



**March 1, 2010**

**Today's editorial in the St. Louis Post Dispatch calls for big thinking** in aligning solutions for transportation and the decades-old challenge of eliminating the barriers between Downtown and the Arch. The Post suggests that the **new Mississippi River Bridge** is the key: this major public works project is expected to carry a lot of I-70 traffic, potentially making it possible to eliminate the depressed freeway and create a boulevard that would connect Downtown to the Arch. More details about this radical idea are available at [www.citytoriver.org](http://www.citytoriver.org).

Before the naysayers get going, thought I would share: this is similar big thinking to what they did in downtown Fort Worth ten years ago. An elevated six-lane freeway divided the southern end of their downtown, cutting the downtown in two, and contributing to blight for more than forty years. When a freeway expansion was proposed by TXDOT in the late 1990's, downtown leaders rallied around an alternative solution to instead tear down the elevated decks, and build a grand boulevard designed to slow traffic and revitalize the southern end of their downtown. This big idea was very controversial, and it took tremendous political capital, funding and even legal action to accomplish --- but it got done, when many said it would never happen. Since the freeway was re-routed and the new Lancaster Boulevard opened there, millions of dollars have been reinvested in adjacent mixed-use properties, and most recently a new \$200M convention hotel opened within a block of where the old elevated freeway stood. Similar projects have been undertaken **to remove or reroute freeways adversely affecting the downtown experience** in cities like San Francisco and Milwaukee; the effects are transformational. Today's editorial calls for creative solutions and inclusion of this idea of a boulevard as a viable solution in the National Park Service's Gateway Arch International Design Competition currently underway.....sounds reasonable and worth exploring to me.

The example outlined above might be quite different from our own challenges here in Downtown St. Louis, but it reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from noted Cultural Anthropologist Margaret Mead: **"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world ---indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."**

A special thanks to **FOCUS St. Louis** for co-sponsoring a thoughtful discussion and presentation last Friday on the proposed elimination of the **City's Earnings Tax**. Over fifty people showed up to learn about this important policy issue and to participate in discussions underway that could significantly change both perceptions and reality for doing business in the City of St. Louis.

We are hosting the **Fourth District Police Officers Awards Luncheon** on Wednesday, March 31 beginning at noon at the Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark. This annual event helps us recognize and honor our partnership with the dedicated women and men of the St. Louis Police Department for their on-going service to Downtown. Sponsorship opportunities are now available, with the deadline for inclusion in printed materials March 17<sup>th</sup>; to participate in sponsoring the Police luncheon, contact Jennifer Burgnone at 436-6500, ext. 225, or [jburnone@downtownstl.org](mailto:jburnone@downtownstl.org).

If our downtown residents don't complete their 2010 US Census form, it hurts Downtown. Retailers use US Census numbers to justify opening a new location. We need the 2010 Census to reflect the true picture of downtown's population. **Completing the 2010 US Census can help fill vacant retail spaces in your building or next door.** The numbers can also have a significant impact on congressional districts, governmental services, and much more.

If you are downtown this Friday or Saturday, you might see our first **"Idiotarod"** in action – this is a parody of the Alaskan Iditarod with dogs and sleds, except with people and grocery carts. Antics include decorated carts, costumes, and stops along the way at downtown restaurants. So far, about ten corporate teams will compete at lunchtime on Friday March 5<sup>th</sup>, and on Saturday we are expecting over twenty teams from the community. **Mush!** It is all in good fun, **raising money for charity through a new partnership with Operation Food Search.** The Downtown St. Louis Idiotarod is sponsored this year by Lumiere Place Casino and Hotels, with promotional support from First Bank, and radio partners 105.7 The Point, KSHE 95, and 97.1 FM Talk. For rules and registration, as well as a list of downtown establishments that will host stops by Idiotarod competitors both on Friday and Saturday, visit [www.downtownstl.org](http://www.downtownstl.org).



On-street downtown parking is designed to turn over – in fact, the current City ordinance calls for a two-hour maximum stay on any parking meter, although it seems this isn't always enforced. As a result, many folks (including our own employees and residents) have figured out they can park and feed the meters. Then, we have free parking meters on weeknights after 7 pm and on weekends, so this problem becomes worse during those times, with employees and residents taking valuable on-street parking inventory away from our own customers. A parking system that includes both on-street and off-street locations should work together to cause customers and clients that only need short-term parking to park on meters, with longer stays directed to nearby off-street locations. If Downtown St. Louis is going to remain competitive in attracting and retaining businesses in our Central Business District, then the parking system needs to work efficiently and fairly. As identified in the City of St. Louis Parking Division's strategic assessment of Downtown's public parking programs, **a strict enforcement of the two-hour requirement would go a long way to correcting this problem that contributes to a lack of parking for downtown's customers.**



Maggie Campbell  
President & CEO

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