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New life for former Sangamo Club?

Local developer hopes to convert it into apartments

By Angela Mueller



Local developer Corky Joyner has the former Sangamo Club property in downtown Springfield under contract and hopes to convert it into apartments. PHOTO BY ZACH ADAMS

After four years on the market, the vacant Sangamo Club building may soon have a new owner.

Local developer Corky Joyner of Joyner Construction has the 29,000-square-foot building at 227 E. Adams St. under contract with tentative plans to redevelop it into apartments.

However, Joyner is awaiting bids for remediating hazardous materials in the building and wants to have a cost estimate for the remediation before closing on the property. He said he is hoping to be able to make a final decision within the coming weeks.

While Joyner remains open to different options for the building, he said residential development is at the top of the list.

“Everything is still on the table at this point, but our initial desire is to do residential there,” he said. He estimates the building could house between 20 and 40 residential units.

Joyner said he believes there’s a market for downtown residential, particularly with the Sangamo Club’s central location.

“It’s close to the employment generators downtown – the Capitol, both the hospitals and the medical school,” Joyner said. “We wanted to do a project that was in the middle of all of them.”

The building has been vacant since

the Sangamo Club closed in June 2023 after more than 133 years in business. The private dining club, which had been part of Springfield’s history since 1890, had close to 1,000 members as recently as 2016, but membership had dwindled to 250 by 2023. The Sangamo Club initially opened at 523 S. Sixth St. but had been located in the Adams Street building since 1963.

Months before the club closed, its downtown building was listed for sale by Hurwitz Enterprises in 2022 at an asking price of \$1.45 million. PNC Bank foreclosed on the property in April 2024, and the following month the property was listed with Todd P. Smith Commercial Real Estate at an asking price of \$895,000. The property currently is listed at \$599,000.

Joyner declined to disclose what he offered for the property, saying only that it was a “little bit less” than the current asking price.

Joyner, who has been in the construction business since 1995, recently has been focused on the apartment market. Joyner owns several local apartment complexes, including the Cobblestone Place and Ash Grove complexes, both of which are off Wabash Avenue. The company is completing construction on the Residences at Cardinal Hill complex in Rochester and has just started construction on a complex

to be known as Wabash Park, located on Mercantile Drive near Wabash.

Over the course of his career, Joyner has been involved in the development of more than 800 acres of raw ground in Sangamon County, most of which was for new subdivisions. Joyner Construction, which currently has about 20 employees, also has built and owned multiple strip malls in the area.

“I’ve been doing this for a while, and I look forward to putting something downtown that will be there for years to come,” Joyner said.

Currently, Joyner owns two office buildings downtown, at 217 E. Monroe St. and 500 W. Monroe St. He said he hopes to see more developers making an investment in downtown. In particular, he’d like to see the proposed expansion of the BOS Center move forward.

“We’re hoping the convention center expansion happens,” he said. “That would be the biggest thing to happen downtown in my business career.”

Joyner said that in a perfect world, construction would begin at the Sangamo Club by the end of summer, with residents moving in by the end of summer 2027.

“That’s probably ambitious, but it’s what we hope to do,” he said.

Grand reopening for Green Toyota

By Angela Mueller

Green Toyota is gearing up to move into its newly refurbished dealership on Wabash Avenue after a \$12.6 million renovation and expansion.

The project added 6,000-square-foot of showroom space and upgraded the dealership's entire facility.

"We basically gutted the entire store from front to back," said Mylas Copeland, managing partner. Green Toyota plans to be open for business in the newly refurbished facility as of June 9.

Upgrades included a climate-controlled shop in the automotive services department, new lifts for the shop technicians, new breakrooms and locker rooms for employees and an upgraded conference room. The shop also doubled its parts-storage floor space by adding a second floor to the storage area.

New technology was added to enhance the customer experience, Copeland said, such as tread-depth readers that can detect whether a car's tires are properly aligned when a customer pulls into the shop. Green Toyota also added a tire carousel that will hold up to 250 tires, allowing the shop to source a wider range of tires. New customer lounges and workspaces were added, as well as a new delivery center for customers.

"It's always been tough to deliver cars in inclement weather," Copeland said. "Now the customer can walk around and inspect the car and take delivery in a climate-controlled environment."

Copeland said the timing was right for the dealership to make the investment to expand and improve product availability.

"We had a really nice store, but we'd had a really nice store since 1998," he said. "Honestly, it was time."

CFI Design Management, an Indianapolis-based contractor that exclusively works with automotive dealerships, was general contractor for the project. Copeland said CFI partnered with local crews for the job.

Green Toyota broke ground on the project in February 2025 and has been operating out of temporary facilities ever since, with sales operations relocating to the Volkswagen Audi showroom next door and other departments working out of modular units.

"This was a full construction zone for 14 months," Copeland said. "It was dirty, and it was challenging, but our customers stuck with us with the understanding that what we will give you on the other side will be amazing."



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Springfield Mayor Misty Buscher, shown at the entrance to the BOS Center, the city's publicly owned convention center.
PHOTO BY ZACH ADAMS

“A lot of things are getting confused”

Van Meter addresses city, county roles in legislation meant to spur downtown development

By Dean Olsen

The only revenue Springfield city government might forfeit to help pay for the proposed BOS Center expansion and new hotel next door would be the city's share of hotel taxes on room rates at the site and part of the expected increase in city sales taxes.

Those were guarantees that Sangamon County Board Chair Andy Van Meter made in recent interviews with Illinois Times about the effects of pending state legislation in which Van Meter has been intimately involved. And he said the Springfield City Council would have to vote to agree with those diversions of revenue before the changes could take place.

Van Meter's assurances referred to the Springfield project tucked inside a “megaprojects” bill – a bill also containing plans for a new Chicago Bears stadium – that passed the Illinois House on April 22 and may be considered by the Senate before the General Assembly's scheduled adjournment later this month.

His comments contradicted statements from several City Council members amid those members' complaints about a lack of clarity in the bill and the city's

potential loss of control over downtown development.

“A lot of things are getting confused,” Van Meter said. “I think the city misunderstands the city's role in this project. The city is only being asked to do the things that it would do with any developer who came to town.”

Van Meter, a Springfield Republican, acknowledged that some sections of House Bill 910 may be misleading when it comes to the impact on the capital city. Those sections, he said, likely will be clarified before the legislation is passed by both chambers and sent to Gov. JB Pritzker for his signature.

The skeptical council members, during hours of city council debate in recent weeks, said they feared the measure would hand more development power to the Republican-controlled county government. The alderpersons failed to be dissuaded by Mayor Misty Buscher, who disagreed with their interpretations.

The bill would create a five-member board that would own the future 200- to 300-room hotel and BOS Center expansion, oversee the expansion and finance the \$200 million project with

state and local tax dollars generated in the heart of downtown's 62701 ZIP code and repay the borrowing.

Under the legislation, three of the board members would be selected by the Sangamon County Board, one would be selected by the City Council and the remaining member would be chosen by the Springfield Metropolitan Exposition and Auditorium Authority that owns and operates the 47-year-old BOS Center.

Several City Council members who are critics of the plan say they support the proposed BOS Center expansion – a doubling of space that is designed to retain and lure more conventions and entertainment to the capital city – but they want a majority of the members to be appointed by the council. They said the current plan would march the Democratic-leaning city ever closer to a metropolitan government in which even more city and county functions are combined.

Ward 3 Ald. Roy Williams Jr., the leading critic, said at the May 5 council meeting that county officials back the bill because it's “designed to weaken us” and “they have plans for things beyond that

two-block radius.” What Williams alleges isn’t true, according to Van Meter.

Williams suggested that Buscher’s desire to help Republicans took precedence over her loyalties to the city. “She’s giving away the farm,” he said in April.

Buscher denied the allegations, saying the success of the proposed legislation depends on various governmental bodies working together to pool resources.

Buscher and Van Meter said the proposed Capital Area Tourism Authority Board wouldn’t have taxing authority. However, Ward 6 Ald. Jennifer Notariano, another frequent critic of the mayor, said the proposal would create an unelected board and “give our authority away to another municipal authority.”

One of the mayor’s allies, Ward 10 Ald. Ralph Hanauer, dismissed the criticisms as conspiracy theories. Hanauer, a Republican on the officially nonpartisan council, said council members should be thanking Pritzker, a Democrat, state Sen. Doris Turner, D-Springfield, who is the key sponsor, and state Rep. Michael Coffey, R-Springfield, chair of the SMEAA board, for supporting a plan that could help rejuvenate the downtown.

The legislation doesn’t spell out all the details and does refer to “all of the tax receipts generated from local sales taxes” in the area to be governed by the new CATA Board.

Coffey referred questions from Illinois Times about the legislation’s wording to Turner, who didn’t respond to several requests for comment and clarification.

But according to Van Meter, the legislation, once passed and signed into law, would depend on written agreements approved by the County Board, City Council and SMEAA Board that would set aside the following revenues over a 30-year period to come up with potentially \$14 million a year to pay off bonds:

- The state’s share of the sales tax in the 62701 ZIP code.
- The state’s share of hotel taxes paid in the 62701 ZIP code.
- All payments on the hotel lease paid by the operator of the hotel. These payments would be the largest contributions to repay the bonds.
- The county’s share of current sales taxes from the 62701 ZIP code.
- All proceeds from a new countywide hotel tax authorized by state legislation passed in 2024, up to a maximum of 3% of the room rate.
- An annual, still-to-be-determined contribution from SMEAA.

- The city of Springfield’s share of hotel taxes generated by the new hotel.
- The incremental increase in the county’s and city’s share of 62701 sales taxes attributed to economic activity spurred by the project, based on a percentage to be estimated by consultants.

Van Meter said it is possible but “highly unlikely” that the slice of 62701 city sales tax revenue he described will be needed.

“In contrast to the contributions asked from the county, the city will not be asked to pledge anything from its current revenue streams,” Van Meter said. He noted that another major contribution of the county would be the county-owned land on which the new hotel and BOS Center expansion would sit. That land, on the west side of Ninth Street, is currently used as a county-operated parking lot.

Van Meter added, “The request for the city hotel tax generated by the new hotel is the typical request that any developer proposing a new flagship hotel would ask of any city in any community.”

The people and organizations that purchase the bonds to be used in the project’s financing – and not taxpayers or taxing bodies – will be at risk if the project fails, Van Meter said. So if the hotel is built and later fails, bondholders could seize the hotel, he said.

When told of the limited contribution from the city envisioned by county officials, Williams at first said he didn’t believe it and then said he wanted to see the details in writing.

“I might not be totally right,” Williams said. “I want to know the fiscal impact on the city of Springfield. ... I want all of this broken down publicly.”

Williams called for a special meeting May 12 to push for City Council passage of his previously unsuccessful resolution calling for three of the five future CATA Board members to represent the city. The special meeting, which took place prior to the regular May 12 council meeting, lasted nearly two-and-a-half hours and included extensive public comments. Former Mayor Jim Langfelder and former Ward 7 Ald. Joe McMenamin both questioned the county’s involvement in the proposal.

Ultimately, the City Council voted 6-4 to support the proposed expansion of the BOS Center. But at the beginning of the special meeting, Hanauer proposed an amendment that removed almost all of the language from Williams’ resolution, other than the first paragraph supporting

the proposed Statehouse legislation. It struck references calling for the city to have more participation in the board overseeing the project.

Buscher broke a 5-5 tie on the amendment, which then passed.

Ward 8 Ald. Erin Conley said the city “wasn’t losing control of downtown” and noted the potential for this to be a transformational project.

“I think the message has been heard that we as a city want to be engaged, we want to be involved, and we want to be part of the process,” she said.

Ward 2 Ald. Shawn Gregory, whose ward encompasses part of the downtown, saw Buscher veto an ordinance the council passed April 21 that called for a study to potentially expand the BOS Center expansion project to fund the east side’s “History Across the Tracks” historical sites.

Gregory previously voted for Williams’ resolution and said that if an increase in the hotel tax is a part of the financing, it’s important to note that almost all of the hotels in the county are in Springfield.

“We’re not the little brother, we’re the big brother of Sangamon County,” Gregory said during the May 12 special meeting.

He also noted that other significant projects, such as the Springfield Rail Improvements Project, have been accomplished through city, county and state collaboration but without a separate governing board.

Van Meter said he supports the current proposed makeup of the CATA Board.

“The county entered into this process with the understanding that for all the county is being asked to do, that the county would have the major responsibility for the project,” he said. “But we want to proceed collaboratively, and we welcome the city and SMEAA as partners.”

The Dallas-based consulting group hired by the county for \$400,000 to guide the project, Garfield Public/Private LLC, has received “letters of interest” from the corporate officers of Marriott International, Hilton and Hyatt to operate the new hotel, Van Meter said.

“Government has no business operating the hotel,” he said.

If the legislation passes and the city and county agree to terms of their commitments in the next six to eight months, Van Meter said construction of the BOS Center expansion and hotel could begin in spring 2027 and be finished by mid-2029. **SBJ**



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