

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Belleville Attracting Young Homeowners Who Look for Something more than ‘Homogenized Suburb’

Belleville, Ill. – November 18, 2019 – Jacob Surratt, 26, grew up in the small town of Chapin, Ill. before coming to the St. Louis area almost a decade ago for college at Saint Louis University. After living in the Delmar Loop for four years, he was ready to settle into his own place long term.

“I did an extraordinary amount of research spanning the entire metro area which essentially helped me narrow down my home search to the City of Belleville,” said Surratt. “The factors that were most important to me were a central location and commute time, sense of community, open spaces, and diversity within the community and my neighborhood specifically.”

As a commercial real estate professional, Surratt used a variety of resources to strategically look at how investing in a property in Belleville compared to other cities in the region.

“For starters, there is no other place in the metro area where you can find a home like this, at this price, in a quality school district, and be 12 minutes from downtown,” he said. “Also, the sense of community and history that Belleville offers is really appealing to me.”

Surratt noted that Belleville has a lot of unique aspects not often found in other communities surrounding St. Louis.

“The City of Belleville was around and thriving well before it was even counted as part of the metro region, which happened for the first time in 1920,” he said. “With that, you see its heritage, its unique architecture, and a community culture that was here well before St. Louis sprawled around it. Belleville isn’t just a homogenized suburb; it’s unique.”

Given his line of work, Surratt studies other urban areas throughout the nation and notes the value added to the region from cities like Belleville.

“I do work on a national level, and places like Belleville, Edwardsville, St. Charles, Alton, and Florissant are what set St. Louis apart from places like Dallas-Ft. Worth, Phoenix, Denver, and Charlotte,” he said. “In cities like that, the outward growth is single-family residential sprawl into largely uninhabited areas which lack the historic town centers and medium density of a place like Belleville.”

With that, Surratt purchased a 3100 square foot home for about \$170,000 in July of 2019 on Belleville’s far west end and has been ecstatic ever since.

The City of Belleville, Illinois, incorporated in 1814, is the St. Clair County seat and the largest city in southern Illinois. With a current population of 44,478 (2010), Belleville is home to the longest contiguous main street in the United States, excellent education and healthcare organizations, and thriving businesses and neighborhoods, including three National Historic Districts. Mayor Mark Eckert runs the municipal government along with elected officials including City Clerk Jennifer Gain Meyer, Treasurer Dean Hardt, and 16 aldermen representing eight city wards. The vision for the City of Belleville is one where all sectors of the community work together to help the city grow and prosper and to become a model for other communities to follow.

“There are so many attractive assets in Belleville – our trail system, the schools, multiple MetroLink stations, a historic yet active downtown square, the culture and sense of community – so many things that are often overlooked and under celebrated,” he said. “It’s so important for young people to set aside any stereotypes they may have heard and explore to find out what is important to them in the place they call home.”

Surratt said that for him, Belleville is perfect because while it reminds him of a small town, where neighbors know each other and are involved with one another, it’s also appealing because of the benefits of being part of an urban area.

“I’m not sure of a lot of places where you can see a deer on your drive to the metro station,” he said. “Belleville is kind of a mash-up of urban and rural, like a big, small town.”

He also celebrates Belleville’s diversity and said that people from various races and socioeconomic backgrounds are in every neighborhood of the city.

“You can tell a lot about a place by looking into its neighborhoods,” he said. “Belleville is again unique because it feels less fragmented by the things that often divide us like race or income. We have a diverse mix of people here in every neighborhood, and that enriches the town.”

Surratt said that he’s never once regretted buying a home in Belleville and intends to be in his home long term and grow into it by raising a family and continuing to be part of the community that he is proud to now call home.

Surratt holds an undergraduate degree in urban affairs and sociology and a Master’s in Business Administration, both from Saint Louis University.

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