

# **Pittsburg Downtown Plan**

**August 31, 2004**

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Purpose of Plan**

The purpose of this document is to present an action plan for the revitalization of the Pittsburg downtown area, based upon review of past downtown revitalization efforts, a review of existing conditions, a statement of long range goals for downtown, and suggested recommendations for actions needed to achieve these goals.

### **B. Committee Members**

In December 2003, a Downtown Revitalization Committee (DRC) was assembled as a joint effort of the City of Pittsburg and the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce. This committee was made up of persons representing a wide variety of stakeholders in downtown, including city government, financial institutions, business owners, building owners, service professionals, churches, Pittsburg State University, nonprofit organizations, and interested citizens. Efforts were made to include participants in past downtown planning efforts. The members of this committee were as follows:

- Allen D. Gill, City Manager, Co-Chair
- Anissa Lomshek, Chamber of Commerce, Co-Chair
- Megan Anderson, Medical Lodge South
- Marty Beezley, City Commissioner
- Gene Bicknell, NPC
- Jim Bishop, Coldwell Banker
- Michael Bishop, Bishop's Studio
- Laura Carlson, The Stilwell Foundation
- Judy Collins, Fort Scott Community College
- Mike Creel, Mike Creel Enterprises
- Rick Dimon, Sears
- Deena Hallacy, City of Pittsburg
- Pam Henderson, Crawford County Visitors Bureau
- Todd Kennemer, City of Pittsburg
- John Kutz, Downtown Building Owner
- Jerry Lindberg, City of Pittsburg
- Henry Menghini, Menghini, Menghini & Mazurek, LLC
- Phil Minton, The Jock's Nitch
- David Nance, City Commissioner
- Patrick O'Bryan, Little's, Inc.
- Mary Carol Pomatto, Pittsburg State University

- Bruce Remsberg, Professional Engineering Consultants
- Thomas Sims, First United Methodist Church
- Corene Stroup, Pittsburg Beautiful
- Stephen Wade, The Morning Sun
- Steve Ward, Brenner Mortuary
- Kaye Lynne Webb, Watco Companies, Immigrant Park
- Wendell Wilkinson, Commerce Bank

### **C. Study Area**

The area studied as “downtown” included all of the properties in the CP-4 zoning district as established by the City of Pittsburg, plus the portions of North Broadway between 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets. This definition was chosen after considerable discussion, realizing that this area contains a variety of land use patterns, including commercial, industrial and residential. The CP-4 zoning boundaries were established after a lengthy study and hearings by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Any alteration of these boundaries needs to be done through the same legally-prescribed procedures. The additional blocks of north Broadway were added by the DRC as a potential gateway into downtown. The committee generally agreed, however, that many of the recommendations for downtown will emphasize improvements on Broadway and Fourth Streets, as these are the most visible areas.

### **D. Planning Process**

The process used in producing this downtown plan placed heavy emphasis on development of local ideas generated by local people. Many of the people on the DRC have been connected with past revitalization efforts or have seen downtown programs at work in other cities. Some have traveled to other cities specifically to see the results of downtown efforts. The DRC agreed upon a set of long range goals for downtown. Using their own experience and a variety of background materials, the DRC was asked to generate a realistic picture of downtown assets and liabilities, and make recommendations for actions to advance the long range goals. This work was organized into topic areas corresponding to the four areas of concentration recommended by the National Main Street Program, with “parking and accessibility” being made a fifth topic area. The DRC specifically reviewed the results of past downtown programs and downtown meetings, and conducted an informal survey of downtown businesses to gather additional information on perceptions of downtown. In areas where the committee had insufficient information upon which to base solid recommendations, it has recommended further study be done by others. The committee met a total of 8 times between December 2003 and April 2004, and

several committee members devoted considerable time outside of meetings to prepare information for the committee.

Documents used in preparation of this plan include the following:

- City of Pittsburg, Kansas, Comprehensive Community Plan Update, prepared by Wilson and Company, in association with Earles and Riggs, Engineers, Planners, and Landscape Architects, December 2000.
- Central Business District Traffic Analysis, prepared by J. B. M. Engineering and Planners, February 1996.
- Pittsburg Streetscape Plan, Landplan Engineering
- "Kansas State Historic Preservation and Its Impact on the Downtown Area of Pittsburg, Kansas," by John Kutz, April, 2004.
- A draft report with recommendations was prepared in April 2004 and circulated for public comment. The findings were summarized at a City Commission meeting and announced in The Morning Sun. Two open public town hall meetings were held with numerous comments being recorded. The draft report was made available for public distribution and was published on the City's website. A series of presentations were made to various civic groups. A final revised report was prepared, based on the comments and suggestions received, and the Downtown Revitalization Committee reviewed the revised draft and recommended its approval.

#### **E. Goals for Downtown**

Based on their experience and knowledge of other downtowns, Committee members were asked to describe their ideal downtown. These descriptions were used to develop a list of ideals or goals for downtown, which are as follows:

- Downtown should be well maintained, including public infrastructure and private buildings.
- The area should be visually inviting, with interesting spaces, colorful banners and awnings, and a mix of architectural styles.
- The area should be clean and free of trash, debris, and weeds.
- All areas should be well lighted and safe.
- Easy access should be provided for motor vehicles, with plenty of on-street and off-street parking, and clear signage.

- Downtown should contain an interesting mix of businesses, including retail, restaurants, and specialty shops, especially those that invite customer browsing.
- Downtown should be pedestrian friendly, with safe, walkable sidewalks and attractive resting and gathering places.
- Downtown should be the focal point for government offices and public gatherings.
- Downtown businesses should be profitable, so that quality products and services can be offered, and reasonable rents allow for quality building maintenance.

## **II. Summary of Past Downtown Efforts**

The Pittsburg Main Street program was approved and funded in March of 1988 by the City Commission. The Commission approved funding in the amount of \$25,000 for three years. An executive director was hired and housed in the Chamber of Commerce offices.

The mission of the Main Street program was intended to focus on downtown revitalization and economic development in the downtown area. Many of the plans discussed by the Main Street Board included Adopt-A-Park, and a privately funded loan pool for rehabilitation of buildings and facade improvements.

Committees formed included Economic Restructuring, Design and Promotion. One of the efforts of the Board included hiring an engineering firm to complete a Streetscape Plan for the downtown area. In 1991, the City Commission and the Main Street Board received the final Streetscape Plan from Landplan Engineering. In partnership with the City, the Main Street director intended to circulate a petition to form a benefit district to fund the Streetscape plan.

In 1993, the City Commission approved partially funding the Streetscape project. The project included street, sidewalk, and water line improvements. The approximate cost to property owners in the benefit district, after including the amount the City would fund, would be around \$775.00 per year for a period of ten years. Immediately following the approval, a citizens group started a petition in opposition of the benefit district.

After it was apparent the citizens were not in favor of a benefit district, the Main Street director notified the City the Main Street Board would not be seeking formation of the benefit district.

In February of 1996, Pittsburg Main Street graduated from the State program.

In June of 2001, Pastor Dr. Robert Bardeen scheduled a meeting with several local leaders to discuss concerns regarding the condition of downtown Pittsburg. The meeting held on July 26, 2001 was facilitated by Dr. Bardeen and a list of 20 concerns was established. As the group continued to meet and discuss downtown Pittsburg, it became evident that a neighborhood meeting would be helpful to give property owners and merchants the opportunity to express their ideas, suggestions, and concerns.

On January 28, 2002, a meeting was held to discuss downtown. Twenty-eight property owners/merchants attended the meeting, along with ten others who had originally been involved on the committee.

In March of 2002, Dr. Bardeen resigned from the committee, when he moved out of state to accept a new church position. The City Manager accepted a position in another city in the same month. Committee members met soon after and made the decision to place the entire process on hold until a new City Manager was in place.

### **III. Current Conditions**

#### **A. Existing Land Use**

The focal point for downtown Pittsburg is the intersection of two highways: U.S. Highway 69 Business Route and Kansas Highway 126. The predominant construction pattern along these two arterial streets is brick buildings with zero setback lines and no on-site parking. Off of these two streets, many different development styles exist.

Downtown Pittsburg contains a mixture of land uses, including single-family and multi-family dwellings, government facilities, financial institutions, churches, retail and service related businesses. Nearly all of the properties fronting Broadway and Fourth Streets are commercial or governmental, with some residential units located on upper floors. Single family homes and heavy commercial/industrial uses are located in the blocks away from the main streets. See Map 1 for a depiction of existing land uses.

A variety of types of commercial and governmental uses are located in the buildings comprising downtown. Based on an informal "windshield survey" and inspection of city business licenses, the following inventory of downtown occupancies was developed:

<u>Type of Entity</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Government	20	6%
Retail	67	20%
Professional	31	10%
Service	78	23%
Other	19	6%
Insurance	10	3%
Church	5	2%
Bank	6	2%
Bar/Restaurant	16	5%
Parks	2	1%
Residential	3	1%
Vacant Buildings / Lots	69	21%

It should be noted that these percentages reflect only a simple count of occupancies, without any weighting for size of space occupied or number of employees. Table 1 shows this tenant mix as a pie chart.

## **B. Parking**

Parking in the downtown area is provided both on-street and off-street in public and private lots. Parking on Broadway is in the form of angled spaces, while parking on other streets is parallel spaces. City lots have a mixture of time limits. Some businesses, churches, and government buildings provide their own off-street parking lots. The distribution of parking spaces is illustrated on Map 2.

## **C. Historic Considerations**

Downtown contains 3 historic structures listed on state or national registers: the City Library, Stillwell Hotel, and Fox Theatre. These structures have a direct impact on downtown redevelopment, as all neighboring structures must be subjected to historical review and approval before any significant building alterations can be made.

The Kansas State Historic Preservation Office reviews any proposed project within 500 feet of a listed historic property located within the corporate limits of a city. There are penalties of up to \$25,000 for failing to obtain the required building permit before pursuing a project.

**The Colonial Fox Theatre** at 409 N. Broadway. The Colonial Theatre officially opened on March 17, 1920, with 2,000 people in attendance. On December 9,

2000, the Fox Theatre was entered onto the Register of Historic Kansas Places. 409 N. Broadway currently sits vacant and is for sale by Century 21.

**The Stilwell Hotel** at 707 N. Broadway was built in 1889-1890. The Stilwell Hotel became listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 30, 1980. Building permits for renovation of the Stilwell into 44 apartments were issued on May 22, 1996, with a valuation of \$2,592,601. In 1997, the construction on the Stilwell Hotel was complete. The hotel now consists of 44 apartments and four commercial spaces, plus the ballroom, which is available to rent for special events. The Hotel Stilwell now serves as a focal point and a vital part of the community.

**The Pittsburg Public Library** was erected with Carnegie funds in 1910-1911. The architectural firm of Patton and Miller of Chicago was hired to design the building with S.S. Geatches serving as contractor. Completed in 1912, the new library was one of the few Carnegie libraries in the country to be built in the Prairie Style of architecture made famous by Frank Lloyd Wright. The exterior was constructed of Carthage limestone, and the building was considered one of the most beautiful facilities in the state of Kansas at the time of its opening. On November 9, 1977, The Pittsburg Public Library was listed on the National Register of Historic places. In 1995, the voters of Pittsburg approved a bond issue to fund 3 community projects, one of which was the renovation and expansion of the library. The project was carefully planned to preserve and enhance the original architectural character of the building, while more than doubling the space available.

#### **D. Physical Factors Affecting Development**

Many physical factors can place restrictions on future development efforts, including both natural and man-made features. Pittsburg in general features level terrain, with no geographic or geological barriers to downtown development. Downtown is not affected by creeks, rivers, rock formations or flood plains. The two highways that intersect at the center of downtown do place restrictions on development patterns, as these routes are not easily modified. The combination of flat terrain and intersecting highways has resulted in a traditional grid pattern of streets, and it is anticipated that this pattern will continue.

#### **E. Visual Analysis**

Visual appearances have a great deal to do with the impressions made by a downtown area. These impressions are formed in a number of ways. Professional planners look at entranceways, landmarks, edges, and nodes. Other

visual impressions are formed on the basis of age, style, and condition of public and private properties. The following presents a summary of the impressions voiced by committee members and others.

**Entranceways.** Entrances to Pittsburg's downtown are generally not clearly marked, so there is no clear announcement as to when a visitor has arrived in downtown. In fact, the very definition of what constitutes downtown was the subject of considerable discussion in committee meetings. Clearer marking of downtown entrances would greatly help in building an identity for the area.

**Landmarks.** Landmarks provide a point of reference and help shape the identity of an area. There are a number of significant landmark buildings downtown, including:

- Stilwell Hotel
- Fox Theatre
- Memorial Auditorium
- Pittsburg Public Library
- Post Office
- Judicial Center
- Besse Hotel
- Arches located in Parking Lot #4
- First United Methodist Church
- The Presbyterian Church

**Edges.** Edges are linear elements which form boundaries or breaks in continuity, such as railroad tracks, streams, embankments, or highways. In general, the area lacks clear edges. This is especially true on secondary streets. The development of Immigrant Park along Second Street may help form a southern edge for downtown. However, using this as the southern boundary for downtown presents issues related to the extension of the CP-4 zoning district south of Second Street and the existing zero-lot-line development pattern on some properties south of Second Street.

**Nodes.** Nodes are points or strategic spots in the city's transportation network. These may be junctions, intermodal connections, places of a break in transportation, or a concentration point for travel. These present unique opportunities for development. Significant nodes in downtown Pittsburg include the intersection of Fourth and Broadway, the intersection of Second and Broadway at Immigrant Park, and the intersection of Eleventh and Broadway at the Middle School.

**Downtown Identity.** There is no clear identity for downtown. This is due in part to the lack of clear edges and entranceways, and also to the diverse

architectural styles of the buildings. The features that many people reference as defining downtown are the angled on-street parking and the high overhead street lights, even though these affect only properties along Broadway. Another potentially distinguishing feature is the predominant use of red and brown brick as a building material. A positive source of downtown identity is the overhead Christmas decorations that have become a Pittsburg tradition.

**Negative Impressions.** Most of the negative impressions voiced about downtown were in reference to poor maintenance of both public and private facilities. While there are some relatively new buildings and some buildings that have been restored and are well maintained, there are many buildings suffering from obvious defects such as broken windows, peeling paint, torn awnings, worn signs, etc. Upper floors are particularly noted, as windows are poorly boarded over or display unkempt curtains or stored furniture. Sidewalks are often cited as being in poor condition, along with some public parking facilities. Street signs and poles need painting or replacement, and directional signage to public facilities and parking lots is lacking. Street lighting on Broadway in particular is outmoded and failing due to lack of parts. Trash and debris are evident on parking lots and alleyways.

Other negative impressions cited include vacant properties. While the number of vacancies cited earlier is not as high as many had expected, some large spaces are vacant, giving the impression that the rate is higher.

## **F. Strengths and Assets**

Downtown has many strengths and assets. These are the foundation upon which to build a brighter future, and include the following:

- Central location at the heart of the community.
- Location on the major arterial street connecting the Meadowbrook Mall on the south to the Wal-Mart and future Home Depot shopping areas to the north.
- One long "Main Street" through the center.
- Good vehicle traffic counts.
- Cars parked on the street, indicating customer activity.
- Concentration of government offices, adding to traffic counts and pedestrian activity.
- Memorial Auditorium, creating regular amounts of activity.
- Beautiful historic building facades.
- Free parking.
- Economical rental rates, good for small entrepreneurial businesses.

- Christmas decorations that attract attention and create community pride.
- Presence of strong Chamber of Commerce offices.
- Existing restaurants that draw repeat customers.
- Historic properties with potential to draw visitors.
- Existing housing at Stilwell Hotel, Knights of Columbus Tower and upper floors of commercial buildings.
- Attractive newer buildings: banks, Sears, law offices.
- Available second story space that can be utilized for limited commercial or residential uses.

### **G. Weaknesses and Problems**

Downtown has many weaknesses and problems, which if not addressed, threaten to contribute to continued decline of the area. These include the following:

- Lack of maintenance and deterioration of buildings, including simple things like peeling paint, damaged awnings, and broken windows, and more serious structural problems like leaking roofs and cracked or damaged masonry.
- Badly cracked and broken sidewalks.
- Lack of street trees and presence of inappropriate trees.
- Trash and litter, especially around parking lots and alleys.
- Unattractive public parking lots, with poor signage.
- Unattractive displays in business windows.
- Few places open evenings and weekends.
- Weeds growing in cracks in sidewalks and along buildings.
- Outdated street lighting on Broadway, with some fixtures not working due to lack of parts.
- Traffic lights on Broadway not coordinated.
- No signage indicating entrances to downtown.
- No directional signage to parking lots and major public facilities.
- One-way streets are confusing to visitors and newcomers, discouraging them from coming downtown.
- Upstairs windows show damaged blinds and curtains or even stored household items.
- Business signs are often in disrepair.
- Large number of vacant properties, some of which are large spaces that will be difficult to fill.
- Lack of handicap accessibility in many buildings.
- No grocery store for downtown residents.

- Historical structures place development restrictions on neighboring properties, possibly discouraging investors.
- Some business owners tie up parking spaces in front of businesses.
- Lack of pedestrian-friendly gathering spaces: benches, parks, etc.
- Lenders are reluctant to finance downtown businesses and building purchases, which are viewed as high-risk.
- Lack of long term parking for residential dwellings downtown.
- Lack of a downtown theme or identity.

## **IV. Main Street Program**

### **A. National Main Street Program**

Over the last 30 years, thousands of cities have attempted to revitalize their downtown areas. Some have succeeded while many are still struggling. Many strategies have been used from paint-up/fix-up programs to substantial attempts to make downtowns similar to climate-controlled malls. In 1977, the National Trust for Historic Preservation was concerned about historic downtowns and started the Main Street Program to be run by the National Main Street Center.

**Description.** The National Main Street Center is a public-private partnership developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to stimulate downtown economic development within the context of historic preservation in small cities. The Main Street methodology is based on a foundation of preservation, using those elements of quality that have survived as assets upon which can be built a lasting, positive physical and emotional image for everyone who uses downtown. The program's components are:

- Design and Appearance
- Economic Restructuring
- Organization
- Promotion

To be successful, downtown efforts must use a balanced approach, with effort devoted to all four areas. Neglecting any of the four can jeopardize the program's chances of success.

The Main Street methodology is based on an incremental approach. Often communities look to a big project to solve the downtown's problems. Pedestrian

malls, parking ramps, large office buildings and other large construction projects are considered panaceas for declining downtowns. However, projects of this type are often difficult to accomplish, costly and alone seldom resurrect the business area. They can also provide a false confidence that all is well, when in fact there remain problems the solution for which must go beyond a single event or achievement.

Incremental, self-help processes are more beneficial and longer lasting than a single big project. This is not to say that a community should never embark upon large-scale projects, but it should be cautioned against becoming dependent upon them. Self-help requires a willingness and commitment to shape one's own destiny. If a city does not have this desire, no amount of federal money and outside technical assistance will create lasting improvement.

**Proven Results in Other Communities.** The Main Street Program has been highly successful in other communities by using the incremental approach and four-point strategy. Strategies used by the National Main Street Center in three pilot cities in the Midwest beginning 1977 achieved significant results over a three-year period as the methodology evolved. This pilot program had immediate success and the Center prepared a manual describing the program to be used in 30 demonstration cities beginning in 1980. This demonstration program was so successful that it has expanded nation-wide, although many of the participants are still in the Midwest.

## **B. Kansas Main Street Program**

The Kansas Main Street Program was started in 1985, modeled after the National Main Street Program. The program uses a common-sense approach to tackle the complex issues of revitalization, capitalizing on downtown's history, and identifying the resources of the community itself.

The program is managed by the Community Development Division of the Kansas Department of Commerce & Housing. The state program provides management training, consultation visits, local program evaluation, design assistance, business enhancement strategies, incentive dollars and continuous training in the four-point approach for board, committee members, and program directors.

Kansas Main Street is a self-help program. Staff provides technical assistance, but the responsibility and credit for success rests with the community leaders who offer time, expertise, and enthusiasm to revitalizing downtown. Pittsburg participated in the state program for a number of years, but the effort faltered after some setbacks and loss of leadership. However, the program did enjoy some successes, and present efforts are intended to build upon the earlier work.

## **V. Downtown Plan**

The following sections describe goals and recommendations for Pittsburg in each of the four Main Street areas, plus a separate section deals with parking and accessibility. Parking and accessibility issues are covered in more than one Main Street area, and it was decided to create a separate topic area so related recommendations could be grouped together. Rather than dwell further on the problems of downtown, these sections are intended to focus on positive recommendations for actions that will help further the achievement of the stated goals, while addressing the problems and weaknesses described earlier.

### **A. Design/Appearance**

#### **Goal:**

**To establish downtown as a physically attractive and well maintained area, emphasizing historical elements wherever possible, while combining old and new spaces into interesting and exciting blend.**

A successful downtown must be an attractive place. Public infrastructure including streets, sidewalks, parking areas, signage and public buildings need to be well planned and maintained. Private buildings need to be attractive and inviting. For Pittsburg to successfully recruit new residents and businesses, the downtown must make a favorable impression upon visitors, and convey a sense of optimism about the community's future.

Many of the downtown problems cited earlier involve appearance and design issues related to public infrastructure and private property. A professional streetscape plan was prepared by Landplan Associates Engineers for the Pittsburg Main Street Committee, but this plan was never implemented. This plan called for new street lights on Broadway along with landscaping and sidewalk improvements. The development of Immigrant Park will have a major impact on the appearance South Broadway. Both of these projects are strongly recommended by the committee.

Existing buildings should not be forced to conform to strict design rules, but should emphasize preservation of each building's unique design elements, contributing to the architectural variety that makes older downtown areas so interesting. Renovation of facades of existing buildings should be done in a manner that emphasizes the restoration of the building to its original appearance. New construction should be consistent with existing buildings in type of materials used – i.e., predominantly brick – and should incorporate

historical themes from significant downtown structures. Awnings on building fronts should be encouraged. Written materials on renovation strategies and techniques should be assembled and made available to the public.

Recommendations for action in the design and appearance area are as follows:

1. Increase city funding for street signs and improvements.
2. Develop a plan for street light replacement.
3. Support the plans for continued expansion of Immigrant Park.
4. Pursue all possible grants for downtown improvement.
5. Create a recognition program.
6. Incentives should be provided for use of upper floors of buildings.
7. A committee should be appointed to review current building codes and recommend changes needed to allow enforcement of exterior maintenance items.
8. Encourage murals and wall art.
9. Update streetscape plan, and consider festival requirements as part of streetscape plan.
10. Develop resource materials for design guidelines and make them publicly accessible.
11. Fill store windows in vacant buildings by encouraging organizations and non-profits to utilize for advertising.
12. Develop a program to encourage storefront improvements using economic development sales tax (RLF) funds for grants and/or loans on a matching funds basis. The rear facades of buildings should be added to the façade grant proposal if the rear of the building faces a parking lot.
13. City should actively pursue demolition of buildings beyond repair.

14. City should pursue sales tax bond issue for streetscape improvements and lighting if grant funds are not received.
15. Repave Broadway from 1<sup>st</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets.
16. Adopt ordinance to eliminate outdated signs when a business closes.
17. Encourage parking lot landscaping and dumpster screening.
18. Explore possibility of putting public restrooms downtown.
19. Resurface downtown alleys as needed.
20. Increase city funding for parking lot maintenance.

## **B. Economic Restructuring**

### **Goal:**

**Strengthen the existing economic assets of the downtown business district while diversifying its economic base, by helping existing businesses expand and recruiting new ones to respond to today's market, helping convert unused space into productive property, and sharpening the competitiveness of business enterprises.**

In the context of new markets and competition, Downtown's role, or niche, has changed. It will not return to its traditional role as a major retail center; however, it can create a new niche. Downtown can be a unique place with specialty and social retailers, convenience goods and services, professional and personal services, residential development, dining and entertainment.

Downtown revitalization will require a blend of new business recruitment, existing business expansion, new construction, and remodeling of existing buildings. Competitive pressure from major retail centers to the north and south will require downtown to become more competitive and aggressive in appealing to potential visitors and shoppers. The type of space available and its affordability make downtown ideal for small entrepreneurial businesses, but these types of businesses are financially risky and often undercapitalized. Therefore, professional advice and assistance is often required to help improve their chances of success. Incentives may be needed to recruit better quality businesses that might not immediately be drawn to downtown, but these

incentives should be targeted to those businesses deemed the best fit for our downtown. Table 2 shows a list of desired businesses for Pittsburg's downtown. These and other similar businesses should be the focus of recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts.

A variety of financial incentive programs are available to businesses locating downtown. State Enterprise Zone income tax credits and sales tax exemptions on construction materials are available to non-manufacturing businesses, but not to retail businesses. The state offers employee training funds based on new jobs created, but not for retail jobs. Tax rebates on building improvements are provided in the city's Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, which covers much of downtown. Major projects could use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to assist with project costs. However, these incentives do not work well for small businesses with few employees or for those renting space instead of owning.

Housing can be an important component of the downtown economic mix. Downtown residents need convenience retail and service items within easy walking distance, and provide a built-in market for downtown businesses. The conversion of unused or underutilized upper floors of commercial buildings to residential uses can answer several community needs. Construction costs for such conversions can be less than the cost of new construction in some cases, and this allows for greater flexibility of interior design. Rental of upper floor areas helps building owners create positive cash flow, allowing for increased investment in exterior building renovations.

Taking into account all of the above considerations, the following economic restructuring recommendations are made:

1. Downtown should continue to be the primary location for governmental offices, as these create jobs and customer traffic.
2. Emphasis should be placed on businesses that generate customer traffic, encourage customer browsing due to the products offered or the appearance of the facility. City and Chamber recruitment efforts and incentive packages should target the types of businesses on the list.
3. A list of potential redevelopment sites should be developed, including at least a list of vacant lots and buildings for sale.
4. A list of desired businesses should be developed and maintained as a guide for recruitment efforts. City and Chamber recruitment efforts and incentive packages should target the businesses on this list. (See Table 2).

5. Owners of vacant or for sale buildings need to be contacted to determine their intentions and encourage renovation. It is suggested that the Chamber's Economic and Community Development committee take on the duty of contacting these business owners.
6. An investment group similar to PIDC should be formed to buy or renovate downtown buildings.
7. Involve the SBDC in helping to design business plans where required, for new businesses being recruited to downtown.
8. Incentives must be available for business recruitment, with written guidelines and application forms specifically suited to downtown businesses.
9. Recruit the dislocated businesses in the North Broadway TIF district to relocate downtown.
10. Prohibit or restrict downtown businesses that will detract from the area or discourage people from visiting the area; such businesses include storefront churches and adult entertainment establishments; also, restrictions may be needed on the number of drinking establishments, so as to control late night gatherings after closing hours.
11. Create a suitable plan for redevelopment of Besse Hotel.
12. Create a suitable plan for redevelopment of Fox Theatre.

### **C. Promotion**

#### **Goal:**

**Develop and sell a positive downtown image to customers, visitors and investors. Inform the public of good things happening downtown and encourage people to visit downtown to shop, browse, and attend cultural and special events.**

Today's business environment makes it absolutely necessary that downtowns promote themselves, even though this was not necessary in the past. Downtowns no longer enjoy the status of being the commercial center of

attention and shoppers are no longer automatically drawn to downtown. When asked about their impressions of downtown, many people use words like "old" or "worn" or "tired". By marketing downtown's uniqueness, effective promotional strategies create a more positive image of downtown as "exciting" or "enjoyable." Promotional strategies include advertising, retail promotions, special events, and festivals.

Promotion is both internal and external. Internal promotion is downtown promoting itself to those who reside or operate businesses downtown, building a sense of commonality and pride within the district. External promotion could include retail sales promotions, special events to attract attention to downtown, and development of a unified image or distinct identity for the downtown district.

Downtowns often ignore the potential of tourism as an economic resource. This is due to the fact that tourism is most often associated with a major destination or attraction. Pittsburg already draws sizeable numbers of visitors to PSU events and other special events like the Kansas Shrine Bowl. In addition, Immigrant Park and the PSU Veterans Memorial Amphitheatre have potential for drawing large numbers of visitors. Promotional strategies need to include ideas for bringing these visitors downtown and encouraging them to extend their visits.

Recommendations for action to promote downtown include the following:

1. Use special events as a means of promoting downtown
2. Move Little Balkans Days downtown
3. Add one or two additional events downtown, such as:
  - Combine Little Balkans and PSU Homecoming
  - Fall Festival
  - Miners Festival, perhaps tying in Immigrant Park
  - Antique Fair
  - Music Festivals
  - Ethnic Festivals
4. Expand upon Christmas and PSU Homecoming Parades, to add a downtown promotional element.
5. Promote downtown events and attractions through tourism publications and the CVB. Schedule events a year in advance for proper promotion in State and CVB publications.

6. Expand tourism and visitor potential of Immigrant Park, by listing it in appropriate visitor guides.
7. Encourage downtown businesses to jointly purchase advertising.
8. Develop a downtown name and/or downtown slogan and logo: a short positive name would help promote the program.
9. Issue press releases for awards won by downtown businesses and give recognition for improvements made to downtown buildings and businesses.
10. Develop a downtown newsletter.
11. Develop a downtown brochure to distribute to visitors at events, motels, and brochure racks.
12. Develop a walking tour route for downtown, including stops at Immigrant Park, Pittsburg Public Library, Stilwell Hotel and Memorial Auditorium art exhibits.
13. Promote downtown on City and Chamber web sites.
14. Increase number of businesses open late weekdays and on Saturday.

#### **D. Organization**

##### **Goal:**

**Establish a strong downtown organization that can build cooperation and consensus among numerous stakeholder groups and coordinate implementation of the downtown action plan.**

A major factor affecting any successful downtown revitalization program is organization. In order to compete effectively, downtown must create a coordinated strategy for revitalization. The National Main Street Center advocates the hiring of a full time downtown coordinator to manage this task. Qualifications for such a position would include an understanding of retail operations, media and promotions, municipal public works and zoning, and financial and lending practices. Duties would include direct assistance to downtown business people, development of a name and identity for the downtown program, communication of downtown goals to the community,

coordination of events and marketing programs, and recruitment of new business to downtown.

The coordinator needs to be backed by an effective organization representative of diverse downtown interests. This organization needs to be able to speak on behalf of downtown and advocate policies and programs that will benefit downtown. This organization can take any of several forms: a branch of city government; a division of the Chamber of Commerce; or an independent nonprofit corporation. In any case, it must be funded adequately to be able to carry out its mission. The existence of the full time coordinator and strong downtown organization are long term goals, but steps should be taken to work toward these goals.

The following recommendations are made regarding an organizational structure for the Pittsburg downtown program:

1. The City and Chamber should act immediately to designate a person in the Chamber office as Interim Downtown Coordinator, with approx. 12-15 hours per week devoted to downtown using existing Chamber funds and existing donations from the City, subject to review and approval of Chamber Board.
2. The Chamber should use the creation of a Downtown Coordinator position to launch a campaign to build membership in a Downtown Business Association and raise funds for expanding the coordinator's hours. The Downtown association could be set up similar to the Convention & Visitor's Bureau.
3. The City and Chamber should pursue a goal of a fully-funded and self supported fulltime Downtown Coordinator position within 5 years.
4. Within 5 years, the Downtown Association will make recommendations regarding a permanent organizational structure and funding.
5. The city should use a percentage of increased tax revenue, generated from enhancements by the program downtown, to help fund the coordinator position.
6. Downtown property owners should be educated about what the Downtown Committee is trying to do. This prevents some of the feeling that they are being "told" how this will work, getting more cooperation.

## **E. Parking and Accessibility**

### **Goal:**

**Provide sufficient parking at locations needed throughout downtown and provide convenient access for both vehicles and pedestrians.**

Parking and accessibility are important considerations for downtown. Many people come to downtown with a specific destination in mind and expect to park very close to their destination. It does not matter that a visit to a large shopping center usually means parking a considerable distance from the destination. Downtown visits are expected to involve parking only a short distance away. In addition, many downtown parking spaces carry restrictions as to length of stay. These restrictions need to be continually re-evaluated to be sure the intended purpose is being met. In addition, the distribution of parking spaces needs to be periodically reviewed to be sure adequate spaces are located near points of concentrated use, such as the Auditorium, churches, and upstairs apartments.

One-way streets are often cited as an irritant, especially to newcomers. These make it difficult to navigate through and around downtown, and can serve to discourage people from coming downtown. The system of one-way streets seems to have originated during the time when Broadway carried all of the U. S. Highway 69 traffic. The intention was to smooth traffic flow around Broadway and provide for easier access for emergency vehicles. A 1996 study by J. B. M. Engineering and Planners suggested that the one-way streets were no longer needed. However, the City rejected the recommendations, partly for budgetary reasons having to do with the cost of changing traffic lights.

Recommendations for actions related to parking and accessibility are as follows:

1. Improve the condition of city parking lots by addressing trash and litter problems.
2. Improve signage for parking lots.
3. Create an Adopt-a-Parking-Lot program similar to the Adopt-a-Highway program. Encourage area businesses to pick up trash. The City would provide signage for the business or organization maintaining the lot.
4. Create additional parking lots by targeting deteriorating buildings that could be demolished for future lots.
5. Add more parking spaces in the Memorial Auditorium area.

6. Study the impact of parking on entire blocks, not just neighboring properties.
7. Seek opportunities for creating parking lots immediately behind business buildings facing Broadway, creating opportunities for rear door entrances.
8. The City should consider elimination of one-way restrictions on East-West streets first and check the feasibility and need of other one-way streets later.
9. Assign designated spaces for apartments in adjoining buildings.
10. Consider adding turn lanes for 4<sup>th</sup> Street at Broadway, Joplin, Pine and Walnut. Repaint lanes for greater visibility.
11. Add directional signs to parking lots at appropriate locations.
12. Add bike racks at key locations.

## **VI. Funding Sources**

A number of funding sources are available to help pay for downtown improvements. These include grants, loans, and money from state and local economic development funds. However, these sources do not provide funding for operational expenses, such as salaries and fringe benefits for staff. These expenses must be born from local revenue sources, including membership dues, donations, and local tax revenues. In-kind contributions and volunteer efforts will also play a key role. Funding for implementation of the recommendations in this plan will likely need to come from a blend of all of these sources. Aggressive pursuit of grants needs to be a high priority, but local money will be needed for matching funds and operational expenses. The following list summarizes the major funding sources identified to date:

- KDOT Transportation Enhancements Grants: Provides funding for scenic and environmental improvements along state highways; street lighting and landscaping are eligible; 80% funding.
- Downtown Revitalization Grants: Kansas Dept. of Commerce; provides funding for comprehensive revitalization programs, including public infrastructure or private building rehabilitation;

50% funding; \$400,000 total available for state-wide program in FY2003-04; proposed \$1 million for FY2004-05.

- Community Development Block Grants: Kansas Dept. of Commerce; annual competitive applications; funding for public and private improvements, with private improvements usually in the form of loans; has already been used for Immigrant Park.
- Special Assessment Bonds: Provided in KSA 12-6a; allows City to issue bonds for improvements and assess all or a portion of the costs to private property owners.
- General Obligation Bonds: Bonds issued and backed by the City for public improvements, and paid by property or sales taxes.
- Member Sponsorship: Annual member sponsorship for Downtown Association and/or Chamber of Commerce.
- Donations: Money donated by individuals, businesses, corporations, or foundations for specific projects or expenses.
- City Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund (RLF): Funds generated by the City's sales tax and set aside for economic development projects; has been used primarily for industrial projects.
- Private investment funds.
- The Kansas Economic Growth Act of 2004 provides property tax rebates for certain kinds of downtown improvements.
- Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Rebate

## VII. Implementation

### Pittsburg Downtown Plan

<b>A. Design and Appearance</b>						
<b>GOAL:</b> To establish downtown as a physically attractive and well maintained area, emphasizing historical elements wherever possible, while combining old and new spaces into an interesting and exciting blend.						
<b>Action Items:</b>		<b>Assigned to:</b>	<b>YR 1 2004</b>	<b>YR 2 2005</b>	<b>YR 5 2008</b>	<b>YR 10 2013</b>
1	Increase city funding for street signs and improvements	City		•		
2	Develop a plan for street light replacement.	City	•			
3	Support the plans for Immigrant Park.	All	•	•	•	•
4	Pursue all possible grants for downtown improvement.	City Chamber Volunteers	•	•	•	•
5	Create a recognition program.	All				
6	Incentives should be provided for use of second and up floors of buildings.	City Chamber	•	•		
7	Committee be appointed to review current building codes and recommend changes needed to allow enforcement of exterior maintenance items and structural safety items.	City Private Business	•			
8	Encourage murals and wall art.	Private Business Volunteer	•	•	•	•
9	Update streetscape plan, and consider festival requirements as part of streetscape plan.	City	•			
10	Develop resource materials for design guidelines and make them publicly accessible.	City Chamber	•	•		
11	Fill vacant store windows by encouraging organizations and non-profits to utilize for advertising.	Private Business Chamber	•			
12	Develop a program to encourage storefront improvements using economic development sales tax (RLF) funds for grants and/or loans on a matching funds basis. The rear facades of buildings be added to the façade grant proposal if the rear of the building faces a parking lot.	City	•			
13	City should actively pursue demolition of buildings beyond repair.	City Private Business	•	•	•	•
14	City to pursue sales tax bond issue for streetscapes, and lighting if grant funds are not received.	City		•		
15	Repave Broadway from 1 <sup>st</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup> St.	City			•	
16	Adopt ordinance to eliminate outdated signs when a business closes.	City		•		
17	Encourage parking lot landscaping and dumpster screening.	City		•		
18	Explore possibility of putting public restrooms downtown.	City		•		
19	Resurface downtown alleys as needed.	City			•	
20	Increase city funding for parking lot maintenance.	City		•		

## Pittsburg Downtown Plan

<b>B. Economic Restructuring</b>						
<b>GOAL:</b> Strengthen the existing economic assets of the downtown business district while diversifying its economic base, by helping existing businesses expand and recruiting new ones to respond to today's market, helping convert unused space into productive property, and sharpening the competitiveness of businesses enterprises.						
<b>Action Items:</b>		<b>Assigned to:</b>	<b>YR 1 2004</b>	<b>YR 2 2005</b>	<b>YR 5 2008</b>	<b>YR 10 2013</b>
1	Downtown should continue to be the primary location for governmental offices, as these create jobs, and customer traffic.	City Chamber	•	•	•	•
2	Emphasis should be placed on businesses that generate customer traffic, encourage customer browsing due to the products offered or the appearance of the facility. City and Chamber recruitment efforts and incentive packages should target the types of businesses on the list.	City Chamber	•	•	•	•
3	A list of potential redevelopment sites should be developed, including at least a list of vacant lots and buildings for sale.	City Chamber	•			
4	A list of desired businesses should be developed and maintained as a guide for recruitment efforts. City and Chamber recruitment efforts and incentive packages should target the businesses on this list.	City Chamber with All	•	•	•	•
5	Owners of vacant or for sale businesses need to be contacted to determine their intentions and encourage renovation. It is suggested that the Chamber's Economic and Community Development Committee take on the duty of contacting these business owners.	Chamber	•	•	•	•
6	An investment group should be formed to buy or renovate downtown buildings.	Private Business	•	•		
7	The SBDC should get involved in helping design business plans where required, for new businesses being recruited to downtown.	PSU	•	•	•	•
8	Incentives must be available for business recruitment, with written guidelines and application forms specifically suited to downtown businesses.	City	•	•	•	•
9	Recruit the dislocated businesses in the TIF district to relocate downtown.	City Chamber	•			
10	Consider limiting storefront churches, bars and adult entertainment.	City	•	•		
11	Create a suitable plan for redevelopment of Besse Hotel	City Chamber			•	
12	Create a suitable plan for redevelopment of Fox Theatre	City Chamber			•	

## Pittsburg Downtown Plan

<b>C. Promotion</b>						
<b>GOAL:</b> Develop and sell a positive downtown image to customers, visitors and investors. Inform the public of good things happening downtown and encourage people to visit downtown to shop, browse, and attend cultural and special events.						
<b>Action Items:</b>		<b>Assigned to:</b>	<b>YR 1 2004</b>	<b>YR 2 2005</b>	<b>YR 5 2008</b>	<b>YR 10 2013</b>
1	Use special events as a means of promoting downtown.	All	•	•	•	•
2	Move Little Balkans Days downtown.	Volunteer	•			
3	Add one or two additional events downtown.	Chamber Volunteer		•		
4	Expand upon Christmas and PSU Homecoming Parades	Chamber	•	•		
5	Promote downtown events and attractions through tourism publications and CVB.	Chamber	•	•	•	•
6	Expand tourism and visitor potential of Immigrant Park.	Chamber All		•	•	•
7	Encourage downtown businesses to jointly purchase advertising.	Chamber		•	•	•
8	Develop a downtown name and/or downtown slogan and logo.	Chamber All	•			
9	Issue press releases for awards won by downtown businesses and give recognition for improvements made to downtown buildings and businesses.	City Chamber	•	•	•	•
10	Develop a downtown newsletter.	Chamber		•		
11	Develop a downtown brochure to distribute to visitors at events, motels, brochure racks.	Chamber		•		
12	Develop a walking tour route for downtown including stops at Immigrant Park, Pittsburg Public Library, Stilwell Hotel and Memorial Auditorium art exhibits.	City Chamber Volunteer		•		
13	Promote downtown on City and Chamber web sites.	City Chamber	•	•	•	•
14	Increase number of businesses open late weekdays and on Saturday.	City Chamber	•	•	•	•

## Pittsburg Downtown Plan

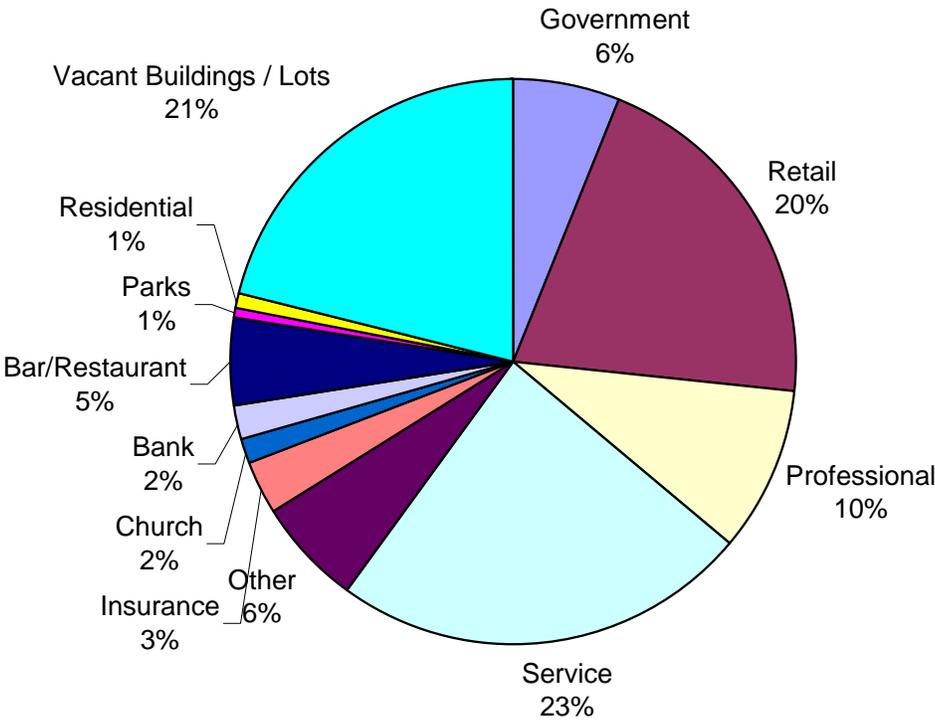
<b>D. Organization</b>						
<b>GOAL:</b> Establish a strong downtown organization that can build cooperation and consensus among numerous stakeholder groups and coordinate implementation of the downtown action plan.						
<b>Action Items:</b>		<b>Assigned to:</b>	<b>YR 1 2004</b>	<b>YR 2 2005</b>	<b>YR 5 2008</b>	<b>YR 10 2013</b>
1	The City and Chamber designate a person as Interim Downtown Coordinator.	City Chamber	•			
2	The Chamber should launch a campaign to build a Downtown Business Association.	Chamber	•	•		
3	The City and Chamber pursue a goal of a fully-funded and self supported Downtown Coordinator position within 5 years.	City Chamber			•	
4	Within 5 years the Downtown Association will make recommendations regarding a permanent organizational structure and funding.	City Private Business			•	
5	The City should use percentage of increased tax revenue, generated from enhancements by this program downtown, to help fund the coordinator position.	City			•	
6	Inform downtown property owners about what the Downtown Committee is trying to do.	All	•	•	•	•

## Pittsburg Downtown Plan

<b>E. Parking and Accessibility</b>						
<b>GOAL:</b> Provide sufficient parking at locations needed throughout downtown and provide convenient access for both vehicles and pedestrians.						
<b>Action Items:</b>		<b>Assigned to:</b>	<b>YR 1 2004</b>	<b>YR 2 2005</b>	<b>YR 5 2008</b>	<b>YR 10 2013</b>
1	Improve the condition of city parking lots by addressing trash and litter problems.	City Volunteers	•	•		
2	Improve signage for parking lots. Add "public" parking on signs.	City Volunteers	•			
3	Create Adopt-a-Parking Lot program similar to the Adopt-a-Highway program.	City		•		
4	Create additional parking lots by targeting deteriorating buildings that could be demolished for future lots.	City			•	•
5	Add more spaces in the Memorial Auditorium area.	City			•	•
6	Study the impact of parking on entire blocks, not just neighboring properties.	City	•	•	•	•
7	Seek opportunities for creating parking lots immediately behind businesses buildings facing Broadway.	City Private Business		•	•	•
8	The City should consider elimination of one-way restrictions on East-West streets first and check the feasibility and need of other one-way streets later.	City		•		
9	Assign designated spaces for apartments in adjoining buildings.	City	•			
10	Add turn lanes for 4 <sup>th</sup> Street at Broadway, Joplin, Pine and Georgia. Repaint lanes for greater visibility.	City		•		
11	Add directional signs to parking lots at appropriate locations.	City		•		
12	Add bike racks at key locations.	City Private Business		•		

**Table 1**

**Downtown Pittsburg Business Mix**



Government	Retail	Professional	Service
Other	Insurance	Church	Bank
Bar/Restaurant	Parks	Residential	Vacant Buildings / Lots

**Table 2**  
**List of Desired Downtown Businesses  
for Recruitment, Retention and Expansion**

- Clothing boutique
- Family shoe store/shoe repair
- Antiques and home furnishings
- Full-service restaurant
- Bakery
- Gifts and collectibles
- Variety/dime store
- Book Store
- Coffee Shop
- Bicycle and bike/skate shop (sales and rentals)
- Tourist-related businesses
- Ice cream store
- Jewelry store
- Micro-brewery
- Entertainment/night life
- Modern office and professional space
- Hobby/Craft Store
- Pottery-Type Store
- Component Meal Business (carry-out meals to cook at home)
- Woodworking
- Card shop
- Music store
- Dance studio
- Ethnic grocery
- Vintage clothing
- Governmental facilities including state and federal as well as local
- Other specialty retail
- Art galleries/art studios
- Produce Market
- Convenience Grocery
- Furniture
- Toy Store
- Copy Center (late night or all night)
- Quilting Shop
- Medical Offices