

Jerseyville Hires PGAV To Guide Downtown District Planning

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JERSEYVILLE – In 2021, the City of Jerseyville began turning a community-shared vision into priorities and plans for a revitalization plan for the city's historic downtown.

A reimagined vision for Jerseyville's downtown district first came to light through a series of conversations among members of the public, city leaders and local economic development staff, regional tourism stakeholders, and Illinois Department of Transportation representatives.

The goal: To reimagine and re-energize Jerseyville's downtown as a vibrant, family- and pedestrian-friendly, inclusive, and welcoming regional destination for shopping, dining, entertainment, and cultural experiences.

City leaders have now brought in St. Louis, Mo.-based firm PGAV Planners to help guide Jerseyville through the next steps of the process.

PGAV Planners provides urban planning, financial development analysis, economic development planning, and municipal advising. The PGAV company also offers architecture and destination design and consulting services.

Among the Illinois communities PGAV has worked with before are Swansea, Mount Vernon, Moline, and Monmouth. Notable regional Missouri-based projects have included the 24:1 Region in North St. Louis County, Manchester Road Corridor and West Florissant initiatives, as well as with Bi-State Development, Emerson Park Transit Transformation, and Ballpark Village.

Regionally, some of PGAV's more recent work of guiding communities through the development of a comprehensive community master plan has included the Arcola Downtown Planning initiative in Illinois as well as the Engage O'Fallon, Empower Wellston, and Sedalia 2040 initiatives in Missouri. An extended list of their work can be seen online at pgav.com.

Jerseyville City Council members were presented with an initial draft of the master plan being proposed by PGAV, full of positive potential for a reimagined Historic City Center District. With a 5-0 vote in favor, this plan was unanimously approved for further development and initial implementation at Tuesday evening's council meeting.

For reference, Jerseyville's Historic City Center District has its commercial center stretching along State Street/US Route 67. It is generally bordered by Liberty and Jefferson Streets to its west and east, by Carpenter Street/IL Route 16 to its south, and by Mulberry Street to its north.

The district takes in the Jersey County Courthouse, First Baptist Church, and the Jerseyville (Carnegie) Public Library. It pushes slightly north past Mulberry Street to also include the Cheney Mansion, home to the Jersey County Historical Society.

Kevin Stork, Jerseyville's Commissioner of Accounts and Finance, points out that this master plan "helps define a vision, which is fluid and continually adapting. It lays a groundwork for the city moving forward. With this plan, we are trying to create and identify as many opportunities for our citizens as we can, both in terms of quality of life and in livelihood. Things to do for them and their family, jobs, and entrepreneurship opportunities are all a part of it."

In fact, there are 15 themes identified in the City Center District Master Plan proposed by PGAV. These include landscape design, connectivity and walkability, activated alleys, pedestrian amenities, public parking, civic branding, wayfinding, public art and connectivity, public art and history, explore-play-learn, outdoor dining and patios, outdoor lighting, technology, land use and development, and economic development.

Stork also pointed out parts of the plan that will be most noticeable to community members and visitors. Some of its work is already underway, such as the development of City Center Park, improved downtown parking, and improvements underway to existing greenspace.

"We have already begun cosmetic improvements throughout the district," said Stork. "And more will come as we move through the three phases proposed in the master plan.

"For example, we have already launched a façade improvement grant program for businesses that provides funding for projects, large and small." Jerseyville Stadium Theater's recent marquee restoration and renovation project is one example of this program's potential benefit to businesses."

"The façade improvement grant program can help a business become accessible from both sides as well," Stork added. "An example of this is with TCAD and Linn's Shoes. With its redesign and improvement, shoppers can now access TCAD from its alleyway rear entrance of the same building that houses Linn's Shoes and its State Street entrance."

"We're also planning to develop the alleyways that run behind the commercial buildings along State Street. We want to encourage businesses to look at ways to improve the design of their backside façade that can also provide public entrances to their buildings from the alley side," Stork said. "We are looking for ways to make access to these establishments easier for downtown visitors walking from city parking areas to destinations throughout the district."

Stork said that wayfinding signage has also started popping up to help guide visitors to wherever it is they want to go as they visit Jerseyville's City Center District. Lighted kiosks are a part of guiding visitors as well, as is the recently launched "Explore Jerseyville" mobile app.

Banners, street lighting and canopies, and a consistently identifiable look will provide a positive welcome to everyone who comes to visit while also recognizing Jerseyville's historic past, Stork added. Added greenspace and major improvements to the city's existing parks, along with expanding parking, are also included as a part of the proposed plan, as are infrastructure improvements throughout the district.

"I think it's important to note that new and expanding parking will help alleviate the traffic congestion we already experience in Jerseyville," said Stork. "It will help greatly, offering safer options for visitors to downtown, and potentially re-routing traffic patterns from the main route through the district to a block or so over."

While the plan proposed by PGAV to the City of Jerseyville includes much in potentially positive progress for revitalizing its downtown, paying for this progress also must be considered, keeping in mind the impact this plan's development has on the city as a whole.

"An increase in property taxes is not being considered a viable part of the equation," Stork pointed out. "We are looking instead at grant opportunities primarily, and investments from the private sector. And at some point, we may look at implementing a sales tax that would specifically support the plan's projects and vision. If a sales tax is implemented, it would be paid on each purchase made, by everyone and not only by Jerseyville residents."

For more information about Jerseyville's Historic City Center District and the continued rollout of this proposed master plan, contact Shari Albrecht, JEDC Partners in Progress executive director, at (217) 556-8696 or visit jedc-il.us online.