

DDC Activities

Board Member Spotlight

Denise Moore



We are pleased to shine our board member spotlight this month on Denise Moore, one of our representatives for the City of Peoria, our foremost founding member. She is also a member of our Nominating Committee.

Denise is an entrepreneur, financial professional, volunteer, and the first African American woman elected to the Peoria City Council, representing Peoria's First District. She is currently running for a third term. In addition to serving on the city council, Denise is the Founder/CEO of the Black Business Alliance Peoria Chapter, Inc. (a 501c3 non-profit corporation), overseeing both WPNV 106.3 LP FM, Peoria's only African American owned community radio station, and the Minority Business Development Center. Additionally, Denise reformatted Peoria's Fair Employment Commission and the Fair Housing Commission to better serve citizens.

As well as serving on the DDC board, Denise has been appointed to the State of Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Advisory Board, PCCEO (Peoria's Community Action Agency) and is one of the founders of the Illinois State Innovation Association. Denise is also serving on the board of the Peoria Innovation Alliance.

Denise had this to say about the DDC: "I am very proud of how the DDC is focusing on community and economic development, particularly in the Warehouse District. I feel that our contributions to the redevelopment of this district are of utmost importance. The DDC works very hard to help developers repurpose existing buildings for reasonable housing and commercial alternatives in the downtown. By helping developers overcome obstacles, such as adequate parking, form code restrictions, procuring historical tax credits, etc., the DDC is a wonderful resource and advocate in partnership with the City of Peoria."

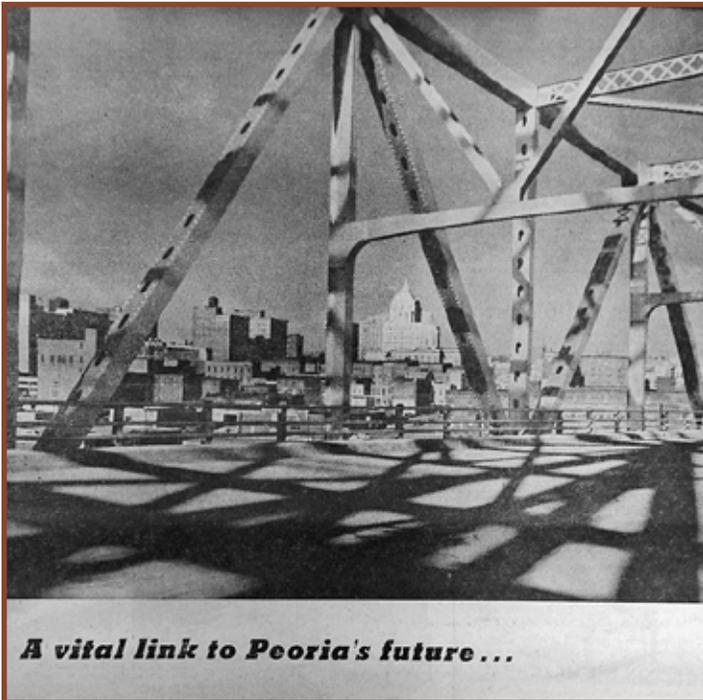
When asked about her vision for downtown Peoria, Denise enthusiastically replied, "My vision for downtown Peoria is that business owners from all walks of life find equal opportunity to grow and prosper. I have seen the momentum build and then pause as COVID-19 came upon us. Now that we are learning how to work through the pandemic, I am excited to see businesses reopening in the downtown and new businesses opening their doors. Downtown Peoria offers a variety of ethnic restaurants and a variety of new commercial interests, such as Pop-A-Shot Basketball Arcade Games, First Ascent Climbing & Fitness, and Black Band Distillery, to name just a few. The Warehouse District is on track to open 300+ new residential living spaces within the next couple of years. I am encouraged by this new growth, knowing that more will follow very soon."

As DDC board member and City Council representative for the First District, Denise says her vision reaches far into the future for downtown Peoria to become one of the most vibrant destinations for people to live, work, and play.

We are so glad to have Denise Moore on our board. Her enthusiasm for downtown Peoria, especially the First District, is contagious. We benefit from her "feet on the ground" energy and the synergy she provides between business owners and the City of Peoria.

Discover Peoria

In collaboration with the Heart of Illinois Hospitality Association (HOIHA) and the Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (PACVB), the DDC is participating in marketing campaigns to promote our downtown and greater Peoria area businesses in their reopening and recovery efforts. As businesses take every precaution for safe experiences, we encourage you to read and watch the ads and take advantage of our local offerings. Our small businesses especially need each and every one of us to survive! It DOES play in Peoria; join in the fun!



Historical Spotlight

Murray Baker Bridge

Photos and article - courtesy of Peoria Public Library

The Murray Baker Bridge was dedicated on December 12, 1958. It was viewed as a harbinger to a revitalized downtown Peoria at a pivotal time when Peoria was on the precipice of many changes, as was our nation. The new bridge was heralded as the “New East-West Gateway to a Vast Mid-west Empire.” This might seem like hyperbole looking at it from our perspective in 2020. Yes, we too have been waiting for the opening (or re-opening as the case may be) of the Murray Baker Bridge for the last several months, but this re-opening does not have anything close to the same import as the original ribbon cutting did in 1958.

In 1958, the bridge was not only considered an integral part of the solution to a traffic problem that had been plaguing the greater Peoria area for decades but was also a connection to the rest of the United States. When discussion of a new bridge started over a decade prior, the planning for an interstate highway system was in its nascent phases. At that time, not much thought was given to the connection that the bridge would have to the interstate system. When originally conceived, the bridge’s primary purpose was to relieve the cross-river congestion that the Peoria area experienced almost every day. With tens of thousands of workers and shoppers travelling from Tazewell County to Peoria County, each workday gridlock was a real concern.

Prior to 1958, the only bridge that connected directly with the downtown area was the Franklin Street Bridge, which, as a Bascule Lift bridge, had to be raised to allow barges or other large vessels to pass on the river, often causing traffic jams on both sides of the river, especially during rush hour. This wasn’t the only concern as the bridge was often placed out of commission due to being damaged by river traffic that hit the bridge.

The concepts for the new downtown bridge went through many stages during the planning process. Some just wanted to build an additional bridge to increase capacity without consideration as to how the bridge would integrate into the rest of the traffic patterns on either side of the river. There was also disagreement on where the bridge would be placed. One faction wanted the bridge to open up directly to downtown Peoria while others wanted it on the periphery. There were many months of discussions on the topic of whether or not the bridge should be elevated over the existing street network and structures or if it should be depressed below grade. Being below grade would mean that the buildings in the right of way would have to be purchased and removed. This would add an additional complication and likely expense.

There was also talk of building a giant earthen berm through downtown Peoria to serve as a base for the roadbed. At the end of the day, the decision was made to build a bridge that would not be directly connected to street traffic and one that would be below grade after Washington Street all the way through the central business district up to Glendale. Doing this also allowed the bridge to be connected to the interstate highway system so traffic flow wouldn’t be impeded.



Being part of the interstate system had the advantage of additional funding from the federal government. When it was all said and done, local, state and the federal government paid for not only the bridge but also the highway that was connected to it. What had started out as a cross-town highway originally labeled as the Illini Expressway was now part of Interstate 74. Truly, this did open up Central Illinois not only to the west but the east as well. The highway through Peoria would eventually be tied into a high-speed road network which would span the United States with the Peoria area being at the heart of it with its central location in the industrial Midwest.

Peorians were proud and optimistic for their city and region in 1958 because of their new bridge and other construction on the horizon. When the bridge was dedicated, there were many plans for improvements in downtown Peoria. As you can see in the accompanying photograph, when the Murray Baker Bridge and the Illini Expressway were completed, the downtown looked much different from what it does today. In the following ten years, many of the structures you see in the photograph were demolished to make way for large modern buildings. Among the list of new structures would be a new courthouse displacing the old courthouse, a new Sears store which, along with its parking deck, would take up two full blocks, and Caterpillar Tractor Company's new world headquarters with a prime location situated very near Peoria's new entrance via the Murray Baker Bridge, incidentally named after famed industrialist and philanthropist Murray M. Baker, who originally attracted Caterpillar to the Peoria area.

Because of the foresight of previous Peorians, our bridge is in a prime location for one to see the beauty of the city as they enter. The interstate was not elevated, leading to an unsightly view and other problems associated with elevated highways. Moreover, not long ago, the interstate going through Peoria was re-done and modernized with corrections made to ingress and egress, including a first of its kind solution to lengthen an entrance ramp from the downtown to the bridge. Now, with the complete reconstruction of the bridge deck, the Murray Baker Bridge is set to serve citizens and visitors alike for at least another 30 or 40 years.

Property for Sale



The Larkin Building

408 SW Washington Street, \$695,000

Located on the Peoria Riverfront, this property would be ideal for office and/or retail space. The building is 21,400 sq. ft. It is a 4-story building with approximately 5,350 sq. ft. per floor. It is a Frank Lloyd Wright inspired design, a limestone clad structure with great potential to be redeveloped to fit your needs. All structural upgrades complete and ready for development. The building has ample parking and is close to restaurants and retail on the riverfront. To find out more about this property, contact Kert Huber at Huber Commercial, Inc., 309-673-3000 or visit the web site at www.hubercommercial.net.

Business Spotlight



Catrina's Express

New to the Warehouse District at 401 SW Water Street is a fantastic Mexican restaurant that is gaining quite a following on social media. Catrina's Express offers all things Mexican, including burritos, tacos, nachos, quesadillas, and more for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Start your day right with scrambled eggs with spinach and cheese topped with avocado slices on white or wheat bread, Choripapas burrito, or pick up some breakfast tacos or other great burritos. For lunch or dinner, try their chorizo with potatoes and queso fresco or taco salad with chicken or steak. Follow them on Facebook to view daily specials at www.facebook.com/catrinasepress.

Riverfront Park Master Plan



The DDC Planning Committee is continuing to work with the Downtown Advisory Commission (DAC) and downtown stakeholders on the riverfront park master plan. Michael Freilinger, DDC President/CEO, and members of the DDC Planning Committee are working with the Peoria Riverfront Association (PRA) to help address riverfront stakeholders' concerns about the proposed Riverfront Master Plan and issues they see with the current plan that was recently proposed.

There is significant opposition to the current plan from property and business owners as it proposes to significantly reduce the amount of parking spaces currently available to these groups by about 41%. Other concerns include lack of a plan for funding park maintenance, lack of a plan for public restrooms, lack of a plan for maintaining existing amenities, and adequate flood protection. The DDC and PRA have agreed to draft letters to the DAC in a joint effort to raise concerns about the proposed Riverfront Park Master Plan and to ask that the City take a pause to substantially rework this conceptual plan.

Resources for Developers

One of the services of the DDC is to provide resources to developers and new business owners in the downtown. A recent issue in the downtown has been the growing number of homeless people on the streets. The DDC Planning Committee was tasked earlier this year to provide guidance on the DDC's position on this issue. The outcome is that the Planning Committee has contacted and worked with social agencies who are equipped to offer assistance to the homeless population. The Planning Committee has put together a one-page resource summary for business and property owners on how to contact these agencies for assistance with the homeless population if it impacts their property. A copy of this resource summary will be available on the DDC web site at www.downtownpeoria.us.

Downtown Activities



133rd Annual Santa Claus Parade

Peoria Area Community Events (PACE) is pleased to announce that "Christmas Wishes Filled with Hope" is the theme of the 133rd Annual Santa Claus Parade, the longest continuous running holiday parade in the nation. Due to COVID-19 this year's parade will be a reverse/drive-thru parade. Floats will be lined up stationary along Main and Monroe Streets. Vehicles will enter the viewing area from 9:00 AM until 10:00 AM beginning at Main and Jefferson streets and proceed on Monroe Street. No candy, flyers or merchandise will be passed out. The parade will be virtually telecast live on WMBD-TV Channel 31. www.peoriaevents.com/events/santa-claus-parade

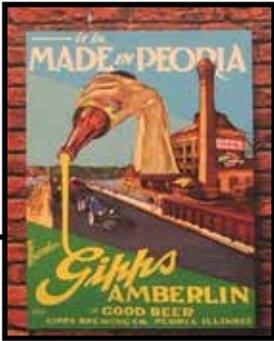
Santa Cause 2020



The annual Santa Cause run/walk will take place from **December 12 - 20** and feature a route that highlights the ArtsPartners Sculpture Walk in downtown Peoria.

The "run when you want" race gives participants 9 days to run the route and take a photo with their favorite artwork along the suggested race route. They will be encouraged to #discoverpeoria and #santacause to then enter them into a contest for additional prizes. Participants also will be encouraged to share their run times with us for posting on the Santa Cause page at www.discoverpeoria.com. **Packet pickup will take place at the Peoria Riverfront Museum on December 10 - 11.**

Follow Discover Peoria's social media for highlights of all! Proceeds from this year's event will benefit ArtsPartners of Central Illinois. For sponsorship opportunities or general information, visit www.discoverpeoria.com.



Announcements

Big Picture Initiative Introduces Washington Street Mural Gallery

The former Van Buskirk Steel building on Washington Street in Peoria's Warehouse District got a much-needed makeover last month in the form of large-scale art pieces. After purchasing the property less than two years ago, local residents John and Gina Wetzel engaged Big Picture Initiative to help them create an art walk in front of their property. It was their wish to not only beautify a very non-descript building, but also show their pride in Peoria and its vibrant arts community.

The Washington Street Gallery is comprised of eight large-scale mounted mural reproductions representing the following diverse works:

1. Gipps Brewery Ad Vintage Gipps Amberlin Beer ad from the Peoria Public Library
2. "Inspiration" One of a series of 14 hand-painted linoleum relief prints by William Butler
3. "Leslie" Black and white portrait photograph by Keith Cotton
4. "Corvette" Commissioned acrylic painting by Brian Jensen
5. "Big Mag 2.0" Deconstructed landscape painting by Steph Van Doren
6. "Chopsticks" Photograph/digital art by Natalie Jackson
7. "Peoria's Colorful Past" Surreal collage of Peoria history by Doug and Eileen Leunig
8. "Field Notes" Mixed media landscape by Lori Reed

"Big Picture is thrilled to be taking yet another step toward making Peoria a national arts destination," said Doug Leunig, co-founder and board member of Big Picture. "With the help of business owners like John and Gina Wetzel, our community can express our creativity and do the important work of amplifying the arts. This isn't just about pretty pictures; this is about showing residents and visitors alike that the arts are essential to a vibrant and engaging community."

Property owner John Wetzel added, "Gina and I are so proud of Peoria and we wanted to show that pride in our community in a unique way. The Warehouse District has so much potential and we hope this installation can add even more momentum to the district's development. We would be thrilled if other business and property owners were inspired to bring more public art to the entire downtown area as well."

For more information about the artists and their featured works, visit Big Picture's website at www.bigpicturepeoria.org/washington-st-murals or contact Big Picture's co-founders Doug and Eileen Leunig at BigPicturePeoria@gmail.com.

DDC Monthly Report for November 2020
Cumulative Total From July 1, 2014 through October 31, 2020

Residential Units	# of Units	Project Type	# of Projects	DDC Finances
Completed	164	Development	46	Budget
Under Construction	290	Completed	26	Fundraising 2020: \$ 305,000
Announced	8	Under Construction	10	Current Receipts \$ 239,250
Exploring	100	Permitted	0	% of Budgeted Receipts 78.4%
Residential Units Total	562	Hired Professionals	0	
		Property Acquired	7	
		Negotiations Under Way	2	
		Gathering Information	0	
		Total Dev.	45	
Business Start-up/Relocation		Infrastructure	5	DDC Activities
Completed	36	Property Acquisition	1	Media
Announced	1	Public Art	1	Articles/Media/Interviews 229
Exploring	1	Public Parks	1	Press Conferences 22
Business Start-up/Relocation Total	38	Projects Active Total	54	Other
		Projects Abandoned Total	84	Confidential Project Assistance 12
		Projects Assisted Grand Total	138	Building Code Amendments
				Lobbying for Extension of State Historic Tax Credits
Permits				Public Engagement/Planning Effort by the City
Last 12 months				2016 Housing Study
Issued Comm. Const. This Year	2			2016 Parking Study
Est. Value Comm. Const. This Year	\$ 175,000			IL-HTC/RERZ Extension
* All Const. Permits Issued This Year	151			2018 Housing Study
# Estimated Value This Year	\$ 49,151,800			Opportunity Zone Funds
Since 2014				Downtown Development Tours
Issued Comm. Const. since 2014	159			Property Acquisition and Sale
Est. Value Comm. Const. Since 2014	\$ 64,938,526			2020 Housing Study
* All Const. Permits Issued Since 2014	1058			
# Estimated Value Since 2014	\$ 145,751,636			
		Mixed-Use Projects Under Construction		Commercial Development Under Construction
		Project Name	# of Units	Project Name
		Winkler Market & Apartments	27	OSF Healthcare Ministry Headquarters 1
		Neon	6	Nailon Bldg 1
		The Center	45	Mitchell Fabrics Building 1
		Adams & Oak	86	
		The Lofts at 812	126	
		Developers Assisted		
		Developers Active		
		Local	27	
		Out of Town	7	
		Developers Active Total	34	
		Developers Inactive	55	
		Developers Assisted Grand Total	89	
		Total Units UC	290	Total Projects
				3

* All Const. Permits Include: Comm. Const., Demolition, Elect., Erosion, Gen. Building, HVAC, Plumbing, Parking, Irrigation, H2O Heater, etc.
All Const. Permits Estimated Values: Not all activity has an estimated value assigned to it **therefore this is only a partial amount**

www.downtownpeoria.us

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Per the DDC bylaws, in making appointments to the Board, consideration is given to the needs of the Corporation, the potential appointee's experience, background and interest in the Corporation and economic development matters, and the benefits to the Corporation to be derived from the service of the appointee. No person who has a sustained conflict of interest between his own responsibilities and interest and those of the Corporation (e.g. being a developer in the downtown or rental property owner) shall be appointed to or remain on the Board of Directors. In addition to other appropriate qualifications, all persons appointed to the Board of Directors shall possess high civic ideals and shall vigorously represent the entity or district from which they have been selected.