

Downtown update puts historic character at risk



Zach Vicars

As I was walking by the hospital one afternoon, I stopped to look at downtown Kirksville. Our "skyline" is composed of Traveler's Hotel, the Adair County Courthouse, the Downtown Movie Theater, a water tower and a Baptist church. It's not much. There's no uniformity, no real rhythm. Really, it's just a few buildings thrown together. But it's Kirksville, and it has a character all its own.

On Jan. 12, the Historic Preservation Committee approved an ordinance to update many of the buildings that compose Kirksville's downtown district, which could include the same buildings I previously mentioned. The plan is to give the buildings a more natural look and ensure the historical integrity of the town (see story, page 3).

But let's be honest: Kirksville is a hodgepodge. Our roads are a hodgepodge of pavement, cobblestone and potholes. Our shopping is a hodgepodge of struggling chains, thrift stores and local eclectics.

The hodgepodge of Kirksville might be what we should try to preserve, not change. For instance, I'm from a bright piece of America called St. Charles, Mo. More than 200 years ago, that town was probably a hodgepodge of granaries, general stores and housing units. Then two guys by the name of Lewis and Clark camped out on the beach there, starting their journey to "discover" the rest of North America. And everything changed.

Fast forward to 2011 and — to my amazement — retirees, antique collectors and others obsessed with all old things flock to the one-mile stretch of river that has been dubbed "Historic Downtown St. Charles." Maybe you've been there, too. Or maybe you've been somewhere much worse, like Dodge City, Kan., an iconic Old West town that seems to have been frozen like a sepia photograph, tumbleweed and all.

In both cases, city planning committees have preserved what's economical — not historical. If Wyatt Earp returned to Dodge City today, he might arrest someone for trying to sell him a cheap pop-gun, rather than for starting a bar fight. Similarly, if Lewis and Clark went on a journey to modern St. Charles, the only thing they'd have to explore would be the endless trinket shops.

Tragically, the true character — and even history — of these two towns have been auctioned off to the highest bidder.

While Kirksville might never be an economically important tourist town, measures to artificially manipulate the downtown's appearance run the risk of selling out the town's true character.

Yes, our city is a hodgepodge, but what a beautiful hodgepodge it is. Kirksville is the place where the slightly nerdy, academic community meets the hard-working, agricultural community. Somehow, we get along. Somehow, we thrive. Somehow, we manage to put together a city. The hodgepodge of people that call Kirksville home find a place in this hodgepodge of a city.

As a result, we have a few buildings that might seem out of place. We might have minimalist architecture on one structure and an outrageous mural on the adjacent one. We might have a local barber shop next to a college bar. It might seem a little unorthodox and it might not make a very good postcard, but that variety is the essence of Kirksville. As the Historic Preservation Committee moves forward, that hodgepodge character is exactly the character that must be preserved.

Zach Vicars is a junior philosophy/religion and linguistics major from St. Charles, Mo.

Life's answers do not lie within the stars



Dates of the updated zodiac:

♑ Capricorn: Jan. 20 - Feb. 16	♋ Cancer: July 20- Aug. 10
♒ Aquarius: Feb. 16 - March 11	♌ Leo: Aug. 10- Sept. 16
♓ Pisces: March 11- April 18	♍ Virgo: Sept. 16- Oct. 30
♈ Aries: April 18- May 13	♎ Libra: Oct. 30- Nov. 23
♉ Taurus: May 13- June 21	♏ Scorpio: Nov. 23- Nov. 29
♊ Gemini: June 21- July 20	♐ Ophiuchus: Nov. 29- Dec. 17
♐ Sagittarius: Dec. 17- Jan. 20	



Molly Skyles

A few weeks ago I woke up and knew something didn't feel right. No, I wasn't sick. I hadn't grown overnight, and my neck wasn't sore from sleeping on it the wrong way. The impulsive leader within my Aries self had transformed into a pushover Pisces. My identity had been changed forever.

A shift in the Earth's axis caused a change in the orientation of the sun and the constellations. A new sign, Ophiuchus, has now been added to the zodiac — a horror for all avid horoscope readers.

I wasn't the only one upset by this life-changing event. My Facebook newsfeed was flooded with equally upset followers of the zodiac. What will happen to those people who had their sign tattooed on their bodies? They will forever suffer from identity crisis.

The once hardworking Capricorns

are turning into freethinking Sagittarius wanderers. The sheltered Cancers in the world are becoming the Gemini life of the party. And those poor Ophiuchus', they have no knowledge of who or what they are, no pre-conceived notions of the path their life is to follow. This new sign has emerged in the stars and those late-fall birthdays are left searching for some type of celestial guidance.

Everyone calm down though — there is a loophole. Yes, the Earth has rotated and the stars might not be lining up as they once did, but the zodiac change only applies to those born after 2009. I know you were nervous. I know when you looked in the mirror, you no longer recognized yourself. I know I didn't.

However, this change in the zodiac is not a new thing. The Earth's alignment with the constellations is constantly in motion, and has been for 3,000 years — since the zodiac was invented. All the signs are constantly changing.

A person born in August is a Leo because the sun has rotated and is "in" the constellation Leo at the time. With the addition of Ophiuchus, there are 13 zodiac signs, but in reality, the sun easily could have entered numerous other constellations at some point, making the zodiac completely irrelevant.

So why did the entire Facebook community panic?

We are a culture obsessed with horo-

scopes, tarot cards and fortune tellers. We believe there is a supernatural being that can predict our lives. The funniest thing about horoscopes, though, is each sign has so many good and bad qualities there is something in each with which almost anyone can identify. I am a leader like an Aries, stubborn like a Taurus and enjoy companionship like a Libra.

Astrology is rooted in belief and maybe a bit of fear, but not science. You never hear of someone headed to astrology class to learn why Virgos are so darn narrow-minded. That's because it is all made up. There is no correlation between the constellations and whether you have a good day. The position of the Earth on the day you were born and where exactly the sun was will not limit your potential.

A star is a beautiful thing. Who doesn't enjoy lying on their backs on a clear evening and hoping to catch a glimpse of a shooting star, and maybe even make a wish? No, the star doesn't have any wish-granting capabilities, but it's fun to pretend. Therein lies the difference between us harmless stargazers and the zodiac-obsessed people of the world. We don't let the stars guide our lives, we just enjoy letting them grace our presence sometimes.

Molly Skyles is a junior communication major from St. Louis, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

Are you satisfied with on campus entertainment?



"I wish they had a larger variety and different genres in the concerts and bands that come to campus."

Allison Francis junior



"I enjoy the concerts and hope there is a good band this spring."

Henry Smith freshman



"They need more concerts and comedians that are more alternative and less mainstream."

Aurelia Lowther junior



"They provide enough entertainment over the course of the year, but they need more variety."

Claire Zimmermann junior

Lower budget cut may not be anything to celebrate



Shawn Shinneman

After Gov. Jay Nixon's speech, I suppose we should all be rejoicing on the streets of Kirksville, dancing through campus and throwing piles of snow in the air sprinkling down like confetti.

This is a celebration, right? We were told to expect cuts to higher education funding of 10 percent, 15 percent, possibly even 20 percent. Approximately a year ago, these were the figures being tossed around as possibilities by Nixon and his administration.

And now, we hear the number figured into the preliminary budget: A mere 7 percent cut — chump change.

You can stop reading, story's done. Truman has been saved. We'll pinch a few pennies and be fine.

At least, this is what seems to be the consensus — 10 to 20 is bad, but 7 is good. If only it were that easy.

Unfortunately, 7 percent is not chump change, especially considering the previous fiscal year's 5 percent cut.

I am a little hesitant to call this a win.

I wanted to stop by President Troy Paino's office to see if he was throwing a party to celebrate having less money to work with when he sits down to figure next year's budget.

He wasn't.

"Really, all that happened to us is that we got the stabilization money from back in the spring of 2009 that was able to spread the

cuts over two years, as opposed to have an immediate 12, 15 percent cut," Paino said. "It really didn't change anything for us. It just gave time to plan for it. So you're right, moving forward we can't just sort of say, 'shew, we dodged another bullet.' We really haven't dodged a bullet."

Missouri, Paino points out, ranks 45th in the country in funding for higher education. It is not a problem that has arisen recently — funding has been stagnant since the 2001 recession, a fact that led Paino to tell me our state has a "systemic problem" with regards to funding higher education.

Sure, Paino and other university presidents — quoted in various newspapers across the state within the past week — were initially pleased when the 7 percent figure became public last week.

But the relief has subsided. Paino will tell you he is a realist. Well, this is about as straight as the leader of a university will give it:

"We are doing things now, because of our lack of funding, that I think are going to severely damage the quality of education we provide," he said.

In the 1980's, Paino explained, Truman aggressively recruited top-notch faculty members, which ultimately led to the educational experience we, as students, enjoy — and they, as future employers, recognize.

But Paino predicts, drawing on faculty demographics, that we are on the verge of a "massive faculty turnover," with possibly 75 percent of faculty needing replacement in the next 10 to 15 years. Without adequate state funding, it's going to be nearly impossible to replace the quality of faculty who will leave.

"I look out into the future and I look at what we're paying new faculty, in particular, to go out and recruit — we're not competitive any longer," he said.

Of course, there will be other areas affected — faculty devel-

opment, institutional research, which allows the University to assess what is and is not working, building upkeep — Baldwin, Paino said, needs significant work in the coming years to insure it doesn't get shut down due to HVAC and mold problems.

The most noticeable and most publicized short-term effects will come in the form of tuition hikes, and they won't be as steep as first expected. The other stuff might be five to 10 or more years down the road, and in the meantime, the University is looking to increase private funding to offset some of the money lost from the state.

But for now, this is no time to celebrate.

Shawn Shinneman is a senior communication major from St. Joseph, Mo.