

Wood River Shares Upcoming Projects, New Businesses Coming to Town

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
July 31 2023 2:45 PM



WOOD RIVER - Following news about a [Five Below store coming to Wood River](#), the city is sharing information about other big projects in the works.

City Manager Steve Palen explained that business and housing development will hopefully go hand-in-hand as these projects are completed, giving Wood River a boost in economic and population growth.

“People are seeing that we’re kind of ripe for the picking,” Palen said. “We’re moving at a breakneck pace right now, but that’s a good thing.”

Several locally-owned businesses have opened downtown in the past few months, including [1929 Pizza and Wine](#), [C&B Boiled Bagels](#) and [The Sweet Tooth](#). Wood River also recently lifted a ban on loft living, and Palen hopes this will encourage people to move to the downtown area.

Other developments include a [new accessible playground](#) that opened last week and an accompanying recreation center that aims to open by the end of the year; you can read [an update](#) on the recreation center’s progress and watch an [exclusive video](#) of the interior on [our website](#).

The [Sports Barn is slated to open this fall](#) near I-255 and Illinois Route 143. This facility will serve as a homebase for the Illinois Gators, a baseball and softball club through the [Gators Baseball Academy](#). Palen added that there have been initial discussions about bringing other sports facilities to the area, though nothing is finalized yet.

“One of the big things is obviously the revitalization of downtown, and we’ve had a lot of focus there. But we’ve also had a lot of focus on the east side of town, which is where the newer developments are,” Palen explained. “There’s a lot of ground out there and potential for commercial development.”

City leaders hope to see more subdivisions in that area as the business district grows, too. The City is also currently in discussion with a hotel chain, as well as a brewery and distillery. They hope to bring these businesses to Wood River soon.

“I think we’re kind of strategically located in between Edwardsville and Alton where we get a lot of traffic that comes through town, and I think we’re finally starting to take advantage of some of that,” Palen added.

He noted that Wood River is successfully appealing to developers, which brings more businesses and people to the area. As some projects are wrapping up and others prepare to break ground, Wood River residents are eager to see what will come next.

“trying to make Wood River as business-friendly as we can. The Council is completely on board with it,” Palen said. “You get that out there, and people notice.”