



Video Overview Included: Wood River's Downtown Business Area and Extensions Come Alive

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WOOD RIVER - Wood River's Downtown area and extensions beyond are undergoing some dramatic changes in recent months. Chief of Police and Building and Zoning Administrator Brad Wells, City Administrator/Public Works Director Steve Palen, and Mayor Tom Stalcup visited Riverbender.com this week to discuss some of the interesting economic changes in the community.

Wells said there has been a move toward transforming the Downtown Wood River area.

“A lot of Downtown businesses closed previously over the year and there wasn’t anything to enforce zoning codes,” he said. “We have made several changes. Some of the buildings have been demolished and we are trying to bring a good atmosphere to the downtown area with stores and eateries where people can eat and drink and spend their dollars. I think Wood River is having one big awakening.”

Wells said he believes the awakening started in strong fashion during COVID-19 and there was a downtown group Halloween night activity that involved most all businesses.

“There were giveaways and people put candies out on tables and both sides of the streets,” Wells said. “Both sides of the streets were packed. From that point on, people started to dig in.”

Mayor Stalcup said since Wells and Palen have both done excellent jobs in their additional roles as building and zoning director and city manager. Wells is also the police chief and Palen is the public works director.

“With Chief Wells taking over building and zoning, he has brought in some new ordinances and some of the areas we were having a hard time in the cleanup of properties have made forward progress. Steve has knowledge of all the major service projects here for years. He didn’t skip a beat when he stepped into the new role. People sometimes don’t like the consequences of enforcement, but it is working. Both Brad and Steve are great city employees and have helped the city move forward.”

Palen said he feels there is progress being made in the Downtown Wood River area over the last several years. He said the work on sidewalks, street lineage, and signage all also have paid off.

“The new sign about historic downtown Wood River also is very positive,” he said. “There are several new businesses already in Downtown Wood River and some others on the table.”

Palen agreed that there seems to be a solid team approach to the City of Wood River between the department heads and employees and he sees great things ahead for the future.



Below are new Wood River businesses in 2022:

New In 2022	2022
Ferguson Street Burger Bar	12 E. Ferguson
Charlie's Drive-In	762 N. Wood River Avenue
C&N Licensing & Title Services	256 E. Lorena
The Rolling Pin Bakery & Café LLC	53 E. Ferguson
Wood River Urgent Care	211 E. Madison
Life Fish	16 E. Ferguson

Easyslots LLC	308 Wesley
El Rodeo	48 W. Edwardsville Road
I Vapor & Tobacco	629 Wesley
1929 Pizza & Wine	7 N. Wood River Avenue
Bubbles Kitties Cat Grooming	17 E. Ferguson
Squeaky Clean Pet Spa	17B E. Ferguson
Pinto's Kustoms & Collision	1368 Vaughn
The Sweet Tooth	148 E. Ferguson