



**THE MELTING POT**  
Hundreds attend Multicultural Festival of Owensboro/C1

**A LITTLE HELP FROM FRIENDS**  
Friends of Sinners aids substance abusers with God-centered approach/C1

**APOLLO SLAMDOWN**  
Girls' volleyball team defeats Caldwell County to win tourney/B1

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER

Vol. 135, No. 228

OWENSBORO • SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2009 • www.messenger-inquirer.com

\$1.75

## Strategic vision's progress has ups, downs

Report is given to city commissioners

By Steve Vied

According to the perceptions of those watching closely, Owensboro has made big strides in the development of an "urban village" on the Ohio River, but city government still has work to do in eliminating communications barriers between itself and the community.

Those points were among the highlights of a report delivered to the City Commission last week by Louisville consultant Libby Alexander, who helps guide the city's planning process.

In 2007, elected leaders, city staff and 20 to 30 residents set community goals and priorities to be used to create a strategic vision for the city's future.

Last year the plan was put into place with nine general areas of focus:

- Creation of an "urban village" downtown.
- Promoting entrepreneurs, education and quality-of-life

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## ANALYSIS: HEALTH CARE OVERHAUL



President Barack Obama

## Sound bites in complex debate rare

By Alan Fram

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

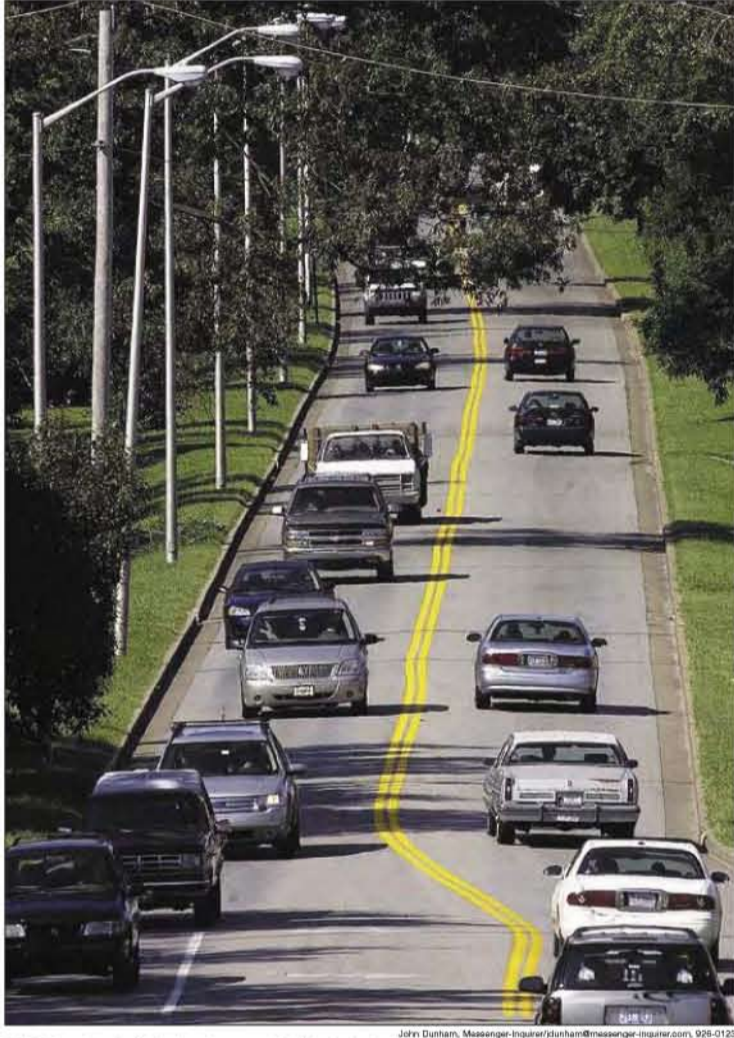
If there's a rhetorical knockout blow out there in the fight over health care, neither side has found it.

President Barack Obama and his opponents are searching for bite-sized, focused and compelling messages that will win over the voters who polls show remain up for grabs. Obama and his foes are going at it hard during the congressional break in August, a raucous, pivotal month when the public and lawmakers are deciding whether to support his drive to reshape the health system.

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# J.R. MILLER Blvd. turns 20

J.R. Miller holds a framed street sign bearing his name at the opening of the street in October 1989.



Traffic flows steadily Wednesday afternoon on J.R. Miller Boulevard at the entrance to the Fiddlesticks subdivision. The road was built 20 years ago to relieve traffic off Frederica Street.

## Chief goal was to ease Frederica Street traffic

By Keith Lawrence

Messenger-Inquirer

In the late 1970s, city officials began discussing the possibilities of extending Lewis Street south along the old CSX railroad tracks to link with Frederica Street near the new Towne Square Mall.

The tracks, laid in 1871 when rail transportation finally reached Owensboro, were slated to be removed by 1984.

Frederica was getting so crowded that there was already talk of widening the street to six lanes.

Building a new road to the east would be a lot cheaper, advocates said.

In October, J.R. Miller Boulevard — the name chosen for the new road — will celebrate its 20th anniversary.

Has it lived up to expectations?

"It's pretty much developed as we thought it would," Keith Harpole, associate director for transportation planning at the Green River Area Development District, said recently.

"The idea was to get traffic off Frederica Street," he said. "We haven't done a traffic count on Miller in about six years, but it was around 20,000 vehicles a day back then. That's 20,000 vehicles a day that aren't on Frederica."

Harpole said: "The alternative to building Miller would have been widening Frederica. There was a study 10 to 12 years ago that estimated the cost at \$25 million to \$30 million to add one lane on each side of Frederica from 25th Street to the end of the shopping centers."

There were those in the business community who hoped that Miller would attract commercial development with Frederica Street beginning to fill up.

That hasn't really happened yet.

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## 20: Street named in honor of former mayor

From the Front Page

The Social Security office, Crandall's Home Furnishings and Champion Ford are the only businesses along Miller south of the U.S. 60 bypass.

A Huck's gas station and convenience store is planned for the intersection of East Parrish Avenue and Miller, and a new neighborhood shopping center is planned on Miller between 12th Street and Parrish Avenue.

But the recession has delayed the start of construction.

In 2005, State Farm Insurance agent J. Todd Luman built an office at 14th Street and Miller. "I got four times the size for half the cost of Frederica Street," he said.

"The traffic count on Miller isn't that much lower than Frederica," he said at the time.

"We weren't expecting commercial development north of the bypass, because it's mostly a residential area," Harpole said. "We did expect it south of the bypass though."

**No new retail planned**

"We have not heard of any new retail projects (planned) in the southern part of the J.R. Miller corridor," said Gary Noffsinger, executive director of the Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission.

"The flood plain will be a limiting factor for development along the southern corridors of J.R. Miller and Frederica Street," he said. "Kentucky 54 appears to be the main choice for new business locations for the foreseeable future."

"The location of the new hospital will have a major influence on attracting new or relocated business to the Kentucky 54 corridor and the lands along the proposed Northeast Expressway (the bypass extension)."

Harpole said Kentucky 54 and Carter Road also deserve credit for reducing traffic on Frederica.

"In 2008, there were 10,700 vehicles a day between Martin Luther King Jr. Loop and Southtown Boulevard on Frederica and 28,000 between Southtown and the bypass," he said. "I know a lot of people who live south of Owensboro who always take Miller because they don't like the Frederica Street traffic."

Today, Harpole said, there's more traffic — 30,000 vehicles a



Amanda Wilson waits to pay for her newspaper Friday at Mickey's Mart, the former Steve's Market, at Davies Street and Legion Boulevard, across J.R. Miller Boulevard from Legion Park. Wilson said she walks in the park almost every day.

day — on Kentucky 54 between the bypass and Fairview Drive than on south Frederica.

"Everybody is looking at Kentucky 54 now," he said. "The shopping that has developed out there added nearly 7,000 vehicles a day. In 2004, the count was 23,900 a day."

In the 1980s, the state widened Carter Road to five lanes south of Parrish Avenue to move traffic from the west side of Owensboro to the "South Frederica" shopping and dining area to help relieve Frederica traffic.

The widened road opened in December 1989 — nine years after the project was announced.

In 1983, the city built Southtown Boulevard as a route between Carter and Frederica. It was supposed to be widened to five lanes within a few years. That still hasn't happened, but it's been approved by the Kentucky General Assembly several times.

"Once, we got Southtown widened between Carter and Frederica, I think traffic out there will increase," Harpole said.

**Named for former mayor**

In January 1984, just weeks after J.R. Miller's term as mayor ended, the City Commission announced that it was naming the new road in his honor.

Miller had been successful in persuading the state to pump nearly \$4 million into the project, and he had shepherded it throughout his term.

"He worked hard to get the funding," said David Atkisson, who was mayor when the new

road opened 20 years ago.

"Then the project got its momentum under (Mayor) Jack Fisher, with most of the construction during his term," Atkisson said. "I inherited the project in time to complete it and cut the ribbon with J.R.'s family."

Atkisson said: "As it neared completion, I remember sending out a letter to a lot of J.R.'s friends, asking them to contribute a bush or a tree to be planted along the boulevard in his honor. Most of the landscaping along the route was donated by J.R.'s friends. We raised several thousand dollars instead of spending more tax dollars on the project."

He said: "I think about how many more traffic headaches there would be along Frederica if J.R. Miller Boulevard hadn't been built. I drive on it almost every time I'm in town, and I'm thrilled it's been so popular with motorists for the past generation."

Thompson Homes broke ground in the fall of 2005 on Fiddlesticks, a planned 146-home upscale subdivision on Miller just south of the Owensboro Country Club.

"We had expected residential development there someday," Atkisson said.

When it opened, the street had six traffic lights and three stop signs. As traffic grew, the stop signs were replaced with traffic lights.

Today, there are 11 traffic lights along the street — 13 fewer than on Frederica Street between Second Street and Southtown Boulevard.