

# Ozark, Alabama DOWNTOWN PLAN





Bob Bunting, Mayor

City Council

Marilyn M. Tamplin, President  
Joe R. Outlaw  
Andy Gilland  
Jerome Dudley  
Winston T. Jackson

Planning Commission

James Lisenby  
Houston Davis  
Don Hallford  
Jeff Outlaw  
Carolyn McCray  
Billy Blackwell  
Dr. James Murphree, Jr.  
Andy Gilland  
Norman Watson

Consultant:

KPS Group, Inc.  
[www.kpsgroup.com](http://www.kpsgroup.com)

Source of Copies

City of Ozark  
P.O. Box 1987  
Ozark, AL 36361  
[www.ozarkalabama.us](http://www.ozarkalabama.us)

# Ozark, Alabama

## DOWNTOWN PLAN



## PREFACE

Most everyone for miles around has been to Downtown Ozark. It is the symbolic heart of the community, and at one time it was the focus of community energy and activity for Ozark and most of Dale County. This was the place people traditionally went to buy the goods and services they needed, to renew acquaintances, and to conduct important transactions. Ozark is the county seat, and the Dale County courthouse occupies the center of the Square. Downtown was the traditional place to seek diversion and to come together as a community. But today, much of that is just a memory: there are fewer people, and there are fewer stores, restaurants and professional offices. And not as many people consider downtown to be the place to come together as a community.

No doubt: many Downtown Ozark buildings are in disrepair (though others are being restored even as this is being written). The retail heart of town moved out to Highway 231, and most of what remains is not doing well. When commercial strips and centers first arrived in Ozark, they were perceived as progress. Some downtown merchants even leased space there. Others stayed downtown—resigned to getting by the best they could. In an attempt to compete, some tried to "modernize" by putting false fronts on their stores to hide the brick facades. The County Commission replaced the Dale County Courthouse.

Eventually, public money was used to improve the sidewalks and add trees and shrubs. More was spent to add a continuous canopy in front of the stores to replace individual awnings around the Square and some adjacent blocks. More often, though, the owners stopped maintaining their buildings, and empty stores just deteriorated. A couple of them finally collapsed; another was destroyed by a tornado. There was little demand for downtown space, so the buildings were not replaced. In a relatively short time, not only was the economic and social importance of Downtown Ozark lost, so also was much of its character.



The theme of this plan is that, even now, the trend can be reversed. Through a systematic process, local people have come together, reviewed their values, and set some goals for themselves and their community. They are intent on putting creative ideas to work. They realize they must address all the factors of downtown success together, rather than just some of them individually.

*Planning* for downtown revitalization is just one small part of the process. The key to success lies in coordinated *action* on several fronts. The planning process generated interest and public understanding of what must be done throughout the community to assure success in downtown. There are no easy solutions. Revitalization requires investment—of time, effort, capital and political will on the part of the community.



# CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN.....	1
II. DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION CONCEPT .....	3
OZARK TOWN MEETING 2007 .....	3
Assets .....	3
Issues .....	4
Visions for Downtown Ozark .....	4
Benchmarks for Testing the Plan .....	5
DOWNTOWN OZARK REVITALIZATION CONCEPT .....	5
Revitalization Policies.....	5
Essential Elements of the Revitalization Concept.....	10
Conceptual Plan Recommendations.....	12
III. IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT .....	17
ORGANIZATION .....	17
COMMUNITY PROMOTION.....	18
DESIGN .....	19
Downtown Physical Organization.....	20
Citywide Land Use and Market Interactions.....	20
Accessibility.....	21
Buildings, Canopies and Streetscape .....	22
ECONOMIC STRUCTURE.....	23
Business Development .....	23
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS .....	25
IV. CONCLUSION.....	27
APPENDIX A: TOWN MEETING NOTES .....	29
ASSETS .....	29
ISSUES .....	29
MISSING FROM LOCAL VISIONS FOR DOWNTOWN OZARK .....	29
APPENDIX B: DOWNTOWN PLANT LIST.....	31
Common Name      Scientific Name .....	31
Suggestions and Planting Details .....	32
APPENDIX C: STOREFRONT DESIGN NOTES .....	33
APPENDIX D: PRESERVATION TAX INCENTIVES .....	35
Alabama Property Tax Reduction .....	35
Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits .....	35
APPENDIX E: IMPLEMENTATION AGENDA.....	37
NOTES.....	39



# I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

This document summarizes a planning process focused on revitalizing Downtown Ozark, Alabama. That process brought together merchants, property owners, citizens and elected officials. They agreed the time was ripe to plan for public and private reinvestment, revitalization and redevelopment in and around downtown. They joined forces to determine how they would recapture their downtown for themselves and for those who would follow in their footsteps.

Objectives for the planning process were established at the outset:

- *Assist the people of Ozark as they devise a vision for a revitalized Downtown*
- *Prepare a guide to Downtown organization, design and economic structure*
- *Recommend appropriate public and private actions that will help lead to a revitalized Downtown Ozark*

As a part of the planning process, the city's consultants added to the city's mapping system with information gained from site visits and discussions with local residents in an effort to build knowledge of the community. This information was analyzed and depicted on thematic maps, and was reviewed at downtown workshops during the planning process. During these workshops, local people shared ideas about community assets and issues, the major trends they anticipated, and the influences those might have on the community. They spoke of their visions for downtown and the possible opportunities for both private and public investment. They also reviewed and helped to revise preliminary and draft versions of this plan.

Information and suggestions from the planning workshops and other public meetings were converted to a Strategic Downtown Concept, which was reviewed and modified during subsequent community meetings. The process provided an opportunity to build consensus in support of revitalization, building improvements and public investments. These ideas are the core of this plan, which is intended to stabilize and protect critical portions of downtown and to encourage and enable appropriate private revitalization and redevelopment activities, supported by public investment and regulation.





## II. DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION CONCEPT

The Downtown Revitalization Concept provides further detail to the Citywide Land Use Plan in regard to Downtown Ozark. Just as public and private decision-making within downtown will have an effect on the city, so will decision-making at the citywide scale affect the potential for successful revitalization of downtown.

### OZARK TOWN MEETING 2007

The planning process began with a Town Meeting held in the Ozark Library in January 2007. The Town Meeting served as a launch point for the Downtown Plan and the Citywide Land Use Plan being developed simultaneously by the City. The participants were provided a brief overview of existing conditions in the downtown area and its relation to the city overall.

The participants were asked a series of questions designed to elicit comments and suggestions that would help develop a vision for the future of downtown. What follows below is a summary of the main topics of the discussion in each of several categories. An outline of participant responses is provided in the Appendix.

#### Assets

Town meeting participants recognized the value of having a strong infrastructure already in place – an interconnected network of streets, access to water and sewer, street lighting, sidewalks, and similar elements which do not have to be extended or provided anew. Similarly, downtown is a historic development with existing buildings that provide an attractive and diverse, yet coherent, character to the area, which is known and appreciated by residents of the city. Because downtown Ozark houses the Dale County Courthouse, people from throughout Dale County visit downtown on a regular basis. Participants specifically recognized the importance of the Courthouse Square, which lies at the heart of downtown.



Downtown's central location within the city is also an important asset. The Ozark Civic Center and several city parks are within walking distance or a short drive from downtown. Participants also mentioned medical offices and related businesses that are within and around downtown, which are an important destination for area residents. Such facilities provide important services to residents within Ozark and surrounding areas in Dale County, especially retirees and other older residents, while also generating greater visitation downtown.

## Issues

Meeting participants listed many issue areas in which work remains to be done to bring downtown up to the standards they hold individually and collectively.

Participants listed different aspects of parking as problems for the downtown area, including: turnover in on-street parking, availability of off-street parking, parking on sidewalks, and overall management of downtown parking.

Vacant and underutilized buildings and lots ranked among downtown's critical issues with meeting attendants. Similarly, participants stated that a lack of repairs, maintenance and reinvestment in individual buildings and properties has further weakened the image of downtown and the viability of existing businesses. Respondents also noted harmful effects that past treatments to historic building facades have had on the character and charm of downtown.



Participants mentioned the canopies over the sidewalks on the blocks facing the Courthouse Square as one of the most important issues facing downtown. The canopies, installed by the City in the 1980s, are now in need of major repairs and over time have caused damage to the storefronts to which they are attached. Participants compared the costs for canopy repair and ongoing maintenance with the costs for their removal and repair of individual storefronts as important factors in deciding how to move forward regarding the canopies issue. Lighting, street furnishings, and pedestrian signals ranked among other public improvements issues.

## Visions for Downtown Ozark

Building from the discussions of assets, issues, outside influences and the reasons people are drawn to the city, meeting participants were asked to envision Downtown Ozark as they would like it to be in a decade or so. Each person present was asked to share one significant physical aspect of those desired future conditions that is absent from Downtown Ozark today.

Meeting participants envisioned a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented downtown able to attract visitors at night and on the weekends. New shops, restaurants and other activities would fully occupy downtown's buildings and properties and bring more people to downtown, building loyalty and patronage for local businesses. Additional housing in and around downtown would provide a stronger customer base for downtown businesses.

The charm and character of downtown would be enhanced by designation of a local historic district, together with financial assistance and incentives for rehabilitation of buildings. Modern coverings would be removed from buildings and their historic

architectural facades restored. Canopies would be replaced by individual awnings that accentuate the richness of downtown architecture and articulate each storefront.

Public investments to improve sidewalks, lighting, and public parking areas, together with public and private coordination of overall parking management, would enhance safety and accessibility in the downtown area.

## Benchmarks for Testing the Plan

To sum up the results of the Town Meeting, participants were asked to offer a few benchmarks of success for plan implementation and to add a sense of priority to the next few years. Responses included:

- *Downtown will be an important economic focus for the city, becoming home to many of the community's most desirable business addresses.*
- *A well-preserved downtown historic district will be a source of community pride.*
- *A community-managed funding source will encourage greater reinvestment in existing business and residential areas in the downtown area.*

## DOWNTOWN OZARK REVITALIZATION CONCEPT

The strategy for Downtown Ozark is based on the values of downtown stakeholders and the responses they shared with one another during the Town Meeting. From these discussions arose a revitalization concept composed of policies intended to shape future decision-making by both public and private sectors regarding investment in downtown. Decisions affecting the overall development of the city inherently affect downtown and are also considered here.

### Revitalization Policies

Downtown Ozark is the core of the city. As such, it should be a major focus of the local economy as well as the seat of city and county government. For example, downtown should serve as the symbolic center of the community—the center of community pride. It should be an active center of the local commercial economy. Downtown Ozark and its surroundings should have a positive image, one that gives a good impression of life in the community. Fitting to its role as the symbolic core of the community, downtown should remain the seat of city and county government, and be a social, retail and service business center that displays its heritage proudly.

At the same time, Ozark residents say downtown should provide a positive, "hometown" image for residents and visitors alike. It should be a place to enjoy—to walk, window shop, see their friends and neighbors, and spend money. The appearance of downtown should indicate that the needs of customer and client come first. After all, people want their patronage to be respected, and this is demonstrated when merchants and service providers obviously care about and maintain the place of business.

Downtown should have a peaceful and tranquil feeling. Yet, at the same time, it should have quality merchandise and economic vibrancy. After all, it is the heart of the community.

The following is a checklist to help keep the essentials continually in front of decision makers—so everyone will know how their actions are supposed to work together to improve the quality of the core of the community. After all, people should agree on what is important about the community, and how its assets and opportunities may be capitalized upon.

## PROMOTE AND MAINTAIN AN ATTRACTIVE IMAGE OF DOWNTOWN

Objective: Provide and maintain high quality public facilities.

- *Provide public facilities and services to stimulate and support appropriate economic development.*
- *Keep streets, parking lots and sidewalks in good, clean condition.*
- *Improve and maintain street lighting in good condition to ensure an attractive, safe appearance in downtown at night.*
- *Provide facilities accessible to all, including those having special access needs.*
- *Maintain and enhance the appearance of public buildings.*
- *Coordinate, manage and promote convenient off-street parking facilities for downtown patrons and employees.*
- *Manage downtown parking as a limited resource—with the highest rate of turnover located along downtown streets, especially around the Courthouse Square; an average rate of turnover in off-street parking lots; and the lowest rate of turnover in parking areas located toward the edge of downtown.*

Objective: Provide and maintain an appropriate appearance and use of open, vacant and unimproved properties.



- *Use a consistent but rich palette of plant materials that are appropriate to the urban character of downtown.*
- *Use appropriate plant materials and lighting to enhance visual and physical access to downtown buildings and activities.*
- *Choose plant materials that require light maintenance and that do not trap leaves and other litter.*
- *Maintain all plant materials to maximize their effectiveness.*

Objective: Encourage the use of attractive and effective displays and signs.

- *Encourage downtown store window displays that are well designed, maintained and changed frequently.*
- *Encourage owners and tenants to use signs of appropriate size, content and location for the scale and character of downtown, which may include flat wall signs, projecting signs, and awning signs.*
- *Use public signs that meet standards of sign purpose, size and location stated in the Alabama Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.*



## SUPPORT AND MAINTAIN A VITAL COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Objective: Promote planned development patterns that contribute to commercial vitality.

- *Concentrate commercial activities in central areas of the city and discourage widespread scattering of business.*
- *Maintain a compact and distinct downtown area.*
- *Severely limit further extension of scattered and strip commercial development in and around downtown.*
- *Promote higher residential densities near downtown, and lower densities further away to create a strong customer base within easy walking distance of downtown and to provide housing opportunities near businesses and services for older residents.*
- *Promote appropriate and compatible mixed-use development downtown, including the use of upper stories of existing buildings for dwellings.*
- *Encourage walk-in businesses to locate in downtown.*

Objective: Promote activities that contribute to a healthy business environment.

- *Encourage clustered land use patterns that support business vitality.*
- *Encourage fill-in business development to concentrate retail trade.*
- *Help to secure new business investment that will complement existing businesses.*
- *Provide an appropriate downtown location for promotional activities and special events.*

Objective: Assemble an appropriate and suitable mix and pattern of uses, businesses and activities in the downtown area.

- *Determine appropriate and suitable uses and activities for vacant lots and buildings.*



- *Secure appropriate uses for downtown spaces and buildings, locating those uses where they will complement the existing pattern of business citywide.*
- *Promote the use of downtown street level spaces for retail and consumer-oriented service businesses.*
- *Promote the use of upper floor spaces for offices, service businesses and residential uses.*
- *Encourage the location of specialty shops and businesses downtown that appeal to retirees.*

Objective: Develop and support a wide variety of downtown businesses and services.

- *Recruit new business investment downtown based on clearly defined market needs of the trade area.*
- *Support development and expansion of local business in appropriate locations.*
- *Encourage downtown merchants to use current, yet proven downtown merchandising techniques.*

Objective: Build and promote a desirable image of downtown.

- *Promote an attitude of confidence in downtown and a desirable image of downtown throughout the area.*
- *Promote and advertise downtown as a single shopping and service destination.*
- *Coordinate joint advertising among downtown retailers.*
- *Regularly schedule fairs, special events and other promotional activities in downtown.*
- *Encourage, promote and provide for family-oriented recreational activities downtown.*
- *Provide access to downtown for all residents, regardless of special access need.*



## MAKE DOWNTOWN EASILY AND SAFELY ACCESSIBLE

Objective: Maintain and support legible traffic patterns for safe and efficient travel throughout the city.

- *Promote the use of simple, coordinated, attractive and informative signage for all major destinations in the city.*
- *Enhance the streetscape of downtown, especially along the principal commercial highways through the city.*
- *Encourage the use of non-motorized travel to all principal destinations in the city.*
- *Promote land use patterns that contribute to the efficiency of the street system.*

Objective: Provide a safe, welcoming environment and enjoyable downtown experience for pedestrians.

- *Locate storefronts along the sidewalk to maintain a pedestrian-oriented environment that supports window-shopping and takes advantage of on-street parking*
- *Maintain streets and sidewalks in attractive, safe condition.*
- *Minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.*
- *Provide crosswalks at logical and traditional locations that are safe and convenient.*
- *Emphasize pedestrian right-of-way at key pedestrian crosswalks.*
- *Encourage the use of alleys and shared driveways for access to parking and loading areas to reduce driveway cuts along the sidewalk.*
- *Provide sidewalks well suited to the walking patterns of customers, employees and visitors, including those with special access needs, such as the elderly and handicapped.*
- *Provide extended sidewalk landings and pavement markings in crosswalks in the downtown area that clearly indicate the pedestrian right-of-way.*
- *Ensure a continuous sidewalk system within and around downtown that provides convenient, safe access between downtown and its adjacent neighborhoods, institutions and business areas.*



Objective: Provide adequate downtown parking facilities.

- *Manage downtown parking as a limited resource to maximize efficiency in the use of existing space and to ensure an adequate future parking supply.*

- *Provide public parking spaces in the downtown area sufficient to meet average demand.*
- *Design and landscape parking lots to maximize parking capacity, to enhance physical access to buildings and to provide shade from the summer sun.*
- *Provide wayfinding signage along major entrances into downtown leading to public parking areas.*
- *Avoid driveway cuts that take up on-street parking spaces.*

Objective: Provide adequate loading zones for service and delivery vehicles.

- *Locate and require use of primary loading zones at the rear of buildings wherever possible to minimize truck parking and loading conflicts with traffic flow.*
- *Locate, design and designate secondary loading zones on downtown streets only as absolutely necessary for those businesses not otherwise accessible to service and delivery vehicles.*
- *Provide a system for garbage pick-up for businesses without rear loading zones.*

## Essential Elements of the Revitalization Concept

The strategic concept builds upon downtown vision by enhancing its physical organization as a major activity center supporting, and supported by, the city's neighborhoods. Essential elements include:

- *Enhance downtown gateways and access corridors*
- *Increase the residential population around downtown*
- *Reassert downtown's role as the heart of the community*
- *Restructure and concentrate community and neighborhood retail and services to build downtown's share of the market*
- *Manage design to ensure compatibility and appropriateness*
- *Organize and promote downtown to build regional focus and local interaction*

These elements are further detailed in the Conceptual Plan on the page to the right, and in the specific recommendations following.



## Conceptual Plan Recommendations

Remove canopies from storefronts around the Courthouse Square to improve visibility and daylighting of individual businesses, avoid ongoing maintenance costs, and to encourage renovation of building facades.

Remove canopies in concert with the designation of a historic district, establishment of a design review process, and creation of a loan or grant fund to assist building owners with façade repairs needed after canopy removal.

- *Removal of canopies will allow room along the sidewalk for new plantings, lighting, and other design improvements. Install street trees along the blocks facing the Square. Trees should be of a species, size and shape that do not hide storefronts and signage and that are low maintenance.*
- *Canopy removal will also enable businesses to install more effective signage and window displays and to accentuate storefronts through façade improvements and individual awnings. Awnings should be individually designed but be compatible in color, shape, and size with the storefront and surroundings.*



*Left:* Illustration of repaired canopy and restored facades along Broad Street facing the Courthouse. Landscaping at corner landings is scaled back and new lighting fixtures are provided along the canopy.

*Right:* Illustration of the same block but with canopies removed and replaced with individual awnings above the restored storefronts, creating a more open, vibrant window-shopping experience along the sidewalk. Additional space is afforded by canopy removal for new street trees and pedestrian-scaled lighting fixtures.

Improve streetscapes of the major corridors leading into downtown.

- *Install new landscaping outward from the Courthouse Square to major arrival points into downtown: on Broad Street/Andrews Avenue, from east of the Methodist Church to west of Painter Avenue, and on Union Avenue from Peacock Parkway to College Street.*
- *Include street trees, accent landscaping, and street lights that feature pedestrian level fixtures oriented toward the sidewalk.*

Infill vacant lots for new businesses in a manner consistent with the historic development pattern of downtown.

- *Build new storefronts up to the sidewalk where they are convenient to on-street parking, easily discernible from the street, and support pedestrian access, especially for window-shopping.*



- *Locate loading areas to the side or rear of new buildings, where possible, accessed by alleys or shared driveways.*
- *Locate any new off-street parking to the side, rear, or off-site.*
- *In short-term, vacant lots may also be (whether leased or purchased) used for outdoor dining in association with an adjacent restaurant.*

Enhance the downtown public parking system.

- *Include adequate wayfinding signage to public parking areas along the major thoroughfares leading to the Square. Ensure signage at entrances to parking areas are consistent with wayfinding signage.*
- *Install landscaping and/or low walls between the sidewalk and off-street parking area. Install interior landscaping, such as shade trees, where room is available within parking areas.*
- *Assess design and condition of public parking areas and improve as needed, taking into consideration parking layout, striping, surface, drainage, etc. Ensure that layout is properly organized and marked to maximize capacity.*

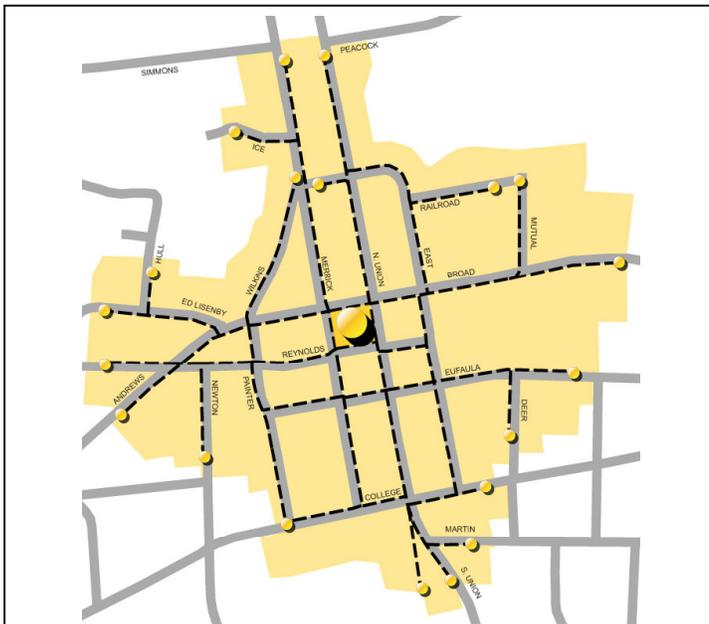


**Downtown Parking**

There is an abundance of off-street parking within walking distance of the Courthouse Square; however, most of this parking is privately owned and unshared. Several public parking lots, shown in blue, are provided by the City. Most are within a 2 to 3-minute walk of the Square. The majority of streets downtown have on-street parking, but other than along the Square, little of that parking is ever used.

Redevelop the former downtown Wal-Mart shopping center for new residential uses.

- *Develop multi-family, attached, or cottage housing for retirees, empty nesters and other residential market groups wanting to downsize their living arrangements and responsibilities and who would be attracted to a location in walking distance of downtown shopping and services.*
- *Maintain the current grocery store housed within the mostly vacant shopping center.*
- *Break up the site into multiple blocks with new streets that connect into the surrounding street network. New streets should include sidewalks, planting strips, street trees, pedestrian-scaled light fixtures, and on-street parking. Include alleys/shared drives that access internal parking areas.*



### **Pedestrian Shed**

A “pedestrian shed” is all of the area within a 5-minute walk of a specified destination, such as the shopping, services, and offices around Ozark’s Courthouse Square. Downtown Ozark’s pedestrian shed, shown here, extends outward from the Square to adjacent business areas and neighborhoods. People will be more likely to walk from the farthest points of the pedestrian shed if the sidewalks and development alongside them create a pleasant, safe experience between the pedestrian’s departure and destination points.

Improve facilities for people to walk within downtown and from nearby neighborhoods.

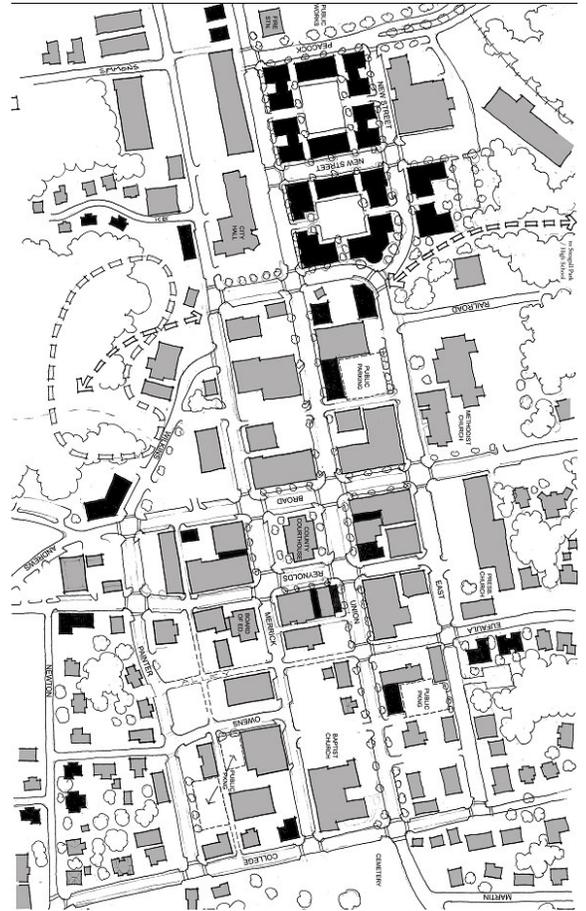
- *Repair existing sidewalks where needed and extend sidewalk network outward from downtown to connect to nearby neighborhoods. Ensure pedestrian-oriented lighting is provided along sidewalks in and around downtown, especially in business areas.*
- *Limit driveway cuts along sidewalks and prohibit parking across pedestrian rights-of-way.*
- *Develop a greenway trail connecting from the proposed civic space to downtown and neighborhoods east of downtown. Connect the greenway to the proposed network of greenways and parks described in the Citywide Land Use Plan.*

Infill vacant or undeveloped lots.

- *Develop new homes in residential areas surrounding downtown, such as along Newton Avenue, to increase population near downtown and reduce vacancy.*
- *Infill sites with new housing comparable with the historic residential architecture and development patterns around downtown. Residential densities should decrease further from downtown.*

Develop a civic open space to house special community events that can promote downtown.

- *Use city-owned property fronting on Wilkins Street for development as a city park designed for civic events, including fairs, festivals, and assembly points for parades. Consider land swap with owners of adjoining undeveloped land if available. City property is inadequate.*
- *Ensure improved open space is properly connected to downtown, and especially the Square, through sidewalk and other improvements along Wilkins Street.*



Improve the entrance into the downtown area along Peacock Parkway.

- *Install landscaping, including street trees, along Peacock Parkway leading into downtown in coordination with potential redevelopment of shopping center.*
- *Improve appearance of public works shop located at Peacock Parkway and North Union with a screening fence and landscaping around outdoor storage and work yard visible from the street.*

## CONCLUSION

The revitalization concept is designed to build on the spirit of the people of Ozark, their history and their successes. The intent is to capitalize on the spirit of the city, to build upon the traditions embodied in its downtown in combination with its location and setting. The concept gives physical expression to the downtown vision and provides a general, overall framework for revitalization.



### III. IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT

There are five components to the approach to revitalizing Downtown Ozark. The approach has been adapted and expanded upon by the city's consultant for use in Ozark from the model developed by the National Main Street Center, a division of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This is also the successful approach tested in the communities participating in the Alabama Main Street Program administered by the Alabama Historical Commission. Each component—Organization, Promotion, Design, Economic Structure and Community Connections—is an essential part of a complete local system of public and private support for downtown revitalization.

#### ORGANIZATION

The one element that makes or breaks a downtown revitalization effort—in any community—is organization. In fact, the one attribute common to successful downtown revitalization efforts across Alabama and the nation seems to be good organization. A broad-based, well-managed, functioning and coordinated organization is essential to direct and channel the variety of projects, programs, activities and investments necessary for downtown improvement efforts to be effective.

The Ozark Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DRA) should be reorganized to serve as the official downtown organization. It has the advantage of an official role under state law, including the ability to offer specific tax incentives for downtown redevelopment projects, to issue bonds, and undertake specific projects on private property on a parcel or in a structure that has historically been a retail/commercial site. Upon reorganization, the DRA should adopt the Downtown Plan as its overall purpose, and establish a separate, formal, broad-based support group. The sole purpose of this group will be continuing revitalization of Downtown Ozark. Membership in this group should include merchants, property owners, professionals, attorneys, bankers, city and county officials, and representatives from the city's various organizations. These should be organized into committees based on the implementation components of this plan.

In devising an effective downtown organization, the following should be kept clearly in mind:

- *Agreement among the downtown organization's members on goals and objectives—and the ways they will be carried out is essential, but strong and clear communication among members is even more critical.*
- *Downtown Ozark as a whole is more important than the ego or business of any one person: mutual participation and support are essential to success.*
- *Member individuals and groups must accept and carry out their responsibilities.*
- *Compromise of some individual priorities may be required for the general benefit, efficiency and well being of Downtown Ozark and the surrounding community*

As the support organization is being formed, the following should be accomplished:

- *Hold organizational meetings to build support*
- *Form the support group as a private, not-for-profit organization*
- *Define implementation of the Ozark Downtown Plan as the organization's mission*
- *Prepare and adopt bylaws to include a program committee structure*
- *Establish a Downtown Promotion Committee to be responsible for organizing and conducting image promotion, joint merchandising promotion (including coordinated opening hours) and special events*
- *Establish a Downtown Design Committee to be responsible for actions and activities that will boost the overall mental image of downtown, with subcommittees to focus on: storefronts, signs and merchandise display; streetscape and landscape; access, traffic, parking and loading*
- *Establish a Downtown Business Committee to support and coordinate the diversification and success of business development activities among merchants, property owners, economic development offices and real estate professionals*
- *Prepare program goals and an annual work plan with measurable objectives*
- *Devise a working budget with public and private funding support*
- *Gather benchmark information for reviewing annual progress*
- *Join the National Main Street Network as an organization*

Numbers are important, but getting the right people involved is critical. As with every community activity, some people will get more involved than others—and may have more time or money or other resources to contribute or invest. Motivation and commitment can be strengthened by recognizing the diverse interests and potential contributions of everyone in the community, and by understanding the strengths and abilities of each individual and group.

## COMMUNITY PROMOTION

In order to consider Downtown Ozark's various commercial opportunities in positive ways, people must know what is available. To accomplish this, a well-organized promotional program is needed—one that promotes downtown as a unified, multi-purpose destination for people all over the trade area. An annual promotional program schedule should be set—and updated monthly—to include three kinds of promotional activities: image promotion, joint merchandising promotion, and special events promotion. Each has an important role to play in building community image.

*Image promotion* should focus on increasing consumer awareness of Downtown Ozark as an attractive, identifiable place for shopping and services. This is the job of projecting the image of the community to people all over the trade area, and of keeping

them up to date as improvements are made, and as events and sales are scheduled. A useful tool may be a directory of downtown stores and services—updated often. Articles in local and regional newspapers can help, and so will word-of-mouth.

*Joint merchandising promotion* requires getting together to advertise and promote Downtown Ozark as a destination. Consumers and clients will benefit from this approach, and if they are pleased with the results they will return for more. The effect will be better activity in all downtown businesses. To be sure, every business should engage in its own promotion, for the unique nature of each is very important to the community and to potential customers and clients. However, by engaging in some joint advertising, in the same way stores in regional shopping centers are required to by their management, Downtown Ozark businesses and services will have far greater impact throughout the trade area.

*Special events* provide an opportunity to bring new people to the community. At the same time they provide an opportunity to increase sales and the chance to introduce Downtown Ozark to people from all over the trade area—and beyond. Downtown should host several special events every year, and should strive to become the preferred venue for selected citywide events. Not every special event can or should be linked to merchandise promotion. Nevertheless, all events should be used as a way to get people back into the habit of coming to downtown. The enjoyment of participating in special events can carry over into new shopping habits, and the indirect results can be an increase in business over the long run.

## DESIGN

Good design is more than just the appearance of buildings and the downtown landscape. In fact, design deals with every part of the mental image of the whole community: it affects the ways in which people think about themselves. Design deals with the way merchandise is displayed in the stores, how traffic flows through the community, and even where to park. Comfortable surroundings and a pleasing atmosphere are the result of good design of the things that make up downtown. There is no doubt that well maintained buildings, streets and parking lots, sidewalks, merchandise displays and signs, put together in accord with a plan and a palette of materials and colors, can affect the way people feel about the place. More people than ever consider shopping as recreation or entertainment in itself, and evening hours have the most potential to capitalize on this attitude. Downtown Ozark should be a nighttime place, lit in a manner that will encourage evening shopping, strolling and browsing.

The physical environment is very important to commercial success—not just the way things are built, but the way they are perceived, and not just on the street, but inside the stores as well. It is important to the image of downtown that each potential customer, client or visitor has a positive experience, from the edge of town all the way to the Square. Along the way should be pleasant experiences of driving, parking, walking and

looking—each linked closely with the design of downtown, its approaches and surroundings.

## Downtown Physical Organization

The consumer is best served when stores are clustered to minimize the aggregate effort spent to buy desired goods and services. This sense of "aggregate convenience" is one of the lost assets of most communities. At one time, Downtown Ozark was the primary retail and service business destination in Dale County—it provided the most aggregate convenience. This is no longer true, for shopping centers and strip commercial development long ago assumed that role.

### **Downtown Ozark**

#### Typical Appropriate Uses

- Residential:
  - Adjacent (horizontal)
  - Integrated (vertical)
  - Diverse type and ownership
- Retail commercial
- Office / service commercial
- Hospitality:
  - Restaurant
- Institutional/Civic

#### General Development Principles

- Positive sense of place
- Visual coherence
- Compact, dense core
- Intensive mixed use
- Civic spaces
- Pedestrian oriented
- Pedestrian accessible
- Internal vehicular circulation
- Intense center of activity
- Well-defined edges

#### General Design Guidelines

- Required build-to lines
- Street trees
- No parking lots fronting sidewalks
- No drive-ins
- Density decreases to edges

In order to combat the loss of shopping convenience that has grown through the years, Ozark must develop a dense pattern of development in and adjacent to downtown. The intent should be to replace the somewhat loose, spotty pattern of land uses—and vacant properties. The blocks adjacent to downtown will not give the impression of health and vitality so long as they remain broken up by marginal parking areas and vacant properties. Instead, Downtown Ozark needs a diverse mix of stores and services. These should be arranged in densely developed blocks, and surrounded by residential areas to help people feel that downtown is alive and well—and worthy of their support.

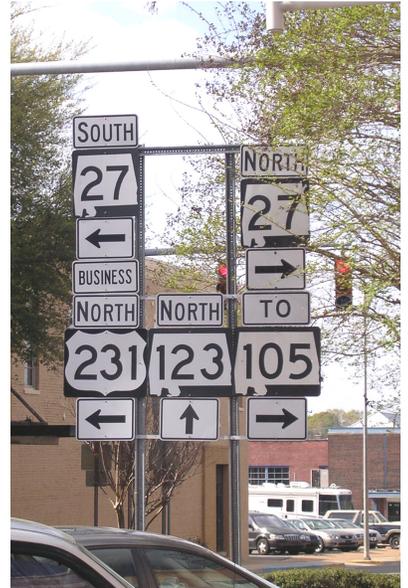
Downtown Ozark should have a concentration of retail, office and service businesses in a relatively small geographic area. Shopping goods stores should be aggregated together around and near the Square, with convenience goods and services located more toward the edges. In that way the physical structure of downtown will be conducive to comparison shopping. Downtown Ozark is of a size that most shoppers can walk around the entire area easily. However, to be successful, there must be virtually continuous ground floor retail and some key service businesses fronting the Square, while most service businesses and offices should be located either upstairs—or on the ground floor around the corner.

## Citywide Land Use and Market Interactions

The Ozark Land Use Plan promotes clustering commercial development in downtown and focused at selected locations along Highway 231 and Andrews Avenue toward downtown. There is little reason to elongate the city's commercial strips any further, or to encourage scattering business development all over town. The consumer is poorly served by such patterns, and too many scattered businesses fail for lack of support.

## Accessibility

It should be easy to find Downtown Ozark from all sides of the city. One way to enhance access is to remove both physical and psychological interruptions to travel. Prime examples include: railroad grade crossings that are jarring to the senses; any apparent lack of continuity of local streets, traffic signals that seem to delay local motorists headed toward downtown while providing no obvious benefit to others, and sharing what seem to be local streets with large, through trucks. Marking and maintenance of roadways, railroad grade crossings and traffic signals, intersections and signage—all are critical to associating pleasant experiences with a trip to downtown. Major street intersections and traffic signals should be organized and timed to favor downtown destinations rather than obstruct and frustrate the motorist trying to get to the center of the city. This requires continuing review of all traffic control systems by city and state highway officials for the impact they have on desired traffic patterns, local accessibility and the separation of local and through traffic.



Providing good access to downtown shopping opportunities should not also provide good travel time through downtown for non-local traffic. This may be difficult to accomplish, but the issue of local vs. through traffic is critical. Through travelers are seldom clients and customers of downtown businesses, and their access needs are different from those of local people. Downtown Ozark streets should be used primarily by local traffic, except for the state highways running through. Local traffic should be separated insofar as possible from through traffic, and through trucks should be kept out of downtown entirely. This may be accomplished through cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation to devise a truck routing system for the city as a whole.

Many people perceive a lack of downtown parking, when in fact there are many parking spaces that go unused most of the time. In response, downtown parking should be managed as a scarce resource—with cooperation, support and direction from city and county governments. Parking opportunities should be differentiated. That is, workers, shoppers, browsers and drop-ins should each have places to park that do not interfere with the needs of others. This simply means that shoppers, clients and other short-term users should be able to park in the core of downtown, while employees—and those who will be engaged most of the day in court—are encouraged to park generally toward the edges.



Access for service and delivery vehicles is critical for downtown—and just as important as good access for customers, clients and employees. Places to park and load or unload must be available to avoid conflicts between various users of the street system in and near downtown. This may require intersection adjustments as well as places to park a truck for such purposes as making routine deliveries or picking up trash.

## Buildings, Canopies and Streetscape

The time has come to remove the canopies from downtown storefronts. The canopies are in poor condition and some downdrains are clogged. Both are a continuing maintenance issue. The canopy lighting is in poor condition and in need of replacement. In many cases, the flashing between the canopies and buildings is failing and has caused water damage to storefronts. Further, the canopies have generally hidden the storefronts for years, and so many storefronts are in need of repair both above and below the canopy. Many buildings (and the entire street) could benefit greatly from reinvestment.

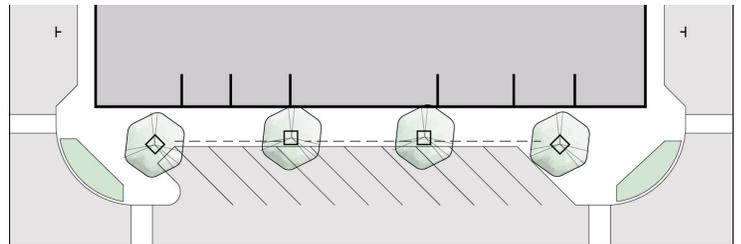
### Preservation Tax Credits

Upon designation of a historic district, owners of historic buildings can receive historic preservation tax credits for renovating their buildings. Tax credits require that building improvements meet the Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitation. Tax credit projects are eligible for 10% or 20% of the building renovation costs to be credited toward the owner's federal income tax, which can be a significant financial incentive for building rehabilitation. See Appendix D for more information.

Removing the canopies will not be simple, but the process is straightforward. Once the structure and flashing has been removed, the sidewalks may be patched and remedial repairs may be done to storefronts that have suffered water damage. There are likely some rooftops that drain to the street, and new downdrains will be required for those. New, pedestrian-scale streetlights will be needed. Buildings should be brought into conformance with the city's building maintenance standards, and some storefronts should be upgraded in accord with downtown historic district standards prepared by the Ozark Historic Commission with grant and/or loan assistance to be provided by the Downtown Redevelopment Authority. This should include installation of awnings appropriate to each storefront in accord with downtown standards.

The time has come also to remove the street trees that have been blocking the views of corner storefronts on the Square and to plant street trees selected from the Downtown Plant List in Appendix B. The key will be to remove the trees and their stumps, repair the curbs and sidewalks as needed, add tree wells along the streets and plant the trees. Once the new trees are in place, shrubs and lower plant materials should be selected from the plant list and planted in the corner landings around the Square.

Most importantly, a city landscape maintenance function should be undertaken to assure these plant materials are maintained.



## ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

The term "economic structure" refers to several important aspects of downtown's function and economy, and it is closely linked to design in many ways. For example, the potential customer, client or visitor should have a positive experience from wherever the journey began all the way to a downtown destination. And the closer one gets to the Square, the better the experience should be. In the case of a retail or service business customer, the trip would be from home to the cash register inside the downtown store—and it should all be pleasant.

To effectively compete, downtown merchants must consider: new and more appropriate economic functions and uses, how to improve the effectiveness of existing uses and their interrelationships, and ways to enhance the merchandising efforts of the community's various businesses. An effective approach to competition with other markets is needed, and that approach should build upon the inherent attractions and advantages of downtown. To repeat an earlier observation, many people prefer to shop during the evening, and that would require an adjustment in downtown store hours. Downtown merchants should reach agreement on compatible store hours. A logical and consistent pattern is highly desirable, so that consumers do not have to check the clock or calendar before visiting certain stores and service businesses.

### Business Development

Downtown employment opportunities should be diverse, with a mix of retail and non-retail jobs. Downtown office and service business space and employment should be strong to help support a local market for retail business. This should include professional, personal service and financial businesses as well as governmental offices. Market research has shown a need for more businesses in most sectors. Preliminary analysis shows that much is missing from downtown, and the local trade area in general, that would have a good potential for success.

Housing density should be relatively high, by Ozark standards, adjacent to downtown. This will help generate full-time activity downtown—more downtown population means more depth and breadth to retail and service demand in the form of walk-in trade, 24 hours a day. When people live close to where they want to work and shop, they save time and money. But, if stores and services are scattered all over the community, then efficiency will be low—and so will customer and client satisfaction—along with total sales. Vacant land close to downtown should logically be developed before the community encourages more development to spread further out from the core. Medium-density housing can be developed right next to the commercial core. And it certainly can be built on the edge of downtown without any conflict at all between residents and merchants. In fact, both will benefit by being next to one another.

Downtown Ozark needs a business development, promotion and marketing function, dedicated to downtown success, to seek out appropriate businesses for downtown. Good working relations should be established with local real estate professionals, so they contact the recruiters first when seeking downtown tenants, and the recruiters contact to the real estate professionals first when seeking a good site for a prospective business investment.

Strong promotion, design improvements and careful selection of desirable tenants to fill vacant buildings will increase downtown's business strength. However, the specific types of stores and services to be added must reflect local market demand as well as fit Downtown Ozark's character, specific location and the mix of existing businesses. Good market information can help to determine types of businesses and services that may fill out a desired mix of retail and service businesses. The key is to find existing and prospective businesses that are interested in downtown business improvement, enhancement and development.



As a part of the research conducted during the downtown revitalization planning process, a preliminary market analysis was conducted. The full results are available through the Ozark Economic Development office. Among the recommendations for expansion of retail and service business uses in downtown was to recruit businesses that appeal to the daytime business population, including courthouse visitors, and to retirees.

**Businesses that appeal to daytime business population and courthouse visitors**

- Breakfast café, coffee shop, lunch restaurant, dinner pick-up
- Lunchtime or after work shopping (pharmacy; gifts and home furnishings; clothing; women's accessories; books and greeting cards)
- Personal services (fitness center, day spa)
- Business support (office furniture, equipment, and supplies; repair and office maintenance services; computer and electronics service and repair; interior design services; and advertising and marketing)

**Businesses that appeal to retirees**

- Breakfast café, coffee shop, inexpensive lunch restaurant
- Sporting goods and accessories; hobby/bicycle shop; specialty clothing
- Office supply
- Fitness center
- Medical offices and support services (doctor, dentist, pharmacy)
- Museums, galleries, antiques stores, book stores

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Everything the community has should be put to work in support of downtown revitalization—every power and every effort. And this should apply all over the city, for simply because symptoms of decline have appeared downtown does not necessarily mean all the causes of those problems are located downtown. Ozark will continually find that creative solutions to downtown problems may be found all over town, and that community connections are needed to deal with them effectively.

The most likely community connection that will support, encourage and enhance downtown revitalization is the city's annual budget process. Local tax dollars should help carry out plans for revitalization—or at least not interfere with them. In addition to investing tax money wisely in support of downtown revitalization, local government should put its legislative and administrative tools to work. These should especially include the zoning ordinance, building code, historic preservation regulations, property maintenance requirements and sign regulations. In fact, all city and county regulations should fully recognize and attempt to deal creatively with the unique issues and opportunities of Downtown Ozark.

Administrative solutions may be as simple as coordinating parking time limits in accord with the guidelines included in the plan, or perhaps coordinating commercial trash collection times with reasonable regulations as to when it may be placed at the curb and how quickly thereafter the containers must be removed from the street. Consistent enforcement of all ordinances and regulations is essential so that a few people are not able to shift part of their cost of doing business to the community at large. Local government and the Alabama Department of Transportation should cooperate regarding access management and appropriate redesign, construction and maintenance of state routes through and adjacent to the heart of the community.

To be effective in carrying out this plan for downtown, Ozark must establish an Ozark Historic Commission under the enabling statutes of the State of Alabama.

- *Adopt a local historic district ordinance to include architectural review*
- *Designate a downtown historic district*
- *Designate one or more residential historic districts*
- *Appoint the Ozark Historic Commission*
- *Prepare and adopt residential district design standards*
- *Prepare and adopt downtown district design standards*
- *Establish a downtown building code and design standards enforcement program*

### **Historic Property Tax Reduction**

Upon designation of a historic district, owners of contributing, income-producing buildings, such as those used for business or residential rental, are automatically entitled to a property tax reduction, in which the income-producing property is reassessed at the rate of residential (non-income-producing) property. This amounts to a significant property tax savings for owners of historic buildings that have been adequately preserved or restored. See Appendix D for more information.

The Ozark Zoning Ordinance is a regulatory device to help carry out the city's comprehensive plan. As such, its language supports downtown revitalization as envisioned in this plan. The zoning ordinance is focused on helping to make downtown accessible to shoppers by helping to encourage appropriate new development close to downtown and by encouraging efficient use of land and the existing street system. Nevertheless, the city should always be vigilant to assure that the zoning ordinance and building code do not prevent creative, adaptive or mixed use of underused downtown property and buildings.

The City Council should adopt the ICC Existing Building Code and ICC Building Maintenance Standards, and prepare and adopt Downtown Design Standards to augment the commercial building standards of the Ozark Historic Commission. Most importantly, all building/maintenance codes should be enforced on a routine basis all over downtown to assure the safety and character of downtown buildings.

Ozark has vacant and underutilized commercial property and buildings downtown adequate to absorb new commercial growth for at least the next few years. There is very little need to extend local commerce further out from the core except to provide commercial clusters at critical intersections in accord with the city's Land Use Plan. The Ozark Zoning Ordinance permits mixed-use, commercial and residential development downtown. The ordinance expressly authorizes ground floor retail uses along with upper floor office and services uses and/or multi-family residential uses. This could help concentrate more businesses and people in the downtown area. It may also be used to encourage a diverse mix of businesses to locate there. By authorizing more complete and more compatible upper floor commercial, office, and residential uses, the city has already enabled building owners to justify the expense of restoring an entire building to make it more compatible with the character of downtown.

## IV. CONCLUSION

This is a long-range plan (after all, Downtown Ozark took years to get into its present conditions). Change will not occur overnight, regardless of how hard everyone may wish it so. Hence, this plan does not propose or provide “quick fix” solutions, nor should the plan be viewed simply as a platform for historic preservation or retail development of downtown. Rather, this Downtown Plan is intended to strengthen, revitalize and optimize all aspects of life in Ozark over the long term by enriching the core of the city. As such, the plan must remain a living document—just like the other parts of the city’s Comprehensive Plan—able to grow and change as conditions change. To do so, it must be updated and amended on a regular basis.

Plan implementation will take time and goodwill on the part of downtown’s many constituents or “stakeholders.” Ozark as a community must strive to get even more people interested and involved in setting and implementing the vision for a revitalized city core. City government must continue to gather others, public agencies and private organizations and citizens, onto the same team. City officials must continue to prioritize and take direct action on various recommendations of this plan by investing local tax dollars. Further, city officials must help shape the action of others with not just more regulation, but effective regulation. The Downtown Redevelopment Authority must be willing to provide selected incentives to encourage others to take the lead in activities that would further implementation of the plan. And finally, everyone in the community must strive to lend every power they have to support plan implementation.

The Downtown Plan is intended to evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and changes in market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment can the plan fully serve Ozark, and only then can the community use it fully and creatively as they seek to “take back Downtown Ozark.”



# APPENDIX A: TOWN MEETING NOTES

## ASSETS

- Infrastructure
- Historic buildings
- Parks and recreation nearby
- Civic center nearby
- County seat
- The Square
- Medical offices

## ISSUES

- Parking facilities
- Parking management
- County parking
- Vacant buildings
- Buildings in disrepair
- Covered building facades
- Parking on sidewalks
- Street furnishings
- Private property conditions
- Underutilized buildings
- Vacant lots
- Canopies
- Canopy maintenance
- Public works facility
- Pedestrian signals

## MISSING FROM LOCAL VISIONS FOR DOWNTOWN OZARK

- More people / residents
- Pedestrian traffic
- Good restaurants
- Nights /weekend activity
- Parking /lighting
- Farmers' market
- Business loyalty
- Public revitalization fund
- Rehabilitated buildings
- Occupied buildings
- Vacant lots filled in
- Local historic districts
- Awnings replacing canopies
- Downtown housing
- Charm and character



## APPENDIX B: DOWNTOWN PLANT LIST

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>
Trees for downtown streets	
*Trident Maple (1)	<i>Acer buergeranum</i>
Red Maple (1)	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
Thornless Honeylocust (1)	<i>Gleditsia tricanthos</i> var. <i>inermis</i>
Willow Oak (1)	<i>Quercus phellos</i>
Shumard Oak	<i>Quercus shumardii</i>
Nuttal Oak	<i>Quercus texana</i>
*Chinese Elm (1)	<i>Ulmus parvifolia</i> ‘Drake, Allee, Dynasty’
*Zelkova (1)	<i>Zelkova serrata</i>
Ornamental Trees—not for street installation	
Japanese Maple	<i>Acer palmatum</i>
Flowering Dogwood	<i>Cornus florida</i>
*Crape Myrtle	<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>
*Flowering Crabapple	<i>Malus hybrida</i>
*Chinese Pistache	<i>Pistacia chinensis</i>
Yoshino Cherry	<i>Prunus Yeodensis</i>
*Halesia tetraptera ‘Halesia Carolina’	<i>Carolina Silverbell</i>
*Cercis Canadensis	<i>Eastern Redbud</i>
Evergreen Trees—not for street installation	
Savannah Holly (3)	<i>Ilex attenuata</i> ‘Savannah’
Burford Holly (tree form)	<i>Ilex cornuta</i> ‘Burfordii’
Evergreen Shrubs	
Japanese Boxwood	<i>Buxus microphylla japonica</i>
Japanese Holly	<i>Ilex crenata</i> ‘Convexa’
Littleleaf Japanese Holly	<i>Ilex crenata</i> ‘Microphylla’
Roundleaf Japanese Holly	<i>Ilex crenata</i> ‘Rotundifolia’
Flowering Jasmine	<i>Jasminum floridum</i>
Nandina	<i>Nandina domestica</i>
Zabel Laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> ‘Zabeliana’
Parsons Juniper	<i>Juniperus compacta</i> ‘Parsons’
Azalea	<i>Azalea</i> white Encore varieties

## Deciduous Shrubs

Barberry	<i>Berberis x mentorensis</i>
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster divaricatus</i>
Spiraea	<i>Spiraea cantoniensis</i>
Lantana	<i>Lantana 'Gold Mound'</i>

## Grasses

Pampas Grass	<i>Cortaderia selloana</i>
Fountain Grass	<i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i>
Japanese Blood Grass	<i>Imperata</i>

\*Note: trees suitable for planting underneath power lines or other locations where tree height may pose a problem.

## Suggestions and Planting Details

1. Remove majority of dwarf yaupon holly – replace with shrubs from the list, appropriate to their proposed locations, or with groundcover and annuals
2. Create a planting plan for the designated area, using two or three species from each category and repeating them throughout all planting areas. The plan can be designed to provide unity for the area and or provide unique planting arrangements to highlight different spaces throughout Ozark.
3. Install evenly spaced tree wells along the sidewalks facing the Square (4-5 trees per block face, including those at corners), between the sidewalk and curb. Existing sidewalk width should be adequate, if canopies are removed, without encroaching into on-street parking.
4. Intersection landscape islands:
  - *Leave all plantings intact, but prune perennials down and trees up*
  - *Remove Live Oaks and replace with a coordinated street tree plan and species.*
  - *Remove all distressed or damaged plant material. Remove all plant materials that are inappropriately scaled and impact sight distance and view sheds; replace with grasses or shrubs on list or plant groundcover possibly with annuals.*
  - *Remove all plantings and replace with an approved planting plan and species.*
5. Design drainage and landscape areas to capture and filter stormwater run-off.

## APPENDIX C: STOREFRONT DESIGN NOTES

Storefront design in downtown should be based on traditional commercial building design principles. The traditional commercial building was composed of three parts: a top, middle, and a storefront at the bottom. Regardless of the height of the building, all these were in place. Downtown buildings were visually related to one another, because they were composed of these similar parts. They fit well together, even though they were different sizes and were built over a period of time. Although styles tended to change, the proportions remained about the same. The first and best source of specific information is the building itself, while old photographs may provide more clues. The following are storefront design guidelines, adapted from suggestions of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, for smaller downtown resources and buildings. Each of the ideas is founded in the design of the traditional storefront. However, the guidelines are not purely historical in nature. They are meant to be functional and practical as well as traditional. The intent is to make downtown storefronts more attractive and accessible to shoppers and clients.

*Contain the storefront.* Stay within the original opening and do not extend beyond it. In fact, rather than extend out beyond the building front, the entire storefront might be set back slightly—perhaps six inches—from the pillars on each side.

*Use appropriate materials.* The color and texture of the storefront should be simple and unobtrusive. The frame can be wood, cast iron or anodized aluminum. The display windows should be of clear glass, white transom windows can be of clear, tinted or stained glass. The entrance door should have a large glass panel and may be made of wood, steel or aluminum. The bulkheads below the display windows can be wood panels, polished stone, glass, tile or aluminum-clad plywood panels. The storefront cornice can be made of wood, cast iron, or sheet metal or sometimes the horizontal supporting beam can serve as the storefront cap. The side piers should be the same material as the upper façade, or stuccoed and painted to look the same. Certain materials and design elements should never be used on a traditional storefront: mansard roofs with wooden shingles, rough textured wood siding, fake bricks or stone and gravel aggregate materials head the list. Inappropriate historical themes should also be avoided: small window panes, colonial doors and storefront shutters are 18<sup>th</sup> Century elements that do not belong on the 20<sup>th</sup> Century buildings of Ozark.

*Keep the storefront simple.* The emphasis should be on transparency. The basic design should include: large display windows with thin framing, a slightly recessed entrance, a cornice or a horizontal sign panel at the top of the storefront to separate it from the upper façade, a cornice or other appropriate cap to define the building top, and low bulkheads at the base to protect the windows and define the entrance.

Many of the above guidelines for façade rehabilitation can be implemented through some simple steps when a building's original storefront is largely in place, or perhaps hiding behind some aluminum or other inappropriate covering. These steps include:

- *Remove metal cladding from the façade.*
- *Remove metal awnings and canopies*
- *Remove decals and paper signs from windows*
- *Replace broken glass.*
- *Carefully clean or paint brick as appropriate; do not sandblast to remove paint*
- *Repoint brick mortar joints*
- *Repair or replace wood doors, sash and trim to match existing materials and design as closely as possible.*
- *Remove excess and out of character signs and replace with signs or appropriate character and proportion.*
- *Add color to storefronts by painting sash, trim, doors, cornice and awnings in appropriate accenting colors selected from an overall downtown color palette.*
- *Install shutters or black plywood panels behind glass in unoccupied second floor windows.*
- *Install individual canvas awnings.*
- *Install accent lights in showcases and entrance soffits to highlight both merchandise and storefront.*

# APPENDIX D: PRESERVATION TAX INCENTIVES

## Alabama Property Tax Reduction

- Buildings that are A) determined by the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) as eligible for listing in the National Register; B) individually listed in the National Register; or C) listed as contributing to a National Register historic district may be assessed at 10% of the assessed value for ad valorem tax purposes. This benefits owners of historic properties used for commercial purposes.
- For application of property tax reduction, submit the Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 – Evaluation of Significance, complete with map and photos, to the AHC.
- Upon receipt of a complete application, AHC staff review documentation and process the application within 30 calendar days.
- Applications for properties within National Register historic districts will be forwarded to the National Park Service for certification. AHC staff will review all other applications. The NPS certification or AHC letter may be presented to the county tax assessor for reassessment of the property.
- This incentive is referenced as the Wallace Property Relief Constitutional Amendment (“Lid Bill”) Code of Alabama 40-8-1 Section 2.

## Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits

### **20% Rehabilitation Tax Credit**

- Available for Certified Rehabilitations of income-producing historic buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Amounts to 20% of the total eligible rehabilitation expenditures and can be applied to federal income tax owed by the property owner.
- Certified Rehabilitations meet the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Rehabilitation* and are approved by the National Park Service as being consistent with the historic character of the property.
- Rehabilitation expenditures must exceed the greater of \$5,000 or adjusted basis of the building. The adjusted basis is the purchase price of the building, minus the value of the land, plus improvements, minus depreciation.
- The three-part application process must be initiated before the rehabilitation project begins. Contact the Alabama Historical Commission for guidance with the application and rehabilitation process. The National Park Service reviews applications and issues official Certification decisions.
- The tax credit may be taken in the year the rehabilitated building is placed in service or when the building has been substantially rehabilitated.

- The owner must own the building for five years after completing the rehabilitation, and any work on the building within five years must be approved by the NPS beforehand, or the credits can be recaptured.

### **10% Rehabilitation Tax Credit for Non-Historic Buildings**

- Available for rehabilitations of income-producing non-historic buildings built before 1936 (non-residential use). The 10% tax credit is available for pre-1936 buildings that are not listed in the National Register or that are non-contributing in registered historic districts because of major alterations.
- Rehabilitation expenditures must exceed the greater of \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building.
- The three-part application process is not required for the 10% credit UNLESS the building is located in a National Register district. In that case, a Part 1 application must be submitted to certify that the building does not contribute to the registered historic district. Even though there is no formal review of the project work, the building must meet a specific physical test for retention of exterior and interior walls, and it is recommended that work follow the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*.
- Whether the 10% credit or the 20% credit applies to a project depends on the building, not the owner's preference.

For more information on Historic Preservation Tax Credits:

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm>

You may also contact the Alabama Historical Commission for more information:

468 South Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900  
(334) 242-3184

<http://www.preserveala.org>

## APPENDIX E: IMPLEMENTATION AGENDA

- Create Downtown Redevelopment Authority
- Establish a Downtown Promotion Committee
- Establish a Downtown Design Committee and subcommittees
- Establish a Downtown Business Restructuring Committee
- Prepare a Downtown Redevelopment work program and budget
- Develop benchmark information to assess progress
- Join the National Main Street Network
- Develop a downtown marketing campaign
- Develop a joint advertising program for downtown businesses
- Coordinate downtown business hours
- Install downtown / historic district signage on US 231
- Program regular downtown weekday events
- Program recurring community special events downtown
- Adopt a downtown historic preservation ordinance
- Designate a downtown historic district
- Prepare and adopt downtown historic district design standards
- Designate one or more residential historic districts
- Prepare and adopt residential historic district design standards
- Appoint a Historic Preservation Commission
- Adopt the ICC Existing Building Code
- Apply for SAFETEA funding for streetscape improvements
- Develop a downtown streetscape improvement plan
- Improve the downtown maintenance program
- Include downtown capital improvements and maintenance in the city budget
- Develop funding assistance program for building rehabilitation
- Develop a citywide truck route plan and program
- Remove the canopies from storefronts throughout downtown
- Improve streetscapes along Broad and Union
- Repair and extend sidewalks to connect to nearby neighborhoods
- Conduct a downtown parking study
- Develop and implement a downtown parking management plan and program
- Improve public parking lots and landscaping
- Improve public parking wayfinding signage
- Acquire abandoned railroad rights of way
- Coordinate garbage collection times and locations
- Designate secondary loading zones as needed



