



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: April 2, 2015

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

Business and Development Activity

Downtown Urbana

- The Request for Proposals for North Crane Alley was issued on March 25th. The full RFP document is available at <http://urbanaillinois.us/NorthCraneAlley> Proposals are due June 26th.
- Proposals for the 200 Vine RFP are due on May 8th. The full RFP document is available here: <http://urbanaillinois.us/200vine> A pre-proposal meeting was also held on March 18th in the Urbana City Council chambers.
- A building permit has been issued for the renovation of the new Strawberry Fields grocery store at 306 West Springfield Avenue.
- The former Corkscrew building at 203 North Vine Street has sold. Details on the new owner and the proposed use for the building are forthcoming.
- 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 has resumed. Plans for a new façade are expected to be submitted in the coming weeks.
- Work continues 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.
- B Spirits on Main Street is in the design phase of remodeling to expand into a grocery store.
- The demolition of the former Auler building at 202 W Green Street is nearly complete.

University-Medical

- A permit will soon be issued for a new Korean BBQ restaurant called Bab+ going into Gregory Place East.
- Work continues for the Campus Circle apartment complex on University Avenue.
- Plans are under review for the expansion of the MTD facility at 1101 East University Avenue.

East Urbana

- Herman & Kittle, the selected developer for the redevelopment of the Aspen Court/Urbana Townhomes area, made a presentation of their plans to the Urbana City Council.

Public Arts Program

- The Urbana Arts Grant 2015 recipients, jurors and Public Arts Commission members gathered at Pizza M on March 27 for a grant announcement celebration.
- The City of Urbana Raises Your Art, a call for artworks to be displayed on Urbana's banners, closed on March 6. The winning local artists, Beth Darling and Paula Chmiel, were selected by a jury. Their works, as well as works by students from local elementary schools, are being printed and will be installed on street poles surrounding the Boneyard Creek Improvements Project.
- The March episode of Art Now! featured artist Jerry Savage.
- 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. The next exhibition will feature works by local artist Beth Darling.
- Urbana Celebrates the Boneyard!, an event to celebrate the Boneyard Creek Improvements Project, is being planned for April 11, 2015. It will feature a West African drumming and dance performance by Djibril Camara, a performance by members of the Community Center for the Arts, kids-friendly art-making stations, face painting, and more. Artist Jack Mackie, who contributed to the park, will attend the event and lead tours. At least two food trucks, including Cracked and Dragon Fire Pizza, will park nearby.



Marketing and Events Activity

- The 2015 Realtor Bus Tour took place on April 2nd. 25 people attended the tour which showcased different areas of Urbana to local Realtors.
- The April edition of “It’s All About U” will be made available for viewing Monday, April 6.
- Staff provided 9,000 promotional packets promoting Urbana for inclusion in the tote bags which will be distributed to runners participating in the 2015 Illinois Marathon.

Urbana’s Market at the Square

- Over 100 vendor and community group applications have been processed for the 2015 Market at the Square season which begins on Saturday, May 2nd at 7:00am.
- The Market Director Natalie Kenny-Marquez co-presented the Urbana-Champaign Chef-Farmer Mixer at the Urbana Civic Center on March 9th. The event brought together nearly 25 area chefs and farmers to learn ways they can work together to incorporate more locally produced food into their dining services.
- A new initiative called Read at the Market is being planned for this season in partnership with Urbana Free Library. A full schedule will become available in April.

Other Updates

- The University of Illinois Board of Trustees approved the creation of a new public-private engineering-based medical school to be located in Urbana-Champaign.
- Community Development Director Libby Tyler and Sustainability Advisory Commission Chair Marya Ryan presented to the Illinois State Section of the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association on *Resilient Urbana*, highlighting Urbana’s programs in sustainability, redevelopment, green housing and local foods.
- On March 10th, Economic Development Manager Brandon Boys presented on recent business and development activity to a meeting of the Urbana Rotary Club.
- In March, Economic Development staff held a site visit with Carters Furniture. City and EDC staff together held a visit with Common Ground.

Memorandum



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

Membership Growth

Membership renewals continue to come in with 129 of 157 received to date. This accounts for 82% of the membership renewals. To date we have received four cancelations.

The UBA has seen the addition of four member businesses in the month of March bringing our member count to 193. We have received \$24,150 in cash membership dues this fiscal year and have a remaining \$4,645 in outstanding membership renewal dues.

Downtown Input Session

The UBA has been working with a consultant on facilitating the pilot program of input sessions with each of the business districts of Urbana. The first input session will be held for the downtown district with a meeting date of April 13 at the Urbana Civic Center. We have sent out a survey to the downtown business owners and the information gathered from this survey will be used in designing the input session program. Postcard invitations were mailed to each business owner with the details of this input session. There are 97 businesses included in this district.

Middle Market

The fourth Middle Market was held in March. This market featured 36 registered vendors, our largest participation this season. Marketing continues with radio ads on seven stations as well as 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 took place March 2-9. Eleven restaurants participated, each locally owned and operated, and offered a prix fixe menu in increments of \$10, \$20, and \$30 options to satisfy any palette. Participating restaurants included 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.

Media coverage included two ciLiving appearances, four news interviews, three radio interviews, as well as multiple print interviews in News-Gazette and Smile Politely. Radio ads ran on seven stations over a two week period. Posters and flyers were displayed across the area. The website saw a drastic increase in traffic with some days seeing ten times the average traffic. The Facebook page saw a similar increase in reach over the same time period. Feedback from the participating restaurants has been incredibly positive.

Uncork Urbana Wine Festival

Planning has ramped up for the 2nd Annual Uncork Urbana Wine Festival taking place on Saturday, June 13. Working with the Illinois Grape Grower's and Vintners Association, the UBA is handling all the venue logistics, recruiting sponsors, and coordinating the marketing and promotion. Additionally we are recruiting local breweries and food trucks to participate. The venue site plan has been finalized and the special events permit has been submitted. The festival will again take place in the Busey Bank parking lot with an expanded footprint onto Race St. between Elm St. and Main St. Current sponsors include the City of Urbana and Busey Bank.

Sweetcorn Festival

Scheduled for August 28-29, planning for the 40th year of the Urbana Sweetcorn Festival has begun. UBA staff have designed a new website (www.urbanasweetcornfestival.com), designed a new logo, and created new and improved sponsorship levels and benefits. Current sponsors include the City of Urbana, Illinois American Water, Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District, University of Illinois, Lincoln Square, Busey Bank, Carle, Health Alliance, and the University of Illinois Employees Credit Union. Vendor applications were made available at the beginning of the month and ten applications have been received to date.

Banner Program

The winter banners have been switched out for spring and the Boneyard Art Festival banners have been installed.