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## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2004

SUBJECT:    HUD awards Joplin “Best of the Best” Award

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A building once considered for demolition has now gained recognition for the City of Joplin and its partners who worked to refurbish it. **The City of Joplin received the “Best of the Best” Award from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) District 7 office** at a recent conference in Topeka, Kan. HUD gives only one Best of the Best Award in the District, while also recognizing several success stories in redevelopment efforts within communities. HUD’s District 7 includes Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska.

The Frisco Station Apartments, 601 Main Street, is the project recognized as a historic landmark refurbished into low and moderate income housing for senior citizens. Originally built as a railroad depot in 1913, this nine-story building was Joplin’s first modern, high-rise, fireproof office building. It served as a depot until 1955, and in 1987, after years of gradually losing tenants, the building was completely vacant. It became an eyesore and health hazard for the city, with broken windows, weather damage and pigeon-related problems.

As plans for reutilizing this downtown pinnacle were considered and then always dismissed, the distressed Frisco Building became symbolic of Joplin’s diminishing downtown area. In early 2001, no practical use for the building had surfaced, and the City of Joplin was considering demolition.

Other partners of the City, including the Economic Security Corporation (ESC) of Southwest Missouri, had also worked on redevelopment efforts, but without success. A new

partner emerged on redevelopment plans, and the Frisco Building's future looked a little brighter. Carlson Gardner Inc., a Springfield real estate developer specializing in affordable housing projects in Missouri, took notice of the building.

After reviewing Carlson Gardner's restoration plan for the Frisco Building, the City committed \$150,000 for acquisition costs, utilizing HUD's Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) funding. This funding will be considered a grant upon the completion of the project when it is fully occupied. Presently, the Frisco Station Apartments have 39 of the 56 apartments occupied, with full occupancy expected by December 2004.

Throughout the project, the architectural integrity of the building was balanced with providing modern, safe and comfortable apartments.

"It is nice for the City and our partners of the Frisco Building to get recognized on this effort. It is a win-win situation for us," said Dick Largent, Director of Planning and Community Development for Joplin. "This project met many of the goals we have for downtown revitalization. It involves an historic building, helps to repopulate the downtown area and it provides new investment opportunities for goods and services in this area."

The Frisco Station Apartments offers both one bedroom and two-bedroom apartments. Rent is \$280 to \$295 per month for one-bedroom units and \$370 to \$410 for two-bedroom units.

According to Largent, the Frisco Station Apartments project has caused new interest in the downtown area.

"This project served as a spark to downtown revitalization," said Largent. "And with the City purchasing the Newman Building across the street, it is a double victory. This breathes new life into an area that we have been working on for a number of years."

In addition to the UDAG funds, the City provided property tax abatement through the Missouri Chapter 353 Revitalization Program. Carlson Gardner also utilized low-income housing tax credits through the Missouri Housing Development Commission as well as state and federal historic preservation tax credits along with other private funds to fully restore the historic building that was once abandoned.

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