

BRICK DISTRICT GROUP TAKES STEPS TOWARD FUTURE

Four years after Fulton was named a DREAM community, leaders of a local group are working to lay the groundwork to help meet some of the goals set by that program, the main objective of which is to revitalize the city's downtown area.

"I think that's probably kind of a three-fold task," said Tom Riley, new president of the Downtown Fulton Brick District Association. "At it's most basic level, (our mission is) we need to fill more buildings with businesses that will attract more traffic downtown."

Riley added that one of the first steps toward obtaining that objective will be establishing the Brick District Overlay Zoning Area – which would prohibit buildings in that are from allowing residential use on the ground floor. Buildings already utilizing that space as residential would be grandfathered in.

A proposal to that end currently is before the Fulton City Council, although it was tabled at the council's Jan. 24 meeting when questions were raised about how the downtown merchants felt about the plan. The topic is slated to be discussed again at the council's Feb. 14 meeting.

"(The council)" is going to bring it up again Tuesday because we have all the business owners back on board, so I think we're going to be able to move forward," Riley said.

He said other small projects such as signage indicating that special downtown district and planting more trees already have received the go-ahead.

"I'm not sure what would be next on the agenda," Riley said. "I know I have heard a lot of interest in doing two-way streets."

He said another idea that might help draw more people downtown would be working with the Kingdom of Callaway Chamber of Commerce and the Fulton Area Development Corporation "to get a more accessible business and visitor's center."

"That could be kind of a destination downtown," Riley said.

Long-term, he said he would like to see Fulton's downtown "identified as a quality, highly-marketable retail and office district."

As the Downtown Fulton Brick District Association continues to work to find ways to develop and promote downtown, Riley said one of his goals is to keep in better communication with downtown business and property owners and get more feedback from the community. To that end he recently sent out a letter to local merchants and property owners outlining his intent to start sending out periodic updates and asking them to contact him with concerns.

“We would encourage anybody to be involved – volunteer, give their ideas,” Riley said. “We really do want to encourage that.

“I think everybody realizes there’s stuff we need to do, we just need to work together.

“We’re going to really try to identify areas where everybody agrees on and move forward that way.”

Anyone interested in the development of Fulton’s downtown area can contact Riley at tom@riley-dunlap.com, or Nancy Lewis at the Kingdom of Callaway Chamber of Commerce at (573) 642-3055.