



For Immediate Release
April 23, 2018
Megan Morris
Secretary, Historic River District
417-861-1831 HistoricRiverDistrict@gmail.com

New nonprofit seeks input for developing the vision of Downtown Ozark's future.

Ozark, MO – The Historic River District (HRD) is a community-led nonprofit that was established last year to guide revitalization work in the Downtown Ozark area. The HRD represents a broadened footprint for downtown that encompasses not only the historic square, but also a significant portion of the Finley River. The newly established group is focused on launching projects that will promote the area's unique assets, including the important connection of the historic square to the Finley River. The formation of the HRD was spurred by a grant sponsored, in part, by the city of Ozark. The grant supports organizational development and board training, which most recently included the board's participation in the National Main Street Conference in Kansas City. "With all that is going on in Ozark, from the restoration of the mill to the rapid growth the area has seen in recent years, we thought a Main Street organization would serve as a great bridge between the community and the municipality. We hope that the Historic River District will foster community engagement and spearhead projects that might be outside of what the city can do." Steve Childers, City Administrator for the City of Ozark.

Local Main Street History

This is not the first time that Downtown Ozark has reaped the benefits of the work of a Main Street organization. A group of Ozark individuals came together in 2000 to pioneer preservation and economic redevelopment efforts. Working in partnership with the City of Ozark, the original Main Street organization spearheaded infrastructure improvements that included historic building restoration, redesigned sidewalks, and streetscape improvements. They worked to obtain National Historic District designation of the courthouse square and sponsored events such as art walks and farmers markets, all in an effort to bring social and economic vitality back to the historic square. They laid the foundation for this new Main Street group, and many of the original board members are advisors to the new organization.



The east side of Ozark's historic square before and after the work of the original Ozark Main Street organization.



An example of redesigned sidewalks, façade improvements, and landscaping in Downtown Ozark.

About Main Street

There are Main Street organizations in more than 1200 communities across the country. Collectively, these groups have preserved 276,790 historic buildings and spurred \$74.73 million in investments in downtown areas. The average return on investment in Main Street organizations is \$26.43 for every \$1 donated. Main Street has a Four-Point Approach to Revitalization: organization, design, economic vitality, and promotion. “The Main Street model is proven to be successful. It works. The Four-Point Approach ensures that we look at the whole picture of our community, and Main Street principles rely on community members and local businesses to drive decisions and volunteers to make things happen.” – Brad Jackson, President of the Historic River District.



Members of the Historic River District Board and Advisory Board at the Main Street Now Conference in Kansas City (March 2018).

Community Input

Last October, the Historic River District held a community meeting at the Ozark Mill to serve as an introduction to the Main Street approach. Close to 100 community members attended and shared their visions for the future of the area. Some of their ideas included bringing a farmer's market back downtown, expanding the city's biking and pedestrian trails and creating a visual connection between the square and 3rd street (neighboring road corridor with heavy traffic).



Ozark residents gather at initial community meeting at the Mill last October.

The success of the Historic River District is dependent upon the involvement of volunteers and residents within the community to plan events, support and recruit local businesses, raise funds, and complete design projects. The group is now looking for input on the long-term vision for Ozark's downtown and is seeking individuals to join committees that will bring ideas to fruition. Anyone interested in making an impact in downtown Ozark is invited to attend a kickoff meeting on Tuesday, May 1st at 6:30 pm at the Ozark Community Center (OC).

The HRD is looking for input not only from residents of Ozark but from anyone familiar with the area. Please take 10 minutes to complete the following survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OzarkVision>

Contact historicriverdistrict@gmail.com with any questions.

Sources and more information available at <https://www.mainstreet.org/home>