

Downtown Wentzville: Revitalization And Its Effect On Economic Development

Wentzville, Missouri, is located in the St. Louis metropolitan area and has the distinction of being one of the fastest-growing cities in the state of Missouri. New residential, commercial and industrial growth is occurring throughout the community. Commercial development has been concentrated along Wentzville Parkway, with industrial growth along Highway A. Both roadways are major thoroughfares that provide ready-access to Interstate 70 and Highway 61. Even with this growth, local elected officials and city staff are committed to keeping historic downtown Wentzville viable as a business district. This is the story about the programs and improvements that have been implemented to help historic downtown Wentzville thrive.

Research, Strategy And Branding

There are far too many examples about how the downtown core of a community has deteriorated, while other areas of the community flourished. Wentzville officials did not want to see that situation occur within the City. The first step toward the enhancement of historic downtown Wentzville involved the completion of a downtown revitalization study (DRS). The DRS was completed by a consultant team in 2009. This study formed the basis for a future vision of what the downtown area could achieve. The study continues to serve as an



The Caboose, home to the Wentzville Community Historical Society, also features a lending library.

ongoing useful tool to help maintain focus, provide direction and establish a united approach.

Since the adoption of the DRS in 2009, with an amendatory supplement in 2016, the City has worked on strategies to help achieve the vision conveyed in that study. New zoning districts were established to create a Village Center. These zoning districts provided flexibility to allow and encourage a mixed-use approach in downtown development. The flexibility

within these regulations also allowed reduced setbacks and, in some cases, reduced or eliminated the need for on-site parking. To compensate for this potential lack of on-site parking, the City successfully negotiated an agreement with Norfolk Southern Railway to utilize a portion of railroad right-of-way for parking. The City constructed public parking spaces and purchased property or negotiated leases to create additional public parking in the downtown area.

In a branding and marketing effort, the Wentzville Downtown Business Association created a train-themed logo design that has subsequently been used in various promotional materials. The zoning district titles were changed from Village Center to Historic Downtown to coincide with this private marketing approach. The City purchased banners reflecting this new title and logo and placed them throughout Historic Downtown Wentzville. As a side note, the train-theme is a central element in the community. The town was formed along the train tracks that remain an integral part of the community even today.

Infrastructure Improvements

Perhaps the biggest impact in the downtown area has been an investment in infrastructure. The City initially replaced older utility lines located in downtown with new up-sized lines. Once the utility lines

2019 Public Sector Risk Briefings and Advisory Webinars

Register at brownsmithwallace.com/events-public

Q1 Effective Entity-Level Internal Controls

St. Charles 3.7.19
St. Louis 3.8.19
Webinar 3.13.19



Q2 Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities

St. Charles 6.13.19
St. Louis 6.14.19
Webinar 6.19.19



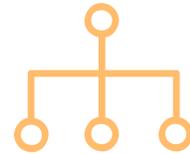
Q3 Using Data to Monitor Fraud Risks

St. Charles 9.12.19
St. Louis 9.13.19
Webinar 9.18.19



Q4 Strategic Process Improvement

St. Charles 12.12.19
St. Louis 12.13.19
Webinar 12.18.19



were replaced, the roadways over these utilities were reconstructed. The reconstructed roadways were consistent with the adopted DRS. The roads included enhancements such as exposed-aggregate sidewalks, benches, landscaping, vintage light fixtures and concrete pavement that is expected to last well into the future.

A total of \$8 million was recently set-aside by the mayor and board of aldermen to make further roadway improvements, consistent with the DRS, and based upon input provided by the community. These improvements are part of the Historic Downtown Transportation Revitalization Project. Funds will be used over the next few years to upgrade and enhance two of the major roadways in the downtown area, Pearce Boulevard and Allen Street. Pearce Boulevard was the original U.S. Highway 40 prior to the construction of Interstate 70. Allen Street was named after the founder of Wentzville, William

M. Allen, and this road parallels the railroad tracks, the original City hub.

Façade Improvements And Historic Preservation

To encourage rehabilitation in downtown, the city of Wentzville established a Façade Improvement Grant Program. This program provides a 50/50 matching grant of up to \$10,000 to make improvements to nonresidential structures that are at least 50 years old. A number of businesses in the downtown area have taken advantage of this program. Improvements include new roofing, tuckpointing, doors, windows and similar treatments.

The City also established a downtown committee. One of the purposes of the committee is, "To provide continuity regarding the focus of economic development and historic preservation of the Wentzville downtown district, when transitions occur in the leadership

of city of Wentzville staff and on the board of aldermen."

This purpose intimately links economic development and historic preservation together. To this end, the city of Wentzville became a Certified Local Government through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources in 2016. This program is administered by MoDNR's State Historic Preservation Office and implements preservation at the local level through the completion of requirements tailored to meet the needs of the community. The City was also successful in obtaining a 60-40 percent matching grant through MoDNR. These grant funds were used to undertake a reconnaissance level architectural survey of historical downtown Wentzville. The study was completed in 2018 and will be used in the future as a basis to support additional historic preservation efforts.

The City has also developed design guidelines that are being used in

businesses for new construction or rehabilitation efforts. These guidelines are intended to give the downtown area a “historic” look and feel, while still utilizing modern materials and construction techniques.

In 2016, the City started a mural program in the downtown area to give the community a better sense of its historic heritage. To date, murals approved and placed include: a representation of some of the historic buildings; a depiction of a Civil War battle that occurred in the community; a tribute to the area’s tobacco-growing industry of the past; and a commemoration of a picnic flier from the turn of the century.

Promoting Economic Development

So how has the private sector responded to the City’s efforts to revitalize historic downtown Wentzville? Here is the rest of the story.

The proactive approach taken by

the city of Wentzville in supporting its downtown has resulted in a variety of positive responses from the private sector. A number of new businesses have located in historic downtown Wentzville over the last few years. Vacancy is at an all-time low.

Several new restaurants have opened in the downtown area. These restaurants include Yo! Salsa, Old Town Smokehouse, Duke’s BBQ, the Wentzville Family Diner and Captain D’s. A microbrewery, Friendship Brewing Company, has been very successful and well-received by the community. Another microbrewery, Exit 6, was recently approved by the board of aldermen. This restaurant and microbrewery will open in 2019 in the former fire district headquarters on Pearce Boulevard. It is believed that the synergy created by having several new restaurants and two microbreweries will continue to bring new customers and pedestrian traffic to downtown. Other unique businesses such as Ellbee’s

General Store, Not Jaded Boutique and Irish Eyes Photography contribute to additional interest in historic downtown Wentzville.

Various nonprofit organizations have also responded to this emphasis on downtown. The Crossroads Arts Council has been responsible for the murals previously mentioned. The Wentzville Community Historical Society has established an old caboose as a community gathering space. The caboose area also includes a free lending library. Two of the Historical Society members co-authored the *Images of America – Wentzville* book (available online). The Wentzville Downtown Business Association has been involved in several downtown events. They are also leading the effort, along with the American Legion and VFW, to reestablish a WWI/WWII Memorial Honor Roll. The Rotary Club and Wentzville Community Club have also made positive contributions in the downtown area.

Put your city on the fast track.

Better serve the community by upgrading your infrastructure with a progressive design-build approach, where early team integration leads to cost certainty and speed to market. Read more about our passion for efficient project delivery at burnsmcd.com/CityUpgrade.



BURNS MCDONNELL

CREATE AMAZING.

Only one large tract remains to be developed in downtown. This 1.5-acre tract along Pearce Boulevard is being actively marketed and there has been recent interest in its utilization.

The future of Historic Downtown Wentzville appears bright. The proactive efforts made by the leadership of the city of Wentzville have been met by the private sector in promoting economic development. The Historic Downtown area, and its recent success, is a testament to what can be achieved when municipal government and the private sector work toward a common goal. 🍃



Wentzville City Hall

Dan R. Lang is the director of economic development for the city of Wentzville. He is certified as a Professional Community and Economic Developer with the Community Development Council and a Business Retention and Expansion Coordinator with Business Retention and Expansion International.

Wentzville. She has more than 18 years of professional marketing and communications experience, including 11 years in municipal government. Learn more about the City at www.wentzvillemo.org.

Kara Roberson serves as the communications manager for the city of

NOMINATE YOUR Hero

RETIRE.MOLAGERS.ORG/LGH

Nominate your favorite LAGERS public servant for our Local Government Hero Award.

LAGERS members embody the best of local government service, and we want to celebrate how important that is to our Missouri communities.



NOMINATE YOUR HERO TODAY!



molagers.org 