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Looking to future of U.S. 24

Medians in east Independence, revival at west entrance envisioned

By David Tanner
The Examiner

U.S. 24 through Independence could be getting a facelift in two different regions.

As the Missouri Department of Transportation prepares for a future median and pavement upgrade between Missouri 291 and the Blue Mills area to the east, the city of Independence is preparing a study in the northwest that will someday help restore a vibrant entryway into the city.

MoDOT announced a public meeting for the proposed median project, 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., Jan. 13, at the Fort Osage Church of the Nazarene, 19333 E. U.S. 24.

Traffic engineer Norm Beeman will present information akin to what he presented Dec. 8 to the Independence City Council.

MoDOT sent out letters to 100 businesses along with the Fort Osage and Independence school districts, inviting them to participate and share information and viewpoints.

Many business owners along the 2.5-mile stretch of the state highway are concerned that a median will take business away by preventing customers making left turns into their businesses.

MoDOT said in the letter that while studying the stretch of highway for a pavement upgrade, the department discovered higher-than-average accident



rates. The state said too many driveways and a high traffic volume create an unsafe environment in key spots.

The state promised to install U-turn features at several intersections, along with entryways into some business areas.

MoDOT's purpose for the public meeting is to explain the project and to gather as much information as possible from residents and business owners.

In the northwest part of Independence, the city is set to launch a study to revitalize an area that has steadily declined over the last two decades.

Representatives from Independence and Sugar Creek are forming the 24 Highway Corridor Marketing Study Committee to consider the area from Interstate 435 to Noland Road.

The study area includes residential areas north of U.S. 24 along that stretch, a city official said.

The study, which is funded by the Amoco settlement from the former refinery in Sugar Creek, will uncover ways to renew the area and define future land uses and the potential for redevelopment.

The city's Community Development Department is scheduling public meetings in February and March to gather public input into the northwest project.

Dates have yet to be announced.

The city hired EDAW, the company that recently helped Lee's Summit plan its downtown redevelopment, and Canyon Research, a company charged with studying the economics of the plan.

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