



DOWNTOWN PEORIA NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2023 - Special Edition

Alphabet Soup!



Let's start the new year with something warm and comforting – Alphabet Soup! Since the Downtown Development Corporation of Peoria (DDC) does not meet in January, we chose to serve up a special edition newsletter to demonstrate how the DDC mixes in with all the other organizations working together to make our Peoria region a rich and welcoming melting pot. We will begin by listing the many “ingredients” it takes to enhance and further development, and we will end with an in-depth look and explanation of the DDC.

What are all the economic development/business groups?

It's true there are many groups dedicated to making our region and Downtown Peoria a better place. This is a good thing. It means our community has active citizens, elected officials, agencies and businesses who share common interests but represent distinct voices in shaping our City's future. The DDC was designed to work seamlessly with and cooperate with many organizations that have a different and unique focus including:

GPEDC - Greater Peoria Economic Development Council



The GPEDC is a **regional** economic development and planning organization **servicing five counties in Central Illinois:** Logan, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford. The Greater Peoria EDC exists to promote economic development in the region through its six core programs which include Business Attraction, Business Assistance, Workforce Solutions, Innovation and Startups, Rural Development, and the Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network.

Guided by their nationally recognized comprehensive economic development strategy, the Greater Peoria EDC is committed to advancing the region's economy by supporting business and talent development and attraction. To learn more about the GPEDC visit <https://greaterpeoriaedc.org/>.

PACC - Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce



Since 1910, the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce has been the **leading voice and resource for business in the region** because of their inclusive and diverse approach to their work, advocacy for improving the quality of place in the region, and their position as a strong source for leadership development. PACC offers professional development opportunities, business & marketing webinars, and they are a conduit for entrepreneurs to connect with the community! To learn more, visit www.peoriachamber.org.

CEO Council



Consisting of over 50 business leaders, the CEO Council shares a common interest in developing the Greater Peoria Region as a destination place to work, live and play. By working together, these business leaders **provide insight and energy that helps fuel real and meaningful changes that benefit the entire community.** In fact, the CEO Council recommended creating the DDC in 2013. As an autonomous business driven organization,

the CEO Council bring unique perspectives and leverage that will be important for accomplishing the shared strategies that will move the Greater Peoria region forward. One of their top priorities is “GP 2030,” a robust effort to attract the best workforce to the Greater Peoria Area. To learn more, visit www.peoriaceocouncil.org.

PRA - Peoria RiverFront Association



PRA is a **collective group of businesses, developers, services, and individuals** dedicated to improving and promoting Peoria’s RiverFront and Downtown. This non-profit organization was formed 25 years ago with the purpose of continuing the advancement of Peoria’s newly developed RiverFront.

In 2016, PRA expanded efforts to include Peoria’s entire Downtown with a new website featuring Downtown’s Warehouse District, Central Business District, and West Main Street, in addition to the RiverFront. The association’s website is Downtown Peoria’s most comprehensive source for local dining and business and includes a robust calendar of events. PRA works to support member businesses through advocacy & communication, information sharing, and joint planning, promotion & advertising. PRA’s largest event is the very popular RiverFront Market which takes place every Saturday morning mid-May through September, drawing 5,000 people to Peoria’s downtown each week. The market will celebrate its 20th season in 2023. PRA proudly promotes all aspects of downtown activity including dining, shopping, living, recreation, arts and entertainment. To learn more about Downtown Peoria businesses and activities, visit <https://www.visitdowntownpeoria.com/>.

Discover Peoria

PACVB - (Peoria Area Convention & Visitors Bureau)



Working hand-in-hand with communities in a seven-county service area, Discover Peoria **creates economic growth through sales and marketing** of their destination's facilities, attractions, and hotels. Their efforts attract sporting events, meetings and conventions, and leisure tourists. While these visitors are enjoying our communities, their spending is bolstering our businesses and increasing our tax revenue. In addition, **the PACVB partners**

with the tourism and hospitality sector, such as HOIHA (Heart of Illinois Hospitality Association) to ensure our destination offers a wealth of opportunities to visitors, while also improving the quality of life for our residents. To learn more about the region's attractions, visit www.peoria.org.

City of Peoria & County Government



All of the organizations listed above work together with City and County Government agencies, such as the Economic Development Office, Planning & Zoning Commission, City Staff, City Council, etc. to gain approval for initiatives and to garner support and approval for tax incentives, grants, loans, etc. to move the Peoria region forward. To learn more about the City of Peoria, visit www.peoriagov.org.

DAC - Downtown Advisory Commission

The Downtown Advisory Commission (DAC) is a City of Peoria entity consisting of nine volunteer commissioners who are nominated by the Mayor and then approved by the City Council. The DAC conducts open, public meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 4:30 pm.

The purpose of the DAC is to advise the City Council and Mayor about important and impactful policies, programs and projects for Downtown Peoria. At each public meeting, appropriate downtown stakeholders, downtown partner organizations (like the DDC) and guest speakers offer their perspectives and opinions on selected topics.

The Commission takes this input and combines research & discussion to develop recommendations to the City Council.

The DAC meetings are used as a public forum for review and discussion of important and timely topics such as the Riverfront Master Plan, one-way to two-way street traffic restoration and downtown wayfinding.

DDC - Downtown Development Corporation of Peoria



Let's take an in-depth look at the DDC

The Downtown Development Corporation of Peoria (DDC) is the leading local champion for planning, development and revitalization efforts in **Peoria's Downtown area**. Geographically, this includes the Central Business District, Warehouse District, Riverfront District, Medical District, and the Near North Side, a 20-block section TIF district. It is a not-for-profit, stand-alone corporation designed to bring private and public interests together for a common goal: **Creating a vibrant environment for people to live, work and play. A thriving Downtown benefits Peoria and our region's economy as a whole.**

Until the DDC's founding in 2013, research showed Peoria may have been the largest American city without a dedicated downtown development organization. Now our DDC is making a big impact in the Downtown, with an office at 403 NE Jefferson Avenue – the historic Judge Jacob Gale house.

How did the DDC come into existence?

The CEO Council, the City of Peoria and community leaders who share a common interest in developing the Greater Peoria Region endeavored to improve the overall business climate in Peoria to make it more competitive in attracting and retaining businesses and a quality workforce.

In researching how other communities successfully became more successful in competing for businesses and workforce, it was determined that in today's market a vibrant and thriving downtown was the key. Businesses are looking for communities that are collaborative and appealing to young professionals; these communities are increasingly located in vibrant downtowns with dynamic urban neighborhoods that are walkable and energy packed.

It was determined when researching our inspirational cities that **three important components were missing** from Peoria's downtown:

First... an organization dedicated to the revitalization and development of the downtown, a Downtown Development Corporation.

Second... a downtown residential population that would be of sufficient size to support increased retail shops and activities.

Third... a Business Improvement District (BID), known as a Special Service Area (SSA) in Illinois, to support an enhanced level of municipal services to improve the downtown's appearance, support events, and increase the perception of public safety.

These findings led the CEO Council and the City of Peoria to establish the Downtown Development Corporation of Peoria (DDC) in December 2013.

The CEO Council drafted bylaws, filed for incorporation, began the process of applying for 501c3 status, began fundraising for the DDC, assembled the initial Board of Directors, which hired its first President/CEO in June 2014. It was then that the DDC, working with the City of Peoria and our business community began its work to **revitalize and develop Peoria's downtown.**



What does the DDC do?

Day to day, the DDC serves as a **“toolbox” to facilitate development, deals, management and marketing.** Those responsibilities include:

- Stimulating discussion and cooperation among public agencies and the private sector with respect to community planning, development and revitalization.
- Serving as a transactional dealmaker to help facilitate desirable private/public projects.
- Supporting policies that encourage new development.
- Leading efforts (with public entities, private developers and existing community development corporations) in the acquisition, lease, sale, design, construction, redevelopment, rehabilitation and financing of real estate projects or development.
- Leading efforts to plan, fund and develop improvements that make Downtown Peoria more walkable, bikeable, attractive and livable, with the utmost safety measures in place.

What are the DDC’s priorities?

As part of the DDC’s charge to **champion development**, it is focused on:

- Providing best practices in relationship, business and economic development.
- Addressing the supply of suitable Downtown housing, recognizing the significant demand.
- Championing a pedestrian-friendly environment in support of residential, business and economic growth in the Downtown area.

Who is in charge of the DDC?

The DDC currently has one employee, President/CEO Michael Freiling, and two part-time staff members. Funding comes from contributions from approximately 60 local businesses and organizations.

The City of Peoria, Caterpillar Inc., OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, and UnityPoint Health are our largest contributors.



Although the DDC is not a governmental body, it does have two representatives from the City of Peoria who serve on its 14-member Board:

- Councilman Zach Oyler and
- Councilwoman Denise Jackson

The other 12 Board members represent businesses across various sectors:

- Rep. Ryan Spain (OSF Saint Francis Medical Center/City of Peoria Appointee)
- Robert Anderson (OSF Saint Francis Medical Center)
- Jeanine Spain (UnityPoint Health)
- Paul Kouri (Farnsworth Group)
- Cliff Vieira (Caterpillar)
- Branden Martin (PAAR)
- Michael Maloof (Jim Maloof Realtor)
- Travis Mohlenbrink (Restaurateur)
- David Nicoll (Downtown resident)
- Jonathan Williams (Finance Executive)
- Mark Yemm (Morton Community Bank)
- Michael J. Freilinger (President/CEO, DDC)

Besides the acquisition and sale of key properties located at 800-810 SW Adams Street for mixed-use development, what other projects has the DDC facilitated?

The DDC has assisted with:

- Acquisition of 701 SW Water Street
- Amending and adopting the 2012 International Building Code
- IL-HTC workshops & seminars
- The development of 19 mixed-use residential development projects
- The City's public engagement project for a vision of Peoria's Downtown
- Downtown Housing and Parking Studies
- Lease negotiations for additional parking in the Warehouse District
- Acquisition of property rights to Riverfront Village
- Property exchange with the City of 807 SW Washington Street for 225 State Street to allow for additional parking
- Acquisition of 724 and 726 SW Adams Street and 837, 905-907 SW Washington Street for sale/development
- Wayfinding prototype signs in collaboration with the DAC, PRA, City Planning & Zoning staff.
- Marketing campaigns for local businesses and workforce attraction

With an in-depth look at the DDC and an overview of the many organizations working in tandem, we hope that this gives you an idea of the unique blend that it takes to serve our Greater Peoria Region. Some agencies work regionally (across several counties); others work throughout the entire city of Peoria; while the DDC's main focus is on the five regions listed above that encompass Downtown Peoria. We are all here today for a better tomorrow.

For further information, feel free to contact Michael J. Freiling, DDC President/CEO, at michael@downtownpeoria.us or (309) 369-6038.



www.downtownpeoria.us

Downtown Development Corporation of Peoria (DDC)

Michael J. Freiling, President/CEO | e: michael@downtownpeoria.us | m: 309.369.6038
403 NE Jefferson Ave, Peoria, IL 61603-3725



@Downtown Development Corporation of Peoria