

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



### **2019 Shows Strong Economic Progress in Belleville Where Small and Big Businesses Thrive**

**Belleville, Ill. – February 10, 2020** – For 2019, the City of Belleville issued 115 commercial occupancy permits, welcoming new businesses and supporting many others who remodeled or expanded their businesses throughout the city.

Some new businesses include Rainstorm Car Wash, 5600 N. Belt West; C & C Food for Your Soul, 1926 W. Main; Sugar Fix Bakery, 106 E. Main; and Sip & Chew Coffee Shop, 124 W. Main, to name a few.

“Businesses are the backbone of Belleville,” said Mayor Mark Eckert. “We want folks to come to Belleville and see how great it is to open a business here, which is not only supported by the city, but by the close network of business owners and merchants who work together to support one another and the business community here.”

In fact, the City of Belleville was cited as of the “next hot spots for development” by the St. Louis Business Journal in 2019. Big restoration projects include the Meredith Home/Lofts on the Square, which was approved for historic preservation tax credits, allowing the project to move forward. 2019 marked the first year that the Downtown Development/Redevelopment Commission granted funding for building improvements made to the exterior of buildings along Main Street as part of the Special Service Area Assistance Program. Margarita’s Restaurant and Circa Boutique completed major façade improvements on the 100 block of East Main, as part of this redevelopment initiatives, along with Olde Towne Mall, Ben’s Crafts & Floral, SPACE’S event center and Venue on Main.

With that, owners of Circa Boutique, Andria and Christian Powell, completely updated the façade of the building which was originally all concrete. They cut out windows on the second story that had been filled in with concrete and replaced other windows. They removed the initial storefront display and extended it to its original height, finishing it with floor to ceiling windows. They also worked with craftsmen to recreate the original woodwork and soffits, having them re-milled and constructed for the renovation.

“The building façade update gives customers and potential customers a better understanding of our aesthetic and the kinds of items we carry, which helps to draw people in,” said Andria. “Without the assistance of the grant program, we wouldn’t have been able to update the building, which is having a positive impact on the business.”

*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.*

The City of Belleville also financially assists businesses on a need-and-case-by-case basis. There are many special districts within the City that allow for different types of partnerships, including the Belleville Enterprise Zone Program, Tax Increment Financing Assistance Program (TIF) Districts, Business Districts, and Special Service Areas.

Likewise, the City of Belleville has launched a pilot program to work with qualified, experienced developers to restore dilapidated buildings throughout the city as one of the its infill redevelopment efforts. Renovation for the first property in this program began in 2019, and another request for proposals recently went out for the second property in the pilot program.

“The really great thing about our city is that we have a variety of different real estate opportunities for business developers, whether its establishing a business on our quaint Main Street or having access to highways and nearby interstates at the more industrial locations, Belleville has so much to offer those entrepreneurs who want to build a healthy and strong business and business culture,” said Eckert.

To learn more about opening or expanding a business in the City of Belleville, contact Economic Development, Planning and Zoning Department at (618) 233-6810 ext. 1250 or [edpz@belleville.net](mailto:edpz@belleville.net).

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