YEARS OF PROGRESS

Columbia has grown significantly, but can the city keep up the pace?
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The shells of soon-to-be housing and parking complexes pepper downtown Columbia. The symphony of buzzing drills, pounding hammers, repeated beeping of backing-up trucks and clattering jackhammers accompanies the construction.

Despite this, there is a shortage of new houses, according to Don Stamper, executive director for both the Central Missouri Development Council and the Home Builder’s Association of Columbia.

Fred Overton, a developer of lots for new subdivisions, is now in the process of selling lots in the Wyndham Ridge Subdivision on the southwest edge of Columbia. This surge in activity has followed the seismic collapse of the housing industry in 2007 that paralyzed development.

Boone Hospital Center, MU Health Center and Truman Veterans Hospital have spent about $347.5 million on new technology, parking garages, buildings, lobbies and exteriors.

One thing is clear: Columbia is growing. But that growth is beginning to stretch the fragile fabric of the city’s aging infrastructure — and how the city will fund repairs and renovations largely remains unclear.

The demand for some accommodations has outpaced supply.

Over the past decade, Columbia Public Schools purchased more than 150 trailers to serve as classrooms on almost every school campus. Enrollment during those 10 years leapt nearly 8 percent — an increase that Superintendent Chris Belcher deemed “unusual.” District spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark called the trailers “crazily inefficient” and pegged them “a safety concern.”

Currently, the district is on the path to carry out a timeline of school bond issues through 2020 that will fund improvements. But, “we are behind, terribly behind,” Belcher said.

Over the past 11 years, MU has been defined by skyrocketing enrollment growth: The university raked in more than 8,500 new students. That accrual has crashed with incremental decreases in state funding, which has forced MU to use tuition provided by the enrollment growth to balance its budget.

For fiscal year 2013, tuition contributed 62 percent of the general operating budget, while the legislature added less than one-third of the funds, according to MU budget documents. Increasing enrollment might not cover the $16.3 million expected shortfall for fiscal year 2014, said Rhonda Gibler, MU budget director. The long-term outlook for the general operating fund looks bleak, Gibler said.

Space limitations on campus and expected decline in enrollment have left MU administration, faculty and staff wondering where the funds will come from or where the cuts will be made to balance the budget for fiscal year 2014 and beyond.

Many students grew up outside Columbia and use Interstate 70 to travel to and from home. The oldest interstate in the nation, its original pavement has been “beaten to a pulp,” said Bob Brennan, special assignments coordinator at the Missouri Department of Transportation.

I-70 was designed to carry 12,000 to 18,000 vehicles a day. Now it carries anywhere from 23,000 to 100,000 vehicles a day. Without adding any capacity, it’s estimated that I-70 would operate at a “stop-and-go” condition by 2030, Brendel said.

Interstate expansion is saddled with a $2 billion price tag, with no answer for how to pay it.

Water demand management also hangs in the balance in Columbia.

According to Water and Light Department statistics, demand for water is approaching the all-time high set in 2006, when it reached about 4.6 billion gallons. The statistics also revealed that Columbia’s water use has doubled since 1982. Now, some of the city’s 15 wells have lost a bit of their pumping capacity over time because of built-up sediment.

But Columbia has put itself on the map regarding green energy. The amount of renewable energy in the city’s electricity portfolio rose from 1 percent in 2007 to almost 8 percent in 2012. These percentages are projected to reach nearly 15 percent by the end of 2022. The rooftop installation of solar panels at the city-owned COLT Railroad facility is the largest in eight contiguous states.

Aside from its advances and the problems it faces in sustaining growth, Columbia retains some of its roots.

Ernie’s Cafe & Steak House sits just west of the construction of a 22,000-square-foot building on Walnut Street. The restaurant has served generations of diners since it opened in 1934.

Its hash browns, French toast and skillet-cooked eggs have remained a constant in a city that has been in flux for the past decade.

Customers constantly flood in through one door and trickle out the other. That will continue for “generation after generation after generation,” owner Tom Spurling said.
The Alpine Experience

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It began with a country obsessed with excess.

Then, in 2007, the housing bubble burst.

“We’ve really come through a dark valley, if you will, with the economic downturn,” said Don Stamper, executive director for the Central Missouri Development Council and the Home Builder’s Association of Columbia. “There were a lot of foreclosures.”

In today’s housing market, Columbia is facing a very different problem. The Home Builder’s Association is calling it a crisis. There is a shortage of new houses.

“There was a huge pent-up demand, and that demand is showing itself now,” Stamper said.

With demand high and supply low, potential buyers were having trouble finding homes to purchase, according to the Columbia Board of Realtors.

“The homes that are being built are in subdivisions that existed before the recession,” said Scott Linnemeyer of Beacon Street Properties of Columbia. “There is not a whole lot of new development now because of that inventory that was there.”

Overall, 2012 home sales were the highest they had been since 2007, and new construction sales were up 40 percent, according to the Columbia Board of Realtors.

“The homes that are being built are in subdivisions that existed before the recession,” said Scott Linnemeyer of Beacon Street Properties of Columbia. “There is not a whole lot of new development now because of that inventory that was there.”

“Today, money is extremely cheap compared to historic levels, and people are taking advantage of that as they should,” Linnemeyer said. “If they price it competitively, their home will sell because we have a good market in Columbia.”

“I definitely see a steady stabilization of the market,” said Doug Muzzy, owner of Muzzy Builders in Columbia. “Most people are now able to sell their existing homes, so they’re able to build new homes.”

Unemployment is down, so people feel safer in their jobs and more comfortable making major purchases, he said.

“People are just ready to start buying again,” said Jessica Kempf, president of the Columbia Board of Realtors. “The outlook is positive; the first few months of this year look good so far.”

In fact, this past January saw record sales, with 97 single-family homes sold; this is the highest number seen for the month since before 2008, according to Columbia Board of Realtors statistics.

Columbia’s Landmark Bank has also seen record numbers for January. The bank’s treasury analysts reported a record increase in deed of trust filings for the month, for both commercial and residential real estate loan transactions. They further reported an indication that all market-area lending institutions showed an increase.

“It’s exciting to see this spike in loan volume and overall demand in the Columbia market. These numbers clearly signal a recovering economy and consumer confidence returning to the market,” Annette Bealmear, Landmark Bank vice president and regional real estate manager, said in a news release.

Columbia has most likely reached a new normal in the housing market. These numbers clearly signal a recovering economy and consumer confidence returning to the market,” Annette Bealmear, Landmark Bank vice president and regional real estate manager, said in a news release.

“We’re seeing a steady but slower growth,” Kempf said. “We had a large growth before with the housing bubble; it’s too risky to grow that fast.”

Linnemeyer anticipates a continued uptick in the market but said “it won’t — and shouldn’t — reach the levels it was in 2005 and 2006.”

As the housing market grows, Columbia’s economy can be expected to grow with it.

“Education, insurance and health care are all big ones, but the housing market is an economic engine in its own right,” Stamper said.

“The housing market affects the local economy immensely; it’s one of the leading indicators of how healthy the local economy is,” Kempf said. “That’s growing is a good sign for Columbia.”
New Wells

City plans to step up conservation efforts

As demand for water goes up, city officials continue brainstorming about how to use efficient systems

By BRENDAN GIBBONS

In 1903, Columbia residents voted to sink wells 1,200 feet deep into an aquifer below the city, searching for clean drinking water.

According to a history of the city’s water supply compiled by John O’Connor of H2O’C Engineering, the water they found was of “exceptionally high quality,” far superior to the Hinkson Creek water they had been drinking until then.

But as the city grew, demand for water outpaced what the high-quality aquifer could provide. In the late 1960s, the city of Columbia began tapping the alluvial aquifer near McBaine.

Since then, the utility kept up with Columbia’s population growth by drilling more wells. Now, some of the city’s 15 wells have lost a bit of their pumping capacity over time as sediment makes the wells less productive.

Water and Light spokeswoman Connie Kacprowicz said production from the city’s wells in the Missouri River bottoms stands at about 24.5 million gallons per day, down from their initial capacity of 28 million gallons per day.

According to Water and Light, demand for water is approaching the all-time high set in 2006, when it reached about 4.6 billion gallons.

In February, the Water and Light Advisory Board agreed that three new wells be drilled so long as the city embarks on a comprehensive look at the water system. The new wells were approved in February, and a panel has been established to review water conservation, education about water use, rate structures, incentives and stormwater reuse.

“The new wells will get us back to the production amounts that all the wells cumulatively used to have, along with an extra well for standby purposes,” Kacprowicz said.

During last year’s drought, a high demand led Water and Light to consider drilling the new wells.

“We weren’t to the point where we were going to be asking people to use less water, but we were closer than any of us liked,” said Bob Roper of the Water and Light Advisory Board.

Water and Light statistics show Columbia’s water use has doubled since 1982.

CONTINUED on NEXT PAGE
New Wells

Water system efficiency a goal for the future

According to Water and Light, the city’s annual water use peaked in 2006 at about 4.6 billion gallons — enough to fill the 50-meter competitive swimming pool in MU’s Student Recreation Complex 5,126 times. That year was relatively dry with about 33 inches of precipitation, according to National Weather Service data.

Wetter years followed, and water use dropped slightly to 3.9 billion gallons by 2009. But in 2012, precipitation was about 30 inches, and water use was up to about 4.5 billion gallons.

Lawns and landscapes are among the thirstiest consumers of Columbia’s water. In the summer, when residents are watering their lawns, city customers use 57 percent more water than winter months, Kacprowicz said.

Water demand and supply march together, with demand putting one step forward, then supply moving a step ahead. Columbia Water and Light stays ahead of demand by drilling more wells. The city drilled the latest well in 2006.

Overall, municipal water managers “tend to over-engineer and exceed capacity. We really err on the side of safety and reliability,” Tom O’Connor, who also serves on the Water and Light board, said. “It’s not like we’re going to run out of water.”

Hank Ottinger, another member of the Water and Light board, is also interested in slowing a march of expansion in the water system that’s expensive and comes with a heavy reliance on fossil fuels for pumping and distribution.

O’Connor wanted to make it clear that the most important targets for reducing demand are water uses that don’t necessarily require the high quality water the city’s treatment process provides.

“We’re all getting kind of dragged into this proposition that we will treat water to drinking water standards and will fully meet demands,” O’Connor said. “If we’re going to decide that as a community, we should very explicitly decide that as a community.”

Rain barrels that gather storm water and reuse it for irrigation are one way to diminish the use of potable water. Another idea is showers that fill toilet bowls with used, but not unusable, water. The city has plenty of information about rain barrels on its website.

Encouraging customers to buy less water is one way to slow demand. One of the most effective ways, O’Connor said, is to make it more expensive for customers to buy more water, creating an incentive for conservation.

“If you want to get serious, rate structure is the strongest tool,” O’Connor said.

The utility already uses a tiered rate structure from June through September, when water use is at its highest. For residential customers within city limits, water costs about 36 cents for every 100 gallons for the first 3,000 gallons. After that, the rate jumps to about 51 cents for every 100 gallons.

If a customer passes the 3,000-gallon mark, they will only notice the rate increase if they read their bill closely, Ottinger said.

“Our billing structure doesn’t allow for that kind of feedback,” Ottinger said. “If there were some kind of feedback mechanism, so people realize, ‘Oh my gosh, my water bill is going up!’”

Ottinger and O’Connor spoke to the need to educate Columbia residents to make voluntary steps toward efficiency. Water and Light has pages of conservation tips on its website, but Ottinger doesn’t think too many people are reading them.

“I think there are other things we can do besides putting stuff on the website,” Ottinger said. He mentioned public service announcements, mailers and public forums as possibilities.

Ottinger identified some major sources of waste that could be addressed such as identifying water leaks, large and small, in the water mains and in customers’ pipes.

“Because the price of water is so cheap, I think people don’t really pay attention to a little waste here, a little waste there,” Ottinger said.

Water and Light’s Web page offers a tip for customers to identify leaks in their homes: check the reading on the water meter, then stop all water use for 30 minutes. Check the meter again. If it’s still increasing, there must be a leak.

Columbia’s residents could significantly reduce their demand for irrigation water by changing how they water their lawns.

Water and Light recommends watering 1 inch per week, divided among about three separate waterings. Homeowners should water from 6 to 8 a.m. to avoid water loss to evaporation, and they should use a rain gauge or can to measure how much water their sprinklers deliver.

Creating incentives to retrofit toilets and shower heads with water-efficient devices. Modifying building codes to require such devices could reduce demand as well, Ottinger said.

O’Connor said he would be interested in seeing the city enter a promotional partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency’s WaterSense project, which touts the benefits of water-efficient appliances.

“We have continuously failed to get on board with that. I’m not sure why,” O’Connor said.

To fully develop these ideas, the city is forming a subcommittee on water conservation. Members of the subcommittee will be: O’Connor, Ottinger, city sustainability manager Barbara Buffalo, Water and Light engineering supervisor Tomas Zajićek, Water and Light engineering manager David Storvick, and Mike Heimos, stormwater educator with the Public Works Department.

The subcommittee will begin meeting in April and will take a broad look at how to manage Columbia’s water supply over the next several decades.
Columbia leads in state solar efforts

Through a partnership, the city now has the state’s largest solar site

By MIGUEL SOLA

Ten years ago, people would have laughed at the idea of Columbia becoming a Midwest-leading community in solar power.

A partnership between the city and a private firm to install solar panels at the city-owned COLT Railroad facility has led to the largest solar site in Missouri with both rooftop and in-ground panels. The rooftop installation is also the largest in the eight contiguous states.

A 2004 citizen-driven referendum, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in November 2014, ignited city government’s pursuit of renewable energy. Columbia continues to go beyond the minimum goals of the voter-approved initiative to expand renewable energy and, in the process, has developed from scratch a solid reputation in solar power.

The Solar One program, which began in 2008, is the city’s first attempt to encourage business investment in solar projects, according to Columbia Water and Light’s Renewable Energy Report. After the business installs a system, Columbia Water and Light purchases the solar energy through a power purchase agreement.

“It got us on the map as a solar-friendly town,” Columbia Water and Light spokeswoman Connie Kacprowicz said.

In 2012, Solar One’s installations at the West Ash Water Pumping Station, Quaker Oats and Bright City Lights produced 46.2 megawatt-hours, which equals the average monthly electric use of 59 Columbia households, according to Water and Light.

CONTINUED on NEXT PAGE
Solar Power

CHANGES IN COLUMBIA’S SOLAR ENERGY

Columbia’s solar energy has been steadily increasing over the years. An increase from 0.22 percent to 0.8 percent in 2013 is thanks to an agreement with the Free Power Company within COLT Transload, which is the largest solar installation in Missouri.

GROWTH OF SOLAR ENERGY

1000 Megawatt hours

2008  0  200  400  600  800  1000

Still, significant growth of solar energy didn’t come until 2010, when the City Council approved a lease agreement with Free Power Co., a private company based in Nebraska. Kacprowicz called it a “minimum risk agreement,” with the city responsible only for preparing and providing sites such as the one at the COLT Railroad along with a way to hook into the electric system.

According to the city’s most recent Renewable Energy Report, the Free Power agreement produced 241.6 megawatt-hours in 2012 — about the average monthly electric use of 307 Columbia households.

The city has increased the amount of renewable energy in its electricity portfolio from 1 percent in 2007 to 7.94 percent in 2012. These percentages are projected to reach at least 10 percent by 2017 and 15 percent by the end of 2022.

The city has increased its solar capacity from 1 megawatt-hour in 2007 to 271 megawatt-hours in 2012; solar makes up .02 percent of the electricity in Columbia’s portfolio. City officials expect solar to produce up to 1,000 megawatt-hours in 2013 and account for 0.8 percent of the city’s electricity.

In coming years, Columbia Water and Light and Free Power will be working to develop more solar installations at the Columbia Energy Center, West Ash Water Pumping Station, a Creasy Springs Road property, the Wastewater Treatment Plant and landfill buffer area.

“It is not inconceivable regarding the ways things are going that we could double the size of the installations each year,” Jay Hasheider of Water and Light said.

The growth in solar power is largely due to significant improvements of technology and price declines that make solar energy more affordable.

Dan Shifley, president of Dogwood Solar in Columbia, has noticed a lot more interest on solar solutions in 2013.

“The conception of people not being able to afford solar energy is not true anymore,” Shifley said.

In addition, homeowners and for-profit businesses are eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit through 2016.

“Five years ago solar energy cost up to $10,000 per kilowatt, now it is down to as low as$4,000,” Terry Freeman of Water and Light said. “Columbia has been blessed with low utility rates in comparison with the rest of the country.”

“I hope we have reached the hot tipping point in which manufacturers are able to increase the volume and reduce the cost,” Freeman said.

PRODUCTION OF SOLAR ENERGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
<th>Source: COLUMBIA WATER AND LIGHT 2013 RENEWABLE ENERGY REPORT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Ash Street:</td>
<td>PepsiCo (Quaker Oats): 20,700 KWH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright City Lights: 7,100 KWH</td>
<td>COLT Transload: 346,000 KWH</td>
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A solar boiler is installed at the MU power plant.
Family Health Center Welcomes Pediatric Dentist Dr. Sujatha Sivaraman

Pediatric Dentist Dr. Sivaraman serves children with special needs such as Autistic, Attention Deficit Disorder, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Dr. Sivaraman also performs dentistry under general anesthesia at Women's and Children's Hospital, Columbia, MO.

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- Periodontics: cleaning, treatment for gum disease
- Prosthodontics: crowns and bridge, partials and dentures
- Oral surgery
- Pediatric dentist performs dentistry under general anesthesia at Women's and Children Hospital, Columbia, MO

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OVERVIEW OF CITY GROWTH

Over the past decade, Columbia and Boone County experienced steady growth until the 2008 economic recession. This can be seen in multiple statistics, such as city and school budget cuts, unemployment surge, decreases in income and home construction. However, the overall economic situation has been improving in the past three years.

PEOPLE

POPULATION
The average annual population growth rates for Boone and Columbia are 1.89 percent and 2.52 percent respectively.

INCOME PER CAPITA
Both Boone County and Columbia’s per capita income increased from 2002 to 2008, and experienced a dip in 2009. The figures have bounced back since then. The county and city per capita income is always below state average.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
Columbia public school enrollment is in constant growth in the past 10 school years.

COLUMBIA EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT
Columbia’s labor force felt the effect of the national economic downturn, especially in 2009, when its unemployment rate hit 6.5 percent.

COLUMBIA HOME CONSTRUCTIONS
Construction permits show that more homes have been constructed since the recession.

COLUMBIA CITY BUDGET
The city budget can be divided into three categories. The general fund, such as general sales tax, can be allocated to many different departments. Enterprise funds are for enterprise departments, such as water, electric, sewer and transit. Funds for internal services, such as the maintenance fund, are for supporting activity departments to cover their operation cost.

COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BUDGET

BOONE COUNTY BUDGET*

$60 million $50,914,314

$37,999,393 $37,350 $37,409 $37,969

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI CAMPUS OPERATING BUDGET

Sources: U.S. CENSUS, BOONE COUNTY, CITY OF COLUMBIA, COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, COLUMBIA BOARD OF REALTORS, BLS, REDI; UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
Columbia in path of needed I-70 updates

Although it’s been discussed for years, there’s never been an answer for expansion funding

By ASHLEY FOWLER

Columbia residents have heard, perhaps more than once, that Interstate 70 needs updates — new lanes, new pavement and safer bridges.

Public hearings have spanned more than a decade on the cross-country thoroughfare, which carries 50,000 to 60,000 vehicles through Columbia each day. Designs have come and gone, including concepts in 2008 that showed the footprints for new truck lanes and local interchanges.

There’s never been an answer as to how the expansion of I-70 would be paid for, and the $2 billion estimate for the most affordable design would be more than double the Department of Transportation’s annual construction budget.

Columbia is situated near the middle of the oldest stretch of I-70 in the country. Built in the 1950s and 1960s, the highway was expected to last into the 1980s. By 2013, the interstate had more than doubled its expected lifespan, carrying three times as many vehicles and trucks that weigh far more than they did when the highway was designed.

“If we don’t do something in the near future, I-70 is going to become a parking lot,” state Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, said. “And distribution companies won’t be as interested in Missouri if our highway infrastructure isn’t capable of carrying the freight.”

The $2 billion design would replace all of the pavement and add two lanes in the existing median. A 200-mile concrete barrier would separate eastbound and westbound traffic, and trucks would be limited to the far-right lanes of the six-lane configuration.

Most of I-70 in Columbia has no median, so widening the interstate would need to take place on the outside of the existing highway, Bob Brendel, special assignments coordinator at the state Department of Transportation, said. The extensive use of retaining walls might be a way to minimize the amount of right-of-way needed, he said.

“It’s a highly developed corridor, so it’s safe to assume there probably would have to be some right-of-way acquisition, but to just what extent I don’t know,” Brendel said. “Some re-evaluation of the studies previously done would have to occur before MoDOT could move any farther.”

Mike Brooks, president of Regional Economic Development Inc., said there are businesses in Columbia that would benefit from reconstructing I-70 and certainly during the construction process.

“If you were to talk to the city or the county about sales tax revenue collection, there’s not an insignificant amount of that comes by virtue of people who are traveling up and down the interstate to stop for gas and food or whatever they need,” Brooks said.

Brendel said hearings in the state legislature suggest there’s a consensus that something must be done but not how to pay for it.

“Missouri’s huge infrastructure system is a key to our economy, and keeping the infrastructure system viable and safe is one of the core responsibilities of the department,” state Sen. Mike Kehoe, R-Jefferson City, said. “Opening a door to commerce moving across the state is critical to Missouri. It’s kind of who we are. We’re the transportation hub in the middle of the United States.”

Rudy Farber, former chairman of the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission, unveiled a proposal in January to create a 10-year, 1-cent sales tax dedicated to transportation. The proposed tax, which would require legislative approval and a statewide vote, could generate $8 billion dollars in 10 years.

Kehoe filed a bill in February to do just that. It passed the Senate on March 14 and moved to the House of Representatives.

Nothing specific has been written in the bill about I-70, but Brendel said the interstate remains a top priority for the Department of Transportation.

Once started, the project could be finished in five years. But construction can’t begin until additional engineering and designs are completed, and that is if the Department of Transportation had additional funding, Brendel said.

“MoDOT wouldn’t move forward with any additional engineering on I-70 unless it knew it had the money to build it,” Brendel said. “And it’s likely that if we were moving ahead with I-70, we would pursue some kind of design-build project where we would seek proposals from teams of designers and contractors together to bring their innovations to the project in order to get the most bang for the buck.”
Major Developments

City construction, neighborhoods grow

Since 2002, development in Columbia has expanded rapidly, resulting in 50 new housing and service projects.
Major Developments

Construction is underway for The Domain at Columbia, a new student housing development at the intersection of Highway 63 and East Stadium Boulevard on Feb. 18.

A man digs a trench near the Aspen Heights student living complex construction site on Ponderosa Street, just off Grindstone Parkway on Feb. 18.

The parking lot on Ninth Street next to Chipotle undergoes construction on Jan. 2, 2012.
MU Enrollment

MU faces big decisions with budget crunch

By DAN BURLEY

MU’s past 11 years have been defined by skyrocketing enrollment growth. Since 2002, the university has grown by more than 8,500 students — or by the size of a small university, MU administrators say.

The rapid and record-breaking enrollment growth has boosted MU’s national reputation and shifted its primary competition from Missouri institutions to flagship universities in other states, said Ann Korschgen, vice provost for enrollment management.

Also in the past 11 years, MU has seen an incremental decrease in state funding. The diminishing help from the legislature has forced MU to use tuition provided by the enrollment growth to balance its budget.

“Essentially, we’ve used tuition to offset a lack of state funds,” MU Budget Director Rhonda Gibler said at a budget forum in March.

But an expected decline in enrollment growth, plus the limitations of space on campus, could limit the stream of tuition that has counterbalanced the shrinking state funds. With no additional help from the state predicted, MU administration, faculty and staff are wondering where the funds will come from or where the cuts will be made to balance the budget for fiscal year 2014 and beyond.

CONTINUED on NEXT PAGE

Essentially, we’ve used tuition to offset a lack of state funds.

RHONDA GIBLER — MU BUDGET DIRECTOR

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The university’s general operating funds — the part of the budget that pays for faculty, staff and campus operations — consists of state appropriations, tuition and research grants.

State appropriations amounted to more than 70 percent of the general operating budget in 1990. Tuition provided less than 30 percent, according to MU budget documents.

For fiscal year 2013, tuition contributed to 62 percent of the general operating budget, while the legislature added less than one-third of the funds, according to the documents.

The expected decline in enrollment growth compounds the problem. The high school senior class of 2009-10 was the largest ever in Missouri, reaching more than 70,000 students.

Since then, the number of Missouri high school graduates per year has decreased by nearly 5 percent, Korschgen said. A survey released in 2008 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education predicted the number of high school graduates would decrease by as much as 5 percent per year until 2015.

MU has targeted out-of-state high school graduates to compensate for the curb in Missouri seniors. From a strictly financial point of view, out-of-state undergraduates are worth the extra recruiting effort; they pay nearly twice the amount of tuition and fees as in-state students. They also bring diversity to the campus — both ethnic and geographic — and often stay in-state after graduation, enhancing Missouri’s intellectual talent pool, Korschgen said.

Increasing enrollment, however, might not be enough to balance the budget for fiscal year 2014, Gibler said. She estimated a $16.3 million shortfall, the difference between revenue and estimated expenses, at the March forum.

Even if MU manages to balance its budget this year, Gibler said the long-term outlook for the general operating fund looks bleak. “If we continue to make certain kinds of assumptions and do what we’ve been doing, we’ll run a deficit year after year,” she said.

If the university can’t bring in additional revenue, it will have to “reallocate,” or cut and rearrange, internally, Gibler said at the budget forum.

Provost Brian Foster said MU has already “cut the low-hanging fruit to maximize efficiencies” in past years.

“We have some difficult questions we’ll have to confront here pretty quick,” Foster said.
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Hospitals

Area hospitals see recent progress

MU Health Care, Boone Hospital have spent millions on new technology

By STEPHANIE GRAFAGE and ZACH STRADER

Columbia hospitals have filled out over the past five years, at a high cost.

MU Health Care, Boone Hospital Center and Truman Veterans Hospital have spent about $347.5 million on new technology, parking garages, buildings, lobbies and exteriors.

The projects have added hundreds of rooms for patients and improved many aspects of care.

Boone Hospital Center

The Boone Hospital Center opened a new patient tower in 2011. It was the largest expansion in the hospital’s 92-year history, adding 128 rooms.

The US Green Building Council awarded the tower its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design gold status for including environmentally friendly features such as triple-pane glass and a rainwater storage basin for its sprinkler system.

The project also added a new parking garage and renovated William Street.

The hospital has also added new technological features in the past five years, including:

- 3D mammography and improved PET/CT scans for more accurate detection of cancer.
- Open MRIs to allow family and friends to accompany patients.
- Da Vinci surgery machines, a minimally invasive robotic surgery option.
- A 4D ultrasound machine that provides video of fetuses moving in the womb.

Boone Hospital Center will expand its cancer treatment facility with the $7.2 million Virginia and Norm Stewart Cancer Center, due to open in early 2014.

CONTINUED on NEXT PAGE

There are two linear accelerators in the Ellis Fisher Cancer Center, it has the precision to remove small tumors on patients. The ceiling panels have outdoor scenery to help patients who have claustrophobia.
Hospitals

Hospital expansions cost millions of dollars

The center will incorporate all the hospital’s cancer services and add 32 patient rooms. It is named for former MU basketball coach Norm Stewart, founder of the Coaches vs. Cancer program.

MU Health Care

In June 2008, MU Health Care began construction of the $55.5 million Missouri Orthopaedic Institute, which opened to patients in June 2010. The facility includes 6 operating rooms, 20 patient rooms and 45 examination rooms for radiology and rehabilitation services.

The $12 million Women and Children’s Hospital opened in 2010 after breaking ground in 2009. The project combined the Children’s Hospital with MU Health Care's women's health services to provide 27 pediatric patient rooms, 16 adolescent patient rooms and a 12-bed pediatric intensive care unit.

Renovations to the 6 East and 7 East buildings at University Hospital, constructed from February 2011 to August 2012, cost $15 million. The project converted rooms in the former Children’s Hospital to private rooms. The newly renovated facility is home to the Missouri Neurosciences Center, a 28-bed unit which provides neurology and neurosurgery care.

The $190 million University Hospital expansion, which broke ground in August 2009, will open to patients on March 25. The additional space allowed for 90 new patient rooms and the expansion of surgical services.

The Ellis Fischel Cancer Center is on the first and second floors of the University Hospital expansion. It includes six operating rooms and a unit for cancer treatment with 30 patient rooms and about 66 examination rooms. The extra space allows for classes such as tai chi to improve the health of cancer patients and survivors.

The $3 million University Hospital lobby renovation will update the interior of the lobby, including new signs, seating, an information desk and a front door.

Renovations to the Missouri Psychiatric Center, costing $14.5 million, modified several units, the exterior entryway and the administrative area. MU Health Care hopes to complete the renovations, which began in August 2009, this spring.

MU Health Care has decided to replace the aging University Physicians-Green Meadow facility with a new clinic on South Providence Road. The organization hasn't decided when to begin construction. The $32.5 million facility would include space for pediatric care, family medicine, adult psychiatry, and radiology, laboratory and pharmacy services.

Truman Veterans Hospital

Truman Veterans Hospital has spent almost $5 million on upgrades to several areas, such as the pathology lab, the inpatient medicine ward and the research unit. It spent $5.8 million to expand its area for imaging services such as X-rays, and $3.6 million on an MRI facility so it can perform the procedure for its patients instead of sending them somewhere else.

The hospital hopes to complete a $25 million construction project in November. The project, which broke ground in August 2009, includes the construction of a new building and the expansion of others. The changes will add clinic space, procedure rooms and an operating room. The hospital also aims to renovate the recovery areas for patients coming out of surgery. A renovation of the emergency department is in the works.

Several other projects are planned but are contingent on funding from the U.S. Congress, which provides about 90 percent of the hospital's budget, said Stephen Gaither, public affairs officer for the VA hospital. The projects include:

- Additions to the operating room building, including an expanded intensive care unit ($18.4 million)
- A new parking garage ($8.6 million)
- An expansion of outpatient services ($10 million)

Gaither said the projects would help the hospital continue its shift from inpatient to outpatient services. Since he joined the hospital in 1977, the number of beds in the hospital has decreased from 300 to 123. In the same time, the number of veterans served has risen from 15,000 to 37,000.
City expects to see most growth in east, southwest

Schools, infrastructure and the sewer system all impact direction of growth

By ALLISON PRANG

In 2001, Sandy and James Groves moved to a home on East St. Charles Road to live in the country.

The Groves’ slice of the country, though, is becoming more urbanized as new developments pop up in the area.

“It’s really, really, really different now,” Sandy Groves said.

The land where Battle High School is taking shape used to be a cattle pasture. Where “beautiful woods” once stood behind the Groves’ home there are now at least 25 duplexes.

That’s no surprise. Columbia development services manager Pat Zenner said the city is poised to expand, particularly toward the east and the southwest. Areas most likely to see growth are those that already have infrastructure such as water, sewer and roads.

Some areas where growth is anticipated were targeted for development during the housing boom. They include neighborhoods such as Copperstone and Thornbrook in the southwest. The widening of Scott Boulevard and the construction of an elementary school in the area likely will speed growth in those areas.

Columbia was poised to grow eastward even before Columbia Public Schools began building Battle High School, Zenner said, noting that the school’s location also will pull development farther north. The pattern will be similar to what south Columbia saw after Rock Bridge High School was built.

Mike McClung of Uptown Investments, which owns about 60 acres east of Battle High, said there are no immediate plans to develop the property. The land was platted with the county at the same time Copper Creek was developed in 1998, but the plat has since expired. McClung said residential would be the best use of the property.

Tom Mendenhall of North Battleground LLC, which owns 36 acres about three blocks east of Battle High, said the group is looking to develop a subdivision of single-family homes. Mendenhall said the sewer system extension to the high school will spark development.

“You can follow the development the way the sewers are going,” he said.

Robert Schwarz of the urban planning company RSP and Associates echoed Zenner, saying that the infrastructure that comes with a school spawns development but that the economy and property owners control the pace of that growth.

The city released a draft of Columbia Imagined, a new comprehensive plan intended to guide development, earlier this year. Zenner said the plan will set the tone for how the city looks at development.

The draft plan indicates the city has approximately 5,100 acres of developable land complete with infrastructure, Zenner said. It includes two models of projected growth. The Columbia

CONTINUED on NEXT PAGE
Hot Spots

City trying to catch up with expansion

Area Transportation Study Organization model, which is based on historical trends, anticipates the metro area will need to bring in another 937 acres to accommodate development through 2030. The Show-Me model developed by MU, however, predicts the available 5,100 acres will suffice.

The two models also differ on housing needs: The CATSO model suggests the city will need 16,363 new housing units; the Show-Me model suggests 11,486 will be enough.

The CATSO model projects the city’s population will be 146,134 in 2030, the Show-Me model predicts a population of 131,797. Zenner said the real number probably will fall in the middle.

The Groves, who used to live down the road from their current home, didn’t think they’d end up living in a city-like environment. They’re not opposed to growth, but they and their neighbors do worry about traffic, particularly if St. Charles Road isn’t widened.

“It may be a good thing,” Groves said of the growth. “So… we’re hoping.”

Schwarz said it can take time for streets to catch up with development. He thinks that will be the case around Battle High School. The school district upgraded St. Charles Road, but some people might not be satisfied, Zenner said.

Willa Adelstein said she and her husband, Eddie, moved to the southwest corner of the city more than 40 years ago because he wanted to live in the country. They’re not in the country anymore.

“It’s ridiculous,” she said of the growth the area has seen. Adelstein said that the city allows developers to build house after house without planning for the growth. She added that Route K is a disaster. Her nine-mile drive to work down Route K used to take her 20 minutes. Now it takes 45, she said.

Zenner acknowledged that the “city is playing catch up” on roads but said the city’s capital improvement plan outlines the road work that has to be done once money becomes available.

Downtown also could see more growth depending on student population trends, Zenner said. But that won’t match the level of growth on the periphery unless the city emphasizes infill development, he said.

That would require the creation of cost-effective opportunities for people to buy into and redevelop areas in and around downtown, he said.

“The one thing that lacks in the downtown is we don’t have a grocery store in close proximity. You’ve got to get on public transit to get to it, or you have to have a car. The one thing that the plan promotes is a more walkable environment.”

PAT ZENNER
Columbia development services manager
District works to adapt to ‘unusual growth’

By CAITLIN HOLLAND

After a decade of continuous enrollment growth, Columbia Public Schools is faced with the challenge of improving and expanding its facilities to catch up, Superintendent Chris Belcher said.

From 2003 to 2013, the district grew from 16,447 students to 17,722 students. The largest growth period occurred from 2004 to 2007. In those three years, the district welcomed 501 new elementary students, according to the district’s enrollment charts.

“It’s not overly radical growth, but it’s growth that is unusual,” Belcher said. “The thing is, it takes you three to four years to plan, fund and build an elementary school. And so you’re always trying to look five years ahead.”

Most of the growth can be traced to two hotspots of home construction in Columbia, Belcher said. One is the area between Mill Creek and Rock Bridge elementary schools to the south; the other is between Alpha Hart Lewis and Parkade elementary schools to the north.

Because elementary student enrollment shot up so fast, district spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark said, a quick fix had to be made to avoid overcrowding the schools. Over the

CONTINUED on NEXT PAGE
Voters supportive of district, make up for budget cuts

Belcher said the district needed a long-term solution to growth and a plan to get rid of the trailers. The solution is a timeline of school bond issues through 2020, Belcher said.

The plan features one bond issue every other year, with most of the money going toward building schools and repairing old ones.

“When we went out for our last bond issue we looked at, OK, this is where we’re going to be, and we’re going to be coming at you ever other year until we feel like we get to the point where were in a better manageable position,” Baumstark said.

The first bond issue in the series was for $60 million and passed in April 2007. The second, for $120 million, passed in April 2010. The combined bond issues authorized the construction of Battle High School and a new elementary school.

“The growth came so fast, and we never had a breathing period,” Belcher said.

“We are behind, terribly behind, but the new high school is the first big step.”

Belcher said Columbia voters have shown support of the district at the polls, not only in passing bonds for construction, but also in making up for funding cuts by the state legislature. In April 2012, voters agreed to a tax levy increase of 40 cents per $100 of assessed property for district operations. Now, 60 percent of the district’s funding comes locally.

Since Belcher became superintendent in 2009, he has seen $20 million in cuts from the budget. He said that on top of funding cuts to all districts in Missouri, the state funding formula used to allot state money doesn’t do growing school districts any favors.

“When you look at the money per student each year from the state, it’s drastically being reduced,” he said.

“We’re growing, and the formula, when it’s not funded, penalizes growing districts. So, not only are we not getting money, we’re getting less money than other districts because of the dysfunctionality of the program.”

‘It’s crazily inefficient, and there are a lot of safety concerns in having them as well. You’ve got, especially at the elementary level, kids that have to come and go to go to the bathroom, come and go to the lunchroom. That’s just not the way we want to operate.’

MICHELLE BAUMSTARK
District spokeswoman
Want to make a difference in your own back yard this summer?

Join more than 2,500 athletes and coaches at the 2013 Special Olympics State Summer Games.

Whether you decide to volunteer or sit in the stands to cheer on our athletes, they will love you for it!

For more info on how you can get involved, visit www.somo.org/summergames.
Profile: Tony Grove

Downtown is canvas for third-generation builder

Tony Grove’s appreciation for downtown Columbia inspires him to work toward diversifying apartments

By ALLIE HINGA

A sketch of the North Light development hangs in the entrance to Grove Construction General Contracting. That sketch is slowly becoming a reality. On Walnut Street, a skeleton of metal beams, scaffolding and temporary stairs is beginning to tower over the buildings around it.

The seven-floor, 22,000-square-foot building on Walnut will eventually house retail and office space, as well as high-end apartments.

North Light will be owner Tony Grove’s first ground-up downtown construction project after several years of completing renovations in the area. He’s building it for his father and his father’s business partner, who own the development.

A third-generation Columbia builder, Grove started his own business in 2009, which serves as a way he can give back to the city he loves. When it’s finished, he wants North Light’s apartments to attract nonstudents, making downtown more diverse.

“I like to think of the downtown community as in itself a little micro-community of the city,” he said. “And for a community, no matter what size, to flourish, it has to have all aspects.”

He comes from a family of builders. His father owned part of Little Dixie Construction, and his grandfather owned Grove Construction in the 1950s.

He always knew he’d go into the construction business. In fact, he never stopped to think that he might do anything else. He received his degree in construction management in 2009 and started Grove Construction that same year.

“Construction was always a part of my life, and so many people get to...”

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Profile: Tony Grove

Revamping old buildings becomes a project trend

Grove Construction is working on retail, office and apartment space on the corner of Short and Walnut streets. The city of Columbia is working with Grove Construction on the building, which will be built alongside a parking garage.

college and are not sure what they want to do, but I knew from when I was 5 or 6,” he said.

For his first project, he renovated a building on Ninth Street. He wound up buying the property a year later, remodeling it again and transforming it into two-bedroom luxury apartments and commercial space.

That was the beginning of a trend in his downtown projects — taking old buildings and revamping them into pizzerias, bakeries and other restaurants.

“You’re changing it, but you’re keeping the old charm of it,” he said. “I like modern buildings, but that’s not what downtown is.”

To him, construction projects such as North Light signify another aspect of progress as downtown grows and flourishes, a way of striking a happy medium between new and old.

“I love my city, and I thoroughly enjoy downtown,” he said. “That’s where I’m making my investments, and I want to see nothing but success for downtown. I know some people’s definition of success is different than others, but I want to see a growing and thriving district.”
Cardiologist brings latest heart-mapping system to Boone Hospital

Jason Rytlewski, electrophysiologist and cardiologist, brought advanced heart mapping technology and specialized training to treat heart conditions the hospital could not handle before his arrival.

Profile: Jason Rytlewski

By ALLIE HINGA

Jason Rytlewski hovers over a patient in the back of the catheterization lab at Boone Hospital Center.

With one hand, he holds the steering device for the long tubes that snake into his patient's heart.

One of the four computer screens before him displays an X-ray image of three twisting electrode catheters. Another screen shows a gray, 3-D image of the heart, a red-and-white-striped line marking the location of a tube.

He uses the map to guide the catheter so he can correct his patient's heart rhythm.

Rytlewski is an electrophysiologist and cardiologist at Missouri Heart Center who performs procedures at Boone Hospital Center. He arrived in August straight from his electrophysiology fellowship at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. He brought advanced heart mapping technology and specialized training to treat heart conditions the hospital could not handle before his arrival.

“It’s just another capacity for the hospital to provide the most excellent care,” said Dan Pierce, an electrophysiologist at Missouri Heart Center.

Pierce said that before Rytlewski was hired, he would refer patients requiring certain advanced procedures to Kansas City.
City or St. Louis for treatment.
“"He brings this new ablation and this new thinking and training into this area,” Pierce said.

Rytlewski is trained to use the newest CARTO mapping system for heart rhythm problems. The technology creates a 3-D virtual image of the inside of a patient’s heart.

When he joined the staff, the hospital invested a half million dollars to purchase a new CARTO and ultrasound system so he could treat patients close to home. MU Health Care also has an electrophysiology program, which it continues to update.

During a procedure, Rytlewski places three pads on the back and chest to create a magnetic field. The system uses the metal tip of a catheter to generate a virtual map, which appears on his computer screen. He uses the image to guide an electrode catheter to the source of the problem, where he uses a series of radio frequency burns to destroy it.

“You can imagine my clinic appointments take a little longer, because if you have chest pain and someone says you need a stress test, that makes a lot of sense to people,” he said. “But when you have arrhythmia or palpitations, it’s a very vague concept, and people don’t understand very well.”

Rytlewski never imagined he’d end up in mid-Missouri. He grew up in a small town in Michigan before attending the University of Michigan for his undergraduate and medical degrees, followed by seven years of training in Dallas and Nashville. He finished his training when he was 34 and moved to Columbia a few months later.

Rytlewski said he has always been driven by a desire to help people combined with a love of intellectual challenge.

“I’ve always been very much a science-type person, so it enabled me to keep both of those needs in alignment,” Rytlewski said.
Profile: Kenneth Wang

Psychology professor Kenneth Wang has spent a lifetime adjusting to change

An assistant professor in the MU Department of Education, Wang cultivates a global perspective in his classes, introducing Americans to cultural experiences or easing the transition for international students.

By ALLIE HINGA

When he was in grade school Kenneth Wang was slapped for being disrespectful in class.

He was a fifth-grader in Taiwan, where students traditionally stand up to answer questions. But Wang had attended grade school in Alabama for five years and was accustomed to just speaking up.

His teacher didn’t know the rules were new to him, but Wang’s confidence took a hit nonetheless.

“There’s different norms, different rules in different cultures,” he said. “Once you don’t know these rules, I think there’s a hit in self-efficacy, and I feel like ‘oh, I don’t know stuff.’”

Such experiences would inspire Wang to ease that difficult transition for other students.

An assistant professor in the MU Department of Educational, School and Counseling Psychology, Wang cultivates a global perspective in his classes, introducing Americans to cultural experiences or easing the transition for international students.

Wang spent his life navigating between...
two countries. Born in Taiwan, he moved to Alabama when he was 5 years old while his father pursued a Ph.D. He was the first Asian student at his elementary school.

He returned to Taiwan when he was 10 years old and remained through undergraduate school, military service in the Taiwanese army and a few years of work.

Then, he moved to Chicago for a master’s degree and returned to Taiwan to work. When he decided to get his doctorate, he came back to the U.S., this time to Penn State University and later to the University of Southern California for an internship.

He remained in the U.S. afterward, working in the counseling center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In 2009, he joined the MU faculty.

Bouncing back and forth made him hyper-aware of differences — rules and customs that vary between countries. As he navigated new cultures, he struggled with anxiety to understand where he belonged.

“That’s really hard, and that makes me feel less self-efficacious, less confident, and then inferior if I’m comparing myself based on those standards,” he said.

As a faculty member at MU, he wants to create dialogues to ease the transition for international students. He’s helped with multicultural training, incorporated diversity issues in his classroom and supervised students on an immersion trip to Taiwan.

His background also drives his research about the cross-national adjustment process — helping people traveling between countries make the switch.

He’s working on a scale to measure how friendly international students perceive the MU community to be toward them, helping to make campus more welcoming and globally aware.

“Diversity across different races and nationality is important,” he said. “It’s important to be respectful and to be competent to work with people who are different from us and that diversity is celebrated.”
Profile: Fred Overton

Recession behind him, developer Fred Overton puts new subdivisions on the map

As the market recovers from the recent recession, land developer Fred Overton is regaining ground while clawing his way through the obstacles to a full recovery

By ALLIE HINGA

Fred Overton still tears up when he recounts the worst days of the recession.
“It was pretty rough there for a while,” he says, his voice quieting as he speaks.
Overton develops lots for new subdivisions, getting them in shape for builders or individuals to put up houses. When demand dwindled to an all-time low in 2008, his business reached a standstill.
His savings were gone. His earnings were gone. His retirement fund was gone.
The housing market finally turned around three years ago, and Overton survived.
“You can’t quit. You’ve just got to keep going,” he said, wiping moisture from his eyes. “No matter how bad it is.”
In the past 10 years, Overton has watched housing sales boom, and he’s watched them bust. As the market recovers, he’s regaining ground while clawing his way through the obstacles to a full recovery.
From 2003 to 2005, the city grew, almost too big and too fast for him. In 2005, Overton sold hundreds of lots, and he averaged 75 sales a year.
The recession hit him hardest in 2008. He sold only 14 lots that year.
He noticed the market begin to come back to life in 2009, and his sales have slowly rebuilt since. He sold 41 lots in 2012.
Overton is now in the process of selling lots in the Wyndham Ridge Subdivision on the southwest edge of Columbia.
In March, he met with builders to talk about 36 lots he is getting ready to sell. He thinks he could sell all of them by this fall.
“For the first time in eight years, I’m in the driver’s seat instead of being run over,” he said.
He survived the three difficult years with the help of his good financial standing, a loyal clientele and extra income from baling hay on his farm.
In addition to the extra income, his farm kept him sane. Working the land helped relieve his frustration, and the scenery of the outdoors reminded him of his faith, which he relied on during the worst days of the downturn.
“A whole lot of it was having faith and trust in the man upstairs because there wasn’t any other place to turn at times,” he said.
As his business begins to bounce back, he’s fighting to turn a profit as land and lot values remain low but prices rise for supplies such as lumber, concrete and drywall.
He also has to pay interest on his vacant lots while he waits for sales to take off.
To him, it’s a constant uphill battle.

“On this project, with as much interest and taxes as I’ve paid, I don’t know if I ever will make any money,” he said. “I’ve lost so much. What I’m doing now is working just trying to cut my losses, and I don’t know if there ever will be any profit.”
But he can’t quit. He grew up in building and development and doesn’t know any other life. It has never been in his nature to give up.
When his sales plummeted, Overton could have left the business and salvaged his remaining savings.
But he loved his work, comparing it to a marriage that takes the bad with the good or a sports team that comes back from behind to win the game.
“I’ve fought so hard to get here, why am I not going to fight to keep it?”

Developer Fred Overton shovels snow for his residents at Wyndham Ridge subdivision March 7. Whether it’s moving snow, shoveling dirt or building relationships with the residents, Overton has a different task each day. “It’s all about customer service,” he said. “That’s why I love this job.”
Profile: Ernie’s Cafe

For more than 75 years, Ernie's Cafe has built success on consistency

Ernie’s Cafe & Steak House has kept its same, consistent diner theme since it opened in 1934 and is still enjoyed by regulars, generations of downtown customers and newcomers alike.

By ALLIE HINGA

A black and white drawing on the wall in Ernie’s Cafe & Steak House shows the interior of the restaurant in 1980.

Ernie’s looks almost exactly the same today.

There have been a few changes, but the similarity of the space to the picture on the wall is striking.

A long counter with a row of stools runs down one side of the cafe. A line of booths with tables and chairs fills the other. A drawing of Dick Tracy hangs in front of the kitchen, and a coffee maker is in the same spot behind the counter.

“Ernie’s is solid and consistent,” manager Nathan Fuchs said. “That’s the beauty of us not changing. And people like that.”

The restaurant has served generations of diners since it opened in 1934. Ernie’s moved to Walnut Street from the north side of Columbia in 1946, relying on the same atmosphere, service and menu that has appealed to hundreds of regular customers.

Fuchs began working at Ernie’s in 2004 when he was 19. He grew up in Jefferson City, eating at the restaurant when he made trips to Columbia. In 2007, he stepped into management.
Profile: Ernie’s Cafe

Fuchs: consistency is key to a good restaurant

His customers span four generations of returning diners — former employees now in their 80s, regulars whose children now bring their grandchildren, a woman who participated in a sit-in during the Civil Rights movement.

“I really think the restaurant is its own living thing,” he said. “It’s kind of like, no matter who owned the building, it would stay the same.”

The menu has received only minor tweaks since the ‘50s, owner Tom Spurling said. Customers who have long since left Columbia will come back and order a No. 3 or No. 11, knowing the item hasn’t changed.

Several dishes have been coming out of the kitchen for as long as Fuchs can remember. Hash browns, french toast, eggs cooked in a skillet instead of on a flat-top grill.

Customers who don’t come in for breakfast might order a chopped cow — a hamburger to the uninitiated. Often, diners simply sit down for a hot cup of coffee.

“Your cup really is never empty,” Spurling said.

That consistency, he said, is the mark of a good restaurant. He bought Ernie’s in 1996 and brought new blood to an old vision, never straying from the essence of a diner.

He has raised prices when he must; he converted an upstairs dining room back into an apartment; and he re-faced the front of the building back to its original Art Deco style.

When crowds bottlenecked the one door that served as both entrance and exit, he switched the layout so his customers come in one door and leave via the other.

“We’ve created a big circle, which is kind of what Ernie’s is — just a big circle going around generation after generation,” Spurling said.

Nathan Fuchs, right, helps 14 year-old Rachel Spurling with her math homework after the lunch rush at Ernie’s Cafe and Steak House on March 8. Rachel’s father Tom Spurling owns the longstanding Columbia diner.
Profile: Jim Shaw

Jim Shaw fights to keep rural lifestyle as city growth surrounds his farm

Late last year, the Boone County Regional Sewer District used eminent domain to acquire just under 20 acres of land from cattle farmer Jim Shaw for a water treatment plant.

By ALLIE HINGA

Cattle farmer Jim Shaw has often felt the squeeze of development around his property for more than four decades.

And now he’s feeling it again.

Late last year, the Boone County Regional Sewer District used eminent domain to acquire just under 20 acres of his land to use for a water treatment plant.

That acquisition was among the most recent developments to change the contour of his property, as subdivisions and construction projects bear down on the outskirts of Columbia.

“They tried to tell me, ‘your land will be worth so much more for development,’ but at 60, I think I’ve pretty well established that my interest is not in development,” he said.

Shaw is determined to maintain a rural lifestyle on the family farm he has worked for a lifetime to preserve. He has lived on the place just north of Columbia since he was born, raising cattle on more than 140 acres.

“I’m doing what I think is the most valuable thing when you live on the land, and the community tends to look at me as being in the way of development,” he said.

For the past several weeks, he and his son have been building a fence on the border of the new sewer district property to contain the livestock. At this time of year, he really should be getting his calves ready to go to market.

“We just haven’t gotten around to doing that,” he said. “Every day that’s been nice, we’ve been trying to deal with that fence issue.”

Shaw stands in his machine shed, the dull colors of old equipment filling the space around him. Rain pounds on the white metal roof, and the sounds of NPR crackle on the radio in the background.

Across his gravel drive on Highway VV, an old wooden barn stands in front of the hills where his livestock graze. The sheet metal on the roof has begun to peel away, and flecks of red paint are still visible in the crevices of the walls. Old tractors and trucks line the drive.

“I guess we just have held on too long, but this is our home,” he said.

His parents purchased the land — a badly eroded, abused plot — before he was born, caring for the property and bringing it back to life. He’s tried to maintain it, even planning his route through the pasture to minimize damage to the soil and vegetation.

“When your whole existence has been focused on taking care of a piece of property, and you enjoy it, why would I want to give it up?” he said.

He can’t quite remember when the first subdivision appeared along the south side of his farm but figures it at more than 40 years ago. A sewage treatment plant followed shortly thereafter. The runoff and sewer outflow from the development caused erosion across the property.

The following years brought a power line and several utility lines to the edges of the farm, and he often found himself repairing fences or working around the projects.

“But once those things are installed, then there’s always hassles that you have to deal with, and it’s an ongoing ordeal for us to cope with those incursions,” he said.

Before the economic recession hit, Shaw received several offers to buy his land, but he turned them all down. The thought of giving it up was too much.

“It’s really hard for me to think about giving up everything I’ve done and trying to start over somewhere, and for me, it would be starting over,” he said.

“We could have presumably sold this for enough money to go buy a much larger place in really nice shape, but I wouldn’t have had a hand in making it.”
Profile: Beth Newton

Teacher Beth Newton takes classroom technology to a new level

Beth Newton incorporates iPads, laptops, a SMART Board, electronic probes and cameras into the classroom to help transform the way her students learn.

By ALLIE HINGA

Toward the end of Beth Newton’s first-period science class recently, pairs of teens poured water into plastic bags filled with calcium chloride and baking soda.

As the air in the bag expanded, the mixture began to fizz. Students scooted their chairs away from the tables, and the room erupted with noisy chatter. Newton shouted over their voices, asking the class to compile three observations about the chemical change they had just seen.

Each team picked up an iPad and scrawled their responses on touch screens. It is just one example of how Newton uses new technology to transform the way her students learn.

She has taught eighth-grade science in the same room at Oakland Junior High School for the past 16 years, but the way she teaches is perpetually evolving.

Her room is filled with tools she uses in the classroom — iPads, laptops, a SMART Board, electronic probes, cameras. Sometimes she lets the students bring their own devices, and they will whip out smart phones to complete their assignments.

“The biggest part is trying to figure out how to use it every day because you can always do a project at the end where you have the kids make a movie, but how do you integrate it on a daily basis that makes it important for students?” she said.

When her students started their chemistry unit, she handed them each an iPad and a sheet of paper lined with QR codes. They used the codes to access links to videos and activities for the assignment. Another code hung on the wall for them to check their answers.

“The technology allows me to set up the classroom where students can be more self-directed and independent,” she said.

Self-direction helps her build a student-centered classroom — fewer lectures, more conversations, extra time with students needing additional help and enrichment activities for those moving at a faster pace.

She’s known for a long time that she wanted a high-tech classroom, and she earned her master’s degree in educational technology in 2004. In 2006, she received a technology grant from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and has since explored different possibilities for engaging her students.

“I never saw my classroom without technology, so I’ve always tried to find ways to have it as a part of my daily routine,” she said.

The technology-rich experience spills out of the classroom for her students. She’ll give them a QR code to a video or a resource to watch at home, and they’ll discuss it for a warm-up exercise the next day.

“It always changes,” she said. “What I’m doing this year is really different than next year because there’s more available.

“So I think the important piece is realizing that it’s going to change, and no matter how great something is now, there might be something better.”
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