

Economic Development, Communities

It’s showtime in the City of Alton: Movie theater, more add to 2021

As the nation emerges from the uncertainty and doldrums brought forth by COVID-19, the City of Alton is poised to continue the growth that preceded the global pandemic. The city has undertaken a number of initiatives to fulfill its economic development aims to attract and retain jobs, expand the tax base, and improve the quality of life for residents. Central to Alton’s economic development goals is the ongoing revitalization of Alton Square Mall. Long-range efforts are aimed at increasing tenant occupancy and stabilizing the mall proper and surrounding out lots. In fur-

therance of these goals, the city recently enacted the Alton Square Business District which imposes a 1 percent sales tax at the property. Additionally, the Alton Square Tax Increment Financing district was established in 2018. Recent site activity includes the demolition of the former OSF medical mall building to facilitate out lot development. In 2019, Hull Property Group entered into a joint venture with Neighborhood Cinema Group for the development of an eight-screen movie theater at the mall. The theater held its opening on Tuesday, March 30. The

Alton market had previously been devoid of a movie theater since the late 1990s.

The adjacent Homer Adams Parkway corridor continues its near capacity growth with recent new construction and renovation activity. Recent development activity includes the adaptive reuse of former big box retail locations for automotive services and climate-controlled storage facilities. Recent additions also include Planet Fitness and Hibbett Sports. Additional development projects are in the plan review and pre-development stages including a planned hotel and fast casual restaurant near the Alton Regional Multi-modal Transportation Center.

Despite the coronavirus pandemic eliminating the possibility for staged events at the Alton Amphitheater during the 2020 calendar year, the City of Alton has proceeded with capital improvements within Riverfront Park. The City recently awarded construction Phase 8 of the



Alton Movie Theater

Riverfront Master Plan. The project includes the reconfiguration of the existing parking lot adjacent to Argosy Casino. Project elements include roadway and bike trail enhancements, landscape improvements, EV charging stations, lighting upgrades, and site furnishings. Additionally, a splash pad and new concession building with restrooms is also under construction within Riverfront Park. Both projects have anticipated completion dates during the late summer. Alton says it is primed for a blockbuster year, and the popcorn is ready.



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Highland sees progress, development on multiple fronts



Recent groundbreaking for public safety building.

Development in the city of Highland has continued to progress despite all of the challenges and obstacles the past year has presented for the community of 10,000 residents. The city’s downtown is experiencing a revitalization through its Broadway Beautification Project. The streetscape development, which commenced in September 2020, includes the installation of new curbing, wider sidewalks, updated signage, and new street lighting. This revitalization project of the downtown area has been met with enthusiasm and has led to investments

by several downtown business owners seeking to improve both the interiors and exteriors of their buildings. The city has plans to further incentivize these investments through the deployment of a façade improvement program it hopes to roll out for the summer of 2021. Also expected to wrap up this year is a new Public Safety facility that will serve as the new headquarters for the city’s police, fire and EMS services. Neighboring HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital, the \$6.5 million, 27,930-square-foot building is expected to finish construction and be in operation summer of this year.

Highland continues to be a leader in rural internet access, continuing to build out its fiber network through Highland Communications Services. As one of the nation’s earliest municipally owned internet service providers, the “gigabit” city has continued to realize the benefits of having a fiber-to-the-premise infrastructure during a sharp upward trend towards tele-work and virtual meetings. This is not only a great quality of life asset for the community’s residents, but also the businesses who benefit from the access to internet speeds

of a gigabit per second and faster. Highland has several developments on the horizon for this year. The project generating the most excitement among residents is the highly anticipated opening of a new brewpub that will overlook the city’s downtown square. City officials anticipate the restaurant and a new community park space adjacent to it will serve as an anchor for the area. “Highland is well positioned for growth and new developments moving forward,” said Economic Development Coordinator Mallord Hubbard.



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