

Independence for All Update

November 2018 indep.us/indep4all #indep4all Independence, MO

Independence Uptown Market

Independence unveiled the new farmers' market and events space on August 23, 2018. The \$3.3 million P3 project anchors the north side of the Historic Independence Square as a new venue for the City's seasonal farmers' market as well as public and private events. The design/build team for the project included Hollis+Miller Architecture, McCownGordon Construction, and McClure Engineering. Dan Pierce served as lead architect and consultant.



The Uptown Market was promoted by the Independence Council for Economic Development (EDC) and Independence Chamber of Commerce to encourage public and private investment in the City's downtown. After visiting Bentonville, Ark., in 2016, business and civic leaders committed to a renewed focus on downtown programming. The project was funded through a partnership



between the City and private donors. The Independence Rotary Club led the fundraising campaign. The club secured 10% of the project cost by utilizing its annual Mardi Gras event to benefit the Uptown Market.

The Uptown Market was featured during the Chamber of Commerce annual SantaCaliGon Festival during Labor Day Weekend and several public and private events are planned throughout the fall. Both the enclosed and open-air structures provide an enhanced experience for farmers, vendors and customers throughout the farmers' market season.

What's in the name?

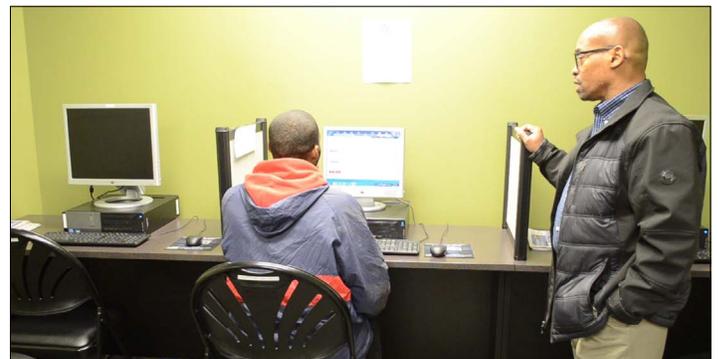
"Independence has been traditionally referred to as 'uptown'. As one of two county seats in Jackson County, Independence is geographically 'uptown' from 'downtown' Kansas City," Mayor Eileen Weir said. "We wanted to honor that tradition and give it a name that is really meaningful to the people of Independence. It's a conversation starter that lets us tell the story of our city"

For information on upcoming events at the Uptown Market or to inquire about rentals, visit independenceuptownmarket.com.

IndepWorks Digital Portal

Independence Works 2025 is the city's workforce development initiative launched by Mayor Eileen Weir to build the work ready population. It is modeled on KC Rising, the regional plan for prosperity, and shares the same objectives to raise median income, increase the number of quality jobs, and increase gross regional product. IndepWorks is a customized digital portal to connect Independence residents to jobs in the city.

The mayor's office recently partnered with Community Services League, the largest social services provider in Jackson County, to allow clients to test the site. More than 40 people participated in the test at two CSL locations in Independence. Participants were asked to complete a survey to help us improve the portal. Overall feedback was very positive. Participants liked that the portal is focused on Independence and how easy it was to use. They suggest more filters on job types and printable forms to help with social services.



"The Independence Works 2025 steering committee is continuing to develop and improve IndepWorks to meet the needs of job seekers in our city," Mayor Weir said. "There is nothing more instructive than having feedback from those who we are specifically targeting for job placement and career advancement. We will continue to do these kinds of events and gain insight on how to better utilize this tool."

Learn more at indepworks.com.

Working toward the future

Since its implementation in 2017, more than 40 percent of *Independence for All*'s 74 strategies have been completed as the City works to improve customer focus; ensure City finances are stable and sustainable; increase economic prosperity of the community; and achieve livability, choice, access health and safety through a quality built environment. You can read the plan in its entirety at indep.us/indep4all and follow progress at indep.us/dashboard.

This newsletter will provide a quarterly update on these strategies and programs created to meet the identified needs within the plan.

For more information, please contact Independence Mayor Eileen Weir's office at (816)325-7027 or email eweir@indepmo.org.

Leadership Exchange to Nashville and Franklin, TN

Nine delegates from Independence traveled to Nashville and Franklin, Tenn., in October for a Leadership Exchange focused on workforce development. These trips are coordinated by the EDC.

“This is our fourth Leadership Exchange, and each one of them has been valuable to fine-tuning how we are going to achieve our strategic goals,” Mayor Weir said. “Not only do we learn how other city leaders are solving problems and leveraging assets, but we see where we are already succeeding. Every trip we have taken has resulted in a tangible outcome for Independence.”

The first stop was Tech Hill Commons to meet with the Nashville Technology Council where the group learned about how NTC is accelerating tech skill training to meet the escalating needs of local employers. A particular focus is increasing diversity in tech sectors by utilizing strategies to attract women, minorities, and veterans.

Fort Houston was a highlight of the visit. This makerspace, co-working space, and fabrication company has played a crucial role in neighborhood reinvestment in one of Nashville’s formerly blighted areas and provided a unique offering for the city’s burgeoning creative class.



A joint session with the Nashville Metro Public Schools Academies, Chamber of Commerce, PENCIL, and Alignment Nashville offered an opportunity to learn how the Independence School District Academies are utilizing the model developed in Nashville to prepare students for careers and college. While the program was modeled after Nashville, ISD Academies are unique in that every student in every high school is enrolled in an academic and/or career pathway.

The group’s visit to Franklin focused on downtown redevelopment, tourism, and historic preservation and interpretation. While Franklin boasts multiple Fortune 500 headquarters and a lofty median income, lessons were nonetheless plentiful for the Independence delegation regarding planned investment in preservation and beautification of the downtown.

“Franklin has a lot of similarities to Independence,” Mayor Weir said. “They focus on the history of their area much like we do but have developed plans over the last three decades that are now paying off in forms of historic preservation and tourism. We brought back many ideas.”

Downtown Redevelopment Coordinating Committee

In August 2017, the City Council created the Downtown Redevelopment Coordinating Committee (DRCC) to advance neighborhood stabilization and economic development in the heart of Independence. Biennial citizen surveys, neighborhood meetings, and discussions with strategic partners like the Chamber of Commerce, EDC and school districts over several years consistently point to the community’s desire to preserve historic assets and the unique character of the city’s traditional commercial districts including the Courthouse Square, Englewood Arts District, Fairmount, Maywood, and Noland Road.



The DRCC was made up of ten citizens from all across Independence. Its task was to evaluate and prioritize recommendation of sixteen existing redevelopment plans containing more than 400 projects that were in various stages of implementation.

“The DRCC represents fulfilled promises for our citizens,” Mayor Eileen Weir said. “Our community has put in the work over the past two decades to create a vision for the kind of city they want and deserve. This process has allowed us to bring all those ideas together in one plan that is achievable and reflects the priorities of the taxpayers across our entire city.”

Information gathered from presentations, written reports, and regional site visits to nearby downtown redevelopment projects led the DRCC to recommend 47 distinct projects that promote

connectivity, multi-modal transportation, complete streets, heritage, housing, and exploration of a new, mixed use civic center. The recommended projects total \$204,715,000 over the next decade and are achievable through private and public investments.



The DRCC recommendations were adopted by the City Council in October. The Council quickly formed the Independence On a Roll Working Group comprised of key city staff, elected officials, and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and EDC to begin prioritizing projects and identifying suitable and achievable funding sources. The Working Group will convene before the end of the year and provide quarterly reports to the City Council.