



DREAM Initiative is Excellent Opportunity for Communities

JEFFERSON CITY — Downtown business districts in the United States have had many problems since World War II. An economy decreasingly dependent on manufacturing and the growth of suburbs starved many industrial cities. More recently, the growth of shopping malls has hurt downtown shopping districts even in small towns. But Americans have displayed a resurgent interest in maintaining and enlivening their downtown areas, and a plan recently announced by Gov. Blunt will do much to further those efforts in Missouri. The Downtown Revitalization Economic Assistance for Missouri (DREAM) Initiative will help communities more efficiently and effectively engage in downtown revitalization efforts.

Under the plan, the Missouri Department of Economic Development, the Missouri Development Finance Board and the Missouri Housing Development Commission will work together to create a comprehensive and collaborative approach to downtown revitalization. DREAM communities will first work with the finance board to develop a plan for downtown revitalization and will then have enhanced access to professional services and programs available through the partner agencies. The available programs can help address a multitude of community needs, including infrastructure improvements, historic preservation, affordable housing, community services, business development and job creation.

Six to 10 Missouri communities will be selected through an application process and designated DREAM communities. They will remain DREAM communities for three years.

The DREAM Initiative is targeted at breaking down the barriers to redevelopment and revitalization for Missouri's communities. It will save taxpayer dollars at the state and local levels by offering a more efficient use of Missouri's tools for redevelopment while concentrating resources and eliminating red tape for communities. The program will also speed up the process of downtown revitalization and spur economic growth in selected Missouri communities.

I encourage communities in the 2nd District to apply for this important program. For more information on the DREAM Initiative or to download an application and program guidelines, visit www.dream.mo.gov.

Applications are due by 5 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2006, to DREAM Initiative Applications, P.O. Box 118, 301 W. High Street, Room 680, Jefferson City, MO 65102.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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