



DOWNTOWN PEORIA NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2022

DDC Activities

Welcome Kimberly Richardson, Assistant City Manager!

Last month, DDC staff members hosted an introductory luncheon with Kimberly Richardson, the new assistant city manager. Accompanying Ms. Richardson were city staff members Kevin Evans, Cesar Suarez, and Uriah Kilgallin (also new on the city staff). The luncheon was a wonderful opportunity for Michael Freiling, President/CEO of the DDC, to inform the two new city employees of its mission and how that aligns with the city's initiatives on new development and redevelopment in the downtown. Following lunch, Mr. Freiling led a brief tour of the downtown to help city employees see and appreciate the new growth and redevelopment taking place downtown, especially in the Warehouse District. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City as we work with developers to grow downtown into a welcoming place for everyone to live, work, and play.

Downtown Wayfinding

The Downtown Wayfinding Implementation Committee, led by the DDC, has approved two prototype wayfinding signs to be installed near the riverfront district. The committee has been working closely with the City of Peoria Public Works Department, Corbin Design (hired by the City in 2018 for a wayfinding study and proposal), and Ace Sign Company for input on design, fabrication, and installation. These prototype

signs will be installed on Main Street near the Caterpillar Administration Building and Washington Street near the Caterpillar Visitors Center by mid-summer. These prototypes will pave the way for the City to do a full wayfinding implementation for downtown Peoria in 2023. The city has budgeted funds for this very important initiative.

Business Spotlight

416 Main Street (formerly the Commerce Bank Building)



Peoria's second-tallest building is, for the moment, not quite as tall. Workers doing extensive repairs to the terra cotta façade of the building have removed many pieces, including elaborate panels at the very top of the tower. Many of them are spread out in a vacant office on the 10th floor of the 17-floor building.

Some are being repaired, while the more damaged pieces are being used to build molds for replicas made of glass fiber-reinforced concrete. The new pieces will look exactly like the original panels, said Bruce Cornell, a bricklayer and superintendent for Otto Baum Co.

“We’ve taken off 14 feet of the upper lantern and shipped off a piece that needs to be replaced,” Cornell said while standing on scaffolding surrounding the top of the skyscraper at 416 Main St. **“There’s a rumor that Charles Lindbergh, when running his mail route from St. Louis to Chicago, used that light to navigate. That’s what I was told, but I couldn’t find any documentation to back it up.”**

416 Main, the new moniker for what was known as the Commerce Bank Building, is one of the most elaborate buildings in Downtown Peoria. It was built by Peoria Life Insurance Co., whose owners aimed to erect the finest building in the state of Illinois.



They hired a Peoria architect and construction company and broke ground on March 1, 1918. Because construction ceased during World War I, the building wasn't completed until 1924. Standing 302 feet tall, 416 Main was the tallest building in Peoria until the 1980s, when Ray Becker built the Twin Towers.

The original owners of 416 Main boasted that it was one of the finest examples of a terra cotta building ever constructed, a statement architect Nathan Harres agrees with. Harres is a senior associate with Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates Inc., a Northbrook-based architectural firm specializing in the repair of terra cotta buildings. He's leading the restoration effort at 416 Main St.

“This building rivals any of the 1920s buildings using terra cotta façade materials in Chicago and other cities,” Harres said. Terra cotta has been used as a building material for thousands of years, according to an article written by one of Harres' colleagues. The material became popular in the U.S. in the mid-1800s because it is fireproof and an economical substitute for carved stone. Elaborate shapes can be easily repeated by pressing clay into molds. Once fired and glazed, the pieces become very durable.

They are attached to buildings with steel and mortar. At first used to provide decorative elements on buildings, terra cotta was being used to cover entire buildings by the early 1900s.

Though 416 Main does utilize some granite and brick in the facade, most of the building is covered with terra cotta. Walls easily visible from the street are adorned with flat panels that look like stone, but the walls of the building's tower are covered in deeply carved panels.

“It’s interesting because the building is less ornate close to the ground — you would think that would be where they would spend the money, but a lot of the terra cotta is up at the tower,” said Harres. **“Above the 12th floor it’s highly ornate. There’s all kinds of dentil moldings and floral or organic ornamentation.”**

Having ornamentation visible from street level was apparently not important to the building’s designers. Details like cornices, decorative railings, spires and even a pair of 6-foot-tall eagles adorn the building’s tower.

“Somebody told me that the reason they put the eagles in those locations is that the two partners who owned the building originally had their offices right up there, and they liked to set up their chairs so that if somebody came in for a meeting, the person would be looking out the window right at those eagles,” Harres said. The eagles are currently being enjoyed by bricklayers who are working on scaffolding surrounding the building’s tower. They are checking every inch of the building: reinforcing loose panels with pins, filling cracks with caulk and removing panels that need more attention. It’s a specialized job that required Otto Baum to provide extra training for its bricklayers, said Cornell, who said he is enjoying the project. **“This is the ultimate job for a bricklayer,”** he said.

Building co-owner Kert Huber is also enjoying the project. **“I like restoring things like they once were; it’s fun,”** he said. **“They will not be building more buildings like 416 Main, you know.”**

Workers hope to complete the tower by next winter, at which point the scaffolding will be moved down the building so workers can begin the next phase of repair. The project is expected to cost about \$4 million, with \$1.3 million spent just to erect the scaffolding around the tower, said Huber. **“We’re hoping to get most of it done for \$4 million. If not, we’ll do the rest of it at a later time. But now that we’ve got the scaffolding around the tower, we want to make sure that we have everything done for the next 100 years.”**

Development Spotlight

Distillery Labs



An innovation and technology hub in downtown Peoria originally expected to open this spring is coming closer to reality. What was once Illinois Central College's Thomas K. Thomas building in Downtown Peoria will soon become known as Distillery Labs.

"We're not actually distilling spirits or alcohol, we are distilling ideas," said Paul Leamon, executive director of Distillery Labs.

Leamon said the center will feature office spaces, a welcoming lobby and cafe, maker spaces, a 3D and digital printing lab, a recording studio, and other amenities. He said the goal is to bring ideas people and resources together to launch and grow Peoria-region businesses.

"If you're interested in innovation and technology and even from a corporate perspective, where things are from a digital economy perspective, we're bringing all those pieces together under one roof," Leamon said.

Design work to renovate the vacant downtown building has been completed. Leamon said leaders are finishing grant requirements and nearing the process of public bidding for construction. Construction is expected to start this summer.

To view the complete story that was recently reported by CIProud.com, visit their website at www.centralillinoisproud.com.

New Business Spotlight

Looks what's opened up in Downtown Peoria!

Cultured Grounds



Good news for downtown residents and visitors: Cultured Grounds has added another coffee shop downtown, this time on the riverfront at 401 Water Street. Cultured Grounds' new space on Water Street is similar to its "flagship" location in the Twin Towers Mall with a variety of flavored teas in addition to their great coffee. The new location is in a building that houses businesses and residential units.

Great Harvest Bread Company



Great Harvest Bread Co. opened its third Peoria-area location, located at 124 SW Adams St., part of the OSF Ministry Headquarters complex. Menu items include breakfast- and lunch-oriented sandwiches, paninis, salads, soups and coffees, as well as acai bowls and smoothies. Avocado toast, grain bowls and espresso drinks downtown exclusives. Breads are made from flour milled daily. Open 7 am - 4 pm weekdays.

Beauty & Beast Event Co.



Located in the Warehouse District at 621 Commercial St., Suite 1B, a new shop called Beauty & Beast Event Co., owned and operated by Peoria entrepreneurs Kourtney Greene and Alexandria Hunter, has opened. The shop features "homemade" items – candles, all-natural skin-care products and things made from resin, such as jewelry and furniture. Themed parties at the shop include not only a custom

candle, but also food and drinks. The candle is poured at the beginning of the session and, as the wax cools and sets up, guests enjoy the fare along with music provided by a DJ.

Tickets are purchased ahead of time on EventBrite. A ticket for one person costs \$35, and a couple is \$50. The shop is open Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. To learn more about the owners and their exciting start-up, read their story as recently reported in the Peoria Journal Star or follow them on social media.

Brazilian Company Coming to Peoria



According to an update in Peoria Magazine Weekly, Manusis4, a Brazilian technology company specializing in asset management, is expanding into the United States – including Peoria. The company will be opening a showroom at The Nest, 820 SW Adams St. in the Warehouse District.

“Manusis4 expanded operations to Peoria because of its impressive innovation environment, proximity to customers, and potential for strategic partnerships,” the company said in a news release.

“The Peoria site will be staffed by current Manusis4 employees. The plan is to bring aboard more full-timers in Peoria once sales ramp up,” said Chris Setti, CEO of the Peoria Economic Development Council. The company, valued at \$10 million, grew its revenue by 70 percent in 2021. Besides the new location in Peoria, Manusis4 is also expanding operations to Boston, where it hopes to connect to hospitals and healthcare systems, and Pittsburgh, where it aims to partner with Carnegie Mellon’s Engineering and Data Science Department. To learn more about the company, go to <https://manusis4.com/en/our-company>.

Business Update

Gone Axe Throwing & More!

Things are raging in the Warehouse District! Sara and Matt Ruder opened Gone Axe Throwing in 2019 in an old brick building in Peoria’s Warehouse District, located at

1001 SW Washington St. In another part of the building is the Gone Mad Rage Room, where people don protective gear and smash stuff, like electronics, glass and pottery, with a variety of tools. And, for those seeking more intellectual fun, the building also contains a pair of themed escape rooms where you have to solve a puzzle before you can get out. The Reactor and The Cemetery are part of Gone in 60 Escape Games. Food, drink, and pinball are also up for grabs. To find out how this unique business evolved, read their story in the Peoria Journal Star or visit www.goneaxethrowing.com.

Downtown Resident Spotlight

David Nicoll



Meet David Nicoll, who resides downtown Peoria right on the riverfront at, appropriately enough, Waterfront Place! David is originally from Peoria and has lived downtown for one year.

He has worked downtown several times, most currently for Caterpillar Inc. David says he loves the urban lifestyle in downtown Peoria.

We were interested in hearing what David had to say about downtown living, specifically Peoria. Let's find out:

DDC: How did you find out about downtown living options?

DN: I have been reading about Peoria's investment into the warehouse district for years, and now I believe Peoria is at a tipping point where downtown resi-

dences are revitalizing a downtown lifestyle opportunity for our community.

DDC: Do you prefer renovated old buildings or modern new buildings in downtown?

DN: I'm excited about the warehouse district renovations into residential lofts. The building I live in is an historic building that is over 100 years old with a history of the Illinois Antique Center.

DDC: Is there a sense of community?

DN: I believe there is a sense of community around the local businesses downtown. I have gotten to know the owners, staff, and patrons at many of the downtown restaurants, shops, pubs, museums, and coffee shops. Support local!

DDC: Are there enough food/beverage options?

DN: Yes, I prefer to support local downtown restaurants and also joined the Creve Coeur Club as a place to host business meetings.

DDC: Is there enough entertainment in the city?

DN: Yes, more than there is time for I just attended the Peoria Civic Center 40 Year celebration, and the Civic Center hosts incredible sporting and music/art events. The riverfront festivals along with live music at Kenny's and Martini's are fabulous.

DDC: Do you plan on staying in your current residence downtown?

DN: Yes, I believe there is a residential future for downtown Peoria that promotes diversity and community.

DDC: What effect has the DDC had on downtown improvements and/or you and your business?

DN: The DDC has worked hard to provide development opportunities and also to advocate for new and existing businesses in the downtown. They have helped with residential options for people like me to be able to enjoy living and working downtown.

DDC: What new businesses and services would you like to see?

DN: When I am not enjoying Peoria's brilliant downtown, I love a weekend trip to Chicago. I support rail service from Peoria to Chicago and hope that project's momentum continues.

DDC: What is your vision for downtown Peoria?

DN: My vision is growth through balance: big business and small business; commercial and residential; history and innovation; entertainment and charity; fitness and restaurants; residential and tourism; Peoria is lucky to have such a historic and engaging downtown.

DDC: What do you most like about living and working downtown?

DN: I appreciate the variety.. sometimes a run on the river trail with coffee at Ardor Provisions; sometimes dinner at Jim's before the Peoria Symphony; sometimes a casual lunch after the riverfront farmer's market. Thank you Peoria!

Property For Sale/Lease

414 Hamilton Blvd: Office Building



If you are in the market for a multi-tenant office building in downtown Peoria, this may be the one for you! The sale price is \$425,000, recently reduced. 414 Hamilton and 203 Jefferson are available together in a sale. 203 Jefferson is a rare, single-story downtown office building with its own onsite parking lot and currently has a long-term 10-year tenant, while 414 Hamilton is a beautiful 3-story masonry building. The property is located just off I-74 in the Central Business District. For details and broker contact information, visit www.maloofcommercial.com.

Downtown Activities

Sculpture Walk 2022

Sculpture Walk Peoria is a vibrant part of downtown Peoria culture. Accomplished artists from all over the nation submit and install works that can be viewed as you take a tour along the Sculpture Walk Peoria map. Visit downtown Peoria with family and friends to scope out the new art installations. On your route, stop in at the Peoria Art Guild and Peoria Riverfront Museum to round out your trip. For more information visit www.peoriaartguild.swp.

Peoria Civic Center

If you are looking for entertainment, the Peoria Civic Center is back at it after a long pandemic break. Everything from sports to music, the Civic Center has something for everyone, all ages and all interests. Visit www.peoriaciviccenter.com and plan your escape today.

Visit Peoria!

The DDC web site is a wonderful resource for development resources and things to do in downtown Peoria. With spring now upon us, downtown Peoria is coming alive with markets, fine arts, great food and entertainment. In collaboration with Peoria Riverfront Association, we keep an updated pulse on downtown activities. If you are looking for fun, visit our web site at www.downtownpeoria.us/play.

Special Interest

Illinois



According to a recent article in Market Watch, titled 10 cheapest U.S. cities to buy a home, and what makes them special (psst: in one, the median home is still under \$100K – and buyers are taking note), Peoria, Illinois is #1 on the list of affordable living!

“Located in central Illinois, about 150 miles southwest of Chicago, Peoria offers a riverfront district with outdoor event spaces, restaurants, a walking trail, museums, and theaters. The city is also home to the Wildlife Prairie Park, an 1800-acre zoological park that is home to 60 species formerly native to the area, including bison, wolves and bobcats. It’s no wonder that people from around the country started buying up properties in the city in the summer of 2021, the *Washington Post* reports.” If you are interested in living big but buying “cheap,” come check out Peoria! The door is open wide.

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