

DOWNTOWN SMITHVILLE HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY



PREPARED FOR:
The City of Smithville, Missouri

PREPARED BY:
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
METHODOLOGY	3
FIELD SURVEY	3
COMPILATION OF DATA.....	3
ARCHIVAL RESEARCH	3
DATA ANALYSIS.....	4
ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS	4
ESTABLISHING DATES OF CONSTRUCTION & PROPERTY HISTORIES.....	4
EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY	5
EVALUATION CRITERIA.....	7
NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY	9
SURVEY RESULTS.....	10
LOCATION AND SETTING.....	10
FUNCTIONAL PROPERTY TYPES	11
COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS	12
NON-COMMERCIAL PROPERTY TYPES	14
ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND BUILDING FORMS	15
COMMERCIAL BUILDING FORMS.....	15
ARCHITECTURAL STYLES.....	17
DATES OF CONSTRUCTION.....	18
INTEGRITY EVALUATION	19
HISTORIC CONTEXT	22
SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS.....	28
NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY	28
CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES	28
NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES	28
HISTORIC DISTRICT	30
CONCLUSION	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY	34
APPENDIX A – RESOURCE LIST.....	35

INTRODUCTION

The City of Smithville (City) contracted Rosin Preservation, LLC to conduct an intensive-level survey of historic resources in the downtown business district. The area surrounding the intersection of Main and Bridge Streets has been the heart of Smithville's commercial area since Calvin Smith platted the town in 1836. The of the original town site in the 1820s.

Tiffany Patterson, the former National Register Coordinator with the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office (MOSHPO), visited Smithville in February of 2012 to conduct a preliminary assessment of historic resources in the community. In a written report, she provided comments and recommendations based primarily on a visual assessment.

Rosin Preservation focused this survey on a roughly four-block area that comprises the commercial district (see Figure 1). This boundary includes the majority of non-residential buildings built before 1965 in downtown Smithville. While the survey focused on the business district, the team noticed several residential properties outside this boundary that may have significance and merit further evaluation.

The survey process evaluated the resources within the project boundary to generate a more comprehensive picture of commercial development patterns in Smithville and to identify resources that may form a National Register Historic District, making them eligible for financial incentives for preservation, such as state and federal historic tax credits.

To that end, the Downtown Smithville Historic Resources Survey encompassed two objectives:

- 1) to identify, record, photograph, and evaluate through intensive-level architectural/historic survey those individual properties and potential historic districts in the project area that, on the basis of age and integrity, meet the eligibility criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and to substantiate such assessments; and
- 2) to identify and characterize those portions of the project area which, on the basis of insufficient age or integrity, warrant no further study to exclude them from consideration for nomination in the National Register of Historic Places and to substantiate such assessments.

During January and February 2013, Rosin Preservation principal, Elizabeth Rosin and associate Kristen Ottesen completed survey activities. Ms. Rosin and Ms. Ottesen initiated the project by visiting Smithville to drive the area and establish survey boundaries for the survey area. Ms. Ottesen completed the field survey, photography, and archival research in February. During March and April Ms. Ottesen entered data into a Microsoft Access database. Finally, Ms. Rosin and Ms. Ottesen analyzed the data and developed management recommendations. Ms. Ottesen, assisted by Ms. Rosin, prepared this report of findings.

This report, through the historic contexts it presents, connects downtown Smithville's built environment to the city's past. More specifically, it establishes relationships between resources that share historical themes, time frames, and geographic areas. Revitalization will be successful if the community embraces and celebrates the architectural past of downtown Smithville as a record of the community's shared history.

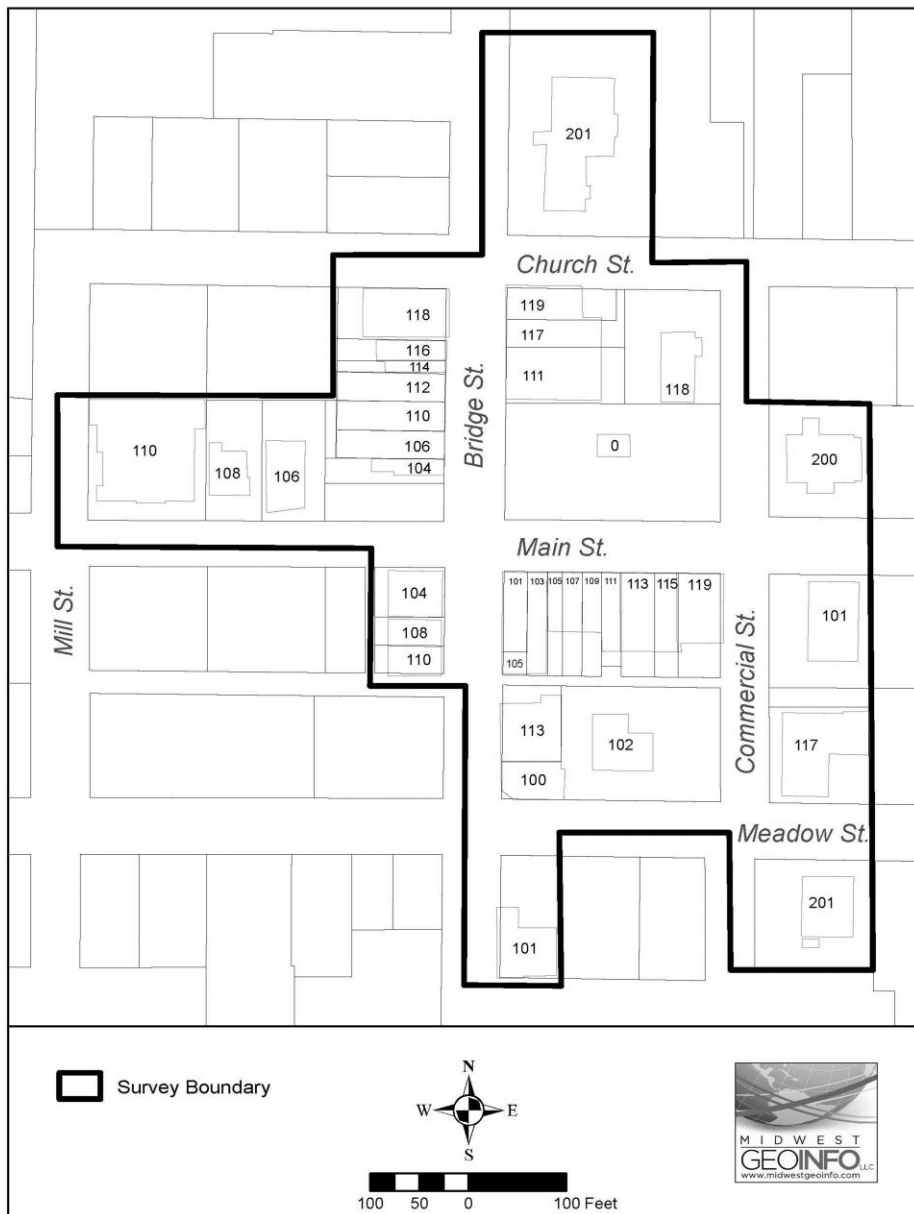


Figure 1.
Survey Boundary

METHODOLOGY

Rosin Preservation completed the Downtown Smithville Historic Resources Survey in conformance with the procedures for intensive-level survey outlined in *National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Survey: A Basis for Preservation Planning*, and *Instructions for Completing the Architectural/Historic Inventory Form* established by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office. Information for each building was recorded on *Architectural/Historic Inventory Form* also developed by the State Historic Preservation Office. Evaluation of resources for significance was in accordance with *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.

FIELD SURVEY

Rosin Preservation performed a preliminary site visit to identify the extent of commercial and non-historic properties in downtown Smithville in order to establish survey boundaries. During field survey the consultant examined every resource in the survey area regardless of age or historic function. The team took high-resolution digital photographs and recorded information about the exterior physical appearance of each resource, specifically building materials, architectural style, and condition. Primary elevation photographs conform to Missouri SHPO standards for survey documentation.

COMPILATION OF DATA

Rosin Preservation compiled survey information in a Microsoft Access database using a template based on the Missouri SHPO Historic Resources Survey Form. The database fields record each building's physical features (e.g., plan, materials, architectural style and/or property type, outbuildings, etc.) as well as historical information (e.g., date of construction, original and current function). When linked with digital records from past and future surveys, this database will enhance the understanding of historic resources in Smithville. The database can also use the City's parcel identification information system to link to Geographic Information System (GIS) and mapping software to facilitate analysis and to create visual presentations of the data. Because each parcel can contain more than one building, additional entries were created in the database so that each surveyed resource would have its own entry.¹ The final database contains 38 entries.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Historical research is critical to understanding the commercial history of Smithville and the evolution of the built environment. Research occurred concurrently with field survey and data review. This approach allowed the team to merge field and research data to create a strong and understandable relationship between the events in Smithville's history and its built environment, to develop a historic context for the survey area, and to establish dates of construction for individual properties.

¹ The Clay County Public GIS on-line viewer and the Google aerial view maps were used to determine separate building footprints.

A variety of primary and secondary resources provided background information about the people, buildings, and developments within Smithville that created the contemporary urban core. The consultants reviewed written histories of Smithville and Clay County, as well as other primary and secondary resources and maps. Materials were gathered from the Mid-Continent Public Library (Midwest Genealogy Center branch) and from the Missouri Valley Room at the Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library. The Smithville branch of the Mid-Continent library did not have any additional archival resources. Both repositories have pertinent primary resources in their general collections. Mid-Continent Public Library has one historic city directory dating to 1929. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* for Smithville were accessed on-line through Mid-Continent Public Library. Life-long Smithville resident Frank Justus helped fill gaps in the historical recorded via additional accounts provided in emails to Ed Holicky and Steven Garret, which were passed on to Rosin Preservation.

DATA ANALYSIS

The consultants analyzed three categories of data to identify contiguous historic districts and/or individual properties that appear potentially eligible for National Register listing. Since the survey boundaries pre-sorted for non-residential function, the following three categories address issues important in determining the significance of a property or properties and National Register eligibility.

- Architectural Style/Property Type
- Date of Construction
- Architectural Integrity

The “Survey Results” section of this report provides a detailed description of this analysis and the survey findings.

Architectural Analysis

After compiling and reviewing the results of the field survey, Rosin Preservation analyzed architectural styles and vernacular property types by reviewing photographs and database information. Rosin Preservation assigned each building an architectural style and/or vernacular property type. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* by Richard Longstreth provided guidance for identifying properties by architectural style, building form, and function and ensured the use of terminology consistent with National Register nomenclature.

Establishing Dates of Construction and Property Histories

Neither city records nor Clay County tax assessor records provided any dates of building construction. The team next consulted archival sources from the Mid-Continent Public Library. When these sources were not fruitful, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* were consulted for clues to construction dates. These provided very little information. Most dates were estimated based on the physical features and architectural style of the resource. Estimated dates are indicated in the database with the addition of “circa” before the date.

Evaluation of Integrity

All properties eligible for listing in the National Register, whether for individual significance or as contributing elements to a historic district, must retain sufficient architectural integrity to convey the period of time in which they are significant.² The National Park Service uses the following areas to define integrity. A property must retain integrity in a majority of these areas to be eligible for the register.

- Location: The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- Design: The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- Setting: The physical environment of a historic property.
- Materials: The physical elements that were combined during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- Workmanship: The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- Feeling: A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- Association: The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.³

Based on visual inspection, each building received an integrity rating of Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor based primarily on how much of the building's original design, workmanship, exterior materials, and overall feeling of a past period of time remain.⁴

When evaluating the architectural integrity and potential register eligibility of individual resources, the consultants employed the "glass half-full" approach, considering the reversibility of alterations as well as the quality of alterations. The goal was to give as many buildings as possible the opportunity to access state and federal historic tax credits to help fund rehabilitation and adaptive-reuse, either as individually-eligible resources or as contributing resources to a historic district. The following criteria served as the basis for rating architectural integrity in this survey.

² A contributing property to a historic district does not have to meet the same threshold for significance or integrity as an individual landmark, but it must contribute to the significance of the district. Properties contributing to a district that is significant in the area of architecture must retain a higher degree of architectural integrity than properties in a district significant for associations with an important individual or with historical events or patterns of history.

³ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, DC: National Register Publications, 1998), 45.

⁴ Architectural integrity differs from physical condition. A building with excellent integrity may be in very poor condition; conversely, a building with very poor integrity may be in excellent condition.

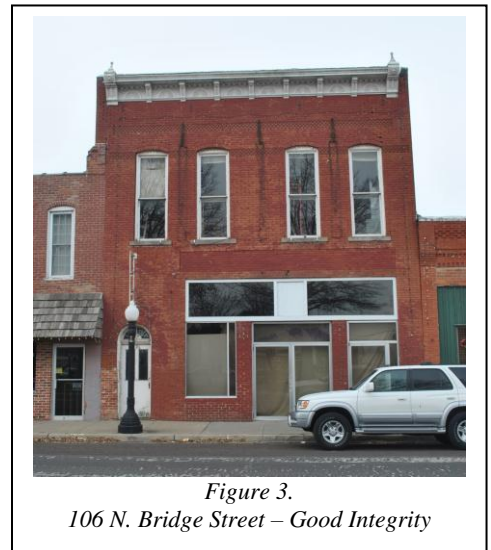
Excellent

- The majority of the building's openings are unaltered or were altered in a sensitive and appropriate manner using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the original building elements;
- The exterior cladding material has not been altered;
- Significant decorative elements are intact;
- Design elements intrinsic to the building's style are intact;
- The overall feeling or character of the building for the time period in which it was erected is intact. Changes over a period of time are sympathetic and compatible to the original design in color, size, scale, massing, and materials;
- Character-defining elements from the time period in which the building had significant associations with events or important individuals remain intact; and
- If over fifty years in age, the building appears to be individually eligible for listing in the State or National Register of Historic Places or would be a contributing element to a historic district.



Good

- Some alteration of original building openings or spaces has occurred using new materials and profiles, but not causing irreversible damage to the original configuration of openings and spaces;
- Significant portions of original exterior cladding materials remain;
- Significant decorative elements remain intact;
- Alterations to the building are reversible and the historic character of the property could be easily restored;
- Additions to a secondary elevation are in an appropriate manner, respecting the materials, scale, and character of the original building design;
- The historic feeling or character of the building is slightly weakened by change or lack of maintenance; and
- The building would be a contributing element to a historic district and/or it might be independently eligible for register listing if restored in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.



Fair

- The majority of the building's openings were altered in an inappropriate manner using new materials, profiles, and sizes;
- Exterior cladding material has been altered or added; however, there is some indication upon visual inspection that if removed, enough of the original cladding material might remain that the property could be restored to its original appearance;
- Additions were made in a manner respecting the materials, scale, and character of the original building design and, if removed, the essential form of the building remained intact;
- Historic feeling or character of the building is compromised, but the property could be restored, although reversal of alterations and removal of inappropriate materials could be costly; and
- If restored in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and if the property has associations with a district's area of significance, the property might be a contributing resource to a historic district.



Poor

- The majority of the building's openings, such as windows and doors, were altered in an inappropriate manner using new materials, profiles, and sizes;
- Exterior materials were altered;
- Alterations are irreversible or would be extremely difficult, costly, and possibly physically damaging to the building to reverse;
- Later additions do not respect the materials, scale, or character of the original building design;
- The overall historic feeling and character of the building is significantly compromised; and
- Further investigations after removal of non-historic materials and alterations may reveal that the structure retains greater architectural integrity than originally apparent and should be re-evaluated.



Evaluation Criteria

In addition to retaining the integrity of their historic architectural design, properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places must meet certain criteria of historic significance. Historic significance is the importance of a property to the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture of a community, a state, or the nation. To be listed, properties must have significance in at least one of the following areas.

- Criterion A: Association with events, activities, or broad patterns of history.
- Criterion B: Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- Criterion C: Embody distinctive characteristics of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- Criterion D: Have yielded, or be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criteria A and/or C, properties must retain strong integrity in the areas of association and location. To be eligible for **individual** listing under Criterion A, a building should retain a high degree of architectural integrity in setting, materials, and workmanship for its period of significance. It should also clearly illustrate its architectural style or property type, possessing the distinct physical characteristics that define it as this property type. For example, because many commercial resources in the survey area are one or two stories tall, are on narrow lots, and have restrained commercial styling, it is important that the primary façade retain its original fenestration and spatial arrangements; in particular, the historic storefront elements or entrance treatments that define this property type. In addition to the above requirements, to be listed as an **individual** resource under Criterion C, the property must be an outstanding example of a specific style of architecture, retaining excellent integrity in setting, materials, and the architectural elements that define the style.

To be eligible for listing as a **contributing element** to a historic district under Criterion A, a property should retain sufficient stylistic and structural features to link the property with its period of significance. Specifically, integrity of façade arrangement and fenestration are important. Additions are acceptable if they are on secondary elevations and are subordinate in size, scale, and massing to the original building. On commercial buildings, façade arrangement and fenestration define the property type. The primary façade should retain sufficient character-defining elements to express the distinct separation of upper floors from the ground floor. The individual historic windows do not have to be present as long as the rhythm of the fenestration and bays is evident. Window, door, and storefront infill or replacement should not destroy or obscure original openings. These types of alterations must be judged in accordance with the architectural style and impact on character-defining features to determine if the property retains sufficient integrity to contribute to a district. Alterations to the primary façades of large buildings may be acceptable if they do not alter a significant portion of the façade and the original appearance of the façade can be restored. Alterations to the façades of simple small buildings should be minimal and should not significantly impact the original appearance of the building. In addition to the above requirements, buildings that are part of a larger grouping may also be eligible for listing as **contributing elements** to a district under Criterion C as representative examples of a specific style of architecture or vernacular property type. In both instances, integrity of design, materials, and workmanship associated with its period of significance are necessary.

National Register Eligibility

Physical characteristics and historic significance provide the basis for evaluating resources for their National Register eligibility. Information about each resource, such as date, function, associations, and physical characteristics, also affects the significance of the property.

The consultants analyzed data relating to the architectural integrity and historic significance of each property within the survey area to identify contiguous districts and individual properties that appear potentially eligible for National Register listing.⁵ Rosin Preservation used the following standard terminology to complete this analysis.

- **Individually Eligible** applies to those properties that retain excellent architectural integrity and clearly represent associations with established historic context(s).
- **Contributing to a District** applies to properties located within a historic district that enhance the district's historic associations and the historic architectural qualities for which the district is significant. A National Register District is a significant concentration of sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are united historically or aesthetically by design or physical development. Contributing properties do not have to be individually distinctive, but must contribute to a grouping that achieves significance as a whole. The majority of the components that define a district's historic character, even if they are individually undistinguished, must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A property that independently meets the National Register Criteria for Evaluation can also be a contributing property to a district if it has associations with the district's areas of significance. Contributing buildings typically have "Excellent" or "Good" integrity, although there may be occasions where resources with "Fair" integrity are contributing.
- **Not Eligible** applies to individual properties no longer possess historical integrity due to alterations or to properties that are located within a historic district but have lost their historical integrity, were not present during the period of significance or do not relate to the documented significance of the district. Buildings with integrity ratings of "Fair" may become eligible as contributing resources if non-historic alterations are reversed.
- **Less than Fifty Years of Age** applies to properties that are less than fifty years of age. The National Register Criteria for Evaluation exclude properties that achieved significance within the last fifty years, unless they are of exceptional importance. Fifty years is the general threshold of time needed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance. For this Survey, the fifty-year cut-off was 1963. Buildings in this category that received integrity ratings of excellent or good may be eligible for the National Register once they reach fifty years.

⁵ The Missouri State Historic Preservation Office staff makes official determinations of National Register eligibility for properties in Missouri.

SURVEY RESULTS

The Downtown Smithville Historic Resources Survey examined thirty-eight resources flanking Main Street, Bridge Street, Commercial Street, and Meadow Street. This area comprises the primary historic commercial area in Smithville. The survey included sixteen properties along North and South Bridge Streets between Church Street and Meadow Street plus the church at the northeast corner of Church and Bridge Streets; thirteen properties along East and West Main Street between Mill Street plus the church at the northeast corner of the intersection of Commercial and Main Streets; three properties along North and South Commercial Streets between Church Street and Meadow Street plus the property at the southeast corner of Meadow and Commercial Streets; and three properties along Meadow Street between Bridge and Commercial Streets.

The thirty-eight surveyed resources document the development and evolution of Smithville from its boom in the late nineteenth century to the quaint town it is today. All of the resources were evaluated as described above, according to their historic function, date of construction, architectural style, and integrity. Appendix A describes the findings for each resource.

LOCATION AND SETTING

The intersection of Bridge (north-south) and Main (east-west) Streets defines the epicenter of Smithville's historic commercial district. This intersection marks the "0" line, both north-south and east-west, on the orthogonal grid of Smithville. The Little Platte River runs along the north edge of downtown. The blocks that comprise the historic commercial district are relatively flat.

Rosin Preservation drew the survey boundary to encompass an area of predominantly commercial resources at the heart of historic downtown Smithville. Outside the boundary, the building types quickly transition to residential uses.

The buildings lining North and South Bridge Street and East Main Street (the core of Smithville's historic commercial area) present a dense cohesive street wall of brick commercial buildings between one and two stories tall with shared party walls. All buildings occupy between one and two city lots. The buildings directly abut concrete sidewalks, presenting a cohesive streetscape of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial architecture.

Several auto-related resources dot the east and south sides of the survey area. These have an inherently different setting to accommodate vehicular access. The free-standing buildings are set back from the sidewalk and are surrounded by paved lots on the primary elevations and grassy yards on the rear elevations. Although not auto-related, the three buildings on the north side of the 100 block of West Main Street are also freestanding and are surrounded by yards. However, the commercial building at 106 W. Main Street directly abuts the public sidewalk.

The churches at 201 N. Bridge Street and 200 E. Main Street occupy large parcels and are surrounded by large yards. The First Christian Church has a pastoral setting, its large grassy lawn abutting the banks of the Little Platte River.

A city park fills the north side of the 100 block of East Main Street. The land that comprises the park has generally been vacant since the mid-twentieth century. It was used as a lot for the Chevrolet dealer until the mid-1970s. A modern bandstand-like structure occupies the center of the park. A modern structure housing restrooms occupies the east end of the park.

Throughout the survey area, concrete sidewalks line the two-lane roads. The roads are wide enough to accommodate parallel parking on either side of the two lanes.

FUNCTIONAL PROPERTY TYPES

In order to better understand the development of downtown Smithville, the consultants identified the surveyed properties based on their original function as well as their architectural style and/or vernacular building form. A property type is a set of individual resources that share physical or associative characteristics. Property types link the ideas incorporated in the historic contexts with actual buildings that illustrate those ideas. By examining resources according to (1) historic function and (2) architectural style, the analysis addressed both shared functional characteristics as well as physical (architectural style/building form/type) characteristics.

Figure 6. Historic Function

Function	Total
Commercial	25
Specialty Store	16
Financial Institution	2
Business	2
Auto-Garage	5
Health Care	1
Recreation & Culture	1
Religion	2
Government	1
Social	2
Funerary	1
Other/Park	1
Domestic	1
Unknown	3
Total	38

Drawn from the National Register subcategories for function and use, the consultants identified different categories of historic building functions for the surveyed properties. While the functions of some buildings have changed from their original use, this analysis was based on known building functions in the 1920s, the primary historic period for which there are sufficient archival records. The overwhelming

majority of resources are commercial (retail) buildings, followed by resources that contributed to the social and collective needs of the community, such as churches, a theater, social halls, the post office, and the hospital. There is some architectural diversity within each of these functional categories, reflecting the span of construction from circa 1890 to the 1990s.

COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The buildings in the Downtown Smithville survey area are predominantly commercial with 63% (24) of the thirty-eight buildings identified as such. These resources exhibit two building forms: one-part commercial blocks and two-part commercial blocks. The variety of businesses housed in these buildings reflects the needs of a thriving town. They represent functional subcategories such as specialty stores (16), financial institutions (2), businesses or professional offices (2), and auto-garages (5). Archival research identified additional types of businesses present during Smithville’s early years, including numerous general stores; tavern/saloons; drug stores; grocery and butcher shops; blacksmiths and livery stables; and jewelry, furniture, and shoe stores.⁶ It is unknown how many of these were located within the survey boundaries or housed in buildings that no longer exist.

Usually sited on one or two lots, the older commercial buildings in Smithville are brick. They have flat roofs and rectangular plans oriented with the short end facing the street. A defining feature of the early commercial property types is a well-defined ground floor “storefront” that distinctly separates it from the upper stories and reflects a difference in public and private uses. Storefronts housed retail or wholesale vending, showroom, or office spaces, as well as public entry to upper floors.

Stylistic treatments for the commercial properties in the survey area reflect architectural styles popular in the era in which they were built. Depending on the date of construction, structural elements include load-bearing stone and brick walls, concrete block, or steel members. Similarly, storefronts incorporate combinations of brick, glass, metal, stone veneer and wood. Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century commercial buildings have decorative ornament at the cornice.

Specialty Stores

The overwhelming majority of small commercial buildings surveyed housed retail sales or service functions that are typical of business districts throughout the country, identified broadly as the “specialty store.” The specialty store includes any commercial entity where goods are available for purchase. One- to two-story business houses accommodated the small operations that provided wholesale or retail sales involving the receipt and distribution of goods. Goods and services offered in specialty stores on Main and Bridge Streets in downtown Smithville varied from the grocery/meat store at 115 E. Main Street (c. 1920,



Figure 7.
115 E. Main Street – Specialty Store

⁶ Mrs. Howard Taylor and Mrs. Harold Harris, *Notes From Yesterday*, 1966, p 46-47. Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, Missouri Valley Room.

Figure 7) to the auto service station at 111 N. Bridge (c. 1920) to the drug store in the south commercial space of 104 S. Bridge Street (c. 1920). The majority of these resources were constructed before 1965, with only five resources constructed between 1966 and the 1990s.

Financial Institutions

The two resources identified as financial institutions are simple one-part and two-part commercial blocks constructed in brick. These two buildings anchor the southwest and southeast corners of Main and Bridge Streets. The location in the center of the business district illustrates the importance of this functional type in the development of the city, as the presence of banking institutions indicates successful commerce. The First Bank of Smithville at 104 S. Bridge Street (SW corner) was constructed in 1889 (Figure 8). The bank occupied the north half of the building while a drug store occupied the south half. The bank at the SE corner appears to have been the Farmers Bank.



Figure 8.
104 S. Bridge Street – Financial Institution

Auto Garages

At least five commercial buildings scattered around the east and south periphery of the survey area were constructed to service automobiles. This resource type developed a presence in Smithville in the mid-twentieth century just outside the historic commercial core where larger plots of land were available. They are typically one story structures, often with rambling footprints that reflect expansion over a period of time. Defining features include a small office area and one or more large vehicular bays (Figure 9). These earliest buildings date from c. 1935-1945. There are two buildings (101 S. Commercial and 201 S. Commercial) for which the original use has not been documented, but the large vehicular openings strongly suggest they were built for automotive purposes. These Butler buildings were built circa 1965-1970.



Figure 9.
101 E. Meadow Street – Automobile Garage

Other Commercial Property Types

Two resources were occupied by offices/businesses during the 1920s. 114 N. Bridge (c. 1890, Figure 10) and 107 E. Main Street (c. 1900) are the only two resources identified as historically having business functions. Invariably, there were more, but the limited available archival resources (Sanborn maps from 1920 and 1928, a city directory from

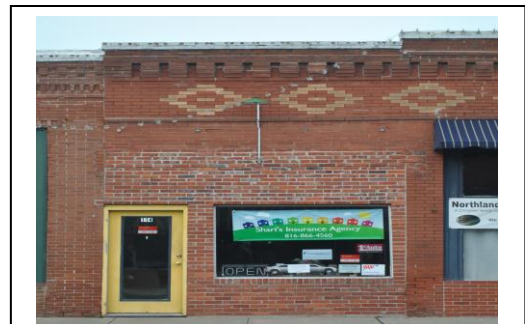


Figure 10.
114 N. Bridge Street – Professional Offices

1929, and a few books) did not identify any others. These are both one-story one-part commercial blocks with simple brick fronts. An undertaker occupied 117 E. Main Street in 1920. By the late 1920s it was occupied by a specialty store.

NON-COMMERCIAL PROPERTY TYPES

The thirteen (37%) non-commercial resources in the survey area represent a range of functions. Two were constructed as churches, one as a post office, one as a movie theater, one as a hospital, one as a single-family residence, and two as social halls. The final non-commercial resource is the city park. Although the movie theater served a commercial function, the National Register of Historic Places defines this property type as “Recreational.” All of these buildings except for the residential structure contribute to and support the context for Smithville’s commercial district.

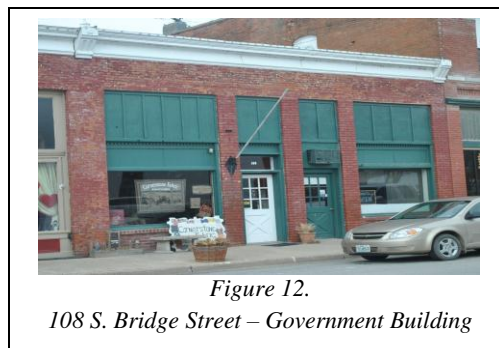
Churches

There are two churches within the survey area. The First Christian Church is located at 201 N. Bridge Street (*Figure 11*). The 1927 Gothic Revival building was augmented by an addition to the northeast corner in 1998. It continues to serve its original congregation. The second church at 200 E. Main Street was built c. 1925 in the Classical Revival style for an unidentified congregation. A Montessori school currently occupies the building. These two buildings have the most high style architectural design in the survey area.



Government Buildings

One building (108 S. Bridge Street, *Figure 12*) in the survey area historically housed the Smithville post office. Built c. 1890, it is not clear if it was constructed specifically for this use. The one-story one-part commercial block has a brick front. Its form and styling closely resemble that of other commercial buildings in the downtown area.



Social/Civic Buildings

Two surveyed buildings were constructed as social halls. 106 N. Bridge Street was constructed c. 1890 for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF), and the Masonic Hall at 119 N. Bridge Street (*Figure 13*) was constructed c. 1903. Both of these buildings are two-part commercial blocks constructed of red brick. The social halls occupied the entire second floor, while the first floor provided commercial space.



ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND BUILDING FORMS

Classifications based on shared physical attributes include categorization by architectural styles and/or vernacular building forms. The architectural styles and vernacular forms identified in the survey area and assigned to the surveyed properties follow the terminology and classifications accepted by the National Register of Historic Places program. This hierarchy and nomenclature relies heavily on the forms and styles discussed for commercial buildings in *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* by Richard Longstreth. Longstreth classifies commercial buildings by building function and form, such as the “one-part commercial block.” This terminology is often combined with the building’s style (i.e., “Italianate one-part commercial block”). The thirty-eight surveyed buildings include three that represent formal architectural styles. The remaining thirty-five have simple early-twentieth century commercial facades or no discernible style.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING FORMS

Commercial architecture is distinguished first by building form and second by its architectural style. In *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, Richard Longstreth identifies and categorizes buildings common to central business districts and neighborhood commercial areas according to the composition of their façades. Despite intricate detailing and stylistic treatments or the lack thereof, the organization of the commercial façade can be reduced to simple patterns that reveal major divisions or zones. Due to their functional nature, many commercial buildings exhibit restrained architectural details. The cornice area followed by the first-story storefront are the most prominent and distinctive features of a commercial building. In addition to the storefront, cornice, and parapet, important character-defining elements of commercial buildings include bulkheads, transoms, signs, and doors.

Figure 14. Building forms

One-Part Commercial Block	19
Two-Part Commercial Block	5
Butler building	3
National Folk Form	1
Free-Standing Commercial Block	6
Not Applicable (Park, hospital, churches)	4
Total	38

Commercial buildings and the streetscapes they create define the distinct functional and visual character of the survey area. Dating from the late 1800s through the late twentieth century, most of the surveyed commercial buildings are simple, one- and two-story structures. The traditional building material is brick.

The most conspicuous alterations reflect the modernization of first-story display windows and entrances. Many of these alterations have left the original openings and spatial relationships of the storefront intact. Other changes are easily reversible, such as the addition of awnings and applications of wood or metal sheathing over original openings or transoms. Where left exposed, the upper stories usually retain their historic integrity and original appearance and are the principal means to identify the building's original style.

Utilizing Longstreth's basic commercial building property types, the most abundant in the survey area are One-Part Commercial Block building types. The categorizations of One- or Two-Part Commercial Blocks, and Free-Standing Commercial Block apply to buildings four stories and under. The majority of the commercial building forms represented in the survey area are One-Part Commercial Blocks (19), Free-Standing Commercial Blocks (6), and Two-Part Commercial Blocks (5).

One-Part Commercial Block

The One-Part Commercial Block building is a simple one-story cube with a decorated façade. In many examples, the street frontage is narrow and the façade comprises little more than plate glass windows and an entrance with a cornice or parapet spanning the width of the façade. These buildings share party walls with adjacent buildings. A typical example is 103 E. Main Street (*Figure 15*). The three buildings at 113, 115, and 117 E. Main Street share Italianate design influences but are defined by the one-part commercial block form (*Figure 16*).

Two-Part Commercial Block

Slightly more complex than their one-story cousins, Two-Part Commercial Blocks are typically two- to four- stories in height. They have a clear visual separation of use between the first-story customer service/retail space and the upper-story office, meeting room, or residential uses. Similar to One-Part Commercial Block buildings, the styling of the first story focuses on the storefront glazing and entrance(s). The design of the upper stories identifies the building's architectural influences. A prime example of a two-part commercial block is 106 N. Bridge Street, which has Italianate influences defined by a dentiled, bracketed cornice and segmental arched window openings (*Figure 17*).



Figure 15.
103 E. Main Street – One Part Commercial Block



Figure 16.
117 E. Main Street – One Part Commercial Block with Italianate influences.



Figure 17.
106 N. Bridge Street – Two-Part Commercial Block with Italianate influences.

Free-Standing Commercial Block

The Free-Standing Commercial Block form is related to the One-Part Commercial Block, but is a separate property type. It is more commonly a late-twentieth century commercial development that occupies a lot independent of the surrounding streetscape (Figure 15). Examples of the Free-Standing form house government offices, banks, auto service stations and convenience stores, fast food restaurants, and a variety of retail and professional businesses. In downtown Smithville these generally house auto-related businesses.



Figure 18.
100 E. Meadow Street – Free-Standing Commercial Block

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

While simple vernacular design defines the vast majority of the buildings in downtown Smithville, a few buildings exhibit formal architecture styling. These include the two churches and one commercial building that fall within the National Register categories of *Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Revivals* and *Modern Movement*. Figure 19 shows the breakdown of surveyed resources by architectural style.

Figure 19. Architectural Style

Late 19 th & Early 20 th Century Classical Revival	1
Modern/Modern Movement	1
Late 19 th & Early 20 th Century Gothic Revival	1
No Discernible Style	35
Total	38



Figure 20.
201 N. Bridge Street -- Gothic Revival.

Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Revivals

Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Revival styles became popular as large architect-designed residences featured popular European styles of the past. In 1893 the Columbian Exposition in Chicago featured historically accurate interpretations of European styles. Millions of people were exposed to the buildings, further popularizing revival styles. Soon, revival styling was applied to all types of buildings including residential, commercial, and institutional. The trend lasted well into the middle twentieth century. There are two examples of various Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Revival styles in the survey area. Both are churches. The First Christian Church of Smithville at 201 N. Bridge Street is Gothic Revival in style, defined by pointed arch windows, steeply pitched clay-tile clad roof, and



Figure 21.
200 E. Main Street -- Classical Revival.

crenellated cast stone canopy above the main entrance. The church at 200 E. Main Street is Classical Revival, defined by the prominent two-story columned portico supporting a pedimented gable roof, symmetrical façade, and multi-light windows on the side and rear elevations.

Modern Movement

The Modern Movement genre encompasses the variety of architectural styles developed in the mid-twentieth century that broke from the historical revival styles of previous eras. Beginning in the 1920s and continuing into the 1970s, architects sought inspiration in the innovations of man and machine rather than in the architecture of the past or in nature. The goal was to create completely new forms that reflected the energy, creativity, and engineering ingenuity of the age. As the first formal style to emerge from the Modern Movement, Art Deco utilized stylized geometric ornament to emphasize modernity and progress. Subsequent styles, such as Streamline Moderne, International, and New Formalism, stripped the building of all formal ornament. Form, construction, and man-made materials became the main components of architectural expression. These later styles were predominantly used for large-scale, free-standing commercial buildings in urban areas. The one-story commercial building at 106 W. Main Street (*Figure 22*) has Modern Movement styling defined by the asymmetrical façade, brick veneer, and shallow-pitched gable roof.



Figure 22.
106 W. Main Street – Modern Movement

Form, construction, and man-made materials became the main components of architectural expression. These later styles were predominantly used for large-scale, free-standing commercial buildings in urban areas. The one-story commercial building at 106 W. Main Street (*Figure 22*) has Modern Movement styling defined by the asymmetrical façade, brick veneer, and shallow-pitched gable roof.

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION

The consultants utilized archival sources and Sanborn Maps, and estimations based on building styling as described in the Methodology to estimate dates of construction. The dates of building additions and/or alterations were not considered in this analysis. Figure 23 presents the distribution of buildings by estimated date of construction. Figure 25 maps the distribution of buildings by this same criteria.

Figure 23. Dates of Construction

Era	Total	Percent
1890 – 1899	12	32
1900 – 1917	9	24
1918 – 1939	7	18
1940 – 1965	5	13
1966 – present	5	13
Total	38	100

Fifty-five percent of the resources in the survey area were constructed before World War I, with two building booms circa the 1880s and the early 1910s. A third building boom shortly after World War I included the construction of institutional buildings - two large churches and the hospital. Beginning in

the 1940s, the construction of automobile-related buildings occurred around the periphery of the historic commercial district.

INTEGRITY

All properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places must retain sufficient architectural integrity to convey the period of time for which they are significant. As described above in the Methodology, each building received an integrity rating of Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor based on the degree of alteration to its exterior facades. Figure 24 presents the results of that analysis. Figure 26 maps the distribution of buildings by integrity rating.

Figure 24. Integrity Evaluation

Integrity	Total	Percent
Excellent	11	29
Good	15	39
Fair	9	24
Poor	3	8
Total	38	100

Integrity ratings represent a sliding scale of alterations to the historic fabric and the features of individual buildings. Both the quantity of changes and the reversibility of changes affected the ranking each building received. Buildings rated “Excellent” and some rated “Good” may be individually eligible for register listing if they also have significant associations that meet one or more of the National Register Criteria. Buildings that received an integrity rating of “Excellent,” “Good” and some rated as “Fair” could be listed as contributing resources to a historic district. An integrity rating of “Poor” and in some cases “Fair” reflects the presence of numerous alterations that significantly diminish architectural integrity, regardless of historical significance. It is possible that many of the surveyed buildings rated “Fair” may retain some or all of their original historic fabric behind later alterations, such as siding, and if these changes were reversed they may improve their integrity ranking and register eligibility.



Figure 25. Survey Area – Dates of Construction

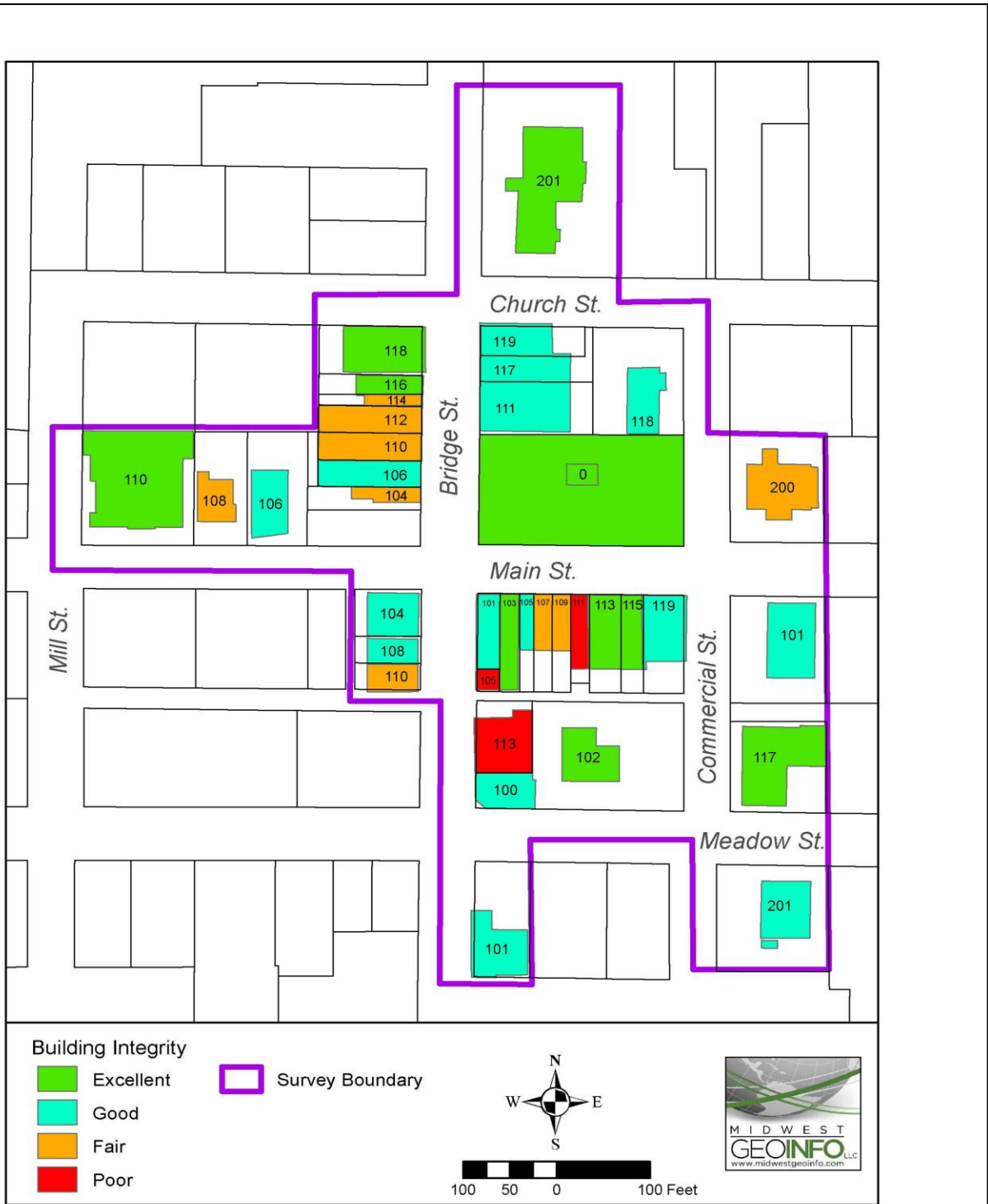


Figure 26. Survey Area – Integrity

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Smithville, originally called Smith's Mill, was founded by Humphrey "Yankee" Smith in 1822. Born in New Jersey in 1774, Smith lived in New York before moving to Missouri in the late 1810s. In 1822 Smith, his wife, and seven children settled on 160 acres along Smith's Fork of the Little Platte River. Although further away from the Missouri River than most settlements, Smith chose this location because of its proximity to government Indian agencies and to new settlers, which could provide steady business for the water-powered flour mill he built two years later next to the cabin using equipment he brought from New York. The family operated the mill, near the present-day intersection of Main and Liberty streets, from 1824 until 1853, when it was purchased by Col. Lewis Wood. Smith also started the first store in Smithville in 1828, adjacent to his mill and home. His son Calvin managed the store. It eventually passed into the hands of Calvin's son, Erastus, and finally to Mounce Byrd, a local businessman, in 1880.

The town grew dramatically in 1826 with the arrival of a group of ninety-three immigrants from Kentucky.⁷ The following years brought several more settlers to the nascent town, including merchants Henry Owens and James Lerty. By 1835 the community had a way station for horses and a post office. In 1836 the U.S. Land Office granted eighty acres of the original townsite to Calvin Smith, son of Humphrey Smith, and the town was officially renamed Smithville.⁸ In 1843 the Church of Christ, later the First Christian Church, and the Methodist Church were the first religious organizations established in Smithville. Just five years later, the Church of Christ congregation erected a simple, unassuming brick church for \$1,000.

A major flood in 1844 did not discourage the townspeople. Smithville continued to develop like other communities in Clay County, boasting "one or two stores, blacksmith and wagon shop and the everlasting saloon" in 1846.⁹ By 1850, the town had a population of 250, which quickly grew to four or five hundred by 1860. Businesses in 1850 included William Peddicord's grocery house on Main Street and a cabinet shop owned by Robert Kern.¹⁰ In 1867 Smithville incorporated for the first time. The incorporation was amended in 1868, and the town was again incorporated in 1878 due to an error in the amendment. Construction and growth continued after incorporation.

Flooding was an all too regular event in Smithville. After another flood in 1853 destroyed Smith's original mill, Col. Lewis Wood built a second mill that her operated until 1868. Wood sold the mill to William Henry Patterson, James Wood, and a Mr. Grunden. Patterson obtained sole ownership in 1874 and expanded the mill in 1880. It was a very prosperous operation until the building burned in 1891. Not to be deterred, Patterson built a new, three-story, iron-clad mill with modern machinery in 1896, which he operated until 1912.¹¹

Like most rural towns of the period, the first schools in Smithville were small one- or two-room schoolhouses. As the town grew, so too did the schools. A subscription school, the Central Male and

⁷ Mrs. Howard Taylor and Mrs. Harold Harris, *Notes from Yesterday*, (1966), 10.

⁸ Ibid, 29.

⁹ Ibid, 30.

¹⁰ Smithville Historical Society, *Progress-A-Rama, Smithville, MO, August 6-12 1967*, (1967), 4.

¹¹ Taylor and Harris, 27.

Female Academy, was founded in 1854, but it wasn't until October 1867 that a Mr. Harmon started the first public school. Originally housed in a two room building on Main Street, enrollment grew quickly, and by 1881 a new two-story, three-room, frame grade school building was constructed at Commercial and E. Woods Street.¹²

This sustained pattern of population and economic growth through the 1870s and 1880s lead to a building boom. In 1889 the town had a population of 800, and “many fine buildings” of recent construction.¹³ New businesses that opened during this period included hardware and drug stores, a harness and saddle shop, restaurants and butcher shops. There was also a furniture factory, jewelry store and several furniture stores, in addition to a saloon and pool hall, among many others.

The Smithville Baptist Church, organized in 1873 with the help of a Rev. Livingston, was finally able to build their first church in 1882, a frame building, at a cost of \$1,700. In 1886 the Smithville Church of Christ, now known as the First Christian Church, also expanded, constructing “one of the handsomest brick churches in the county” at 201 N. Bridge Street.¹⁴ This building was demolished in 1926 and replaced with a larger, extant Gothic Revival Style building able to accommodate the growing congregation.

The first local bank was the Bank of Smithville, founded in 1885. Originally housed in the back of the Mounce Byrd store, the bank built a brick building in 1889 at the southwest corner of Main and Bridge Streets, which became popularly known as the Bank Block Building. The Farmer's Bank, organized in 1886 had offices in the front of the Millis Building, until it bought the Bedford Building in 1890.¹⁵ However, around 1925 the Farmer's Bank was liquidated by the Bank of Smithville due to financial difficulties.¹⁶

As the town grew, so too, did the organized social life of its citizens. A Masonic Lodge was founded before the Civil War, and an I.O.O.F. Lodge organized in 1872. The latter group constructed a building at 106 N. Bridge Street in 1890 with a second story lodge hall and established a private cemetery in 1905. In 1900, the Rebekah Lodge, auxiliary to the I.O.O.F., was founded. In addition to these groups, Smithville had branches of the American Legion and its auxiliary and a number of extension clubs developed through the University of Missouri.¹⁷ In 1893 John S. and Crawford Morton founded Morton's Store, a staple business in the town for seventy years. The entrepreneurial brothers also established a newspaper, “The Smithville Star,” and bought several other companies, including an Electric Light business and Dodson Furniture and Undertaking. John's son Leon purchased Morton's Store in 1937 and operated the business until 1963.¹⁸

Smithville experienced a second construction boom in the early 1900s, as the prosperous community evolved into a modern town center. Concrete sidewalks were installed on the south side of Main Street in 1904. There were three stone crossings installed at the intersection of Main and Bridge Streets, and many

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, 47.

¹⁴ H.H. Woodson, *History of Clay County*, (Topeka, KS: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 198.

¹⁵ Archival resources identified the buildings by name only, not address.

¹⁶ Taylor and Harris, 47.

¹⁷ Ibid, 163-164.

¹⁸ Ibid, 50-51.

businesses and residences had electric lights. New houses were constructed on Church Street and Bridge Street, as well as in North Smithville. It was reported at the time that “builders were unable to meet the demand for a place to live in Smithville.”¹⁹

Commercial and civic development was notable. In 1902 C.M. Evans founded the Apollo Lithia Bottling Works, which sold local spring water. After discovering the high mineral content of the water, he developed a soda pop, and the thriving company operated until 1942. The Masons constructed a meeting hall in 1905. The dedication of the brick building at the corner of Bridge and Church Streets was one of the highlights of the year.²⁰ In 1904 the frame building at 106 W. Main Street that originally housed Humphrey Smith’s store was covered with sheet iron and converted into a carpentry shop for Frank Stapp. This building would later be occupied by A.J. Cox and his Son for their marble yard, but has since been demolished and replaced with the current brick commercial building.²¹ The Adkins Building, located on Bridge Street, was also constructed in 1904 for M.G. Everett’s grocery and meat market. In 1907 a “fireproof” building was erected to replace two derelict buildings -- Arelius Owen’s c. 1870 blacksmith shop and another building constructed just after the Civil War.²²

Horse races and shows became a great source of entertainment in Smithville in 1901. In 1911 the Smithville Horse Show and Fair Association was formed and in 1915 they constructed a half-mile track with a grandstand and five barns at the fairgrounds north of Smithville.²³ Funds for another track were raised in 1925 and races held six days a week. New management in 1928 left the racetrack in debt. It subsequently closed and was demolished in the 1940s.²⁴

Smithville’s businesses were numerous and diverse by the 1910s, offering all the amenities of a typical small town -- saw mills, coal dealers, an ice plant, meat markets, and even an opera house.²⁵ The Ingram and Strange Broom Factory opened in 1913, and the town boasted at least eight grocery stores, including Martin Will’s grocery, Boyd and Dalby, and the Young Brothers.²⁶ In the late 1910s, the George T. Ecton Mill and Elevator Co. started milling flour, and a new general repair shop was opened by Winner Shafer and Ed Boyd. Other businesses in the town included Reber’s Shoe Shop and Jess Ingram’s grocery store.²⁷ In 1920 John Morton celebrated the grand opening of his furniture store located in a newly constructed brick building near the corner of Bridge Street and Meadow Street.²⁸

The local prosperity is evident in the continued expansion of the city’s schools. Due to an expanding enrollment, a new six-room brick school building was constructed in 1905 for \$11,000.²⁹ In 1917, the

¹⁹ Ibid, 82.

²⁰ Ibid, 83.

²¹ Ibid, 85, 93.

²² Ibid, 88.

²³ “Smithville, Missouri: A City of Push, Hustle, Energy and Endeavor: The home of the “Push” Club,” *Democrat Herald*, April 9, 1915.

²⁴ Toni Lapp and Donna Whitham, *Pictorial History of Smithville: 125th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Smithville*, (Marceline, MO: Heritage House Publishing, 1992), 3.

²⁵ Ibid, 112.

²⁶ Ibid, 98.

²⁷ Ibid, 123.

²⁸ Ibid, 133.

²⁹ Lapp and Whitham, 3.

school board obtained property for a new high school. Completed in January of 1918, it was a simple brick building, with a stone foundation and flat roof. Five years later, Smithville High School became the only school in Clay County with its own gymnasium when a two-story frame addition was constructed to the school.³⁰ Continued growth necessitated the construction of a new gymnasium and auditorium in 1936, followed by a lunchroom in 1951 and expansion of the gym again in 1960.

When the stock market crashed in the fall of 1929, Smithville had a population of 902. The ensuing years of the Great Depression were difficult in Smithville as they were in small, rural communities across the country. Severe drought conditions during the 1930s destroyed crops, causing farmers to lose their farms in foreclosure. The tight economic times also put a damper on leisure travel, which impacted Smithville's four hotels along the Jefferson Highway. A strong spirit of perseverance, cooperation and benevolence in Smithville helped local business owners survive this difficult period. Merchants worked long hours and were willing to barter goods and services with their customers.³¹

The opening of the Smithville Community Hospital in 1938 under the direction of Drs. Arch E. Spelman and J. Leonard Dixon marked the first hospital to operate in the region north of Kansas City. The original \$11,000 eleven-bed hospital grew quickly. By 1948 the hospital included a nurses home, laundry facilities, and beds for thirty patients. In 1962 Dr. Spelman donated land for a new seventy-three bed hospital outside of downtown on U.S. Highway 169, where the St. Luke's Northland Hospital now stands.³²

The disastrous flooding that had plagued the city from its earliest days continued well into the twentieth century. After a damaging flood in 1915, one source declared "the fellows who live in the hills are the losers. Think of the hundreds of acres of good, rich land carried downstream to enrich the lowlands."³³ The worst flood on record struck Smithville in 1965. Downtown, water rose as high as twelve feet, causing \$30 million in damages. Numerous downtown businesses closed after the flood, including three grocery stores, a feed store, a general store, a hardware store, a candy store, a chicken hatchery, the Ford dealership, and a gas station.³⁴ Some relocated to the commercial district developing on the hill along Highway 169, where they could not only avoid future flooding but also take advantage of increased automobile traffic.³⁵

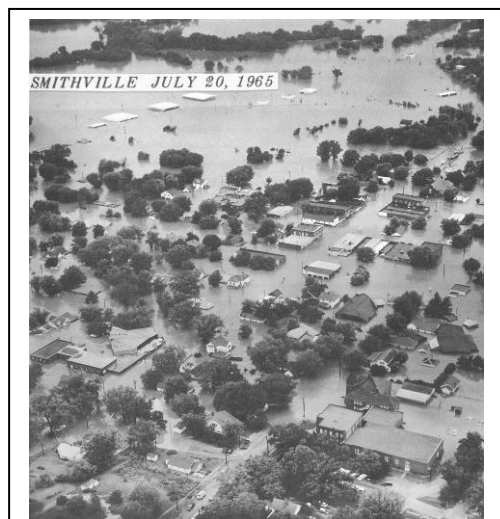


Figure 27. Downtown Flooding, 1965.
(Source: 1966 Comprehensive Plan)

³⁰ Daughters of the American Revolution, Alexander Doniphan Chapter, "Clay County Missouri Centennial Souvenir," (Liberty, MO: Al's Printing Service, 1922), 106.

³¹ Frank Justus, personal communication to Ed Holicky, 25 June 2013.

³² Lapp and Witham, 69.

³³ Smithville Historical Society, *Progress-A-Rama*.

³⁴ Justus.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Although the idea of a dam had been discussed for decades, this event was the catalyst for developing flood control measures to protect Smithville from future catastrophic events. After years of planning, the Smithville Dam and Lake opened in 1983, dramatically altering the commercial landscape of the city by eliminating much the surrounding farmland and allowing for new economic opportunities focused on recreational activities.³⁶ U.S. Highway 169 was widened to accommodate the new traffic patterns, and the merchant make-up in downtown Smithville shifted to accommodate recreational and leisure customers. Restaurants, antique stores, and specialty shops now fill most commercial buildings.

TRANSPORTATION

As early as 1823 a wagon road from Liberty, Missouri to Council Bluffs, Iowa passed through Smithville, connecting it with the surrounding communities.³⁷ The town experienced early prosperity as a trading post, yet the first railroad did not arrive to Smithville until 1887, when the Kansas City Atlantic Railroad (later the Quincy, Omaha and Kansas City Railroad) constructed a depot on East Meadow Street. The railroad was an important presence in town, connecting it with other major cities and market centers. When the railroad left Smithville in 1939 the rails were torn up, bridges dismantled, and the depot demolished, leaving few reminders of this once vital transportation link.³⁸ The St. Joseph-Grand Island Railroad also had a presence in Smithville, connecting the town to Kansas City until 1918.

Smithville began to feel the influence of the automobile early in the twentieth century. A 1906 account noted that four automobiles drove through town, although they did not upset horses as on previous occasions.³⁹ Road improvements used oil to smooth the road beds in the early 1910s. Crushed stone was added by the mid-1910s to create a hard surface ideal for motoring.

The rising influence and popularity of the automobile is evident in the number of auto-related businesses that opened in Smithville around this time. In 1915 two automobile garages operated in Smithville, including the Interstate Trail Garage.⁴⁰ A busline from Smithville to Kansas City started in 1917, and in 1919 C.F. Heathman opened a tire repair shop behind the Riverside Garage on North Bridge Street.⁴¹ The exact addresses of these businesses are unknown.

Around this time it was announced that the Jefferson Highway would pass through Smithville. This road was part of the early National Highway System, designed to connect major cities and provide a north-south military supply route. It stretched from New Orleans, Louisiana to Winnipeg, Manitoba, running directly through towns and cities along its path. It was not uncommon for the route to be determined by the location of existing hard-surfaced roads rather than the shortest distance between any two points. The crushed stone road in Smithville likely influenced the alignment of the route. A spot along one of the newly designated national roads brought many economic benefits to small rural communities like Smithville, and towns vied for the opportunity to be part of this new phenomenon. Smithville sent a representative, Elder Loos, to the Interstate convention in New Orleans to assure Smithville's selection as

³⁶ Lapp and Witham, 3.

³⁷ Ibid, 3.

³⁸ Ibid, 3.

³⁹ Taylor and Harris, 90.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 112.

⁴¹ Ibid, 132.

part of the Jefferson Highway route.⁴² The high level of competition often meant that a single highway offered multiple alignments between major cities, as evidenced by the two routes the Jefferson Highway followed between Kansas City and St. Joseph.

Surveying for the Jefferson Highway began in 1919 and the route was completed in 1922.⁴³ It substantially impacted the growth and development of Smithville. Not only did it connect merchants and farmers with larger market centers in the surrounding areas, but it brought large numbers of vehicles into town, supporting local commerce. By the 1920s the automobile was the preferred means of transportation in Smithville. The first auto dealership, the C.C. Kindred Motor Co., began selling Chevrolets in 1922. The building still stands at 111 N. Bridge Street, although the dealership has relocated to the west side of Smithville on U.S. Highway 169.

The influence of the automobile on the local economy continued to grow after designation of the Jefferson Highway. By the 1929 Smithville City Directory lists seven auto-related businesses. In addition to the C.C. Kindred Motor Company, these included the Barmann Motor Company, the Jefferson Highway Garage and Standard Service Station, the Heathman Tire and Filling Station, the Smithville Repair Shop, Skelly Oil Company, and Sinclair Refining Company.⁴⁴

Another major roadway, U.S. Highway 169, was commissioned in 1930. By the end of the decade it passed just west of downtown Smithville as it connected Tulsa, Oklahoma to International Falls, Minnesota. Like the Jefferson Highway, U.S. Highway 169 supported local commerce and the auto-related businesses in Smithville, although the focus shifted out of the historic commercial district to the land lining the new highway.

Authorization of the Federal Aid Highway Act in 1956 added a network of freeways to the National Highway System. Smithville sat roughly midway between Interstate 29 (approximately 10 miles to the west) and Interstate 35 (approximately 10 miles to the east). Both opened in the late 1950s to mid-1960s, siphoning additional traffic from the Smithville area.

⁴² Taylor and Harris, 113.

⁴³ "Smithville- a town with a past worth remembering," *Sun Chronicle*, July 31, 1996, 20. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Vertical File.

⁴⁴ "Telephone Directory, March 1929, Smithville, Gashland, Paradise Missouri." Mid-Continent Public Library, Midwest Genealogy Center.

SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Downtown Smithville Historic Resources Survey evaluated all of the buildings within the survey area, individually and within the context of the surrounding streetscape. In a commercial area, setting is an important factor of integrity. Solid streetwalls, like those along Main and Bridge Streets, are typical of commercial nodes that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Together the surveyed resources reflect the continuum of commercial development and the historic fabric of Smithville's commercial center.

NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY

Based on dates of construction, architectural integrity, and historical associations, the survey data identified resources that appear eligible for listing in a historic register as well as resources that do not appear to be register-eligible.⁴⁵ While a majority of resources lack the distinction necessary for individual listing, there are concentrations of resources that could form a National Register Historic District. No resources built after 1966 appear to meet criteria for exceptional significance. Figure 23 identifies resources by their potential for register listing as well as a suggested historic district boundary.

INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE RESOURCES

There are no resources in the survey area currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The survey identified three buildings that appear to meet at least one of the four National Register Criteria for Evaluation and retain sufficient architectural integrity and historical associations to qualify them for individual listing with local significance in the National Register of Historic Places. These properties are:

- **110 W. Main Street (Smithville Community Hospital):** locally significant under Criterion A for Health Care.
- **113-115-117 E. Main Street:** locally significant under Criterion A for Commerce and Criterion C for Architecture.
- **201 N. Bridge Street (First Christian Church):** locally significant under Criterion A for Religion and possibly Criterion C for Architecture.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Contributing resources do not retain sufficient integrity to merit individual listing on the historic register, although they would be contributing resources to a historic district. It is possible that additional research, beyond the scope of this project, could identify an area of significance or important historical associations for a Contributing resource that would change its status to Individually Eligible.

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Non-Contributing resources are those that have lost significant integrity and/or are less than fifty years of age and, therefore, do not merit consideration for National Register listing at this time. Two of the

⁴⁵ Appendix A contains complete survey results.

buildings, (105 S. Bridge Street and 113 S. Bridge Street) where integrity is an issue, are clad with non-historic materials. It is unclear whether or not historic fabric is present under this cladding. If cladding is removed and historic material is present these buildings should be re-evaluated to determine if they are register-eligible. Resources that are less than fifty years of age should also be re-evaluated when they reach this National Register threshold.



Figure 28. Historic District Contributing/Non-Contributing Map

HISTORIC DISTRICT

A historic district is a grouping of resources that shares significant associations of history and/or architecture. These resources must be located in a concentrated geographical area to create a unified entity that is clearly distinct from the resources outside the district boundaries. Resources within a historic district can include individually distinctive resources (resources that might also qualify for individual register listing) as well as resources that lack the qualities of design or association to merit individual listing. District boundaries can encompass resources that lack integrity or association with the historic context and are considered “non-contributing,” although resources of this type must be a minority within the district.

The consultants identified one group of buildings that as a contiguous group retains its historical/architectural integrity and appears to meet at least one of the four National Register criteria. This potential historic district would be locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Commerce. As a group, the setting, design, materials, and workmanship of these buildings conveys feelings about and provides associations with the City’s commercial past as it evolved over time. The core of the proposed district includes the one-part and two-part brick commercial buildings that comprise the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century core of the business district, as well as the more recent auto-related resources around the periphery.

General Registration Requirements

Resources eligible for listing as a contributing property to a historic district must retain the architectural and structural features that tie the resource to its original function and period of significance. Alterations to primary building facades are acceptable if they do not alter a significant portion of the façade, if the changes are reversible, and if the original appearance of the façade can be restored. Infill of original fenestration openings should not destroy or obscure the original openings and should be fully reversible. The resource should represent a style of architecture or a type, period or method of construction and should retain sufficient integrity of design, materials, and workmanship to represent the style or the property type.

CONCLUSION

CAPITALIZING ON THE HISTORIC COMMERCIAL ASSETS OF SMITHVILLE

The historic commercial center of Smithville, anchored by the intersection of Bridge and Main Streets, and the commercial buildings surrounding this core, illustrate the development of Smithville from a small trading post on the edge of the Western frontier to a thriving small town located midway between the larger cities of Kansas City and St. Joseph. The buildings in this survey tell a unique and important story. They define the commercial history of the community and provide tangible reminders of the past that create a unique sense of place. The on-going continuum of development already obscures much of the area's beginnings and early development. As Smithville's commercial core continues to evolve, change provides the opportunity to strengthen and enrich its visual character and to enhance the quality of life already appreciated by residents and visitors.

The goal of this survey was to identify and evaluate historic resources as part of on-going efforts to maintain a vital commercial center and to move toward change in a positive manner — as a catalyst for capitalizing on the synergy of the old and new. To achieve this goal, it is necessary first to recognize and understand the assets that contribute to the survey area's unique physical and cultural character; and to develop goals, policies, and initiatives to assist the City and the community in the future identification, interpretation, evaluation, and protection of its remaining cultural resources.

The survey findings can provide the basis for many preservation decisions, including nominating eligible buildings and districts to the National Register of Historic Places and evaluating the impacts of government actions on historic resources. As a planning tool, the National Register encourages preservation without public control over private property interests. Listing a property does not impose responsibilities upon the private property owner for maintenance or restoration, but can provide owners with access to financial incentives. Survey results can also help the City better protect its historic resources by raising awareness among the public of the significance of the city's building inventory and by boosting interest in private investment in the rehabilitation of historic buildings for new uses.

BENEFITS OF PRESERVATION

Preservation has its own intrinsic value in celebrating a community's history. As noted by John W. Lawrence, former Dean of the School of Architecture at Tulane University, it enables the citizens of today and tomorrow "to understand the present as a product of the past and a modifier of the future." It allows a greater awareness of the relationships of the past, the present, and the future — a deeper understanding of the continuity and contrasts of life.

Another compelling argument for protecting historic resources is simply that people like them. People seek out historic settings because they offer quality craftsmanship and materials, create variety, and encourage human interaction in a familiar context. Moreover, preservation has proven value as a tool for economic development.

As described by nationally recognized real estate professional Donovan D. Rypkema in his book *The Economics of Historic Preservation*, commitment to preservation may be one of the most effective acts

of fiscal responsibility governmental entities can undertake. Older neighborhoods and commercial centers represent a considerable taxpayer investment in infrastructure and building stock. Conservation of buildings, neighborhoods, and sites of historic and aesthetic value is one of the best tools for recovering the worth of past investments while fueling new economic activity.

SOME BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- ✓ The physical appearance of its buildings and streetscapes reflects the community's overall vitality and economic health.
- ✓ Maintaining the vitality of the city's older commercial and residential areas, by rehabilitating older buildings and designing quality new buildings, can attract larger commercial ventures to the community, even if these ventures do not locate in the historic core of the city.
- ✓ Rehabilitation of individual buildings is more attainable and stabilizing to a local economy than a single large economic development project.
- ✓ Cultural resources represent the unique evolution, history, and diversity of a community and a region and differentiate them from other areas. Rehabilitating older buildings and sites distinguishes one community from another by preserving the unique character of each.
- ✓ The value of a property is determined by the buildings, public improvements, and activities around it. Rehabilitation of a historic property directly benefits adjacent property owners and nearby businesses.
- ✓ The value of rehabilitated properties in a city's historic core increases more rapidly than the real estate market in the larger community.
- ✓ Older buildings are ideal for many smaller and start-up businesses, which typically generate a majority of new permanent jobs.

The most successful revitalization efforts in the country utilize historic rehabilitation as the core of their revitalization strategies. These efforts document that the most successful approach to create sustainable communities merges the old and the new. The creative combination of preservation, adaptive reuse, and new construction capitalizes on the aesthetics and craftsmanship of other eras, provides opportunities for architectural innovation, and promotes problem-solving, thereby enhancing the community's character and fabric.

The State of Missouri and the federal government recognize the role rehabilitation of historic buildings can play in strengthening the local economy. To encourage sustainable neighborhoods and communities as well as to encourage preservation of important cultural resources, they provide incentives to encourage

rehabilitation of historic buildings. The investment tax credit for rehabilitation of historic buildings is available from both the state and federal governments.

The **20 percent Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit** applies to owners and some renters of income-producing National Register listed properties. All residential and commercial properties (income-producing and owner-occupied) listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the Register of Historic Kansas Places are eligible for a **25 percent Missouri Historic Preservation Tax Credit**. When used together, the federal and state tax credits provide a significant financial incentive.

In exchange for the tax credits, the rehabilitation work must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*. The Secretary's Standards are designed to address changes that will allow older buildings to function in the twenty-first century. The common sense guidelines address new construction as well as the rehabilitation of historic buildings. Several properties in the survey area have already taken advantage of the tax credits with dramatic results.

In addition to the economic advantages to preservation, preservation is also an effective and important tool for the conservation of natural resources. After years of exploiting resources, people are now considering how their surroundings fit into the larger environment. Better stewardship of older buildings and structures recognizes the important embodied energy contained in built resources. Buildings contain energy that has already been expended, materials that have been mined or harvested, manufactured, shipped, and assembled. Material from demolished buildings accounts for up to 40 percent of landfill materials, the cost of which is indirectly borne by taxpayers. At the same time, new construction consumes new energy and resources.

When considered together – the embodied energy, the cultural memory, the craftsmanship and artistry – preservation provides a critical mechanism to ensure the long-term vitality and sustainability of our unique built environments. Financial incentives, such as historic tax credits, provide the means to encourage individual owners to take actions that benefit our communities as a whole.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY RESULTS

(Address, Historic Name, Year Built, Integrity Rating)

Smithville Historic Resources Survey - 2013

Address			HISTORIC NAME	CONSTRUCTION DATE	INTEGRITY
104	N	BRIDGE		c. 1890	Fair
106	N	BRIDGE	IOOF Lodge Hall; Cit	c. 1890	Good
110	N	BRIDGE		c. 1890	Fair
111	N	BRIDGE	C.C. Kindred Motor	c. 1910	Good
112	N	BRIDGE		c. 1890	Fair
114	N	BRIDGE		c. 1890	Fair
116	N	BRIDGE		c. 1890	Excellent
117	N	BRIDGE	The State Theater	c. 1910	Good
118	N	BRIDGE		c. 1990s	Excellent
119	N	BRIDGE	Masonic Hall	c. 1903	Good
201	N	BRIDGE	First Christian Churc	1927	Excellent
101	S	BRIDGE		c. 1920	Good
104	S	BRIDGE	Bank of Smithville;	1889	Good
105	S	BRIDGE		c. 1920	Poor
108	S	BRIDGE	Post Office	c. 1890	Good
110	S	BRIDGE	Post Office	c. 1890	Fair
113	S	BRIDGE		c. 1950	Poor
118	N	COMMERCIAL		c. 1966	Good
101	S	COMMERCIAL		c. 1966	Good
117	S	COMMERCIAL		c. 1945	Excellent
201	S	COMMERCIAL		c. 1966	Good
0	E	MAIN		c. 1975	
103	E	MAIN		c. 1920	Excellent
105	E	MAIN		c. 1900	Good
107	E	MAIN		c. 1900	Fair
109	E	MAIN		c. 1900	Fair
111	E	MAIN		c. 1900	Poor
113	E	MAIN		c. 1890	Excellent
115	E	MAIN		c. 1890	Excellent

Address			HISTORIC NAME	CONSTRUCTION DATE	INTEGRITY
117	E	MAIN		c. 1890	Excellent
119	E	MAIN	J.A. Brooks Building	1903	Good
200	E	MAIN	Methodist Episcopa	c. 1925	Fair
106	W	MAIN		c. 1955	Good
108	W	MAIN	Unknown	c. 1900	Fair
110	W	MAIN	Smithville Communi	1936	Excellent
100	E	MEADOW	Standard Service St	c. 1935	Good
100	E	MEADOW		c. 1945	Excellent
101	E	MEADOW		c. 1940	Good