

HyettPalma

# **Frenchtown Audit 2019**

**St. Charles, Missouri**



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November 5, 2018

City of St. Charles, MO and  
Frenchtown Revitalization Committee

RE: ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***

HyettPalma is honored to work with St. Charles and Frenchtown, once again, and to present to you this ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***.

This document is the result of an audit undertaken by HyettPalma to revisit, refocus and recharge Frenchtown's economic enhancement effort, which was started in 2003. The audit process entailed a multitude of research techniques, including visioning, interviews, community meetings, issue sessions, market research and on-site analysis.

We thank you for the opportunity to work once again with Frenchtown and the City of St. Charles and to be a part of your continuing efforts to further strengthen historic Frenchtown. As always, we hope you will keep us informed of your success and know that HyettPalma stands ready to assist in any way possible as you proceed with the Frenchtown economic enhancement effort.

Sincerely,

Doyle G. Hyett

Dolores P. Palma

## ***Acknowledgements***

HyettPalma would like to thank the City of St. Charles and the Frenchtown Revitalization Committee, established to oversee this project, for identifying the critical issues to be addressed in this audit. The Committee was comprised of:

Sherilyn Blair, Frenchtown Secret Garden, Chair  
Ed Akers, Farmers Insurance-Akers Agency, Vice-Chair  
Susan Sams, Sams Carpet Cleaning and Repairs, Secretary  
Susan King, St. Charles Economic Development, Ex-Officio Secretary  
Alex Reichert, Resident  
Bob Tipton, Business Owner  
Eric Ebeling, First State Bank  
Steve Merritt, Resident  
Jason Orf, Business Owner/Property Investor/Resident  
Keith Lutz, Business Owner/Property Investor/Resident  
Melissa Whitwam, Foundry Art Centre  
Robert Ellis, Lindenwood University  
Bob Adams, Resident/Frenchtown Museum  
Kate Manfull, Business/Property Owner, Marketing  
Michelle Beucke, Architect, St. Charles/City of St. Charles Landmarks Board

### **Support Members**

Bruce Evans, City of St. Charles Community Development  
Dave Leezer, City of St. Charles Economic Development  
Joe Ward, Director of Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Elizabeth Norviel, City of St. Charles Public Information Manager  
Elizabeth Phelps, Assistant Director of Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Susie King, City of St. Charles Economic Development  
Brad Temme, City of St. Charles Director of Engineering  
Mary Ann Ohms, City Council (Ward 1)  
Scott Tate, Greater St. Charles County Chamber of Commerce  
Travis Wilson, City of St. Charles Economic Development  
Jeremy Lutgen, City of St. Charles Public Information Specialist  
Tom Besselman, City Council (Ward 2)



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# *The People's Vision 2025*

A series of meetings were held to define the community's vision for Frenchtown, as it would be in the year 2025. The community's definition of success for Frenchtown follows.

Frenchtown would be a very appealing place that makes you want to go there, take your friends, stroll, and shop. The area would be known for its diversity of people and businesses.

North Second Street would be "another chapter" of Main Street – one that has its own unique flavor, look, appeal, and mix of businesses. Frenchtown would "be who we are and not imitate someplace else."

Frenchtown would be known for encouraging diversity, supporting its existing businesses, and welcoming quality businesses that serve Frenchtown residents and are also able to attract customers from the region.

There would be "tons of activity" and Frenchtown's sidewalks would be filled with people. Frenchtown would have ties to the Katy Trail and Blanchette Landing, so people can stop for refreshments and fun at the end of their walk or bike ride.

In terms of uses, Frenchtown would:

- Be packed with "really good" restaurants and "restaurants with liquor licenses;"
- Have "things to do day and night;"
- Include rooftop bars, coffee houses with entertainment, and outdoor cafes;
- Feature local artists in galleries and shops;

- Have buskers and entertainers on its wide sidewalks; and
- Offer specialty retail shops that serve local residents and draw customers from the region.

Frenchtown would be “cleaned up.” Private property owners would “step up” and make needed improvements to their buildings. And, emphasis would be placed on keeping, renovating, and “bringing back our amazing architecture.”

Frenchtown would have “consistent curbs and gutters” and slower traffic, making it safer and more attractive to bicyclists and pedestrians.

The 370 interchange and North Third Street corridor would be made “prettier” through more and well-maintained landscaping.

And Frenchtown’s public spaces would include public art “that reflects the area’s unique history.”

By 2025, Frenchtown would be able to attract the following as customers:

- Residents of Frenchtown;
- Users of the Katy Trail and Blanchette Landing;
- Foundry Art Centre visitors;
- Frenchtown Heritage Museum visitors;
- Lindenwood University students;
- Guests of nearby B&Bs;
- Residents of St. Charles; and
- Residents of St. Louis and the region.

The successful Frenchtown would be known for, and as having, the following image.

***A festive, lively, and comfortable place that is full of life and activity;***

***A district where you can find visual arts, music, and entertainment;***

***A place that is creative, edgy, unique, and true to itself;***

***Where there's something to do day and night;***

***A real and neighborly community – people actually live here and they get out, come together, celebrate together, and know each other;***

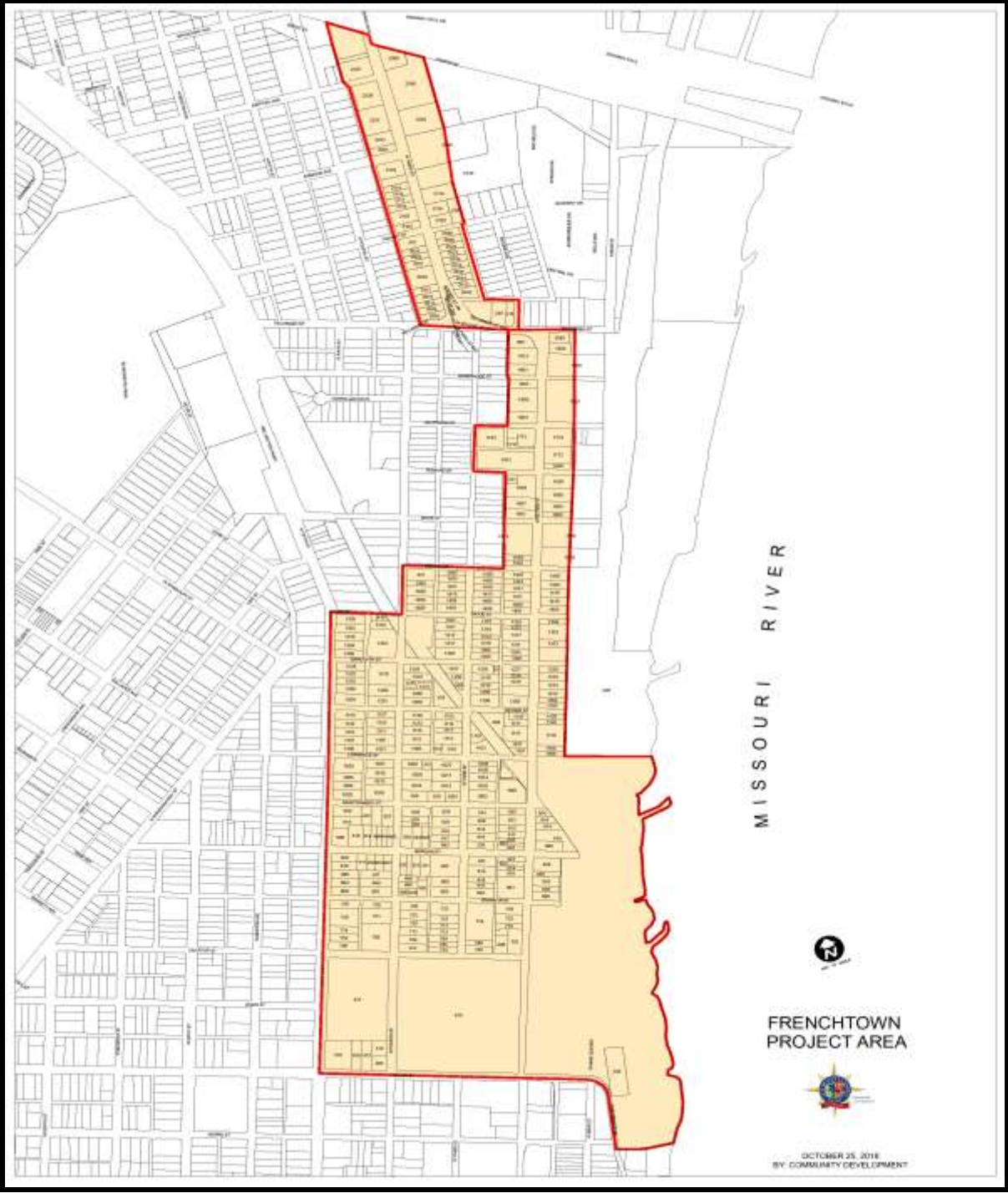
***A historic district that has amazing architecture; and***

***When people ask “where do locals go?” the answer is “Frenchtown!”***

# Project Area Map

A map of the Frenchtown Project Area – the area examined in this Frenchtown Audit – is presented on the following page. Please note that the area includes the portion of Frenchtown that was the focus of the ***Frenchtown Economic Enhancement Strategy 2003*** and that the Third Street corridor has been added to the project area in association with this audit.





## Overview

Great strides have been made in Frenchtown since completion of the ***Frenchtown Economic Enhancement Strategy 2003***. Specifically, these improvements include:

- New sidewalks, curbs, and street lighting;
- New landscaping in the form of street trees and planters;
- New benches and trash receptacles;
- Updated public signage and banners – with new banners soon to be installed;
- Updates to the Frenchtown Heritage Museum;
- Creation of the Foundry Art Centre;
- Creation of Eco Park Trailhead;
- Creation and marketing of the City’s façade grant program;
- Use of façade grants by owners to improve building appearance;
- Addition of French design elements – such as the fleur-de-lis on benches at Eco Park Trailhead and on poles that mark the district’s boundaries;
- The opening of new businesses; and
- Additional special events and marketing.

In addition, Frenchtown is now enjoying the benefits of:

- A stronger partnership between the City, the Frenchtown business community, and Frenchtown residents;
- New and younger people investing in Frenchtown’s business district and residential neighborhood; and
- A more solid market within walking distance of Frenchtown’s businesses – due to improvements and investment made over the last 15 years in Frenchtown’s residential area.

And, as a result of this ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***, the community has defined an updated vision for Frenchtown. That vision is detailed earlier in this document and can be summarized as:

***An arty, edgy, and creative district that is mixed-use, mixed-income, and has a diversity of both businesses and people.***

***A district that is unique, true to itself, and that celebrates its architecture, history, businesses, and people.***

***When visitors to St. Charles ask “where do the locals go?” the answer is “Frenchtown!”***

These improvements, benefits, and updated community vision all bode well for Frenchtown’s future economic health and stability.

# Overarching Goals

The following overarching goals should be used to guide the further enhancement of Frenchtown.

## 1. **Advocacy Group**

To ensure that the actions recommended in this document are implemented in a timely manner, it is imperative to have a strong, stable, and on-going advocate in place for Frenchtown. Such an advocacy group has been started in the form of the Frenchtown Revitalization Committee, which spearheaded the process resulting in this **Frenchtown Audit 2019**.

The Committee's role as Frenchtown's advocate should be strengthened and solidified through the following steps.

- The group should be renamed the Frenchtown Revitalization Partnership – to indicate its permanence.
- The following members should be added to the Partnership's Board of Directors as voting ex officio members (meaning by virtue of their office):
  - Ward 1 City Council Member;
  - St. Charles Community Development Director;
  - St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau Director; and

- President of the Greater St. Charles County Chamber of Commerce.
- The President of the Historic Frenchtown Association (HFA), who is currently on the Board, should serve in that position as a voting ex officio member. This will ensure HFA representation on the Partnership's Board as HFA experiences changes in leadership over the years.

In addition to acting as an advocate for Frenchtown, the Partnership should:

- Spearhead implementation of the ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***;
- Provide/generate energy and enthusiasm for that effort;
- Stimulate participation in that effort; and
- Drive Frenchtown's continued success and market that success to additional business owners, property owners, residents, and investors.

## **2. City Priority**

The time is right for Frenchtown's further improvement to become a priority of City government. It could be said that City Hall has already started doing so by agreeing to fund this ***Frenchtown Audit 2019*** and with a large number of City staff participating in completion of the audit.

Ideally, the City would further make Frenchtown a priority by:

- Addressing issues and making improvements that only City government can;
- Providing staff assistance to the Frenchtown Revitalization Partnership;
- Acting as a strong collaborator with, and member of, the Frenchtown Revitalization Partnership; and
- Providing funding assistance in implementing the ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***.

### 3. ***“Historic”***

Frenchtown is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. Recently, thought has been given locally to eliminating the word “historic” from marketing materials and graphics produced for Frenchtown. HyettPalma strongly advises against this, since:

- Listing in the National Register is a significant recognition that carries great prestige and cachet throughout the world;
- Studies have shown that property values increase more quickly in areas that are historic districts than in those that are not;
- Historic district status has been used successfully by business districts across the country to attract heritage tourists; and
- Studies have shown that heritage tourists stay longer and spend more than other types of tourists.

In short, historic district designation can and has been used nation-wide to drive and increase economic success. Frenchtown should not forfeit that opportunity by downplaying its historic district status.

### 4. ***A Unique Vibe of Its Own***

During the process conducted to define this ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***, Frenchtown community members made it clear that they want the area to become known as:

- Arty, edgy, and creative;
- Welcoming and diverse;
- Pedestrian and bike-friendly; and
- A real local spot that serves neighborhood residents and others seeking a unique experience.

This is the “personality” that should be created for Frenchtown through implementation of this ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***. All improvements made in Frenchtown – both public and private – as well as all marketing of the area, should reflect, create, and move Frenchtown toward attaining this personality.

## **5. *Prototype of Success***

To maintain and increase momentum and enthusiasm around the Frenchtown enhancement effort, it is critical to demonstrate visible, quality results as quickly as possible. To do so, efforts and resources should be concentrated in the following area:

### ***North Second Street, from Bayard to Franklin***

This portion of Frenchtown currently offers the greatest potential for creating a prototype of success since:

- It contains long-standing, successful businesses;
- Several buildings in the area have recently been purchased by new investors;
- New businesses – of the type desired by the community – have and are moving into the area; and
- The Frenchtown Heritage Museum is located in this portion of Frenchtown.

This prototype area should be used to create a nucleus of:

- The appearance desired by the community;
- The business mix desired by the community; and
- The atmosphere and “experience” the community wants to enjoy in Frenchtown’s business district.

Once the desired prototype of success has been created in this area, steps should be taken to build on and leverage that success to other portions of Frenchtown.

# *Frenchtown Retail Marketplace Profile*

As part of this **Frenchtown Audit 2019**, a Frenchtown **Retail Marketplace Profile** was acquired from the market research firm ESRI. The profile is presented on the following pages.

The Frenchtown marketplace is defined as the area within Zip Code 63301, which is the same primary retail trade area used to examine Frenchtown's retail market potential in the **Frenchtown Economic Enhancement Strategy 2003**.

The profile presents an analysis of retail dollars leaving the community (leakage) and retail dollars coming into the community (inflow or surplus).

The leakage/surplus factor presents a snapshot of retail opportunity in the Frenchtown primary retail trade area. This is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total leakage) to -100 (total inflow). A positive value represents "leakage" opportunity outside the trade area. A negative value represents a surplus of retail sales, a market where customers are drawn in from outside the primary retail trade area.

The Retail Gap represents the difference between Retail Potential and Retail Sales. ESRI uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to classify businesses by their primary type of economic activity. Retail establishments are classified into 27 industry groups in the Retail Trade sector, as well as four industry groups within the Food Service & Drinking Establishment subsector.



As noted by the table presented on the next page:

- The Frenchtown Primary Retail Trade Area has a total retail demand of \$708,940,432 for retail goods and food & drink;
- The primary retail trade area has total retail sales of \$622,921,391 for retail goods and food & drink; and
- Therefore, the Frenchtown Primary Retail Trade Area has a retail gap (leakage) of \$86,016,032 -- meaning that over \$86,000,000 is being spent outside Frenchtown's Primary Retail Trade Area by trade area residents.

This means retail businesses in Frenchtown have the potential to capture a portion of \$86,000,000 that is currently leaving the trade area, if goods and services demanded in the marketplace were offered in Frenchtown. Specific retail categories that present the greatest opportunity for Frenchtown businesses to capture new retail sales include the following:

- Furniture;
- Home Furnishings;
- Electronics;
- Appliances;
- Groceries;
- Health and Personal Care;
- Clothing;
- Shoes;
- Jewelry;
- Luggage;
- Leather Goods;
- Books;
- Music;
- Office Supplies;
- Stationery;
- Gifts;
- Used Merchandise; and
- Eating and Drinking Places. (**NOTE:** While actually showing a surplus in food and drink sales in the Primary Retail Trade Area, the marketplace for food and drink tends to expand in most cases as more food and drink establishments are introduced into the marketplace. St. Charles' Main Street is an excellent example of this compounding. Food Brings Food.)



## Retail MarketPlace Profile

63301 (Saint Charles, MO)  
63301 (Saint Charles, MO)  
Geography: ZIP Code

Summary Demographics						
2018 Population						51,443
2018 Households						20,398
2018 Median Disposable Income						\$49,446
2018 Per Capita Income						\$32,188
2017 Industry Summary						
	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	44-45,722	\$708,940,423	\$622,921,391	\$86,019,032	6.5	458
Total Retail Trade	44-45	\$640,128,689	\$526,410,091	\$113,718,598	9.7	302
Total Food & Drink	722	\$68,811,734	\$96,511,300	-\$27,699,566	-16.8	156
2017 Industry Group						
	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	\$136,667,632	\$186,176,152	-\$49,508,520	-15.3	51
Automobile Dealers	4411	\$110,076,308	\$79,770,795	\$30,305,513	16.0	24
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	4412	\$14,351,800	\$93,631,640	-\$79,279,840	-73.4	14
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$12,239,524	\$12,773,717	-\$534,193	-2.1	13
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$20,416,144	\$9,174,339	\$11,241,805	38.0	10
Furniture Stores	4421	\$12,231,016	\$3,149,811	\$9,081,205	59.0	3
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$8,185,128	\$6,024,528	\$2,160,600	15.2	7
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$19,372,759	\$7,971,709	\$11,401,050	41.7	11
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$44,434,675	\$39,133,058	\$5,301,617	6.3	28
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$41,469,443	\$35,949,912	\$5,519,531	7.1	23
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$2,965,232	\$3,183,146	-\$217,914	-3.5	5
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$105,602,780	\$84,675,081	\$20,927,699	11.0	41
Grocery Stores	4451	\$97,793,585	\$73,768,541	\$24,025,044	14.0	20
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$3,618,094	\$4,847,867	-\$1,229,773	-14.5	12
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$4,191,101	\$6,058,673	-\$1,867,572	-18.2	9
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$37,578,602	\$10,947,592	\$26,631,010	54.9	15
Gasoline Stations	447,4471	\$73,520,877	\$58,493,467	\$15,027,410	11.4	15
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$28,234,924	\$10,626,678	\$17,608,246	45.3	27
Clothing Stores	4481	\$18,306,392	\$7,160,401	\$11,145,991	43.8	20
Shoe Stores	4482	\$4,790,844	\$1,083,288	\$3,707,556	63.1	2
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$5,137,688	\$2,382,989	\$2,754,699	36.6	5
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$18,672,226	\$50,847,203	-\$32,174,977	-46.3	23
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	4511	\$15,891,444	\$48,927,884	-\$33,036,440	-51.0	18
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$2,780,782	\$1,919,319	\$861,463	18.3	5
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$121,530,415	\$46,761,331	\$74,769,084	44.4	11
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$92,305,035	\$9,934,769	\$82,370,266	80.6	1
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$29,225,380	\$36,826,562	-\$7,601,182	-11.5	10
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$26,264,323	\$20,598,917	\$5,665,406	12.1	65
Florists	4531	\$1,797,075	\$2,301,833	-\$504,758	-12.3	8
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$6,488,212	\$2,922,327	\$3,565,885	37.9	15
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$3,130,067	\$2,609,316	\$520,751	9.1	13
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$14,848,969	\$12,765,441	\$2,083,528	7.5	29
Nonstore Retailers	454	\$7,833,332	\$1,004,564	\$6,828,768	77.3	5
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	4541	\$4,999,945	\$0	\$4,999,945	100.0	0
Vending Machine Operators	4542	\$700,699	\$92,480	\$608,219	76.7	1
Direct Selling Establishments	4543	\$2,132,688	\$912,084	\$1,220,604	40.1	4
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$68,811,734	\$96,511,300	-\$27,699,566	-16.8	156
Special Food Services	7223	\$1,801,174	\$1,109,785	\$691,389	23.8	4
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$2,144,913	\$3,511,362	-\$1,366,449	-24.2	14
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	7225	\$64,865,647	\$91,890,153	-\$27,024,506	-17.2	138

Data Note: Supply (retail sales) estimates sales to consumers by establishments. Sales to businesses are excluded. Demand (retail potential) estimates the expected amount spent by consumers at retail establishments. Supply and demand estimates are in current dollars. The Leakage/Surplus Factor presents a snapshot of retail opportunity. This is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total leakage) to -100 (total surplus). A positive value represents 'leakage' of retail opportunity outside the trade area. A negative value represents a surplus of retail sales, a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area. The Retail Gap represents the difference between Retail Potential and Retail Sales. Esri uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to classify businesses by their primary type of economic activity. Retail establishments are classified into 27 industry groups in the Retail Trade sector, as well as four industry groups within the Food Services & Drinking Establishments subsector. For more information on the Retail MarketPlace data, please click the link below to view the Methodology Statement. <http://www.esri.com/library/whitepapers/pdfs/esri-data-retail-marketplace.pdf>

Source: Esri and Infogroup. Esri 2018 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace. Copyright 2018 Esri. Copyright 2017 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved.

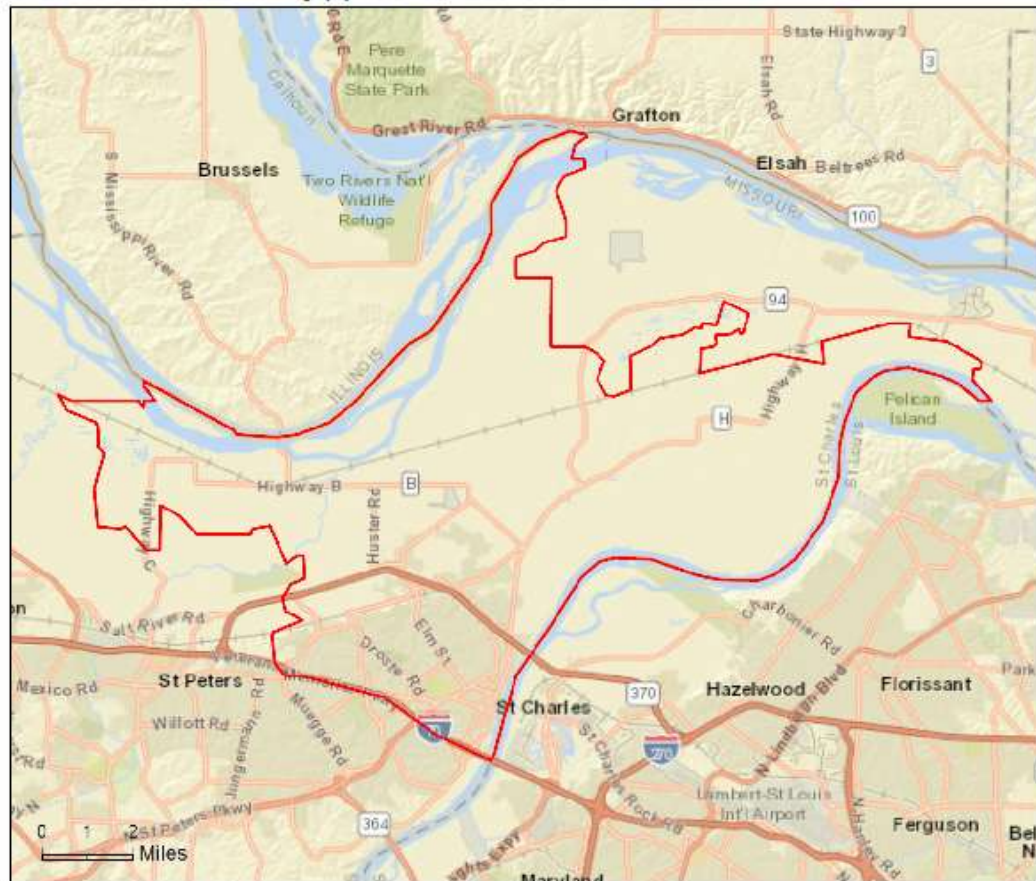
October 19, 2018

## Frenchtown Primary Retail Trade Area – Zip Code 63301



### Site Map

63301 (Saint Charles, MO)  
63301 (Saint Charles, MO)  
Geography: ZIP Code



October 19, 2018

# Actions

Following is a course of action specifically designed to:

- Move Frenchtown toward the community's desired vision for the area;
- Enhance the business district's ability to attract investors, including consumers, property owners, business owners, and residents;
- Strengthen Frenchtown's economy; and
- Create a business district that serves and appeals to neighborhood residents as well as visitors.

The recommended course of action should be aggressively implemented – in its entirety – over the next 5-7 years.

## **Building Improvements**

The following actions should be taken to spur building improvements in Frenchtown’s business district.

### **1. Façade Grants**

To its credit, the City of St. Charles has a façade grant program in place. The availability of this incentive should be heavily marketed in the prototype area described earlier.

### **2. Fire Suppression**

There is concern locally about the cost of installing fire suppression systems in Frenchtown’s older structures – especially for restaurants. This should be addressed through the following.

- Solid, accurate information is needed about the actual costs of installing sprinkler systems in Frenchtown’s older commercial structures. To do so, estimates for fire suppression should be obtained from reputable firms. And, those estimates should be widely shared with Frenchtown building owners.
- The City should consider creating a grant program to assist owners with fire suppression measures. Fire suppression grants should be:
  - Made on a matching basis;
  - Up to a maximum of \$7,500 per structure;
  - Made to restaurateurs only;
  - Made available in the prototype area only; and
  - Offered for a limited time.

These parameters are intended to encourage the opening of restaurants – which are greatly desired by the community – and to cluster those restaurants in the prototype area to create another Frenchtown “anchor.”

It is recommended that grants be awarded initially to 2 to 3 restaurants. After the first 2 to 3, the grant program should be reconsidered to determine if it should continue – meaning it may not be necessary to provide grants once the marketplace is strengthened by the addition of new restaurants.

### **3. Code Enforcement**

It was clear from meetings held to define this **Frenchtown Audit 2019** that Frenchtown’s community members – both business and residential – are fed up with run-down buildings that have long been neglected by their owners. Therefore, the time has come to send a message to those owners that disinvestment will no longer be tolerated in Frenchtown.

The City of St. Charles conducts what are called “City Sweeps”, at the request of Council Members, to identify code violations and cite owners. Such sweeps should be conducted throughout Frenchtown’s commercial area.

The sweeps should emphasize correction of life-safety code violations, such as derelict buildings, warehousing, on-street merchandise that obstructs sidewalks, etc. Doing so will greatly improve not only Frenchtown’s aesthetic appeal, but also its appeal to pedestrians, consumers, and investors.

### **4. Start with the Positive Ones**

In any business district, there will be property owners willing to re-invest in their properties and act as area assets and good neighbors. And, there will be some who will refuse to invest at all or who will only do the bare minimum required of them. This is the norm.

To avoid frustration and to create examples of success as quickly as possible, the enhancement effort should focus on, encourage, and assist those positive property owners to make needed improvements to their buildings. Then, attention should be turned to encouraging the less positive owners to join in and become contributors to, rather than hindrances to, the area’s economic success.

## **Public Improvements**

The City government should be commended for the public improvements that have been made since completion of the ***Frenchtown Economic Enhancement Strategy 2003***. To build on and leverage those improvements, the following actions should now be taken.

### ***1. Drainage Study***

The City has discussed conducting a drainage study to address the best means of removing storm water in Frenchtown. This should be done as quickly as possible.

### ***2. Sidewalks, Curbs, Gutters***

Based on the results of the drainage study, further improvements should be made to sidewalks, curbs, and gutters in Frenchtown. As a first step, those improvements should be concentrated in the prototype area – North Second Street, from Bayard to Franklin.

As part of these improvements, the maximum number of curb cuts on North Second Street should be eliminated and curbs and gutters should be reinstated wherever possible. Doing so will greatly enhance pedestrian safety and comfort in the area.

### ***3. Aesthetics***

Aesthetic enhancements have been made in Frenchtown since completion of the ***Frenchtown Economic Enhancement Strategy 2003***. Now it is time to make sure those improvements are consistent in design. This includes benches, planters, and landscaping, particularly in the prototype area.

Having streetscape elements that are of a consistent design conveys a message to consumers and investors alike. That message is:

***This area is valued and valuable,  
so much so that  
there is a concerted and united effort in place  
to make sure it looks its best.***

#### **4. Wayfinding**

The current wayfinding sign system in Frenchtown should be examined and updated to:

- Ensure that it is consistent with the new branding being created for the district;
- Lead motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians to Frenchtown, its businesses, and attractions;
- Mark the entrances to Frenchtown;
- Include a larger directional sign to Blanchette Landing that reads “Public River Access/Boating and Fishing”; and
- Include directional signs to Frenchtown from Main Street, the Katy Trail, Blanchette Landing, and 370.

#### **5. Crosswalks**

There is a great desire to make Frenchtown an area that is safe, appealing, and highly inviting to pedestrians. Therefore:

- A pedestrian crosswalk should be created at every intersection in the prototype area – on North Second Street, from Bayard to Franklin;
- Existing crosswalks should be re-striped;
- “Pedestrian Crossing” signs should be installed at each intersection;
- During high-traffic times, signs reading “Stop for Pedestrians” should be placed in the middle of North Second Street, as is done on Riverside Drive; and
- “Art crosswalks” – creative and decorative crosswalks that act as public art – should be created in the prototype area, if at all possible.



## **6. Speed Limit**

Currently, the posted speed limit varies within the prototype area. It should be made consistent throughout this area at 25 mph, except in the school zone. And, the City should aggressively enforce the speed limit until motorists realize that they must slow down in Frenchtown.

## **7. Bikes**

There is a great desire locally for Frenchtown to be safe and welcoming to bicyclists. This should be done by:

- Installing “art racks” in the area – bike racks that serve as public art, as has been done near City Hall; and
- Installing signage that directs and leads bicyclists to Frenchtown from the Katy Trail and Blanchette Landing.

## **Growth Management**

The following steps should be taken to manage the type of investment that occurs in Frenchtown. The goal here is to allow and encourage the types of businesses and investment desired by the community.

### **1. Non-conforming Uses**

A “non-conforming use” is defined as a use of property (e.g., by a business) that legally existed before zoning changes were made and which continued after the zoning changes went into effect.

In St. Charles, if a non-conforming use closes, the owner of the property has one-year during which the same type of non-conforming business can be opened in the vacant space.

The one-year allowance is much too lenient and should, therefore, be changed to a 6-month period. This change will enable the community’s vision for Frenchtown to be attained much more quickly.

### **2. Zoning Ordinance**

Most of the commercial portion of Frenchtown is now zoned as the “Frenchtown Historic Commercial District.” Currently, several conditional uses allowed in the district are not compatible with the community’s vision for Frenchtown. Therefore, it is suggested that those conditional uses be removed from the ordinance, including the following:

- In-vehicle sales or service;
- Passenger vehicle or motorcycle sales, rental, service, detailing, body and fender repair and/or spray painting;
- Plumbing, heating, air conditioning shop (not involving furniture manufacture), appliance repairs and general service and repair establishments, similar in character to those listed in this item. No outside storage of material is permitted; and
- Small manufacturing establishments.

### **3. City Expediter**

There appears to be a high degree of interest on the part of investors in improving Frenchtown's commercial structures and opening businesses in the area. However, there seems to be some confusion regarding City review and approval processes.

To eliminate confusion, attract quality investors, and speed up the rate of quality investment in the commercial area, a City staff person should be appointed to serve as a "quality investment expediter."

The expediter's role would be to help investors navigate all City approval processes that are required for building modifications, business openings, and new construction. The goal of appointing an expediter would be to encourage and accelerate quality investment in Frenchtown.

### **4. Community Support**

The community should show their support for quality investors – defined as those who intend to make building changes that are consistent with Frenchtown's design guidelines and open/modify businesses of the types desired by the community.

This support should take the form of attending City Council meetings, City Board meetings, and City Commission meetings when such an investor is seeking City approval to move forward.

## **Business Mix**

The following steps should be taken to ensure that an appropriate range of businesses is attracted to Frenchtown and placed in appropriate locations throughout Frenchtown's business district.

### **1. Business Orientation**

The business orientation of Frenchtown should be:

- Art;
- Entertainment;
- Food; and
- Specialty retail to serve neighborhood needs first and then area residents and visitors.

### **2. Placement**

Impulse uses should be located on first floors, with office and residential above.

### **3. Business Development**

An aggressive and purposive retail recruitment effort should be undertaken for Frenchtown and should include the following steps. Business development efforts should be concentrated in the prototype area first.

- **Start With Frenchtown Businesses First**

The business recruitment effort should start with existing Frenchtown businesses interested in opening additional businesses in Frenchtown. Any existing Frenchtown business owners who express an interest in opening appropriate additional businesses in Frenchtown should be helped in any way possible and any incentives to improve building space, such as façade and fire suppression grants, should be made available to business owners opening new businesses.

- **Walk-In Business Prospects**

Walk-in business prospects (or their agents), who express an interest in locating in Frenchtown should be directed to the City Expediter. The City Expediter should serve as the point person for prospects. Naming a point-person who all prospects should go to or be directed to will allow clear channels of communication to be established and accurate information to be provided.

Through the City Expediter, prospects should be:

- Provided with information about Frenchtown locations for lease/sale;
- Accompanied on a Frenchtown walk-through;
- Introduced to successful Frenchtown business owners; and
- Encouraged to contact the owners/agents of available Frenchtown property.

The City Expediter should follow-up with prospects to provide any additional information or assistance needed to help them make their decision regarding Frenchtown as a business location.

- **Outreach**

A concerted effort should be made to entice successful, unique, independent, well-established businesses to open a business in Frenchtown. The outreach effort should be made by both the City's Economic Development Department and the Greater St. Charles County Chamber of Commerce. These two entities should take the lead in business recruitment.

The business recruitment effort should be done by:

- Identifying existing, strong businesses that are compatible with the economic niche/brand being created in Frenchtown;
- Contacting and meeting with the owners of those businesses; and
- Referring appropriate prospects to the City Expediter to work with and encourage the business to locate in Frenchtown.

Appropriate, successful, well-established business owners should be sought from:

- Throughout St. Charles;
- Throughout the greater St. Charles trade area; and

- Throughout the greater St. Louis metro area.

Business prospects should be encouraged to establish a presence in Frenchtown by:

- Relocating to Frenchtown;
- Opening an additional business in Frenchtown – of the type they now operate in another location or community; and/or
- Opening an additional business in Frenchtown – that is of a different type from their current business, but that also “fits” Frenchtown’s economic niche.

#### ***4. Food Truck Festival***

Several food truck events currently take place in St. Louis and throughout the region. Frenchtown should make every effort to get on their circuit and hold a food truck festival in the prototype area, on multiple occasions throughout the year if feasible.

## Central Square

In the *Frenchtown Economic Enhancement Strategy 2003*, it was recommended that a Central Square be created near where a very attractive landscaped area is now located – at the intersection of North Second Street and Lawrence.

This recommendation is still relevant and a Central Square is still needed to:

- Serve as a Frenchtown focal point;
- Create a place for the community to celebrate together;
- Provide a respite for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Create a grand entry to the ACF property and the future development desired there by the community;
- Link the northern and southern portions of the business district together; and
- Act as a symbol of Frenchtown's unique identity.

Central Square's design should:

- Emulate the high standards of quality and maintenance that have been established at Eco Park Trailhead;
- Incorporate French elements – as has been done at Eco Park Trailhead with benches that include the fleur-de-lis; and
- Include quality and unique public art that reflects Frenchtown's history, people, and personality.

## **Tax Increment Financing**

The State of Missouri allows for the creation of a funding mechanism that might be appropriate for Frenchtown in order to fund some level of public improvements, such as the recommended Central Square, enhanced streetscape, and landscape improvements at the North Third Street/370 interchange. This potential funding mechanism is called tax increment financing (TIF).

As noted by a white paper recently prepared by Armstrong Teasdale:

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a redevelopment tool used by Missouri local governments to underwrite redevelopment project costs that would otherwise make a redevelopment project economically unfeasible. TIF has its roots in urban renewal—it began in California in the late 1970s in reaction to cuts in federal funds available for community and economic development. Now nearly all 50 states, including Missouri, have adopted some form of TIF.

A TIF enables municipalities to finance certain redevelopment costs with the revenue generated from (i) payments in lieu of real estate taxes, as measured by the net increase in assessed valuation resulting from redevelopment and (ii) a portion of the increase in other local tax revenue associated with new economic activity.

TIF is a “pay-for-itself” and “pay-as-you-go” redevelopment tool. It is premised on the theory that by agreeing to underwrite certain redevelopment project costs, a local government can attract new private development in a redevelopment area, which will in turn generate the new tax revenues used to retire notes or bonds issued to pay for the redevelopment project costs.

When a TIF plan is adopted, real estate taxes in the redevelopment area are frozen at their current level. By applying the real estate tax rate of all taxing districts having taxing power within the redevelopment area to the increased assessed valuation resulting from redevelopment, a tax “increment” is produced. The real estate tax increments are referred to as payments in lieu of taxes, or “PILOTs,” and are deposited in a special allocation fund. In addition to PILOTs, fifty percent of certain local taxes generated by new economic activities in the redevelopment area, such as sales taxes and taxes on utility gross receipts (economic activity taxes, or “EATs”), are deposited in the special allocation fund.

It is strongly recommended that the City of St. Charles examine the potential for forming a TIF in Frenchtown to finance the cost of needed public improvements in Frenchtown. ACF and RV Park properties should be included in the TIF district.



## Longer-Range Projects

The following issues were raised repeatedly during sessions held to define this ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***. While these are valid topics that should be addressed, they should be recognized as:

- Being larger and broader in scope than the purview of the Frenchtown Revitalization Partnership;
- Requiring a great deal of time, money, and other resources to address; and
- Requiring a lengthy timeline to be successfully resolved.

Therefore, while the Frenchtown Revitalization Partnership might choose to participate in various discussions aimed at dealing with these issues, the Partnership should not take the lead in resolving them.

Instead, these issues should be addressed in the following manner.

### ***1. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street/370 Interchange and Corridor***

The North Third Street/370 Interchange and the North Third Street corridor are in need of public space beautification and maintenance.

It is understood that the City of St. Charles is about to take over responsibility for the 94 corridor from the State of Missouri. Therefore, it is suggested that the visual appeal of the interchange and corridor be improved by the City government:

- Completing a landscape and maintenance plan for the interchange;
- Defining a streetscape improvement plan for North Third Street, from the interchange to the roundabout; and
- Seeking a corporate partner to help fund these improvements.

## **2. Riverfront Development**

The community would greatly like to see housing developed along the Riverfront as a way to bring additional people and activity to the area. It should be recognized that, as North Second Street's economy and appeal are strengthened, the market demand for additional nearby housing will grow.

When demand is high enough to make riverfront development financially feasible, the following should be kept in mind:

- Appropriate uses along the river are housing, food establishments, passive recreation, and retail businesses that pertain to use of the river – such as bait shops and canoe rentals;
- Other specialty retail shops, which are of the type desired for North Second Street, should not be allowed along the river; and
- The City should work with FEMA to best determine possibilities for creating housing in this area.

## **3. Homelessness**

Local social service agencies and religious institutions – not the Frenchtown Revitalization Partnership – should spearhead any actions needed to address homelessness issues that occur in Frenchtown.

Implementation of this **Frenchtown Audit 2019** will result in more businesses, more people, and more activity on North Second Street. This increased animation, along with actions taken by social service agencies and religious institutions, will lessen the reality and the perception of homelessness in Frenchtown.

## **4. Special Business District**

There has been some discussion locally about creating a Special Business District (SBD) in Frenchtown. Doing so would allow a special assessment to be placed on commercial property located in the district.

While it might be appropriate to create a Frenchtown SBD in the future, it would be premature to try to create one now. This is because:

- The process to create an SBD is long and laborious and would divert the attention and resources of the Frenchtown Revitalization Partnership away from immediate implementation of this ***Frenchtown Audit 2019***;
- The special assessment would be passed on from property owners to the businesses renting from them, many of which are currently too fragile to sustain higher operating costs; and
- The annual revenue stream generated by the SBD would be nominal at this time.

## Appendix

Following is the scope of the services HyettPalma used to complete the Commercial District Audit for Frenchtown's North Second Street commercial area located in the City of St. Charles, Missouri.

The Commercial District Audit is prepared for a commercial district by HyettPalma through a process which employs a multitude of research techniques, including visioning, interviews, community meetings, issue sessions, and on-site analysis, further described below.

### **Startup**

To form our working partnership with the community, a local Steering Committee will be formed. The Steering Committee will serve as the group which coordinates the collection of local information and ensures that all appropriate sessions are arranged to enable maximum local involvement in completing the Commercial District Audit.

Specific individuals who should serve on the Steering Committee will be determined through consultation with the community. HyettPalma will work in partnership with the Steering Committee throughout the assignment.

At the outset, HyettPalma will obtain from the community all previously completed plans, studies, analyses, etc., prepared for the commercial district since HyettPalma's 2003 assignment in Frenchtown. This information will be reviewed to ensure a that HyettPalma has a clear understanding of all past work to enhance the commercial district.

### **Local Interviews and Frenchtown Vision Sessions**

As the project is started, HyettPalma will conduct interviews with "key" community leaders. A "key" community leader is defined as one who can either provide critical information or who is critical to the success of the further enhancement of Frenchtown's North Second Street.

Interviewees will be asked:

- Their opinion of Downtown as it stands today;
- The issues they think Downtown is facing; and
- Their opinion of what must be done to make Downtown the best it can be in the future.

As part of the project, a Frenchtown Vision Session will be conducted by HyettPalma. This session will be open to the public and should be widely and innovatively advertised in order to encourage maximum participation by attendees.

Efforts should be made to encourage Frenchtown's major constituents to attend. These include:

- Business owners;
- Property owners;
- Members of Frenchtown business organizations;
- Municipal officials and staff;
- Financial institution reps;
- Civic organization reps;
- Utility reps;
- Preservation group reps;
- Frenchtown residents;
- Media reps (management and reporting); and
- Funders and potential funders.

Those attending the Frenchtown Vision Session will be asked the following questions. These questions should be made available to participants in advance so that they can come to the session prepared to respond to the questions.

- If the citizens, the Frenchtown business community, and the government were to work together over the next 5 years to make Frenchtown's North Second Street the very best it could be, what would you like to see **result** from that effort?
- For you to consider those efforts a success, what would North Second Street **look** like in 5 years?
- What would the property and buildings in Frenchtown be **used for**?
- Who would the **customers and users** of our successful North Second Street be in 5 years?
- What kinds of **goods and services** would you be able to find here?
- What is the **image** you want North Second Street to have in 5 years

The Frenchtown Vision Session will be conducted in a manner that elicits discussion and motivates each of the constituents who attend the session to participate in defining a preferred vision for the future of Frenchtown's North Second Street.

### **Field Analysis**

During the on-site audit, HyettPalma will undertake an in-depth examination of Frenchtown and the overall community to ensure a thorough understanding of the overall condition and status of operations in the business district and throughout the broader community.



**Recommended Course of Action**

Based on the above, HyettPalma will prepare a written technical memo that includes:

- Documentation of the Frenchtown Vision -- as defined through the local meetings and discussions held with local constituents and moderated by HyettPalma;
- Documentation of the major issues now facing North Second Street -- issues that must be addressed in order to attain the Frenchtown Vision; and
- Recommended next steps -- a sequence of steps defined by HyettPalma as necessary so that the client can begin to address the identified issues, move toward the Frenchtown Vision, and start/redirect the overall North Second Street enhancement effort.