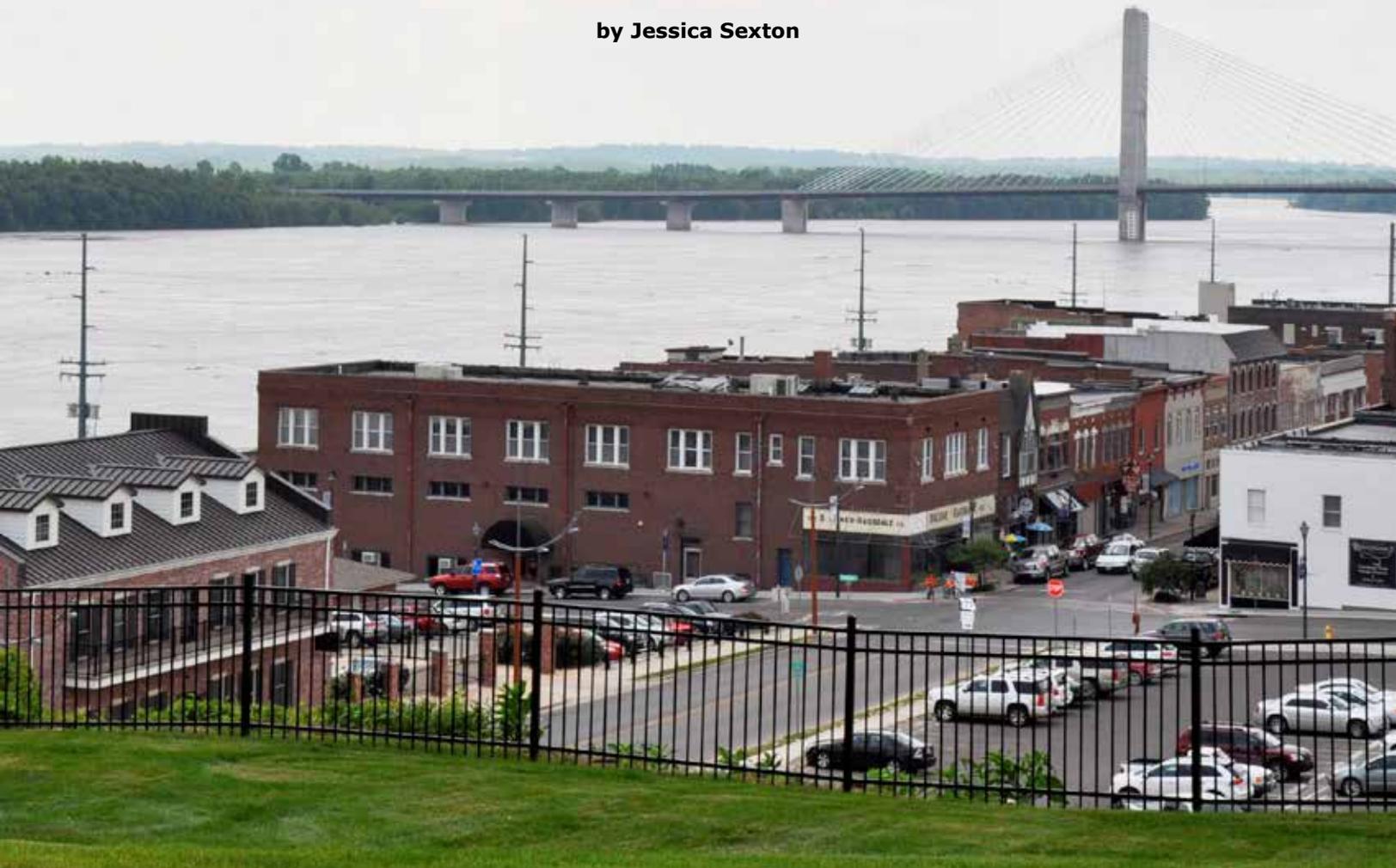


CAPE GIRARDEAU: NEW GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

by Jessica Sexton



When was the last time you visited Cape Girardeau? If you returned today, you would notice changes and growth at a rapid pace that would not have been possible without the hard work of both city government and community partners. Below are a few of the City's most recent, and unique, projects sprouting up around town.

COMMUNITY GARDENS AND ORCHARD PROJECT

Community gardening is nothing new in Cape Girardeau. The Cape Girardeau Parks and Recreation Department has partnered with volunteers and master gardeners to create several community gardens in past years. However, for 2015, a grant administered through the Cape Girardeau County Healthy Communities Coalition, in conjunction with the Cape Girardeau County Public Health Center, brought on a new phase of growth. Members of the coalition facilitating the grant include city government staff, representatives of local hospitals

and schools, local businesses and restaurants, and more.

Receiving the grant enabled the addition of part-time staff for the community gardens and additional programming for 2015. The grant has aided in long-term planning and the addition of free gardening classes for the public co-hosted at city facilities and presented by University of Missouri Extension staff, among others.

“My job is coordinating volunteers at the four gardens and organizing new classes for the community,” said Emily Scifers, the part-time coordinator on staff for the project.



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“We’re working to develop more educational opportunities and outreach. We really want to get the community involved.”

The newest project is a raised-bed style community and demonstration garden constructed next to the Shawnee Park Center. Orchard fruit trees were added to the grounds of the Shawnee Park Center, including three peach, three pear, and three apple trees. Classes offered this spring ranged from planting and maintaining a personal garden to cooking and canning techniques. All of these were made possible through with the grant.

The goal of this project and the Healthy Communities Coalition is working together to promote healthy lifestyles in the Cape Girardeau area. Considered among the “healthier” counties, Cape Girardeau County was recently ranked number 24 of the state’s 115 counties. In 2012, a study by the Cape Girardeau Public Health Center identified the three most significant problems affecting the health status of its population, including the obesity rate, an increased rate of smoking in the county, a higher rate of smoking during pregnancy, and overall immunization rates. By working with the community gardens project and providing programs the coalition, community partners, and volunteers hope to educate others on how to provide healthy food options at their own homes and provide healthy items to those who may need them.

CAPE GIRARDEAU OUTDOOR SCULPTURE EXHIBITION: YEAR TWO

April 2015 marked the second year of the launch of the Cape Girardeau Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition. Seven sculptures created by artists from all over the Midwest grace various locations along Broadway, co-mingling with the

beautiful new streetscape completed in 2012. The public art initiative was made possible in partnership with representatives from the city of Cape Girardeau Parks and Recreation Department, the Cape Girardeau Area Chamber of Commerce, the Cape Girardeau Convention and Visitors Bureau, Southeast Missouri State University, and the Arts Council of Southeast Missouri. Prior streetscape improvements that helped make public installations along Broadway possible were done in conjunction with the City and Isle Casino Cape Girardeau.

A committee was formed in 2011 to develop the City’s public art policy and propose recommendations for the future. Based on research, the committee submitted a written policy to City Council that was adopted in October 2012. By hosting the sculpture exhibition, the committee hopes to achieve two primary goals: increase the number of arts-related activities

within the region and provide an additional revitalization strategy for Cape Girardeau’s downtown. Both the 2014 and 2015 public art installations along Broadway were facilitated by public and private funding (Parks and Recreation, Old Town Cape, and the Cape Girardeau Convention and Visitors Bureau).

“The first Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit was met with a very positive reception by the community,” said Murielle Gaither, executive director of the Arts Council of Southeast Missouri. “So far, we have heard great things from those who enjoy driving by the sculptures every day, as well as those who have come to town specifically to see the exhibit.”

The 2015 Cape Girardeau Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit was judged by the committee. Chris Wubbena, professor of sculpture at Southeast Missouri State University, led the judging of this year’s exhibit. You can view all of the sculptures online at capearts.org/capesculpture.

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD

In March 2015, Cape Girardeau’s Main Street was awarded the Great American Main Street Award from the National Main Street Center during its national conference held in Atlanta, Georgia. Staff, board members, and volunteers with Cape Girardeau’s downtown organization, Old Town Cape, attended to accept the award. “Old Town Cape really captured our attention with its creative partnerships and commitment to historic preservation,” says Patrice Frey, president and CEO of the National Main Street Center. “Their collaboration with art organizations, business interests, and the University brings a dynamic mix of resources downtown, while the City’s impressive list of rehabbed historic buildings demonstrates how Cape Girardeau fully embraces

preservation's power to revitalize."

With the Main Street Center's methodology as its guide and strong public and private partnerships, Old Town Cape has helped engineer a popular riverfront market, a creative corridor featuring public art, an interactive children's museum, and a bustling local shopping scene. The result was 85 net new jobs, downtown reinvestment of more than \$6.6 million, and 34 new or relocated businesses in just one year. Thanks to preservation projects, many of which used state and federal historic tax credits, a former high school now offers senior housing; a vacant federal building houses a co-working space and technology incubator; and a seminary serves as the performing arts campus for Southeast Missouri State University. The University also intends to open a student-run creative entrepreneurial incubator and a center for its media programs in historic buildings downtown.



A new project is a raised-bed style community and demonstration garden constructed next to the Shawnee Park Center.

"Downtown Cape Girardeau has seen significant positive change in the past few years," says Mayor Harry Rediger. "There has been a definite new trend of both commercial and residential development in our downtown area. Old Town Cape has been the catalyst toward this strong momentum and total community support. I am very excited about the future of our downtown." Police Department Expands Community Outreach

Providing a strong community presence, the Cape Girardeau Police Department expanded their outreach in the past year with several new and ongoing projects. The department has added Twitter to their social media presence that already included an active Facebook page that is frequented by citizens for information. They recently added an anonymous crime tips phone line, texting option, and mobile application called CapePD Tips. The new anonymous tip system can help start the conversation related to possible criminal activity. This puts powerful crime-fighting tools in the hands of community members of all ages. "Working with the community, we reduced crime in the city by 11 percent last year," said Chief Wes Blair. "We're hoping these new tools will help more people partner with us in keeping Cape safe."

Other new programs include Coffee with Cops, where officers and citizens meet up at various java stops around Cape Girardeau, and the Neighborhood Roll Call weekly events. Both programs have been increasing in popularity. The second-ever roll call event in the Whitener and Themis streets area, saw a rapid attendance increase to more than 20. "Neighborhood Roll Call is a chance for folks to ask us questions they wouldn't normally get to ask about what we do and address any concerns they may have," said Lt. Rodney



The public art initiative was made possible in partnership with representatives from the city of Cape Girardeau Parks and Recreation Department, the Cape Girardeau Area Chamber of Commerce, the Cape Girardeau Convention and Visitors Bureau, Southeast Missouri State University, and the Arts Council of Southeast Missouri.



Barker about the program. The idea was brought back to Cape Girardeau for adoption by Chief Blair, who heard about the program in other communities during a conference. The goal is to visit locations around town once weekly, canvassing the entire City. The program continues through summer and fall, weather permitting.

FIRE DEPARTMENT DOUBLES ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT CAPABILITIES

The Cape Girardeau Fire Department recently doubled some of their emergency medical service capabilities, thanks to acquiring additional heart monitors and FEMA Fire Act grant funding that paid for several firefighters to complete paramedic training. Previously, the Department had one or two teams on shift capable of providing advanced life support (ALS) measures. With the additional training and new heart monitors, that statistic increased to four or five front line, advanced life support companies on duty at any given time.

Greater Cape Girardeau Business Park Update
Pepsi MidAmerica, the first occupant committed to the new Greater Cape Girardeau Business Park, broke ground on their new location on June 3, 2015. Many city employees, dignitaries, community partners, and others were in attendance.

“We’re pleased to have the largest Pepsi franchise in the nation be the first employer to plant their operations at the Greater Cape Girardeau Business Park,” said Mayor Harry Rediger. “We’re working with several developers right now to find Pepsi some neighbors in the new park.” With the addition of this business park, located at LaSalle Avenue near the Interstate 55 interchange, Cape Girardeau is positioned for further economic success. Road and sewer

work have been underway at the new business park location to accommodate the Pepsi site, and other potential developers have been working with economic development staff and partners. The Greater Cape Girardeau Business Park is strategically located to meet the logistics needs of a variety of industries, and is also surrounded by a strong and capable workforce.

The city of Cape Girardeau has benefitted from many fantastic developments in recent months and years. The City is also quickly expanding in the digital sphere, with a new website expected this year and a strong social media presence. Track the City's changes online and plan a visit! □

Jessica Sexton is a public information specialist for the city of Cape Girardeau, where she has served for six years. She is an active volunteer with several organizations, including Old Town Cape, Inc., and various local projects.