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## **Making DREAMS Come True**

JEFFERSON CITY — The second round of the effort to help cities and towns in the state with the 2007 Downtown Revitalization and Economic Assistance for Missouri (DREAM) Initiative was announced a few weeks ago. I think this can be a great opportunity for communities in our district to compete for grants and assistance that will build their economic viability well into the future.

The DREAM Initiative specifically targets small to mid-sized communities with help from the Missouri Department of Economic Development, the Missouri Development Finance Board, and the Missouri Housing Development Commission. In this three-pronged approach, communities will be able to rejuvenate their downtowns while cutting through the red tape of multiple agencies. Those downtowns selected for the program will enjoy a centralized system of applying for state incentives. They will get direct, financial technical assistance for preparing proposals. The DREAM Initiative uses professionals who are dedicated to helping rebuild central business districts. When you add these all together, communities will see their redevelopment timelines significantly reduced.

What does all this mean to the downtown's that get the help? It means re-established properties in downtown cores and gives back to those areas a sense of place and cultural heritage in the heart of the community. As those businesses thrive, they'll generate revenues and increase property tax values to fund roads, schools, and other projects for areas even outside of the downtown community. And finally, the redevelopment will mean jobs.

Only six to 10 downtowns statewide will be awarded one of this year's DREAM Initiatives, so the competition is pretty tight. Ninety-eight communities put in for a DREAM Initiative last year, and only 10 were chosen. I encourage the communities of my district to apply for this worthwhile economic development tool. The deadline for this year's application is July 6<sup>th</sup>. You can find out more information by visiting the DREAM Initiative web site, [www.dream.mo.gov](http://www.dream.mo.gov).

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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