

City of Ottawa, Illinois

A Newsletter from Ottawa City Hall

Winter 2010



Message From The Mayor

Dear Friend:

Welcome to the first edition of the City of Ottawa's on-line newsletter. With the publication of this newsletter, we hope to keep those with a special interest in Ottawa up to speed on major happenings in our beautiful City. The newsletter is intended to be published on a quarterly basis. Feel free to pass the newsletter on to anyone you believe has an interest in Ottawa. Free subscription to the news letter can be quickly and easily done through the City of Ottawa website (www.cityofottawa.org).

I am extremely pleased to be able to report that Ottawa seems to be weathering the economic crisis. Certainly, not everything is rosy with fewer employment opportunities than we would like and lower City revenues coming in – yet most of the downtown merchants seem to be making the grade while a number of local industries have even been hiring new employees.

Our approach to handling the recession has been to focus on job retention and aggressive pursuit of the limited number of available opportunities to create new jobs while at the same time laying the groundwork in terms of infrastructure improvements and new economic development tools for significant new growth once the economy begins to improve.

Please take a few minutes to read the newsletter and then share your thoughts with us by contacting me (mayor@cityofottawa.org).

Sincerely,

Robert Eschbach
Mayor City of Ottawa

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A key element of Ottawa's economic development program is the availability of six TIF districts which cover the various areas of Ottawa slated for new business growth – including downtown Ottawa. These TIF districts put Ottawa in the strong position of being prepared to quickly accommodate new development and job creation opportunities. According to a recent article in *The News Tribune* and attorney Tom Jacob (November 3, 2009), Ottawa seems to have benefitted from TIF districts during the past decade more than most Illinois Valley communities – as they have led to \$727 million in private investment while creating or retaining 2,000 jobs. The Ottawa TIF districts also produce nearly \$4 million in annual income for the City of Ottawa and other local governments – a figure which steadily increases along with the value of property in the TIF districts. The increment is available for use by the City of Ottawa for improvements within the TIF districts and has recently made possible the downtown streetscaping and the Heritage Harbor Ottawa/Ottawa Industrial Park projects – both described elsewhere in this newsletter.



Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Makes a Big Difference

International Titanium Powder (ITP) High Tech Manufacturing Comes to Ottawa

Calling the decision by International Titanium Powder (ITP) to locate and grow its business in the Ottawa Industrial Park, “perhaps the most exciting thing to happen during my tenure as Mayor”, Mayor Eschbach officially welcomed ITP to Ottawa on October 22, 2009 at the company’s Milestone Celebration at its production facility in the Ottawa Industrial Park. When completed and in production – scheduled for the second half of 2010 – the ITP plant will be the only one of its kind in the world.



International Titanium Powder uses a brand new process developed by the company to produce high quality titanium powder at a significantly lower final product cost while requiring much less energy than does the standard titanium production process. These production strengths should place ITP in a strongly competitive position within the industry and revolutionize the use of titanium in many different applications. This position, along with the growing demand for titanium from the aerospace, national defense, automotive, recreational and health care industries, is fueling hopes of ITP expansion along with the attraction to Ottawa of new businesses requiring titanium as their primary production ingredient.

It should be noted that International Titanium Powder is managed by those with a passion for safety, care for the environment, quality and being a good community citizen. The Ottawa plant is emission-free and produces only a sodium chloride (salt) liquid byproduct that possibly could be used in road salt applications.

By the end of this year, ITP hopes to move forward with the hiring of about 60 new employees. All of its available positions will be posted with Business Employment Skills Team (BEST), Inc. at 815/433-4550 in the South Towne Mall on Ottawa’s south side.

Kohl’s Increasing Ottawa Workforce

While no one is happy about benefitting from the misfortune of others, Ottawa will nevertheless welcome an influx of new jobs resulting from the closing of a Kohl’s distribution facility in Menominee Falls, Wisconsin. As a result, the Kohl’s distribution facility in Ottawa will be adding 150 positions as it picks up the distribution responsibilities of the Wisconsin facility in the early part of 2010.

At the request of Kohl’s, which covered the cost of the event, the Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce, working with the City of Ottawa, hosted the visit of approximately three dozen Kohl’s employees from Wisconsin in October. Kohl’s has promised to assist its Menominee Falls employees in relocating to other Kohl’s facilities. The Chamber organized a very nice luncheon event and tour of the Ottawa area. In addition to being fun to tell these visitors about the many advantages of living in Ottawa, it was great to have the opportunity to work together with the realtor, health care, education, business and employment sectors of Ottawa for a common cause. It is expected that a considerable number of the visitors will decide to remain with Kohl’s and relocate to Ottawa. Nevertheless, the bulk of the new employees will be hired locally. The Kohl’s reorganization means the Ottawa distribution center will soon be serving more than 150 Kohl’s stores.

Ottawa Moves to Implement Brand

The summer of 2009 saw the City of Ottawa begin to put into effect its Gardening and Botanical Arts Brand for downtown Ottawa with the streetscaping of the 700 block of LaSalle Street. This Brand was recommended by Destination Development, Inc., an international consultant located in Seattle, in the Fall of 2008 after a nearly yearlong study (the entire DDI study is available on the City of Ottawa website – www.cityofottawa.org) and was officially adopted by the Ottawa City Council early in 2009. The 700 block streetscape features ten trees and 800 plants, all installed by volunteers. Each of the 18 plant beds and tree pits features a different planting design (the full color plant designs for each bed will soon be available on the City of Ottawa website).

The City is already beginning to plan the expansion of the streetscaping effort on LaSalle Street in 2010. The extent of the 2010 effort will depend upon available funds. The streetscaping program is funded by the Downtown TIF which contains a portion of the property taxes paid by downtown property owners – the taxes paid by individual Ottawa citizens are not used. Appropriately enough, the taxes paid by downtown property owners are thus reinvested in the downtown. While the beautification of downtown Ottawa is an important part of the plan, the ultimate goal of the Brand is to strengthen the economic vitality of the downtown by attracting more potential customers and providing more opportunities for entrepreneurs to start new businesses and create new jobs.



Ottawa Continues to Upgrade Its Parks

Continuing a decade long program of aggressive expansion and major upgrades to its public park system, the City of Ottawa completed \$500,000 worth of major improvements in late summer to Fox River Park. The project was funded by a \$250,000 State grant and \$250,000 gained from the sale of the Harpers Farm property several years ago.

The improvements included a new basketball court and playground equipment, park shelter, fishing platforms, better Fox River access and boat carrier parking and an outdoor ice rink location. Of special interest to Ottawa children and families is a new outdoor water feature.

This park along the beautiful Fox River was made possible when the City of Ottawa more than a decade ago won a million dollar plus federal flood mitigation grant to purchase and remove homes in this area which historically has suffered from frequent severe flooding.



Scouting Centennial to be Celebrated in Ottawa –



Ottawa is the Birthplace of Scouting in America

On February 8, 1910, William D. Boyce of Ottawa incorporated the Boy Scouts of America – launching the organization which has since meant so much to generations of American youth.

This historic occasion will be celebrated June 10-13, 2010 with a wide variety of activities designed to bring thousands of Scouts to Ottawa.

A few of these many activities include an old fashioned soap box derby, a 1910 camp site, crafts, opportunities to earn merit badges, games, the re-dedication of the W.D. Boyce Trail and much more. Full details of the event will be available at ottawascoutingmuseum.org.

Ottawa is home to one of our nation's premier Scouting museums, the Ottawa Scouting Museum, which commemorates the history of the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Camp Fire.

Ottawa Launches Enhanced Broadband Access Study With NIU



The City of Ottawa has contracted with the Northern Illinois University (NIU) Broadband Development Group to conduct a feasibility study of the options available to provide high speed, unrestricted broadband to Ottawa at reasonable rates. The study will also involve Illinois Valley Community College and the cities of LaSalle and Oglesby. It will consider connectivity options ranging from wireless to the laying of fiber optic cable to the value of any current options and should be completed by Spring, 2010. The study will also focus on the broadband needs of Ottawa's schools, hospital, library and emergency services

Landmark Agreement to Benefit Ottawa

It is not often that a city can put together a business agreement which significantly boosts virtually all of its key economic development sectors and not have to rely on funding from local individual taxpayers. The City of Ottawa has completed the implementation of an agreement to finance the extension of water and sanitary sewer services throughout the Heritage Harbor Ottawa (HHO) marina resort project located on the Illinois River on the far eastern edge of Ottawa. Arrangements are being made to sell \$2.5 million of Recovery Zone bonds (created early in 2009 by the passage of federal stimulus legislation) to finance the laying of the sewer and water lines. This vital project provides the following important advantages to Ottawa:

- Extends water and sewer from the western edge of HHO to the eastern side of its property, permitting HHO to build the new amenities it needs to bolster its marketing efforts. The property tax base and visitors/new residents which will be provided by HHO are very important parts of Ottawa's economic future.
- The extension also brings sewer and water services to within a block of the eastern portion of the Ottawa Industrial Park, thus allowing the City to meet the future expansion needs of International Titanium Powder and also be in position to attract new businesses to the Industrial Park.
- As part of the agreement, HHO has transferred ownership of the Jordan Block in downtown Ottawa to the City of Ottawa. The nearly vacant Jordan Block is a critical key to the economic development of downtown Ottawa. The City of Ottawa acquired it as part of the HHO agreement for hardly more than a third of the cost paid by HHO to purchase the property and demolish the fire damaged buildings left on it.

The cost of retiring the bonds used to finance the deal over the twenty years will be split between HHO and the City of Ottawa. The City's share will be funded by revenues drawn from its Canal TIF which primarily contains property taxes paid by HHO – thus verifying the above claim that no money will be taken from the pockets of individual taxpayers. The use of the federal stimulus bonds will save the City of Ottawa hundreds of thousands of dollars in bond finance costs.