Examining the built environment of Missoula's central business district.

Jill M. Patrick

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EXAMINING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF MISSOULA'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

by

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B.A. University of Wisconsin, 1999

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Maintaining a healthy and vibrant downtown is one of the most important aspects to a sustainable community. Many downtowns throughout the United States have deteriorated in recent decades, due to a variety of factors including the construction of highways, increased automobile use, and the emergence of superstores. This has prompted numerous strategies to revive these struggling central business districts.

Downtown Missoula has experienced both periods of decline and of vitality. Currently, Missoula’s central business district experiences a “state of vitality” due to several revitalization strategies. One successful revitalization strategy is historic preservation. As demonstrated in this thesis, historic preservation coupled with many other factors including, a major university, riverfront development, outdoor events, and other aspects on the part of the people, functions, and organizations have resulted in Missoula maintaining a vibrant downtown. Additionally, as demonstrated by Geographic Information Systems, businesses located in Missoula’s central business district have contributed to the vitality by conforming to changes in the economy. Missoula encompasses many distinctive attributes within the downtown that together has created a vibrant and healthy community.
I would like to first thank my advisor, Dr. Sarah Halvorson, for her positive guidance and support throughout my entire thesis writing experience. The support on the behalf of my entire committee-Dr. Sarah Halvorson, Dr. Paul Wilson, and Dr. Thomas Foor has provided me the essential knowledge and guidance to complete this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Maintaining a vibrant downtown is one of the most important aspects of a healthy community. Without maintaining a certain level of vitality within the downtown, the key functions of a downtown are lost. Downtowns play a vital role in maintaining the social wellbeing of the cities of which they are a part, contributing to the city’s tax base as well as an area for high public investment. Additionally, downtowns are most often the oldest section in any city, encompassing the public institutions, representing the heritage and history, and containing both public and private investment.1 Structurally, downtowns contain the original town site along with the majority of historic architecture and renowned buildings. Culturally, it is the site of community gatherings such as parades, festivals, rallies, as well as many other aspects of entertainment.2 Maintaining an active and healthy downtown is an essential component to any city, large or small.

Unfortunately, for many downtowns throughout the United States, there has been a struggle to stay healthy and vibrant. There are several factors which have led to this dilemma, including the construction of highways; increased automobile use; and the emergence of superstores. These factors have led to a decentralizing of a multitude of functions historically provided by downtowns (i.e. retailers, professional services, movie theaters, hotels, and even some government facilities). Once the central gathering points for entire communities, downtowns today may no longer be necessary or even perceived

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as important. Because of this shift away from downtowns, the level of vitality has decreased, which in turn has impacted the health of many communities.

This thesis examines the role of the built environment in preserving downtown vitality in Missoula, Montana, with a specific focus on Higgins Avenue. This topic is important because it has been found that attention to preserving the structural elements of buildings in the downtown is one of the main ways in which a city maintains vitality. Missoula, Montana was chosen for a variety of factors. Efforts on the part of city planners and officials have sought to revitalize the downtown through an urban renewal district beginning in 1978, which is set to expire by 2005. Additionally, in the year 2001, Missoula was ranked number one in the state and 15th in the nation for its dedication towards historic preservation of its buildings and architecture. Finally, as a resident of nearby downtown and employee of the Missoula Downtown Association, I visit the downtown everyday and experience all that it has to offer, making it an ideal case study for determining the contributions of the built environment to its vitality.

In addition to examining the historical contributions of the built environment, including aspects of the architecture, functions, and people, this thesis also considers the detailed contributions of the businesses located within the buildings through the use of GIS (Geographical Information Systems). By combining modern advances of GIS with more traditional methods of historical research, I have created a unique methodology, allowing for an in-depth examination of Missoula's historical development. In order to obtain a reliable level of detail and to focus on the “main street” of Missoula, I have chosen eleven buildings placed on the National Register of Historic Places located on or

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near Higgins Avenue. The findings presented in this thesis draw upon research undertaken in the spring and summer of 2004. The methodological strategies utilized in this research consisted of historical analysis, the development a historical GIS, interviews with planners and city officials, and field observations.

**Objectives and Research Questions**

*Research Questions*

The eleven buildings chosen along Higgins Avenue have been examined in relation to the following questions:

1. What are the reasons for the construction of and the function of each building?
2. How have the functions, people, and physical characteristics of each building contributed to the downtown?
3. How has each building contributed to the overall vitality of the downtown?

*Research Objectives*

In order to answer the preceding questions, this study was guided by four central objectives:

1. To explore and analyze changes in Missoula’s built environment, concentrating on the reason for construction, the people, and the changing functions;
2. To determine whether each individual building examined has enhanced or detracted to the vitality of downtown Missoula;
3. To visually document each building’s physical contributions through photographs of the buildings’ exteriors and an assessment of the distinctive aspects of the interior which contribute to the vitality; and
4. To map the changes over time in each building’s functions using Geographic Information System with each business individually labeled and categorized into four distinct time periods (first year of completed construction, 1948, 1984, and 2004).

Research Setting

Before the arrival of the steam engine in 1883, downtown Missoula was a typical western frontier town. A few prominent businessmen owned most of the businesses in the area. The Missoula Mill located along the Clark Fork River and Front Street was the pride of many of the residents. There were about 50 buildings along Higgins Avenue and Front Street with residents and businesses scattered throughout. Then came the roar of the steam engine and with it came a wide variety of goods, people, and services. The arrival of the railroad prompted the construction of various buildings within the downtown, including a variety of businesses and entertainment venues.

The historical character of Missoula’s built environment has impacted the downtown of today. For example, the Missoula Mercantile Building was built in 1877. This building reflects the powerful impact of the retail boom that took place in downtown Missoula during this period. Around the same time eight to ten other retail stores sprang up, along with theatres, hotels, and saloons. Downtown Missoula was becoming a center for socio-economic activity. Today, this same building contains a large department store

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4 Reynolds, Sam, “Historic Missoula,” Missoulian (Missoula, Montana), Section C-1. (November 10, 1988).
known as The Bon Macy’s, which has been serving the retail needs of the community since 1979.

In 1921, the Smeade-Simons building, or better known as The Wilma, was constructed. This magnificent structure became known as the tallest building in western Montana. The grand theater’s acoustics has even been compared to those of Carnegie Hall. On the opening day of The Wilma, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra performed making it a notable event. In addition to the theater, The Wilma provided the downtown with twelve apartments, a restaurant, a barbershop, two retail stores, fifty offices, a pool, and gymnasium. Presently, this building has two theatres, the original one in addition to a smaller one that still provides Missoulians with a variety of entertainment opportunities.

Today, the streets of downtown Missoula are lined with coffee shops, outdoor recreation stores, book stores, and various other kinds of businesses. Most of the buildings depict certain architectural eras in Missoula’s history, including those on the National Register for Historic Places. The residents and business owners along Higgins Avenue have a variety of places to stop for lunch or they can head down to Caras Park to listen to an outdoor concert. The Wilma is playing independent films that most mainstream cinemas avoid. The Bon Macy’s display windows are lined with most current trends in fashion. The healthy mix of functions contained within the downtown serve a variety of needs for the community. This present mix of functions is examined through an historical and geographical analysis of the built environment.

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7 Mathews, p. 83.
8 The National Register of Historic Places is located in Washington, D.C. and is available at http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/index.htm. The National Register of Historic Places is the Nation’s official register of cultural resources, which include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are noteworthy in American culture.
Arrangement of the Thesis

The analysis presented here has been arranged into four chapters. Chapter II discusses the conceptual framework and methodology used in the thesis. The conceptual framework is divided into sections including: urban geography and planning; downtowns and current methods of revitalization; historical research in combination with GIS; and past research on downtown Missoula. The chapter provides an overview of the contributions made on the part of both planners and geographers to the literature on downtowns and their relevance to this study. The section on methodology explains the process used in examining the vitality of the built environment. Traditional and modern techniques of analysis are combined through the use of: archival and historical data sources, GIS, interviews, and field observation. The chapter provides insight on why these methods were chosen and the steps involved.

Chapter III examines the current factors of downtown Missoula that contribute to its vitality today, including organizations, people, and other present day elements all which help create a stronger sense of place. Most of this chapter is based upon personal observations and personal communications with key individuals in the community.

Chapter IV examines the historical elements of the built environment. This section provides an overview of each building; the reason for its construction; the individuals and groups and their contributions; the functional contributions; and the physical contributions of the buildings included in the sample. This close examination of the buildings and their multi-faceted dimensions presents important insight into how these structures contribute to the vitality of the downtown today.
In Chapter V the historical geographic analysis is presented. This chapter provides an analysis of building functions using four time periods: the first year of completed construction, 1948, 1984, and 2004. The examination of Missoula’s historical development along with an analysis of changes occurring within downtowns nationally help to identify the factors of the built environment that contribute most to a vibrant and healthy downtown.
CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the conceptual framework used for this thesis. For this study the literature has been drawn upon from several works in urban geography and planning on downtowns and the revitalization strategies taken in many cities throughout the United States. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the concept of vitality, the original function of the downtown, various approaches to revitalizing downtowns, and the National Main Street Program. The second section of the chapter presents a summary of the theory behind historical research and GIS. The third section discusses past research on downtown Missoula that is relevant to this study. These three sections provide the foundation for the methodological approach to this study which is presented in the fourth section of this chapter.

Downtown Studies

Vitality and Quality of Life

Urban geographers have devoted much research to identifying the factors, both physical and social, that keep a downtown vital and in turn have led to key revitalization strategies. Downtown revitalization strategies are usually employed because one or more of the physical and social functions that a downtown could provide has been lost overtime. Quality of life research suggests that it is a combination of the physical and social attributes that people place value on when determining where to live, work, or visit. Physical attributes are measured objectively (with census data, etc.), while social
attributes are measured subjectively (usually based on some form of an evaluation). Determining the tangible and intangible characteristics that keep a downtown economically and culturally vibrant and in turn can impact its revitalization strategies are viewed to be critically important.

The downtown is the location of a multitude of functions. It is a shopping node, a workplace for a variety of professions, and a center of entertainment and other cultural events. Additionally, these factors create an area of high public investment which in turn contributes to the city’s tax base, all of which can be measured quantitatively. If one or more of these physical attributes is missing from a downtown, it impacts its level of vitality significantly. Therefore, revitalization strategies take into account these physical attributes.

However, not all of the functions of a downtown are tangible; some are intangible. Urban geographers have uncovered some of the intangibles which impact whether people locate themselves in the downtown or not. Some of the social attributes a downtown serves that have an impact on its vitality include: the level of community gatherings such as parades, festivals, rallies, as well as many other aspects of entertainment; and the historic architecture. Economic research undertaken in 2003 in Missoula indicated that Missoulians value many aspects of these intangible aspects of vitality. The results showed that residents also value: “family and friends, quality of people, outdoor recreation, scenery, and quality of climate.”

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There are many ways to measure the health of a city. Most often, measurement of “health” is based on quantitative data, such as crime or unemployment rates. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the level of vitality is measured through a variety of methods. The term vitality is used because it encompasses a wide array of characteristics in determining whether a downtown is healthy and vibrant. For the purposes of this study, the term vitality has been defined as possessing most or all of the attributes the original downtown was created to serve or possessing the revitalization strategies which are discussed further in this chapter. However, even though a downtown may implement and possess characteristics of a “revitalized” or vibrant downtown, it may still lack vitality. Vitality must also include the personal experiences of the residents and visitors. Missoula has played a considerable role in creating vitality through a variety of approaches including historic preservation and events on nights and weekends at Caras Park. These events result in creating a stronger sense of place among residents for the whole community. However, to understand whether a downtown possesses vitality, there needs to be a better understanding of how a city or central business district was formed and how it came about. The next section provides a brief background on some of the important roles that a central business district plays in the development of a city.

*Central Business District*

Central business districts (CBD’s) have gone through a variety of phases in all cities throughout the United States. Some have maintained vitality, while others have steadily declined in popularity. According to Holloway (et al.) the original reasoning for the development of the CBD all focused on centrality. The purpose behind a city was to
serve the needs of the surrounding populations, both those nearby and those located further outside of the city. Accessibility to both workers and consumers in addition to businesses and services was the most important purpose behind the CBD. The most common functions of the CBD were: “a common place to shop, a cultural and social and entertainment center, an administrative center, a workplace, and a distribution and collection node for industry.”\(^\text{11}\) Downtowns throughout the country became the place to gather and socialize along with a place to work or own a business. The most popular time period for the CBD was just before WWII. During this period, downtowns were the “place to be.” Whether it was shopping, the theatre, or just to people watch, the CBD had it all.

Today, the functions the CBD still focus on its centrality in addition to other aspects such as the promotion of sport stadiums and tourism. Most strategies of revitalization focus on creating a downtown that is “attractive and more economically and socially viable.” While others focus on the same purpose the original CBD was intended to serve such as: “nightlife and entertainment, and new office construction.”\(^\text{12}\) Most revitalization strategies implemented throughout the United States focus primarily on centrality because it is something that differentiates itself from the ever expanding suburbs. Many of the strategies used would not be successful if it were not for the central location the downtown occupies. For example, downtown Missoula has over seventy-five buildings located on the National Register of Historic Places, a promotional attribute not available in many suburbs. In addition to emphasizing historic preservation, downtown Missoula practices a wide variety of revitalization strategies that are applied to


\(^{12}\) Holloway (et al.) p. 145.
many cities throughout the United States. The next section covers many of the more popular strategies discussed in the literature by both urban geographers and planners.

**Revitalization Strategies**

Both planners and urban geographers have researched various North American cities. A major focus in downtown studies is on successful revitalization strategies and how they contribute to a vibrant downtown. As noted earlier, downtowns throughout the United States have steadily declined in their “usefulness” for many people, even to the point of no longer serving any purpose at all. Bringing downtowns back to their original state entails a variety of revitalization strategies. Missoula, like most downtowns, has employed revitalization strategies of its own. Some of Missoula’s strategies have focused on historic preservation, exterior and interior remodeling of buildings, or the promotion of cultural and social events. Below are just a few of the studies by both urban geographers and planners that emphasize the factors that make various revitalization strategies effective.

Research indicates there are numerous approaches a city can take in an attempt to “save” its downtown. The two most common revitalization strategies found in the literature are historic preservation\(^\text{13}\) and a variety of efforts directed toward developing retail and entertainment venues (attracting visitors on the nights and weekends).\(^\text{14}\) There are many other important components for maintaining a vibrant downtown. Strategies

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\(^{14}\) Bunting et al., Gratz and Mintz, Wasserman, p. 7-18.
found important by Robertson (who researched several American cities both large and small) were: “to maintain high density levels, develop true civic places, do not ‘suburbanize’ the downtown, develop and enforce design controls, do not underestimate street level activity, and plan for a multifunctional downtown.”

Creating “energy” is also an important component in producing a sense of place within the community. Gratz determined that many cities create this sense of place through various methods including: farmers’ markets, local artists, educational facilities, and the restoration of buildings, hotels, movie theaters, and retail shops. Pre-World War II downtowns, according to Filion (et al.), were considered to be the healthiest time for downtowns. Through the results of a survey, Filion (et al.) determined that some of the most common characteristics include “an active, street-oriented retail scene, cultural activities, concentrations of jobs, and a pedestrian friendly environment with sidewalks.” Filion (et al.) notes that revitalization strategies should emphasize the downtown’s historical nature and street level activity, which are distinctive characteristics not shared with suburban development.

As previously mentioned, preservation of historic buildings is an important method for creating a sense of place. Missoula has maintained several buildings that were constructed when the downtown was first being established, and today these buildings contribute by creating a unique ambiance not shared by a strip mall. According to Rypkema, these “meaningful buildings” are necessary in maintaining a vibrant downtown. Public spaces are the most important part of the urban center and need to possess significance which usually newer buildings lack. Historic preservation of older

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15 Robertson, p. 270-284.
16 Bunting (et al.)
17 Ibid, Bunting (et al.)
buildings is a crucial component to any successful economic survival plan, and gives "meaning" to the community.\textsuperscript{18} Collins (et al.) describes how the role of historic preservation has recently become a tool in economic development and no longer just a cultural resource, noting how some revitalization programs have left this crucial component out of their plans.\textsuperscript{19}

Through both an increased use of automobiles and other advances in technology, many of the purposes that the downtown used to serve the community are no longer necessary. This is especially relevant within the retail sector. Wasserman discusses the importance of small retail businesses that are now being threatened by superstores, internet shopping, and catalog retail. In order to help the retail and other sectors, the National Main Street Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to downtown revitalization, collaborates with downtown businesses to assist them in enhancing their stores or services. This organization assists in promoting events that bring people downtown. According to Wasserman, it is important to realize that you cannot "revive retail with retail." The events and other functions (banks, libraries, etc.) also assist in keeping a healthy downtown.\textsuperscript{20}

**The Main Street Program**

The Main Street Program was developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This program focuses on "the belief that historic preservation of our downtown’s uniqueness and buildings can lead to economic development."\textsuperscript{21} This

\textsuperscript{18} Rypkema, p. 9-18.  
\textsuperscript{19} Collins et al.  
\textsuperscript{20} Wasserman, p. 7-18.  
program has been applied to many cities throughout the United States. Two cities that have achieved success through participating in the program are Burlington, Iowa and Rogers, Arkansas. Similar to Missoula, both cities developed around thriving towns during the late 19th and early 20th century, in part because of the expansion of the railroad. For example, Burlington’s original economic boom corresponded with the emergence of the Burlington Missouri & River Railroad Company which sparked development from 1850 -1900. Then, like Missoula, Burlington, went through a period of decline during the 1970’s and 80’s. However, with the implementation of the Main Street Program that “formed public-private partnerships, recruited hundreds of volunteers, empowered downtown business owners, and launched community initiated investment,” the city has regained its original vitality and now is a center for legal and business services.22

Rogers, Arkansas was also a town that grew and prospered out of the development of the Frisco Railroad and again by the 1960’s and 70’s experienced economic decline and the decay of its physical environment. However, with the assistance of the Main Street Program, Rogers currently has a vibrant downtown with twenty three buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places along with renovation of its major theatre.23

Downtowns are extremely dynamic; strategies may result in an abundance of vitality for one city, while they may do nothing for another. One important factor in determining which revitalization strategies to use is to understand the community to

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which the downtown is connected. For example, Missoula has a considerable population of students, about 22 percent. Therefore, providing social events for these students creates vitality by bringing the students into the downtown on nights and weekends. Another strategy used to create a sense of place is through the businesses within downtown. Missoula takes pride in its wide variety of "owner-run" small businesses. Very few of the unique stores located on Higgins Avenue are seen anywhere else in the nation. Having a distinctive variety of retail and businesses available for both residents and visitors creates a matchless charm not offered by surrounding cities.

**Historical Research using GIS**

This final section discusses some of the relevant literature in the area of historic research and GIS. Historical research in the social sciences uses a variety of methods to examine historical patterns and trends. In the field of geography, focus is given to temporal and spatial patterns. GIS (Geographical Information Systems) has recently become an important method of historical analysis. Using GIS allows the researcher to "document, visualize, and interpret spatial history."\(^{24}\) Combining traditional methods of historical research (i.e. analysis of archival documents) with GIS leads to a better understanding of the patterns and processes not apparent without a visual representation. Historical geography research complemented by GIS also allows for the data such as pictorial or oral histories into the research.\(^{25}\) After a review of the following articles, GIS was chosen as a method of research in this study for its implications and its vast capabilities for visualizing change in historical research.


Most research focuses on the capacity of GIS within historical research. Summerby-Murray focused on the pedagogical uses of GIS and historical geography by updating and revising an inventory (containing architectural and construction details which was produced in 1973) with current information, including individual property and civic address data. Using GIS as a spatial “tool” in combination with theoretical research in accessing heritage landscapes is no longer considered a rare combination but essential in geographical research.

There are many applications for GIS and historical research. For example, a dissertation by Siebert developed a multi-faceted database on the entire region of Tokyo, Japan. The result was a spatial database that could be used to record and examine an extensive range of spatial features over time, including: physical (rivers, etc.); political (boundaries); social and economic activities (industrial activities, etc); transportation (roads, etc.); and land use (ownership, etc.).

GIS can also be applied to techniques in historic preservation. Stewart examined an area in Cairo, Egypt where little GIS data was available on past landscapes. As a result, old British maps of the 1920’s were used in combination with satellite imagery to produce maps which visually represented the changes in land use that had occurred in the past eighty years. The database also provided the area with a tool to help in establishing a “historic site” within the area supporting the idea that GIS has a multitude of applications.

Temporal changes are important for understanding the processes that influence historical geography. Bruel (et al.) supports the benefits of using GIS through research that describes an in-depth analysis of the changes in land use in the area of rural/urban Quebec from 1958-1993. Using a geo-referenced spatiotemporal database, this GIS project represented trends in the relationship between the change of land use, zoning regulation, and land use succession.²⁹

Unfortunately, with most methods of research there are certain limitations. Gelpke addresses some potential limitations of using GIS in combination with historical research. The most common issue, according to Gelpke, is the low level of accuracy associated with historical maps. Gelpke conducted a pilot case study using GIS and GPS in combination with the history of the Public Waterfront Act of Massachusetts in an effort to bring together public interest, property rights, and environmental protection. Overall, the project provided both the city and the public with geographic information previously unavailable in a GIS format but could not answer all questions posed by historical geographers.³⁰

As noted in the literature, GIS is an invaluable tool in the area of historical geography. However, there are many aspects of GIS in historical research that have not been researched. Through this thesis, the goal is to contribute to the knowledge and applications of GIS in historical research by mapping the functional changes in eleven buildings within the “main street” of downtown Missoula. Visualizing the changes and

variety of functions within Missoula's downtown with GIS will contribute to this body of knowledge on the various applications of GIS.

**Past Research on Downtown Missoula**

There have been numerous studies conducted on Missoula, Montana. Below are just a few of some of these studies and their contributions. The thesis titled, “Cost Benefit Analysis of the Central Business District” by Leamon explains the overall impact of the MRA on downtown Missoula. Leamon contends that the efforts on the part of the MRA contributed significantly to the overall resurgence of the downtown. Leamon also suggests that the MRA started a "chain reaction" through the physical renovation prompting other nearby business owners to also renovate which eventually encouraged many businesses to relocate downtown. Dissatisfaction with the mall and loss of autonomy and unhappiness, prompted many business owners to return downtown.31 Many of the business owners which came back to the downtown missed the sense of community and pride that comes with being located downtown. Not only did the MRA help to preserve and enhance the physical beauty of these “meaningful” buildings and provide for a more aesthetically pleasing environment, but also brought forth an increased sense of place by bringing the wide variety of businesses back into the downtown.

Another recent study of downtown Missoula was undertaken by Rina Ghose. Entitled “Regionalizing the CBD of Missoula,” Ghose’s study provides a detailed floor-by-floor analysis of the land use patterns of the central business district of Missoula. Ghose determined that the location of the Peak Land Value Index was located at the

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corner of Higgins and Main Street. This intersection holds the majority of buildings that are located on the National Register of Historic Places (within the downtown) and incidentally is the area of focus for this thesis. Additionally, this area was also determined to have the most expensive goods, and highest pedestrian and vehicular traffic rates compared to the rest of the CBD. Another important finding was that the service industry was the most dominant industry type in the CBD with retail being the second although historically the retail sector had been the most dominant. These results reflect a dramatic and important change in land use occurring within the central business district. By the early 1980’s, retailing was becoming decentralized (i.e. Walmart and Southgate Mall) while services were taking over as the major form of industry located downtown.32

Ghose’s thesis is not the only source which points out this trend. According to an article dated March of 2000 in the Missoulian, the Missoula Downtown Association expressed concern about the ratio of retail to office space. However, author John Stucke points out, “actually, the two business sectors feed off of each other, the professionals buying lunch and goods from the specialty shops downtown, and the merchants providing the kind of atmosphere and offerings necessary to sustain a financial district loaded with bankers, brokers, lawyers, doctors, consultants and bureaucrats.” Many retailers agree that there is a healthy mix, however, they would like to keep the service industry limited to the second or higher floors, while maintaining the street level for retail shops.34 In the past two decades, there has been a gradual shift towards the service industry. However,

34 Ibid, Stucke.
as supported by the analysis presented in Chapter V, there is still a healthy and distinct variety of businesses located downtown with the majority of retail and entertainment venues located on the first floor and services on the second.

**Methodology**

*Historical and Archival Data Collection*

Historical and archival data sources contribute a significant portion of the data for this thesis. Some of the sources include: National Register of Historic Places Registration forms, newspaper archives, written histories on Missoula (including theses and a dissertation), Sanborn Insurance Maps, and Polk City Directories. The data sources were all local to the Missoula area and accessible through a variety of outlets, including The University of Montana Mansfield Library, the Missoula County Public Library, the Office of Planning and Grants, and the Internet. These sources of data were chosen for their accessibility and their contribution for shedding light on the processes that have come to influence present day Missoula.

*Interviews*

Informal interviews were conducted with three city officials who have a strong interest in the downtown. These unstructured interviews were used as a method of gaining insight into some of the past and present attributes of the downtown that are not apparent in historical or archival data sources. The three people chosen for correspondence were Linda McCarthy, Director of the Missoula Downtown Association, Geoff Badenoch, former Director of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, and Allan Mathews, former Historic Preservation Officer for the City of Missoula. The main goal

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35 Communication was through both personal conversations and email.
of the informal interviews was to gain insight into what these individuals see as contributing to Missoula's vitality and other important aspects of the downtown not apparent in the other methods of data collection.

**Personal Observation**

Personal observations were used throughout the spring and summer of 2004. Observations were made on the community events, the overall "feel" of Higgins Avenue, and the individual names of businesses currently located downtown. In addition, personal observation was used to help depict the boundaries of the stores and applied to the GIS chapter of this thesis. This method of research was chosen in order to gain an understanding of the sense of place within downtown Missoula. Additionally, because I was an employee of the Missoula Downtown Association, I was able to gain first-hand experience of the cultural events provided by this non-profit organization and their impact on the community.

**City and County Government GIS Data Collection**

GIS data was gathered from the Missoula county website. GIS data was chosen to provide for carrying out a geographic analysis of the stores located downtown throughout its history. Again, the historical development is important to better understand the current vitality of the downtown. GIS gives a spatial representation the historical development of Missoula that has shaped the present environment. Beginning with the first year of completed construction (for each specific building examined) and ending with the present functions, data was entered and then placed into a GIS in order to visually represent the changes in the types of businesses located along Higgins Avenue.
This method was based on a review of previous research employing techniques of GIS in historical geography.

*City and County Government GIS Data Preparation*

In preparing the data for the GIS portion of this thesis, the following steps were taken in order for the data to be analyzed. The method for preparing the data was completed through the application of GIS, specifically ArcGIS 8.3. The first step was downloading the block and parcel shapefiles from the county website. Since data containing the boundaries of the building footprints was not available (not in an applicable format), a building footprints shapefile was constructed by “on-screen” digitizing, that was produced through the use of images taken from Sanborn maps and a building footprints map available through the Missoula Redevelopment Agency.

Once a suitable shapefile was constructed, the next step was to build various shapefiles for each year analyzed (four total) detailing the stores within each building. This was completed through the use of available Sanborn maps and personal observation. Once the boundaries of the stores were completed a “new field” was added to the attribute tables. The field was labeled “Store_Name.” The information for the store name was provided by the registration forms of the National Register of Historic Places and Polk City Directories. After reviewing various years in the Polk City Directories and concurring events with local and national historic events, analysis of the

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38 Shapefile could not be used because of conflicting metadata.
39 Every attempt was made to ensure the boundaries were as accurate as possible, however, because of time constraints and resources, the store boundaries are not exact.
building functions were categorized into four time periods; the first year of completed

Sampling of Historical Buildings

The buildings examined in the historical analysis section are all on the National
Register of Historic Places. Buildings listed on the National Register were chosen for
their availability of data, their established history, and their overall significance to the
downtown. The U.S. Department of the Interior which houses the National Register lists
the criteria used when evaluating whether a building can be placed onto the list. The
main focus of the criteria is based upon “historical significance.”

“Significance may be based on association with historical events (Criterion A);
association with a significant person (Criterion B); distinctive physical
characteristics of design, construction, or form (Criterion C); and potential to
yield important information (Criterion D).”41

Establishing Historicity

Because the focus of this thesis is on eleven buildings located on the National
Register of Historic Places, how researchers (those whom determine “historical
significance”) establish the historical value of a site is important. According to the
literature, historical preservation is one of the most important attributes of a successful
downtown.42 Establishing the historical significance of anything whether it is a
monument, a person, a place, or a building has always been a subject of debate,
especially in the United States where most physical sites are relatively “new” compared

40 The first year of construction varied from 1892 to 1941.
41 National Register of Historic Places Website, “Research and The National Register Form,”
accessed on May 6, 2004. Available from
42 Collins, et al. Bunting et al.; Gratz, and Mintz; Robertson, K. p. 270-284; Rypkema, p. 9-18; and
Wasserman, p. 7-18.
to the rest of the world. Furthermore, there are a variety of methods used when measuring the historical significance of a building.

In the past, evaluating historical significance has been accomplished mainly by “experts in the field.” However, a study by Coeterier attempts to consider the views of both resident and non-residents in establishing the factors considered important when determining historical significance.\(^{43}\) The study used four attributes (cognitive, affective, form, and information) previously developed by Purcell and Nasar for measuring environmental preference.\(^{44}\) A list of research questions were posed to determine what is considered relevant when considering historicity. Results between residents and non-residents were very insignificant with emotional ties being the only major difference. The results concluded that the main difference between experts and lay people is between form and information. For experts, the most important criteria for valuing historicity was its informational value, the more “rare and complete” the more valuable. On the other hand, for lay people form was seen as the most important attribute. A building’s overall level of beauty, completeness, uniqueness, and quality of workmanship were the most important measures. This study recognizes the importance of including the general public when determining the historicity of a building. Many buildings provide a community with identity and a sense of place, and are important to any city, large or small.\(^{45}\)


\(^{45}\) Ibid, Coeterier. p. 114-123.
City and County Government GIS Data Analysis

As noted earlier, GIS data was used in order to map the various functions throughout the development of downtown Missoula. Four time periods were chosen in order to add a temporal component to the analysis. The four time periods chosen were the first year of construction, 1948, 1984, and 2004.

The first year of construction is important because it represents the reason for why the building was constructed. For example, the Missoula Mercantile was constructed during a time when wholesale and retail trade was the dominant industry and heavily expanding in Missoula. Additionally, the Florence Hotel was built during a time when tourism was seen as an essential and economically viable way of enhancing Missoula’s downtown. Hence, the initial year of construction and its functions are important when analyzing the historical development of Missoula’s downtown.

The next time period analyzed continues after the first year of completed construction (which varies) until 1948. This time period was chosen for the significant events that occurred in downtowns throughout North America. This period represents a time when downtowns were the “place to be.” Anything and everything occurred downtown. It was where families shopped on the weekend, where friends met to eat and drink and to catch the latest movie at night. Many downtowns were crowded with visitors any day of the week, day or night. However, with the explosion of the automobile industry and suburban sprawl, this period of vibrant downtowns slowed down starting in the 1960’s.

The third time period analyzed was from 1949 to 1984. This period represents a time when downtowns across the nation were failing. Even downtown Missoula went
through a period of demise. Much of the downfall of downtown Missoula was due to the construction of Southgate Mall located a few miles outside of the central business district. By this time everyone owned an automobile, so driving to the mall was convenient, resulting in less foot traffic in the downtown area and the closure of many businesses. In 1978, an Urban Renewal Plan was implemented through the Downtown Missoula Development Program. The goal of the plan was to reduce some of the factors which were causing a negative view of the downtown, including high crime, high incidence of fires, poor conditions of residential structures, and a lack of public facilities such as parking and traffic control devices. This time period reflects the growing concern in downtown Missoula for a plan to combat its deterioration.

The last time period chosen is from 1985 to 2004. This time period represents the most recent developments in downtown Missoula. The buildings located along Higgins Avenue as well as the variety of functions they provide contribute to the downtown in various ways. Downtown Missoula has gone through stages of prosperity and decline all which have led to its current state of vitality.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the body of literature that has informed the thesis, the conceptual framework, and the methodology. It is apparent that there has been much research on the factors affecting downtown vitality that has been undertaken by urban geographers and planners. The review of this past research has led to the choice of methods used in conducting the research for this thesis.

CHAPTER III
MISSOULA’S ROLE IN CREATING VITALITY

The following chapter attempts to analyze the various factors that contribute to the current level of vitality present in Missoula’s downtown. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first discusses two important organizations that have sought to stimulate a vibrant downtown, the second section briefly discusses the importance of the functions within the building (discussed further in Chapter V), and the third section discusses the role of historic preservation in creating a stronger sense of place.

Organizations

*Missoula Downtown Association*

One organization that has influenced the downtown is the Missoula Downtown Association (MDA). The first committee was part of the Chamber of Commerce, named the Missoula Retailers in 1957. By 1975, the Downtown Merchants Association was created and was no longer a part of the Chamber of Commerce. With the construction of Southgate Mall and the overall decline in downtowns throughout North America, the Association expanded and restructured its goals and mission to become the MDA in 1981.47

The MDA is an entire organization devoted to the promotion and enhancement of the downtown. The four goals of the MDA are:

1. “Retain and promote downtown Missoula as a center for business, culture, and entertainment.

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2. Provide a forum for mutual solutions to common problems downtown.
3. Encourage preservation and enhancement of the area's physical beauty.
4. Create public awareness of the historic and cultural significance of Missoula’s unique downtown to the community as a whole.\textsuperscript{48}

As mentioned, an aspect of the MDA is to organize events located in downtown or near the downtown. Many of the events are advertised throughout the downtown area with posters or through its newly updated website. The website is a valuable resource for families looking for activities located downtown, such as Missoula Osprey games, Missoula City Band Concerts, Family Game Day, Pilates in the Park, Kids Fest, and the Downtown Drum Circle.

Some of the major events the MDA organizes and promotes include: Out-to-Lunch, Downtown ToNight, Germanfest, Garden City Brewfest, various concerts, and others. These events draw large crowds of people, anywhere from a few hundred to 4,000 people. Out-to-Lunch caters mostly to the employees located downtown by providing various food vendors and entertainment during the lunch-hour on Wednesdays. This event allows for those employed downtown to experience a sense of camaraderie with fellow employees or other workers located in the area. These individuals are able to experience a different kind of lunch hour than many people employed elsewhere in the city. Another event, Downtown ToNight, which is on Thursday evenings, caters to both families and the young by providing music, food, and activities for children. This event offers people of all ages and all areas of Missoula to experience the downtown in a fun and relaxed atmosphere. I have recently had the opportunity to work for the MDA and have experienced first-hand the results of these events and their importance to the people and businesses of downtown. At the last Downtown ToNight in which I participated,

crowds of people came to the Caras Park Pavilion with their co-workers and families to enjoy a variety of food and to listen to live music. This event and others provided by the MDA bring people of all ages into the downtown on weekday nights. This is a crucial aspect of a healthy and vibrant downtown, creating a strong sense of place for the community and all that visit the downtown.

Another important resource the MDA offers, mostly via its website, is a "Downtown Guide." This guide provides vast amounts of information on the downtown this is useful to both Missoulians and visitors. The guide supplies information on: restaurants, shopping, pubs, arts & entertainment, a public art tour, a historical walking tour, and professional services. This resource, although not a physical or social entity of the downtown, contributes significantly because of the clear and organized nature of the information provided. Without this resource, many residents and visitors would not be informed of the various events, businesses, restaurants, and history that are present in downtown Missoula.

Overall, the role of the Missoula Downtown Association has significantly contributed to the vitality of the downtown. Its main focus is to promote and enhance the downtown through various events and information which are imperative in a healthy and vibrant downtown. According to Linda McCarthy, Director of the MDA,

"downtown is such a viable part of our community [because of] the entertainment factor. Most of Missoula's unique attractions are found in the downtown - attractions like the Art Museum, Children's Museum, Children's Theatre, the Carousel, and events like the Farmers' Market, Out to Lunch, Downtown ToNight, First Friday Gallery Night, First Night Missoula, etc. The cultural aspect of Missoula IS Downtown. You won't find these cultural attractions and events anywhere else."\(^{49}\)

\(^{49}\) Per conversation with Linda McCarthy, Director of the Missoula Downtown Association, July 2004.
Another contributor to downtown Missoula’s vibrancy is the role of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA). The MRA’s has played a pivotal role is reversing the impacts of sprawl and the development from shopping malls located outside of the city center. According to the Urban Renewal Plan implemented in 1978, the downtown was experiencing a period of decline. Some of the key concerns were increased crime and fire in the area, declining residential structures, and a lack of parking. The MRA’s reason for improving the downtown was “because of the undisputed importance of the central business district to the well being of the community.”

A major contributor to the blight of the downtown was the construction of the Southgate Mall in 1978 that caused a major “exodus” away from the downtown. Eventually, this caused many businesses within the downtown to either relocate to the mall or go out of business, leading to many vacant stores. The role of the MRA was to reverse this situation and return downtown Missoula to the vibrant place it had once been.

The main purpose of the MRA is to subsidize the external refurbishment of downtown buildings by lessening the dichotomy between social and private interests, thereby, stopping the downward trend in under-maintenance of many of the buildings located downtown. Through tax increment financing (TIF) and the Commercial Rehabilitation Loan Program (CRLP), the MRA provides the necessary financial support needed by many of the businesses to improve the physical appearance of their buildings.

An additional aspect of the MRA focused on open space which led to the revitalization

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51 Personal communication with Geoff Badenoch, former Director of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, June 2004.
along the Clark Fork riverfront. As noted in the Urban Renewal Plan,52 “the demand for water front space provision is regional in nature and recognizes the unique and splendid resource provided by the Clark Fork River.” The efforts on the part of the MRA put in motion a new and revitalized downtown including a beautified riverfront. Through its policies, buildings began to improve their outward physical appearance which in turn created a sense of pride and place within the downtown.

**Functions**56

Another important aspect of a vibrant downtown is the variety and combination of businesses, stores, and entertainment venues, that are unique from the monotonous strip malls located on the outskirts of the city. A variety of uses allows for a range of people to visit the downtown anytime of the day. Although many of the original businesses that existed when the buildings were first constructed no longer remain, the unique and individual appeal of the downtown has remained the same. As Linda McCarthy of the Missoula Downtown Association notes,

"downtown Missoula is the core of our community and is created by a variety of small retail stores, restaurants and professional service businesses that are locally owned and operated. Owners are found in their businesses every day and are the professionals who support the philanthropies of the community.”57

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56 See Chapter V.
57 Per conversation with Linda McCarthy, Director of the Missoula Downtown Association, July 2004.
Historic Preservation

As noted earlier, historic preservation is an essential element to any vibrant downtown. Missoula, Montana in the year 2001 was ranked number one in the state and 15th in the nation for its dedication towards historic preservation of its buildings and architecture. And according to Allan Mathews, former Historic Preservation Officer for the city of Missoula, historic preservation enhances a downtown as opposed to hindering business owners. By maintaining these important buildings, visitors and residents are able to gain insight into Missoula’s vast and dynamic history which in turn creates a stronger community. Missoula has managed to prove that historic preservation can only help support a stronger sense of community.

An effective way of communicating the positive impacts of historic preservation is through the sharing of knowledge. Allan Mathews currently owns a business dedicated to providing historic tours of Missoula and has been featured in the Missoulian for his efforts and dedication to the history of downtown Missoula. In a September 2001 issue of the Missoulian, Mathews discusses how the built environment contributes to the downtown. "To feel the reality of the past, it helps very much to visit the places where historic events actually occurred," Mathews said. "Buildings are something physical that can be shared by a number of generations, reference points which explain how it was that we arrived at this particular time and place." Historic architecture along with a variety

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59 Mathews, p. 160.
60 Per conversation with Allan Mathews, former Historic Preservation Officer for the city of Missoula, April 2004.
of uses for the people contributes to the success of the downtown. "That's what keeps a downtown vital," Mathews added,

"People on the streets after dark. People who think of downtown as their neighborhood. Throughout the country, cities are learning the value of restoring instead of tearing down and building new. People see the value of the old architecture; they see that it tells a story and that the story is important to how people value their community."62

Another article in the Missoulian titled, “Walking Through Time,” explains the important role of the physical environment on downtown Missoula. Every building tells a unique and individual story. In this article, Mathews stated,

"the physical buildings establish the tone of a place. If they are all similar, it creates a drabness that causes you to lose vitality. But when you have this wide variety of buildings as we do in Missoula, representing all these different eras, it gives you a sense of excitement."63

Mark Baumler, Montana's Historic Preservation Officer, also agrees on the benefits of historic preservation and notes, "in these communities, the historic homes and commercial quarters continue to contribute today - economically, socially, politically and aesthetically - to their town's livelihood and purpose. They are testimonies that historic preservation works and makes sense."64

Furthermore, according to Geoff Badenoch, former Director of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, older buildings explain a past unavailable in newer, more recently constructed buildings. “In historic architecture, you can observe workmanship, problem-solving, and the delight that comes from detailing or ornamenting the functional purpose of buildings. A lot of today’s post-modern architecture foregoes details because building is bottom line driven. The builders of a few generations ago would find that

62 Ibid, Missoulian September 2, 2001
64 Ibid, Missoulian December 5, 2002.
attitude troubling, I think." The vitality of any downtown greatly depends on how the community views historic preservation. Fortunately, the City of Missoula had Allan Mathews as the Historic Preservation Officer for eleven years, who contributed significantly to the level of awareness and importance historic preservation provides a community. History is revealed in these “meaningful” buildings that are located throughout the downtown. Downtown Missoula has over seventy-five buildings on the National Register of Historic Places from practically every time period beginning with the late 1800’s all the way to 1941 contributing to downtown Missoula’s vitality.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed strategies that are clearly fundamental to the current vitality present today in downtown Missoula. The factors that create the vitality present in Missoula are maintained by key individuals, organizations, and historic preservation efforts. Ultimately, much of Missoula’s present condition is due to its extensive historical development. The next chapter covers the historical growth of Missoula’s built environment and how it has come to shape downtown Missoula presently.

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65 Personal Communication with Geoff Badenoch, former Director of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, July 2004.
CHAPTER IV
HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter is devoted to analyzing the historical context of Missoula in an attempt to better understand the processes that have contributed to the current built environment in the downtown. All of the buildings examined in this chapter are on the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, this chapter emphasizes the importance of historic preservation on the part of the built environment within downtown Missoula because of the history associated with each of these buildings. The buildings are examined beginning with the first building constructed (among the eleven sampled). Each building is discussed in terms of its contributions to Missoula, including the reason for its construction, people associated with the building, the businesses associated with the building, and a brief part on the architectural characteristics. All of these factors associated with the buildings provide information into the current vitality of downtown Missoula.

The Missoula Mercantile

Throughout the majority of Missoula’s history this building has been associated with the Missoula Mercantile Company. The Missoula Mercantile Company, originally known as Bonner and Welch, was established in 1866 by E.L. Bonner, D.J. Welch, and Richard Eddy and was originally located at the present site of the Florence Hotel. The construction of the Missoula Mercantile building took place between 1882 and 1904 and housed the Mercantile Company beginning in 1877 which was incorporated by 1885. The site where the “Merc” presently stands was the original location of the first jail,
which was erected in 1866. Even before the construction of the building was complete, frightened citizens of Missoula used the half built structure as a shelter from the potential attack of the Nez Perce in 1877.\textsuperscript{70} Because of its contributions in the realm of functions, architecture, and people the Mercantile Building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.\textsuperscript{71}

**People**

Many of the business elite of Missoula began their careers at “The Merc.” As mentioned earlier, the company became known as Bonner and Welch in 1866. Then in 1871, when D.J. Welch retired, the company was referred to as E.L. Bonner and Company. Five years later, the named changed again to Eddy Hammond and Company when A.B. Hammond entered the business and by 1885 the Missoula Mercantile Company was incorporated.\textsuperscript{72}

However, before the success of the Missoula Mercantile, many of the individuals behind the scenes had already or were about to contribute significantly to the establishment of Missoula. One important contribution was that of Eddy, Hammond and Company establishing the Montana Improvement Company, which eventually opened the doors for the contract between the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1881 to supply the railroad construction materials and many other commercial needs. With the establishment of the railroad coming to Missoula, a major economic boom was beginning, causing growth in wholesale and retail trade within the area. The Missoula Mercantile became a


critical player in supplying the needs of both the railroad company and the people of 
western Montana.\textsuperscript{73}

E. L. Bonner also contributed to Missoula in other ways besides the Missoula 
Mercantile. Bonner contributed to the railroad construction throughout western Montana. 
He was particularly involved in the construction of numerous portions of the Northern 
Pacific Railroad including the lines between Missoula to Hamilton and Drummond to 
Phillipsburg, and the Rimini and Red River lines. Bonner ultimately became in charge of 
the Northern Pacific’s operations throughout all of Montana.\textsuperscript{74}

A. B. Hammond also contributed to Missoula in other ways besides The Missoula 
Mercantile. As mentioned above the formation of the Montana Improvement Company 
in 1881, on the part of Hammond, Eddy, and Bonner played a pivotal role in the 
formation of the Missoula. The Montana Improvement Company eventually became 
known as the Big Blackfoot Milling and Manufacturing Company which prompted the 
construction of the Big Blackfoot Lumber Company in Bonner. This mill contributed to 
the growth of Missoula area economy. Other contributions on the part of Hammond 
include the construction of three business blocks within the central business district in 
Missoula. Hammond also invested considerably in the First National Building and the 
original Hammond Building; unfortunately both no longer stand today.\textsuperscript{75}

Richard Eddy, along with contributing to the establishment of the Montana 
Improvement Company was also an owner of numerous mills located throughout

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Missoula and during the 1880’s was the largest producer of lumber in Missoula. Eddy also incorporated the Missoula Real Estate Association in 1885 along with Bonner, Hammond, J. Keith, and W. Winstanley.

The most recent individual to play a major role in the development of the Missoula Mercantile was that of W. H. McLeod. McLeod served as President of the company for many years, building the Missoula Mercantile Company into a regional business symbolizing immense political and commercial influence. After 1941, McLeod retired, and the Missoula Mercantile Company gradually declined in its level of influence. No other person in Missoula’s history has reached such an enormous level of power.

Functional Contributions

The Missoula Mercantile Company was successful throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The Mercantile provided Missoula with groceries, dry goods, clothing, hardware, shoes, furniture, and equipment. According to Shirley Coon’s dissertation, “The Economic Development of Missoula,” the Missoula Mercantile has “probably been the greatest single economic instrumentality in Missoula, except the railroad.” The profitability of the Missoula Mercantile was often used as the lead indicator of the commercial success of the city. For example, in 1880 the total amount of trade was $180,000, while only ten years later it was at $1.5 million and $2.6 million in 1910. This dramatic increase in commercial trade promoted the development of the central business

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9 Coon, p. 77.
district by employing over 100 people by 1900 and twenty years later controlled 40
percent of the retail sales and 75 percent of the wholesale trade. Around this time, the
“Merc” became a lead distributor between the Twin Cities and Seattle for many years
leading the wholesale trade in all areas of commerce. The establishment of the
Missoula Mercantile is a pivotal part of Missoula’s history, symbolizing permanence and
economic power.

In 1959, the Missoula Mercantile, now known as The Bon Macy, was sold to
Allied Stores ending its wholesale empire in the Northwest. Throughout the more
recent history of downtown Missoula, The Bon Macy department store has kept a strong
presence. During the late 1970’s competition with the mall on the outskirts of town
proved difficult for the company. However, today the presence of The Bon Macy is still
resilient serving the departmental needs of the community. The windows are always
lined with the latest in fashion and people are always coming in and out of the store. The
survival of this commercial building is a true reminder of the importance in maintaining a
historical structure which represents the establishment of Missoula.

Architectural Characteristics

The Missoula Mercantile is representative of its time period in which it was
constructed. “A stucco front façade representative of the post World War II attempt to
modernize.” The most overwhelming feature of the building is its vast size, occupying
almost a half a block from Higgins Avenue to Pattee Street. The original brick color still

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80 Babcock, “Missoula Mercantile”
81 Reynolds, Sam, “Historic Missoula,” Missoulian (Missoula, Montana) Section C-1, Volume I,
82 Ibid, Babcock, “Missoula Mercantile”
shows (sandblasted around 1990) with “cast iron entryways and a commercial bay entrance on Higgins Avenue (Photograph 1).”

The Missoula Mercantile is one of the most renowned buildings in downtown Missoula, not only for its association with the mercantile business, but also for all of the influential people whom began their careers there. The Missoula Mercantile’s contributions to Missoula are numerous which has led it to be just as important to the downtown today, then when it was first constructed.

Photograph 1: The Missoula Mercantile (Source: Jill Patrick, June 2004).

**Headquarters Building**

The Headquarters Building, located on East Front Street, was constructed in 1888, coinciding with a period of commercial growth. Its ornate and elaborate design reflects this boisterous time in history when liquor and gambling flowed freely. Originally, the rear lot located behind the Headquarters building was the Missoula Brewing Company that continued operation from about 1870 till 1893. During this time Montana was

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83 Mathews, p. 59.
deciding on the location of its state capital and many “illegal” activities were taking place within the Headquarters building. According to Lenora Koelbel in “Missoula the Way it Was” this location was considered “the Bloody Fourth” where votes were openly gathered through the enticement of whiskey and cigars. Additionally, “politicos” would bring voters back and forth from the saloons to the polls. Slowly saloons began to disappear along Front Street and in 1912 there were only four left and by 1916, Montana voted in favor of Prohibition to take effect by December 31, 1918. The Headquarters Building was added to the National List of Historic Places in 1996.

People

The first owners of the Headquarters Building were W.H. Bennett and Mitchell, whom were involved in investment and loans in addition to “mining claim transactions.” Bennett and Mitchell also received gambling licenses for the building, reflecting the type of social activity occurring along Front Street during this time. Mitchell was also associated with illegal gaming around 1892.

In 1893, A.B. Hammond bought the Headquarters Building from Mitchell, completing his claim to all “four corners” of Missoula’s central business district, including: “the Missoula Mercantile, the First National Bank building, the original Hammond Building, and the Florence Hotel.”

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85 Koelbel, p 74.
Functional Contributions

In 1890 a one-story annex was added onto the Headquarters Building and housed a restaurant called the Saddle Rock Oyster and Chop House. During the late 1890's, the building functioned primarily as a "men's social club," offering "the finest whiskey and cigars." The last year with a saloon located within the Headquarters Building was 1909.

By 1916, the Headquarters Building became a retail outlet for the Daily Meat Company, coinciding with the more conservative times. In 1932, the top floor was listed as a "Businessman's Handball Association." Because of the sudden onset of Prohibition, it is not unlikely that the second floor of the building was turned into a "speakeasy." However, after Prohibition was repealed and the Depression began, the top floor was turned into the location of the Missoula Community and Chest and the Missoula Family Welfare Agency. Additionally, the American Red Cross was listed at this location from 1948 till 1956.

By 1967, the Daily Meat Company had relocated to Mullan Road and the functions in the building consisted of services on the second floor with retail on the first. Most notable is the travel agency, Wide World of Travel, which has located in either the Headquarters Building or the Daily Company Annex since 1978. Today, the building contains World Games of Montana on the first floor consistent with its historical pattern of retail use.

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91 Mathews, p. 45.
Architectural Characteristics

The Headquarters Building is from the Victorian era. Reflected in its beautiful design are Italian influences and detailed ornamentation. Most notable are its cast iron columns and cornices. This brick building is representative of the 1880-1900 time period with offices on the second floor and retail on the first.\textsuperscript{95} Located next to the Daily Company Annex, the drastic changes in architectural style can easily be seen (Photograph 2).

The Headquarters Building visually adds to downtown Missoula, not only through its ornate and beautiful architecture, but also through its strong association with the time before Prohibition. The Headquarters Building is associated with many important historical events, including the formation of downtown Missoula.

Photograph 2: The Headquarters Building (left) and Daily Company Annex (right). (Source: Jill Patrick, June 2004).

Higgins Block

The construction of the Higgins Block, beginning around 1889, was to be the site of the C.P. Higgins Western Bank and the D.J. Hennessy Mercantile Company. The

purpose of this building was to relocate the central business district in Missoula. With
the construction of the railroad on the north side of town and the original town site to the
south, the Higgins Block was to serve as the meeting ground between the two.\textsuperscript{96}
Additionally, the construction of the Higgins Block sparked later development within the
downtown, such as the Bluebird Building, which shares an adjoining “party wall.” Local
business people often referred to the area as the “Golden Block,” associating it with a
section of town where most of the prominent businesses and shops were located. This
building contributes to the city center through its economic significance, making it an
essential focal point to the people and businesses within downtown Missoula.\textsuperscript{97} The
Higgins Block building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.\textsuperscript{98}

\textbf{People}

Christopher Powers Higgins, co-founder of Missoula, commissioned the
construction of the Higgins Block for his new bank, C.P. Higgins Western Bank in 1888.
However, before this building, C.P. Higgins along with Frank Worden, were involved in
various events prompting the establishment of downtown Missoula. Originally, Higgins
and Worden established the very first store in Western Montana (Worden and Co.) in
1860 near “Hell Gate Village.” Then in 1864, Higgins built a flour mill at the location of
present day downtown Missoula and eventually moved their store to a brick building
located next to the flour mill.\textsuperscript{99} By 1871, Worden and Company had established the
Brick Block, located on the northwest corner of Higgins and Main Street which contained

\textsuperscript{96} Mathews, Allan. “Multiple Property Documentation Form-Amendment,” \textit{National Register of
Historic Places Registration Form} (1993) on file at the City of Missoula Historic Preservation Office,
Missoula, MT.

\textsuperscript{97} McDonald, James. “Higgins Block,” \textit{NRHP} (1975).

\textsuperscript{98} McDonald, James and Williams, Gary, “Missoula Historical Resource Survey.” (1980).

Through the success of Worden and Higgins, Missoula became a distributing center for the retail and commercial needs of the surrounding valleys, in addition to an expanding agricultural community through farming goods and other trade.

In 1873, Higgins organized the capital for the establishment of the Montana National Bank for which he was President along with D.J. Welch whom was Vice President. This building was originally located within the Brick Block, but was later moved. In 1872, Worden and Co. (Higgins) also prompted the construction of Missoula’s first water system, which was in use till 1883, by diverting the Rattlesnake Creek to an area located in Waterworks Hill.

Shortly before the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad was secured, Worden and Co. received a patent on 160 acres of Missoula of which most is now considered the central business district. In order to obtain the guarantee the arrival of the railroad, Higgins along with a few other prominent businessmen offered a section of the land to the NPR. However, it was not C.P. Higgins that received a contract with the NPR, but instead Eddy, Hammond and Co. which is said to have caused a “lack of harmony” between the two leaders.

After years of economic and social contributions to Missoula, C.P. Higgins commissioned the construction of the Higgins Block. This building was to be the location of the C.P. Higgins Western Bank located on the northeast corner of Main and Higgins Avenue. However, just as construction was being completed, Higgins past

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100 Coon, p. 74.
103 Coon, p. 130.
away. C.P. Higgins died on October 16, 1889 unexpectedly and was quoted as being “a honest and kind-hearted person, noble being.” The contributions made on the part of C.P. Higgins to Missoula are extraordinary in both his social dedication and economic support. After C.P. Higgins death, his sons Frank and George took over the bank, but it unfortunately closed four years later. The economic depression which occurred in 1893 caused the Higgins family to never fully recover from its losses.

R.M. Cobban and Samuel Dinsmore are associated with the Higgins Block in addition to the Bluebird building. Cobban and Dinsmore purchased the Higgins Block along with the 212 Bluebird building in 1899. Cobban moved his office to the 212 building while Dinsmore stayed in the Higgins Block. Both continued together for years in a successful business venture.

*Functional Contributions*

Along with C.P. Higgins Western Bank, the Higgins Block also housed the D.J. Hennessy Mercantile Company, a large number of offices for attorneys, insurance and real estate agents, surveyors, architects, engineers, plumbers, and a physician. However, in 1895, the D.J. Hennessy Mercantile Company closed its doors opening up more space for other businesses as well as a restaurant. In 1900, the Conrad Kohrs Company bought the building still utilizing the space as before and a few years later C.P. Higgins Bank went out of business and was replaced with the Missoula Trust and Security Bank, that

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105 Author Unknown, “Dead, Captain C.P. Higgins Passes into the Unknown” *The Daily Missoulian* (Missoula, Montana), October 16, 1889.
107 See Bluebird People Section.
eventually became known as the Missoula Trust and Saving’s Bank. Around this same time, an addition was placed in the back of the building along Main Street.\textsuperscript{109}

In 1955, the bank portion of the building was renovated and replaced with the Missoula Building & Loan Association; this same organization purchased the entire building in 1959 which continued until 1978, when it was replaced with the First Federal Savings & Loan of Missoula, its current occupants in the main portion of the building.\textsuperscript{110}

Other businesses located on the upper floors in 1982 include the Missoula Benefit Society, two vacant spaces, an attorney’s office, a social survey agency, and James McDonald architects.\textsuperscript{111}

Today, the Higgins Block contains the Sterling’s Savings Bank along with an art gallery located to the north along Higgins Avenue and an antique store along Main Street. The second floor is comprised of a photography school, massage therapists’ law offices, and a design studio.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Architectural Characteristics}

The Higgins Block architecture represents the Queen Anne style, and was designed by J.C. Paulsen and McDonnell of Helena. The structure is best known for its hooded entryway and copper dome which can be viewed at the corner of Main and Higgins. Some of the building materials include stone, brick, terra cotta, and metal.\textsuperscript{113}

According to Alan Mathews in “A Guide to Historic Missoula”, “Missoula had never

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{111} Polk, R.L. and Co. “Polk’s Missoula City Directory,” Kansas City, MO. (1982).  
\textsuperscript{112} Personal Observation June 2004  
\textsuperscript{113} McDonald, James. “Higgins Block,” \textit{NRHP} (1975).  
\end{footnotes}
seen anything like this brilliant combination of shapes, materials, and textures in one building (Photograph 3).”

The Higgins Block is a structurally magnificent building located in the heart of the downtown. Although mainly associated with the financial industry, the Higgins Block has also contained many small and important businesses and services for the people of Missoula. The historical context of this building and its mere size contributes to the present day vitality in Missoula.

The Bluebird Building

The Bluebird building was constructed along Higgins Avenue sometime between 1891 and 1902. As mentioned earlier, this structure was considered part of the Higgins Block to link the Northern Pacific Railroad station and the original town-site to the...

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114 Mathews, p. 61.
south. The construction of this building along with the adjoining Higgins Block prompted further commercial and economic development to continue throughout the central business district of Missoula. The Bluebird building was added onto the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.116

People

The most notable of people associated with the Bluebird building are also associated with the Higgins Block, R.M. Cobban and William Dyson. William Dyson was originally involved with the Northern Pacific Railroad when he first arrived in Missoula, but later opened his own real estate and insurance business that was located in the Bluebird building. During the time of his business, Dyson also contributed to Missoula by serving as Justice of the Peace until 1920, when his wife took over both as Justice of the Peace and President of his real estate and insurance company.117

Another key individual was R.M. Cobban. Originally, Cobban had owned and incorporated a mill in Butte around 1893 named the Montana Lumber and Produce Company. Eventually, Cobban became involved in the real estate and insurance business and moved to Missoula. Once established in Missoula, Cobban engaged in the manufacturing of gas and pipes via the Missoula Gas and Coke Company. Cobban’s most notable contribution to Missoula was through the development of subdivisions. Cobban and his partner, Samuel Dinsmore, created the subdivision called Orchard Homes along with the Cobban Addition, the Dinsmore Addition, and the Park Addition.118

Functional Contributions

According to the Polk Directories of 1901-1902, numerous businesses resided within the Bluebird building including: a realty company, a real estate company, and a newspaper company (the Butte Miner). During this period, the main function of the building was office use; even R.B. Cobban maintained an office until 1908. Then, in 1902, "the North thirty feet" of the property, together with the "party wall" to the north wall were sold to Leona B. Forbis and from then on was considered a separate structure from the Higgins Block.\textsuperscript{119}

In 1922, the address changed from 212 North Higgins to 220-224 and remained in the Forbis family until 1961. Numerous businesses have located in the Bluebird building, such as Haberdasher’s in 1911, and a cigar and card shop in 1912.\textsuperscript{120} In 1913, the building became the Empress Theatre, that was later renamed the Bluebird Theatre in 1925.\textsuperscript{121} The theater, one of Missoula’s first, had a strong connection with Missoula vaudeville. William Bouck, although being blind, contributed his mastery as a showcase piano player for silent films at the theatre.\textsuperscript{122}

Commercially, the Bluebird building has contributed significantly to downtown Missoula. From 1932 to the present the main function on the first floor has been retail. Noteworthy companies include: Brown Bilt Shoe Store (1932-1934), Haines Style Shop (1936-1938), Keith A. Steve (shoes) and Buttrey’s Women’s Shop (1938-1961), and the

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, Mathews, Allan. "Multiple Property Documentation Form-Amendment," NRHP (1993).
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, Mathews, Allan. "Multiple Property Documentation Form-Amendment," NRHP (1993).
\textsuperscript{122} McDonald, James and Williams, Gary, “Missoula Historical Resource Survey.” (1980).

Architectural Characteristics

The Bluebird building’s intricately detailed tin façade along with “double-hung windows and bracketed cornice” are all characteristic of the commercial era during the time of its construction. Its association with the Higgins Block can be viewed through similar style and adjoining “party wall” on its south-side. The blue coloring of the building adds a distinctiveness to the downtown many do not have (Photograph 4).

The Bluebird building, although historically associated with the Higgins Block, contributes significantly to the present day vitality. Whether it is through its distinctive blue exterior, the unique shops located on the first floor, or the services provided on the second floor, the Bluebird building and its historical context within downtown Missoula are important.

Photograph 4: The Bluebird building. (Source: Jill Patrick, June 2004).

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Dixon-Duncan Block

Named after its two founders, Asa L. Duncan and Joseph Dixon, the Dixon-Duncan Block was constructed in 1897. This two-story Romanesque-style commercial building was constructed during “Missoula’s second post-1883 building boom” and unmistakably correlated with the economic growth occurring downtown. Originally, the Dixon-Duncan Block had an address of 216 and 220 North Higgins between 1902 and 1912. Then between 1912 and 1921 an addition was constructed in the rear of the building and the address was changed to 232-240 North Higgins. The Duncan-Dixon Block was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997 for its commercial and architectural contributions.

People

Joseph Dixon and Asa Duncan during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were influential businessmen and attorneys. Dixon played a key role in the building and reconstructing of Fort Missoula into a place of economic permanence. Additionally, he was influential in obtaining the funding for the construction of the Federal Building in Missoula. Dixon was a U.S. Senator from 1906 until 1913 who greatly influenced the development of the CBD in Missoula. For example, Dixon lobbied for the construction of boulevards to carry on the reference to Missoula as the “Garden City.” Most of the boulevards were located within the historic residential areas outside of

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the downtown.129 Joseph Dixon also watched over the Missoulian newspaper, which he often used to voice his Republican causes. In 1920, Dixon won the governorship of Montana, which he held for one term. One of Dixon’s most notable enemies was the Anaconda and Clark Mines, who were accused of taking millions and only paying one dollar in taxes.130 Dixon was known throughout Missoula for being anti-monopoly, in favor of a corporate income tax,131 the “czar of the radicals,” and “spend-thrifty.” Additionally, Dixon ran for Senate in 1928 but lost and was later selected by Hoover as the first Assistant Secretary for the Department of the Interior.132

**Functional Contributions**

Historically, the Peterson Drug Company was the most long-standing business located at this address (from 1903 until 1979).133 The Ogg Shoe Store located on the first floor of the building from 1936 until 1976134 also had a long-term presence in the building. Additional uses of the building when it was first built were offices for Dixon and Duncan and other small businesses including three small insurance agencies. Unfortunately, in 1956 a fire swept through the building and destroyed the north portion of the building. This portion was later rebuilt.135

The Peterson Drug Company was replaced with the Montana Coffee Tea & Spice Trading Company in 1980 and shortly after changed to Butterfly Herbs. Additionally,
around the same time, the Ogg Shoe Store became the present Hide and Sole Leather Goods.\textsuperscript{136} Today, retail is still the primary function of the Dixon-Duncan Block.

\textit{Architectural Characteristics}

The Dixon-Duncan Block is a two-story structure placed into the architectural category of vernacular Romanesque. The building was constructed with brick, including the top of the building which is flat and contains a brick parapet. On the outside of the building, there is extensive brick adornment along the brick façade.\textsuperscript{137} Overall, the building has been classified as contributing exceptional physical value to the downtown. Most of the structural elements of the building remain intact with the first floor being one of the most notable in overall integrity in Missoula (Photograph 5).\textsuperscript{138}

The Dixon-Duncan Block has predominately been the location of the Peterson Drug Company, a main facet on Higgins Avenue for many years. Today, it contains two stores with just as much influence, Hide and Sole and Butterfly Herbs. The Dixon-Duncan Block also was the site of two influential people in Missoula, which has made its historical context important.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{photograph5}
\end{center}

\textit{Photograph 5: Dixon-Duncan Block.}
(Source: Jill Patrick, June 2004).

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Garden City Drug

The Garden City Drug building was constructed between the years 1898 and 1902. Because the building was constructed during the development of the railroad, it signifies the commercial growth representative during this time in Missoula. The owner, George Freisheimer located Garden City Drug in this building between the years 1903 and 1909. Then during the next 19 years, the owners changed hands about three times and in 1922, Peterson Drug Company took over until 1928. The most recent and final exchange between owners took place in 1934 with the Missoula Mercantile hosiery department or presently The Bon hosiery department. The Garden City Drug building was placed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 for its architectural and engineering significance.

People

George Freisheimer contributed to Missoula’s downtown through the ownership of the Garden City Drug Company located inside the building for twenty six years. Before owning Garden City Drug, Freisheimer was vice president of the Montana Pharmaceutical Association in 1891.

Functional Contributions

The Garden City Drug Company occupied the building from 1902 through 1928 symbolizing the important role dominance of drug stores, which in the early 20th century...
carried a variety of goods and services. During this period, drug stores were known to carry pharmaceutical products and other items such as gifts, food, cards and beverages. Peterson Drug, located within the building until about 1934, became the location of the hosiery department for the Missoula Mercantile. “The Merc” officially purchased the building in 1959, turning the second floor into office space for the company. Today, the function of the Garden City Drug building has not changed since 1934. It is still the women’s hosiery department; however, it is now operated by The Bon Macy instead of the Missoula Mercantile.

Architectural Contributions

Located near the heart of the central business district and bordering the famous Missoula Mercantile, the Garden City Drug Building, has been classed into the Vernacular Romanesque category of architecture. Most notable are its considerable-sized, second story Romanesque arched windows. Unfortunately, portions of the first floor have lost some its “authenticity” due to the installation of new metal frame, plate glass doors, and windows and polychrome underneath the windows. However, the second floor still possesses excellent examples of design, materials, and craftsmanship used during this period. Unless closely examined, the separation between the Missoula Mercantile building and Garden City Drug Company cannot be easily distinguished (Photograph 6).

The Garden City Drug Company has a strong association with the era when drug stores were popular. The second association with this building is the hosiery department

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for both the Missoula Mercantile and The Bon Macy, contributing significantly to downtown Missoula’s dynamic history.

Daily Company Annex

The location where the present Daily Company Annex stands today was formerly the location of at least two saloons prior its construction. The first saloon to locate here was in 1871 and was referred to as The Magnolia. Eventually this saloon was replaced with The Exchange which existed till 1905 and 1912.144 Then in 1916, John R. Daily purchased the site and began the construction for his future wholesale building. The original annex to the Headquarters building was torn down to make way for the new Daily Company Annex, which reflects a more cautious and conservative time in history. Together the two buildings shared a common wall and became a new meat production

plant, in addition to offices and retail space.\textsuperscript{145} The Daily Company Annex was added to the National List of Historic Places in 1996.\textsuperscript{146}

\textbf{People}

John M. Daily, also one of Missoula’s most leading businessmen, contributed to Missoula most significantly through the success of his meat packing company. Prior to this commercial venture, a dramatic increase in the value of surrounding agricultural land was occurring and John Daily was able to enjoy the benefits. Additionally, Billy Simons is said to have invested in the Daily Meat Packing Company, and when he passed away his wife, Edna, inherited a considerable portion of the company. Edna Wilma served on the board of directors for the Daily Incorporation till 1954.\textsuperscript{147}

\textbf{Functional Contributions}

The success of the Daily Meat Company was vast, with sales expanding into both regional and national markets, making it one of the most influential businesses located in the downtown. Services include: “livestock buying to slaughtering to sausage making to ham curing to retail marketing and home delivery to regional wholesaling to national mail delivery of seasonal specialty meat products.”\textsuperscript{148} The overall function of the building remained constant until 1967 when the Daily Meat Company relocated out to Mullan Road. After the departure of the meat-packing and retail company, the functions of the Daily Company Annex have remained consistent with offices on the second floor and

retail on the first. Currently, Laurel Creek (women’s clothing) is located on the first floor along with a behavior therapy center on the second.\textsuperscript{149}

\textit{Architectural Characteristics}

The Daily Annex stands in sharp contrast to the Headquarters building. Its lack of design correlates strongly with its period of construction, where hard work and “no-nonsense” was rewarded. In the late 1960’s, both the Daily Annex and the Headquarters building were covered with a “panelized aluminum façade” to portray the two buildings as one.\textsuperscript{150} Fortunately, the façade has been removed and the two buildings are back to their original appearance (Photograph 2).

The Daily Annex is strongly associated with the Daily Meat Company and apparent in its architecture it was built during a time of sobriety and hard work. The Daily Annex’s contributions to Missoula are numerous which has led it to be just as important to the downtown today as when it was first constructed.

\textbf{The Wilma}

Originally, the Wilma was constructed as a cultural and arts outlet for the thriving downtown of Missoula. The Wilma is Missoula’s first and only skyscraper, representing the tallest building in western Montana. Initially, the Wilma was called the Smead-Simons building, referring to its builders. This “Showplace of Montana” was built by William “Billy” Simons and W.H. Smead. Eventually the building was dedicated to Simons’ wife, Edna Wilma, who was a well-known light opera star.\textsuperscript{151} It is considered one of the best auditoriums in the western states, and during the 1920’s was considered

\textsuperscript{149} Personal Observation June 2004
distinct because of its wide array of functions. The Wilma’s presence added many new and exciting characteristics to the downtown, many of which are still present today. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 because of its historical significance to the people of Missoula.

People

William A. “Billy” Simons was tremendously involved in the production of Wild West shows throughout much of the West. Billy Simons also contributed to the construction of theatres in Oregon and Idaho. When Simons decided to build a living memorial for his wife, Edna, he wanted the Wilma to provide Missoula and Western Montana a place for residential, cultural, and other community needs. Along with the Wilma, Billy Simons was also involved in building the first electric light plant in Missoula and the original Missoula Drug Company. Even after Billy Simons past away, his wife Edna took over operations and was in charge of the 1951 renovation. Billy and Edna Simon’s contributions have provided downtown Missoula with an enormous array of cultural and entertainment opportunities for over 83 years.

W.H. Smead, another major contributor to the Wilma, was also involved in many other areas throughout Missoula and the surrounding valley. Beginning in 1891, Smead incorporated the State Lumber Company; a year later he became director of the Missoula Building and Loan Association, and in 1893 incorporated the State Lumber and Milling Company. Additionally, Smead was an Agent for the Flathead Indian Tribe.

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Functional Contributions

In addition to the theater, the Wilma originally provided the downtown with twelve apartments, a restaurant, a barbershop, two retail stores, fifty offices, a pool, and gymnasium.\textsuperscript{156} The theatre inside of the Wilma was and still is the most notable attraction the building offers the downtown. Numerous concerts and shows have been performed in the renowned theater by a variety of performers. The grand theater’s acoustics has even been compared to those of Carnegie Hall. On the opening day of the Wilma, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra performed making it a notable event throughout downtown Missoula.\textsuperscript{157}

Unfortunately, during the 1930’s the swimming pool and gymnasium were closed due to extreme moisture problems. Eventually, the restaurant was also closed and turned into office space.\textsuperscript{158} However, this did not change the level of cultural and entertainment value this building signifies. Throughout Missoula’s history, this breathtaking theatre has been the stronghold of this building and was even regarded as the “finest and most beautiful theatre” between the Twin Cities and the West Coast.\textsuperscript{159}

Some of the smaller functions on the upper floors have changed slightly throughout history such as a dentist office became a lawyer’s office; however, the overall function of the building has not changed. Unfortunately, during the 1960’s much of the office and retail space available was vacant. According to the Polk Directories, in 1962

\textsuperscript{156} Mathews, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, Mathews, p. 83
there were a total of six vacant office spaces and in 1970 there were four. However, by 1982, most of the office space was utilized and vacancies dramatically decreased.\textsuperscript{160}

Presently, the Wilma continues to operate as a movie-theatre-performing-arts center. The functional uses of the Wilma today have changed slightly from when the building was first constructed; however, its overall contribution is still in the area of arts and entertainment. Today, the list of uses include: a performing arts center, two cinema’s, gallery space, meeting facilities, business offices, catering services, theme parties and events, private dining, and residential living.\textsuperscript{161} The Wilma’s functional contributions provide the downtown with a place to hold meetings, view movies and concerts, attend parties, and many other social needs of the community.

Architectural Contributions

The Alder and Sullivan influence of the auditorium give the Wilma its unique physical appeal to the downtown. The building was constructed with brown brick, topped with a double cornice and brackets ornamented with floral pendants and lights. Both the inside and outside of the building has been characterized as Chicago style. The interior of the theatre was completed in a Louis XVI style complete with gilded cast molding and panels. In 1951, the Wilma went through expansive to: make more leg room for the theatre, change the curtains, and retouch and clean the trim and panels.\textsuperscript{162} The mere physical presence of this building has contributed significantly to the downtown. The image of the Wilma will remain apart of Missoula’s downtown for many years to come (Photograph 7).

\textsuperscript{161} Personal Observation June 2004
The Wilma is one of downtown Missoula’s most prized buildings. It reflects a strong association with the arts and entertainment industry which has contributed to the creation of a healthy urban environment.

Photograph 7: The Wilma

Hammond Arcade

The Hammond Arcade was built during the Depression, in 1934. The original Hammond building, which was three stories high, was built in 1890 but was destroyed in 1932. The original Hammond building was a landmark in the late 1890’s, until a fire destroyed the entire building. The downtown was devastated. The construction of the second building was financed through insurance money and was an immense asset in boosting Missoula’s economy despite the coinciding Depression. Due to limited finances, the current Hammond arcade was restricted to

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one floor. Yet, because of its location and appealing interior, many small businesses located within the building and further stimulated the local economy. The Hammond Arcade was placed on the List of Historic Places in 1990.

People

A.B. Hammond was most closely associated with the Hammond Arcade.

Functional Contributions

Three of the most notable businesses located within the original Hammond building were the Missoula Drug Company, the Missoula Real Estate Association, and the first office for the Northern Rocky Mountain District of the United States Forest Service. The second structure also contained numerous small businesses, either in the retail or service industry. Some of the most notable of these businesses include the Missoula Drug Company, the Watsor Insurance Agency, and the Arcade Fountain Lunch. Because of its location and design, the Hammond arcade was considered the most popular place to locate a small business in the 1930’s. The Missoula Drug Company was the most long-standing of the small businesses, residing there from 1934 till 1986. Today, the building’s overall function has remained constant with its original use and houses a restaurant, clothing store, an art gallery, a gym, a salon, and many other businesses.

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167 See Missoula Mercantile People Section.
170 Koelbel, p. 90.
173 Personal Observation June 2004
Architectural Contributions

The Hammond Arcade has been placed into the Art Deco category of style, consistent with its time period of construction. Because the structure is only one floor, it adds a distinctive character to the downtown. Large glass windows along Higgins Avenue also add to the unique style of the structure (Photograph 8).

The Hammond Arcade is a unique building, both structurally and commercially. Because it is only one level, it provides a break from the other surrounding structures. Also, there have been a wide variety of businesses and services located within the building that all have contributed to the vitality of the downtown.

Montgomery Ward Building

Built during the Depression, specifically 1935, the construction of this building provided downtown Missoula with the commercial growth to survive this difficult period.
The Montgomery Ward building was added onto the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

People

A name most closely linked with the Montgomery Ward building is D.J. Donohue. Donohue owned the property in which the current building stands. Prior to this Donohue managed Anaconda’s Mercantile store located in Hamilton, Montana. Additionally, in 1892 along with M.J. Connell, he incorporated M.J. Connell Mercantile.

Functional Contributions

The Montgomery Ward department store remained in the building until its remodeling in 1971. Montgomery Ward, a major chain, was very successful throughout the nation during this period and signified an important period of growth and permanence of Missoula, contributing considerably to the commercial survival of the downtown. In 1971, the Missoula Bank of Montana bought and renovated the building with office space on the first and second floors located on the north side.

Architectural Characteristics

Located in the heart of the central business district, the Montgomery Ward building has been classed into the Renaissance Revival category of style. The building was constructed with brick, wood-framed windows, and a “painted concrete belt course” to divide the first and second floors. Another notable feature of the building is its clock.

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174 Mathews, p. 86-87.
located in the center of the building.\textsuperscript{178} Large windows currently line the building displaying the different kinds of businesses inside (Photograph 9).

The Montgomery Ward building is important for its site of the Montgomery Ward store, especially during difficult times in the nation’s economy. The survival of this building and store both played a role in maintaining vitality in the downtown.

![Photograph 9: Montgomery Ward building. (Source: Jill Patrick, June 2004).](image)

**The Florence Hotel**

The Florence Hotel, also known as the Glacier building was built in 1941. The previous two Florence Hotels had been destroyed by fire. The original Florence Hotel was constructed in 1888, and named after A.B. Hammond’s wife Florence.\textsuperscript{179} One notable event associated with this hotel was in 1911 when President Theodore Roosevelt visited Missoula. On this April day businesses closed their doors early and nearly 50,000 people came to hear the speech. President Roosevelt stayed at the original Florence Hotel in addition to attending a formal banquet later that evening.\textsuperscript{180} However, two years

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Koelbel, p. 63.
\item Ibid, Koelbel, p. 105-107.
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later, a fire which supposedly began from hot ashes being dumped into a wooden box at
the bottom of an old elevator shaft located outside of the building, completely destroyed
the hotel.181

Around 1913, the second Florence Hotel, was constructed consisting of 106 guest
rooms. This hotel was considered the largest in Montana west of Butte and Helena.

Then, in 1936 another fire completely destroyed the hotel along with eight other
businesses in the area. Speculation has the fire starting in the basement of a nearby drug
store.182

Eventually, the Missoula Mercantile Company, then owned by Walter H.
McLeod, realized the urgent need of the people and businesses of Missoula to replace the
hotel. According to McLeod and other business men, the economic viability of Missoula
depended upon a hotel to meet the needs of travelers and to sustain a lively downtown.
Finally, with the assistance of many other leading business men, the financing and
justification for building another hotel were met in 1937. However, because of financial
issues on the part of the Missoula Mercantile Company, construction was delayed until an
appeal was made to the citizens of Missoula, calling them to donate money because it
would increase the city’s real estate values, distribute money, and stimulate the economy
of the central business district. Finally, the construction of the third hotel was completed
in 1941183 and was advertised as “America’s Finest Small Hotel” reflecting the
significance of the tourist industry in the downtown.184 Additionally, the Florence Hotel

181 McNally, Mike, “Flames Do Strike Twice,” Missoulian (Missoula, Montana), Section B,
March 18, 1983.
183 Butterfield, Beth. “Florence Hotel” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
(1991) on file at the City of Missoula Historic Preservation Office, Missoula, MT.
184 Mathews, p. 85.
contributed to Missoula’s prosperity by creating over 100 jobs and included the employment of Italian prisoners of war during World War II. Most Missoulians took pleasure out of the fact that they had contributed financially to the construction of the hotel and used the lobby as a meeting place for community gatherings.\(^\text{185}\) The Florence Hotel was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.\(^\text{186}\)

**People**

As referenced earlier, Walter H. McLeod played a major role in acquiring the funds and promoting the development of the third Florence Hotel. McLeod, who was associated with the Missoula Mercantile contributed to Missoula in various ways.\(^\text{187}\)

**Functional Contributions**

According to an article in the *Missoulian* on December 5, 2002, the third and present hotel which cost $600,000 hotel was comprised of “175 rooms, an elegant formal lobby, main dining room, coffee shop, cocktail lounge, banquet rooms and retail stores.” Up until the 1970’s when it was renovated into office space, the Florence Hotel “was the social center of Missoula.” According to historian Allan Mathews, “It carried us right through the bleak period of the war years. Here was this brand-new, sparkling, streamlined hotel at this important street corner. It added a visual joy in the heart of downtown.”\(^\text{188}\) The extravagant lobby was also a vital component of the building. Because of the beautifully adorned interior design, the lobby was commonly used as the community’s gathering spot. Additionally, as a result of the automobile boom occurring

\(^{187}\) See The Missoula Mercantile People Section.
throughout the nation, an interior multi-level parking garage was also added to the portion located along West Front Street. This relatively new phenomenon was recently making its way into the downtowns of many urban areas throughout the United States.

Between the years 1975 and 1989, the owner of the hotel transformed the guest rooms into office space. And in 1990, the Florence Associates (law firm of Worden, Thane, and Haines) purchased the entire building which prompted more tenants and eventually restored the Florence Hotel into its original “first rate” classification. In 1982, some of the businesses located in the building were the Glacier General Insurance Company, Helping Hands Learning Center, an insurance agency, a barber shop, a commercial and real estate firm, and a hypnotist.

Architectural Characteristics

The Florence Hotel is noticeably different from most other buildings located downtown. The Art Moderne design consists of “strong horizontal lines, flat-faced concrete, a metal exterior, and terra-cotta accents.” Today, The Florence Hotel is still one of the most distinct buildings located downtown. Furthermore, it is one of the few remaining historic hotels with a lobby lasting since its construction (Photograph 10).

Even with the current Florence Hotel being the third hotel built at this location it still encompasses a significant portion of the downtown’s history. Whether it is through its vast history in the hospitality industry or through its magnificent and beautiful lobby, this building provides a glimpse of what life was like in downtown Missoula during the 1940’s.

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Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the numerous contributions on the part of the people, functions, and buildings throughout history that have impacted downtown Missoula in various ways. Knowledge of Missoula’s built environment help to explain the processes that have assisted in creating vitality in the present. The preservation of the built environment is important because it provides residents and visitors insights into the key elements of downtown Missoula’s historical and cultural landscape.
CHAPTER V
GIS ANALYSIS

This chapter uses GIS to visually depict the different types of businesses located within the eleven buildings examined beginning with the first year of construction and ending with the present (Map 1). GIS is used to illustrate the changes occurring on Higgins Avenue throughout history. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section analyzes the first year of construction (which varies from building to building), the second section discusses the period leading up to 1948, the third section discusses 1949 to 1984, and finally the last section analyzes the period from 1985 to 2004.

First Year of Completed Construction

The initial years of construction for each of the eleven buildings chosen are all different. Therefore, the analysis is slightly different from the other three periods.

The oldest building examined in this thesis is the Missoula Mercantile which came under construction around 1882. Historically, this building represents the economic prosperity experienced in the late 1800’s in Missoula. The primary function of the Missoula Mercantile was wholesale and retail trade. Some of the goods supplied by the company included dry goods, liquor, groceries, meat, hardware goods, and other wholesale items. Most of the retail and wholesale items sold to the public were kept on the first floor, while the second floor was used primarily for storage. The Missoula Mercantile was very successful for many years and satisfied most of the retail and wholesale needs of the downtown businesses and residents most of their retail and wholesale needs.

AREA of RESEARCH

Map 1
November 2004
Jill Patrick

- Building Lots
- Buildings Examined
- Streets

Dimensions: 613.6x793.3

- Dixson Duncan Block
- Montgomery Ward
- Bluebird Building
- Higgins Block
- Florence Hotel
- Missoula Mercantile
- Headquarters Building
- Daily Clarion Annex
- Hammond Arcade
- The Wata

Streets 100 200 400

Feet

0 100 200 400
The Headquarters building was built in 1888, during a time of gambling, prostitution, and heavy drinking. The primary function of the Headquarters building was a men’s social and gambling club, offering the “finest whiskey and cigars.”\(^{194}\) Additionally, a restaurant/bar was located in the building called the Saddle Rock Oyster Chop and Saloon.\(^{195}\) This area along Front Street was considered to be the center of town for many years and is referred to as the original town site.

The Higgins Block was constructed in 1889 to be the location of the C.P. Higgins Western Bank and the D.J. Hennessy Mercantile Company. Unfortunately, with the death of C.P. Higgins before the completion of the building, the C.P. Higgins Western Bank closed down after only four years of business. The D.J. Hennessy mercantile company was fairly successful; however, it never reached the level of success experienced by the Missoula Mercantile Company. The second floor of the building was dedicated to office space mostly for the service industry. Some of the services provided on the second floor included insurance agents, real estate agents, surveyors, plumbers, engineers, and a physician.\(^{196}\) This building held many of the services needed by the people of Missoula. During this time, there were very few offices supplying these types of services located outside of the downtown.

The Bluebird building which was constructed in 1889, and considered part of the Higgins Block until 1902, shared the same original function as the Higgins Block, the D.J. Hennessy mercantile company.\(^{197}\)

\(^{194}\) Mathews, p. 45.
The Dixon-Duncan Block was constructed in 1897 and is associated with the second economic boom in Missoula. According to the earliest Sanborn Map available, the primary function on the first floor was the Peterson Drug Company, which included a meat and drug section. The Peterson Drug Company remained in the Dixon-Duncan Block until 1980, making it one of the most long-standing businesses in downtown Missoula.

The Garden City Drug building which was constructed in 1902 adjoins the Missoula Mercantile building. The building’s primary function was the Garden City Drug Company which remained from 1902 till 1922. The establishment of this company was prompted by the retail boom taking place in Missoula, mostly due to the development of the railroad.

The Daily Company Annex which shares a common wall with the Headquarters building was constructed in 1916. The primary reason and function of the building was for the Daily Meats Company, a production plant and a wholesale company. Also, according to the 1921 Sanborn Maps the second floor was used for lodging rooms. The construction and use for this building reflect “changing times” occurring in downtown Missoula and throughout the country. The days of gambling, drinking, and prostitution no longer existed, but instead a dedication to hard work. The area along Front Street began to change and with it were changing functions within the buildings.

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The Wilma was constructed in 1921. The main purpose of this building was to provide Missoula with an arts and entertainment venue. The beauty of the Wilma Theatre added a whole new feel to the downtown. Additionally, the first floor contained a beautiful and decorative entrance to the theatre along with two retail stores and a barbershop.\textsuperscript{204} The primary functions on the second floor contained about six offices, including; The Wilma Theatre office, Simons WA Amusement Company, along with a dentist and a chiropractor.\textsuperscript{205}

The Hammond Arcade, a one story structure was built a second time around in 1934, which helped to boast the local economy through its construction.\textsuperscript{206} The name most closely associated with the Hammond Arcade is the Missoula Drug Company.\textsuperscript{207} However, there are many other small businesses which located in the building its first year such as Peek’s Fountain Lunch, Taylor & Hill Bakery, Sport Shop clothing, Bishop Insurance Agency, Watson Insurance Agency, and Modern Beauty School among many others. The wide variety of functions indicates the Hammond Arcade was a popular destination for many small service and retail businesses and Missoula residents.

The Montgomery Ward building was built in 1935, also during the Depression, which helped to provide jobs to Missoula through its construction.\textsuperscript{208} The primary function of the Montgomery Ward building was its department store. The Montgomery Ward department store provided Missoula residents a variety of retail goods available on both the first and second floors.

\textsuperscript{205} Polk, R.L. and Co., “Polk’s Missoula City Directory,” Kansas City, MO. (1921).
\textsuperscript{206} Missoulian Official Life Section B, 3/18/1983
The Florence Hotel was constructed in 1941 a third time around after two previous fires had destroyed the original two. A "America’s Finest Small Hotel" reflected the impact of the tourism industry on Missoula’s economy. The main functions within the hotel were guestrooms, along with a beautifully decorated lobby and dining room, used by both visitors and residents alike. The first floor contained: the Florence Hotel Pharmacy, Garden City Dairies, Garden City Floral, Kohn Jewelry, and the Strait Bar. The entrance of the hotel continued into the second floor which had a large ballroom.

This time period in both Missoula and the rest of the United States reflects a time when downtowns were thriving and essential to the survival of any city, big or small. Downtowns were the focal point for manufacturing, retailing, and services for the surrounding community. Most of the buildings completed during the late 19th and early 20th century were a result of the railroad, prompting an economic boom and the establishment of a permanent Missoula. Most of the businesses within Missoula were located downtown during this period, resulting in a variety of retail shops, services, and entertainment venues. All of the buildings contributed significantly to the downtown, whether it was through their construction (i.e. providing jobs), their architecture, or the businesses inside. Additionally, many people resided within the downtown making it a location for parades, restaurants and other social events. Furthermore, the automobile had not made its way into mainstream culture, which kept the construction of both businesses and homes within a small amount of space. This period was an important time for the establishment of most central business districts that are present today (Maps 2-5).

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210 Mathews, p. 86.
First Year of Completed Construction - First Floor

- Peterson Drug Company
- Meat Company (Peterson)
- The Missoula Mercantile
- D.J. Hennesy Mercantile
- Western Montana Higgins Bank
- Montgomery Wards Department Store
- Garden City Drug Co.
- The Florence Hotel Lobby/Skylights
- Garden City Floral Co. Inc.
- The Florence Hotel Lobby/Entrance
- The Florence Hotel Dining Room
- The Florence Hotel Kitchen
- Garden City Dairies
- The Florence Hotel - Pharmacy
- Strait Bar - Beer
- Kohn Jewelry
- Building Lots

Map 2

November 2004

Jill Patrick

79 Feet
The Period from the First Year of Construction to 1948

The Missoula Mercantile Company continued to supply Missoula residents with various wholesale and retail items. The stability of the Missoula Mercantile Company provided strength and resilience during various stages of Missoula’s economy.

The Headquarters functions had dramatically changed since 1888 when it was an establishment of whiskey, cigars, and gambling. With the construction of the Daily building in 1916, the two buildings shared the common function of the Daily Meat Company. The Headquarters’ portion of the building contained the Sausage Factory, while the second floor held the offices of the American Red Cross. The functions of the Headquarters building had changed dramatically.

The Higgins Block functions also changed. The D.J. Hennessy Mercantile Company and C.P. Higgins Western Bank no longer existed, but instead a variety of small businesses sprang up. The first floor contained businesses such as Cumming’s Shoe Store for Women, LaCombe Fur and Dress Shop, and the Fashion Beauty and Barber Shop. The second floor contained less retail and more service type offices including: physicians, dentists, real estate agents, and attorneys. The Higgins Block was beginning to supply a variety of services for the downtown.

The Bluebird building, now considered completely separate from the Higgins Block also changed functions. Again, the D.J. Hennessy mercantile company no longer existed and instead the building contained the Buttrey’s Women’s Shop on the first floor

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and an apartment on the second floor. \textsuperscript{215} Specialty retail shops were prevalent during this period, especially those catering to women’s clothing.

The Dixon-Duncan Block still contained the Peterson Drug Company, but made room for Ogg Shoes Store which was located on the right side of the building. The second floor contained a variety of office space and was labeled the “Duncan Rooms.” The Duncan Rooms served insurance agents, attorneys, and accountants.\textsuperscript{216} Many of the services Missoulians needed were provided by the Dixon-Duncan Block.

The Garden City Drug Company no longer existed and instead was changed into the Missoula Mercantile Hosiery Department.\textsuperscript{217} The change was from a drug proprietor to a specialty retail shop.

The Daily building’s functions still remained that of the Daily Meat Company, which continued to supply Missoula and national markets with a variety of meat products, making the Daily Meat Company one of Missoula’s most successful company’s during this period.\textsuperscript{218}

The Wilma continued to be a center for arts and entertainment. The grand theatre was still the most beautiful in Missoula. Additionally, the Wilma building contained Pearson Ida’s clothing shop for women along with a variety of offices for dentists, insurance agents, and the Fox Intermountain Amusement Corporation.\textsuperscript{219}

The Hammond Arcade still contained a variety of uses along with the original Missoula Drug Company. Conway’s Restaurant, Cecil’s Accessory Shop, The Gift Shop,
Grady Insurance Agency, and Koski Radio Service located here.\textsuperscript{220} The variety of businesses had changed; however, the overall function of the building had not.

The Montgomery Ward building still contained the large department store that it was originally constructed to serve.

The Florence Hotel still contained guestrooms, a ballroom, and a large dining space. In addition, the Florence Hotel Pharmacy and the Garden City Dairies remained in the building. Some of the additional functions of the buildings extended to the Florence Hotel men’s shop, Blue Mountain Confectionary, Northwest Airlines Ticket office, and the Yellow Cab Company. A wider variety of retail and services were beginning to locate within the hotel.

Downtowns were flourishing across the United States and were the center point for any community. Again, most types of commercial activity were located in or around the central business district. The variety of businesses, services, and entertainment venues brought life into the downtown. Missoula was now established and offered both the residents and visitors a variety of uses. The automobile was just beginning to become popular during the end of this period; however, most people still relied on other forms of transportation (i.e. walking or train), keeping the community closely knit (Maps 6-9).

\textbf{The period from 1949 to 1984}

The Missoula Mercantile Company ended its reign in Missoula in 1959 when it was sold to Allied Stores and eventually became the location of the Bon in 1979.\textsuperscript{221} The Bon Macy is a department store with a variety of merchandise such as shoes, men’s and

\textsuperscript{221} Missoulian 11/10/1988, vol. 1, C-1, p.1
YEAR 1948
First Floor

Business Name
1. Peterson Drug Company
2. Ogg Shoe Store
3. The Missoula Mercantile
4. LaCombe Fur and Dress Shop
5. Towne's Shoe Shop/Repairs
6. Fashion Barber Shop
7. Missoula Bldg and Loan Association
8. Fashion Beauty Shop
9. Union Realty Company
10. Savon's Shoes
11. Cumming's Store for Women
12. Butter's Women's Shop
13. Montgomery Ward's Department Store
15. The Florence Hotel Lobby/Skylights
16. The Florence Hotel Lobby/Entrance
17. The Florence Hotel Buffet and Lounge
18. The Florence Hotel Kitchen
19. The Florence Hotel Office
20. The Florence Hotel - Pharmacy
21. Northwest Airlines Inc. Ticket Office
22. Kohn Jewelers
23. Garden City Dairy
24. The Florence Hotel Men's Shop
25. Yellow Cab Co.
26. Vacant
27. The Florence Hotel Repair Shop
28. The Florence Hotel Manager Office
29. The Florence Hotel Coffee Shop
30. Blue Mountain Confectionary

Building Lots

Streets

Map 6
November 2004
YEAR 1948
Second Floor

Business Names
1. Peterson Drug Company
2. State Farm Insurance
3. Gordon Overland Dentist
4. Camp Fire Girls Inc.
5. Perry Hewitt real estate
6. Jewell and Root Attorney Office
7. Missoula Retail Clerks Union
8. Dahi Babcock Physician
10. Nelles and Marcy Accounting
11. Hosking William accounting
12. Stone Emerson osteo physician
13. Western Finance Company
14. Jas A. Rusk Apartment
15. McGraw R Allen CPA
16. Title Abstract Co.
17. Toole Insurance Co.
18. Leo Hamilton Insurance
19. Bodens and Babbitt lawyers
21. Bailey Jane attorney/shipper
22. Newland and Biffin Accountants
23. Duncan Thos W. Insurance
24. Montgomery Ward's Department Store
25. Building Lots

Streets

0 80 160 320 480 Feet

November 2004

Jill Patrick
Map 8
women’s clothing, and house wares. Because of changes in the economy, the wholesale items provided by The Missoula Mercantile were no longer necessary in the downtown of Missoula.

The Headquarters building also provides an example of a shift in businesses locating downtown. In 1967, the successful Daily Meat Company relocated to Mullan Road. This shift occurred throughout many downtowns indicating a decreased need for wholesale businesses to be located in the downtown. The first floor of the Headquarters building became the home of Wide World Travel (a travel agency), while the second floor was listed as vacant.222

The Higgins Block still remained the location of a variety of retail and service businesses, however, none of the original stores were listed. Some of the businesses that existed in 1984 were the Designer Gallery and the First Federal Savings & Loan of Missoula which comprised most of the space on the first and second floors. The second floor contained the office of James McDonald architects, Design Media, Waddell & Reed Inc. investment company and one vacant space.223

The Bluebird building’s first floor functions also changed. The first floor was still used for retail space; however, the stores were Nostalgia (gifts, candy, and toys) and the Kiddie Shop. According to the 1984 Polk Directories the second floor was listed as vacant.224

The Dixon-Duncan Block also remained a building with the first floor used as retail space with Butterfly Herbs (listed as a food broker) and Hide and Sole (a leather goods store). The second floor remained the location of a variety of services provided by

the National Wildlife Federation, Duncan Reality, Mountain Health Company, Energy Options (solar energy equipment), and two attorneys’ offices.\textsuperscript{225}

The Garden City Drug building also changed functions along with the Missoula Mercantile Company. The building became a special section of The Bon dedicated to women’s hosiery, while the second floor contained offices for The Bon.

As mentioned above, the Daily Meat Company had relocated. Therefore, the Daily building became the location of the Commercial and Investment Real Estate Company, noting a drastic change from its original use. The second floor was listed as vacant.\textsuperscript{226}

The Wilma building remained the home of the most grand and ornate theatre in downtown Missoula. A major remodeling occurred in 1951, mostly to restore the beauty of the theatre. Additionally, a smaller movie theatre was added to the left of the lobby on the first floor. The first floor contained Kineo’s Jewelry and Gifts, Chapel of the Dove (wedding chapel), Design Photography, and the office of the Modern Beauty School. The second floor contained offices for a certified public accountant and two dentists, Out in Montana Organization, and the Fashion Beauty Shop.\textsuperscript{227}

The Hammond Arcade continued to hold a multitude of businesses filling a variety of needs for the residents of Missoula. The Missoula Drug Company was still in business since its construction. Some of the new businesses located in the Hammond Arcade in 1984 included Pine Mountain Candies, Fred’s Bookkeeping Services, Fur

Boutique Originals Ltd., The Jem Shoppe and Custom Jewelry, Check Stop-Intermountain Financial Systems, and three vacant spaces.\textsuperscript{228}

The Montgomery Ward building changed in its functions in the 1970’s after going through a major remodeling. The Missoula Bank of Montana located its offices on the first and second floor, while the remodeled office space on the north side of the building contained the office of Senator Max Baucus and All Points Travel Service. The second floor also changed and held office space for Robinson & O’Neill architects, By Hand Studio Weavings, and Touch America (a telephone company).\textsuperscript{229}

The Florence Hotel also underwent a major renovation during the 1990’s, turning its guestrooms into office space.\textsuperscript{230} Fortunately, the beautiful hotel lobby and the ballroom remained. Additionally, the building was also referred to as the Glacier building, most likely because of the Glacier Assurance Company located in the building along with Stoverud’s Jewelers, The Children’s Bookshop, Sundance Café, The Boardroom Lounge, Yellow Cab Company, and Ninety Three Realtors.\textsuperscript{231} As mentioned earlier, the second floor remained the location of a ballroom, along with office space added on during the renovation. Some of the businesses located on the second floor were Burke Securities, Sterling Productions, three real estate brokers, and an attorney.\textsuperscript{232} The change from guestrooms into office space symbolizes a dramatic shift in the types of functions present in the downtown during this time period.

The period from 1949 to 1984 is a time of dramatic change occurring in downtown Missoula and the rest of the United States. Most of the long-standing

\textsuperscript{230} Mathews, p. 86.
businesses (i.e. the Missoula Mercantile Company, Peterson Drug Company, and Daily Meat Company) were no longer in existence. This change reflects a shift in both the national and global economics from manufacturing to the service industry. Many buildings were renovated and converted into office space, while many businesses in the retail industry located outside of the downtown. The construction of Southgate Mall in 1979 coupled with the increasing popularity of the automobile led many residents away from the downtown and forced many companies out of business. The number of vacancies in 1984 reached a total of four (including the first and second floor only) within the eleven buildings. Levels of crime and fire along with deteriorating exteriors of buildings and the riverfront eventually prompted city officials to realize change was needed in order to save the downtown from declining any further. And as mentioned earlier, in 1979 the Missoula Redevelopment Agency was created to help bring downtown Missoula back to the vibrant downtown it had once been (Maps 10-13).

The period from 1985 to 2004

Presently, The Bon Macy is still located in the Missoula Mercantile building. This department store has been a part of the downtown since 1979 and continues to provide both Missoulians and visitors a place for shopping. The Bon Macy is a rare exception for many downtowns in the 21st century especially with the growing popularity of shopping malls located on the outskirts of the central business district (i.e. Southgate Mall or Reserve Street) where variety increases and prices decrease. The Bon Macy and the Missoula Mercantile building have become permanent fixtures in the downtown. When walking down Higgins Avenue today, the windows of The Bon Macy are lined

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Map 12

1984
Second Floor

Business Name
1. Missoula Bank of Montana
2. Marvin Sprunka CPA
3. Robinson & O'Neill Architects
4. Harris - Larsen & Associates
5. Touch America (telephone co.)
6. T.K. Botsford attorney
7. By Hand Studio weavings
8. Energy Options solar energy equip.
9. First Federal Savings & Loan
10. McDonald, James architect
11. Waddell and Reed Inc. Investment co.
12. Design Media
13. Natl' Wildlife Federation Resource
14. Thomas Murray attorney
15. Duncan Realty
16. Smith and Van Valkenburg lawyers
17. Mountain Health Co.
18. Vacant
19. Vacant

Building Lots

Streets

Jill Patrick
November 2004
with the most recent fashion trends in clothing, cosmetics, and furniture. The location and historical nature of The Bon Macy is incomparable to any shopping mall located outside of town (Photograph 1).

The Headquarters building located along Front Street still provides the downtown with its beautiful ornate and elaborate design. The functions of the building have not changed dramatically since 1984; however, when compared to its original use the change is remarkable. Today, the function of the Headquarters building is World Games of Montana (game store). The second floor is still used for office space and contains the Donor Services-Western Range, an architect, and Wide World Travel agency (Photograph 2).^2^3^4^

Today, the Higgins Block still provides the downtown with its attractive Queen Anne architecture. The current first floor tenant is Sterling’s Savings Bank and on the second floor tenants are marriage and family counseling, massage therapy, dentistry, and legal advice.^2^3^5^ The historical importance of the Higgins Block is apparent in its architecture and grandeur and offers the downtown historical relevance (Photograph 3).

The stores of the Bluebird building have changed since 1984; however, they are still retail-type venues with individual appeal (Photographs 4, 11-12) the tenants on the first floor are Fact & Fiction (book store) and Brown Bear & Co. (wildlife gifts and resources). The second floor is comprised of only one office, that of A&E Architects. Both of the locally owned stores on the first floor offer a personal touch to this “blue” building and the downtown. Fact & Fiction often has local and national authors hold readings of their newest releases. Both Fact & Fiction and Brown Bear & Co. offer local

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^2^3^4^ Personal observation June 2004.
^2^3^5^ Personal observation June 2004.
appeal because they are locally owned and cater to the needs of Missoula residents and visitors, a trait often left out of a strip mall.

Photograph 11: Brown Bear & Co. wildlife gifts and resources (located in the Bluebird building).

Photograph 12: Fact & Fiction (located in the Bluebird building).

The Dixon-Duncan Block is another example of local appeal by providing stores to visitors and residents unique only to Missoula. This building has actually held the
same two stores since 1984, Butterfly Herbs (food broker) and Hide and Sole leather goods (Photographs 5, 12). The second floor holds the offices for AERIE Backcountry Medicine, R&B Computer Consultants, and the National Wildlife Federation. Butterfly Herbs is a very distinctive store which offers food and drink (coffee, tea, etc.) in the back, which one would never know if they did not enter the store. The atmosphere is that of a very small town, everyone knows everyone else, offering the people of downtown a familiar place to gather and discuss local and national events.

Photograph 13: Butterfly Herbs (located inside Dixon-Duncan Block).

The Garden City building, now considered part of the Missoula Mercantile building and The Bon still is the location of the hosiery department with the second floor used as office space. The physical part of the building blends in fairly well with the Mercantile building, but it is still obvious that it was built separately (Photograph 6).

The Daily building located next to the Headquarters building is now the home of Laurel Creek clothing and gifts with Montana Behavior therapy clinic located on the  

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second floor. Again, Laurel Creek clothing and gifts offer the downtown a unique store with individual charm selling many items not found in large chain-stores. The visual difference between the Headquarters building and the Daily building are remarkable and offer the downtown a interesting insight into the changing times of the 19th and 20th century (Photograph 2).

The Wilma still provides the downtown with its exquisite theatre. The Wilma Theatre is the location of many music concerts in addition to films (Photographs 7, 14-15). One of the most notable contributions of the Wilma Theatre is its movie selection of which are usually independent films that are not part of the mainstream “Hollywood” genre. This distinctive characteristic makes the Wilma an authentic place to visit, showing films that large movie theater complexes on Reserve Street or Brooks Street avoid. In addition, the second floor has remained the home of multiple offices, such as the Wilma Amusement Company, the Wilma Catering Company, and High Plains Films.

Photograph 14: The Wilma Theatre

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237 Personal Observation June 2004
238 Personal Observation June 2004.
The Hammond Arcade’s original function has not changed dramatically since its construction. Although none of the original stores still exist in the building, the overall distinctiveness is apparent. Today, the stores located in the Hammond Arcade consist of El Cazador (restaurant), Skin Chic (beauty supplies), Nolita’s (clothing), Fish Creek (textile designs), Claws (nail lounge), Wallwork’s Gym, and the WM Gambradt Art Gallery. Two new stores recently added to the Hammond Arcade are the Towne (an interior design store) and Chickadee’s (“gifts for chicks”), starting a new trend towards expensive upscale boutiques. The Hammond Arcade offers the downtown a wide variety of truly unique and individual stores, most found nowhere else (Photographs 8, 16).

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240 Ibid.
The Montgomery Ward building has remained the same since its remodeling, with a couple changes in businesses (Photograph 9). The main portion of the building holds the First National Bank, while offices to the north include Senator Max Baucus’s office, Appraisal Services, First National Bancorp, TK Botsword (attorney), and Pronto Press.242

The Florence Hotel (also known as the Glacier building), still holds the most beautiful lobby in Missoula (Photograph 10). Inside is filled with leather couches, a fireplace, and coffee tables all to enjoy while sipping on espresso from the stand located in the entrance hall. The lobby, once filled with proud patrons which helped contribute financially to the reconstruction of the present building in the 1940’s, still embraces a historic feeling not experienced by many other buildings. The first floor of the building is still occupied by many small businesses such as Senator Conrad Burn’s office, Stoverud’s Jeweler, 102.5 FM radio station, Candy Bouquet, Solar Energy (supplies and equipment), and The Redbird (restaurant). Still present is the ballroom on the second

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floor, now called “The Governor’s Room,” and the office space of Alps (law firm), Foundation Services Corporation, Captive Management, and Professional Support Services.

Missoula has returned to the vibrant downtown it had once been with a variety of retail shops, businesses services, and entertainment venues. Some of the unique businesses are still present (i.e. Butterfly Herbs and Hide & Sole), while others have lasted only temporarily. The individual appeal of the stores are still present, serving the needs of a growing community (Maps 14-17).

As mentioned earlier, much of the improvement within the downtown is because of physical improvements encouraged and financially supported by the Missoula Redevelopment Agency. According to the MRA’s fiscal year budget report for 2005\(^{243}\), an estimated 7,234,483 dollars has been set aside for Urban Renewal District 1, which encompasses the central business district. Included in the plan is the renovation of the Bon’s awning and the façade and sidewalk outside of the Florence Hotel. In the “improvements” category within the report 3,457,241 dollars has been set aside for 2005.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed four different time periods in the development of downtown Missoula. The four periods all reflect changes occurring both locally and nationally. Downtown Missoula has gone through various stages of decline and prosperity which is reflected in the variety of businesses within each building examined.

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Business Name

1. The Wilma Theatre - Grand Theatre
2. The Wilma Theatre no. 3
3. Hammond Arcade
4. Claws nail lounge
5. Fish Creek textile design
6. Nolita's clothing
7. Wallworks - gym
8. WM Gambradt Art Gallery
9. El Cazador - restaurant
10. Laurel Creek clothing and gifts
11. Towne - interior design
12. Skin Chic-saloon
13. World Games of Montana
14. The Wilma Lobby/Entrance
15. Chickadees' gifts for chicks
16. The Wilma Entrance

Building Lots

Streets
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to explore the various characteristics which contribute to the vitality of a downtown, specifically within the context of Missoula, Montana. By examining the historical development of the buildings, along with recent contributions on the part of organizations and people, a thesis has been developed that explains how these various contributors have impacted the vitality that is present in Missoula today. The term vitality had been defined as possessing most or all of the attributes a downtown was intended to serve or possessing the revitalization strategies discussed in the previous chapters. Downtown Missoula serves the needs of what a vibrant downtown should serve. It possesses a rich and diverse history reflected in its “meaningful” buildings, a variety of businesses, and a strong sense of place unique only to Higgins Avenue.

This thesis has several empirical, theoretical, and methodological implications. First, it has suggested that historic preservation is an important attribute of a healthy and vibrant downtown. Missoula’s historical development is reflected in its built environment and historic preservation strategies can be experienced today. The people, functions, and structures of the past all serve to enhance the downtown and make it the vibrant place that it is today. By providing a detailed history on the people, functions, and reason for construction of the eleven buildings examined it is evident that these structures contain a history unique only to Missoula. Preservation of these buildings provides the community cultural landmarks into the history of Missoula’s development. The Florence Hotel is just one of these structures. Viewing the lobby of the Florence
Hotel today provides a glimpse of what life was like during the 1940’s and how important it was to provide a beautiful hotel which catered to the needs residents and tourists. Without the preservation of this building, residents and visitors would not be able to step back in time and experience Missoula how it had once been.

Unfortunately, historic preservation alone is not enough to create vitality. According to empirical observations, there are many additional characteristics that illustrate vitality within the downtown. By observing events, talking with key individuals, and examining the various organizations and businesses in the downtown, it is apparent there are a variety of factors that create vitality, which for the most part are unique only to Missoula. As discussed in this thesis, some of these additional factors include the presence of a major university, revitalization along the riverfront and tax incentives provided by the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (Urban Renewal District), and events provided by the Missoula Downtown Association. Additionally, tourism has contributed the economic vitality of the downtown. According to a report on Missoula’s economic trends, tourism has steadily increased since 1977 (with a total of about 78,000,000 dollars in labor earnings in 1977). By 2000 the total labor earnings from tourism jumped to almost 125,000,000 dollars.¹ Not only is it the tourism which helps bring vitality to downtown Missoula, but also it is the organizations and people.

Finally, this thesis uses historical GIS to illustrate the spatial and historical changes that occurred throughout the various buildings examined. GIS contributed significantly to the research, making it an important part of the study by providing insight into the eleven examined buildings beginning with the first year of their construction and

ending with the present. By using GIS as a method of research, it becomes evident that the businesses within the eleven examined buildings changed concurrently with changes occurring in the national economy. The most obvious and important change made apparent through GIS is the shift from a manufacturing based economy to an emphasis in the service industry. This shift is most noticeable when comparing maps from the 1948 time period and 1984 time period. For example, the Daily Meats Factory/Wholesale Inc. which came into existence in 1916 had relocated out to Mullan Road in 1967. In its place were Wide World of Travel and Commercial and Investment Real Estate Company. Missoula conformed and adjusted to this change in order to create a renewed vitality.

Unfortunately, there are aspects of the study that were not covered. Only the first two floors were analyzed within each building of which only eleven buildings (within the downtown) were examined. Therefore, the scope of the study was limited. In order to provide a greater level of detail, an entire analysis of the downtown which covers all of the buildings and all of the floors would provide more insight into the historical development of downtown Missoula. However, the scope of this thesis does provide insight into the value of a historical examination of the built environment and its role in creating vitality. Cities of similar size or smaller can learn about their built environment by duplicating the methods used in this research on their own downtown. An in-depth examination of a downtown’s historical development can assist in examining the various characteristics and contributing factors which create vitality and a strong sense of place.
SPATIAL REFERENCE INFORMATION:

1. Missoula Maps

Horizontal Coordinate System Definition: North American 1983

Map Projection Name: Lambert Conic Conformal

   Longitude of Central Meridian: -114.00

   Reference Latitude: 47.00

   Standard Parallel 1: 46.75

   Standard Parallel 2: 47.25

Planar Coordinate Units: Miles

   Distance Units: Miles

   Map Units: Miles

Geodetic Model:

   Horizontal Datum Name: GCS North American 1983

   Spheroid Name: GRS 80
REFERENCES

Author Unknown, “Dead, Captain C.P. Higgins Passes into the Unknown,” *The Daily Missoulian* (Missoula, Montana), October 16, 1889.


Murphy, Sean M. “The Direct Valuation of a Community’s Amenities,” The University of Montana (2003).


Reynolds, Sam, “Historic Missoula,” Missoulian (Missoula, Montana), Section C-1. (November 10, 1988).


