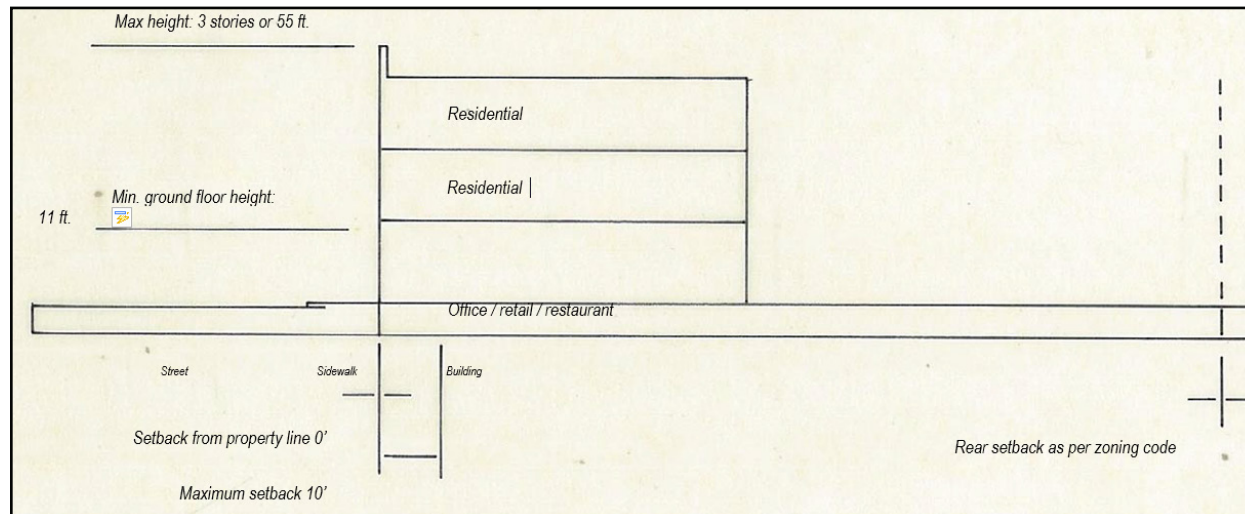
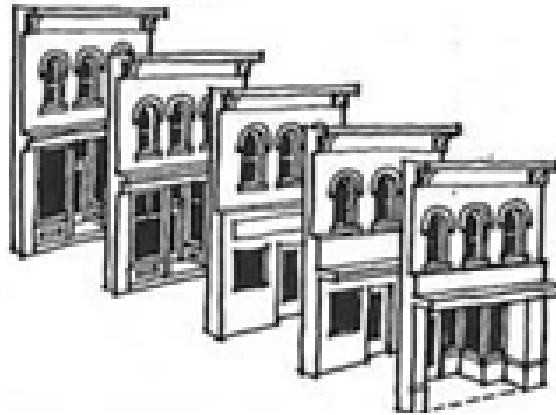
D.4. Establish a program to support façade improvements.

Russellville should create a façade improvement program to assist building owners downtown with the renovation of frontages and publicly visible areas in accordance with design standards. Although there is no ‘seed money’ from grants for façade programs, they are nonetheless incredibly valuable tools for promoting the redevelopment practices that are desirable downtown.

The program may take one of several forms. The most directly beneficial program for owners is a local pool of resources to make grants of aid directly for the use in renovation. Grants can be structured to have minimum financial commitments and/or matching share (e.g. not less than a \$5,000 total project cost and/or 50% owner-financed). A second means of promoting façade improvements is through a low interest loan pool. Although less beneficial to owners, a loan pool with low (or even no)

interest rates and generous repayment schedules can be a valuable tool for accessing capital for improvement projects. Terms of the loans could be similar to those described for grants, with minimum commitments from owners. A successful program might also be crafted from a combination of several of these.

STOREFRONT DESIGN



3. Encourage mixed use development in downtown Russellville.

D.5. Revise zoning regulations for commercial and residential mixed use appropriate for downtown.

Despite decades of zoning and land use decisions that have separated residential and commercial land uses, communities nationwide are beginning to understand the value of mixed residential/commercial development in downtown. Firstly, the presence of people throughout the day and into the evening creates additional market demand for goods and services downtown. While many downtowns have strong civic and institutional linkages (e.g. attract people downtown for trips to government and professional offices), many lack amenities and services after hours. Residential uses bring people back to downtown after hours. This is especially important to increase the productive (i.e. profitable) hours of downtown businesses in areas that “roll up the streets” in the afternoon!

In addition, residential land uses increase the overall profitability of land and buildings downtown. High demand for downtown living ensures high occupancy rates and rental incomes for owners. These incomes become a source of reinvestment in downtown and a source of income stability for investors.

Finally, downtown residences are culturally significant to downtowns. The aesthetic of downtown and its core identity is enhanced by the presence of people who live, work, and play nearby. Downtown is ideally suited for this lifestyle since its density and walkability allow

individuals to access many (and hopefully all) of their basic needs without leaving the district.

D.6. Revise zoning standards to gradually redevelop incompatible businesses and industrial uses in the downtown district.

Unfortunately, over time, lax planning and design can lead to incompatible uses downtown. Heavy commercial and industrial uses tend to work against the environmental aesthetic of downtown. These land uses tend to be unattractive to visitors and residents of downtown. In addition, they are usually more sprawling and devote space to cars, storage, and machinery instead of to people and amenities.

As a result, zoning regulations must be retooled to accomplish long term land use goals that are aligned with the goals for downtown. Russellville should revisit its permissible land uses in its downtown core. A revised ordinance would make incompatible uses “grandfathered” and urge their redevelopment into compatible uses over time. Meanwhile, Russellville should ensure that adequate space is available and appropriately zoned to receive these uses in the future.

D.7. Evaluate potential park sites, costs and acquisition and finance strategies within the downtown district.

Recreational space is a critical piece of the lifestyle puzzle for any community. Access to parks and recreation for leisure, exercise and entertainment enhances the value of nearby properties. Recreational facilities located in or adjacent to downtown provide opportunities for gathering space for promotions, festivals,

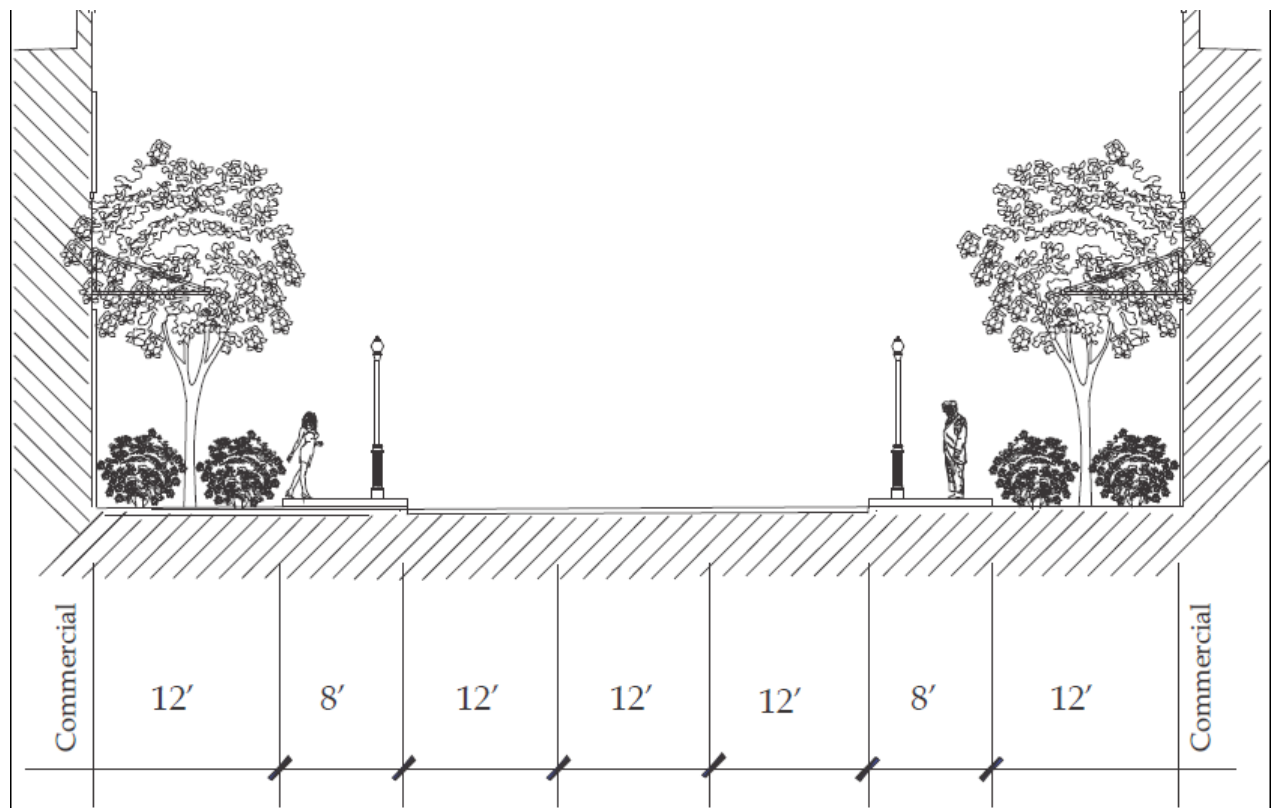
and events as well as a day-to-day amenity in downtown.

“Pocket parks” are useful in downtown as a placeholder for future development. These spaces are often the site of lost buildings that have been destroyed over time. Rather than a parking lot or a “missing tooth” in the downtown streetscape, these lots offer a low-cost opportunity to work with owners to provide recreation. The recreational use is easily converted to a new building or storefront at the proper time when market conditions allow for new construction.

4. Improve streetscapes throughout downtown.

D.8. Extend sidewalks throughout the downtown district.

Sidewalks are incredibly important for circulating visitors to downtown and to improve their access to downtown from throughout the city. Sidewalk improvements should be prioritized as needed to improve pedestrian access and connectivity with investments first in the core of downtown Russellville to ensure adequate, safe, and accessible sidewalks; then successive investments connecting adjacent residential



districts as well as providing pedestrian access along major collectors leading through gateways into downtown Russellville.

D.9. Install decorative crosswalks in the focused development area using brick pavers, stamped concrete, or other materials.

Decorative crosswalks improve both safety and aesthetics downtown. They provide distinctive design elements throughout the downtown at key intersections. As well, they provide visual cues to travelers on foot or in vehicles that these areas are low-speed and that caution is required because of foot traffic downtown.



D.10. Extend street trees and landscaping throughout the focused development area and along Jackson Avenue.

Street trees provide shade and beauty for visitors downtown and improve energy efficiency of cooling systems in downtown buildings. Tree-lined streets provide an appealing atmosphere for pedestrians visiting downtown. They provide shade and shelter as well as greening the environment. Planting areas for trees can additionally be used to improve surface drainage, slowing and storing water for slower release and decreasing flood hazards.

D.11. Install street trees along cross streets and parallel streets as opportunity allows.

Outside of the focused development area of downtown, street trees are slightly less of a priority but are nevertheless important landscaping improvements to gateways and approaches to downtown. These contribute to a better overall visitor experience to downtown Russellville.

D.12. Provide street furniture including benches and trash receptacles in the focused area.

Street furniture improves the appearance and appeal of downtown. Benches provide a place for rest and relaxation and encourage pedestrian activity in downtown by individuals with mixed levels of physical ability. They allow residents a place to take a break from activities and to stay longer in downtown. Increased length of visitation reflects an overall enjoyment of the downtown environment and is reflected in downtown economic activity. Some visitors may want to rest while others shop! Meanwhile, trash receptacles (and policies for their maintenance/emptying) that coordinate with other furniture in appearance and materials provide a place for people to dispose of trash and reduce litter and debris downtown.



D.13. Provide empty corners and large parking areas with borders such as landscaping or decorative fencing as a way to break the visual monotony of these spaces.

Empty spaces downtown disrupt the aesthetic, which should reflect a built environment of secure enclosures with “base, body, top” pattern of traditional downtown buildings. Where buildings are absent, such as on empty corners and adjacent to parking lots, the illusion of enclosure can be created by installing fences and landscaping that carry the viewer’s eye away from less slightly features and provide a visual connection with more appealing architectural elements downtown.



D.14. Upgrade parking and regulatory signage to match decorative lighting.

Consistency between regulatory signs, wayfinding, parking signs, and street lights is important to achieving an overall look and feel downtown that is consistent throughout. Coordinating all of these elements with street furniture throughout the downtown will provide coherent visual cues that define the visitor experience downtown.

D.15. Extend decorative lighting throughout the focused development district and non-residential areas of the downtown district.

Lighting upgrades are important to downtown in order to provide a good visitor experience day and night in downtown. The presence of lights that are consistent in design details throughout the district provides important visual cues to visitors in addition to the functionality of lighting as a safety and security measure for nighttime visitors. Like other investments downtown, the core of downtown’s commercial areas are first to receive treatment under a new lighting plan, but gradually extending these improvements throughout the downtown area along adjacent connector streets will significantly improve access and enjoyment of downtown.

D.16. Bury or relocate overhead utilities in the focused development district.

Overhead utilities disrupt the image of downtown and distract from unique architectural and design elements. The poles and wires necessary for electrical service become obstacles to visitors and impede certain activities downtown. At minimum they become obstacles for pedestrian access. Overhead utilities should be buried or relocated off of main streets so as to minimize this disruption.

5. Improve gateways and thoroughfares leading into downtown.

D.17. Install banners, signage, and arches that accent entrances to downtown to create noteworthy entrances.

The design of the borders or edges of any district are important to providing strong visual cues to visitors that they have arrived in a distinctive location. Key entrances or gateways to downtown Russellville should be redesigned with permanent features that reflect the arrival of a guest or visitor to downtown. Decorative elements along Jackson Avenue, Lawrence Street, and Madison Street at the entrance to the district should interpret the design and cultural significance of downtown for visitors and provide visual cues about the meaning and significance of the downtown district.

D.18. Create visually appealing corridors along main entries to downtown using local maintenance ordinances and voluntary cleanup activities to remove debris and visual clutter along these routes.

The visitor experience to downtown Russellville starts at the main corridors leading into downtown. From the city limits into downtown Russellville, visitors travel along a number of different corridors with different purposes. Highway 43 and Highway 24 are the main arterials through town and they serve primarily to move people quickly through town and to provide access to auto-oriented commercial uses adjacent to the corridor. These patterns are largely fixed by the need for traffic conveyance, auto-focused commercial development and the standards of the Alabama Department of Transportation. Secondary streets include Jackson Highway north and south of downtown, and Madison, Franklin, Lawrence, and Tuscaloosa Streets entering downtown from the east. The City of Russellville can institute policies to improve overall appearance along these corridors including landscaping and screening of adjacent commercial uses, signage and wayfinding consistent with downtown themes, and zoning that discourages unsightly land uses along major entries to downtown.

6. Maintain downtown infrastructure.

D.19. Invest in local streets throughout the downtown area.

D.20. Monitor condition of water and sewer infrastructure.

D.21. Improve striping and appearance of parking areas.

D.22. Invest in broadband and Wi-Fi access downtown.

D.23. Develop additional shared or public parking areas.

Downtown infrastructure is, generally, in a good state of repair. Streets and sidewalks are in fair to good condition. Water and sewer infrastructure is adequate for future needs, including increased demand for upstairs development. Parking is generally in good supply; however future demand for parking may necessitate improvements. One simple improvement to parking is the installation of striped parking on adjacent side streets which signals its availability to motorists searching for space. In the future additional parking may be needed in private lots to the rear of existing structures. Finally, one critical infrastructure element that is often overlooked in downtown is the availability of internet to facilitate additional marketing and revenue opportunities for downtown businesses as well as encouraging the location of new residences downtown.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Downtown Russellville is uniquely positioned to become a market center and cultural destination for the City of Russellville and surrounding areas of Franklin County, as well as a destination center for visitors to Russellville. The typical customer base of downtown Russellville would consist of residents living downtown and those within a short walk or drive of downtown. In addition, a secondary market consists of Franklin County residents and those attracted for regular events and promotions scheduled to take place downtown. Much of the work needed to grow commercial opportunities downtown is accomplished through coordinated redevelopment efforts involving design, organization and promotions; however, the existing market conditions indicate certain opportunities to diversify products and leverage strengths to increase business revenues downtown.

A market survey was conducted for the City of Russellville for both downtown and city-wide using ESRI's Business Analyst suite of data. The following key observations were drawn to inform the development of economic vitality objectives and strategies:

- Strategies for retail growth should focus on retaining resident and visitors' buying power downtown as long as possible while meeting any predicted demand for goods that is not being met in the city or, in particular, downtown.

- Retail sales and food and beverage sales city-wide in Russellville were about \$174 million in 2015, while demand from residents was estimated to be \$100 million, indicating a retail surplus of \$74 million in "attracted sales" from residents outside of Russellville shopping in the City. In terms of market potential, this means people are being drawn to Russellville to meet their demand for goods and services; but it does not necessarily indicate surplus income to spend. In other words, taken by itself a retail surplus or leakage is not positive or negative.
- Downtown has a significant role in both city and regional sales. Downtown captures approximately \$49 million (28%) of the city's \$174 million in total retail and food and beverage sales. For an area of approximately 0.14 square miles (1% of the 13.4 sq. miles of total land area of the City), this represents a significant contribution to city sales.
- Most downtown sales are in General Merchandise sales (\$22 million), Automotive (\$9.2 million), Food & Beverage Stores (\$6.3 million with \$5.0 million in grocery sales alone), and \$5 million in Health and Personal Care Stores. These business types are typical of downtown businesses.
- Downtown dining and drinking establishments (\$1.9 million) are only 13.33% of city-wide sales in these categories, representing a large potential market shift/growth downtown over time.

Within this category, full service restaurants are 16.35% (\$1 million) of city-wide sales, limited service eateries are 10.99% (\$878,000).

- The following establishment types are missing from downtown Russellville: Home furnishings, electronics and appliance, lawn and garden, specialty food, shoes, jewelry and leather goods, sporting goods, music stores, department stores, florists, office suppliers, electronic shopping (online shopping), special food services, and alcoholic beverages.
- In the regional marketplace, within a 15 minute drive of downtown, the following establishment types have predicted demand, based on average sales per capita and population, that is under-supplied in the marketplace: electronics and appliance stores (\$5 million), lawn and garden equipment supply stores (\$121,000), grocery stores (\$1.3 million) and specialty food stores (\$869,000), clothing and clothing accessories- includes shoe stores and jewelry stores (\$2.3 million), sporting goods (\$589,000), books periodicals and music stores (\$1.2 million), florists (\$95,000), Office supplies and stationary and gifts (\$1.6 million), used merchandise (\$422,000), non-store retailers (includes online and direct sales (\$2.4 million), special food services (\$224,000). These establishment types, individually or in combination, indicate potential future markets for goods to be sold downtown

to a market area up to 15 minutes away by passenger car.

- The following business types are strong attractors to Russellville’s city-wide market area; these are businesses where the supply in the city is greater than the demand predicted from residents in Russellville alone. In cases where greater sales volume is coming into town, there may be a specialization or niche that can be directed toward downtown in support of redevelopment: Furniture and home furnishings (\$11 million split between furniture \$5.2 million and home furnishings \$5.8 million), food and beverage stores (\$6 million), health and personal care stores (\$13.9 million), sporting goods, hobby books and music (\$557,000), general merchandise (\$32.1 million), and food services and drinking places (\$5.3 million).

Collectively, these observations regarding market conditions in Russellville, downtown Russellville, and the local market area in the immediate vicinity of a 15-minute drive lead to the following economic vitality objectives and strategies.

Economic Vitality Objectives and Strategies

1. Retain and support existing businesses.

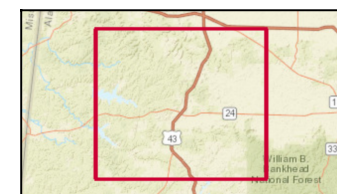
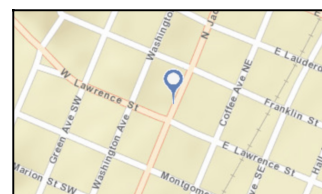
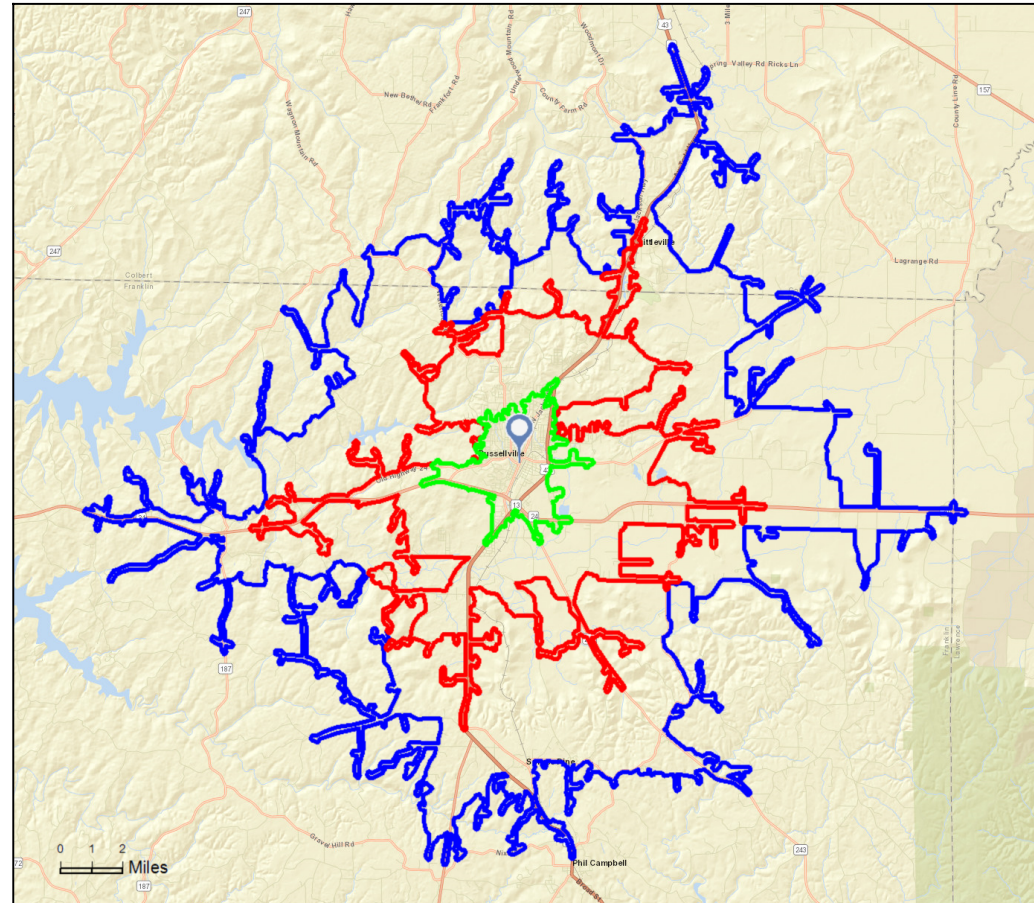
Existing businesses are the lifeblood of any local economy and the Russellville market is no different. Business support services and policies that support the expansion of existing businesses include market research, expanded real estate utilization (such as second story



Site Map

Russellville Downtown 125 N Jackson Ave, Russellville,
125 N Jackson Ave, Russellville, Alabama, 35653
Drive Times: 5, 10, 15 minute radii

Prepared by Esri
Latitude: 34.5051
Longitude: -87.73027



development), design initiatives, and promotions. The downtown revitalization plan provides suggestions on many of these topics, which can be further explored and expanded by the downtown organization. For example, “buy local” campaigns, cross-promotional efforts such as coupons or discount days, and other efforts could be developed to encourage patronage at downtown businesses. Finally, business planning and support services, including access to capital, may be available through entities such as the Small Business Development Center at the University of North Alabama, through New Markets Tax Credits, and through Federal Historic Redevelopment Tax Credits.

2. Recruit new businesses desirable to downtown.

New business expansions should fit within the market potential of Russellville and both utilize and reinforce downtown development efforts. New businesses should be retail and service oriented and fit the aesthetic of downtown, avoiding outdoor storage and outside sales activities other than small curbside displays. New business targets should include national chains of appropriate size, but more importantly, should also include successful local and regional businesses that would make the move to the revitalized downtown area.

One function of the downtown organization might be to identify these targets, both national and regional/local, and to organize site visits to these businesses to gain familiarity with them and to encourage them to look into downtown Russellville. Another tool for recruitment is a building inventory, which could be de-

veloped using the county GIS data in conjunction with local realtors.

3. Encourage activities and land uses that foster business success.

The right mix of businesses and land uses downtown should reinforce an aesthetically pleasing and well-designed local environment. Over the long term, through planning and zoning, the volume of businesses that market outdoors and through outside sales should be shifted away from downtown. Auto dealerships, for example, take up valuable space that, within a vibrant downtown real estate market, could redevelop into new, compatible structures for housing, retail, and services. It bears emphasizing that these businesses are current contributors to the local economy and tax base and that downtown redevelopment efforts are not hostile to these businesses or their owners. However, long-term strategies should provide a favorable marketplace for redeveloping these properties over time while providing adequate space for them in appropriate districts outside of downtown.

4. Diversify downtown activities to support daytime, nighttime, and weekend commerce.

A variety of nighttime and daytime businesses will help to diversify and revitalize downtown Russellville. People provide the engine of commerce in any district, and particularly in downtown. The longer the hours of operation, into the night and throughout the week, the greater the economic opportunity for downtown businesses. For owners looking for a return on investment in real estate, these businesses provide an important attractor for residents to

come downtown throughout the day and evening and for new residents to move downtown.

E.1. Develop business recruitment program based on market gaps (retail leakages).

The market survey indicates the following business types are currently under-served in the Russellville market area studied (15 minute drive time); businesses that are underlined are entirely absent from downtown:

Electronics and appliance stores

Lawn and garden equipment supply stores

Grocery stores and specialty food stores

Clothing and clothing accessories, including shoe stores and jewelry stores

Sporting goods

Books periodicals and music stores

Florists

Office supplies and stationary and gifts

Used merchandise

Non-store retailers (including electronic shopping, online and direct sales)

Special food services

New businesses recruitment and existing businesses expansions should consider these types of sales to be important targets individually or in conjunction with one another and/or existing products and services.

E.2. Develop business recruitment program based on market strengths (attractors).

The City of Russellville (as a whole) attracts additional sales above predicted demand from city residents to within its city limits for the following types of goods:

Furniture and home furnishings

Food and beverage stores

Health and personal care stores

Clothing stores

Shoe stores

Jewelry, luggage, and leather goods stores

Sporting goods

Book, periodical, and music stores

General merchandise

Food services and drinking places

These business types are those for which the city attracts more sales than its population would predict. Those that are **bolded** are businesses that, despite selling more than Russellville’s population would predict, nonetheless, sell less than predicted amounts within a 15 minute drive time (have leakage in a 15 minute market area). Underlined businesses are absent from downtown.

The market potential of these business types is more difficult to quantify and speculate, since

the City of Russellville is a regional marketplace that is, itself, situated in a larger market area, the presence of these attractors may indicate a strong niche market or natural geographic pull that can be developed further in order to attract even greater sales.

E.3. Develop full retail market study.

The conclusions and suggestions contained in this section are drawn from national data on sales and predictions of consumer behavior based on averages. A full retail market study will contain more detailed demographic and consumer preference surveys than are available in national publications. Statistically significant surveys of consumer preference have greater predictive ability than these samples; however, detailed survey data is a more expensive and time-consuming proposition and not immediately needed to get started on redevelopment efforts. However, more detailed local data will re-enforce recruitment and business expansion efforts, particularly for businesses that are marginal or currently objective targets due to smaller predicted sales figures.

E.4. Locate space for retail cooperative.

A retail cooperative is a group of entrepreneurs who own and operate a retail business together. By locating a space for small businesses to start-up and operate cooperatively, downtown Russellville can enhance their chances of success. These ‘incubators’ allow business to share overhead expenses, including sales responsibilities, by sharing space and responsi-

bilities. Creating a seamless design that ‘flows’ throughout (while accounting for individual sales accurately) is critical to the operation of a cooperative. As sales increase, these businesses can then become successful independently and grown into other areas of downtown.

E.5. Develop a property and tenant inventory.

An inventory of properties, their tenants, goods, services and, employment, and sales is an important tool for tracking downtown success as well as recruiting new businesses to downtown. Downtown redevelopment is at heart economic development and these measures help to identify success and build upon that success when allocating resources to downtown Russellville.



PROPERTY INVENTORY

AVAILABLE PROPERTIES IN CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

PLEASE NOTE: Although the following terms and costs have been given to Principal Shopping District office by property owners, they are negotiable between interested parties and the property owners, and sometimes change.

PROMOTION

Promotions are year-round activities designed to bring visitors and residents to downtown. Promotions serve a strong business development purpose as well as familiarizing people with the offerings of downtown and giving them an opportunity to engage with one another. By offering a variety of goods and services downtown as well as activities and events to promote them, local residents and visitors can take advantage of businesses and businesses can grow and benefit.

Promotions should include a variety of activities and should include annual, seasonal, monthly, and even daily and weekly events designed to attract visitors downtown. Promotions are a vehicle through which people become accustomed to visiting downtown and, over time, their shopping habits begin to adjust. Promotions also attract tourists and occasional visitors from outside of the normal market area of downtown and provide an additional source of revenue for downtown merchants.



Promotions Objectives and Strategies

1. Develop effective, cooperative marketing techniques for downtown.

P.1. Extend business hours into nighttime and weekend hours.

P.2. Mix retail and services to support expanded hours.

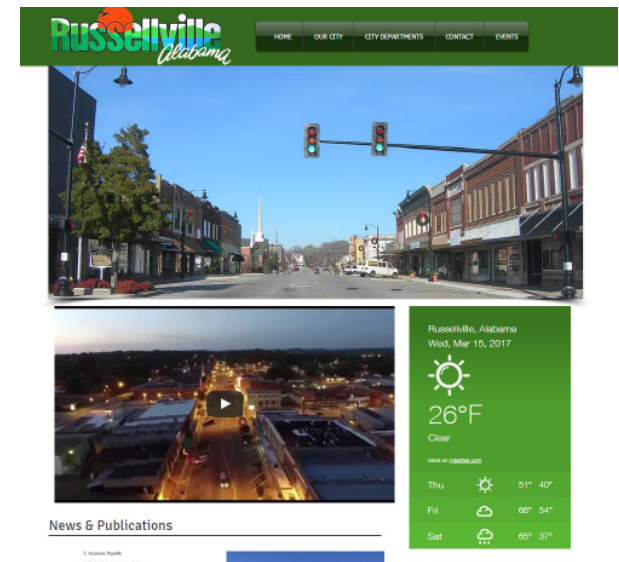
Businesses that are open after regular “nine to five” business hours, such as restaurants that are open for both lunch and dinner, are desirable downtown. This opens additional hours for revenue as well as making goods and services more accessible to working families. Not all businesses will be able to open into night time and weekend hours, however, as the ‘critical mass’ of activity downtown begins to shift and the right mix of businesses are opened, there will be greater ‘after hours’ and weekend activity downtown. This increased activity in turn enhances promotional opportunities, all of which enhances the community’s access to and enjoyment of downtown.



P.3. Develop City of Russellville Downtown brand and website.

P.4. Create joint marketing and advertising opportunities and a downtown brochure.

Promotions involve design in similar ways as discussed above for the physical design of downtown. Common thematic elements are important for communicating the overall “brand” of downtown Russellville. These can and should be translated to marketing materials including the downtown website. Consistent communication about the value of downtown is critical to improving its image and attracting visitors to its amenities.



2. Host a variety of downtown events throughout the year.

P.5. Organize retail shopping events and festivals.

Events are important because they increase awareness of downtown, infuse revenues into businesses, and foster community enjoyment of the cultural heart of the city. Current annual events like the hugely successful Watermelon Festival should be continued, while new annual events should be developed and promoted at different times of the year. In addition, retail shopping events, 'downtown days', sales promotions, and other special occasions can be developed to enhance downtown businesses and to attract visitors to downtown.

ORGANIZATION

One important measure of success for the downtown plan will be the establishment of an active organization to oversee the implementation of the plan. A downtown organization should be established as a non-profit entity that independently seeks improvement in downtown through the implementation of the revitalization plan and ongoing advocacy, fundraising, and promotional activities in support of downtown. The downtown organization is envisioned as an agent with primary responsibility for growing downtown by working together in partnership with other entities with 'ownership' of various downtown resources. These include local governments, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, merchants/business associations, consumers, and residents.

The purpose of the downtown organization is to provide overall guidance, direction, and complementary workforce (volunteer and eventually paid) to effectively coordinate resources for downtown development. It is not a competitor organization to existing entities, but will instead be the primary focal organization for downtown redevelopment, providing consistent leadership over time in order to promote the design and vibrancy that is part of the vision for downtown Russellville.

Organization Objectives and Strategies

1. Establish a non-profit community organization to coordinate downtown redevelopment activities.

O.1. Designate a downtown organization and initial board of directors.

O.2. Develop bylaws and organizational guidelines.

O.3. Develop organizational filings for non-profit status.

The first set of organizational strategies deal exclusively with the steps necessary for starting a downtown organization and taking it from an unincorporated entity to an incorporated non-profit. The ad hoc committee that was established as the Downtown Revitalization Committee to review and approve progress on the Downtown Revitalization Plan may serve as an adequate entity for the first few steps, determine a board structure and pursue the necessary funding and documentation to produce incorporating papers.

O.4. Develop a strategic plan with mission statement and short term objectives.

The Russellville Downtown Redevelopment Plan provides both short and long-range goals and objectives for downtown as a whole, and is therefore a good guide into the strategic priorities of the new organization. However, the new downtown organization should pursue a separate strategic plan with milestones and benchmarks around which members can organize activity. It may draw heavily on the actions suggested in the revitalization plan, but it should be a working document that is frequently referenced and updated as the group moves toward goals and objectives for downtown.

O.5. Apply for Main Street Alabama.

Ultimately, Main Street Alabama designation is the bellwether of the downtown organiza-

tion. Main Street Alabama offers several levels of participation in the statewide Main Street program. Full-designation as a Certified Main Street program will represent a significant achievement for downtown Russellville. Working through the steps for designation requires the new organization to develop sustainable resources for staffing and other downtown development activities; however, the future of downtown Russellville is certainly important enough to warrant the effort and the investment.

2. Establish funding and work plan for the organization.

O.6. Develop fundraising strategy for specific projects.

Specific projects will require separate fundraising techniques. The projects for each year of the strategic plan should be specified in enough detail to understand and each year's fundraising strategy should be reviewed and approved by the organization board. Each project budget for the present and upcoming year should include specific details regarding financial resource requirements and it should be tied to a fundraising strategy, whether from sustaining member contributions, charitable donations, or other fundraising activities.

O.7. Develop committees and committee work programs.

Each project should be undertaken by committees with functional oversight and expertise. The downtown organization will be a working organization and there will be little, if any, room for figurehead appointments! The full board must volunteer time and resources to

work through committees to plan and execute the work of downtown development.

O.8. Organize, recruit and train volunteers.

As a “working” organization, the recruitment of volunteers to participate in the planning and execution of projects is particularly critical. Interested parties must be recruited and motivated to do the work of each committee and the overall board in order for the organization to be successful.

O.9. Recruit and train professional staff.

Finally, a long term goal of the organization should be to acquire full-time professional talent to lead the organization. Whereas the work of volunteers can accomplish a great deal and will always be needed, downtown Russellville is important enough to warrant a full-time, focused professional who works to improve downtown each and every day.

CONCLUSION

The Russellville Downtown Redevelopment Plan proposes a variety of comprehensive activities designed to enhance and revitalize downtown Russellville. The plan provides brief descriptions of actions across four major categories that are needed to fully establish the Russellville downtown district as the cultural, historical, and commercial heart of Russellville. The district is filled with historic resources, organizational assets, and potential for future development. By following the recommendations of this plan, residents of Russellville can insure the future of their downtown for generations to come!

| IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---|--|
| Task | Plan Reference | Lead Organization | Supporting Organization(s) | Expertise | Priority | Level of Cost | Possible Resources | Review or Completion Date | |
| | DESIGN | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Draft and adopt a resolution or ordinance designating a downtown developemt district | D.1 | City Council | Planning Commission/Downtown Redevelopment Committee | Planning | Short Term | Very Low | | |
| 2 | Adopt appropriate design standards/zoning regulations for downtown. | D.2 | Planning Commission | Planning Commission/Downtown Redevelopment Committee | Zoning, architecture, preservation | Short Term | Very Low | | |
| 3 | Survey and register a downtown Historic District for access to historic preservation tax credits. | D.3 | Downtown Organization | Planning Commission | Historic preservation | Short Term | Low | Alabama Historic Commission; Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area | |
| 4 | Establish a program to support façade improvements. | D.4 | City Council | Downtown Organization | Incentive financing, architecture | Long Term | Medium | | |
| 5 | Revise zoning standardsfor commercial and residential mized use appropriate for downtown. | D.5 | Planning Commission | Downtown Organization | Zoning | Short Term | Very Low | | |
| 6 | Revise zoning standards to gradually redevelop incompatible business and industrial uses in the downtown district. | D.6 | City Council | Planning Commission | Zoning | Mid Term | Very Low | | |
| 7 | Evaluate potential park sites, costs and acquisition and financing strategies within the downtown district. | D.7 | Planning Commission | Downtown Organization | Recreation | Mid Term | Very Low | | |
| 8 | Extend sidewalks throughout the downtown district. | D.8 | City Council | | Civil engineering | Long Term | High | ALDOT | |

| Priority | Short term | Mid Term | Long Term | Ongoing |
|------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Less than 2 years | 2-5 years | 5+ years | Recurring |
| Commitment | Very Low | Low | Medium | High |
| | \$5,000 or less | \$5,001-\$20,000 | \$20,000-\$100,000 | \$100,000+ |

| Task | Plan Reference | Lead Organization | Supporting Organization(s) | Expertise | Priority | Level of Cost | Possible Resources | Review or Completion Date |
|------|---|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 9 | Install decorative crosswalks in the focused development area using brick pavers, stamped concrete, or other materials. | D.9 | City Council | | Civil engineering | Long Term | Medium | ALDOT |
| 10 | Extend street trees and landscaping throughout the focused development area and along Jackson Highway. | D.10 | City Council | Downtown Organization | Civil engineering, landscape design | Long Term | Low | ALDOT |
| 11 | Install street trees along cross streets and parallel streets as opportunity allows. | D.11 | City Council | Downtown Organization | Civil engineering, landscape design | Long Term | Medium | ALDOT |
| 12 | Provide street furniture including benches and trash receptacles in the focused area. | D.12 | City Council | Downtown Organization | | Mid Term | Low | |
| 13 | Provide empty corners and large parking areas with borders such as landscaping or decorative fencing as a way to break the visual monotony of these spaces. | D.13 | Downtown Organization | Property Owners | Landscape design | Mid Term | Low | |
| 14 | Upgrade parking and regulatory signage to match decorative lighting. | D.14 | City Council | Downtown Organization | Civil engineering | Mid Term | Low | |
| 15 | Extend decorative lighting throughout the focused development district and non-residential areas of the downtown district. | D.15 | City Council | | Civil engineering | Long Term | Medium | |
| 16 | Bury or relocate overhead utilities in the focused development district. | D.16 | City Council | Utility Department | Civil engineering | Long Term | High | |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Priority | Short term | Mid Term | Long Term | Ongoing |
| | Less than 2 years | 2-5 years | 5+ years | Recurring |
| Commitment | Very Low | Low | Medium | High |
| | \$5,000 or less | \$5,001-\$20,000 | \$20,000-\$100,000 | \$100,000+ |

| Task | Plan Reference | Lead Organization | Supporting Organization(s) | Expertise | Priority | Level of Cost | Possible Resources | Review or Completion Date |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 17 | Install banners, signage, and arches that accent entrances to downtown to create noteworthy entrances. | D.17 | City Council | Downtown Organization | Graphic design | Mid Term | Low | |
| 18 | Create visually appealing corridors along main entries to downtown using local maintenance ordinances and voluntary cleanup activities to remove debris and visual clutter along these routes. | D.18 | City Council | Downtown Organization | | Long Term | Very Low | |
| 19 | Invest in local streets throughout the downtown area. | D.19 | City Council | | Civil engineering | Ongoing | High | |
| 20 | Monitor condition of water and sewer infrastructure. | D.20 | City Council | | Civil engineering | Ongoing | High | |
| 21 | Improve striping and appearance of parking areas. | D.21 | City Council | | Civil engineering | Short Term | Low | |
| 22 | Invest in broadband and Wi-Fi access downtown. | D.22 | City Council | | | Long Term | High | USDA |
| 23 | Develop additional shared or public parking areas. | D.23 | City Council | Downtown Organization | | Long Term | Medium | |
| ECONOMIC | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | Develop business recruitment program based on market gaps (retail leakages) | E.1 | Downtown Organization | City Council | Retail recruitment | Mid Term | Very Low | NMTC; USDA-RD; NACOLG RLF |
| 25 | Develop business recruitment program based on market strengths (attractors) | E.2 | Downtown Organization | City Council | Retail recruitment | Mid Term | Very Low | NMTC; USDA-RD; NACOLG RLF |
| 26 | Develop full retail market study. | E.3 | Downtown Organization | City Council | | Mid Term | Low | Main Street AL |
| 27 | Locate space for retail cooperative | E.4 | Downtown Organization | | Retail recruitment | Mid Term | Medium | NMTC; USDA-RD; NACOLG RLF |
| 28 | Develop a property and tenant inventory | E.5 | Downtown Organization | | Real estate, GIS | Short Term | Very Low | |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Priority | Short term | Mid Term | Long Term | Ongoing |
| | Less than 2 years | 2-5 years | 5+ years | Recurring |
| Commitment | Very Low | Low | Medium | High |
| | \$5,000 or less | \$5,001-\$20,000 | \$20,000-\$100,000 | \$100,000+ |

| Task | Plan Reference | Lead Organization | Supporting Organization(s) | Expertise | Priority | Level of Cost | Possible Resources | Review or Completion Date |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| PROMOTIONS | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | Extend business hours into nighttime and weekend hours. | P.1 | Downtown Merchants | Downtown Organization | | Short Term | Very Low | |
| 30 | Mix retail and services to support expanded hours. | P.2 | Downtown Merchants | Downtown Organization | | Mid Term | Very Low | |
| 31 | Develop City of Russellville Downtown brand and website. | P.3 | Downtown Organization | | Graphic design, web design | Mid Term | Low | Main Street AL |
| 32 | Create joint marketing and advertising opportunities and a downtown brochure. | P.4 | Downtown Organization | | Marketing, graphic design | Mid Term | Very Low | Main Street AL |
| 33 | Organize retail shopping events and festivals. | P.5 | Downtown Organization | | Event coordination | Mid Term | Low | Main Street AL |
| ORGANIZATION | | | | | | | | |
| 34 | Designate a downtown organization and initial board of directors. | 0.1 | City Council | | | Short Term | Very Low | Main Street AL |
| 35 | Develop bylaws and organizational guidelines. | 0.2 | Downtown Organization | | | Short Term | Very Low | Main Street AL |
| 36 | Develop organizational filings for non-profit status. | 0.3 | Downtown Organization | | | Short Term | Very Low | Main Street AL |
| 37 | Develop a strategic plan with mission statement and short term objectives. | 0.4 | Downtown Organization | | Planning | Mid Term, then Ongoing | Very Low | Main Street AL |
| 38 | Apply for Main Street Alabama | 0.5 | Downtown Organization | City Council | | Mid Term | Low | |
| 39 | Develop fundraising strategy for specific projects. | 0.6 | Downtown Organization | | | Mid Term, then Ongoing | Very Low | Main Street AL |
| 40 | Develop committees and committee work programs. | 0.7 | Downtown Organization | | | Mid Term | Very Low | Main Street AL |
| 41 | Organize, recruit and train volunteers. | 0.8 | Downtown Organization | | | Mid Term | Very Low | Main Street AL |
| 42 | Recruit and train professional staff. | 0.9 | Downtown Organization | | | Mid Term | High | Main Street AL |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Priority | Short term | Mid Term | Long Term | Ongoing |
| | Less than 2 years | 2-5 years | 5+ years | Recurring |
| Commitment | Very Low | Low | Medium | High |
| | \$5,000 or less | \$5,001-\$20,000 | \$20,000-\$100,000 | \$100,000+ |