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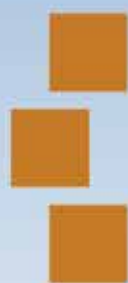
February 2024

Making city government more helpful to businesses

Q&A with David Steckel

2024 commercial real estate forecast

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When you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got

I spent seven years working in commercial real estate before returning to *SBJ* for my second tour of duty, so I became quite familiar with the oft-heard complaints from business owners, general contractors, architects and others that it is hard to get projects done in the city of Springfield. The problem has transcended multiple administrations, but the new mayor, Misty Buscher, says she wants to make city government more efficient and helpful to businesses.

It's a worthwhile goal, but not an easy one. The wheels of bureaucracy move slowly, especially when change is involved. Despite the best efforts of well-intentioned individuals, it can be hard to take collective action. The recent change of administration has also resulted in a significant loss of institutional knowledge. While that can mean fewer people to say, "We've always done it this way," it also means there are fewer people who remember what's already been tried and whether or not it worked.

Val Yazell has returned to head up the Office of Planning and Economic Development and points to new hires and new roles as key to carrying out her goals for the office (p. 26). She has certainly assembled an impressive team with extensive knowledge of what other cities have done to become more friendly to businesses that want to launch or expand. And while it's important to provide some hand-holding during the often-cumbersome process of permitting, licensing and inspections, helping business owners who come to the city with projects is only a small piece of the puzzle. What Springfield needs are bold visionaries with fresh ideas for revitalization and the will to carry out those plans.

King Solomon, who lived in the ninth century B.C., is credited with the saying, "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again, there is nothing new under the sun." Cities with similar demographics and geography can provide a template for our economic development efforts. We may not be able to attract an IKEA or Trader Joe's, but there are plenty of concepts that have worked in other places and could be repurposed for Springfield. There are other cities that have successfully reinvented themselves in the midst of changing economic forces. For Springfield to not only survive, but thrive, we must become one of them.



Michelle Ownbey, publisher



Editor: Fletcher Farrar
fletcher@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Publisher: Michelle Ownbey
michelle@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Associate Publisher: James Bengfort
jbengfort@illinoistimes.com

Copy Editor: Daron Walker
daron@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Production Design: Devin Larson
dlarson@illinoistimes.com

Advertising:
Yolanda Bell
yolanda@springfieldbusinessjournal.com
217-679-7802

Haley Jackson
haley@springfieldbusinessjournal.com
217-679-7804

Beth Parkes-Irwin
beth@springfieldbusinessjournal.com
217-679-7803

Ron Young
ron@springfieldbusinessjournal.com
217-679-7807

Subscriptions:
springfieldbusinessjournal.com/subscribe
subs@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

February Contributors:

Zach Adams
David Blanchette
Kelly Gust
Dean Olsen
Thomas C. Pavlik
Scott Reeder
Janet Seitz
Holly Whisler

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

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Q & A

with

David Steckel

By David Blanchette

David Steckel originally went to college to study engineering but switched his focus to architecture after the first year and never looked back. He's now held the same job for nearly 50 years, although the company has changed names and owners several times along the way, and is the principal of Steckel-Parker Architects, 2941 Happy Landing Drive.

David has served on the city of Springfield's Historic Sites Commission for many years and also on the board of Island Bay Yacht Club. He and his wife, Cathy, live in Springfield.

Where were you born and raised, and what was your first job?

I was born and raised in Greenfield, which is south of Jacksonville. I grew up on a farm and did a certain amount of work there. My first actual non-farm, paying job was at a filling station in Greenfield.

When did you decide to enter the architectural field?

I went to college at the University of Missouri-Rolla (now Missouri University of Science and Technology) for one year in engineering. It wasn't a good fit, but it was close. At that point I decided a good fit would be to study architecture at the University of Arkansas.

Basically, I have had one job for almost 50 years. In the summer of 1974, I worked as an intern and at that time the company was named Golabowsky-Spinney-Coady. When I finished college in 1975, I started working here full time, and the company name had changed to Spinney-Coady-Parker. It's now Steckel-Parker Architects.

How has the architectural field changed in your 50 years in the business?

The advent of computers and CADD (computer-aided drafting and design) has been a real significant change. When I started everything was manually drawn, and when you were manually drawing it took a whole lot more people to do the same thing that quite a few less people can do now.

Which projects that you've worked on are your personal favorites?

The LRS complex, the Gables, the BRANDT corporate office building – those are some of my favorite larger projects. There has just been a phenomenal number through the years that I have enjoyed tremendously – some of the smaller ones as well. I still enjoy doing projects.

What is the greatest satisfaction that you get from your career?

It's working on the projects and seeing them through. Also, having clients that sometimes don't totally have the vision to see exactly what the final product is going to be, and then are quite satisfied.

What are the biggest challenges that architects face today?

Coming out of COVID-19, things have changed a lot. Scheduling projects, the



Dave Steckel, pictured in a 2007 SBJ article, has worked for the same company for almost 50 years. He began as an intern in 1974 and is now an owner of the firm now known as Steckel-Parker Architects.

supply chain and manpower – both in architects' offices and on job sites – have become really significant challenges in the last few years.

What will the local designed environment look like in the not-too-distant future?

There will be continued refinement in the efficiency of buildings, the reduction of energy usage and that sort of thing. The look of some things is not necessarily going to change a lot, particularly when you've got a city like Springfield that has a lot of historic buildings. There is always hopefully going to be that historic fabric within the built environment.

We are a pretty traditionally-styled area here. Traditional forms of architecture are what people seem to gravitate toward. I don't think visually you're going to see that much of a change, it's going to be more in the efficiency of buildings.

How do you give back to the Springfield community?

There are times that we have donated services to certain worthwhile groups. We donated services on the original Ronald McDonald House and the Habitat for

Humanity office building on South Sixth Street. It's an effort to utilize what we do for the good of the community.

I have been on Springfield's Historic Sites Commission for a lot of years. That's all volunteer, and it's to try to keep the inventory of historic buildings in place. If somebody wants to put an addition on a historic building it goes through an approval process with the commission.

To what do you attribute your 50-year longevity in the same career?

It has been a tremendous pleasure working in the Springfield environment. That's the reason I have been at it as long as I have and plan to continue to do so. There have been a lot of wonderful clients that I've worked with and a lot of great contractors. It's been a great fit for me, and there's no place else I'd rather be.

What advice can you give to young people entering the career field today?

Try to learn as much from every project as you can. It's a field where you continue to learn forever. Take advantage of the nature of that project to learn things you didn't know before. The process is to keep learning and grow as a result. **SBJ**

Show me the money

Lucky Horseshoes have ambitious plan to renovate stadium, seeking financial support

By Scott Reeder



A rendering showing some of the proposed renovations to Robin Roberts Stadium.
COURTESY OF J.H. PETTY AND ASSOCIATES

The Springfield Lucky Horseshoes have \$10 million in ideas about how to improve Robin Roberts Stadium.

But the question is: Who will pay for it? "First and foremost, it starts with the ownership group," said Jamie Toole, an executive and an owner of the team. "Our ownership group has shown a commitment and a willingness to invest, such as in the video board and beer garden. We've done a few things on our own. Second, the owner of the building needs to engage."

The ballpark is owned by the Springfield Park District.

Park Board President Leslie Sgro said Jan. 21 that neither she nor other members of the board have seen the proposal that Toole is advocating. She added that it originates from an architectural study jointly funded by the Horseshoe ownership and the Park Board.

Joe Petty, an architect and the owner of J.H. Petty and Associates in Springfield, completed the renderings of proposed renovations. He said the cost of the study was \$17,500.

"It's kind of a broad overview of what's possible without really getting down and dirty into the weeds," Petty said.

"I'm hoping that the board will see it in February," Sgro said. "It was a joint project between the Horseshoes and the Park District. So, we each kicked in money to

do this. We offered to let them take the lead – sort of driving the bus on it – but our first preliminary meeting between the Shoes and (Park District) staff, not even the board, is Feb. 7."

Sgro added that she and the rest of the board want to see the stadium flourish.

"They're excited and that's a good thing," she said. "Any improvements at Robin Roberts are a good thing. And that's why we've invested money ... I'm all for improvements for the stadium. We just have to figure out a responsible way to pay for them."

Sgro added, "We're partnering with District 186 to help the Shoes get more parking, which I think is a critical component to their success. And we can work with various partners to make the Shoes successful in Springfield."

Taxpayer dollars from the Park District will need to be part of the equation, Toole said.

"I'm not saying they underwrite the entire project, or even half," Toole said. "I'm saying (they) have to engage. You own the facility. And, you know, from our perspective, there's resources that they have access to that they have not allocated to Robin Roberts Stadium. And for whatever reason, I just think that the ballpark has not been a priority."

Toole said there are other sources of money that need to be explored such as

private and government grants. Another possible funding source would be selling the naming rights to the stadium, he said.

The stadium is named after Robin Evan Roberts, a Springfield native and Lanphier High School graduate. He was a major league pitcher and an inductee into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

"This is something that we're trying to handle with kid gloves because we have such great respect for Robin Roberts and that family and the tradition. But the reality is a lot of ballparks are maintained and improved with a naming rights partnership," Toole said. "So, it may be Dublin Pub Field at Robin Roberts Stadium or something like that. But that could be a significant annual contribution that goes into the facility that helps go toward these enhancements and these improvements."

Special state funding may also be sought.

"When you can get the local leadership – meaning the mayor, the city council, the park board, the local politicians – pulling on the same rope, on the same side, then I think you are positioning a project that the state says, 'Yeah, this makes a lot of sense. It's the capital city, let's go make this thing happen,'" Toole said. "We basically try to look at every different opportunity to get resources into this facility to create more of a long-term, sustainable facility."



But what improvements do the Horseshoes believe are needed to have a sustainable facility?

The architectural renderings speak more in broad strokes than fine details. Even the \$10 million figure is at best a guesstimate, Toole said. He added the improvements would likely come in a series of phases.

"(Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility, restrooms and concession

stands – those are priorities," he said. Since the team's inception, the Horseshoes have said these aspects of the stadium are in dire need of renovations.

Other proposed changes for Robin Roberts Stadium include a new turf field, enhanced lighting, an improved concourse, a brick facade and having a new fan section on the right field.



Toole said new turf is critical.




"I think that the field turf is probably

the economic driver from our perspective," he said.

"When you're going to recruit bigger events – you want to go get University of Illinois to play University of Missouri in an annual baseball game or series – you need to have these modern amenities to go and create the revenue generation to turn those schools' attention to say, 'Yeah, let's go to Springfield.'" **SBJ**




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City pursues legal action against Olde Towe Apartments

Seeking to demolish eight vacant structures and force owner to repair four others

By Scott Reeder



The city of Springfield is seeking court orders to take possession of eight vacant building in the Olde Towne apartment complex and has allocated \$600,000 in this year's budget for demolition. The city also wants the owner to renovate four of the occupied buildings on the site.

PHOTO BY MICHELLE OWNBEY

The city of Springfield is seeking court orders to take possession of eight vacant, dilapidated apartment buildings so that they can be demolished.

The structures are part of the 23-building Olde Towne apartment complex, located at the corner of Jefferson Street and Bruns Lane. City officials are also seeking to have the owner rehabilitate four occupied buildings on the site.

The complex is owned by two New York investors who city officials say have told them they lack the money to make the necessary changes. The current owners purchased the property at auction in November 2020 and paid \$5,250,000 for the 218-unit property, according to Sangamon County tax records.

"There are eight buildings that have been 'condemned,' but they are all vacant already," said Kateah McMasters, senior assistant corporation counsel. "We did not vacate those. They've been vacant for at least two, if not three years – maybe even longer."

She said the city is midway through the condemnation process for five of the buildings and has just begun the legal process for the other three.

"A lot of those vacant buildings either don't have secure floors or there's other structural issues," Ethan Posey, director of community relations, said. "There are broken windows, there's mold. And from a public safety perspective, when you have vacant buildings that are open like that, (home-

less people) – especially when it gets cold – break into those buildings and start a fire for warmth. And that's something that could either kill them or start a fire that could burn down the whole complex. So demolishing those buildings is really more for the safety of the people who live in buildings that are currently occupied there."

The city administration has set aside \$600,000 in its proposed budget to raze the structures.

McMasters said there are less-serious building code violations in four occupied buildings in the complex. She declined to identify the nature of violations.

"The problems are not immediate dangers," she said. "We just don't want to cause any kind of unnecessary panic because these things can sometimes spread and get blown out of proportion," she said.

City officials say there are 47 apartments in the occupied buildings in which they are seeking repairs.

"Structurally, those buildings are sound that everyone lives in," Fire Marshal Todd Taylor said. "And they passed everything they needed to for fire safety inspection. ... There are still open issues, but the fire alarm systems have been restored and are in working condition."

City staff is working with the building's project management company in hopes of resolving the issues.

"Any given building probably has at least a couple violations, but they are not to the

extent that we are ready to close down those buildings, by any stretch of the imagination," McMasters said. ... "There are four additional buildings that do have some heightened safety concerns that we are contemplating shutting down, but we are not there yet because we are trying to resolve those issues."

Posey said the city does not want to see anyone lose their home.

"If we're not able to reach a resolution here, we're making sure that people don't just end up out on the street," he said. "We're finding appropriate, alternate housing for them that's also price comfortable."

Flyers were posted around the complex informing tenants that caseworkers from Fifth Street Renaissance would be on hand Jan. 10 "to work to relocate those affected by the building condemnation." After some tenants took to social media to ask questions and express concerns, Penny Powell, executive director of Fifth Street Renaissance, posted a statement in response that read in part:

"As a neutral party and a social service organization (that) operates multiple programs serving the needs of those experiencing homelessness or near homelessness, our only goal is to ensure that no one becomes unhoused. We are not forcing anyone to participate, encouraging anyone to move or stop paying their rent. We are only informing tenants of available assistance and assessing for program eligibility if requested." **SBJ**

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website: http://seebuildings.com/fs_crenmembers.php
Members listed alphabetically.

AGENT	BUSINESS NAME	ADDRESS	EMAIL	PHONE	MOBILE
David Barber	Illini Properties	22 Virginia Lane, Springfield, IL 62712	davidbarber2@gmail.com	217-529-1236	217-652-1064
Denise Bean-Mathis	Coldwell Banker Commercial Devonshire Realty	Springfield, IL	tmathis@cbcdr.com	217-547-6650	217-377-1944
John Clark	Real Estate Group	3701 Wabash Ave., Springfield, IL 62711	johnbclarkrealtor@yahoo.com	217-787-7000	
Bernard Curvey	Curvey Real Estate, Inc.	611 Springfield Road, Taylorville, IL 62568	curvey@ctitech.com	217-824-4996	
Max Dancer	Happel, Inc. Realtors	4439 Broadway, Quincy, IL 62305	mdancer@happelcommercial.com	217-224-8383	217-440-3100
Tom Frost	The Real Estate Group	3701 Wabash Ave., Springfield, IL 62711	frost4003@att.net	217-787-7000	217-652-8972
Glen Garrison	Garrison Group, Inc. Keller Williams Capital	739 S. Fifth St., Springfield, IL 62703	glen@garrisongroupinc.com	217-241-0202	217-816-2664
Kevin Graham	Century 21 Real Estate Assoc	2030 Timberbrook, Springfield, IL 62702	KGraham367@aol.com	217-789-7200	217-638-5100
Cindi Hamill	Todd P. Smith Commercial Real Estate	3000 Professional Drive, Springfield, IL 62703	cindi@tpsmithre.com	217-441-8000	
Sandra Hamilton	Re/Max Professionals	2475 W. Monroe St., Springfield, IL 62704	sandyhamilton@gmail.com	217-787-7215	217-778-1010
Richard Hohmann	Hohmann Agency	1850 W. Morton Ave., Jacksonville, IL 62650	Rich@HohmannAgency.com	217-245-6166	
Kirk Jefferis	Cityscape Real Estate, Inc.	2160 S. Sixth St., Springfield, IL 62703	capitalideas@sbcglobal.net	217-522-8800	217-971-2258
Lindsey Leonard	The Real Estate Group	907 Clocktower Drive, Springfield, IL 62704	lindsey@curtistillet.com	217-787-7000	217-899-4888
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Members listed alphabetically.

AGENT	BUSINESS NAME	ADDRESS	EMAIL	PHONE	MOBILE
Steve Myers	Myers Commercial Real Estate	1 W. Old State Capitol Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701	smyers@myerscommercialre.com	217-747-0019	217-306-4137
Terri Myers	Myers Commercial Real Estate	1 W. Old State Capitol Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701	terri@myerscommercialre.com	217-747-0019	217-306-4137
Samuel Nichols	True Commercial Real Estate	2815 Old Jacksonville Rd., Suite 105, Springfield, IL 62704	sam@truecres.com	217-787-2800	217-494-0800
David Plake	Garrison Group, Inc. Keller Williams Capital	739 S. Fifth St., Springfield, IL 62703	david@garrisongroupinc.com	217-241-0202	217-494-0907
Blake Pryor	Coldwell Banker Commercial Devonshire Realty	Springfield, IL	bpryor@cbcdr.com	217-547-6650	217-725-9518
Art Seppi	Seppi-Kent Commercial Real Estate	3226 Hilltop Road, Springfield, IL 62712	art@seppi.us	217-725-5161	217-652-7755
James Skeeters	Keller Williams Capital	3171 Robbins Road, Springfield, IL 62704	skeetersrealtors@yahoo.com	217-303-8445	217-971-6775
Todd Smith	Todd P. Smith Commercial Real Estate	3000 Professional Drive, Springfield, IL 62703	todd@tpsmithre.com	217-441-8000	217-553-5439
Philip Spengler	Wanless-Spengler, Ltd.	2852 S. 11th St., Springfield, IL 62703	spengler@comcast.net	217-622-6226	
Dan Sperry	The Real Estate Group	3701 Wabash Ave., Springfield, IL 62711	sperryonline@gmail.com	217-787-7000	217-725-2467
Curtis Tillett	The Real Estate Group	907 Clocktower Drive, Springfield, IL 62704	curtis@curtistillett.com	217-787-7000	217-553-7022
Melissa Vorreyer	Re/Max Professionals	2475 W. Monroe St., Springfield, IL 62704	melissalistings@gmail.com	217-787-7215	217-652-0875
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Commercial real estate: the year ahead

Interest rates, supply chain issues continue to be problematic

By Holly A. Whisler

The National Association of REALTORS® annual Real Estate Forecast Summit, The Year Ahead, predicted general contractors will continue to struggle with supply chain issues and labor shortages, while developers will be hampered by rising interest rates and insurance costs. The virtual event, held Dec. 12, 2023, highlighted aspects of the economy and how residential and commercial real estate markets across the nation were impacted in 2023, and what can be anticipated in 2024.

Dr. Lawrence Yun, chief economist and senior vice president of research for the National Association of REALTORS®, moderated the commercial real estate panel that featured Caitlin Sugrue Walter, vice president of research for the National Multifamily Housing Council; and Ken Simonson, chief economist at Associated General Contractors of America.

Yun opened by stating that the multifamily market has had three years of cyclical

oversupply with even more units coming onto the market in 2024. He asked Sugrue Walter if owners of multifamily complexes are confident that they can rent the new units or are rents beginning to be slashed?

Sugrue Walter confirmed there are many new multifamily units under construction at this time. She said, "We are starting to see some filtering," but "rent growth varies tremendously by region. If you look in the South and the West, they actually had slightly negative rent growth last quarter. But when you look at the Northeast and the Midwest, that's not the case. They still have fairly strong rent growth," and units are being absorbed. Sugrue Walter attributed that information to RealPage, a property management software company for the multifamily rental market.

While oversupply may seem to be a concern, Sugrue Walter explained that multifamily will actually be in short supply, especially as multifamily starts begin to slow due to rising material costs and supply chain issues.

New apartment rents are entering the market on a higher price point with some filtering happening. She said we are experiencing a massive affordability crisis where families are housing-cost burdened – paying more than 30% of their income on rent or their mortgage.

Yun summarized by saying multifamily starts remain high but the completion rate is taking longer as interest rates rise which impacts the shortage and therefore, "rents are not falling or not decelerating fast enough."

Yun then switched the focus to AGC chief economist Simonson and asked about the overall attitude of general contractors and the issues they are facing. Simonson replied by explaining that the contractor members build everything other than single-family housing, such as larger multifamily projects, manufacturing plants, data centers and all types of non-residential building, as well as power and infrastructure projects. He said general contractors are doing well and have

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high expectations of the future. However, the outlook is grim for those contractors who are dependent on developer-financed projects which could include multifamily, warehouse and office.

Simonson said that supply chain issues are the cause of the grim outlook for so many. He said that switchgear and transformers – essential elements for getting electricity into a building – are taking 70 weeks to be delivered, thus causing monumental delays in the time it takes to complete multifamily projects, for example. He does not anticipate an improvement in this situation for at least a year.

Although there have been improvements with supply chain issues, Simonson is concerned about concrete products in 2024, for both ready-mixed concrete and precast, which is essential for infrastructure of sewer and water and the panels on a multifamily building. He said the need has increased, but the capacity to produce concrete products has not increased.

On a brighter note, Simonson said that general contractors definitely caught a break on the cost of materials in 2023. The Producer Price Index for new construction inputs “has been basically flat on the

non-residential side.” His expectation is a possible 4 to 6% increase in material costs for multifamily and non-residential projects in 2024.


However, the cost of insurance has increased significantly, due to storms that have caused major insurance payouts. Sugrue Walter confirmed this is a major concern and said a survey of the NMHC membership revealed the average property insurance rate increase was about 26%.

Simonson said the cost of labor is high, but contractors are most concerned about the availability of labor. There is a labor shortage; we need more people entering the construction trades. The industry is making the trades more appealing by increasing pay, improving working conditions and making it more welcoming and appealing to women.

Yun stated there has been a rise in office-vacancy rates across the nation, despite there being 4.5 million more jobs as compared to pre-pandemic numbers. He asked Simonson if contractors are not constructing office buildings, are their skillsets transferable to other types of construction?

Simonson answered, “It depends.” He elaborated by explaining that the skillset to build office, retail or warehouse is more transferable than if a contractor specializes in building “highly sophisticated, massive manufacturing plants that produce semiconductors or batteries for electric vehicles.”

Overall, the nationwide commercial real estate market has a mix of both bad news and good. In closing, Yun asked the panelists their opinions as to what the Federal Reserve might do to impact interest rates in 2024. Sugrue Walter gave a conservative prediction of one or two cuts, neither of which she thought would be significant. Simonson predicted the Federal Reserve will raise rates and then cut them, for a net of zero. He does not think rates will drop below current levels. Yun closed on a high note with a prediction of four rate cuts by the Federal Reserve, or 100 basis points, with the hope of bringing down the long-term rates.

To view the recorded summit, go to: <https://www.nar.realtor/events/nar-real-estate-forecast-summit>. 

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COMMERCIAL BUILDERS

Sources: The builders.
Ranked by number of full-time employees.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE WEBSITE / EMAIL	NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/ PRINCIPALS	AREAS OF SPECIALTY	% SUB- CONTRACTED	RECENT NOTABLE PROJECTS	YEAR EST'D
1	O'Shea Builders 3401 Constitution Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-522-2826 osheabuilders.com info@osheabuilders.com	190	Michael E. O'Shea Tyler Cormeny	Design-Build, Construction Management, General Contracting Civil Construction	70	Lanphier High School renovation, Memorial Stadium renovation, YMCA of Springfield – Downtown, Williamsville High School renovation and expansion, Memorial Medical Center campus expansion, Springfield Clinic Pediatrics Building, HSHS St. John's Hospital Intensive Care Unit renovation, West Side Christian Church addition.	1900
2	United Contractors Midwest, Inc. 3151 Robbins Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-6192 ucm.biz contact@ucm.biz	140	Robert Bruner Mike Cullinan	Asphalt Paving, Concrete Paving, Bridge Building, Earthwork	15	Construction of an underpass to carry the Norfolk Southern Railway Company over Laurel Street between Eighth Street and 11th Street and the construction of an underpass to carry the Norfolk Southern Railway Company over Ash Street between 6th Street and 10th Street. Resurfacing of Woodside Road from west of IL 4 to east of Old Chatham Road.	2001
3	Sangamo Construction 2100 E. Moffat Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-544-9871 sangamo.net office@sangamo.net	75	Allan Reyhan Jr. Matthew P. Reyhan	Bridge/Highway Construction	20	IL 1/Robinson Bridge Replacements; IL 1/Flatrock Bridge Replacement; US 50/Lawrence Bridge Rehab; US 40/Clark Bridge Replacement; IL 29/Taylorville Bridge Replacements; US 24/Adams Bridge Rehab; US 40/Cumberland Bridge Overlay; IL 128/Beecher City Bridge Replacement.	1990
4	R. D. Lawrence Construction Company, Ltd. 603 N. Amos Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-787-1384 rdlawrence.com info@rdlawrence.com	45	John Goetz	General Contracting, Design-Build, Commercial, Industrial, Restorations, Remodels, Additions	60	Renovate Old State Capitol Dome and interior repairs Computer building upgrade back-up generator/chillers FBI new guard houses and special OPS. Springfield/Sangamon County Transportation Center Ph. 1 Sangamon County auditor's office remodel, Sangamon County sheriff's office remodel Ph. 2. Sangamon County Complex SIU Endocrinology/Pelvic Wellness Clinic Renovation	1984
6	Evans Construction 1900 E. Washington St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-525-1456 evansconst.com info@evansconst.com	20	Donald Evans	General Contracting, Construction Management, Design/Build, Commercial/Industrial Construction	60	Springfield Electric addition, Horace Mann executive apartments, additions to Butler and DuBois elementary schools, Eisenhower School in Jacksonville.	1913
7	Siciliano, Inc. 3601 Winchester Road Springfield, IL 62707	217-585-1200 sicilianoinc.com rick@sicilianoinc.com	15	Richard E. Lawrence Kim Lawrence	General Contractor, Historical Restoration, Design-Build, Commercial/Industrial Construction, Site Work	15	Historical restoration Booth-Bateman/Kennedy-Ferguson Building downtown Springfield, State Retirement System's new security upgrades, SIU School of Medicine.	1968
8	Mid-Illinois Companies 601 N. Amos St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-685-5486 309-222-0510 mic123.com	12	Robert Taylor Debra Young	Interior Systems, Specialty Contractor, General Trades Contractor, UL Firestop Contractor, Fireproofing, Painting, Epoxy Floors	1	Old Springfield Journal-Register renovation, Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen, Horace Mann, Black Hawk Elementary, HSHS St. John's, Decatur Memorial Hospital, Johns Hill Magnet School.	1970

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- Illinois State Police Memorial Park Photo Courtesy Knight E/A, Inc.

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TRADE UNIONS

Sources: The trade unions.
Ranked by number of local members.

	UNION NAME	PHONE WEBSITE / EMAIL	2023 LOCAL MEMBERSHIP	CONTACTS	NUMBER OF IL COUNTIES REPRESENTED	YEAR EST'D
1	International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local Union 916 3361 Teamster Way Springfield, IL 62707	217-522-7932 teamsters916.org sasha@teamsters916.org	4,100	JP Fyans president	14	1943
2	Local 477 LIUNA Laborers 1615 N. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-0014 liuna.org	1,615	Brad Schaive business manager & secretary/treasurer	7	1903
3	International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 965 3520 E. Cook St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-9659 iuoe965.org operators@comcast.net	1,400	Jason Rhoades business manager	15	1931
3	United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local No. 270 211 W. Lawrence Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-528-7571 carpenters270.com local270@carpentersunion.org	1,400	RJ Finneran business representative	19	1887
4	Plumbers & Steamfitters, Local 137 2880 E. Cook St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-2724 ua137.org	875	Aaron Gurnsey business manager	16	1895
5	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local No. 193 3150 Wide Track Drive Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-3479 ibew193.com office@ibew193.com	787	David Wells business manager	9	1901
6	Plasterers and Cement Masons, Local 18 40 Adloff Lane, Suite 6A Springfield, IL 62703	217-585-4221 opcmia18.org localunion18@att.net	750	Mark Winkler business manager	22	1864
7	Sheet Metal Workers, Local 218 2855 Via Verde Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-0161 smart218.org	640	Richard Manka business manager	21	1903
8	Iron Workers, Local 46 2888 E. Cook St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-4041 ironworkers46.org bbaskett@ironworkers46.org	402	Brian Baskett business manager	20	1908
9	International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 58, Locals 90 & 2007 3223 Lake Plaza Drive Springfield, IL 62703	618-781-9543 217-529-6976 dc58iupat.net jwilliamson@dc58.org	273	James Williamson business representative	9	1899
10	United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers, Local 112 301 E. Spruce St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-210-2044 rooferslocal112.com john@rooferslocal112.com	100	John Nicks business manager	15	1930

International Union of Operating Engineers Local 965



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Business Manager: Brian Baskett
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Making city government more helpful to businesses

Office of Planning and Economic Development has new staff, new positions

By Dean Olsen



Staff members of Springfield's Office of Planning and Economic Development include (from left) Kayla Graven, Julia Cave, Val Yazell, Sai Joshi and Amy Rasing.

PHOTO BY DEAN OLSEN.

Springfield's Office of Planning and Economic Development will focus on data and innovation to make city government more efficient, helpful to businesses and in line with Mayor Misty Buscher's goal of creating more good-paying jobs in the city.

Those are among plans for the office under Val Yazell, who was hired back to head OPED by Buscher after her election in 2023.

Yazell, who previously led the office under former mayor Jim Langfelder until March 2021, said she is excited about the professionals she has hired to fill long-vacant positions. Several of them just started in the office in November.

"The important thing for me was to find people who were self-starters, who were high-performing, who could think for themselves," Yazell said. "It doesn't happen every day that you get someone who has those qualities and those traits."

OPED has an annual budget of \$24.7 million, 94% of which represents funding from local, state and federal sources for grants and other allocations to address community needs, Yazell said. The remaining 6% of the budget pays operating costs, including salaries.

Yazell pointed to new hires and new roles

for people in the office as key to carrying out her goals for the office:

Julia Cave is operations director for community development and has more than 20 years of experience in public and health service administration. Cave worked in OPED previously but in a different role.

Kayla Graven, operations coordinator for business development, previously was executive director of Downtown Springfield Inc.

Sai Joshi is the city's Bloomberg-Harvard fellow, and Amy Rasing, operations coordinator for grants, has spent more than three decades in nonprofit leadership at the local, state and national levels.

"These women are remarkable in supporting one another and helping one another," Yazell said. "I knew I needed people around me who could problem-solve and didn't expect me to solve every problem, so I needed people just as strong as I am and as capable as I am."

The office will work harder to collect data and make decisions on spending money based on data, Yazell said. For example, decisions on who should receive tax-increment financing revenues from property taxes, and how much should be allocated, will

be weighed based on the potential increase in assessed valuation that a TIF-assisted project will create for future property taxes, she said.

Staff members also will work collaboratively to determine whether a developer seeking assistance may be helped by a variety of programs and not just the specific program that the developer initially had in mind, she said.

That brainstorming will result in more effective use of the local, state and federal funds at OPED's disposal, she said.

"The goal of this department is to better our community," Yazell said.

And for the staff, the key to achieving that goal is "knowing all the programs and being able to work together," she said.

"There is a huge commitment to technology and a commitment to innovation, and our mayor is very supportive of that," Yazell said. "But you know, let's face it, it takes time, it takes finances, and it takes a cultural commitment. In the coming year, we'll be further along, but we will never be done because if you're truly committed to innovation, you're just always doing that."

OPED is working to revamp its website to make it more user-friendly "so people can inquire about the programs directly online

instead of us having to mail them program information," Cave said.

The department also plans to be more active on social-media platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook to promote its services.

One of Joshi's focuses will be to develop a strategy for the city's land bank. And she is spearheading the use of the recently announced \$450,000 grant the city received in Recompete funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce for the Springfield Economic Empowerment Project.

Buscher said the new federal funding will help "improve the economic mobility of our distressed communities. Our public, institutional and philanthropic partners' coalition has been leading the way to bridge economic gaps locally."

The project's ultimate goal is to expand training initiatives such as Lincoln Land Community College's Workforce Equity Initiative and the Highway Construction Careers Training Program.

Other partners in the project include The Springfield Project, Springfield-Sangamon

Growth Alliance and the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

The grant, Joshi said, will "essentially help us to have a full-time person or a couple of part-time people who are working on developing this strategy further and working on developing the partnership further."

To respond to complaints that the city isn't "business friendly," several OPED staff members have received training from Harvard University faculty on innovation and are part of an interdepartmental team looking at potential improvements to propose to Buscher in the spring.

"We're interviewing people internally and externally," Joshi said. "We're meeting with department heads and staff who are involved in this process."

Graven said she is working to make sure OPED's customers are served better.

"Whenever a business comes to us and is not understanding the permitting process, we can help introduce them to the person they need to communicate with, or maybe we can be an advocate for them or an ally," she said.

Cave's latest focus is plans for a city-

sponsored, four-day training program Feb. 5-9 for people wanting to become certified lead abatement contractors. The city currently doesn't have any local-based, certified contractors to remove lead-based paint from homes, she said.

"We have many families with poisonous lead in their homes that are waiting for assistance," Cave said.

There will be 18 spots available for the free training, a value of more than \$500. More information and registration for the spots are available by phone at 217-789-2377 or at info.oped@springfield.il.us.

In her role, Rasing said she is examining the city's various grant programs for individuals and groups to "maximize our resources, both internally and externally."

"We're looking at grants, and the applications for grants, and the use of those grants," to make sure the money "aligns with everything else that we're doing," she said.

Rasing said she is considering "doing more storytelling" to the public about the impact of grants. **SBJ**



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ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

Sources: The electrical contractors.
Ranked by number of full-time employees.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE WEBSITE / EMAIL	# OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/ PRINCIPALS	UNION AFFILIATED	NOTABLE PROJECTS	YEAR EST'D
1	Anderson Electric, Inc. 3501 Sixth St. Frontage Road W. Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-5471 anderson-electric.com adamb@anderson-electric.com	175	Employee-owned	Yes	Lanphier High School additions and renovations, Memorial Child Care Center, White Oaks Mall Sears Building Renovation, J.P. Morgan Chase solar, New Berlin Junior/Senior High School, Illinois State Museum, Westermeyer Industries, Central Illinois Foodbank, ATS & Generator, Hillsboro High School additions, Sullivan WTP, Decatur Public School Athletic Facility, ISU Watterson Towers Dining, Rivian Automotive Plant, Heartland Community College CTE, Carle at The Riverfront, Danville Area Community College Healthcare Professions Center.	1918
2	B & B Electric, Inc. 3000 Reilly Drive Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-9666 bnbelectric.net todd@bnbelectric.net	105	Todd M. Brinkman Tim Brinkman Kristin Miller	Yes	St. John's Cath Lab, St. John's ICU, SIU School of Medicine, Westminster Presbyterian Church Outside Lighting, Horace Mann Solar, Prairie Sky Snacks, Springfield Clinic Security Upgrades, Illinois State Museum Fire Alarm Upgrades, Kwik Wall, Jacksonville Memorial Hospital MOB Addition, CMS Emergency Generator, Sangamon Valley Schools, Corkscrew, Camp Lincoln AGO Building, HSHS Battery Replacement, Blue Cross Blue Shield Generator, LLCC Exterior Lighting, Nestle Chiller Replacement, LRS, Springfield Clinic Pediatric Building, Springfield Clinic Lab, Illinois State Capitol North Wing renovation, Taylorville Memorial Hospital, Malibu Jack's, Helping Hands, Springfield fire stations, Springfield Memorial Hospital wireless access points.	1962
3	Capitol Construction Group LLC, DBA Egizii Electric 3009 Singer Ave. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-4001 ckeating@egiziielectric.com egiziielectric.com	68	Carole Keating	Yes	Downtown Springfield Traffic Modernization; Ash and Laurel Underpass; New Berlin and Mason City Water Treatment Plant Upgrades; Pleasant Plains New Gymnasium; UIS Fire Alarm Upgrade; Camp Lincoln Building 2 Renovation; Illinois Capital North Wing Renovation; SSCCTC New Transportation Center; Bloomington Arena LED lighting; Lincoln's Challenge Emergency Generator Installation.	1967
4	Senergy Electric, Inc. 509 N. Elm St. Williamsville, IL 62693	217-566-2826 senergy-electric.com info@senergy-electric.com	48	Matthew J. Giacomini Brandon M. Keafer	Yes	Illinois School for the Deaf security; Springfield School District 186 school security; Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen; Illinois College Crispin Hall; JSD 117 Washington Elementary; Springfield Capitol Airport solar array; Litchfield Elementary School; OSF Healthcare Global S2 Security; Williamsville School District and Village Unified Security; West Side Christian Church addition, renovation and new Worship Center; Lanphier High School addition and renovation; Champaign County Jail consolidation; LLCC Access Control; Champaign County Plaza renovation; Chatham Goodwill; JSD Eisenhower; Illinois College Access Control.	2014
5	Ryan Electrical Solutions 4151 W. Jefferson St. Springfield, IL 62707	217-698-4877 ryanelectricalsolutions.com dennis@ryanelectricalsolutions.com	35	Dennis Ryan	No	Various commercial, residential and audio-visual projects, agriculture projects, backup and portable generator sales, installation and service and ground-mounted solar installation.	1995
6	Ruby Electric, Inc. 341 S. Meadowbrook Road Springfield, IL 62711	217-787-4949 rubyelectric.com johnruby@rubyelectric.com	24	John Ruby	No	Various commercial, residential, agricultural, automatic standby generator, generator maintenance and repair.	1978

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

Sources: The electrical contractors.
Ranked by number of full-time employees.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE WEBSITE / EMAIL	# OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/ PRINCIPALS	UNION AFFILIATED	NOTABLE PROJECTS	YEAR EST'D
7	Lindsey Electric 3260 Terminal Ave. Springfield, IL 62707	217-544-6789 lindsey-electric.com lori@lindsey-electric.com	12	Catherine A. Lindsey, J. Michael Lindsey, Lori A. Lindsey Von Behren	Yes	Various commercial and residential projects.	1972
8	Prairie State Plumbing & Heating 3900 N. Peoria Road Springfield, IL 62702	217-636-9000	10	Jerry Judd	Yes	Springfield Pepsi, LRS, SIU School of Medicine, Illinois Veterans' Home, Springfield Metro Sanitary District, IDOT, IDNR, UIS, LLCC, Generac generators installation and various commercial and residential upgrades, repairs and remodels.	2005
8	Mansfield Electric Co. 4425 N. Peoria Road Springfield, IL 62702	217-523-0811 ed@mansfield-electric.com	10	H. Edward Midden III	Yes	Sangamon County Complex, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, UIS University Hall, The Bridge Short Stay Nursing Home, Enos Elementary School, Hy-Vee.	1949
9	R. Watts Electric 2801 E. Sangamon Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-652-9950 rwattselectric.com wattselectric1@yahoo.com	6	Robin Watts	NO	Amazing Escapes, Texas Roadhouse, Aperion Health, McDonald's, Fresenius Kidney Center, Walgreens, Best Buy, Target, Ashley Furniture, Dollar General, Tri-City Library, Dunkin' Donuts and various residential and commercial projects, new construction and remodels. Generator installation and maintenance.	2011
10	Carmean Electric Inc. 2434 Denver Drive Springfield, IL 62702	217-789-1155 217-541-6383 carmeanelectric.com carmean0451@gmail.com	4	Melanie and Curtis Ryen	Yes	Various residential and commercial projects. Maintenance, new wiring, rewiring, utility work, solar design and installation, LED lighting.	1970



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Billy J. Serbowski - Chapter Manager



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David Wells - Business Manager & Financial Secretary

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Gano Electrical Contracting, INC.
Adam Cuddihy
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Senergy Electric, Inc.
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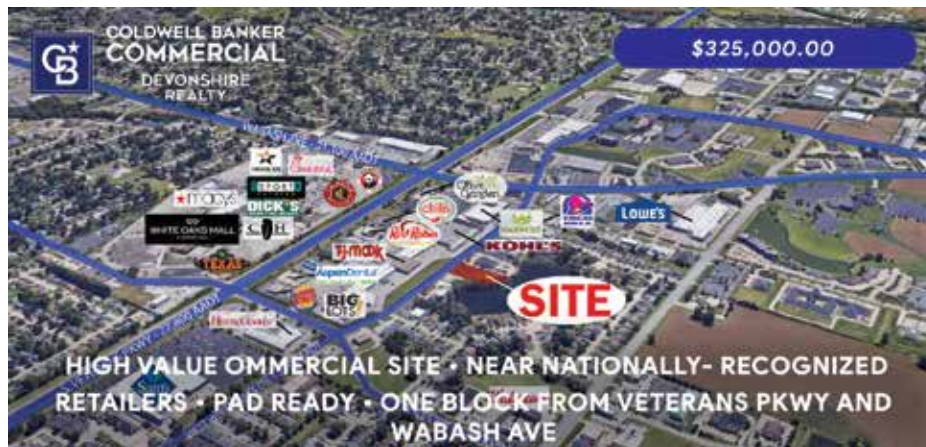
Sources: Mechanical Contractors Association of Central Illinois, the contractors.
Ranked by number of full-time employees - peak season.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE WEBSITE / EMAIL	# OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/ PRINCIPALS	TYPES OF SERVICE	NOTABLE PROJECTS	YEAR EST'D
1	Henson Robinson Company Petersburg Plumbing and Excavating Reliable Mechanical, LLC 3550 Great Northern Ave. Springfield, IL 62711	217-544-8451 hensonrobinson.com hrc@henson-robinson.com	410	Joe Kulek Brian Vogt	Commercial HVAC, roofing, plumbing, piping, refrigeration, architectural sheet metal, HVAC/plumbing service, sewer and water mains, excavation, residential heating and cooling installation and service, residential plumbing service, directional boring, sewer cleaning/TV inspection.	Rivian, Williamsville schools, UIS, LLC, City of Springfield, Ball/Chatham, SHG, Illinois School for the Deaf, Hope School, St. John's, Memorial Medical Center, Blessings Hospital, Springfield Clinic, Prairie Eye Clinic, BCBS, Passavant Hospital. Governor's Mansion, IDOT, IDOC, Illinois State Police, IEMA, Camp Lincoln, CMS, Secretary of State, CWLP, Springfield, Chatham, Taylorville, Jacksonville. Caterpillar, State Farm, Bridgestone Firestone, White Oaks Mall, NAPA, Bunn, Walmart, Villas Senior Care, Pleasant Plains School, Champaign School District, Carle Hospital, ISU, Millikin University, Kraft Foods, Mt. Pulaski School SCWRD, West Side Christian Church, Decatur School District, YMCA, Quincy Veterans Home, Illinois State Capitol, City of Assumption, Carle Foundation Hospital, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, Danville VA Medical Center, OSF Healthcare.	1861
2	E.L. Pruitt 3090 Colt Road Springfield, IL 62707	217-789-0966 elpruitt.com	336	John Pruitt	Commercial HVAC/plumbing/architectural sheet metal installation, plumbing/piping/sheet metal fabrication, HVAC and plumbing service and maintenance, sewer structure rehabilitation, site utilities and civil.	Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport, Academy Sports, ADM, Blessing Hospital, Caterpillar, CWLP, Decatur Park District, Decatur Public Schools, District 186 schools, Green Hyundai, Helping Hands, Horace Mann, HSHS, Illini Central, Illinois State Fairgrounds Coliseum, Illinois State Police, Innovafeed, Lincoln High School, Lincoln Land Community College, Malibu Jack's, Medics First, Memorial Health Systems (multiple locations), Millikin University, New Berlin schools, Nudo Products, Pleasant Plains High School, Rising Pharmaceuticals, Rivian Automotive, Salvation Army, SIU School of Medicine, Springfield Clinic, Springfield fire stations, Springfield YMCA, Starbucks, St. John's Hospital, Taylorville schools, U-Haul, University of Illinois Springfield.	1971
3	ENTEC Services, Inc. 681 E. Linton Ave. Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-3333 entecservicesinc.com sdenby@entec-solutions.com	70	Tom Weed	Commercial HVAC service, commercial generator service, building automation, door access and energy services.	First United Methodist Church, Lincoln Memorial Hospital, Illinois Secretary of State, First Christian Church, Springfield Clinic, Cherry Hills Baptist Church, BUNN, Springfield Memorial Hospital, Illinois State Police.	1981
4	Tiger Plumbing, Heating, Air Conditioning & Electrical Services 775 E. Linton Ave., Suite D Springfield, IL 62703	217-697-4044 217-280-4091 trusttiger.com servicenow@trusttiger.com	66	Todd Kiefer	Plumbing, heating and air conditioning repair and replacement, drain clearing and sewer repair, crawlspace and basement waterproofing, cater heater repair and replacement, shower/bathtub modification and installation, indoor air quality and duct cleaning, water softeners and filtration, toilet repair and replacement, sump pump repair and replacement, faucet repair and replacement, frozen pipe repair.	HVAC and plumbing repair and replacement services for residential and commercial properties.	1993
5	MB Heating & Cooling, Plumb- ing & Electric, Inc. 1555 W. Jefferson St. Springfield IL 62702	217-544-4328 (HEAT) mb-heating.com doug@mb-heating.com	50	Curtis Tomlin Ashley Tomlin	Heating, cooling, plumbing, electrical, solar and generators.	Heating, air conditioning and plumbing, residential service, repair and pre-season maintenance.	1986
6	AIRmasters - Commercial Mechanical Contractor 1330 North Grand Ave. W. Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-9793 theairmasters.com dispatch@theairmasters.com	43	Robert Mathews, Mike Duval	Commercial mechanical contractor, HVAC, controls, refrigeration, plumbing, piping, sheet metal and restaurant equipment/hot side.	St. John's Hospital Life Safety Projects, St. Mary's Hospital upgrades, White Oaks Mall replacements/upgrades, Casey's General Store upgrades, DCFS Chiller, Vonderlieth Senior Living piping/boilers, Beatty Television upgrades, JC Penney's boilers, Best Buy replacements and upgrades, HSHS, Chatham Schools controls, IDOT freeze thaw equipment, WalMart and Sam's Club, Kohl's and many more.	1993
7	Prairie State Plumbing & Heating 3900 Peoria Road Springfield, IL 62702	217-636-9000 www.prairiestateinc.com jjudd@prairiestateinc.com	35	Jerry Judd	Plumbing, heating, cooling, electrical, mechanical, sitework, ventilation.	Plumbing, heating, cooling, electrical, mechanical, ventilation, and site work services to residential, commercial, and industrial clients throughout central Illinois. Vactor truck and jetting services.	2005

MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS

Sources: Mechanical Contractors Association of Central Illinois, the contractors.
Ranked by number of full-time employees - peak season.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE WEBSITE / EMAIL	# OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/ PRINCIPALS	TYPES OF SERVICE	NOTABLE PROJECTS	
7	Mike Williams Plumbing and Heating 3225 E. Clear Lake Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-241-3878 mikewilliams.net micah@mikewilliams.net	35	Lewis Williams	HVAC, heating, plumbing and air conditioning.	Heating, air conditioning and plumbing, residential service and repair and pre-season maintenance tune-up.	1976
8	Allied Plumbing & Heating 1315 Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-5500 alliedpnh.com mark@alliedpnh.com	30	Jean Miller Mark Miller Susan Gum-Miller	Plumbing, heating, air conditioning, lawn irrigation-service only, residential and light commercial service and installation, maintenance contracts.	Tacology 201, Luminary, Boy Scout Council, Chatham Dental, Heartland Dental, strip mall build-outs, residential/light commercial HVAC replacements, Ash Grove Apartments, Home Plate Bar & Grill, Illinois Presbyterian Homes, Cardinal Hill Apartments.	1977
8	F. J. Murphy & Son, Inc. 1800 Factory Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-528-4081 fjmurphy.com	30	Chad Fricke	Plumbing, heating, cooling, fire sprinklers, refrigeration, restaurant equipment, icenmachines, residential, commercial, institutional, installation and repair.	Harvest Market, UIS, Bunn, White Oaks Mall, McFarland Zone Center, Brother James Court, Willard Ice Building, IL State Historic Sites, Lincoln's Home, Mel-O-Cream, Schnucks, Family Guidance Center, Land of Lincoln Goodwill, Ace Hardware, Lewis Memorial Christian Village, Hoogland Center for the Arts, HSHS, Illinois Capitol, District 186, Illinois State Capitol and hundreds of small residential and commercial repair and remodel projects.	1947
9	Aire Serv HRI Plumbing 1209 N. Eighth St. Springfield, IL 62704 800 N. Church St. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-523-8594 217-243-6531 aireserv.com/cil aireserv@as-hri.com	19	Chris Williams, Jennifer Williams	Residential, and industrial service for HVAC equipment and ductwork. Indoor air quality, including duct cleaning. Chillers, boilers, and geothermal. Residential plumbing.	Jacksonville High School - building automation, Ill. Coalition Against Domestic Violence - rooftop units, Ill. Dept. of Human Services, Casey's General Stores, multiple local banks and restaurants, multiple residential projects.	1985



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WOMEN'S EVENT CALENDAR

Illinois Women in Leadership will host a luncheon on Thursday, Feb. 15, from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at Illini Country Club. Anne Mosely, director of Sangamon Experience at the University of Illinois Springfield, will speak on the topic "A Struggle for Change."

This new exhibit by the University of Illinois Springfield's Sangamon Experience, located on the lower level of the UIS Public Affairs Center, will tell the history of underrepresented people in central Illinois. The exhibition will run through Sept. 6.

In the face of challenges that spanned eras, countless individuals and organizations have emerged as beacons of hope and catalysts for transformation. The groups of individuals mentioned in this exhibit are a small sample of many citizens who have fought for women's rights, underrepresented groups, LGBTQ+ individuals and those with disabilities. From civil rights activists advocating for equality to pioneers who challenged societal norms, each narrative contributes to a complex tapestry of struggle and triumph. This exhibit serves as both a commemoration and an education, inviting participants to engage with the narratives of those who dared to question the status quo and pave the way for a more just and equitable world.

Luncheons are open to all IW/L members and their guests. Registration is \$22 for members and guests through February 9; \$27 on or after February 10. Online Registration will close on February 12.

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HSHS hires new CFO



Hospital Sisters Health System has announced Michael Scialdone has joined the system's executive leadership team as senior vice president and chief financial officer, effective Jan. 8, to oversee system financial services.

"Michael brings over three decades of health care finance and operational leadership experience along with a faith-based mindset that will support our mission to reveal and embody Christ's healing love as we carry forward the legacy of the Hospital Sisters," said Diamond Boatwright, HSHS president and CEO.

Scialdone was most recently executive vice president and CFO at Health-First, Inc., in Brevard, Florida. He has also served in CFO roles

as well as in chief executive leadership roles at large health care entities, including Memorial Hospital-University of Colorado Health and Penrose-St. Francis Health Services, both located in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and at Osceola Regional Medical Center, Northwest Medical Center and Pembroke Pines Hospital in Florida.

"My passion is faith, family and having the opportunity to work in faith-based health care," Scialdone said. "It is a blessing to have a role that can support the Hospital Sisters' mission."

Scialdone is a graduate of Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama and received his Master of Business Administration in health administration from the University of Colorado in Denver.

HSHS acquires open MRI system

HSHS St. John's Hospital is has acquired Fujifilm's Oasis Velocity High-Field Open MRI Imaging System to offer patients and physicians access to the most advanced diagnostic imaging techniques currently available in the health care industry.

The open MRI is located at HSHS St. John's Health Center at 1100 East Lincolnshire Blvd. It is the only open MRI in the Springfield community and the most advanced in the region.

"This open MRI provides our patients an exam that is as quick and smooth as possible. The Velocity helps to lower stress, lower scan time and increase patient satisfaction," said Branden Richardson, market director of radiology at HSHS.

This system offers an accommodating design to make patients more comfortable during their exam. With a 270 degree unobstructed view, the Velocity helps to minimize feelings of discomfort and claustrophobia. This feature also allows the patient to have a loved one or friend nearby during the exam for further reassurance. In addition, the machine can accommodate larger patients comfortably.

Fujifilm has been a long-time pioneer of diagnostic imaging systems, with more than 1,500 CT and MRI systems installed in the United States.



HSHS St. John's imaging tech, Stacy, with the new Velocity open MRI technology.

PHOTO COURTESY HSHS

Statutes of limitation

By Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.

All too often we operate under the rule of: Why do today what can be done tomorrow? But, under the law, that kind of delay may well result in certain rights being forever barred. Illinois law has specific rules regarding time limits within which claims must be brought as lawsuits. These rules are strictly enforced and many non-lawyers don't know that they exist.

Lawyers refer to the rules as statutes of limitation. These statutes place time limits on pursuing legal remedies as a result of wrongful conduct. After the applicable time period expires, the wronged person loses his or her right to file a lawsuit, unless an exception applies. More about that later.

What follows are a sample of some of the more common statutes of limitation in Illinois. Note that it's possible for multiple causes of action to result from certain wrongful conduct. Therefore, even if it appears that the relevant time period has expired, it may be possible to still bring a different claim. Also, there may well be an exception. This list is provided only for example. If you want to know what statute applies to your situation, consult your lawyer.

- Medical malpractice – two years
- Negligence/personal injury – two years
- Fraudulent concealment – five years
- Libel/slander/defamation – one year
- Product liability – two years
- Contracts – 10 years for written, five years for oral

A statute of limitations starts running when a claim accrues. That's usually the date that the injury is suffered. However, sometimes it's not possible for a person to discover the cause of an injury or to even know that an injury has taken place until long after the act giving rise to the injury. For example, you might not know for more than five years that your business partner has been looting your business. Or you may not know for quite some time that a surgeon left a lap sponge in your abdomen.

For this reason, the courts have developed what's called the discovery rule. The discovery rule means that a statute of limitations will begin to run at the time the injury is discovered or reasonably should have been discovered. For example, assume the applicable statute dictates a one-year period. Normally, the clock starts ticking as soon as the injury occurs. But, if the injury is reasonably discovered one year after it occurs, the two-year period begins to run on the day of discovery. The discovery rule doesn't apply



to all civil actions, so don't always count on it being available.

Statutes of limitation can also be extended under other situations — this is called tolling. When it is said that a statute is tolled, it means that something has stopped the statute from running for a period of time. Typical reasons for tolling a statute of limitations include a minor claimant (that statute won't start running until the claimant turns 18 years of age), mental incompetence (the victim of the injury was not mentally competent at the time the injury occurred) and the defendant's bankruptcy (the automatic stay in bankruptcy ordinarily tolls the statute of limitations until such time as the bankruptcy is resolved or the stay is lifted).

There's another layer that has to be considered when analyzing statutes of limitation and the discovery rule. The law has also developed what's known as statutes of repose. Like a statute of limitation, a statute of repose cuts off certain rights if they aren't acted upon in a timely manner. However, a statute of repose puts an absolute bar on the date by which a lawsuit must be filed. For example, if there is a 20-year statute of repose on the manufacture of a farming implement, a claim cannot be filed against the manufacturer more than 20 years after the date of manufacture, even if a design or manufacturing defect is responsible for a later accident. The statute of repose applies irrespective of tolling. Likewise, a statute of repose may well result in a claim being barred even if it would have otherwise been viable due to the discovery rule.

Despite these somewhat complex and

seemingly arcane rules, parties can sometimes alter the applicable limitations period through contract. For example, a written employment contract between employer and employee might dictate that any claim for wrongful termination must be brought within one year of the claimed wrongful conduct. Illinois courts will usually enforce these agreements, especially in the context of business transactions, even if the result is a shorter limitations period than would otherwise apply. Regarding the sale of goods, you should also be aware that the Uniform Commercial Code allows parties to shorten a statute to no less than one year, but doesn't allow the parties to lengthen it.

Although not technically statutes of limitation, there are other deadlines contained in the law that have real-world consequences. Once filed, for example, mechanic's liens are void if a suit to enforce (i.e. foreclose) the lien is not brought within two years. Or, judgments become stale (and hence unenforceable) within seven years of recording unless revived.

The overall point is that time limits are a fundamental part of law and life. As a lawyer, there are few things worse than telling a prospective client that a claim they want to enforce is barred by a statute of limitation or other deadline. Unfortunately, it happens more often than you might think. It's understandable that people might delay doing anything about bringing a claim. However, at a bare minimum, you should consult your lawyer to make sure you understand just how long you can delay without forever losing your rights. **SBJ**

Springfield Frontiers International: Advancement through service

By Janet Seitz

Springfield Frontiers International is a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization whose goals are achieved through service to others and by working with community leaders in finding solutions to key issues that are civic, social and racial in nature. Members are called Yokefellows, the term originating from oxen bearing the burden of hard work through the yoke it wears.

The club is known for its youth programs and the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Breakfast. Jan. 15 marked the group's 49th breakfast and featured guest speaker Dr. Wendi El-Amin, associate dean for equity, diversity and inclusion at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. A portion of the breakfast proceeds, along with funds generated from the annual golf outing, will be used to support the Positive Youth Development program for males in grades six through eight and the Junior Frontier Club for males in high school.

Derrick Stapleton knows first-hand the invaluable benefits the organization offers young men. Stapleton has served as president of the club and currently serves as coordinator of the Positive Youth Development program and the Junior Frontier Club. He believes the most important aspect of the work accomplished by Springfield Frontiers International "is reaching the young males of Springfield and surrounding communities."

The PYD program launched during the 1991-92 school year and helps mostly young, African American males develop as leaders in their homes, churches, schools and the Springfield community. Each program offers opportunities to gain experience and be the positive influence by reaching goals in four specific areas: leadership, scholastics, citizenship and community service.

For those who stay in the PYD program, involvement pays off. Springfield Frontiers International offers an automatic \$2,000 scholarship to any male who joins the PYD program when they are in sixth grade, a \$1,000 scholarship to males who join in seventh grade, a \$750 scholarship to those who join in eighth grade as long as they ultimately graduate from the Jr. Frontier Crew 33 Club. Scholarships are awarded upon enrollment into an accredited college or vocational training institute.



Springfield Frontiers International has been hosting an annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Breakfast for 49 years.



Members of the Positive Youth Development program, for males in grades six through eight, with high school students from Junior Frontier Club.

Stapleton said it is rewarding to be able to give scholarships to young people in need. Most challenging, he said, is not being able to give students a scholarship for all four years of college.

Funds raised by Springfield Frontiers International support two more scholarships named for two deceased members of the organization: the J.D. Washington 2K Scholarship, awarded to a young man that comes into the club's Positive Youth Development program in the sixth grade and continues to the Junior Frontiers program through the 12th grade; and the James Forstall General Scholarship, named in memory of The State Journal-Register's First Citizen winner for 2016, is open to any student graduating from a high school in Sangamon County.

Stapleton was drawn to Springfield Frontiers International after graduating from Western Illinois University. "As I was graduating from college," he recalled, "I realized I wanted to work with the Black males of my community. I was afforded that opportunity through the Frontiers."

The mentoring programs serve dozens of young men annually and provide positive influence and encouragement to help them avoid peer pressures. Meeting topics include tips on how to interview for a job and may also provide interaction with potential employers and others in authority. All programs reinforce the importance of positive community involvement. The goals are to let young men know they are valued and encourage them to excel in school and become leaders in their communities.

Stapleton is a youth mentor and appreciates "seeing the young men you've mentored come back and reminisce about being in the programs – having them come back and talk to the young men. Also, there have been young men (who graduated and are) now sending their sons through our PYD program and Junior. Frontier Club."

The community can support Springfield Frontiers International by encouraging young men to participate in youth programs, by attending the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Breakfast and through donations.

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The delicate art of discussing religion, politics or gender in the workplace

By Kelly Gust

There are few topics that remain as complex as they are sensitive, especially with co-workers. The big three are religion, politics and gender. These subjects hold profound importance in our lives and are at the core of our identities, thus holding the power to stir up deep emotions. Avoiding or hiding these parts of our identities in the office can leave us feeling false or like imposters at work. How do we balance sharing our true selves at work, with a need to respect our co-workers and, of course, steer clear of workplace policy violations? Here's a few tips for navigating delicate subjects:

Focus on similarity first:

Yes, we are all unique, but in the wise words of Maya Angelou, "We're more alike than we are unlike." Respect for diverse perspectives, beliefs and backgrounds is crucial, but so is remembering that we're all human. We have families, interests and full lives outside of work. Find out what you have in common with co-workers; perhaps a favorite restaurant, vacation spot or hobby, then build on that.

Listen rather than speak:

When discussing a sensitive topic, or if someone casually drops a personal share that you weren't expecting, remember you have two ears but only one mouth. Prioritize listening over speaking; it's not always necessary to respond. Phrases such as, "Thanks for sharing that," or "I understand where you're coming from," can help build common ground. Listening to truly understand

someone's experience or perspective (rather than listening only to react or respond) takes practice and is worth the effort. Active listening fosters an environment where people feel heard and valued.

Choose the right timing and setting:

If a sensitive discussion is necessary, then it deserves the right time and location. If a conversation takes an awkward or unexpected turn, it's OK to say, "I can tell this topic is important, but now isn't the right time or place. I want to give this conversation its due. Can we start again later when we'll both be able to focus?" If you don't want to go there when someone shares something personal, it's also OK to simply say, "Thanks so much for sharing that with me," then politely change the subject or get back to work. Again, it's not always necessary to respond.

Exercise discretion:

While open dialogue, listening and human connection are encouraged, exercising discretion is equally important. It's not OK to engage in heated debates that turn into arguments or let a tense conversation cross the line of a workplace-policy violation. Expressing speech that could be perceived as harassment or hate speech (whether in person or on social media) will land you in violation of your company policies.

Set boundaries:

If a conversation becomes uncomfortable or contentious, or if the steps above don't get

the conversation redirected, gracefully move toward more common ground. It might be appropriate to say, "I can tell we are both uncomfortable talking about this in the office," or "I feel a little differently about that," followed by, "I respect you as a person and our relationship is important to me, but would you mind if we change the subject?"

Know your policies:

What's the culture regarding sensitive or personal dialogue in your workplace? Some workplaces encourage open discussions, while others prefer to keep conversations less personal. It's essential to understand your organization's policies. Many workplaces have anti-harassment policies that outline prohibited activity and consequences. Many organizations also have equal employment and diversity policies intended to foster fair and equitable treatment, as well as prevent harassment or discrimination.

Discussions about personal topics can be respectful, inclusive and contribute positively to the work environment. When approached thoughtfully, such conversations can broaden our perspectives, foster empathy and create deeper relationships built on trust and mutual respect. Embracing diversity while navigating sensitive conversations can enrich the workplace culture and help us build stronger human connections.

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Brewski's Pub

By Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.

I've driven by Brewski's Pub countless times but never stopped in until recently when I was craving a burger. When I think pub, I also think burger. My bad, as I should have paid more attention to Brewski's logo, which proudly proclaims it's all about pizza and beer. Other than sliders, Brewski's has no burger option. But, as it turns out, I ended up not being disappointed at all.

Brewski's has the ambiance of a typical sports bar with loads of beer advertisements, high top and booth seating, plenty of TVs (11 of them) and 12 craft beers on tap. One side of

the interior holds a rather large bar. The liberal use of corrugated metal for wainscoting gives off a post-industrial vibe. Oh, and of course, there's video gaming.

We visited on an unseasonably warm day and were cheerfully greeted and told to pick a table. We were early in the lunch hour, but as our meal progressed a steady stream of patrons kept coming in. Had we visited it on a cold and blustery day the constant opening of the door may have let in loads of cold air, but it wasn't a problem that day.

The menu is quite lengthy, especially

with all the varieties of pizza. It's basically broken down into salads, toasties (toasted sandwiches), pizza and grinders. For those not in the know, a grinder is a form of sandwich that originated in New England. It's similar to a sub sandwich and usually filled with shredded lettuce, Italian sandwich meats, provolone, tomatoes, oil, vinegar, oregano and salt/pepper. For a purist, Brewski's may have taken some liberties with the grinder concept (mayo on a grinder – no), but I don't think New England grinder-makers care at all about culinary cultural appropriation.



Italian toasty

One nit on the menu – Brewski’s website menu appears to leave out a handful of items that are listed on its order online section.

Although we did not order one, I was very impressed with the size of Brewski’s salads. Options run from the traditional chef, Italian and steak salads to more unique selections like the blueberry chicken salad.

Sandwiches come with kettle chips and all options are reasonably priced for the portion sizes. Waffle fries are available as an add-on. I was intrigued by the Hawaiian toasty (smoked ham, cheese and pineapple), the barbecue pulled pork toasty, and the pub grinder (chicken or steak, bacon, mushrooms, garlic cheese, Alfredo sauce, cheese and turbo sauce).

When it comes to pizza, there are loads of options. First there are the artisan-style flatbread pizzas (unleavened bread), thin and thick crust and crispy pizzas. There are gluten-free options. Then there are the specialty pizzas such as the pulled pork pizza (made with Turasky’s pulled pork), the garlic lovers pizza (garlic cheese, Alfredo sauce, bacon, minced garlic and roasted red peppers – better reserved for after work), and the taco pizza (salsa, taco meat, lettuce, tomatoes and crushed Doritos for some crunch).

I opted to go with the spicy Italian pizza (sriracha marinara, pepperoni, Italian sausage,

salami and banana peppers) with a side of the sauce to dip slices into. I was a little nervous ordering a pizza well-done at lunch time, but they must have a scorching hot oven as the wait for it to be served would be very manageable for those on the clock. I can be a traditionalist when it comes to pizza, but Brewski’s creation hit some fun flavor notes and it was not excessively spicy.


My other guest went with the Italian toasty (pepperoni, salami, banana peppers and cheese) augmented by a special request for the traditional grinder accompaniments (oil, vinegar and oregano). Our server happily

advised us that it would not be a problem. I did manage to grab a piece of the sandwich, and loved the fact that the bread was crunchy on the outside but still fluffy on the inside. It contained a generous amount of meat and cheese, especially for a \$9 sandwich.

Service was cheerful and efficient, and Brewski’s appeared to be well-staffed the day we visited, something that seems like a rarity these days. Overall, our trip to Brewski’s Pub was an enjoyable experience, and I am sure we’ll be back. **SBJ**



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