



Hotel Quickly Taking Shape

The Cobblestone Hotel and Suites in Urbana is well on the way to completion for a spring opening. The 54-room hotel, near the intersection of 68 and 55 on the south end of Urbana, will enable more business guests and other visitors to stay overnight in Urbana — to help boost the local economy.

Comprehensive Plan Will Help Guide Future Development

Champaign County will soon have a new plan to help guide future development over the next five to 10 years.

Now in final draft form, the county's updated comprehensive plan is expected to be approved in February by the Champaign County commissioners, says Brad Bodenmiller, director of the Logan-Union-Champaign Regional Planning Commission (LUC). The LUC drafted the plan — an update from the last previous update in 2004 — with input from a broad cross-section of community leaders serving on a steering committee and subcommittees, 711 public survey responses and interviews of 24 key community leaders.

Attendees at a community open house in January also provided comments on the plan. *A link to the plan is on the LUC home page,*

lucplanning.com.

While the plan respects the autonomy of local political bodies, Bodenmiller said, "The biggest impact that I hope the plan has is that it guides decision makers, that they refer to it and look through the lens of it when making their decisions" on development and zoning.

A key focus of the plan, he says, is "to support existing areas of development and industries, and preserve and protect the county's natural resources, rural character and small-town atmosphere."

Among the plan's recommendations:

- Encourage housing, commercial and industrial development in areas where public infrastructure (such

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Ultra-Met Ready to Expand Urbana Facility, Add Jobs

Ultra-Met Carbide Technologies of Urbana is moving ahead with plans to expand operations with a 15,000-square-foot addition and 15 new jobs to keep up with the strong economy and growing business opportunities.

Urbana City Council recently cleared the way, approving a community reinvestment area (CRA) agreement between the city and Ultra-Met. Urbana City Schools and Ohio Hi-Point Career Center boards of education previously passed resolutions in favor of the CRA, which was developed by CEP Director Marcia Bailey in partnership with Ultra-Met.

The CRA provides a 15-year 75% tax abatement on the new construction, on the north side of the existing facility at 720 N. Main St. Total cost of the project — construction and new equipment — is \$4.7 million. As a condition of the agreement, Ultra-met will add 15 jobs, which will increase the company's annual taxable payroll by \$600,000.

Will Witten, Ultra-Met's Vice President of Opera-

tions, said the company's last expansion was in 2008. "Ultra-Met is grateful to be a part of the Urbana community, and we thank the CEP, City of Urbana, Urbana City School Board and our employees for helping to make our continuing growth and success possible."

Ultra-Met is the leading independent American manufacturer of custom-molded tungsten car-



bide blanks for toolmakers and fabricators in aerospace, automotive, oil and gas, mining, woodworking and other industries.

"Tax incentives like the CRA agreement with Ultra-Met

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Kyle Hall Leads CEP Board

Kyle Hall, on the CEP Board since the economic development agency's founding in 2015, was recently elected board president. President of the Hall Company in Urbana, Hall serves as the CEP's manufacturing representative.



Kyle Hall

He serves on the Government Relations Committee of the Clark State Community College Board of Trustees, which he joined in 2016. Hall served on the board of the Dayton Development Coalition from 2011 to 2014 and is a past member of the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce Board, serving as president in 2014-15.

"I'm involved with the CEP because economic development is a passion of mine," Hall said. "I like to see our community grow, and I think it's important for business leaders to give back to the community."

Todd Michael, who completed his term as CEP Board president, was elected vice president of the board. Owner of Michael Family Farms, he is commercial/retail representative on the CEP Board.

Dave Snyder, finance representative on the CEP Board, was re-elected CEP treasurer. He is vice president and commercial lender for Security National Bank.

County Job Fair March 24

A county-wide career fair for students and the community is in the planning stages, says Ashley Cook, CEP Business Liaison.

The March 24 event, co-sponsored by the CEP, OhioMeansJobs Champaign County and Urbana University, will be held at UU, 9-11 a.m. for Champaign County high school juniors and seniors and 11 a.m.-1 p.m. for UU students, UU alumni and the community.

As business liaison, Cook also is planning lunch and learn events at local schools to allow manufacturers to present career opportunities to students. And she is working with health care businesses to plan career events.



The southwest corner of Monument Square will take on a new, revitalized look in 2020 as the Douglas Hotel undergoes renovations for the Legacy Place affordable senior apartment project. The project developer, Flaherty & Collins Properties, has obtained needed funding and will soon gain possession of the hotel and the former Urbana North and South elementary schools to transform them into 51 senior living apartments — and retail space on the Douglas's first floor.

It's a Go! Douglas and Former Schools to Be Transformed into Senior Apartments

Three historic Urbana buildings — the long-vacant Douglas Hotel on Monument Square and the former North and South Elementary Schools — will soon have vital new roles in the life of Champaign County.

In November, developer Flaherty & Collins Properties obtained the last piece of funding needed to transform the buildings into Legacy Place — 51 affordable senior apartments, plus new retail space on the Douglas's first floor.

Flaherty & Collins anticipates closing on the properties by late February, beginning restoration and renovation soon after. Construction planning was taking place as funding was being secured.

"This is a huge win for our community and another example of what partnerships can do to move Champaign County forward," CEP Director Marcia Bailey said.

City government, Urbana City Schools, the CEP, and other organizations worked with Flaherty & Collins to make the project possible.

"Legacy Place will have a tremendous impact on our community and the vitality of downtown Urbana," Bailey said. She added that the project will have a ripple effect on the local housing market, easing the shortage of single-family homes as seniors move into the apartments.

Justin Evans Joins CEP Board As Chamber Rep

Justin Evans has joined the CEP Board as Champaign County Chamber of Commerce representative.

Evans, owner/agent of Tri-County Insurance Services, LLC in St. Paris, has served on the Chamber board since 2015. He was board president 2018-19 and has served on the Chamber's Leadership Champaign County Committee and the Champaign County Ag Association.

His community and professional service also include Champaign County 4H advisor, active member of Fellowship Christian Church, Champion City Youth Basketball coach, Ohio Insurance Agents Association, National Alliance for

Insurance Education and the Gathering of the Miami Valley.

He has earned certifications as insurance counselor, insurance service representative, and agribusiness and farm insurance specialist.



Justin Evans

He says, "I see the role of the CEP to attract employers to the area, support business growth and help our community reuse, repurpose and improve infrastructure to provide an inviting environment where future generations will raise their families."

OhioMeansJobs Newest Site for CEP's Network of Monitors

OhioMeansJobs Champaign County (OMJCC) is the newest location in the CEP's network of television monitors that broadcast news about economic and workforce development, career training and local job postings. OMJCC is located at 1512 S. U.S. 68, Bay 14, Urbana.

The other 11 monitors in the network – supported by CEP investors – are in the five Champaign County high schools; in the villages of Mechanicsburg, North Lewisburg and St. Paris; Urbana University; Ohio Hi-Point Career Center; and the CEP office in downtown Urbana.

As a CEP partner, OMJCC will share information on the monitors about its free workforce services for employers and job seekers. These include:

- **For job seekers** – job search, career counseling, help with resume writing and interview prep, help obtaining funding for career training, financial assistance for day care and other employment-related costs
- **For employers** – help finding employees, posting jobs,

hosting open interviews, on-the-job training and other workforce training assistance

For more information, visit champaigndjfs.org/omjcc.

Stacy Cox, director of the Champaign County Department of Job and Family Services, of which OMJCC is a part, said, "We help people become self-sufficient so they don't need public assistance benefits."

"By helping people get jobs and helping employers find workforce, OhioMeansJobs complements the CEP's work to attract new businesses and help existing businesses grow," CEP Director Marcia Bailey said.

Amy Sherman, workforce supervisor at OMJCC, said that Ashley Cook, CEP's business liaison, is meeting monthly with OMJCC to coordinate services. Cook brings together schools and employers to help students prepare for local career opportunities.

Sherman adds that OMJCC counsels youth on choosing a career and how "to pair their passions with jobs that pay a self-sufficient wage."

Shoemaker Joins CEP As Assistant

A Champaign County native and recent Urbana University graduate, Caty Shoemaker, has joined the CEP as administrative assistant.

While a UU student she saw firsthand how the CEP partners with schools and employers to help prepare young people for local job opportunities. The CEP arranged a signing ceremony to mark the start of her internship at Orbis in Urbana.

In her new role, supporting the economic and workforce development efforts of the CEP and Director Marcia Bailey, she hopes to help current students learn about the job training and career opportunities available locally. "I want them to have a better understanding of what's possible in Champaign County, right out of high school and with additional education."

"Caty's enthusiasm, talent and belief in Champaign County will be invaluable in supporting the CEP's mission to help businesses succeed and grow and improve our county's quality of life," Bailey said. "I look forward to working with her."



Caty Shoemaker

Shoemaker is a West Liberty-Salem High School graduate. At UU she majored in strategic management and minored in accounting and marketing.



Stacy Cox and Amy Sherman with the new economic development/workforce monitor at OhioMeansJobs Champaign County.

TechCred at Clark State Helps Employers Raise Employees' Skills

The state-funded TechCred program, which recently began its second wave of funding, can help businesses with the cost of training employees to keep up with new and emerging technologies.

Clark State Community College, a Champion Level investor in the CEP, offers many credential training programs that qualify through TechCred for employer reimbursement – up to \$2,000 per employee and up to \$30,000 total during a funding cycle.

These include credentials that take a year or less to complete in the areas of health care, business technology, information technology and manufacturing, says Aimee Belanger-Haas, dean of business and applied technologies at Clark State.

She adds that Clark State can work with employers to customize credentials to meet their specific needs if an appropriate approved credential doesn't already exist.

For help in applying for TechCred, contact Belanger-Haas, belanger-aasa@clarkstate.edu or 937-328-6038.

Yes, We're Open for Business

Champaign County is open for business. As a sign of this, the CEP offers "open" flags for businesses to purchase and display during their business hours. To get a flag, contact the CEP, 937-653-7200 or info@cephio.com.

New Website Quickly Building Following

Local employers, job seekers and other visitors are already discovering the benefits of the new ChampaignWorks.com website, sponsored by the CEP and developed by Berry Digital Solutions, which launched the CEP website, CEPOhio.com, more than four years ago.

In its first four months, ChampaignWorks had 902 new users, compared to the 342 new users CEPOhio.com had in its first four months. (In its most recent four-month span, CEPOhio.com had more than 2,500 new visitors – a 734% increase, reports Chris Anders of Berry Digital.)

The goal, says Anders, is to make ChampaignWorks “a part of Champaign County everyday life, showing what’s going on in Champaign County.”

Online Jobs Board

Most visitors to ChampaignWorks are using the site’s job board, which features jobs posted by Champaign County employers. In its first four months, ChampaignWorks had 3,328 page views. The jobs page has been the most viewed page recently, accounting for more than 30% of all page views.

Ultra-Met Expanding Urbana Facility

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promote business growth and creation of new jobs – and retention of existing jobs – to help enrich the well-being and future of our local communities,” CEP Director Marcia Bailey said.

“The tax incentives are temporary and apply only to business expansions – not existing facilities. The in-



“We’ve gotten really great feedback from employers, that it’s easy to post jobs,” says Staci Wisma of Berry Digital Solutions. About a dozen employers are regular job posters on ChampaignWorks – among them, manufacturers, Mercy Health and CRSI. And the Champaign County Library reported attracting applicants through the site, Wisma said. As of December, the site has featured more than 70 job postings – some of them for multiple positions. Wisma added that ChampaignWorks is partnering with OhioMeansJobs Champaign County, posting their weekly “hot jobs” list. And Wisma is recruiting additional employers to use the site, and she adds job openings as she discovers them.

Sharing Good News

The CEP also wants the site to promote the

benefits of living and working in Champaign County – to help entice job applicants. Wisma is encouraging organizations and businesses to post on the website positive news and information about what Champaign County has to offer in the way of events, businesses, education, tourist attractions, restaurants, and more.

And Wisma is working with local high schools and Urbana University to find students who have a passion for writing or journalism to create content for the site.

To post news on the site, click on “Share Your News” under the News tab on the home page.

For more information about ChampaignWorks, contact Wisma, staci@berrydigitalsolutions.com.

Comprehensive Plan Soon to be Approved

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as water, sewer, transportation and recreational amenities such as bike paths and parks) already exists, to “avoid stretching the limited resources of community services.”

- Preserve and revitalize existing cultural resources and explore and support policies to repurpose, redevelop and reoccupy existing development.
- Consider creation of a land bank to address blighted, vacant and tax-delinquent properties.
- Strengthen the county’s competitive position by facilitating investments that build capacity with existing businesses, create jobs, generate economic opportunity and improve the quality of life.
- Encourage specialty restaurants and retail in municipalities.
- Preserve prime farmland. “When I look at agriculture preservation,” Bodenmiller says, “I look at that the same as trying to retain and attract workforce for manufacturing.”
- Develop a county-wide park system.

Citizens’ responses to a survey conducted by LUC were considered in developing the new plan, Bodenmiller said. “People were really interested in preservation of the county’s agricultural atmosphere. People like the small-town feel and like having open spaces on their drives. They also felt there’s a need for new housing – affordable and workforce housing ... and some amount of executive housing.”

Survey respondents also support extension of bike paths, community gardens, festivals and fairs, concerts, athletic events, downtown revitalization, historic resources and public transportation.

Contact Us

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