

Timelapse videos of Independence, MO, streets and landscape.

Jim Allin, Owner, Fish Window Cleaning sitting in front of wall with red and white Fish Window Cleaning logo.

Jim Allin: I grew up like old-school western end of Independence. Kids everywhere. Little bitty streets.

Steve Noll, Jackson County Hist. Society Executive Director (ret) sitting in front of bookshelves.

Steve Noll: Came to Palmer Junior High as it was known then in 1963.

Black and white photo of Independence.

Grew up here, stayed in Independence and I left at the end of my junior year a high school and I never really expected to be back.

Jim on the phone in his office.

Photos of Jim's family.

Jim: Great-grandfather moved from England in early 1900s. You know from a history of farmers and early moonshine runners.

Jim Allin, Owner, Fish Window Cleaning

They settled here you know in eastern Jackson County and we've been here ever since.

Steve Noll, Jackson County Hist. Society Executive Director (ret)

Steve: At one point this was the West. This was the edge of the United States, the eastern boundary of Jackson County was the beginning of that last incorporated government.

Xander Winkel, Ennovation Center Executive Director, seated in front of white wall with wood molding.

Xander Winkel, Ennovation Center Executive Director

Xander Winkel: Of course Independence has an awesome history that we see and feel today.

Black and white photo of Independence.

Tom Lesnak, Independence Economic Development Council President, in front of mural of a man's face.

Tom Lesnak, Independence Economic Development Council President

Tom Lesnak: We are still kind of that at that central point that point in eastern Jackson County where people come for commerce where they come for finances where they come for employment.

Steve: When people came to Independence, they were often looking for new opportunities or sometimes came here to get ready for that next opportunity.

Paintings of Independence settlers.

But other people came here, stayed here, provided the infrastructure built their businesses around those other people.

Austin and Kirsten Conley, American Family Insurance, seated at an office table.

Austin Conley, American Family Insurance

Austin Conley: We moved to Independence because I had an opportunity to open my business here and we moved here about six years ago.

Photos of American Family Insurance office interior.

Photo of Austin and Kirsten with a marriage license.

Kirsten Conley

Kirsten Conley: There's something about Independence that has the amenities of a bigger city but also kind of has a smaller hometown feel which is where we're from originally.

Christina Leakey, Truman Heritage Habitat for Humanity, CEO/President, seated at desk in front of computer screen.

Christina Leakey, Truman Heritage Habitat for Humanity, CEO/President

Christina Leakey: We have all of the opportunity and the advantage of being part of a thriving metropolitan area but we have all the perks and they would be compassion that comes with living in a small town community.

Local coffee shop interior and exterior.

Xander: Like even going into the coffee shop this morning everybody was knowing everybody and talking to each other so it still really had that small hometown feel.

Black and white and current photos of Independence buildings.

Steve: There's a strong sense of community and the Independence history is a common thread.

Tom: I think if you go back to the start of the city back in the 1800s, you know, this was the point where the pioneers loaded up their wagons so the merchants around the square they were loading up the goods for the trip west and I don't think that's what changed over the over the decades and even over the centuries because we're still kind of that central point.

Jim: It's one of the things as to why we opened a business here. It's one of the reasons why my family's been here 100 years and has remained and continues to live here is the people.

Christina: That sense of being part of something bigger than ourselves about meant making sure that everyone in the community that we lived in was okay. That they had what they needed.

Tom: The people of this community are hard workers, they have a strong work ethic, they provide the type of labor pool that companies need to be successful.

Xander: What are other things that we can do to help other industries? To help once they get beyond the incubation stage?

Austin: You know I think there's been a lot of work done here especially within this downtown over the last 20 years that you know we just weren't familiar with at the time but we just saw a huge potential for growth and I think it's continued to do that.

Tom: In all the communities that I've worked with over the years I've never seen a community that comes together as a community not only the business community but the leadership and that's really important for commerce, it's vital. It takes a community kind of working together to make this all successful and in Independence we get that done.

Xander: One thing that I'm seeing now is that Independence is becoming an interesting juxtaposition of a very historic town that's also looking to the future. That's also working on innovative ideas for how to improve the lives of its citizens.

Innovation Center building signage.

Employee working with technology.

Tom: We work with companies every single day and what they what they're challenged with is how do they keep up.

Woman working in office space.

A new startup, a new technology company, what we're doing with the Innovation Center incubator.

Xander: We started primarily as a space for folks to get started, as a flexible space that folks who come in, have access to a commercial kitchen, they have access to conference rooms,

Employees working in Innovation Center.

and have access to all those physical assets that means startup business is going to need. So it's incredibly exciting to see other organizations seeing the city, seeing the community come together to see what are those other pieces what else can we put in place to help folks in this community?

Steve: I see a community that continues to support its public education system, then continues to focus on preserving its past while at the same time improving and rebuilding its infrastructure.

Independence storefronts and flags.

Tom: We've adapted to the moves that had to be made and that's I think one of the big things is you know if companies don't adapt to change, they don't survive. There's a lot of great American stories to be told in this community and you know I think the next great one is it's just waiting to be told.

Independence is Truman, SantaCaliGon, Comfortable, Three Trails, Crackerneck, Englewood, Adventure Oasis, Noland Road, Bass Pro, Polly's Pop, Bingham Wagner, Home, Entertaining, Approachable, Silverstein, HiBoy, Downtown, Friendly, Mavericks, Historic, Chicago & Alton, Family

Independence is A Great American Story

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