



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 7th, 2014

SUBJECT: **Economic Development Activities Report for March 2014**

Business and Development Activity

Downtown Urbana

- A Request For Qualifications commercial realty services for the 200 Block of South Vine Street has been issued. The RFQ will close on May 5th at which time staff will proceed with selection of a broker to facilitate the development of a mixed-use building on the site. More information on the site is available at: <http://urbanaininois.us/200block>
- The proposal to pilot a Curbanas program in Downtown Urbana received strong media attention in March having been featured on the front page of the News Gazette, three television station news segments and one radio interview. Staff held two open houses receiving supportive feedback overall. Two additional Main Street restaurants have requested consideration for having Curbanas if the pilot program is later expanded. Staff also received inquiries from Springfield about the program.
- [Champaign Cycle's](#) new bike shop at 110 S Race St is now open. A ribbon cutting and grand opening will be held on Wednesday, April 9th at 10am.
- Eclectic has closed its boutique art shop at 123 W Main Street. The artists collective behind the space may consider other, smaller endeavors in the future. Several new tenants have expressed interest in leasing the space.
- Plans have been submitted for Dancing Dog Eatery & Juicery at 126 W Main Street. Dancing Dog was also issued a \$2,000 Business Development Grant.
- Renovations continue for Masijta, a new Korean BBQ restaurant going into 202 N Race Street in the Stratford Apartments.
- [Nina Paley](#), an artist, animator, and quiltmaker, recently opened a studio in County Plaza. She collaborates with Theodore Gray, a co-founder of Wolfram Research. Their company is PaleGray.
- Central Illinois Hydro-Grafx, a graphic design company which uses water transfer printing, is now open at 509 E Main Street.
- Green Yoga Spa and Living Yoga Center, both located above Crane Alley at 115 W Main Street have been informed by their landlord that their lease will not be renewed this spring. Staff is working with these businesses to help find them new locations that are still in or near Downtown Urbana.
- The Urbana Butcher Shop has raised over \$4,000 with its "[Save the Bacon Fund](#)" in order to purchase a blast chiller, which public health is requiring the business to have in order to resume producing bacon and other meats that are either smoked or heated in their production.
- Independent video game developer Luke Schneider, sole proprietor of [Radian Games](#), released his new game licensed by the Cartoon Network—Powerpuff Girls, Defenders of Townsville. Luke developed the vast majority of the game himself in his office at County Plaza in Downtown Urbana.

- County Plaza was issued a \$10,000 Redevelopment Incentive for their \$150,000+ remodeling project in preparation for the new Choices, Inc. office.
- A Plus VIP Lounge was issued a \$13,000 Redevelopment Incentive for their \$130,000+ remodeling and commercial kitchen certification project.
- [The Illiac](#), a new free spring festival in Downtown Urbana was announced for May 10th.
- [Pandamonium Doughnuts](#), a pop-up shop in [co][lab] at 206 W Main Street has been generating long lines and press attention for Downtown Urbana. The image below was taken several minutes before the shop opened the morning of Sunday, May 28th. The store has consistently sold out of all of its 450 doughnuts in a few hours each day it is open. The last weekend of the pop-up is April 4-6.



Cunningham Avenue

- Interior remodeling is complete for Uncle Martin’s, a new restaurant and sports bar at 1104 N Cunningham Avenue. The property owner, Martin Fuentes, would like to open in May.

University-Medical

- Construction is underway for the new Wendy’s at the Five Points Commerce Center.
- KoFusion’s new campus location is open at 701 S Gregory Street.
- Work is nearly complete for Café Bene at Gregory Place East. A ribbon cutting will be held on Friday April 11th at 4pm.

North Lincoln

- CV Lloyd is closing its retail location in downtown Champaign and will open a new service shop at 702 Killarney Street in Urbana. CV Lloyd has been in Champaign for 147 years and at their current location since the 1960s.

East Urbana

- The new Birkeys Farm Store on High Cross Road is open. A ribbon cutting and grand opening will be held on April 4th at 9:30am.

Philo Road

- On April 1st, a statement was posted on the webpage for the proposed [Unity Performing Arts and Career Center](#): “We regretfully inform you that we did not gain enough support from the community to make this a viable project in Champaign, IL area.” Signs announcing the Center at 1901 S Philo Road have been removed and a “For Lease” sign is now posted in the window.

Marketing and Events Activity

- A new guide to Downtown Urbana Retail Shopping and Restaurants is in development by staff.
- Staff is working with Downtown business owners on a public/private marketing campaign for Urbana, as an extension of the #UrbanaLove promotion that has been ongoing since early 2013.
- A Bus Tour of Urbana for realtors, developers and contractors will be held on April 10th at 8am.

Urbana’s Market at the Square

- The annual vendor meeting was held in March. The purpose of the meeting is to present new and returning vendors with updates and a review of the previous Market season.
- The Market Director was a presenter and roundtable moderator at the Illinois Farmers Market Association Workshop in Springfield, IL. The presentation discussed ways to promote and run Markets year-round and was geared towards vendors and market managers. The roundtable was a discussion on marketing and promotions related to farmers markets.
- Staff assisted with the Illinois Stewardship Alliance with the Champaign-Urbana Chef-Farmer Mixer. The Mixer took place on Monday, March 31st at Cafeteria & Co. Over 30 farmers and chefs from around the area attended the event.
- As of March 31st – the Market has received over 150 vendor and community group applications.

Arts Related Activities

- The arts grants process for 2014 has been wrapped up. Two jury panels consisting of Public Art Commission members, arts professionals and community members awarded \$47,500 in funding to 32 arts groups and individuals in IL. For 2014, there were 40 applicants total requesting \$138,585 in funding.
- The Public Arts Coordinator received a \$1,000 scholarship from the Local Arts Network of the Illinois State Arts Council to attend the 2014 Americans for the Arts Conference on Public Art and Creative Placemaking in Nashville, TN in June.
- A general operating grant was submitted to the Illinois Arts Council. We will hopefully receive between \$500 and \$10,000 from the Council for FY 14-15.
- A general call was sent out for art workshop leaders and performers for the 2014 Art at the Market. The response has been steady so far.
- The City of Urbana mounted the latest Artist of the Corridor exhibition featuring Urbana artist Jason Patterson. The subject matter in his work is predominately portraiture, with American cultural, political, social and historical themes. Jason Patterson will be on display in the City Building lobby through May 4, 2014.

Memorandum



TO: Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor
FROM: Cynthia Chandler, Executive Director
DATE: April 1, 2014
SUBJECT: Urbana Business Association Activities Report for March 2014

Middle Market

We are three-fourths through the Middle Market season. In its second year, the market has seen an average attendance of 450 each month. This is an improvement to last year's inaugural numbers however the winter weather has contributed to slower growth. We are anticipating larger numbers for the fourth and final Middle Market in April due to warmer weather and increased marketing efforts.

Board of Directors Growth

The UBA Board of Directors has seen growth over the last two months with the addition of four new board members: Scott Clannin (JSM Development), Brandon Boys (City of Urbana), Jacqueline Hannah (Common Ground Food Co-op), and Don Schlorff (Busey). This brings our board count to 13 members. The addition of these individuals and the broad spectrum of their professional backgrounds will benefit the UBA as we move forward.

Staffing Changes

Michelle Lepka has accepted a position with the University of Illinois and her last day with the UBA was March 14. We are currently hiring a replacement for the Marketing Coordinator. Resumes will be accepted through April 4 with interviews following. We have seen interest from several very qualified candidates however the lack of benefits has reduced that selection pool.

Membership Numbers

The 2013 membership year saw a growth of 45 new member businesses, bringing the total year-end count to 172. The 2014 renewals are 90% complete with a current retention rate of 94.5%. The 2014 membership year has seen the addition of 10 new member businesses.

Business District Merchant Meetings

The UBA will begin hosting business district merchant meetings to talk with business owners about their respective districts. This will begin with a pilot in the downtown area. These meetings will allow business owners to talk with the UBA and with each other about their vision for business growth and increased foot traffic in their respective area.

Urbana Restaurant Week

The second annual Urbana Restaurant week took place March 3-9 with 12 local restaurants participating including: Attie's Bar & Grill, Black Rock Pizza Co., The Bread Company, Café Zojo, The Courier Café, The Great Impasta, Milos, Piato Café, Po' Boys, Siam Terrace, Silvercreek, and Sitara. A survey of these participants following the event showed excellent results. Nine restaurants responded with 78% indicating it was profitable for their business; 63% indicated it was successful with 37% saying it was fairly successful; and all nine restaurants indicated they will participate in restaurant week again. Comments included:

“It exceeded our expectations”

“I was very happy with the number” of additional customers

“The timing was great – as it is typically a little slower at that time of year. It got people out of their homes and into our restaurant! It was a fun week. Nice to be busy.”

“Keep up the great work!”