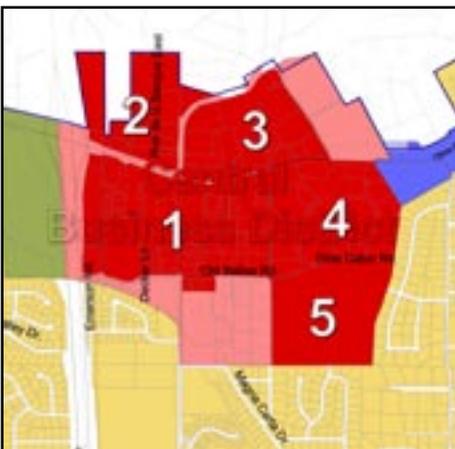


## 2.0 Vision

Creve Coeur is well known throughout the region as a very desirable place for businesses and residents alike. Reinvestment in new homes and large commercial projects demonstrate the strong demand for the Creve Coeur location and its stability as a vibrant, attractive community.

However, in spite of Creve Coeur's positive image and strong property values, the lack of a downtown inhibits the community's maximum potential. A true downtown, with public open space, civic facilities and a mix of land uses, will provide Creve Coeur a physical focus and symbolic heart. Functionally, it would provide the mix of entertainment, services and shopping needed to serve the demands of the community. For residents, a downtown with a variety of housing options, allows the opportunity to live in Creve Coeur during every stage of life.



As the Central Business District continues to redevelop, Downtown Creve Coeur will become its hub of activity and civic focus. Over time it will emerge as a vibrant, mixed use urban neighborhood and will become a progressive, dynamic symbol for the City of Creve Coeur.

### 2.1 Central Business District Recommendations

Implementation of the plan for a downtown, or town center, is one of the primary goals of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan makes two sets of CBD recommendations: first, general recommendations for the greater Central Business District and, second, more specific recommendations for each CBD District.

Recommendations for the greater Central Business District address four critical issue areas: residential preservation and economic development, community health and connectivity, transportation and movement and public facilities.

**Residential Preservation and Economic Development.** The strong real estate market in Creve Coeur is anticipated to continue to be a basis for strengthening residential areas while at the same time stimulating major reinvestment in aging or underutilized commercial areas. Office

**CityPlace Phase III.** Strong demand for retail and office space continues to drive commercial development in Creve Coeur despite a very competitive regional market.



**High Quality Residential.** Creve Coeur's location is a highly sought-after for market and upscale residential, including new high density condominium projects.

**Transportation Enhancements.** Functional and aesthetic enhancements to Olive Boulevard and the I-270 interchange are improving the character of Creve Coeur while easing traffic congestion.

development continues to demonstrate the desirability of the Olive and I-270 location. Demand within the downtown area for a variety of residential options, particularly catering to retirees and “empty nesters,” combined with a moderate density of neighborhood facilities, services, shopping and entertainment suggests that a market exists for tenants and residents.

As an urban neighborhood, a proposed Downtown Creve Coeur must appropriately combine residential with other land uses. By definition, this type of land use is mixed-use, and usually follows one of two patterns (or an adaptation of both). First, as a vertical mix on a given parcel, land uses change from floor to floor within the same building. Typically, this pattern is residential above commercial (retail, professional services or office). The second pattern occurs when buildings of a single use are combined with those of other single uses. For example, a street of residential buildings with commercial (retail, professional services or office) occupying the corners, or a commercial “main street” combined with residential “side streets.” Regardless of the pattern, for mixed-use neighborhoods to thrive, they must incorporate fundamental urban design principles that create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

More specifically, the CBD town center or downtown plan must focus on each of the following:

- Market Feasibility
- Mix of Uses
- Density of Development
- Financing
- City’s Role in Redevelopment
- Urban Design
- Connectivity

**Community Health and Connectivity.**

Quality-of-life issues are directly related to community health and connectivity. Increasingly, studies by groups as diverse as the Centers for Disease Control and the Congress for New Urbanism are concluding relationships between health and urban form. Residents of urban communities that are designed to encourage active lifestyles are generally healthier than residents of comparable suburban communities that are vehicle dependent.

Strong connections between suburban neighborhoods and urban town centers can facilitate more active lifestyles. This is accomplished through open space, streets with functional sidewalks and pedestrian or bicycle trails. High quality public open space is an essential part of every good downtown and provides a balance to its more compact, dense urban form. Not only does this contribute to the beauty of the city, but also benefits the livelihood of residents, community image, function, convenience, recreation and social interaction.

**Transportation and Movement.** Repeatedly cited as one of the community’s biggest concerns, traffic congestion has





*Olive Boulevard. Along with Creve Coeur's valuable location comes the consequence of traffic congestion on Olive Boulevard.*

for a long time been a problem in Creve Coeur, particularly along Olive Boulevard. Unfortunately, large traffic volumes are a consequence of Creve Coeur's success as a popular place to live and work. Any new development will likely add cars to the road. However, through good planning, additional cars do not have to result in more congestion. Over time, the road network could be altered to distribute traffic, mitigating the impact of new developments. This may prevent traffic congestion from getting worse, and perhaps there may be ways to improve traffic flow, particularly with route options, a parallel grid network, enhanced streetscape, better pedestrian facilities and improved mobility options.

The Comprehensive Plan included eleven recommendations for addressing the problem of traffic congestion in the CBD. Some of these are currently being implemented with the Olive Boulevard Transportation Improvement Plan and the completion of the I-270 – Olive interchange. Recommendations specific to the CBD town center plan that are addressed

in the CBD Land Use Plan include the following:

- Develop parallel or modified street grid network; extend Old Ballas Road to connect to the east with Old Cabin Road and the intersection with Craig and Olive
- Create a pedestrian-friendly sidewalk plan; provide safe pedestrian crossings for all roads within the CBD and crossings of Olive and Old Ballas Road
- Extend Studt Road eastward, bisecting the Creve Coeur Executive Office Park
- Promote pedestrian and bicycle access
- Examine opportunities for an additional "flyover" crossing of I-270
- Develop a transit plan to address mobility within the CBD; Consider shuttle service with the CBD as the hub
- Explore a multi-modal center as part of the CBD to attract multiple transportation modes with bicycle and pedestrian connections and potential for transit passengers to transfer between buses

**Public Facilities.** One of the fundamental differences between a private commercial town center and a true community town center (or downtown) is the inclusion of public facilities. At minimum, the circulation network is a part of the public realm;



*TDD Enhancements. Street trees, lights and other new landscape treatments from the TDD program are improving the visual character and traffic functions in the Olive corridor.*

*“Creve Coeur is a maturing high-quality community with a well-maintained infrastructure. It has potential demand for new development, but little land to accommodate that growth. Therefore, the City must take great care to insist upon high quality in new development and redevelopment, both to preserve its character and to maximize benefits to the City.”*

— 2002 Creve Coeur Comprehensive Plan



**Studd Road. Public realm enhancements throughout the CBD District 1 will stimulate the redevelopment and create a more walkable, urban environment.**

meaning that it is publicly-owned, for everyone’s use and is inviting and accessible to the general public at all times.

Beyond the public realm, inclusion of other public and semi-public facilities increases the vitality of a downtown and contributes to a greater sense of community pride. True public facilities may include City Hall, a library, the post office or a park. Semi-public facilities may be privately owned and maintained but are generally open to the public and may include museums, galleries, theaters and performing arts venues.

In addition to the cultural infrastructure of a community, the CBD plan also recognizes the importance for utility infrastructure. The provision of these facilities – sewers, roadway easements, other utility lines – can be accomplished through a variety of methods and partnerships.

### **Central Business District 1 Recommendations**

The CBD Land Use Plan builds upon the general recommendations for the greater CBD but is primarily concerned with the redevelopment opportunities for a community downtown within the CBD boundaries. The downtown area will be established in CBD 1, primarily south of Olive Boulevard between I-270 and Old Ballas Road (west to east). However, these boundaries should smoothly transition to adjacent neighborhoods and commercial areas to create a seamless urban development pattern that encourages interaction, access, walkability, compatible land uses and appropriate scale.

**Central Business District 1 (Town Center Focus Area).** This district will become the heart of the CBD and of the City of Creve Coeur. While Creve Coeur has developed a very positive status within the region, the downtown should redevelop in

a manner that creates a prominent visual appeal, through density, quality, activity and individuality. In time this distinction would not only contribute to Creve Coeur’s positive image, but it would become the true center for the community.

Good urban design is a vital aspect of downtown’s success. Implementation of the physical development of the downtown must balance between integrating with its surroundings while at the same time, establishing clear boundaries with an effective use of gateway features.

Recent history of redevelopment within the CBD indicates that it is very unlikely that the CBD 1 will be redeveloped at one time and by a single developer. With many property owners and a range of lot sizes and property conditions, the CBD Land Use Plan must anticipate that redevelopment will occur incrementally. Although this approach can pose challenges to cohesive development and timely completion, incremental redevelopment of individual sites should nonetheless follow the framework of a CBD Plan. The framework should focus on:

- Incorporating design elements that include “human scale”
- Creating prominent visual appeal
- Establishing a true “center” for the community
- Encouraging use of gateway features
- Encouraging an urban framework based on the pedestrian shed
- Creating a hierarchy of thoroughfares
- Encouraging a mixed-use land use plan
- Offering a range of public spaces
- Placing an importance on civic spaces

### **Narrowing the Focus Area**

According to the Comprehensive Plan, the CBD 1 area extends from I-270 to Old Ballas Road (west to east) and roughly between Old Ballas Road to Olive Boulevard (north to south). During the development

of the Comprehensive Plan, approximately eight acres of ground west of New Ballas Road remained undeveloped. Since 2002, however, Summit Lofts and the Plaza Lexus Dealership were constructed. Additional phases of the Summit Lofts development, West Village, are planned for construction in the near future. Other developments within this general area, including the Creve Coeur Corporate Center, Drury Inn and Applebee's, the Plaza Motors campus, and the Plaza Shops continue to be viable and are not expected to be redeveloped for many years.

Since the properties were developed and others are not expected to be redeveloped, the focus of the CBD planning process shifted the focus to properties primarily east of New Ballas Road. Due to market conditions and property characteristics, these properties are expected to face considerable pressure to redevelop in the future.

As shown in the "Planning Context" of the CBD section of the '02 Comprehensive Plan and the Site Analysis conducted through this process, many of the buildings between New Ballas and Old Ballas Roads are aging and outdated, the developments lack cohesion without defined vehicular and pedestrian connections, they are underutilized due to the prominence of surface parking and since many of the buildings are single story, and several developments are located on parcels that are less than one acre in size.

Unlike other properties on the west side of New Ballas, the properties between Old Ballas and Studt Roads bear many of these characteristics and are also expected to face redevelopment pressure in the future.

## 2.2 Defining the Vision

Although the Comprehensive Plan clearly recommends the creation of a Central Business District town center, it does not specifically define the characteristics of what the town center should be. Many precedents exist in cities across the country, of town centers both new and old. These can be used as comparable projects or benchmarks, demonstrating what could be possible in this community. Whatever form the town center takes, it should be distinctive to Creve Coeur, so it is essential that it convey a positive, high quality and progressive image for the city.

Among the many opportunities facing Creve Coeur and precedents set by comparable projects elsewhere, there emerge three distinct development typologies. These are often misunderstood and their names connote very different things. For clarification these forms, "central business district," "town center" and "downtown" are discussed below.

**Central Business District.** A district typically differs from a neighborhood in that it is made up of a single land use. In Creve Coeur, the term is correctly applied to the predominantly commercial CBD in spite of the recent trend toward building residential. (Until a critical mass of residential is achieved, it will not function as a neighborhood.) With a very large amount of commercial, a CBD generally serves the needs of a community well, with jobs, shopping and services, but it is not the social or civic heart of the community. If the CBD does not provide any public functions, it will not develop a civic focus.

**Town Center.** Historically, the term "town center" has referred to the heart of a community or neighborhood, usually at a smaller scale or less urban condition than a "downtown." However, in recent

*CBD District 1. The 2002 Comprehensive Plan identified Central Business District 1 as a likely area to develop a town center or downtown.*



*Downtown Creve Coeur. The 2005 CBD Land Use Plan narrowed the focus from the CBD District 1 to an area generally to the southeast of the Olive-New Ballas Road intersection. This area will become the Downtown for Creve Coeur.*

**Traditional Downtowns.** Sidewalks and urban character contribute to vibrant streets and active lifestyles. Numerous examples exist in older communities where an authentic downtown has evolved over many years. However, there is a growing number of new developments that successfully achieve a downtown urban character.



[Central West End, St. Louis]



[Santana Row, San Jose, California]



[Easton Town Center, Columbus, Ohio]

decades in the US, the term has been corrupted by developers and by poor land use planning to the point where it has lost much of its original meaning. It is now frequently misused to describe single use private developments that focus on retail. Furthermore, it is no longer understood that town centers have a civic or public focus, but instead replace civic uses with entertainment.

**Downtown.** The understanding of the term “downtown” has traditionally meant the economic, social and cultural heart of a community or city. It usually refers to a condition more dense or urban than a town center, and may be the center of an entire region or metropolitan area. True downtowns are mixed-use urban neighborhoods that serve a wide variety of community needs, including retail, office, residential, public uses and entertainment. Often, the main focus of a downtown is on civic activities, public spaces and cultural facilities.

Public participation, focus group sessions and individual comments confirmed widespread support for the concept of a downtown. However, the physical form of this concept could be accomplished in various ways. While it is not an objective of the CBD Land Use Plan to redesign CBD 1, assessing characteristics of comparable projects against Creve Coeur’s goals is a prudent way to begin defining a vision for the downtown.

Based upon these definitions, and upon the public engagement process, the precedent development typology (central business district, town center, downtown) best suited to accomplish the project goals for Creve Coeur is a downtown. Creve Coeur’s CBD, as it is currently defined, functions well as a hub of business. A town center concept would potentially favor a retail-office market. Redeveloping

CBD as a downtown, however, would establish a vibrant neighborhood with a civic focus that would serve the entire Creve Coeur community.

### **Creating a Downtown Creve Coeur**

Local and national precedents can be used to describe the scale, character and density that a Downtown Creve Coeur may develop. Downtown Kirkwood, Downtown Webster Groves, Old Town St. Charles, the Central West End and the University City Loop are great local examples of vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood that evolved as downtowns for their respective communities. Today they are thriving places to live, work and socialize, and are of a scale appropriate for their context. They are not as densely developed as regional centers Downtown St. Louis or Downtown Clayton.

Downtown Creve Coeur should create a civic focus, with public facilities such as a library, performance venue, community center, recreation center, art center or other city functions. Possibly as a long-term goal, property could be set aside for future civic development. Rights-of-way and easements should be considered valuable components of the public realm. High quality urban design, architecture and landscape will help ensure long-term success of downtown as a premiere St. Louis neighborhood.

As the CBD gradually redevelops as a downtown, it will become the new image for the City of Creve Coeur. Signature physical attributes will inevitably become icons for the community and therefore must be well designed and constructed. A landmark building, open space or design feature, either private or public, could be the central feature in establishing this image.