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Poll: Kentucky 54 challenging Frederica for business

Holy blaspheme, Batman! A new poll has cast a shadow on Frederica Street's claim to being Owensboro's "Main Street."

But Jody Wassmer, executive vice president of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce, says the chamber's online poll may have been tainted by a three-day series of articles in the Messenger-Inquirer about the booming Kentucky 54 area.

"We try to make our polls newsy," Wassmer said. "The stories about Kentucky 54 inspired the poll. But they might have influenced it too."

The chamber's weekly poll on its Web site - Owensboro.com - generally attracts 20 to 50 responses, he said.

This one drew 25.

That's a small sampling of the community, and no online poll is scientific.

But asked if Frederica is still "the best place for a retailer/service company to conduct business in Owensboro," 52 percent of the respondents - 13 people - said, "Yes, but other parts of the city are becoming attractive too."

Thirty-two percent - eight people - said, "Yes, it's Owensboro's `main street.' " And 16 percent - four people - said, "No, a good business can be run from anywhere."

"Frederica is still the undisputed hot spot," Wassmer said. "But Kentucky 54 is rising in prominence. Retailers look at rooftops and income levels. And most of the new houses and a lot of the higher-income neighborhoods are along Kentucky 54."

Roughly a dozen commercial projects worth several million dollars have been started or proposed along Kentucky 54 in the past year.

But so far, most of the new stores - like the Wal-Mart supercenter - and restaurants are businesses that already had other locations in the city.

"When we get a store out there that isn't already in Owensboro, that will be the sign that Kentucky 54 has arrived," Wassmer said. "It's already quite an alternative as a No. 2."

And there's nothing wrong, he said, with having two hot spots in town.

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