

# City of Ottawa, Illinois

A Newsletter from Ottawa City Hall

Summer 2010

## Message From The Mayor

Dear Friend:

Ottawa is now a College Town! Sounds great, doesn't it?

Late last year, the City of Ottawa and Illinois Valley Community College signed an historic agreement creating the first satellite campus in the 87 year history of IVCC – the IVCC Ottawa Center. I want to commend the Ottawa City Council, IVCC President Jerry Corcoran and the IVCC Board of Trustees for their commitment to the expansion of the educational opportunities available to residents of Ottawa, Streator, Marseilles, Seneca, Earlville and throughout eastern LaSalle County. This was truly a visionary action on their part and the beginning of a new partnership with IVCC which I strongly believe will provide a great many benefits to the people of Ottawa in years to come.

The City of Ottawa purchased the Ottawa Center building from Centru Bank in early March and is now in the process of renovating it to house the IVCC educational program. The renovation is moving forward quickly as the IVCC Ottawa Center opens on August 18 for the Fall semester. Until the renovation is completed, registration for the Fall semester is being held at Ottawa City Hall. Interested students need to sign up soon as I hear classes are quickly filling.

I need to take a moment to thank Centru Bank for being a great corporate citizen of Ottawa and an absolutely essential partner in the IVCC Ottawa Center project. Not only did Centru agree to sell the building to the City for a price far below its appraisal value, it also donated almost all the office furniture in the building to the City of Ottawa and IVCC – saving taxpayers thousands of dollars.

Although we hope the expected success of the IVCC Ottawa Center will soon result in the expansion of the IVCC educational program offered there, already students have access to a great many courses (check them out at [www.ivcc.edu/ottawa](http://www.ivcc.edu/ottawa)). For example, Ottawa students planning to attend IVCC for two years and then transfer to a four year university may take all of the general education courses they need to transfer without leaving the City of Ottawa. A large number of exciting and interesting continuing education courses will also soon be announced.

What a wonderful benefit for Ottawa – convenient access to IVCC's high quality and very affordable educational opportunities – and I have not even emphasized the expected economic boost to downtown Ottawa. As the IVCC ads say about the new Ottawa Center – "No place so close...is now even closer!"

Sincerely,  
**Robert Eschbach**  
Mayor City of Ottawa

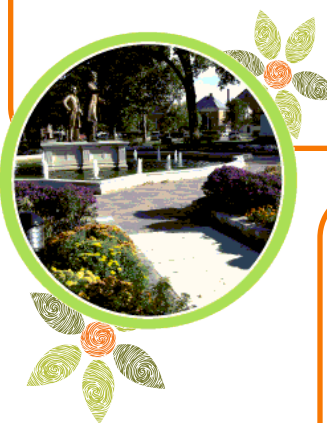


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## Ottawa Riverfest Celebration Begins July 28th

The 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Welcomeburger sponsored by the Ottawa Area Chamber on July 28 launches the pinnacle summer event in Ottawa – the annual Ottawa Riverfest Celebration. A family-oriented carnival, the "Taste of Ottawa", giant used book sale, craft and flea market sale, exciting evening musical entertainment, beer garden and much more highlight the celebration which runs through August 1, the date of the big parade through downtown Ottawa. Check out all the details at [www.ottawariverfest.org](http://www.ottawariverfest.org).



## Illinois Valley Community College Comes to Ottawa

After nearly a year of site selection and discussion activity, the Ottawa City Council and the IVCC Board of Trustees passed and signed an agreement late last year to create the IVCC Ottawa Center – the first satellite campus in the 87 year history of IVCC – the second oldest community college in the State of Illinois. The five year agreement calls for IVCC to lease the former Centrue Bank Operations Center at 321 West Main Street from the City of Ottawa for \$649,000 over the course of the initial contract.

A key step in the site selection process was a survey done by IVCC of the several thousand students from the east side of LaSalle County now enrolled at IVCC. The survey results, especially from the Streator area, showed a clear preference for a downtown Ottawa site. As a result, the site search shifted to downtown Ottawa from the Interstate 80 area on the north side of Ottawa.

The City of Ottawa purchased the 12,000 square foot building – the former Ottawa Post Office – from Centrue for \$625,000 in March and will spend approximately \$650,000 to renovate the building to meet the requirements of the IVCC educational program. The funds

needed to purchase and renovate the building will be completely provided by the City of Ottawa's Enterprise Fund. This fund is comprised of payments made to the City of Ottawa by local wind farm operations in exchange for access to the City enterprise zone. These funds have been set aside for economic development and just this type of special opportunity. The IVCC lease payments will be used to replenish the fund. At the current lease rate, the entire expense of purchasing and renovating the IVCC Ottawa should be covered by the IVCC lease payments over the course of ten years. The project cost will be further offset by some major private sector contributions.



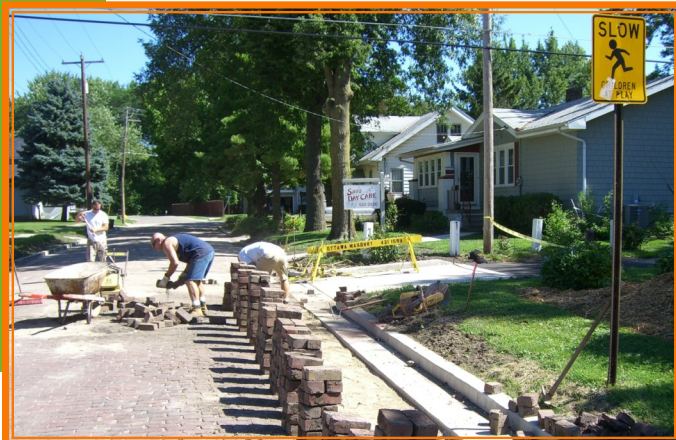
The initial education program offered by IVCC will feature general education courses such as mathematics, English, art, music, social studies and psychology along with allied health, a full CNA program, GED, English as a Second Language (ESL), citizenship and continuing education courses. Student registration is now ongoing at the Ottawa City Hall for the Fall semester of the 2010/2011 school year which begins on August 18, 2010. The education program can be reviewed on line at [www.ivcc.edu/ottawa](http://www.ivcc.edu/ottawa).

## City of Ottawa Pursues Major Infrastructure Projects

*Puts Federal Stimulus Funds to Good Use – Saves Millions in Local Taxes*

Upgrade of Ottawa wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) – The first significant upgrade in 40 years, this \$9 million project will restore some treatment processes, install new and improved processes, make the facility much more energy efficient and generally lay the groundwork for a major increase in WWTF capacity should future economic development and population growth. Using federal stimulus funds will save Ottawa taxpayers \$4 million.

Westside Water Tower – The currently underway \$1.5 million construction of the west side water tower is a key part of the retention agreement between the City of Ottawa and Pilkington. Reached several years ago, the agreement commits the City to extending water and sanitary sewer services to the Pilkington glass plant on the west side of Ottawa in exchange for the investment by Pilkington of \$70 million to modernize its glass production facilities. The alternative would have been the closing of Pilkington plant and the loss of more than 150 good paying jobs. The new half million gallon water tower will also enable the City to reach the IEPA recommended level of 1.5 million gallons in water storage capacity.



2010 Streetwork – The City of Ottawa is in the midst of spending approximately \$3.5 million this year to upgrade its streets. More than a third of this total will come from stimulus funding, Motor Fuel Tax funds administered by the State of Illinois, a developer contribution and IDOT grants. High profile projects include new curbs, gutters, new paving and the widening of West McKinley Road and the widening and left turn lane for Dayton Road as required by IDOT to accommodate the Kohl's Distribution Center traffic. Another project of special note is the "Save Roads To School" project funded by a \$200,000 IDOT grant for new sidewalks leading to Ottawa's schools.

The City is also especially pleased to have completed the \$1 million Poplar Street Hill project last year which widened the street and made its incline less steep and safer. The sidewalk was also completely rebuilt. Poplar is an important, high traffic route which "collects" traffic wanting to travel from the lower to higher ground in Ottawa along a north-south route.

## Heritage Harbor Ottawa Retools – Moving Forward Again

Given the deep recession which hit the real estate market two years ago, it is remarkable that Heritage Harbor Ottawa (HHO), the marina resort being developed on the eastern edge of Ottawa, is still in existence – a great many of its former colleagues in the real estate business are not. Yet HHO is not only still in business, it is moving forward – seeing a renewed interest from potential investors and beginning to sell an increasing number of homes and properties. This HHO revival is good news for the City of Ottawa – given the importance of a successful HHO to the City's future tax base and retailers.

What has caused HHO to not only survive but actually begin to turn the corner? Foremost has been the personal commitment to Ottawa of HHO developer, Tom Heimsoth, and his sheer determination to just hang on. Second has been the ability of HHO to recognize that the old economy – the one on which the original HHO business plan was based – has almost completely disappeared. The new economy demands a new approach and new real estate products. A silver lining of the recession was the opportunity – alertly seized by HHO – to gain access to the top level marketing expertise and personnel needed to create and implement a new plan – resources not available a few years ago when the economy was booming. The new plan is carefully tailored to the new economy with a diversity of real estate products more affordable to more people (witness the launching of a local Illinois Valley HHO marketing effort) and an increased focus on making the many recreational and cultural resources of the Illinois Valley available to HHO clients.

The results of this realigned effort are already evident. A quick drive by HHO will reveal a great deal of activity – sewer and water lines being extended across the HHO property, new homes and infrastructure under construction, very attractive landscaping installed, a swimming pool being built – with more projects to come later in the year. The ongoing HHO commitment to Ottawa and this new approach are very much appreciated by the City of Ottawa. The ability of HHO to draw visitors and new residents to Ottawa – people eager to explore and shop Ottawa – and the increasing amount of local tax revenue generated by HHO will be of great importance to Ottawa over the years. In addition, HHO has been a very good corporate neighbor willing to support local events and good causes while its beautiful marina facility enhances Ottawa's image as a special place.



## Ottawa Garden and Botanical Arts Brand Update



The implementation of the Ottawa Brand began in 2009 in a big way with the streetscaping of the 700 block of LaSalle Street. The beautiful trees and plants won many local and visitor compliments and to many merchants – seemed to boost Downtown retail traffic. The beautification effort has continued this Spring with the next phase – the streetscaping of the 800 block of LaSalle Street. An extra feature in the 800 block plan is the addition of a “bumpout” on each side of LaSalle Street.

This involves the expansion into a single parking space on each of the street of curb and brickwork which permit the creation of more green and gathering space for Downtown visitors. As the sidewalk needed to be cut for plant beds and tree pits, the City of Ottawa decided it would also be efficient to replace much of the curb and sidewalk on the 800 block

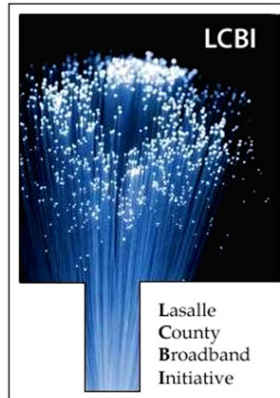
at the same time. As was the case with the 700 block, the whole project is being funded by the Downtown TIF. TIF funds come from the property taxes paid by the owners of Downtown property and must be reinvested into the Downtown. They cannot be used to fund streetwork in other parts of the City or to pay City employees.

NOTE: The benches planned for the 800 block are available for purchase as memorials – just contact Kim Czyz at City Hall. The City is very appreciative of the contributions which have resulted in the purchase of all the 700 block benches as memorials.

## City of Ottawa Wins Historic Preservation Grant

Downtown Ottawa benefits from the presence of many historic buildings – some dating back to pre-Civil War times. These buildings, once attractively restored, have the potential when combined with the beautiful flower and plant beds emerging throughout the Downtown to produce the kind of ambiance sure to attract many visitors to Downtown Ottawa. Thanks to the awarding of a \$56,000 grant of federal funds administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the City of Ottawa has been able to contract with the Peoples Economic Development Corporation (PEDC) to help develop and implement during the next two years a comprehensive historic restoration program for Downtown Ottawa. A key provision of the contract will be the handling by the PEDC of the application process which will place Downtown Ottawa on the National District. Among other things, this will make the owners of historic buildings eligible for a 20% federal income tax credit to be applied against the cost of a historic restoration project for their buildings. Everyone will soon have the opportunity to learn a great deal more about historic restoration as one of the first responsibilities of the PEDC will be to organize a comprehensive informational forum.

## Ottawa Leads Effort to Bring High Speed Broadband Access to LaSalle



The City of Ottawa and the North Central Illinois Council of Governments are leading the effort to bring unrestricted, high speed broadband at reasonable prices to LaSalle County. The vehicle is the LaSalle County Broadband Initiative (LCBI) which would lay 190 miles of fiber optic line across LaSalle County with the assistance of nearly \$19 million in state and federal funding. The LCBI is being strongly supported by Northern Illinois University which assisted in the filing of the grant application and would assist in the administering of the grant funds should they be awarded. The LCBI will provide direct connectivity at very reasonable prices to LaSalle County schools, libraries, villages and cities, emergency services and

other public bodies. On the private side, the LCBI will inject a healthy dose of competition into the marketplace – providing residential and business users with lower prices. Very good news was recently received in the form of notification by the National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA) that the LCBI application had been reviewed and promoted to the Due Diligence Phase. In this phase, the LCBI committee will be asked to justify certain aspects of its application with a final funding decision expected in September.



## Ottawa – A Longtime Tree City USA, To Gain More Trees

*A Lot More Trees as City is Awarded Large Tree-Planting Grant*

The winner of a \$337,250 Illinois Green Street Program grant late last year, the City of Ottawa is poised to plant a lot of new trees during the next year. The rules of the grant require the planting of trees along the Illinois and U.S. highways which form the gateways to the City. At the moment, the City is working with a local engineering firm to develop a tree planting program which meets the requirements of IDOT, the agency which will administer the grant. Even after covering the costs of the engineering study, the City is hoping to plant more than 1500 good-sized new trees. The grant is funded by federal transportation dollars administered by the State of Illinois.



## Beautification Efforts Spread Downtown



While the most dramatic and obvious beautification of Downtown Ottawa is occurring in the street-scaping of LaSalle Street, visitors should also take note of the many other beautiful flower and plant beds and designs throughout the Downtown. These include the urban garden at Madison and Columbus, the area around the Vietnam Memorial, the LaSalle County Courthouse block, all around the Jordan Block and the

Riverwalk. Of special note are the efforts by many individual merchants to beautify their places of businesses with a variety of planters. Even the hanging baskets have been beefed up this year with extra plant material. Of course, Washington Park continues to be an especially beautiful place with the landscaping around the Lincoln-Douglas fountain and the LaSalle County Civil War Memorial. It is especially important to note that almost all of this natural beauty is developed and maintained by volunteers. For example, each of the plant beds on the 700 block of LaSalle Street is being cared for by a volunteer gardener. The 2010 growing season promises to be particularly beautiful in Downtown Ottawa.



## Ottawa Township High School Wins State Music Championship Again

Under the able leadership of Roger Amm, Choral Director for 29 years, and Sarah Reckmeyer, Band Director for 21 years, Ottawa Township High School (OTHS) has added yet another title to its extraordinary streak of 14 consecutive Illinois State Music Championships. This very proud tradition flourishes not only because of the strong leadership of Roger and Sarah, but also because of the emphasis placed on having high quality music programs in the elementary schools which feed into OTHS. These programs nurture an appreciation for music in students at a young age and began to develop their musical talents. A focus on fine arts is one of the many keys to the high quality of life enjoyed in the City of Ottawa.