



[www.downtownpeoria.us](http://www.downtownpeoria.us)

# DOWNTOWN PEORIA NEWSLETTER

October 2025

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## DDC Activities

### DDC 2025 Fundraising Campaign

Thank you to those who have already contributed to our current campaign. As a nonprofit committed to the long-term revitalization of Downtown Peoria, we rely on the generosity of our contributors to drive real, lasting change.

Downtown is gaining momentum—with new storefronts, renewed investment, and growing residential interest—and you can help keep it moving forward. Our core initiative focuses on increasing downtown density by expanding residential, commercial, and retail opportunities to create a vibrant, walkable, and connected district.

Your support doesn't just sustain our mission—it shapes the future of Downtown Peoria. We hope we can count on you once again to fuel this exciting transformation.

If you are not currently a contributor to the DDC but would like to be, please contact Chris Waible, President/CEO, at (309) 369-6038 or [chris@downtownpeoria.us](mailto:chris@downtownpeoria.us).

# Board Member Spotlight

## Alex Carmona



We welcome Alex Carmona to the DDC board of directors. Alex was recently elected as City of Peoria's 2nd District Council Member, serving the downtown district.

He served his country for 10 years in the military, and in that time he launched his art business.

Today, his work as a master relief printmaker and fine woodworker has earned international recognition, with pieces showcased across the globe.

Alex is a husband, father, veteran, artist, and proud Peorian with a deep-rooted passion for history and American constitutional government.

When asked what DDC accomplishments he is most proud of, interested in, and/or are affected by, Alex replied, **"Since the DDC is a non-profit organization that relies on sponsor donations, I am eager to find ways to make lasting and impactful changes that do not require a lot of spending. I would like the DDC to make recommendations on a regular basis to the leaders in city hall that will help chip away at cumbersome rules and regulations that have been imposed on the business community. The DDC should not only be identifying the challenges in this arena, but also offering research and examples from other localities that lead us towards sustainable, common-sense solutions. This is a way that Peoria as a whole can compete in our current business environment to show that we are a city who is willing to do what it takes to attract entrepreneurs, big businesses, and local merchants to invest in our great city."**

Alex says his ultimate vision for downtown Peoria is to have a thriving, competitive, and dynamic culture of business and entertainment: **“An adaptable downtown that meets the needs of the up-and-coming generations will pump life back into a city that was once the second largest in Illinois. The potential for Peoria to thrive is extraordinary. We must get back to the basics and allow a creative and dynamic business sector to organically shape our downtown area.”**

We are pleased to have Alex as one of our newest board members and look forward to the energy and vision he brings to downtown Peoria. For a complete listing of DDC board members, visit our website at <https://www.downtownpeoria.us/ddc-board>.

## Big Table Greater Peoria 2025



Big Table Greater Peoria is an event where bold ideas meet regional collaboration.

The theme for 2025 was Innovation as a Regional Growth Strategy.

This year's event took place on October 17th with guest speaker, Victor W. Hwang, Economic Growth Expert, and community members from across the region focused on entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth.

® Chris Waible, DDC President, represented the DDC on a panel to discuss livability and enhancing the regional core. Innovation is

driving growth across industries, communities, and careers, and we were pleased to be a part of the momentum moving Greater Peoria forward.

# Property for Sale/Lease

## 401 Water Street



Prime commercial opportunity! Commercial spaces are available for lease right on the Peoria riverfront. 401 Water Street is a self-contained community, surrounded by unique restaurants, art galleries, retail/antique shops, farmers' market and parks. It is located in the heart of outdoor riverfront activities and festivals. Commercial/retail space ranging from 1,335 sf to 3,265 sf with an option to combine space for a larger presence, if needed.

At 401 Water, you're in a highly walkable area just steps from the riverfront and only seconds from Interstate access.

Locate your business in this great property – founded in heritage, focused on the future.

- Turn-key space custom designed to your specifications
- Open floor plans up to 12,000 sq. ft. per floor
- Regional recognition of 401 Water
- Ample on-site parking
- Excess floor load capacity
- ADA compliant
- Fiber optic data communications available on every floor
- Special needs addressed, such as back-up power, and special cooling accommodations

To become a part of the riverfront scene, contact Huber Commercial at 309.673.3000 or <https://hubercommercial.net/property/401-water-street/>.

## Contributor Spotlight

### Jim Maloof Realtor



Jim Maloof Realtor is a premier real estate agency serving the greater Peoria, Illinois area since 1969. With over 50 years of market leadership and a team of 150+ professionals, they combine innovative marketing strategies with the personalized service that has defined their reputation for excellence.

**“Our company culture values integrity, teamwork, and continuous learning, housing the largest relocation department in central Illinois as well as services like property management, realtor school, lawyers, insurance agents, appraisers, and loan officers,”** says President Michael Maloof.

Mr. Maloof is also a proud member of the DDC board of directors and provided his insights on our downtown:

**DDC: What is your interest in the downtown?**

**MM:** As one of the region's top relocation companies, Jim Maloof Realtor has already welcomed/on-boarded 310 people to Peoria this year. We serve hospitals and companies who recruit people to work here with welcome services, tours, and housing. Our downtown is one of the first features newcomers ask to be shown, and this first impression ranks high in their decision to live, move, and work in Peoria. Living downtown is attractive to many folks wanting a short commute to work at our hospitals, Caterpillar Inc., and other downtown businesses.

**DDC: What do we need more of in the downtown?**

**MM:** New residents look for convenience, and the more retail business we have, the more attraction to living there. Even the return of the food trucks is an attraction. With several companies asking their employees to return to the office, service trade is expected to increase. More stores, more shops, and more eateries filling in the corridors will provide interest. The issues of safety and parking come right along with demand, and our City has these as priorities.

**DDC: What do you like most about downtown?**

**MM:** Some of the best coffee is served, and three of the best restaurants are in the area. The basketball, hockey, symphony, museum and riverfront events bring large crowds. Peorians are surprised by all that happens downtown, and meeting of friends is commonplace. The quality of entertainment exceeds that of any suburban center in the area.

**DDC: What effect has the DDC had on the downtown?**

**MM:** The DDC is the primary collaborator and information resource for developers and business owners. They are the essential partner for anyone looking to invest, build, or open shop downtown. They are the connectors, the problem solvers, and the information hub that turns ideas into reality.

**DDC: What is your vision for downtown Peoria?**

**MM:** Downtown Peoria is becoming the heartbeat of our community. And we're proud to bring people home to it, one family at a time.

# Art Spotlight

## Big Picture Peoria



John and Gina Wetzel, in partnership with Big Picture Peoria, are making a bold new investment in Peoria’s Warehouse District by expanding the collection of large-scale public art on their building at 926 SW Washington Street. Known as The Washington Street Gallery, the site has featured eight mounted murals installed by the arts nonprofit in 2020. Now, the Wetzels have swapped out the original eight pieces for new works by local artists—and added eight more large-scale murals to the back of the building. The new section, called The Depot Street Gallery, faces a soon-to-be-completed, fully revitalized streetscape where the City of Peoria is in the process of installing new pavement, landscaping, lighting, and parking, creating an ideal viewing area for the expanded collection. Each piece will also be illuminated at night, enhancing both the vibrancy and safety of the area.

**“Sixteen new large-scale murals—each 10 feet tall and varying in width—on a single building is truly remarkable,”** said Doug Leunig, co-founder and president of Big Picture Peoria. **“John and Gina Wetzel are investing in Peoria’s vibrancy because they understand the power of creative placemaking and the pride it generates in our community.”**

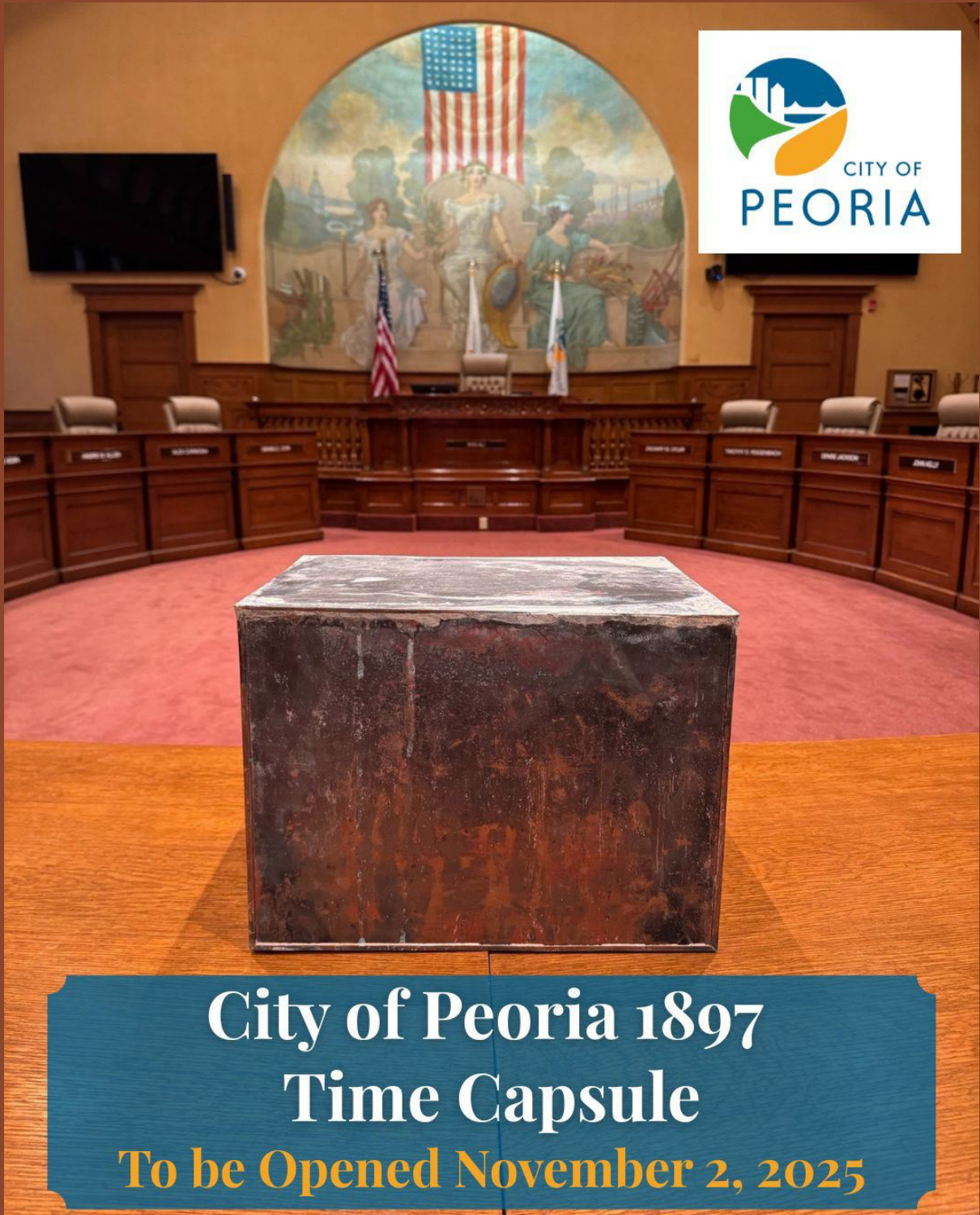
Property owner Gina Wetzel added, **“Public art doesn’t require admission—it’s free for everyone to enjoy. John and I want to share our pride in Peoria and create a place where residents and visitors can experience the talent and creativity that exist in our community. We hope other business owners will feel inspired to show their pride in Peoria, too.”**

To learn more about Big Picture Peoria, visit <https://bigpicturepeoria.org/> or contact co-founders Doug and Eileen Leunig at [dande@bigpicturepeoria.org](mailto:dande@bigpicturepeoria.org).

## City of Peoria Updates

### Open 1897 Time Capsule

Sunday, November 2, at 2 p.m



**City of Peoria 1897  
Time Capsule  
To be Opened November 2, 2025**

The City of Peoria is excited to announce the upcoming opening of a time capsule that dates back to the construction of City Hall. The capsule was placed in the cornerstone on the northwest side of the building on November 2, 1897 and is believed to contain a variety of items from the community. It was recently removed while the façade of the building was being repaired.

According to a Peoria Herald article from 1897, the capsule may include a city directory, a copy of the city code, local newspapers, business cards, photographs, speeches from former mayors, and even a buckeye, among other historical treasures.

**“Time capsules are more than just containers of artifacts—they are messages from the past, created by the people who lived here more than a century ago,”** said Mayor Rita Ali. **“Because this capsule belongs to the people of Peoria, it is only fitting that our community comes together to witness its opening and reflect on how far we’ve come.”**

The public is invited to witness the opening of the time capsule on **Sunday, November 2, at 2 p.m.** at the Gateway Building, 200 NE Water Street. The event will mark the 128th anniversary of its placement.

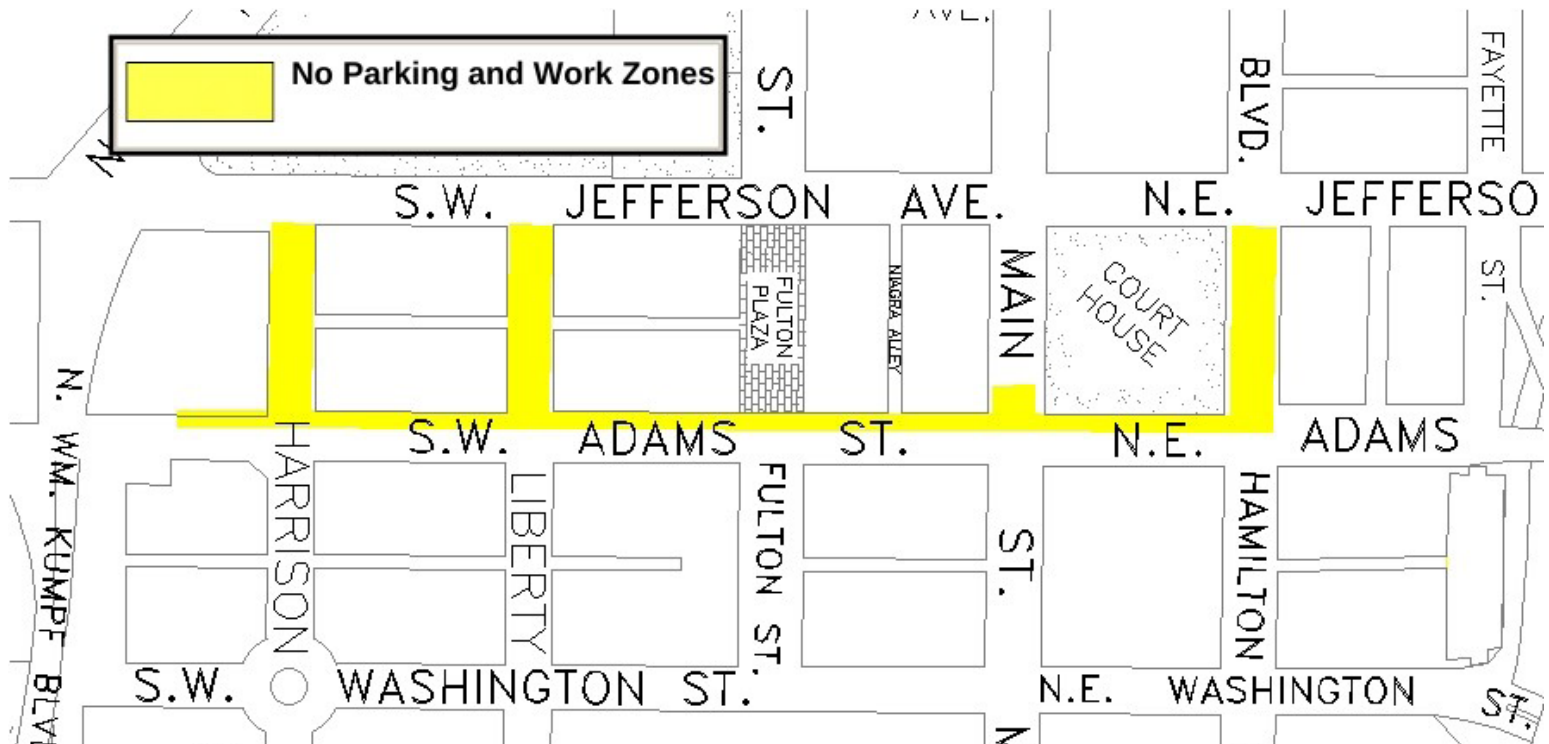
A short program will precede the unveiling, featuring representatives from the Peoria Historical Society, Peoria Public Library Local History Collection, Bradley University Special Collections, and the Peoria Riverfront Museum.

The capsule will be displayed on the first floor of Peoria City Hall, 419 Fulton Street, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., until the November 2 opening.

Time capsules hold a special place in preserving local history, offering future generations an authentic snapshot of community life, culture, and values from the past. They connect people across time, inspiring reflection on what has endured and what has changed.

The public is also encouraged to participate in the 2026 Time Capsule Project by visiting Peoria City Hall to fill out a card sharing what they love about Peoria. These cards will be placed in a new time capsule to be sealed in City Hall in 2026.

# One-Way to Two-Way Conversion Project



According to Nick McMillion, Department of Public Works, work is progressing nicely on major downtown streets. As the City of Peoria's Adams Street and Jefferson Avenue One-Way to Two-Way Conversion Project approaches the end of its second year, crews are making significant progress toward transforming two of downtown's most traveled corridors.

This year's efforts have focused primarily on pedestrian improvements along Jefferson Avenue, enhancing accessibility and safety through upgraded sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps. These upgrades are part of the City's continued commitment to creating a more walkable, connected, vibrant downtown environment.

In October, resurfacing work occurred on Adams Street, Harrison Street, Liberty Street, and Hamilton Boulevard, signaling the next major milestone in the two-and-a-half-year initiative. These improvements will prepare the corridor for its eventual conversion to two-way traffic in 2026.

When complete, the Adams Street and Jefferson Avenue One-Way to Two-Way Conversion Project will feature one travel lane in each direction, a bi-directional center turn lane, and a dedicated bike lane, along with modernized traffic signals and improved visibility at intersections. The project is designed to balance the needs of motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists while supporting downtown revitalization and local business access.

Originally converted to one-way streets in 1951, Adams Street and Jefferson Avenue have long served as key arteries through Peoria's core. Converting them back to two-way travel supports the City's broader goals for slower traffic speeds, safer crossings, and stronger connections between downtown residents and visitors, and businesses.

## Downtown Activities

### Peoria Riverfront Museum



Now open! “Finding Titanic: The Secret Mission” is a traveling exhibition produced and toured internationally by Flying Fish in collaboration with Nautilus Live and generously supported by the Office of Naval Research and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The greatest undersea mystery of all time is revealed in the world premiere of a brand new exhibition! Discover one of the greatest oceanic finds in American history in “Finding Titanic: The Secret Mission” presented by CEFCU only at the Peoria Riverfront Museum.

Plan your visit today at [www.RiverfrontMuseum.org](http://www.RiverfrontMuseum.org).

## Visit Downtown Peoria!

We encourage everyone to embrace the vibrancy of downtown Peoria. As we approach the holiday season, beginning with the spookiest of them all, make sure to visit our website at <https://www.downtownpeoria.us/play> to fill your entertainment calendar. And follow our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064639275934> where we share downtown updates and good news.

# Announcement

## Future Play! Multi-Day Event

Coming to Peoria Civic Center in 2026



Discover Peoria, the City of Peoria, the Peoria Civic Center, and the Illinois Office of Tourism recently announced Future Play in Peoria - a city-wide entertainment, gaming, and tech festival coming to Peoria September 18-20, 2026. This expansive event will take over the entire Civic Center Convention Center and additional parts of Downtown in a three-day next-gen family festival.

The National Collegiate Esports Showdown will serve as the culminating event with 512 teams competing for \$50,000 in cash and prizes in a Collegiate Challenge Competition. The schedule will include live gameplay streamed across social platforms (Twitch, YouTube, etc.), plus activations for attendees such as a retro arcade gaming lounge, a creator studio, airsoft target range, and RC rocketing racing.

“I’m thrilled that Cinematic will be producing the Future Play Festival in Peoria in 2026,” said Dylan Marer, Executive Producer at Cinematic. “Peoria is ideally located and the perfect, forward thinking city to showcase what’s next in interactive entertainment and gaming tech, as we bring 40,000+ fans together for an unforgettable weekend of esports, celebrity gaming exhibitions, immersive activations, and live music.”

“Bringing Future Play 2026 to the Peoria Civic Center reinforces our commitment to hosting dynamic, cutting-edge events,” shared Beau Sutherland, Assistant General Manager at Peoria Civic Center. “We’re excited to welcome the collegiate esports community and give fans in Greater Peoria a chance to experience this electrifying competition firsthand.” Expected to draw tens of thousands of attendees, the event will also serve as an opportunity for local and national businesses to share the best of their digital capabilities with a demographic already engaged with advancements in technology. To read the full press release and for more information on the festival, visit: <https://www.futureplayfestival.com/>.



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