



# DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

*Economic Development Division*

## m e m o r a n d u m

**TO:** Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor

**FROM:** Elizabeth H. Tyler, Community Development Director

**DATE:** March 12, 2015

**SUBJECT:** **Economic Development Activities Report for February 2015**

---

### **Business and Development Activity**

#### **Downtown Urbana**

- The Request for Proposals for the redevelopment of 200 Vine was issued on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. The full RFP document is available here: <http://urbanaillinois.us/200vine> Proposals are due May 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Action Jackson Comics held a Ribbon Cutting for its new location at 123 West Main Street. The store relocated from in Bismarck, ND, and shares a space inside the business mall with Error Records, Farm League Skate Shop, and Muris Technologies.
- Work continues at Lord & Lacy BBQ restaurant at 115 W Main.
- The demolition and stabilization work for the creation of an outdoor market at 204 W Main Street is expected to resume at the end of March.
- A proposal is being circulated by Matt Cho of Cake Design Development to prospective investors for the redevelopment of 401 North Broadway Avenue, the former 4-Season Garage Sale site, into “Broadway Market”—an indoor dining hall, coffee roaster and seasonal retail market. The building overlooks the newly beautified area of the Boneyard Creek in Downtown Urbana.
- Work is underway for the expansion of Heel-To-Toe into 108 ½ West Main Street to accommodate Innovative Bracing.
- Work continues for a second-story expansion of A-Plus VIP Lounge to include a karaoke bar at 214 West Main Street. A Plus also initiated its ‘reprogrammed’ space and is now hosting live music performances as well as magic and comedy shows.
- B Spirits on Main Street is under new ownership and is in the early stages of remodeling to include grocery items in addition to alcoholic beverages.
- The demolition of the former Auler building at 202 W Green Street is approaching completion.

#### **University-Medical**

- Plans are under review for a new Chinese restaurant at Gregory Place East.
- Work continues for the Campus Circle apartment complex on University Avenue. Goodwin Avenue will be closed for approximately six weeks starting March 23<sup>rd</sup> to allow for the construction of the parking deck.
- Plans have been received for the expansion of the MTD facility at 1101 East University Avenue.

## **Cunningham Avenue**

- The new Urbana True Tires, a Goodyear tires retailer, is open at 608 North Cunningham Avenue.
- Urbana Boulders, a proposed rock-climbing facility at 1502 North Cunningham Avenue, has raised over \$10,000 in an Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/urbana-boulders>

## **East Urbana**

- Marine Bank filed for commercial foreclosure on a reported six apartment complexes (in Urbana, one in Champaign) owned by Platinum Group Properties, which is operated by Paul Zerrouki and Nicoleta Negrau. The filing lists the following properties under the foreclosure:
  - 703 East Colorado Avenue
  - 1304, 1305, 1401 East Silver Street
  - 2017 South Philo Road
  - 2018 Fletcher Street
- City of Urbana and Champaign County Housing Authority representatives interviewed developers interested in redeveloping and renovating the Aspen Court/Urbana Townhomes area. Herman & Kittle of Indianapolis was selected by the committee as the most qualified applicant. A presentation by the group to the City Council will be made later in March.

## **Marketing and Events Activity**

- The March edition of “It’s All About U” was made available for viewing on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Staff presented information about City programs and services at the Daily Illini Spring Campus Housing Fair.

## **Urbana’s Market at the Square**

- The Market at the Square’s 2014 Annual Report is available online at: <http://urbanaillinois.us/marketreports>
- In 2015, Urbana’s Market at the Square will launch a *Farm Fresh and Fast!*, a new program intended to promote eating healthy and in-season. Every week a new recipe card will be made available at the Market and online; the recipes will be designed to be quick, healthy, and use seasonal foods. As part of the program, Natalie Kenny-Marquez will co-host a cooking segment each week with Maria Ludeke of Creative Health on WCIA News Channel 3’s afternoon lifestyle program, ciLiving. Natalie and Maria will demonstrate that week’s recipe and promote the *Farm Fresh and Fast!* program and the Market. The first segment will air on April 30th and will continue for 28 consecutive weeks.
- The Market Director gave presentations to: the University YMCA Friday Forum, two local pre-school classes, and to the USDA’s Farmers Market Partners, a group of farmers market professionals from throughout the Midwest.

## **Public Arts Program**

- The Urbana Arts Grant Program convened two groups of jurors to review the 44 grant applications received. The two juries have made their recommendations, and this cycle, 25 projects are awarded a total of \$47,500. Grant recipients and jurors have been invited to attend a grant announcement celebration at Pizza M on March 27<sup>th</sup>.
- *Urbana Celebrates the Boneyard*, an event to celebrate the completion of the Boneyard Creek Improvements Project is planned for April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. It will feature an African drumming and dance performance by Djibril Camara, a performance by members of the C4A Bow-Dacious String Band, kids-friendly arts workshops, food trucks, and more. Artist Jack Mackie, who contributed to the park’s design, will attend the event and lead tours. The event will be followed by the dedication of a new Royer Plaque at the Knowlton & Bennett Building at 130 West Main Street.

- On February 12, the Boneyard Naming Contest jury selected three finalists from the 98 submissions received. The public then voted for their favorite out of the three options. By its February 22 deadline, staff received a total of 48 unique votes. Boneyard Riverwalk was the winner with 46%. The other finalists, Boneyard Creek Walk and Boneyard Creek Park, received 29% and 25% of the votes, respectively. The results were presented to the City Council for consideration.
- The City of Urbana Raises Your Art, a call for artworks to be displayed on Urbana’s street pole banners, closed on March 6. The submitted works will be reviewed by a small jury, which includes members of the *Urbana Celebrates the Boneyard* working group. Staff will also install works by students from local elementary schools on some street poles.
- Staff is working with professional designers to create a marketing brochure highlighting Urbana’s sculptures and a new template for the Public Arts e-newsletter. Both designs will be ready to use by the end of March.
- The March episode of Art Now! features photographer George Amaya.
- The current Artist of the Corridor exhibition, which features costume design sketches and photographs by Wiley Elementary’s 3rd grade students, is open until May 1<sup>st</sup>. On February 27<sup>th</sup>, several of the students showcased their works in a fashion show in the Council Chambers. The Artist of the Corridor has also now expanded to include both the City Building and the Urbana Free Library.

## **Other Updates**

- The State of Illinois has announced the recipients of licenses for medical cannabis dispensaries and cultivation facilities. The two dispensary licenses for this state police district, which also includes Champaign, Danville, and Decatur, were both issued to applicants in Downtown Urbana. The highest scoring application in the district was for Nu Med Rx, LLC which plans to open a dispensary at 105 East University Avenue—at the southeast corner of the Five Points intersection. The second license has been awarded to Phoenix Farms of Illinois, LLC which had intended to locate at 202 West University Avenue, but has been required by the state to find an alternative location that is more than 1000 feet away from the Nu Med Rx dispensary location.
- In February, Economic Development staff held site visits with Efficient Living Illinois and Oriental World. City and EDC staff together held visits with Proton Scientific and Runtime Verification.
- The Urbana Business & Development Luncheon was held on February 17<sup>th</sup>. The topic, *Pitch Perfect: Quick-Takes on Urbana’s Commercial Properties*, featured real estate pitches by local brokers as well as an announcement on the City’s RFP for 200 Vine and the upcoming North Crane Alley RFP. A video recording by UPTV is available here: <https://youtu.be/KU03vMw32xk>
- The Economic Development Coordinator position has been posted. The deadline for applications is March 20<sup>th</sup>.

# Memorandum



**TO:** Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor  
**FROM:** Cynthia Chandler, Executive Director  
**DATE:** March 1, 2015  
**SUBJECT:** Urbana Business Association Activities Report for February 2015

---

## Membership Growth

Membership renewals continue to come in having received 112 of 157 to date. This accounts for 71% of the membership renewals. To date we have received two membership cancelations, one of which is American Legion Post #71 resulting in the loss of \$1,000 in annual dues. The Legion has attributed their cancelation to reduced revenue from their video poker gaming machines as a direct result of the large number of video gaming licenses issued within the city and the high cost of Urbana's liquor license.

The UBA has seen the addition of three new member businesses in the month of February bringing our member count to 192. To date we have received \$20,650 in cash membership dues with \$7,445 in outstanding membership renewal dues.

## Boneyard Connect

The UBA again partnered with 40 North 88 West (the Champaign County Arts Council) to host Boneyard Connect. This event was held on Thursday, February 5, in the back room at Pizza M. A venue for businesses and artists to connect in advance of the Boneyard Arts Festival, this event was well attended by more than 80 artists/venues and hugely successful.

## Middle Market

The second and third Middle Market's were held in February. The February 7 market featured 29 registered vendors and February 21 featured 28 registered vendors. A winter snow storm overnight leading to the February 21 market resulted in several vendors canceling however that did not stop the shoppers from coming. Marketing continues with radio ads on seven stations, online advertising with Smile Politely and ChambanaMoms.com. Attendance has continued to increase and all vendors are pleased.

## Urbana Restaurant Week

The third annual Urbana Restaurant Week will take place March 2-8. Eleven restaurants are registered to participate, each locally owned and operated. Participating restaurants include Attie's Bar & Grill, The Bread Company, Café Zojo, Courier Café, Dancing Dog Eatery & Juicery, Milo's, Piato Café, Po' Boys, Silvercreek, Siam Terrace, and Sitara. This combination of restaurants will provide a variety of cuisines including American, Indian, Thai, Swiss, and vegan; offers options from casual to fine dining; and covers several districts of Urbana highlighting the diversity available in Urbana. Participating restaurants will offer a prix fixe menu in increments of \$10, \$20, and \$30 options to satisfy any palette.

## Sweetcorn Festival

Scheduled for August 28-29, planning for the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the Urbana Sweetcorn Festival has begun. UBA staff have designed a new website ([www.urbanasweetcornfestival.com](http://www.urbanasweetcornfestival.com)), designed a new logo, and created new and improved sponsorship levels and benefits. Sponsorship conversations have begun with past sponsors and new alike. Additionally, staff members are researching a variety of grant opportunities for the festival.