

Blue Springs Development On The Move

A city of just under 55,000 people nestled between Interstate 70, U.S. 40 and Highway 7, Blue Springs, Missouri, is a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri, in eastern Jackson County.

They say development spurs development, and investment in one area can inspire others to do the same.

For years, the “Old White Oak Shopping Center” was considered blighted and a place of neglect.

“It was the poster child for blight,” said Mayor Carson Ross. “People were constantly asking me what we were going to do about it.”

In 2017, everything changed when a local grocery store decided to reinvest in the community. Cosentino’s Price Chopper had grown out of its location in the southern part of the City, just across the road from the Old White Oak Shopping Center. But instead of seeing the blight and moving far away, the store’s owners, the Cosentino Family, triggered redevelopment of the old shopping center by building a brand-new state-of-the-art Price Chopper store in that location. With that one decision, the once-blighted location was redeveloped. It is now home to Price Chopper, two new restaurants, an urgent care clinic and more. Also, the store’s former location did not sit vacant for long, as Orscheln’s Farm and Home decided to move in.

On the other side of the new White



Blue Springs city officials and staff on site with Faurecia officials at the Faurecia plant site.

Oak development sits Sunset Plaza, that was recently purchased by the same developers. In July of 2018, the City approved a Community Improvement District for Sunset Plaza that will allow the outdated strip mall to undergo a huge facelift.

“Most of our commercial development right now is redevelopment,” said Tom Cole, the City’s director of community and economic development. “Blue Springs is a great community, but like many communities that experienced a lot of growth in the 70s and 80s, we are now getting to the point where these shopping strips and other buildings developed during that time just haven’t aged well. Luckily, development is contagious and now that we’ve seen some success stories, we are getting more and more interest in redeveloping

these aging shopping centers and restaurants throughout the City.”

Moving further south on Highway 7 sits another older shopping center, the Mall at Fall Creek, where a major new tenant has recently been announced. Though the City has not yet seen a site plan, B&B Theater has confirmed it will bring its new premier theater concept to this location. And with it, a popular local diner has plans to relocate in the

same center. Once the theater goes in, the City is hopeful that façade upgrades and other new tenants are soon to follow.

Blue Springs Is Open For Business

“We escort a development project through the entire development process,” Cole said. “It’s almost like a concierge service and the developer can work with the same team from the beginning through the end.”

The City formally combined the economic and community development departments under the direction of Cole in May 2018, but Cole and Assistant Director Mike Mallon said the coordination was already there, making the formal shift much easier.

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The development review process has been streamlined and the Blue Springs economic and community development team brings a business-friendly attitude to the projects with a goal to get developers through the process as quickly as possible.

The success of this process has been evident in several recent projects like KC Bobcat, a local company that had been headquartered in Blue Springs for many years. The company outgrew its current location, but instead of relocating to another metro city, city staff convinced them to stay by researching location options in town. This, said Cole, was done entirely without incentives.

One of the most impactful economic development wins for the City came in early 2018 when Faurecia, an interior automotive manufacturing plant, announced it would open a 250,000 square-foot location on 25 acres near Northeast 20th Street and I-70. The plant will be completed in 2019 and will bring about 300 jobs to the area.

City staff, Mayor Ross and the rest of the City Council worked hand-in-hand with the



Dante Cosentino speaks at Cosentino's Price Chopper grand opening in Blue Springs, Missouri.



Ward Park Playground before (left) and after.

international company to ensure Faurecia chose Blue Springs as home to its next plant.

Public Redevelopment Brings Improvements For Citizen Access, Quality Of Life

It is not just commercial development making investment in existing structures. The City, school district and public library have all committed to major investments and development that will be completed within the next few years.

In 2016, the city of Blue Springs developed and adopted the first Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, that identified the need for dedicated funding to address a backlog of deferred maintenance items throughout the City’s park system. On April 4, 2017, the residents of Blue Springs decidedly approved a five-year, half-cent sales tax to fund these priorities.

In the summer of 2018, the first projects using this funding were completed, including two major playground upgrades, new tennis

courts at two different parks and three trail projects.

“As we make good on the promises we made with regards to the Park Sales Tax, we continue to improve the quality of life for all Blue Springs residents,” said Blue Springs Mayor Carson Ross. “Most importantly, we enable families to make memories at our beautiful parks.”

Next on the list is a whole park renovation of one of the City’s most historical and prominent parks, Burrus Old Mill Park, that will include a splashpad, new playground and renovated basketball courts, skate park, trails, construction of a new loop road, restrooms, and shelters.

In the early spring of 2018, the City began the process of renovating the City Hall building. Blue Springs city staff began moving out of City Hall and into several temporary locations to accommodate a complete renovation and overhaul of the existing structure.

This project will not only allow City Hall to accommodate a more service-friendly layout to its citizens, but it will also bring the building, originally constructed in 1961 and last remodeled in 1989, into compliance with code requirements, including the Americans with Disability Act. It will provide a customer-focused design that better serves residents and employees.

Additionally, the Blue Springs South Branch of the Mid-Continent Public Library is seeing some major

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facility upgrades, thanks to a Library District voter-approved Library Capital Improvement Levy passed in November 2016. Also, the Blue Springs School District voters recently approved a No-Tax-Increase Bind Levy in August 2018 that will bring construction to several schools throughout the district to reduce class sizes and enhance safety features.

Development “On the Move”

“Blue Springs is a City on the Move and On the Right Track” – this phrase has been the unofficial slogan of the city of Blue Springs ever since Mayor Carson Ross began using it when he was elected in 2008 and it has never been truer than today. In almost every corner of the 22.2 square miles of the city of Blue Springs, Missouri, some sort of development project has taken place within the last two years. Cole said this is in-part because, “We understand who we are as a community and have an exceptional organization team and leadership committed to the success of our City.”

“We push for good development and good use planning, but we don’t want to try to be the next ‘insert city here.’ We want to be the best we can be, and I think that is the attitude that is serving us well right now,” Cole said. 🍃

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