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JOURNAL

JANUARY
2017

Remembering Springfield's big dig

An architect reflects on the 1960s
Old State Capitol facelift

BY CATHERINE O'CONNOR
PAGE 4



August "Augie" Wisnoski
Co-founder of FWAI Architects

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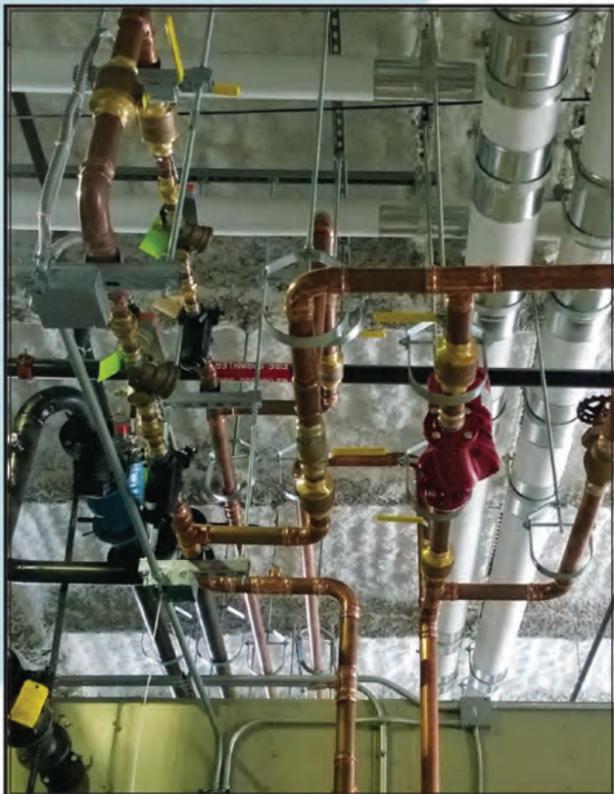


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Please allow me to introduce myself

BY PATRICK YEAGLE
Associate Editor

I'm a journalist because I love to learn. I firmly believe that the day a person stops learning is the day they begin to die.

I started as associate editor of the *Springfield Business Journal* in November after seven years reporting at our sister publication, *Illinois Times*, and I'm eager to learn all I can about covering the world of business.

I grew up in the small town of Farmer City, about 50 miles northeast of Springfield. My parents own a construction business, and I learned from them the value hard work and doing my best. One of my favorite examples of that is the time my mom tore up a thank-you note I had written because I made several obvious errors. She made me write it again, and you can bet I proofread it before showing her the second time.

I got my first job in elementary school, de-tasseling corn over the summer. By sixth grade, I graduated to working summers at the family construction business, first tearing off old siding and shingles and eventually learning how to replace them. I remember one sweaty summer day when I got in a hurry and did a particularly poor job building a window frame. Just like with

the thank-you note, I was told to do it again and do it right. I didn't like it at the time, but I'm thankful now for the lesson it taught me.

I came to Springfield in 2008 for the Public Affairs Reporting master's program at the University of Illinois Springfield, where I learned how to cover state government and politics. I'm grateful that *Illinois Times* gave me the chance to stick around Springfield after graduating, and now I've been entrusted with the responsibility of planning coverage in the *Springfield Business Journal*. Expect to see more breaking news and investigations on our website, along with more analysis, statehouse news and business trends in the magazine.

I don't have any formal training in business, but I know is that the economy relies on business, business relies on people and people rely on one another. I must rely on the knowledge and wisdom of the people in this city to help me do my job. As I seek to deepen our coverage of business issues in the capital city, I welcome your story ideas, your criticisms and your visits to our new office downtown.

I believe in respect, discipline, courage, honesty, fairness and compassion, and I want this magazine to reflect that. However, I'm capable of hypocrisy just like anyone else, so when I fail to uphold those values, please tell

me. The credibility of the news media demands moral and ethical conduct, as well as accountability for our shortcomings.

Springfield is my home, and I want the best for it. I think we all do. However, love sometimes means caring more about what's best than about keeping the peace. When this magazine asks critical questions of this city and its businesses, it's for that purpose. We may not always agree with one another, but we are on the same team.

"I believe in respect, discipline, courage, honesty, fairness and compassion, and I want this magazine to reflect that."



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Address: P.O. Box 398, Springfield, IL 62705
Phone: 217-726-6600
Website: springfieldbusinessjournal.com
Email: info@springfieldbusinessjournal.com
Facebook: facebook.com/sbjmonthly
Twitter: twitter.com/sbjmonthly

Editor and Publisher: Fletcher Farrar
fletcher@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Associate Publisher: Michelle Ownbey
michelle@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Associate Editor: Patrick Yeagle
patrick@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Production Designer: David Hine
ads@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Editorial Designer: Brandon Turley
brandon@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Business Manager: Brenda Matheis
brenda@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Advertising:
Beth Parkes-Irwin
beth@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Stacie Lewis
stacie@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

COVER PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

January Contributors
Colin Patrick Brady Michael Kokal
Roberta Codemo David Kelm
Thomas Pavlik Rhonda Buckhold
Eric Woods Sarah Delano Pavlik
Noami Green

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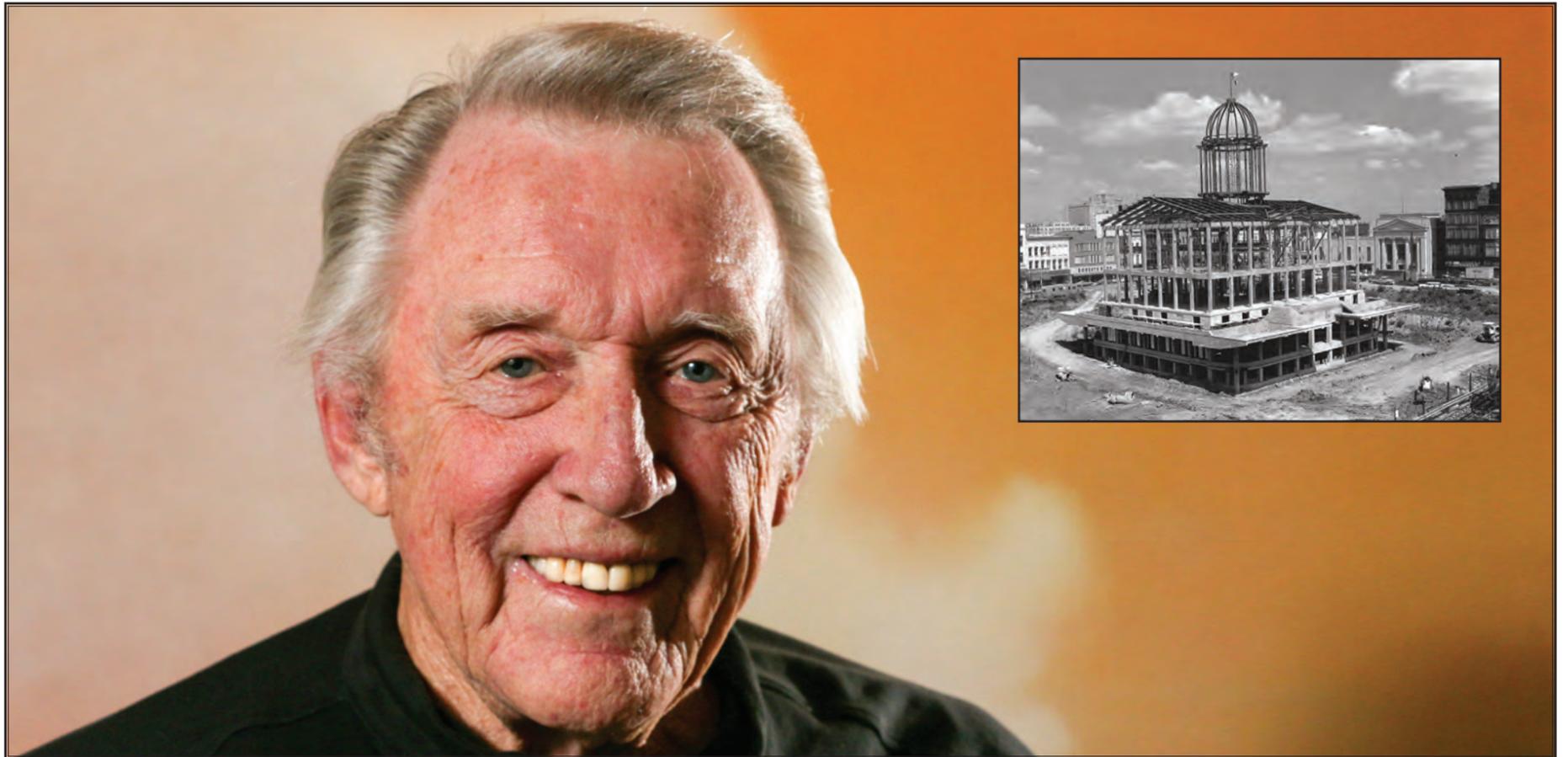


PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

Springfield's big dig

An architect reflects on the 1960s Old State Capitol facelift

BY CATHERINE O'CONNOR
Freelance Contributor

In the early 1960s, the capital city's downtown corridor was the home to bustling shops of all kinds, including the Hub Clothiers, Fishman's Sporting Goods, Black's Hardware store, Myers Brother's, Bressmer's, and S.A. Barker's department stores, Shadid's book store, various hardware, appliance and grocery stores, restaurants, car dealers, bakeries and a couple of local movie theatres.

At that time, city fathers, historic preservationists and the state's conservation agency were discussing how the burgeoning national trend toward suburban fringe shopping mall development would begin to draw commerce away from downtowns.

It was in this forward-looking spirit that Gov. Otto Kerner pledged that the state would pay two-thirds of the \$1 million cost to renovate the recently-vacated Sangamon County Courthouse — the former Old State Capitol— if Abraham Lincoln Association boosters could come up with the remaining funds. The project, which would eventually restore the 19th century dome and old-time interior found a friend in state historian Clyde Walton, who along with young architects at the Springfield firm of Ferry & Henderson Architects, recognized its potential as a Lincoln-connected tourism draw.

In the early 1960s, August "Augie" Wisnoski, AIA, was an associate architect who had joined Ferry & Henderson in their 500 square foot, two-room loft office on Jackson Street between Sixth and Seventh streets. It was there, Wisnoski remembers, that the firm conceived the historic capitol building restoration plan, which would morph into a complex project to include a new home for the state's historical library, offices and

two stories of underground parking.

After the current state capitol building on Second Street was completed early in the 20th century, the former Old State Capitol structure was raised 11 feet and surrounded by an earthen berm to begin its almost 60-year run as Sangamon County's courthouse.

In 1959, Trutter and Turley Architects were tapped by Springfield's Public Building Commission to design a modern combined Sangamon County and Springfield municipal complex between Eighth and Ninth streets facing East Monroe Street. At that point, the county's move from the Old State Capitol motivated the late Earl "Wally" Henderson Jr., AIA, who had an avid interest in the preservation of the building, to pursue studying its history and its mid-19th century roots, according to Wisnoski.

The humble conference room of partners Ferry, Henderson and Wisnoski had only a card table and three chairs. When meetings began in earnest with Gov. Kerner and State Historical Society officials, the architects were inclined to join the Sangamo Club, which offered space for discussion and planning, according to Wisnoski, "so that no one would see how small our shoe-string office really was."

Recalling his role as the onsite architect in charge of construction, Wisnoski looks back at the massive project as a learning experience which involved extensive historic research of building techniques and materials of the period.

Because Ferry and Henderson's team had discovered that a turn-of-the-century fire had destroyed early drawings of the original interiors from the 1837 Old State Capitol design by John Frances Rague, they undertook extensive research using newspapers, diaries, first-hand accounts and bills of sale to learn about the dimensions of original materials that were purchased.

"With no actual evidence of the floor plan, we had to act like sleuths," Wisnoski recalls.

Clues came from a tour of a similar historic courthouse in Iowa that had also been designed by Rague, and scientific exploration involving

partition plaster removal and layers of paint analysis.

Historically, the Old State Capitol has been a place of enduring significance. Early plans were to complete the renovation project in June 1968, which would have been the sesquicentennial of Illinois' 1818 statehood.

"A June 16 date was chosen as a way to also commemorate the June 16, 1858 anniversary of Lincoln's "House Divided" speech, being one of the most significant events associated with the Old State Capitol," Wisnoski said.

More recently, a young Barack Obama announced his presidential bid at the Old State Capitol, becoming the county's first president of African American heritage in 2008 — 150 years after Lincoln's celebrated Civil War speech was delivered in the halls of the same building.

It was state historian Clyde Walton's need for a new location for the historical library that expanded the renovation project. Between 1964 and 1968, Ferry & Henderson Architects and a host of other companies were involved in the nearly complete dismantling and reconstruction of the steel form building, covered with a skin created from the original three foot thick stone, chiseled down to an eight-inch veneer. At that point, Hanson Engineers began civil engineering for the excavation required for the subterranean parking and basement office areas.

"So, what resulted was a 330-by 330-foot abyss, 25 feet deep in the center of downtown Springfield, for more than a year," said Wisnoski, who would be assigned as the project's principal on-site lead. The project required traffic to be rerouted, with several streets closed in Springfield's downtown.

A series of parabolic dish-shaped plates supporting the building and its yard, each holding enough earth to support living trees and grass, were the brilliant design of civil engineers. However, within a couple of decades the thick tree root systems began to wander below, snaking through the parking deck into structural concrete pier supports, eventually requiring the parking

garage superstructure to be re-engineered in the 1990s.

One Friday at the end of October 1967, as the construction crews were finishing up after a day working in the sprawling construction site, Wisnoski heard a tremendous explosion that shook the building. The cause was a 40-foot long channel section that had not been secured to a roof beam.

"That was a quite a Halloween trick-or-treat," Wisnoski recalled.

With the project complete in December 1968, dedication ceremonies were held with Governor-elect Richard Ogilvie on hand. A Chicagoan, Ogilvie took note of the Ferry, Henderson and Wisnoski team, which had now earned a reputation for their historic restoration expertise. The firm would later play a role in the 1970s renovation of Illinois' Executive Mansion, developing a design that included large brick security walls on three sides of the building. That was at the request of Ogilvie, who reportedly faced retribution threats from his earlier days as Cook County's tough mafia-fighting sheriff.

Ferry, Henderson and Wisnoski would go on to be involved in many other notable projects, both collectively and later as a part of other firms in the Springfield area. Ferry worked as an architect in Springfield until his passing in 2015, eventually working with his son, Bruce Ferry, as Ferry & Associates. Henderson died earlier this year, but had remained active in the community long after his retirement. In a nod to his most memorable project, he persuaded the U.S. Mint to change plans for the design of a 2009 commemorative penny so the design would include a depiction of the Old State Capitol in back of a gesturing Abraham Lincoln. Wisnoski joined with Carl and Kay Fischer in 1982 to form Fischer-Wisnoski Architects, Inc., known today simply as FWAI Architects. The three architects may have gained fame early on due to the significance of the Old State Capitol project, but all went on to have long and storied careers. ♦

Rauner addresses economic reforms, minority business

BY COLIN PATRICK BRADY
Freelance Contributor

As state lawmakers return to Springfield for the start of their spring legislative session, Gov. Bruce Rauner is renewing his call for statewide economic reforms.

Rauner discussed his plans at a town hall meeting in November for leaders from the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Illinois Chamber of Commerce, Associated Builders and Contractors, and the National Federation of Independent Business at the Will Group Manufacturing Facility near Chicago.

Rauner said he hopes to create jobs, lower property taxes, improve Illinois' education system, and keep jobs in Illinois. He also previewed plans to bolster minority-owned businesses.

"We are at a key turning point in Illinois' history," Rauner said. "We need to change direction, and we are battling to do that every day."

The Republican governor has sparred with the Democrat-controlled Illinois General Assembly, tying his approval of new revenue to acceptance of his pro-business Turnaround

Agenda. Democrats have balked at many of the proposals, which they see as aimed at gutting unions.

"I ran for governor to do two things," Rauner said. "Have a booming economy - create good jobs good careers for everybody that wants to work - and have the best schools in America in every neighborhood. I've dedicated my life to those two things."

Rauner said entrepreneurs are a barometric indicator for the economy, saying that if small business owners are doing well, the economy is doing well. He congratulated Will Group founder Steve Davis on 30 years as an African American-owned business. The Will Group specializes in the lighting industry, hiring skilled workers from around northern Illinois.

Rauner said in order for business to flourish, they must be regulated less.

"We must create an environment that allows business to grow," he said. "We have got to get the regulatory burdens off of businesses. We have red tape and restrictions strangling companies. We must get more access to capital and more access to networks that entrepreneurs built."

The governor, who has made bolstering minority-owned businesses a focal point of

his administration, recommended a study to improve how the State of Illinois contracts with those businesses.

"If minority businesses offer those services in a large way and the state does not use them, that is a disparity that's wrong," he said. "It indicates either discrimination or a failure of the system."

Rauner has also previously called for changes to workers' compensation, reining in "frivolous" lawsuits, changes to Illinois' unemployment insurance system, term limits for lawmakers and more.

The Illinois General Assembly returns to Springfield on Jan. 9.



Governor Bruce Rauner

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

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A photograph of the Springfield Clinic Sherman building. The building has a brick facade on the left and a modern glass and metal facade on the right. The entrance is visible through the glass. The sky is a mix of blue and purple, suggesting dusk or dawn. There are some plants and a paved area in the foreground.

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Officials: Obamacare will continue – for now

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Despite a shift in power in Washington, D.C., the federal health insurance reforms nicknamed Obamacare will continue at least another year, according to outgoing officials.

The controversial law has been targeted for repeal and replacement by Republicans, but it's unlikely to be dismantled immediately, and insurance coverage obtained under the law will extend through 2017.

Sylvia Burwell, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, spoke to reporters by phone on Dec. 21, touting increased enrollment numbers under the Affordable Care Act. The law provides a "marketplace" for consumers and small businesses to purchase private health insurance which meets basic coverage guidelines, also providing subsidies for qualifying consumers. Data from HHS shows that 247,818 people in Illinois purchased insurance on the marketplace from Nov. 1 through Dec. 19, not including existing customers whose coverage was automatically renewed.

Nationally, more than 2 million people purchased insurance through the marketplace during that time, and there were 4.3 million

returning consumers, according to HHS.

"People are expressing that this is a product they want and need by signing up," Burwell said. Enrollment continues through Jan. 1.

Opponents of the Affordable Care Act have sought to undermine it – especially because of a requirement that every person buy insurance or face a tax penalty. Burwell said the HHS call center has taken about 30,000 calls from consumers worried that President-elect Donald Trump and the next Republican-controlled Congress would dismantle the Affordable Care Act.

Republicans in the U.S. House have passed dozens of bills attempting to repeal the ACA since it became law in 2010, but the Democrat-controlled Senate refused to approve the bills. Republicans gained control of both chambers of Congress in the most recent election, however, and Trump promised before his election to repeal the law. He has since said he would favor keeping some of the law.

Despite the uncertainty over the law's future, Burwell said insurance coverage obtained by Jan. 1 would remain effective through the end of 2017, even if the law is repealed. Additionally, she said insurance companies are unlikely to rapidly abandon it.

"The best thing people can do now is shop and get covered," she said.

A recent report from the nonprofit Urban Institute estimates that a partial repeal of the law now under consideration would result in nearly 30 million people losing health insurance and insurers losing about \$3 billion in premiums.

Burwell told reporters that the incoming Congress should amend the law rather than repeal it. She suggested improving financial assistance so more people can afford insurance, addressing high prescription drug costs and creating a government-run "public option" insurance to drive competition among private insurers.

Public polling has shown middling support for the Affordable Care Act, with most Democrats supporting it and most Republicans opposing it. However, many of the individual tenets of the law – such as eliminating lifetime caps on benefits or banning exclusion for preexisting conditions – receive strong support.

Andy Slavitt, acting administrator at the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, noted that people tend to appreciate the law more once it benefits them. He cited an example of a three-day hospital stay, which he

said could cost around \$20,000.

"When people get past the headlines, they say 'This is something that can really protect me and my family and give us access to health care,'" he said. ♦



Sylvia Burwell, HHS secretary



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SPRINGFIELD

New life downtown for empty church

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

A long-vacant downtown building is slated for a major renovation, pending city council approval of nearly \$1 million in tax increment financing funds.

The plan calls for the empty former Methodist church at 501 E. Capitol Ave. in downtown Springfield to be converted to a mix of business and residential space, including the new headquarters of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce.

Springfield Urban Redevelopment, LLC – a joint venture between the Chamber of Commerce, The Springfield Project and Rock Island-based Economic Growth Corporation – will own and redevelop the building. Funding for the project's \$8.5-million expected cost includes about \$3 million in federal tax credits, \$985,000 from the Central Area Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District and \$4.4 million in borrowing. The TIF money would represent about 11.6 percent of the project's cost.

The Springfield Economic Development Commission, tasked with evaluating development projects requesting TIF funds, unanimously approved the TIF portion of the church renovation on Dec. 13. The Springfield City Council, which has final authority on TIF disbursements, will likely vote on the proposal in January.

The redevelopment would be anchored by new headquarters for the Chamber of Com-

merce and The Springfield Project, as well as several apartments. There would be about 1,400 square feet of office space remaining for lease in the main part of the building at the corner of Fifth Street and Capitol Avenue, while the east wing would hold 25 apartments, including 16 one-bedroom units and nine two-bedroom units.

Chris Hembrough, president and CEO of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, said he's excited to move the group's headquarters closer to the heart of downtown. The current headquarters are on Second Street, between Lawrence and South Grand avenues. Still, he says what's most important is putting a vacant building back into use and generating more property tax revenue.

"It's a property that's been sitting vacant eight – going on nine – years," he said. "If you go in, it's falling apart, but it's a prominent location in downtown Springfield."

Brian Hollenback is a partner in Springfield Urban Redevelopment LLC, and he has several similar projects under his belt around the Quad Cities, where he serves as president and CEO of Economic Growth Corporation in Rock Island. Hollenback says he originally connected with business leaders in Springfield through an effort to develop an economic development corporation here. That led to discussions about

specific projects, and Hollenback saw the reuse of the empty church in Springfield as a solid investment.

He says the building meets several criteria for rehabilitation: location in a distressed census tract, vacancy, blight and a troubled title history.

"This one hit everything," he said. "Based on that, it ranked very highly for community impact and reinvestment."

Additionally, Hollenback says the experi-

enced development team and engagement by the community gave him confidence. Evan Lloyd Architects of Springfield is designing the renovation, while O'Shea Builders of Springfield will handle the construction. Hollenback says the City of Springfield has also been supportive of the project.

"These projects are extremely complex to do," he said. "With the uncertainty in the current market, that's what you rely on – the strength of the community support." ♦



Former First Methodist Church

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

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Is workers' compensation holding up the budget?

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Illinois is without a state budget again, and there's no consensus among lawmakers on a major issue which could lead to a budget deal.

The issue is worker's compensation, which Gov. Bruce Rauner and his fellow Republicans in the statehouse tout as ripe for reforms. While Democrats say they're willing to consider changes, attorneys representing injured workers say the proposed changes would undermine the system.

Rauner is calling for a handful of changes to the system, tying this and other business-related issues to his approval of a state budget.

Previous changes enacted in 2011 included reducing by 30 percent how much doctors are paid for treating injured workers and implementing "utilization review," which allows a third party to decide whether an injured worker's treatment is medically necessary. The 2011 changes did reduce costs, according to several reports, but business groups say it wasn't enough to keep Illinois competitive.

The proposals on the table now include further reductions to doctor reimbursement, requiring injured workers to prove that at least 50 percent of their injury is due to their job, specifying when a traveling worker's injuries are considered work-related and allowing employers to argue that an injured worker's benefits should be reduced due to the worker's

other insurance coverage.

Business groups like the Illinois Chamber of Commerce and the Illinois Manufacturers Association say the payouts for injured workers are currently too high, driving up insurance costs for employers.

Indeed, Illinois ranks near the top among states for its maximum benefit levels for most body part losses. For example, a worker who loses an arm on the job in Illinois could receive as much as \$439,858.

In Indiana, often touted by Republicans as a model for Illinois, the loss of an arm could net a worker up to \$202,050.

However, the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association says the 2011 changes worked, but insurance companies aren't passing along their savings to employers. As evidence, ITLA notes that Illinois has more than 330 insurance companies underwriting workers' compensation policies – the most of any state. The group also points to a September report from the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission, which found that Illinois insurers saw 1.7 percent profit increases last year and an increase of 21.6 percent since 2010.

The report says Illinois also saw a large drop in the loss ratio – the difference between claims paid and premiums collected. While the national average drop in the loss ratio was 3 percent, Illinois dropped 7.2 percent in 2015.

Steve Schneider, vice president of state affairs for the Midwest region of the American

Insurance Association, says the trial lawyers' claims of insurers hoarding savings from the 2011 changes are "spurious" and "fiction." Schneider says Illinois is the most competitive insurance market, adding that insurers are required to report their financial information to regulators for oversight.

"There is absolutely no basis for their accusations," he said.

Mark Denzler, vice president and COO of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, adds that self-insured companies which don't buy private sector insurance have not seen the kind of savings that would be expected if the 2011 changes actually reduced costs.

Frank Lynch, a partner at Springfield law firm Wolter, Beeman, Lynch and Londrigan, often represents injured workers in workers' compensation cases but has also represented insurers and employers. He says the 2011 changes meant reduced awards for injured workers, and the changes proposed now are meant to invalidate legitimate claims by injured workers.

One example is the causation standard – a proposal requiring workers to show that an injury is at least 50 percent work-related. Lynch says 50 percent is arbitrary because different doctors will assign different percentages. He worries that insurance companies will use only doctors likely to side with insurers over workers.

"My view is that the 50 percent causation

standard they're trying to impose does not represent a decrease in potential insurance costs," Lynch said, "but rather represents higher profitability for insurance companies."

Denzler at the Illinois Manufacturers' Association disagrees, pointing to a case which originated at the Northfield Inn, Suites and Conference Center in Springfield. In that case, a housekeeper submitted a claim for carpal tunnel in both hands after six weeks of work.

"They had to pay tens and tens of thousands of dollars, but clearly it was not caused by the hotel," Denzler said. "Causation would require they pay the proportionate share."

Rep. Dan Brady, R-Bloomington, is on the bipartisan legislative working group negotiating on workers' compensation. While Brady stops short of saying a deal on worker's compensation would lead to a state budget, he says resolving this issue would help. He says the Republicans have made their stances known, but as of mid-December, the Democrats hadn't made counter-proposals. Sen. Kwame Raoul, D-Chicago, who serves as the Democratic lead on the working group, could not be reached for comment.

Brady disputes the claim that the Republican proposals are aimed at gutting benefits.

"One of our priorities is continued medical care and access for injured workers," Brady said. "Everybody wants that." ♦

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PHOTO / ED CLARK

STACEY SKRYSAK

- TITLE:** News anchor, WICS NewsChannel 20
- EDUCATION:** B.S. in journalism from University of Oregon
- FAMILY:** Husband – Ryan; Children – Peyton, Parker, and Abby
- FAVORITES:** Hobby: writing; Restaurant: Charlie Parker's Diner and American Harvest; Sports team: Oregon Ducks
- TIDBITS:** Author of the blog perfectlypeyton.com; Wants to travel more with family; Enjoys baking with her daughter

BY ERIC WOODS
Freelance Contributor

Stacey Skryszak knew at a young age that she wanted to grow up to be a news anchor.

"I really wanted to be a weather lady," she said. "I did not know the term 'meteorologist' at that time. I started watching the 'TODAY Show' and just fell in love with journalism."

Skryszak was born in Arizona but raised in San Diego. Throughout her career, she has worked in Nebraska, Michigan and Idaho before coming to Springfield five years ago.

"I have told a lot of people this, but I came out here kicking and screaming," she said.

Her attitude about Springfield, though, has completely changed since her arrival. The people of Springfield have captured a place in Skryszak's heart.

"The people are so nice," she said. "With my children and health issues, it was easy to stay because they became family, like a support group."

If she could change anything about the city, it would be finding ways to keep the younger generation around.

"They want out of Illinois. Honestly, until I had a family, I did not know what Springfield had to offer," she said. "It is a great place to raise a family."

Skryszak is one of the anchors at 5 p.m., 6 p.m., and 10 p.m on WICS Newschannel 20. She also fills in at the Fox affiliate, works to help the producers and reporters, and also gets out in the community. One of her primary tasks is reporting on parenting issues.

"I have a segment called 'Mommy Matters,' which focuses on parenting and kids," she said.

One of the biggest challenges in her profession is ensuring the story she reports is correct.

"We need to be real and show compassion but also be a journalist," she said.

With her passion for journalism, Skryszak has

learned how to treat others with respect while remaining on the job.

"Our industry is cut-throat, but we are a team trying to get this one product out," she said.

In 2013, Skryszak and her husband endured a tragic situation when their triplets were born premature. Two of the children, Parker and Abby, passed away soon after birth, and Skryszak herself almost died during the experience. Their third child, Peyton, survived and continues to thrive. If she could take a glimpse into the future, Skryszak would like to see what her daughter will be like when she grows up.

"She has had so many challenges since birth, and she keeps overcoming everything," said Skryszak, who has used numerous avenues to help other parents. She loves writing and uses her blog, perfectlypeyton.com, to tell her story. She is also a contributor at *The Huffington Post*, *Upworthy*, *TODAY Parents*, and *Scary Mommy*.

Skryszak has become extremely active in the community. She has been a wish granter through the Make-A-Wish Foundation and is also active with Children's Miracle Network. Her daughter is actually a Miracle Network Miracle Child.

Skryszak credits her own parents for being so influential in her life.

"They are wonderful – so kind hearted and hard working," she said.

She also hopes that she and her daughter end up best friends in the same way she is with her mom.

Although she does not think about retirement, Skryszak says if she does someday leave journalism, she would run a not-for-profit, given her passion for helping others. In the meantime, Skryszak will continue focusing on her job and especially her "Mommy Matters" segment.

"I have said I will stop when news is no longer fun for me," she said. "It could be many decades, though." ♦

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Blockchain for businesses

BY MICHAEL KOKAL
Freelance Contributor

The advent of blockchain technology means a new method of establishing trust in business transactions.

Although popularized by Bitcoin, blockchain has potential far beyond virtual currency.

Business and trade run best when there is trust, certainty, and transparency surrounding transactions. When humans traded in hunter-gatherer economies for small villages, trust was enforced by social constraints or reputation. You knew who you were dealing with.

When trade expanded outside villages and grew more complex, institutions developed. These institutions function as “neutral authorities” in which both parties to the transaction had some degree of confidence. In other words, you may not trust the person you were trading with, but you did trust that if they did not fulfil their obligation, a government, police, legal system or other “middle man” would step in and enforce the agreement.

Indeed, the late Nobel laureate economist Douglass C. North wrote that these “institutions” were specifically built “to create order and reduce uncertainty in exchange.” Now, with the promise of blockchain technology, we have the potential to enforce trust in business—without the middle man.

At its core the blockchain is a peer-to-peer decentralized database that stores a registry of assets and transactions. Think of it like “triple-

entry accounting.” In traditional double-entry accounting, the seller enters a debit in their accounting ledger for cash received, while the buyer books a credit for cash spent for the same transaction. Each party maintains separate books, but placed side by side, the bookkeeping entries of both parties should line up.

In a blockchain, rather than the parties generating entries in separate records, the details of each transaction get automatically coded into blocks of data that are cryptographically linked together with other transactions and secured over a network. The chain of data blocks forms an incorruptible record of all the transactions that can be replicated on every computer that uses the network. On the blockchain, you can store not only the debits and credits of the transaction, but other information such as history of ownership and location, title, contracts, real world objects and even personal information.

Perhaps the most widely used application of blockchain technology is the virtual currency Bitcoin. However, according to a 2016 research report from Credit Suisse, there is an “increasingly consensus view” that it is blockchain – not Bitcoin – which may disrupt institutions like law, banking, real estate, accounting, media, and intellectual property because of its three key properties: “disintermediation of trust, immutable record, and smart contracts.”

Blockchain technology provides a more efficient and secure transaction not

possible before the internet, hence the “disintermediation” of trust. Take the example of land title. Currently, county recorders and title companies are necessary to verify and record property data with brokers, escrow companies, appraisers, notaries and other middlemen involved in verifying a process that can be slow and tedious.

With a block chain protocol in place, instead of paper title, a digital title can be created – a cryptographically secure token than can be transferred as quickly and cheaply as an email. A unique and cryptographically secure digital ownership certificate could be created which would be virtually impossible to replicate or forge, making selling or advertising properties you don’t own almost impossible.

If you think this is the stuff of the future, think again. A number of countries, including the Republic of Georgia, Ghana, and Honduras, are already experimenting with it.

Because the entries in a blockchain are distributed and cryptographically sealed, falsifying them, destroying them, altering them or concealing them is practically impossible, creating an immutable record. Instead, there is a detailed audit trail without the need of a third-party auditor.

Blockchains also allow programmers to write code creating binding “smart” contracts between individuals – contracts which are self-executing, without the need for third party enforcement. The classic example envisioned by cryptography expert Nick Szabo was a leased car, recorded as a smart contract on a

block chain. If the lease payment is missed, the contract could automatically revoke the digital right to use the car. Purchase contracts could be programmed to release funds only when the goods are received in a satisfactory condition. Smart cars could automatically release funds for parking meters or even parking violations. The possibilities are limited only by the coder’s ability to translate legal principles into self-executing algorithms.

Perhaps, the most salient promise of blockchain technology is the potential to return humanity back to the trust and transparency of transactions based on reputation – not mediated by third parties whose interests may not be congruent with our own.

Currently, we purchase products – but not the story behind the products. We buy our clothes from chains where people work in conditions which might be abhorrent to our sensibilities if our purchase was not mediated and kept at a distance by an opaque scheme of middle men. With blockchain, we may someday be able to see the whole transaction and supply chain history of how a product came to be. If we drink a cup of coffee, we could trace its path from the farmer who actually harvested the coffee beans to the person who ground them. We could see the fully story behind everything we buy.

And likewise, they may be able to see us. ♦

Michael Kokal is a partner at the law firm of Heyl, Royster, Voelker and Allen P.C. in Springfield.

Where the Heart is...

Continuing his “on-the-side” income source, Rob and his wife Karen Wagner bought their first rental property together in 1996. Rob always knew he wanted to be a business owner, so once the couple acquired 50 rental units, Rob and Karen both switched careers to form Smart Choice Properties.

As a family business, Rob and Karen value having Rob’s brother Dave (left) and Rob’s cousin Lad (right) working with them daily. The couple’s two boys represent the next generation. With his degree in business, Blake has enjoyed learning the ropes from his father for the past year while Blake’s brother Tyler is off at college getting his degree in construction.

The Wagners believe in treating people well and doing things the right way, which is probably why their rental company has grown to 330 units and 30 houses. To see all the available units or for more information on their unique lease-to-own program, visit SmartChoiceProperties.net.

For over 20 years, Rob and Karen have valued having Nancy Richards as their business lender. When they bought their first property,

Rob remembers, “When you don’t have a track record, you are selling what you think you will be able to do. We needed somebody to help us get rolling, and Nancy did. We are very loyal to her now.” Reflecting on their longstanding relationship, Karen adds, “I love Nancy! She’s just warm and genuine.”

The Wagners came to First Bankers Trust with Nancy, and Rob says, “We’ve moved a lot of business over to them. First Bankers has been very good to work with. They think outside of the box and do things that other banks don’t seem to get done.”

They appreciated it when the bank president Allen Shafer wanted to come out and meet them at their place of business. Rob says, “We’ve never had a bank do that. It was nice to sit down and talk to him; that was a nice gesture.” Rob is pleased to add, “At this point in our business, all the banks would work with us. It does say something that First Bankers is the bank we choose to work with.”

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MEMBER LENDER

A look at Springfield's panhandling ordinance

BY SARAH DELANO PAVLIK
Freelance Contributor

If you work downtown, you are well aware of some of the aggressive panhandlers in Springfield. An encounter with one of them can be a little frightening, especially after dark. In response to this problem, the Springfield City Council passed an ordinance in 2007 making it illegal to panhandle in the downtown historic district.

Two Springfield residents, Don Norton and Karen Otterson, filed a lawsuit against the city in federal court in 2013, alleging that the ordinance unconstitutionally restricted free speech because it prohibited a particular type of speech (vocal requests for immediate donations) and it restricted speech in a particular area (the downtown historic district). As part of their lawsuit, they asked the federal court to stop the ordinance from being enforced while its constitutionality was litigated.

The United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois refused to stop the ordinance from being enforced while the suit was pending. The court determined that the ordinance was content neutral because it treated all people who verbally ask for immediate donations in the same manner. A person asking for an immediate charitable donation in downtown was subject to the same restrictions as a panhandler. The plaintiffs appealed the district court's decisions, and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals also denied their request for an injunction, also determining that the ordinance was content neutral.

Then on June 18, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Arizona*. The *Reed* decision did not involve a panhandling ordinance. Rather, it analyzed a law regulating the amount of time a sign could be displayed, which depended on whether it was a political sign, an ideological sign or a temporary directional sign. Temporary directional signs could only be displayed for twelve hours before an event and one hour after an event.

In *Reed*, the Good News Community Church frequently used signs to direct people to its services, which used multiple temporary locations. The church would place the signs on Saturday morning and remove them on

Sunday afternoon. The church was ticketed several times for failing to comply with the sign ordinance. The church then challenged the law's constitutionality.

The Supreme Court ruled that, "A law that is content based on its face is subject to strict scrutiny regardless of the government's benign motive, content neutral justification, or lack of 'animus toward the ideas contained' in the regulated speech . . . A speech regulation targeted at specific subject matter is content based even if it does not discriminate among viewpoints within that subject matter." In other words, the sign ordinance was not content neutral because it treated all temporary directional signs the same. It was content based because it treated temporary directional signs differently than other signs. The court further stated: "Because content based laws target speech based on its communicative content, they are presumptively unconstitutional and may be justified only if the government proves that they are narrowly tailored to serve compelling state interests."

Although *Reed* dealt with signs and not panhandling, its reasoning is applicable to all free speech situations. Therefore, the Seventh Circuit reconsidered the Springfield ordinance. In its decisions of Aug. 7, 2015, it stated: "Any law distinguishing one kind of speech from another by reference to its meaning now requires a compelling justification." However, the appellate court did not analyze whether or not the Springfield ordinance had a compelling justification, because the only issue on appeal was whether the ordinance was content based. The Springfield ordinance was content based because it prohibited specific content – a request for immediate donations. Springfield appealed the Seventh Circuit's ruling, but the Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal.

The Springfield ordinance also prohibits aggressive panhandling, which includes coming within five feet of a person or touching a person, using profanity, panhandling someone who is waiting in line, following a person or panhandling in groups of two or more. The five foot zone was added in 2015 after the appellate court overturned the ban on panhandling downtown. Norton and Otterson are also challenging the five foot zone. The city lost its motion to dismiss the lawsuit and has agreed

not to enforce this provision of the ordinance while the current case is pending.

A content based ordinance will only pass muster if the city can prove a compelling justification for the ordinance – a very difficult standard to meet. Compelling justification cannot be based on commercial reasons such as business and tourism, or on the fact that panhandlers offend people or make them uncomfortable. Compelling justification can be based on public safety, but in a 2015 Colorado case, a federal district court ruled that prohibiting all panhandling after dark was not necessary for public safety. Likewise, courts have ruled that prohibiting repeated requests, imposing 20 foot buffer zones around ATMs and bus stops and prohibiting solicitations at cafes and parking garages do not meet the strict standard.

So what restrictions on panhandling can be enforced? The answer is not clear. The U.S. District Court for Massachusetts stated in a 2015 case that, "Post *Reed*, municipalities must go back to the drafting board and craft

solutions which recognize an individual's right to continue to solicit in accordance with their rights under the First Amendment, while at the same time, ensuring that their conduct does not threaten their own safety, or that of those being solicited. In doing so, they must define with particularity the threat to public safety they seek to address, and then enact laws that precisely and narrowly restrict only that conduct which would constitute such a threat."

I believe Springfield and many other cities will continue to struggle with this matter for years to come before a definitive solution can be found. In the meantime, there has been a greater police presence on the downtown square, particularly in the evenings. If the city can't stop panhandlers from soliciting people, at least the police presence can help people feel safe while walking downtown, especially after dark. ♦

Sarah Delano Pavlik is an attorney with Delano Law Offices, LLC. She can be reached at sdpavlik@delanolaw.com.



Don Norton of Springfield is one of the panhandlers who sued the city.

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

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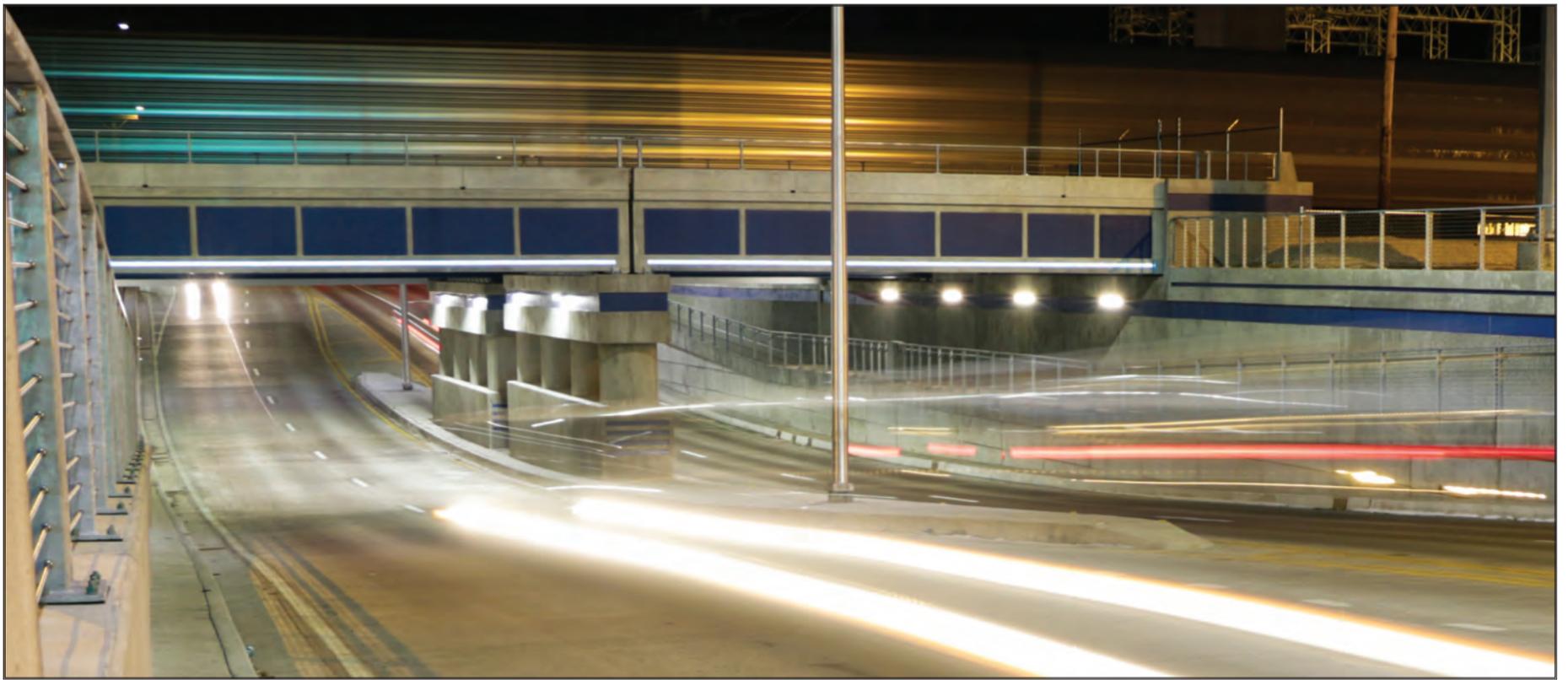
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Carpenter Street underpass

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

National politics won't affect next phase of rail relocation

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Federal funding for the next phase of Springfield's rail relocation is secure, meaning the project likely won't be affected by the new president-elect and change in Congressional control.

Meanwhile, improvements on the Third Street rail continue, but won't endanger plans to move that rail traffic to 10th Street.

The rail relocation project calls for adding a second track alongside the existing 10th Street rails and moving the current Third Street rail traffic to that new track. The project also plans for additional underpasses for automobiles and pedestrians beneath the 10th Street corridor.

As the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump nears and Republicans prepare to take full control of Congress, questions

remain about how the priorities of the federal government will differ from those of the previous administration. Trump has indicated support for infrastructure spending, but his positions on some issues have changed since his election.

Jim Moll, a project manager for Hanson Professional Services in Springfield, says that won't likely matter for the next phase of Springfield's rail relocation project. That's because funding for the upcoming construction of underpasses at Ash and Laurel streets is already in place. The federal part of that funding is a \$14-million federal TIGER grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"We're in a very good position as far as funding right now," Moll said.

The first phase of construction was the Carpenter Street underpass, which opened to

traffic in August 2016. That underpass was also funded in part by a TIGER grant.

Moll says underpasses planned for Jefferson and Madison streets are contingent upon state funding for capital projects, but he notes that Springfield currently has funding for about five years' worth of work on the rail relocation project. The city has purchased about 30 properties along the 10th Street rail corridor so far, including a handful of businesses which were already relocated.

Construction on the Ash Street underpass is scheduled to start in September or October 2017. When that's complete, construction can begin on the Laurel Street underpass. Moll says the overall project is on schedule, and if funding is secured for the remaining portions, it could be complete in about eight years.

Even as the 10th Street rail is being

prepared to accept trains from the Third Street rail, improvements continue on Third Street. Kelsea Gurski, a spokeswoman for the Illinois Department of Transportation, says upgraded crossing guards on Third Street will be installed starting in spring 2017. The upgraded guards are more effective at preventing pedestrians and vehicles from crossing the tracks when a train is approaching.

Gurski says the improvements to Third Street don't mean that trains on that track are not moving to 10th Street. The funding for the upgraded guards comes from the federal high speed rail project, she says, noting that those funds can only be used on the existing high speed rail corridor.

"Funding for the Third Street upgrade does not have any impact on funding for 10th Street," she said. ♦



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SPOTLIGHT



PHOTO / HANSON PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

TONY COMERIO

- TITLE:** Chief Water Resources Engineer, Hanson Professional Services
- EDUCATION:** B.S. in engineering from University of Illinois in Champaign
- FAMILY:** Wife – Theresa; Children – Jack and Nicolas
- FAVORITES:** Movie: Empire Strikes Back; Book: *The Catcher in the Rye*; Sports team: Fighting Illini and Chicago Cubs
- TIDBITS:** Plays guitar; Would like to live in Italy for a month and integrate into the culture; Enjoys outdoor activities like skiing and upland huntings

BY ERIC WOODS Freelance Contributor

Tony Comerio enjoys Springfield's historical connection to Abraham Lincoln and sometimes wonders how the city would be if it did not have the former president as a tourist attraction.

"It is like Route 66," said Comerio, who serves as board president for Downtown Springfield, Inc. "It is a unique, cultural component that is pretty coded to the DNA of the city."

Although he admits that Lincoln sites bring a lot of people to Springfield, the number of vacant buildings downtown is disappointing. Comerio would love to see the downtown area return to its former level of activity.

"It is hard to do good things downtown because of all the vacant buildings," he said. "It used to be more vibrant, mainly because of the business of the state. There are a shocking number of buildings empty."

Comerio is also chief water resources engineer for Hanson Professional Services, Inc. in Springfield. He has lived in the area most of his life, with the exception of a couple years in Chicago right after college.

Growing up, Comerio knew he wanted to be some sort of scientist.

"I knew I wanted to be a builder of some kind," he said. "I think about 'The Knack' from Dilbert sometimes."

Comerio's first job in high school was making pizzas at Pizza Hut, a skill he is happy to still possess. He has had a few jobs since then, with his most challenging coming from an internship at the place he would eventually settle down with.

"I interned at Hanson working over a summer for an archaeologist digging up

bones," he said. "It was a hot summer and very labor intensive. But the people I worked for were very good."

Following college graduation, Comerio worked at a firm in Chicago near Wrigley Field for a couple years, which helped him develop a love for the Chicago Cubs. He came back to Springfield when he took a job with the Department of Natural Resources, which he held for seven years before being convinced to return to Hanson. He has now been with the firm for 11 years.

"My job now is making sure we have people with the right technical skills and keeping them sharp," said Comerio, who also works on projects involving bridge hydraulics, flood damage reduction and design of levees, floodwalls, water control structures and stormwater detention facilities.

Comerio credits his father as his greatest influence and the person who really taught him about having a good work ethic.

"People still respect him and ask me about him," he said. "I admire that."

Comerio has learned that people must be prepared to put their time in and work hard. He advises people hoping to enter the engineering field to become a student of whatever path they choose.

"Find that thing that blows your hair back and study it," he said. "Read books about it and study it. Understand it, and you will get the respect of your peers."

Comerio sees himself with Hanson for the foreseeable future as he and his wife raise their two young children. He hopes that the outdoor world he enjoys so much will still be there for his children someday.

"Sustainability is a big topic in the industry," he said, "and it is not always about being green." ♦

Restoring the Lincoln Vault

BY RHONDA BUCKHOLD
Freelance Contributor

The Medieval Latin word *ingeniator* means “designer.” Its verbal derivative - *ingenium* - is “to devise.” The modern translations became “engineer” and “engineering.” Coincidentally, the modern word “genius” shares the same Latin root.

The combination of superior intellect and the ability to devise design adjustments was required to complete the momentous project of restoring a small brick structure in Oak Ridge Cemetery, known as the Lincoln Vault.

The Lincoln Vault was built as a public receiving area in the side of a hill to the north of the spot which would become Lincoln’s Tomb five years later. The vault held Lincoln’s body from May 4 to Dec. 21, 1865, while the tomb itself was being prepared. The vault also held the body of Lincoln’s son, Willie Lincoln, who died in 1862.

Fred Coombe, project manager at Fehr-Graham Associates and former owner of Coombe-Bloxdorf, P.C., said the original scope of the project required several adjustments due to 150 years of water damage and rules of historic preservation.

The project timeline originally called for plans to be drawn up by September 2014 and construction to begin after the May 2015 reenactment of Lincoln’s funeral. The schedule was accelerated, however, so that work would be finished in time for the funeral reenactment. The project was a collaboration between Coombe’s firm and R.D. Lawrence Construction Company, Western Specialty Contractors and the Illinois Capital Development Board.

“The challenge for us ... was to come up with a design to provide permanent support to the roof of the vault and reconstruct the exterior walls,” Coombe said, “which required us to execute several contract change-orders within a very tight project budget and time schedule.”

Coombe said one challenge required a temporary earth retention system to allow excavations in a very tight space.

“Since the vault was originally constructed against the hill side from inside of the vault, the exterior of the original vault was visible for the first time ever,” he said. “The original vault structure was in excellent condition. However, the vertical extensions were much different from assumed and in very poor condition.”

The severely deteriorated stone finish of the vault’s façade required planners and

craftsmen to find suitable replacements from commercial quarries, then replicate the fit and finish to match the original.

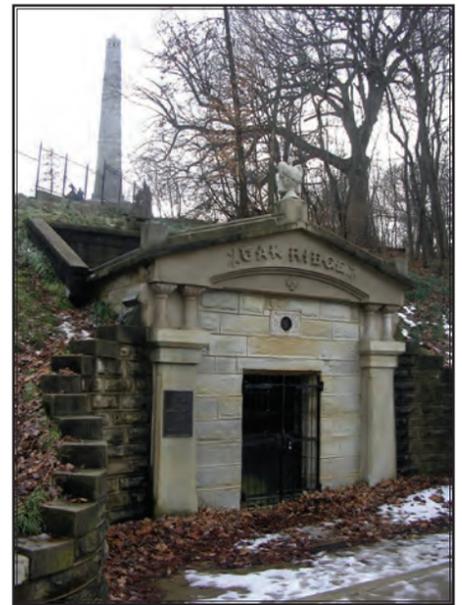
“It developed through much trial and error,” Coombe said. “It was a combination of modern machine fabrication ‘enhanced’ by hand hewing.”

The construction work continued during a period of subzero temperatures, using heated enclosures around the vault. Despite the difficult conditions and extra work required, the project was finished on budget and in time for the Lincoln funeral ceremony.

Since then, Coombe-Bloxdorf has been acquired by Fehr-Graham Associates, LLC. The organization has several ongoing projects in Springfield, such as surveying and drainage studies on the “flyover” portion of Springfield’s rail improvement project. Coombe, now on staff with Fehr-Graham, is also involved in the renovation of the Booth and Ferguson buildings in downtown Springfield, including the design of an elevator and stair tower that will provide access to the two buildings.

“Numerous conflicts exist in developing a foundation under an existing structure and constructing a tower structure wedged between two historic buildings,” Coombe said.

The engineers will again be required to design solutions for significant challenges posed by preserving history. To take on the task of restoration while staying true to an original design is an exceptional challenge, but these professionals have already demonstrated they are up to the task. ♦

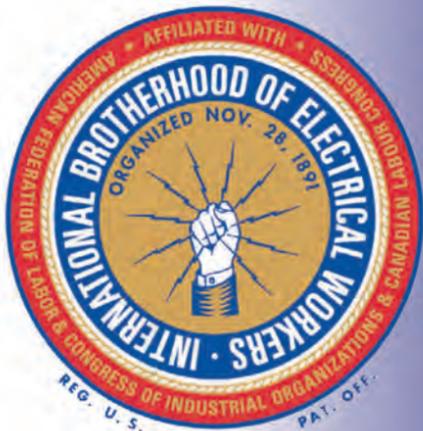


The Lincoln Vault PHOTO / TOM ANDERSON VIA WIKIPEDIA.ORG



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1	Graham & Hyde Architects, Inc. 1010 Clocktower Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-9380 217-793-6465 grahamandhyde.com info@grahamandhyde.com	5	9	Thomas J. Hyde, Jamie Cosgriff, Kevin Handy, Mike Zellers	Springfield, Ill.: Vachel Lindsay Elementary School; St. Agnes Church; Hoogland Center for the Arts; First United Methodist Church; Blessed Sacrament Church; Carrollton Bank; St. John's Lutheran Church expansion; Christ the King Parish Center; Cathedral of Immaculate Conception renovation; Ridgely Elementary School; Ball Charter Elementary School; Cherry Hills Baptist Church; Ben-Gil Elementary School, Gillespie, IL; Panhandle Elementary School addition, Raymond, IL; Ball-Chatham Community Schools additions and renovations; Campus improvements, Benedictine University.	1968
2	Evan Lloyd Associates Inc. 1630 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-789-7011 217-789-7101 evanlloydarchitects.com tsmith@evanlloyd.com	4	13	Timothy B. Smith, Gregory T. Frazier	Springfield: PCCC renovation and expansion, IL State Police Credit Union, Waterways Building renovation (4th District Appellate Court), Engrained Brewery, Obed & Isaacs/Wm. Van's Coffee Shop, Prairie State Bank (Wabash branch), Friar Tuck, County Market (Carpenter Street), The Outlets of Springfield, Sangamon County Health Department renovation, Connor Co. Distribution/Sales Facility, Horace Mann interior renovations. Sherman: Illini Bank, New Park and Amphitheater. Jacksonville: Pathway Services renovation. Carlinville: Bothwell Auditorium and Woodward Athletic Center renovations at Blackburn College. Taylorville: St. Mary School Addition. Eldorado: Legence Bank Corporate Headquarters. Maryville: First Baptist Church additions. Litchfield National Bank branch.	1969
2	FWAI Architects Inc. 1 NW Old Capitol Plaza Springfield, IL 62701	217-528-3661 217-528-4717 fwai.com admin@fwai.com	4	13	Carl Fischer, Paul Wheeler, Forrest Hoffman	Springfield, Ill.: Ronald McDonald House; Blessed Sacrament School Expansion, Central Illinois Community Blood Center, LLCC A. Lincoln Commons, University of Illinois Springfield - various projects, H. D. Smith Corporate Campus, Sangamon County Building, Camp Lincoln - CSMS & Allied Trades, Crowne Plaza Hotel, INB Branches, St. Joseph's Home Dementia Wing, The Hope Institute - Learning Center & Master Planning, Memorial Medical Center - various clinics, Springfield Clinic - various clinics; Urbana/Champaign, Ill.: UIUC English Building Renovations, UIUC McKinley Health Center Remodel, UIUC Assembly Hall Remodel & Addition; Waukegan, Ill.: Regional Corporate Data Center; Texas: Corporate Data Center.	1976
2	J.H. Petty and Associates, Ltd. Architects 2920 Chatham Road, Suite B Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-2844 217-787-2855 jhp@jhpa.biz	4	8	Joseph H. Petty	Jr/high school addition for Virginia CUSD No. 64; admin addition for Thompsonville CUSD No. 174; Sangamon County Farm Bureau Headquarters; County Market Store, Pittsfield, Ill.; Remodel of Illinois Municipal League; Mid America Advertising Office Building; Cass County Court House Addition, Virginia, Ill.; Re-roof Pike County Court House, Pittsfield, Ill.; Classroom addition for West Lincoln Broadwell Middle School, Lincoln, Ill.	1994
2	Steckel-Parker Architects, Inc. 2941 Happy Landing Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-793-6444 217-793-5434 steckelparker.com dave@steckelparker.com	4	5	David E. Steckel	Springfield, Ill.: Brandt Consolidated offices, IL Primary Health Care Association, Central IL Kidney & Dialysis Association offices, United Community Bank - multiple facilities, Town & Country Bank - Wabash & Dirksen facilities, Group Home at The Hope Institute, Pepsi Distribution Center, West Central Bank remodeling - Beardstown, Military facilities - Sparta & Marseilles.	1964
3	Allied Design Consultants, Inc. 405 1/2 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-522-3355 217-522-5570 alliedarch.com alliedsn@fgi.net	3	6	Bruce M. Bollero, Todd R. Hannah	Illinois: John F. Kennedy Middle School, Spring Valley; Public Library, Rushville; New Berlin Elementary School, New Berlin; Eureka School additions; ISU, LLCC, UIS and SIU renovation projects; Security Bank renovations and new construction; Casey-Westfield High School addition and renovations; Springfield School District 186 renovation projects.	1984
3	John Shafer & Associates 1230 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-744-9036 217-744-9039 shafer-arch.com john@shafer-arch.com	3	4	John Shafer	Bunn Corporate Office, LLCC Taylorville, Illinois Education Association, Midwest Technical Institute, various locations, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, Terry Farmer Photography, Illinois Baptist State Association, Yellowstone Shopping Center, Shelter Insurance State Headquarters, Novanis Building, Illinois Association of School Administrators, Gone for Good Document Destruction, Springfield Clinic Administrative Offices, Illinois Times, Bunn Corporate Office Building and Salvation Army.	1992
3	Melotte Morse Leonatti Parker, Ltd. 213 1/2 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-789-9515 217-789-9518 mmlpltd.com architect@mmlpltd.com	3	9	Ralls C. Melotte, David J. Leonatti, T. David Parker	Tinsley Dry Goods Shop Historic Exterior Reconstruction, Springfield; Jaenke Hall Renovation, Blackburn College; The Abbey Mausoleum Renovation, Springfield; 22,000 SF interior design for professional business, Springfield; New school building, Morton; Toledo Estates Affordable Housing, Alton; Mt. Pulaski Courthouse Historic Site Renovation; Adaptive reuse for 16 bed youth residential facility, Morton; 1st Presbyterian Church Geothermal and Building Renovation, Jacksonville; Renovation of 140 Apartments, Taylorville; Renovation of Triopia Schools.	1978
4	Cowdrey and German DESIGNED ARCHITECTURE inc 1305 Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-5730 217-546-5739 designed-architecture.com cg@designed-architecture.com	2	3	Scott Cowdrey	Rolling Meadows Brewery, Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary, Nehemiah Expansion, Downtown Streetscape Enhancement - Litchfield, IL, Rexx Battery - Springfield and Jacksonville, Macoupin County Animal Shelter - Carlinville, IL, Nature's Grace and Wellness Center-Vermont, IL	2007
4	Square Root Architecture + Design 1601 Holmes Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-903-5908 squarerootarch.com info@squarerootarch.com	2	1	Jeff Sommers	Caisley Residence - C3Prefab v1.0, Schulze Residence - C3Prefab v2.0, Huang Residence - C3Prefab v3.0, Leiman Residence - C3Prefab v1.1, 99k_House, Eco Prototype Residence, Bridgeport Residence, Edgewater Residence, Andersonville Residence, Glencoe Residence, Lincoln Park Residence, Jefferson Park Residence, Sylvan Mellou Salons, Cut Up & Dye Salon, SalonBlonde Hair Salon, OnShore Consulting Offices	2004



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SPOTLIGHT



PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

DAVE STECKEL

TITLE:	Owner, Steckel-Parker Architects, Inc.
EDUCATION:	Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Arkansas
FAMILY:	Wife – Sarah; Children – Kinley, Camden and Cassidy
FAVORITES:	Music: Blues; Restaurant: Darcy's Pint; Sports team: Arkansas Razorbacks
TIDBITS:	Grew up on a farm; Loves vacationing in Key West and anywhere with warm weather and water; loved design in school

BY ERIC WOODS
Freelance Contributor

Since 1975, when he joined Spinney-Coady-Parker Architects, Dave Steckel has called Springfield his home.

"It is very convenient to St. Louis, Chicago, and other big places, but also is small enough to get to and from work in 15 minutes," he said. "Plus, you can always run into people you know."

Growing up, Steckel always knew he would end up in the realm of architecture and engineering. He tried the engineering field first but quickly realized it was not a good fit, so he went to school to learn architecture. A few years after starting full-time with Spinney-Coady-Parker Architects, Steckel became an associate. In 1983, he became a principal.

"Within the profession, this is the only job I have ever had," he said.

As the primary owner of the company, he now wears a number of hats and enjoys everything he does.

"I am involved with finding work, meeting with clients, doing some design and production work, and even some administrative work during the construction," he said. "I like to see the project through from the acquisition stage through completion of the job."

Steckel also likes to remain a resource for clients after the job is complete.

The busiest times of the year, according to Steckel, are spring and fall, with the winter months being the slowest times.

"In the spring, everyone is anxious to get their projects started," he said. "In the fall, everyone is racing the weather to get work started and far enough along that the cold does not shut it down."

Work has picked up this year for Steckel. "It is looking much better now than this time

last year," he said.

The industry has changed quite a bit over the years, according to Steckel.

"When I began, we did manual drafting. Now, everything is computer drafted, and that changed the makeup of the firm," he said.

Steckel also notes that with the exception of administrative positions, everybody in the firm is now licensed and registered, which never used to be the case.

"The skill level is higher today," he said. "It is more likely that the architects will also be in production. There are very few manual drafting jobs anymore."

The architecture industry can be a very rewarding profession, but Steckel says it can also be extremely challenging. "It is more affected by the economy than other professions," he said. "There are a lot more ups and downs."

Steckel's own success can be linked to advice he learned early in his life.

"No matter the task, do it to the best of your ability, no matter if it is a little or big job," he said. "You really need to just look at it and turn out the best product you can."

Ken Parker, a former partner in the firm who hired Steckel, was a great mentor and influence on his career. Steckel said they not only worked well together, but he learned a great deal from Parker.

Steckel has given little thought to retiring, as he plans to continue working on projects for the next several years.

"A lot of what we do is dependent on our clients," he said. "We are extremely blessed to have come into contact with the people and to have worked with them on their buildings," he said.

One possibility down the road could be doing the work he grew up with. "I still have the farm I grew up on," he said. "It's only an hour away." ♦

MAJOR ENGINEERING FIRMS

Sources: The engineering firms.
Ranked by number of licensed engineers in Springfield/Jacksonville.
Number of full-time employees in engineering division may vary from total employee count.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE / FAX (=) WEBSITE / EMAIL	EMPLOYEES LICENSED ENG. ENGINEERS DIV.¹	PARTNERS/ PRINCIPALS	NOTABLE PROJECTS	YEAR EST'D	
1	Hanson Professional Services, Inc. 1525 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-788-2450 217-788-2503 hanson-inc.com marketing@hanson-inc.com	55	443	Sergio Pecori, P.E., CEO; John Coombe, P.E., S.E., COO; Robert Cusick, P.E., S.E., CTO; Jo Ellen Keim, CFO, CPA	Stratton Lock & Dam design for IDNR, McHenry, IL; Emiquon water control structure, Havana, IL; Commissioning for Sandy Grove Middle School commissioning (Cx), first net-positive school, N.C.; CWLP Spaulding Dam Spillway Gate Rehabilitation; IL High-Speed Rail Chicago to St. Louis program Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement; Springfield Rail Improvements Project; IL Tollway Interstate 90 (Jane Addams Memorial Tollway) widening and reconstruction; Kennedy Expressway reconstruction in Chicago; Indianapolis International Airport runway and taxiway rehab.; Alaska Railroad Corp.'s Northern Rail Extension Project; U.S. Dept. of State, Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) prof. commissioning (Cx) services on diplomatic facilities projects worldwide.	1954
2	Crawford, Murphy & Tilly, Inc. 2750 W. Washington St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-787-8050 217-787-4183 cmtengr.com raustin@cmtengr.com	50	109	Dan Meckes, P.E., pres., CEO; Michael Doerfler, P.E., sr. vice pres., COO; Lou Dixon, P.E., sr. vice pres.	St. Louis Park Over the Highway at Gateway Arch Peoria Stormwater Program and Utility Development Sangamon County Water Reclamation District Sugar Creek Plant Expansion O'Hare Modernization Projects Midway Airport Planning Metro Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Plant Improvements West Florissant Avenue Great Street project, St. Louis County US Student Union CWLP Waterworks Improvements Branson, MO Downtown Historic Streetscape Illinois Tollway Interstate 90 Expansion Airfield Rehabilitation at Dulles and Reagan National Washington Airports Springfield/Taylorville Route 29 Improvement	1946
4	Hutchison Engineering, Inc. 1801 W. Lafayette Ave. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-7164 217-243-0468 hutchisoneng.com ghutchison@hutchisoneng.com	21	59	Gary L. Hutchison, pres.; Michael V. Meier, exec. v. pres.	Illinois: Macomb Bypass - Phase II McDonough County; I-80 Reconstruction - Phase I & II, Henry and Rocky Island Counties; I-57 / IL 50 Interchange - Phase III, Kankakee County; U.S. 50 Expressway - Phase I, Lawrence and Richland Counties; U.S. 30 Phase I, Kane and Kendall Counties; I-155 / I-74 Interchange Phase III, Tazewell County.	1945
5	Quigg Engineering, Inc. 2351 S. Dirksen Pkwy. Springfield, IL 62703	217-670-0563 217-679-2204 quiggengineering.com lquigg@quiggengineering.com	19	55	Lori L. Quigg, P.E., pres.; Rebecca L. Stocker, vice pres.	I-294 (Tri-State Tollway) Mile Long Bridge Reconstruction, Cook County, IL, Illinois State Toll Highway Authority; IL Route 75 from Rock River to IL Route 2, IDOT District 2; Phase III Construction Inspection on IL Route 3, Waterloo Bypass, Monroe County, IDOT District 8; High Speed Rail (HSR) at various complex crossings, Various Routes, Logan, Macoupin, and Sangamon Counties, IDOT District 6; Phase III Construction Inspection on IL 47 from north of I-80 to Sherril Road in Grundy County, IDOT District 3	2006
6	Benton & Associates, Inc. 1970 West Lafayette Ave. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-4146 217-245-4149 bentonassociates.com info@bentonassociates.com	16	40	Reginald H. Benton, P.E., S.E.; Jamie L. Headen, P.E.; William J. Sleeman, P.E.	Illinois: Jacksonville WTP Study, New Jacksonville WTP, Taylorville Water System Improvements, New Taylorville WTP, US 67 Jerseyville Bypass, SNAWS rural water, Round Prairie rural water, Beardstown Sanitary District WWTP improvements, Jacksonville WWTP CSO, various IDOT projects, I-64 bridges - St. Clair County, I-55 Bridges - Madison County, McDonough County Transit Facility. Subsurface Engineering Services for High Speed Rail.	1970
7	Fuhrmann Engineering, Inc. 2852 S. 11th St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-5577 217-529-5575 www.fuhrmann-eng.com ghuhrmann@fuhrmann-eng.com	14	39	Gina Marie Cianferri-Fuhrmann, P.E.; Michael Dean Curtis, P.L.S.; Peter Wagner, P.E., P.L.S.	Jefferson Crossing Commercial Development; IDOT Various Bicycle Projects and Pedestrian Accommodations; IDOT Phase I and Phase II design services for the replacement of US 51 over Sugar Creek in Normal, Illinois; IDOT Phase III construction services for the High Speed Rail corridor from St. Louis to Dwight, Illinois; ISHTA Phase II for proposed roadway reconstruction, MOT for I-90 Jane Addams Memorial; Centennial Park	2002
8	WHKS & Co. 7018 Kingsmill Court Springfield, IL 62711	217-483-9457 217-483-9458 whks.com springfield@whks.com	13	25	Fouad K. Daoud, P.E., S.E., pres., CEO; Michael A. Zelinskis, P.E., vice pres.; William K. Angerman, P.E., COO; Scott D. Sanford, P.E., S.E., vice pres.; Scott Sweet, P.E., vice pres.	Illinois: I-72 resurfacing from Chatham Rd. to Morgan County Line in Springfield, Old McCluggage truss bridge repair in Peoria, Safe Routes to School project for Illiopolis, US 20 over the Mississippi River Approaches and Local Road Improvements, IBEW Union Hall in Springfield - civil & structural, IL Route 10 over Prairie Creek bridge replacement in Logan Co., Farmington Road re-alignment in West Peoria, Pawnee Road bridge rehab, IL 84 over the Apple River bridge replacement - phase I and II, Seismic analysis for the I-70 Tri-level interchange analysis near St. Louis, Cedar Street gusset plate strengthening in Peoria, Historic truss relocation in Bureau Co.	1948
9	Cummins Engineering Corporation 135 West Lake Shore Drive Springfield, IL 62703	217-726-8570 cumminsengineering.com kim@cumminsengineering.com	9	19	Kimberly S. Cummins, P.E., COO, Michael D. Cummins, P.E., S.E. pres., Michael E. Rapier, P.L.S.	Fayette Avenue Bridge Replacement near Washington Park, Restoration of the Vachel Lindsay Bridge, Sangamon Valley Trail from Centennial Park to Stuart Park in Springfield (and Phase 2 underway from Stuart Park to Irwin Bridge Road near Menard County Line), Veterans Parkway Intersection Improvements (dual turn lanes) at Old Jacksonville Road and Southwest Plaza Drive, Interstate 55 Bridge Improvements near Lincoln, Sangamon County bridges on Old Jacksonville Road, Farmingdale Road, Waverly Road, Roadway Improvements to Pleasant Plains Road and Waverly Road	1998
10	Andrews Engineering Inc. 3300 Ginger Creek Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-787-2334 217-787-9495 andrews-eng.com marketing@andrews-eng.com	8	35	Kenneth W. Liss L.P.G. pres., Douglas W. Mauntel P.E. exec. vice-pres., Bradley J. Hunsberger, L.P.G. vice-pres.	IDOT-Statewide Hazardous Contractor; IDOT-High Speed Rail corridor Carlinville to Dwight (construction inspection, health and safety, environmental); US Dept. of Veteran Affairs; US D.O.E.; multi-state landfill design, remediation compliance; Utility Ash management; RCRA, CERCLA, TSCA permits/corrective action.	1974
11	Patrick Engineering, Inc. 300 W. Edwards St., Suite 200 Springfield, IL 62704	217-391-3500 217-391-3501 patrickco.com cburger@patrickco.com	7	7	Daniel P. Dietzler, P.E., CEO; Jeff Schuh, P.E., president; and Chris Burger, P.E., vice president	Amtrak site modifications; Veterans Admin metering project; Smart Energy Design Assistance Center energy efficiency studies throughout Illinois; Solar Energy assessments; Livingston County wind farm evaluations; FutureGen Alliance carbon dioxide sequester project siting and environmental assistance; Edison Mission Energy Wind Farm construction assistance; Powerton powerplant rail and infrastructure upgrades; Tazewell County landfill evaluation and design; ICG coal mine infrastructure design and subsidence monitoring.	1979
11	Veenstra & Kimm, Inc. 907 S. Fourth St Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-8033 217-544-3965 v-k.net mhenderson@v-k.net	7	15	Bob Veenstra, pres.; Mark Henderson, P.E., S.E.; Christopher Kohlrus, P.E.; Gene Arnold, P.E., S.E.; Leo Foley, P.E.	Springfield, IL: Chatham Road over Jacksonville Branch Creek, Drainage Improvements at Wabash Ave. and I-72, Central Illinois Community Blood Center, White Oaks Mall Renovation, Legacy Point Outlet Mall, Blessed Sacrament School Addition, Peoria, IL: IL 116 over Kickapoo Creek, UP Railroad, and Kickapoo Creek Road, Chatham, IL: IL 4 over Polecat Creek, Putnam County, IL: Curved Girder Bridge on IL 26 over Coffee Creek, East Moline, IL: WTP (Ultraviolet Disinfection Process), East Moline WWTP Improvements, Burlington, IA: Flood Mitigation Project, Davenport, IA: WWTP Improvements, Large Diameter Interceptor Sewer Improvements, West Liberty, IA: Water Treatment Plant (Reverse Osmosis Process), Cambridge, IL: Cambridge Commercial Park - East Oak Street, Bettendorf, IA: Utica Ridge Road Reconstruction, Des Moines, IA: Iowa Christian Academy Athletic Center, Holiday Inn Exhibition Center, Des Moines Public School Aviation Facility.	1961
12	Fehr-Graham Engineering & Environmental 755 South Grand Ave. W. Springfield, IL 62704	217-544-8477 217-544-8483 fehr-graham.com mbloxdorf@fehr-graham.com	6	14	R. Todd Weegens, P.E., Michael W. Gronewold, P.E., Ken R. Thompson, Adam G. Holder, P.E., Joel P. Zirkle, P.G., Noah J. Carmichael, P.E.	Civil/Structural Design: UIS Public Safety Building, ISU Watterson Dining Expansion, Normal, IL.; Civil Design: Lincoln Challenge Academy, Rantoul, IL; Mill Creek Estates, Phase 2; Kreston Place Subdivision; Springfield YMCA Site Development; Meadowbrook Road Extension; Structural Design: Lincoln Tomb Receiving Vault Rehabilitation; IDOT Hanley Building Plaza Waterproofing; Springfield Housing Authority Office Addition; Galesburg East Main Street Retaining Walls; IL 97 over Little Haw Creek, IDOT prel. eng. to rehabilitate 9 bridges on I-55 near Pontiac.	1973
12	HDR Engineering, Inc. 5201 S. Sixth St. Road Springfield, IL 62703-5143	217-585-8300 217-585-1890 hdrinc.com springfieldinfo@hdrinc.com	6	25	Matthew Cochran, marketing; Lawrence Bellingier, real estate services section manager	Land Acquisition, Utility Relocation, and Encroachments, including the current Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail Project; Freshwater and Marine Fisheries Production and Research Facilities, including Armstrong State Fish Hatchery, North Carolina; Wells Dam Hatchery, Washington State; and NOAA Cooperative Oxford Laboratory, Maryland.	1984
13	Greene & Bradford Inc. 3501 Constitution Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-793-8844 217-793-6227 greeneandbradford.com mail@greeneandbradford.com	5	9	Kashif Syed, Ph.D, SE, president; Joseph L. Greene, PE, PLS, CEO	South 10th Street Storm Sewer, Springfield, IL - Structural Seismic Evaluation of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Building, Springfield, IL - Wabash Center Subdivision, Springfield, IL - Prairie Meadows Subdivision, Hoopston, IL - Ward II - City Park Addition - Storm Sewer Project, Taylorville, IL - Northeastern 30 Inch. Sanitary Sewer, Taylorville, IL - North Cherokee Street Roadway Improvement, Taylorville, IL - Mill and Resurface East Main Cross Street, Taylorville, IL	1972
13	Hampton, Lenzini & Renwick, Inc. 3085 Stevenson Drive, Suite 201 Springfield, IL 62703	217-546-3400 217-546-8116 hireengineering.com hlrsfld@hlreng.com	5	12	Steven W. Megginson, P.E., S.E.	Tazewell County Manito Rd and Towerline Rd bridges over the Mackinaw River; Kane County bridge inspections and bridge management system; IDOT BB&S Bridge Load rating assistance; Sangamon County - Multiple bridge replacements; IDOT D9 and D3 multiple bridge replacements; Kendall County Eldamain Rd bridge over Fox River; US 61 bridge inspection over Mississippi River; Hamilton County - CH 3 reconstruction to White Oak Reservoir; IDOT D7 - US 51 Corridor hydraulic review of 50 structures; IDOT-Peoria Cedar Street bridge inspection and rating	1965
13	Knight E/A, Inc. 993 Clocktower Drive, Suite A Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-7455 312-577-3526 knightea.com	5	11	Jim Wolfe, CEO Kevin Lentz, PE, president Christine Reed, PE, senior vice pres.	UP Railroad High Speed Rail construction inspection, Springfield Park District Washington Park lagoon structures (design and construction inspection), IDNR Mazonia Braidwood reclamation, Vandalia Levee District Pecon Island assessment, Sangamon County Logan County Road Bridge, Springfield signal warrant assessment	1945
14	Kuhn & Trello Consulting Engineers, LLC 630 E. Washington Street Springfield, IL 62701	217-679-0044 ktengr.com kkuhn@ktengr.com	4	6	Kevin L. Kuhn, PE Michael J. Trello, PE, SE	Railroad Overpass - Williamsville, IL; Municipal Park - Sherman, IL; Birch Lane Reconstruction - Williamsville, IL; 5th Street Reconstruction - Riverton, IL; Multi Purpose Arena - CDB; Statewide Sign Structure Inspection - IDOT; Multi Use Trail - Williamsville, IL; Colt Road Industrial Park Phase II, Springfield, IL	2013
14	Prairie Engineers of Illinois, P.C. 6405 Canadian Cross Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-605-0403 217-718-4764 prairieengineers.com lkramer@prairieengineers.com	4	15	Lisa Kramer, PE; Darren Forgy, PE, PLS	All-Hazards Transportation System Vulnerability Assessment & Response Plan - Statewide; Ducks Unlimited Various Projects - Statewide; Shawnee Expressway Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Corridor Design - Southern Illinois; Pavement Testing - Statewide; Land acquisition services and construction engineering services for the High Speed Rail corridor; Hydrogeomorphic study of the Lower Missouri River; Construction engineering services for the Interstate 74 Knoxville Interchange; Phase I services for the central Tri-State Tollway; Land Acquisition services for Ameren electric transmission lines - central Illinois	2010
14	Professional Service Industries, Inc. (PSI) 480 North St., Springfield, IL 62704	217-544-6663 217-544-6148 psiusa.com bill.pongracz@psiusa.com	4	17	William Pongracz, P.E., vice pres.; James Gerloff, P.E., branch manager Eram Iqbal, P.E.	Springfield Metro Sanitary District Spring Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, Enbridge SAX Crude Oil Pipeline and Pump Stations, Springfield Clinic First North and Parking Ramp, St. John's Main Surgery and Patient Tower Renovation, Clinton Nuclear Power Station-Dry Cask Storage, Memorial Medical Center for Learning and Innovation, CWLP Dallman Unit 4 Coal Power Plant, Springfield High Speed Rail, SMSD Sugar Creek WWTP	1961
15	TRC Worldwide Engineering, Inc. 3200 Pleasant Run Springfield, IL 62711	217-793-2299 217-793-3311 trcw.com	3	7	Robert Boellner PE, vice pres.	University of Illinois Champaign/Urbana - various projects including Housing Life Safety Improvements, Burrill Hall Laboratory Renovations, Veterinary Medicine Building Renovations, Advanced Experimental Research Building, Eastern Illinois University various projects including a new building for Center for Clean Energy Research and Education, University of Illinois in Springfield various projects including Student Housing renovations, Cooling tower replacement, Sangamon Auditorium lighting controls, Illinois State University Capen Auditorium, OLOL Replacement Hospital, Lafayette, LA, New TESCO Stores in Turkey, UK and Poland, Parking structures for Martin Army Community Hospital Fort Benning, GA and VA Hospital, Dallas, TX.	1985
16	Finley Engineering 7000 Piper Glen Springfield, IL 62711	217-529-9362 217-529-9184 fecinc.com a.lowe@fecinc.com	2	16	Michael Boehne, CEO; Jeffrey Swan, vice pres.	Providing telecom related solutions to various market segments, including energy, municipalities and private entities.	1953
16	Hurst-Rosche, Inc. 531 East Washington St., 5th Floor Springfield, IL 62702	217-523-4660 hurst-rosche.com dpool@hurst-rosche.com	2	4	James Roth PE, David Pool AIA, David Kimmle PE, Mark Reitz PE, Scott Hunt PE	Structural evaluation of the Coliseum @ Illinois state Fairgrounds, State-wide condition survey of rest areas for IDOT, Vinegar Hills apartments for Springfield Housing Authority, Capaha Field renovation for Southeast Missouri State University, Construction Administration for 2016, 17&18 for Springfield Mass Transit District, New Marion High School, New Collinsville Water Treatment Plant, and New Park & Ride Terminal for Rides Mass Transit District	1937
16	Martin Engineering Company of Illinois 3695 S. 6th St. Frontage Road West Springfield, IL 62703	217-698-8900 217-698-8922 martinengineeringco.com mecmail@martinengineeringco.com	2	11	Philip G. Martin, PE, pres.; Steven R. Walker, PLS, vice pres.	Springfield: Wabash Commercial Park, Hospital Sisters - Motherhouse, Oak Park Estates Phases 4 and 5, Prairie Eye Center Expansion, Centennial Park Place Phase 6, Cobblestone Apartments, Idlewild Sanitary Sewer, Jerome Mini Mall, Menards - Springfield North Warehouse Expansion, Pies the Limit - South MacArthur Boulevard, Cardinal Ridge (Chatham), The Christian Village Expansion (Washington), Geneseo School District new parking lot and synthetic turf football field (Geneseo)	1982











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2017 Resolutions for Springfield

BY DAVID KELM
Freelance Contributor

It's true that setting resolutions seems archaic and have solely become the realm of those seeking to lose a few pounds. There was a time when the New Year brought reflection and rededication to improving one's station. These resolutions are offered in that vein – to leave behind the detritus of 2016 (Prince died, for God's sake!) and to provide my five step plan for 2017.

It is important to note, before jumping into the resolutions, that Springfield needs a lot of help, and five resolutions are not enough. Springfield's leaders in government, business, faith and non-profits could develop dozens of resolutions to address education, growth, economic development, planning, and the list goes on.

Resolution 1: Develop a realistic action plan for the east side of Springfield. Let's be honest. Springfield is jaw-droppingly segregated between east and west. East of the 10th Street rail corridor, businesses are scarce, housing stock is troublesome, crime is a challenge and infrastructure is in disrepair. It does not take a Ph.D in planning to recognize the overt racial inequities staring us in the face. And, rather than actually do something, the big thinkers have paid for

empty plans, tried to rebrand the east side as "East Springfield" and, of course, every couple of years have pushed a new shelter or a new community center – often over the objection of the neighbors.

Springfield is 16 years into the 21st Century and, yet, we have elected officials and business leaders and community organizations that just can't seem to find the will or the way to put an actual plan together for a huge swath of our community. We as a community should demand better and resolve to establish a public-private working group to develop and implement solutions to economic development, jobs, housing, education and crime.

Resolution 2: Put a moratorium on business regulations. The Springfield City Council has been so busy lately. There are out-of-town developers who don't play by the unwritten rules of the game. There are TIF districts that have to be extended – again. There are buildings to be torn down for out-of-town developers who play by the unwritten rules. And, of course, the food trucks must be put in their place.

The council should resolve to take a year off from new business regulations. Simple. Just step away.

Resolution 3: Repeal the Mid-Illinois Medical District. There was a time in the heady pre-conviction days of Governors Ryan and

Blagojevich that some thought the burgeoning medical community in Springfield needed a guiding hand. The problem is the District was a solution in search of a problem.

For the past 14 years, the District has scrounged about for funding in an effort to plan and "grow." But during the scramble for funds, the Springfield health care community planned, grew and grew some more all by itself. Springfield's state representatives and senators should resolve to repeal the District and allow the Springfield medical community to continue its phenomenal success without another bureaucratic layer.

Resolution 4: Pick a project from the next city plan. Last month, the *Springfield Business Journal* included a piece discussing the upcoming 20-year plan for the City of Springfield. The plan is still being written but includes input from citizens, neighborhoods, businesses and leaders. It will be the first plan for Springfield written with the Millennial generation in mind.

The mayor and city council should resolve to pick one thing in the new plan to accomplish in 2017. Don't let the new plan gather dust on a virtual shelf on some back page of the city's website. Grab hold of one thing in the plan, put it on the community bulletin board and tackle it head on.

Resolution 5: Stop fantasizing about

Indianapolis. For years, Springfield leaders have gazed longingly at the growth and development of downtown Indianapolis. (While not confirmed, it is rumored that Lincoln himself once lead a planning committee to Indy to bask in what a "modern" city has to offer.) Research junkets and reports extolling the virtues of Indianapolis have become a virtual fetish of Springfield mayors and planners.

Repeat after me: "Springfield will never be Indianapolis." We don't have a premier car race. We don't have an NFL franchise. We don't have a monorail. (Indianapolis doesn't have one either, but if they did, we'd want one, too). If Springfield feels the need to look at what other cities and towns are doing, check out downtown Decatur (words I never thought I'd type) or Normal. Let's resolve to seek best practices from communities that better reflect Springfield.

That's it. I know, I didn't touch on education or crime or potholes or one-way streets or parking or golf courses. I agree we need some serious resolve in these and other areas. (Again, let's be honest, we have got do something about golf in our fair city.) But there are plenty more years to come and the resolutions will keep piling up. Happy 2017. ♦

David A. Kelm is an attorney in private practice.

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Stormwater reuse earns praise

BY NAOMI GREENE
Freelance Contributor

This is the first in a series of profiles on businesses and organizations pursuing environmentally sustainable projects and activities in and around Springfield

Although Springfield has a reasonably good water resource in its lake, the city has developed another water source, and it isn't Hunter Lake. It's a project to capture and reuse stormwater runoff, and it's getting noticed.

The idea for the project stemmed from an Illinois Environmental Protection Agency grant aimed at reducing the amount of stormwater runoff entering a municipality's sewer system, particularly in areas where rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater are collected in the same pipe.

At the time, Lee Bloome, an engineer with Hanson Professional Services, Inc., and John Higginbotham, an engineer with Springfield's Public Works Department, were looking for innovative ways to reduce pollutants like oil, grease and road salt that get picked up by stormwater as it flows across rooftops, parking lots and storage yards.

They chose the City of Springfield's garage facility for a test project because it had runoff issues due to salt storage on the property. The project design called for construction of a bioswale, which uses simple landscaping elements to remove silt and pollution from surface runoff water. The sloped sides of a swale are filled with vegetation, compost and riprap. In essence, the design slows and filters the water before releasing it to the sewer or watershed.

The plan won favor from the city as it came at a time in 2012 when there was little rain and the lake water levels had dropped. The \$600,000 grant was awarded in 2014, with the city providing 15 percent matching funds. The project was completed April 2015.

"The director and city engineer were on board," said Higginbotham. "It serves to highlight stormwater management issues in the city of Springfield and the city taking the initiative (to manage those issues)."

"We know that there are capacity issues out there," Bloome said, referring to sewers in Springfield which sometimes back up because



Bloome and Higginbotham, examine the bioswale site.

of heavy rainfall. "The system was designed 150 years ago and is still in service. Past practices didn't look at retaining stormwater or slowing how it gets into the system."

He says modern sewer systems correct that by including a detention pond to hold excess water.

The stormwater project includes an underground cistern that consists of four barrels which can hold a combined 94,000 gallons of stormwater runoff. A hydrodynamic separator, which uses cyclone action and a special screen to trap trash and pollutants, filters the runoff to keep out silt, oil, sediments or grit. That ensures the long-term operation of the system by protecting downstream pumps, filters and fixtures from damage or clogging.

The landscaping helps to slow the water, and the grasses used are salt-tolerant and require little water. The project and design is a model Hansen and other communities can reference for similar projects in the future.

"It adds projects to our toolbox," said Bloome. "We can incorporate these types of systems to other projects."

The ultimate goal is to use the collected water for non-potable activities, such as street sweeping and sewer jetting.

The project has earned recognition from Sustainable Springfield, was named top project of the year by the American Public Works Association and made *Storm Water Solutions* magazine's 2015 list of top 10 projects. ♦

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Just right at Pao Bistro

BY THOMAS C. PAVLIK JR.

Freelance Contributor

Over the years, we've concentrated on business lunches. But business isn't done just at lunch. As Bud Fox from "Wall Street" said, "Money never sleeps." We've all had our fair share of business dinners, as well. Some of those locations aren't open for lunch and therefore didn't get a review, so we're going to branch out a bit and throw in some business dinner reviews. What better place to start than Pao Bistro?

Pao is located in the heart of Springfield's west side in The Gables and holds itself out as a gourmet bar and restaurant providing Pacific Coast cuisine. The description is not far off the mark.

My guests and I showed up, without reservations, around 7 p.m. on a week night. Although it was fairly full, we were pleasantly greeted and quickly seated. As we headed to our table, we noticed that there was a pretty good crowd in the spacious bar. Had we needed to wait for a table, it would have been a nice spot to have a pre-dinner cocktail.

Pao's interior is clean and modern with a touch of industrial, accented by hues of red, orange and black. Tables aren't too close together, so there's little risk of being overheard by fellow diners. If you're taking a large group out, there are two private rooms – one more suited for larger events and a smaller room that's more intimate and designed for a dozen or so guests. Weather permitting, there's also al fresco dining available in a rather large patio

area.

Pao's menu is broken into starters/small plates and entrees. In addition to daily specials, Pao also has an extensive and separate sushi menu.

My guests and I decided to share some starters. We selected the Flying Squirrel (\$12.50 – tuna, scallions, avocado, cucumber, crispy wonton and sriracha peanut sauce, rolled inside out and topped with crushed nuts), the spicy tuna roll (\$11), the chorizo avocado egg roll (\$9 – fresh avocado with house made chorizo and a sweet chili glaze for dipping), and the filet roll (\$10 – diced marinated filet and pepper jack cheese rolled in wonton over a roasted tomato coulis).

Each dish was spot on. I'm a fan of sushi, and spicy tuna is my litmus test. Pao nailed this one. The Flying Squirrel was also fun to eat, and the different textures and tastes pleased everyone at the table. The chorizo egg roll, while delicious, was our collective least favorite; we found the chili glaze a bit too sweet. The filet roll, however, came with a wonderful roasted tomato sauce that packed a surprising – but not off-putting – amount of heat. Plus, the dish was large enough that it could count as an entrée. We couldn't have asked for a better start to our meal.

For our main dishes we ordered the tuna (\$19 – tuna steak, wasabi sesame seared very rare with teriyaki glazed vegetables and a soy citrus reduction), the Pao steak (\$16 – marinated eight-ounce choice sirloin with garlic blue cheese, cheddar-bacon potato cake and a balsamic demi glaze), and the daily special

consisting of fresh Chilean sea bass over lemon beurre blanc with grilled shrimp risotto and sautéed Brussels sprouts.

The tuna has been on Pao's menu for as long as I can remember – and with good reason. We appreciated that Pao isn't afraid to serve this sushi-quality tuna very rare. It's such a pity when overcooked. The dish was plated attractively and the soy-citrus reduction paired well with the sesame dusted tuna. This was a refined dish.

So, too, with the sea bass. I love sea bass because it's hard to overcook, thanks to it being oil rich, yet not tasting oily. The smooth and supple butter sauce – kudos to the chef for not allowing the emulsion to break – didn't overpower the fish but rather elevated it. The risotto was a bit stodgy and thick but hit the right flavor notes. The Brussels sprouts were perfectly sautéed, and their nuttiness and sweetness worked in harmony with the rest of the dish. Pao should put this one on its regular menu.

The Pao steak is one of Springfield's best bargains. Served very rare as requested, it was an excellent cut of meat. The cheddar-bacon cake was actually the highlight and was packed with flavor and contrasting textures; we mopped up the demi glaze with it. Although the asparagus was slightly overcooked to my taste, all was forgiven thanks to the wonderful garlic blue cheese that topped the steak.

Pao also has a full bar and an extensive wine menu with quite a few selections at reasonable price points.

We opted to split one dessert between us

and selected the chocolate torte (\$7 – dense fudge chocolate with ganache and a creamy chocolate mousse). It was a rich dish, perfect for sharing, and a nice finish to an enjoyable meal.

Service was pleasant and efficient, and our special requests were honored. We also appreciated that the owner personally made the rounds to make sure that his guests were happy.

Pao Bistro should be on your list for a business dinner. It delivers top flight food, at a reasonable price point, in a nice setting. Well done, Pao. ♦

Thomas C. Pavlik is an attorney with Delano Law Offices LLC in Springfield.

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You simply must

100 Things to Do in Springfield, IL Before You Die

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

It's easy to take for granted the places we see every day. Sometimes, we need a fresh look to appreciate all that Springfield has to offer.

In her recent book, "100 Things to Do in Springfield, IL Before You Die," Springfield author Penny Zimmerman-Wills offers a bucket list that will likely challenge even longtime Springfield residents.

The book is one of several from St. Louis-based Reedy Press curating activities in cities around the U.S. Zimmerman-Wills' version for Springfield highlights dozens of businesses in and around the capital city, with background, contact information and personal recommendations. It's easy to read all at once or flip through as needed. Think of it like a tour guide for locals and tourists alike.

The book is divided into sections for food and drink, music and entertainment, sports and recreation, culture and history, shopping and fashion and Lincoln-specific attractions. Zimmerman-Wills says once she began collecting activities for the book, it was difficult to narrow the list down to only 100. Some entries have useful tips that recommend other bonus experiences.

"There really are more than 100 things

to do in Springfield, believe it or not," Zimmerman-Wills said with a laugh.

Many local favorites make the cut: soup at the Feed Store, Vose's Korndogs at the state fair, digging through vinyl at Recycled Records and many more. There are also some better-kept secrets in the bunch, like Patricia Doyle Associates Auction Gallery, which holds Friday-night auctions of eclectic wares – from antique furniture and paintings to baseball cards and tools.

Downtown Springfield gets a fair amount of attention in the book, with the Lincoln sites, Sixth Street shops and several restaurants taking their rightful places on this must-experience list. However, there are also plenty of entries from the rest of the city and beyond, including horse riding at Riverside Stables, picking blueberries at Jefferies Orchard and exploring Lincoln's New Salem by candlelight.

Zimmerman-Wills says she hopes the book helps people experience Springfield in a new way.

"I hope they look through this and say, for example, 'Oh, I've never had a truffle from Cocoa Blue,' " she said. "If you go to the same places all the time, you don't think about it. I hope people learn something new and just have fun." ♦

100 Things to Do in Springfield, IL Before You Die

Reedy Press, St. Louis. 2016. 144 pages.
<http://store.reedypress.com/100-things-to-do-in-springfield-il-before-you-die>



Penny Zimmerman-Wills

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

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Exelon bill a win for green jobs, but manufacturers see loss

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

A nuclear power plant near Springfield which was slated to close will continue operating, thanks to a controversial new state law awarding an estimated \$253 million per year to power company Exelon.

Some environmentalists see the measure as a win for green jobs, but a coalition of opponents blasts it as a bailout.

For several years, Exelon had warned state lawmakers that some of its nuclear power plants were losing money and would likely have to close because of how the state's electricity market works. Even though Exelon's fleet of six nuclear plants in Illinois is the largest source of electricity in the state, Illinois' "deregulated" market lets consumers choose the source of their electricity, meaning many consumers opt for coal or natural gas power instead of more expensive nuclear power. The excess power produced by nuclear plants in Illinois is sold on the grid in other states.

Exelon's solution for its unfavorable market position in Illinois was for state lawmakers to create a system to subsidize nuclear plants with low carbon credits that recognize the plants' lack of carbon dioxide emissions. The system provides Exelon with about \$253 million per year in ratepayer subsidies for 10 years by creating a preference for low carbon nuclear energy within the state power market.

Gov. Bruce Rauner's administration negotiated concessions from Exelon before the bill's passage, including capping the average residential cost increase to 25 cents per year and capping cost increases for commercial and industrial users at 1.3 percent. The bill was also stripped of prevailing wage requirements before passage.

"That's the argument of somebody who's grasping at straws at end of a debate,"

Environmental groups originally opposed Exelon's plan, saying the company had hampered efforts to fix a glitch in state law which prevented the growth of wind and solar power. The Illinois Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), adopted in 2008, calls for 25 percent of the state's power to come from renewable sources by 2025, but a technical problem in the law prevented money from being spent out of a fund set up for renewable power projects. In August, the U.S. Energy Information Authority estimated that only 2.2 percent of electricity produced in Illinois came from renewable sources.

Exelon ultimately incorporated the RPS fix into its bill, getting many environmentalists on board with its passage. Nick Magrisso, Midwest states legislative director for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said most of the funding in the new law will actually go toward "kick starting clean energy." Among other provisions, the law rewards energy efficiency efforts by consumers and utilities while making wind and solar energy more affordable.

"The clean energy provisions in this bill will lead to billions in private investment and create thousands of new jobs," Magrisso said, "making the Future Energy Jobs Bill one of the greatest economic development plans Illinois has seen in a very long time."

However, at least one statehouse observer expressed skepticism that the law would deliver on its promises. Abe Scarr, director of the Illinois Public Interest Research Group, praises the green jobs aspect of the bill but says he's concerned that the cost increase caps won't work. He says the penalty for Exelon exceeding the cap is that the company receives less of a subsidy for plants which already produce more power than Illinois needs.

The BEST Coalition, a nonprofit group of businesses organized to oppose Exelon's legislation, blasted the law as hurting consumers and stifling innovation. Dave Lundy, the group's spokesman, says energy demand in Illinois is

actually declining, but the new law ensures continued excess power – essentially subsidizing electricity in other states at the expense of Illinois ratepayers.

Val Jensen, senior vice president of customer service for Exelon subsidiary ComEd, responds that if Exelon's nuclear plants went offline, there would actually be less power available, driving up energy prices. He calls the BEST Coalition's criticism about exporting electricity a red herring.

"That's the argument of somebody who's grasping at straws at end of a debate," Jensen said.

The Illinois Manufacturers' Association – which often sees an ally in Rauner because of his business-oriented Turnaround Agenda – broke with the governor over the Exelon bill, saying "Illinois' ability to compete for middle class manufacturing jobs was weakened" by Rauner's approval.

"Building a guaranteed electric rate hike into state law and reversing 20 years of deregulation is not the answer to get our economy booming again," the group said.

Jensen says the law specifically exempted large electricity users from the requirement to participate in energy efficiency programs as a way to limit cost increases.

"We're sensitive to the condition of our largest customers," he said. "We have no interest in putting them in a less competitive position." ♦

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The business of art: Mandy Curl, Mandinka Design

BY ROBERTA CODEMO
Freelance Contributor

This is the first in a series profiling Springfield artists selling their art in downtown shops.

Mandy Curl of Springfield credits her mom, Liz Curl, with teaching her to sew. Now, Curl uses that skill to make one-of-a-kind handcrafted bags under her Mandinka Designs label, which she sells at The Roost in downtown Springfield.

"Mandinka" comes from a group of people in West Africa, referenced in a Sinéad O'Connor song by the same name.

Although Curl learned to sew in junior high, it

wasn't until college that she found her passion, when a friend encouraged her to take a fiber arts class.

"It all made sense," said Curl, who has a Master of Fine Arts degree in fiber arts from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

One day, she was batting around ideas when she called her mom, and asked her to pick up some men's suit jackets at the Salvation Army. From there, a business was born.

Curl did research and could find only one person – in England – making purses out of suit jackets at that time in 2005. Each of her designs is named after a man, and there are currently 13 different designs in the line.

Her mom scouts out suits for her.

"It's a little addictive," Liz Curl said, laughing. She started making hats and branched out into scarves and wallets that she sells under her daughter's label.

"I enjoy the process," Mandy Curl said, adding that she loves playing around with new ideas. She's inspired by different patterns and colors and is drawn to '50s style jackets. When she finds a new piece of fabric, Curl browses her existing collection of suit fabrics, looking for complementary pieces to create a fabric collage which she'll turn into a handbag.

"People don't understand what goes into it," she said.

Curl also does custom orders. For those, someone – usually a family member – will give

her a loved one's suit jacket and have Curl create handbags out of it for family members.

"I'm privileged to get to do that," she said.

She also sells a line of stuffed mutts under the Mutts of Tweedville label.

"I did bugs in the beginning," she said. "I love dogs."

Each litter comes with a story. The girls come with bowties and the boys with neckties made from ties.

"I knew," said Liz Curl, "she was destined to do something creative." ♦

For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/MandinkaDesigns> or www.mandinkadesigns.com



PHOTO / MANDY CURL



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PHOTO / COURTESY OF H.D. SMITH

H.D. Smith announces Ross Davison as CFO

Ross Davison is taking over as chief financial officer at H.D. Smith, the nation's largest independent pharmaceutical wholesaler.

Davison is a certified public accountant who earned his accounting degree from the University of Kentucky and a master's of business administration from Bellarmine University. He's an experienced financial manager, most recently serving as CFO at

Louisville-based ResCare, Inc., where he oversaw revenues of \$1.8 billion. Davison also has consulting experience and serves as a board member for PJ United, a private investment company which is one of the largest Papa John's pizza franchisees.

"Ross brings excellent leadership, analytical, strategic planning and communication skills to our team, with

substantial experience," said Chris Smith, president and CEO of H.D. Smith. "After a thorough search process, we look forward to the guidance and knowledge Ross will bring to our financial teams."

Started in 1954, H.D. Smith is headquartered in Springfield and offers a variety of healthcare products in major markets around the nation. ♦



PHOTO BY ASPEN GROUP

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HeplerBroom adds attorney in Springfield



COURTESY OF HEPLERBROOM

Law firm HeplerBroom has added attorney Julieta Kosiba to its Springfield office.

Kosiba, who will handle civil litigation at HeplerBroom, was admitted to practice law in Illinois in November after graduating from Washington University School of Law. She is fluent in Polish and speaks conversational Spanish.

Kosiba says she decided to become an attorney while participating in mock trials in college.

"I fell in love with being an advocate, getting to draft arguments and resolve conflicts," she said. "I enjoy thinking outside the box." ♦



MEDICAL NEWS

HSHS faces pension lawsuits

SCOTUS to hear challenge to religious exemption in related cases

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Hospital Sisters Health System in Springfield faces a pair of lawsuits over alleged pension underfunding, but the cases are really about challenging an exemption to a federal pension law which religious hospitals nationwide enjoy.

In early December, the U.S. Supreme Court announced it will hear three separate but related cases against different religious health care providers based in Illinois, New Jersey and California. The cases are among several challenging the religious exemption on constitutional grounds.

Holly Mollet, a former employee of Hospital Sisters Health System, filed a lawsuit against the Springfield-based health care group in

September of this year, alleging HSHS had more than \$410 million in unfunded pension obligations in 2012.

Hospital Sisters Health System is headquartered in Springfield and operates HSHS St. John's Hospital here, as well as several other hospitals in Illinois and Wisconsin.

Mollet alleged that HSHS is in violation of the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act, known as ERISA. That law requires companies to maintain specific funding levels in their pension systems, but it exempts "church plans," which is currently interpreted to include any religious group. Mollet contends that the church plan exemption applies only to churches themselves – not religious hospitals.

The lawsuit says that Congress' intent in creating the church exemption was to prevent an invasive government examination of a church's finances. Mollet alleges that because HSHS already publishes extensive financial records and has no direct financial ties to the Roman Catholic Church, the hospital system should not be considered exempt as a church.

HSHS is operated by the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, a Roman Catholic order of nuns.

Further, Mollet contends that the church exemption within ERISA is unconstitutional. Mollet says it violates the First Amendment, which prohibits Congress from passing laws "respecting an establishment of religion." The amendment's so-called Establishment Clause forbids the government from establishing an official religion, elevating one religion over another or giving preference to religion or non-religion.

A separate lawsuit against HSHS was filed in October by former HSHS employees Mary Holcomb and Mary Grovogel, making substantially similar allegations. The two cases were consolidated in November by U.S. District Court Judge Sue Myerscough in Springfield.

A spokesman for HSHS in Springfield declined to comment, but HSHS has communicated to employees that its pension plan is not at risk of underfunding.

In an Oct. 5 memo from David Beach, chief people officer for HSHS, and Michael

Yost, director of compensation and benefits, HSHS told employees that lawsuits against it and other Catholic healthcare systems are "a coordinated attack on religious based health entities." The memo assured employees that the pension system is secure and urged employees to bring forth any questions or concerns.

Separate lawsuits with similar allegations were previously filed against Illinois-based Advocate Health Systems, New Jersey-based St. Peter's Healthcare System and California-based Dignity Health. Those lawsuits were allowed to proceed in federal court, and the hospital systems involved are now asking the U.S. Supreme Court to throw them out. The high court agreed to take the three cases, although a hearing date has not been set.

Attorneys for Hospital Sisters Health System have not filed an answer to the complaints against the system for the consolidated case pending in Springfield. With the Supreme Court agreeing to weigh in, it's likely that case will be postponed until the Supreme Court rules. ♦

Memorial named in top 10 healthcare organizations for leadership development

Memorial Health System in Springfield has been named by the National Center for Healthcare Leadership as one of the best health care providers for leadership development.

The designation puts Memorial among the top 10 health care organizations in the U.S.

The National Center for Healthcare Leadership announced in October that 19 health care organizations around the nation were named among its Best Organizations for Leadership Development (BOLD), which honors

providers using evidence-based leadership development practices to improve community health and health care.

"Memorial is committed to developing leaders who not only embody our mission to improve the health of the people and communities we serve, but also are ready to succeed in a challenging healthcare environment, said Aimee Allbritton, vice president of organization development and chief learning officer for Memorial Health System.

Curtis to chair Illinois Health and Hospital Association board

Edgar Curtis has been named as chairman of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association board. Curtis serves as president and CEO of Memorial Health System.

The Illinois Health and Hospital Association is a statewide organization

of more than 200 hospitals and about 50 health systems focused on improving health care. Curtis will lead the group's board of trustees in setting policy and goals.

Curtis will remain president and CEO of Memorial Health System when he starts as chairman at IHHA on Jan. 1.

AIWO donates nearly \$137,000 to St. John's neonatal unit

The Asian Indian Women's Organization of Springfield donated \$136,822 to the neonatal intensive care unit at HSHS St. John's in December.

The donation – one of several from AIWO in recent years – was raised at the group's India Night dinner and fashion show earlier in the year and will help remodel the NICU at St. John's.

Beverly Neisler, chief development officer of HSHS St. John's Foundation, said the remodel will, among other things, allow private patient rooms for families whose newborn children are in the NICU. Currently, newborns are held close together in large "pods", she said, adding that the remodel project is still in the early planning stage.

"A lot of what is going to happen in the neonatal intensive care unit has yet to be

determined," she said.

MaryBeth Miller, nurse manager at St. John's Hospital, says the remodel will reduce the number of newborns in a room from eight to only one. That allows more space for families, less stress and reduced chance of spreading harmful germs.

"We are just so fortunate to have the AIWO as a partner with us," Miller said. "They've just been so generous in spirit and in every way."

Aruna Mathur, president of AIWO, says the group's first fundraiser was in 1996 for Ronald McDonald House. Since then, the group has held several similar fundraisers aimed at giving back to the city which accepted them.

"We all came from India, and we got so much from this community," she said. "Now, it's time to give back."



Dr. Charles Lucore, president and CEO of HSHS St. John's Hospital, thanks the Asian Indian Women's Organization of Springfield for their donation.

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

Grojean Real Estate in Jacksonville sold

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Charles Grojean has been in real estate around Jacksonville since 1970, and he jokes that it was about time for him to have an "exit strategy."

Grojean sold his company, Grojean Real Estate, earlier this year, but he's sticking around for the foreseeable future.

Mike Hayes, a real estate broker, developer and landlord in Jacksonville,

purchased the company in October. Hayes says he was considering starting his own company to market and sell a proposed subdivision adjacent to Jacksonville Country Club, but after talking with Grojean, Hayes decided it made more sense to buy an established business than to build one himself. Hayes also does business in North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida.

Grojean says he got started in real estate

because he was always around it. His father and grandfather started the company in the '70s, and Grojean's son, Adam, now works for the company, too. Grojean and his brother, Tom Grojean of Jacksonville, retained ownership of a separate insurance company under the same umbrella when they sold the real estate company. They'll continue to operate out of the same building as before, with Grojean continuing to sell real estate. He says even the name, Grojean Real Estate, will

remain for now.

"Not much has changed," Grojean said.

Hayes says the proposed subdivision is still in the approval stage, but demolition has already begun for an existing mobile home park and a handful of houses on the site. Hayes hopes to begin developing the still-unnamed subdivision in the spring, with a mix of single-family and duplex residential, including high-end homes directly facing the golf course. ♦

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space reservation: Fri., Jan. 13 • materials due: Wed., Jan. 18

Smartphones key at downtown hotel

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

A hotel in downtown Springfield has announced that guests can now use their smartphones to check in and access their rooms without a separate key.

The President Abraham Lincoln Springfield - A Double Tree by Hilton announced its initiative Nov. 30, saying it's the first hotel in Springfield to offer such services. It's a commercial spin on the burgeoning world of home automation enabled by increasingly interconnected mobile devices.

At the President Abraham Lincoln Springfield, 701 East Adams St., guests can download the Hilton HHonors app to choose a room, check in without stopping at the front desk and open the room using their smartphone as a "Digital Key."

"We are committed to continuously improving the guest experience and utilizing cutting edge technology," said general manager Robert Sabin. "Digital check-in and Digital Key are great ways

for us to continue to offer our guests the best service in the Springfield area."

Once a guest chooses a check-in time with the app, the hotel makes sure a warm cookie is waiting in the room prior to the guest's arrival.

As the power and connectivity of smartphones grows, so has the range of applications - both commercial and residential. One common use of the technology is security, which allows users to view surveillance cameras while away from their home or business and even turn lights on and off. There are Internet-enabled thermostats, coffee-makers, ovens, stereos and the list continues to grow. Hilton's use of the technology for check-in and room access uses Bluetooth-enabled locks which open when a paired smartphone is placed within range.

According to a press release from Hilton, guests at the company's 4,700-plus properties have used the app more than 20 million times since it was first introduced in 2014. ♦

Professional Women's Calendar of Events

You play a key role and we thank you for your contributions to our community.

Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL)

IWIL will hold a luncheon on Thursday, January 19 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Sangamo Club. Jennifer Gill will speak on "Realizing a Strong Sense of Worthiness." After almost three years as superintendent in Springfield District 186, her journey is still a work in progress. Working alongside teachers, administrators, board members and students gives her a strong sense of purpose and the belief that a successful school district creates a healthy community. Jennifer will share her story as well as key learning experiences she has had along the way that can be incorporated into any profession. Cost is \$18 for advance registration or \$23 at the door. Register at www.iwil.biz.

Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois (WE-CI)

WE-CI will hold its monthly meeting on Wednesday, January 11 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Sangamo Club. We will be discussing our goals for 2017 and will also have sign-ups for our new committees. Be a part of this kick-off and help us form a strong foundation for 2017! The cost for this meeting will be \$15 for members, \$10 for guests, and \$20 for walk-ins. RSVP by January 6 to reservations@we-ci.org, or you can visit www.we-ci.org to reserve a spot.

Association for Women in Communications (AWC)

AWC will hold a luncheon on Wednesday, January 11 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Sangamo Club. The program will feature Illinois Times editor and publisher Fletcher Farrar. The weekly newspaper has been a staple of the Central Illinois news media landscape for 40 years. Farrar will discuss the changes that have affected news gathering and reporting over the years and potential new threats to freedom of the press in this era of political upheaval.



To have your event added to the Women's Calendar of Events, please fax your information to 217-753-2281 or e-mail to info@springfieldbusinessjournal.com



Rakey steps down

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Lisa Rakey has stepped down as executive director of Big Brothers, Big Sisters of the Illinois Capital Region.

Rakey's successor, Mia Woods, started in her new role this month, although Rakey will stay involved as a volunteer.

Rakey, whose last day as executive director was Dec. 9, was first hired at Big Brothers, Big Sisters about 10 years ago to help the program expand into Macoupin and Montgomery counties. It has since expanded further into Christian and Logan counties, with hopes to continue expanding to other nearby counties.

In September, Rakey told the board that she was stepping down, but she agreed to stay until a replacement was named. Rakey had been executive director since 2014, and she says she'll continue to be involved as a volunteer.

"I'm just going to be enjoying the non-administrative part of volunteering," she said.

"I'll still be around to help out."

Rakey said she's excited for Woods to take the reins.

"I love this organization and wanted to stay on as long as I could until they found the perfect person to take over," Rakey said.

Woods previously served as director of operations for Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Illinois. She says she was attracted to Big Brothers, Big Sisters of the Illinois Capital Region because of its longstanding history of working with communities in need.

"There are so many great stories from supporters and participants," she said.

Woods says her main priority will be decreasing the wait time for children to be paired with a mentor or "big" by getting more people involved.

"I have so much to learn," Woods said. "I'm looking forward to figuring out who we are in the community. I want to make sure every child wanting a big has one." ♦

Fairhills Shopping Center sold to new owner

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Fairhills Shopping Center has a new owner and a new vision following a sale in November.

Changes at Fairhills could include new national retailers and a reconfiguration of some retail space.

Fairhills is on Springfield's northeast side, bounded by Washington Street, Chatham Road and Monroe Avenue. It hosts a handful of restaurants, a County Market and other businesses.

Sean Namvar of Los Angeles is manager of Fairhills Investors Equity LLC, the company set up to purchase Fairhills Shopping Center. Namvar heads Equimax Management, which manages more than five million square feet of retail space in California and the St. Louis area. Namvar says the mall's location on a hill made it attractive because of its good visibility from several directions.

"When we first saw it, we liked the way it was situated," he said.

The first change at Fairhills will be replacing the roof, which Namvar says has needed repairs for some time. He says three current tenants have renewed their leases, which typically last between five and 10 years, and he's confident the other tenants will also renew.

"We're very committed to turning the center around and making it a vibrant center in town," he said. "We're committed to keeping the tenants happy."

Tim Mathis, a commercial real estate broker with Coldwell Banker Commercial Devonshire Realty in Springfield, will handle marketing the vacancies at Fairhills. Mathis says the 100,000 square foot mall has several openings, ranging from a few hundred square feet to a possible consolidated space which could encompass 20,000 square feet. Plans for Fairhills include developing an outlet to have a freestanding national retailer, Mathis says, as well as a mix of small and large businesses.

He says the mall has several advantages, like good visibility and strong traffic from the nearby schools and residential areas. According to Mathis, the prices for the open spaces at Fairhills will be quite reasonable.

"The way it's priced for the traffic level and all the area has to offer," he said, "it's probably the best deal in Springfield for its category."

Namvar says the decision to invest in Springfield was easy.

"We're real estate investors, so we look at opportunities everywhere," he said. "We go see properties to make sure they fit our guidelines. Fairhills makes sense for our model." ♦



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