

Downtown Development Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Commercial Development workshop was conducted in September at Bichelmeyer's Steak House Annex in September 2008 as a fast-paced, interactive process of defining critical issues and detailing options for Tonganoxie's Downtown. The issues and opportunities facing Downtown were presented and discussed in the context of near-term and long-term development of the Tonganoxie Community. It was facilitated by the project consultant for Tonganoxie citizens, community officials, business owners, employees, and stakeholders.

For the purpose of the workshop the Downtown was defined as an area two blocks north and south of 4th Street from 24/40 Highway to Pleasant Street.

Participants were led through three workshop components:

- a) Summary of the communitywide opinion survey, focusing on Downtown issues,
- b) *Visual Preference Evaluation* of development options was conducted with the committee to identify design options most appropriate for Tonganoxie in five categories:
 - Gateways,
 - Sitting/Gathering Areas,
 - Downtown Streetscape,
 - Directional Signage, and
 - Public Art.
- c) Workshop with workbooks that asked specific questions about Downtown issues.



Downtown Commercial Development Workshop



Proposed improvements to the Downtown

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Downtown's small town atmosphere



An example of a property at the US 24/40 Highway and 4th Street intersection gateway to the city that needs to be improved

Discussed during the workshop were issues that ranged from:

- Niche strength of Downtown commercial businesses;
- What Tonganoxie can do to attract visitors to Downtown, such as from the county fair;
- Wayfinding signage to help direct visitors to downtown and through town;
- Tonganoxie's character, visual integrity, and "small city ambience" and what that means as a "quality Downtown;"
- Downtown Tonganoxie's image or brand;
- What visitors say as they drive through the city or visit the Downtown, specifically, what would they say about the intersection of 4th Street and 24/40 Highway as a main entrance to Downtown;
- Downtown as an attraction for "day-trippers" looking for an interesting location, then returning home that same day;
- What impact (challenge/opportunity) the KTA interchange at County Road 1 may create for the Downtown;
- How a public gathering space and greenspace could add to the vitality of Tonganoxie's Downtown;
- What streetscape improvements can be made to beautify downtown; and
- How to improve the appearance of the 4th Street intersection with 24/40 Highway.

The working groups—attended by more than 30 local participants, including numerous owners of Downtown properties—used workbooks, an area map, aerial photo, markers and other tools necessary to record preferences, goals, objectives, actions, and strategies for addressing these issues.

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Downtown Business District Organization

The chamber supports several multi-day events, the largest of which is a Tonganoxie Days celebration in June and Rodeo. There is interest in a stronger Chamber presence in both the downtown and along the highways.

Strategy: Create a Downtown Business District Organization

- Should be a separate organization from the Chamber and the City or an arm of the chamber
- Should partner with the City to provide enhancements and promotional efforts
- Should coordinate cross promotional activities with the highway businesses and other community organizations...



Below: Simple improvements such as awnings can contribute to the design cohesiveness of the downtown.



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Strategy: Develop Tonganoxie as a day-trip destination place.

- Weston, MO, Council Grove, KS and Atchison, KS are good examples.
- It is the right distance—not too far or too close from metropolitan areas, and can combine with other day trip sites, such as Fort Leavenworth; even the Legends, or the hill country/Perry Lake above Lawrence.
- Downtown would be the heart of the attraction.

Streetscape Improvements

The City should initiate projects to build on its successes in beautifying Downtown. Past efforts have been well received.

- Whenever possible, interesting “vias” (walkway connections between buildings) from 4th Street to parking areas or civic plaza spaces behind the buildings should be created.
- Benches and hardscape are needed in Downtown to create a more pedestrian friendly and inviting destination for customers.
- Small spaces should be provided to create “surprises and unique things around the corner” for people to discover when walking.
- More green space and open space Downtown would make it more inviting as would more trees and water. The water park will help create activity in the area. There is no community center, and should be considered.



Ornamental trees used in urban streetscape



Thematic use of color in design

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Strategy: Create an area(s) for downtown park / civic plaza

- A larger community civic park/plaza space should be built downtown—particularly something usable for a farmers market, festival, band, outdoor theater, etc.

Strategy: Improve the streetscape along the north-south connecting streets in the HBD

- Consider improving streetscape from 4th Street to 3rd Street
- Provide bicycle facilities (racks)

Strategy: Extend a streetscape theme from the HBD along both entrance corridors from US 24/40 Hwy

- Complete the 4th St streetscape west to US 24-40 Hwy
- Complete a Main Street streetscape from 4th Street to US 24-40 Hwy
- At a minimum, the decorative streetlights should be installed the full length of both corridors from the highway to the HBD to create a visual loop from the highway

Downtown Mobility

The City and its Downtown partners should enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to and through downtown.

- The “wayfinding” needs are clear and must be focused along 4th Street, U.S. Highway 24/40, CR1, and CR5.
- Historic signage theme, e.g. Interpret Chief Tonganoxie history as a record of American history expansion and Native Americans. East coast—to Midwest—to Great Plains, all personified in the chief, his grandfather and father.

Chapter 4 Downtown Development Plan

Strategy: by improving neighborhood sidewalks along all north-south connecting streets to 4th Street

- The number of blocks may vary, but should be several blocks in both directions north and south of 4th St.
- Main St.
- Delaware St.
- Bury St.
- Green St.
- Shawnee St.
- Church St. (Improve south to Washington Street). This Church St. improvement is in the City CIP and identified by the SRTS plan.

Strategy: Extend a trail from Chieftain Park to 4th Street (east of Pleasant St and the Fire Station) and complete the loop to 4th St.

- This trail loop should extend south from Chieftain Park, generally along the unused River St. alignment) and connect to the 4th Street improvements in an area east the Fire Station. The trail should connect west along 4th Street to Main Street.

Strategy: Improve the Intersection of US 24/40 Highway at 4th Street

- Conduct a design Charrette similar to Mission's Johnson Drive Signature Park
- Acquire properties
- Coordinate with KDOT on future highway plans

Strategy: Redevelop the properties along 4th Street between US 24/40 Highway and Church Street

- Acquire Properties (at least the ½ block fronting onto 4th St)
- Create a redevelopment district
- This should be tied in with redevelopment / enhancement of the highway intersection.



Fourth Street from US 24/40 Hwy to Church Street

Strategy: Implement Citywide Wayfinding Signage

- Related to directional signage to downtown, one group suggested the following key locations (with other possible locations to be determined by additional study): US 24/40 Highway intersections at Main St. and 4th St.; Pleasant St intersections at 4th St. and Washington St.; Main St / 4th St. intersection; various locations along 4th St.
- (the group felt a comprehensive citywide wayfinding signage system should be developed to identify all major points of interest

Strategy: Develop a Public Art Program and install permanent and temporary works of art in community spaces.

- Build on the city's history
- Integrate water features

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VISUAL PREFERENCES SURVEY SUMMARY

September 2008

Design Preferences

A visual preference evaluation was conducted with the committee to identify design options most appropriate for Tonganoxie. **The following summary of the most preferred images indicates values and preferences of the Tonganoxie community in each category:**

- Gateways
- Sitting/Gathering Areas
- Downtown Streetscape
- Directional Signage, and
- Public Art.



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Preferred Image



Committee Comments

Gateways:

The preferred Gateway image represents a substantial presence that will be readily visible and identifiable from vehicles. It clearly indicates that you are entering a special area or district. In addition, the sitting area will be attractive to pedestrians. Additional color could be provided by plants that change color in the fall. The coordination of the different elements (light fixtures, street lights, sidewalks, etc.) all contribute to a positive, cohesive image for an entrance into the downtown area.

Sitting/Gathering Areas:

There is a richness of this setting due to the combination of landscaping, brick pavers, benches and the store fronts with colorful awnings. This image reflects a warm inviting space for sitting and relaxing. The shade and landscaping are "people" friendly and will draw people into a more intimate setting. It is easy to visualize many people utilizing this area for multiple activities ranging from reading to eating to resting before continued shopping.

Downtown Streetscape:

This image conveys a satisfying richness of color while not being overly designed or constructed. Its simple and practical design reflects a softened and inviting aspect of a commercial area. There are ample opportunities to sit without intruding on the pedestrian way. There is sufficient detail in the pavers, benches, landscaping, etc. to add visual interest without being cluttered.

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Directional Signage:

This particular design was seen to reflect several aspects needed in directional or way finding signs. Its clear and straightforward language is easy to read from either the street or the sidewalk. The somewhat non-traditional fonts and logo along with the distinctive color help display the necessary information to local sites. It exhibits a well designed local flavor without being seen as institutional.



Public Art:

The general opinion about public art was that it should be more representational than abstract. This particular image reflects the traditional family values of Tonganoxie residents. Its size relates well to the pedestrian environment and could be located in the sidewalk area without impacting the pedestrian flow.



Retail-Commercial Development Plan