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Developers unveil plans for second half of sports, business complex

BY TERI MADDOX  
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Developers have unveiled plans for the second half of a 62-acre sports and business complex along Frank Scott Parkway West, across from Belleville West High School.

Last spring, they announced they had bought about 30 acres of farmland to build an indoor sports facility and “flex buildings” with flexible tenant space for office, retail, warehouse or light industry.

Now they’re buying about 32 more acres to the north for outdoor soccer and baseball and softball fields, more flex buildings and other businesses, developer Matt Froese said.

“There’s some hotels interested, especially with the playing fields,” he said. “That will draw quite a crowd to Belleville.”

Froese and his partner are operating under the name Bonfire Holdings for the estimated \$30 million project. They expect to begin grading the site and installing underground utilities this winter.

“We wanted the property to be graded as a whole,” Froese said. “It will make it flow better.”

Last week, the Belleville City Council approved a special-use permit allowing the 32-acre northern parcel, which is zoned for single-family residential use, to be used for amusement, recreation and business. The council took the same action for the 30-acre southern parcel earlier this year.

At the time, the developers expected to build the flex buildings before moving on to sports facilities. Now, they may start with the outdoor fields next spring and summer.

“These will be turf fields,” Froese said. “They’re not just grass fields, so that has to be done in fairly decent weather.”

School districts, private sports clubs and other organizations will be able to rent the outdoor fields and indoor facility for tournaments and other sporting events, graduations and community gatherings.

The developers expect construction to begin on the indoor facility in 2028. Plans call for a full-size soccer field with turf that can be rolled up to convert the space into basketball and volleyball courts.

Beyond sports facilities and flex buildings, the complex could include a gas station and drive-through car wash.

“We will sell some of the lots (if dealing with) a company or business that needs to own their prop-



Provided

This rendering shows the northern half of a development planned for about 62 acres of farmland east of Frank Scott Parkway West and south of Illinois 15 in Belleville. It includes soccer and softball/baseball fields and space for other businesses.

erty,” Froese said. “But we will try to hold onto most of the flex buildings, just to keep the standards high on what everything looks like and how it’s maintained.”

The development will be east of Frank Scott Parkway West and south of Illinois 15. The Biver family has farmed the land since the 1920s.

Last year, Biver Family Farms Partnership sold a nearly 8-acre parcel with a home, pond and outbuildings to Canning Properties for \$385,000, according to St. Clair County parcel records. Karla Smith Behavioral Health is converting it into a treatment center for people with mental illness.

Bonfire plans to create a buffer zone to divide the Karla Smith property from the commercial complex.

“We want to be good neighbors,” Froese said.

In July, the Bivers sold about 30 acres of farmland to Bonfire for \$1.58 million, county records show. The family is still listed as



Provided

This rendering shows the southern half of a development planned for about 62 acres of farmland east of Frank Scott Parkway West and south of Illinois 15 in Belleville. It includes an indoor sports facility and space for other businesses.

the owner of about 32 acres that will make up the northern half of

the development. The property is under contract, Froese said.

O’Fallon police lead Illinois in DUI arrest increase

BY LYNN VENHAUS  
For the News-Democrat

O’Fallon police recorded 250 DUI arrests in 2025, the state’s highest arrest rate — an average of five arrests per officer — according to a survey by the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists, a victims’ advocacy organization.

The department also reported Illinois’ largest increase in DUI arrests: 64.5%, from 152 in 2024 to 250 in 2025. O’Fallon tied with Bloomington for the sixth-highest total. Aurora had 479 arrests, Rockford 476, Springfield 298, Naperville 287 and Elgin 269. Decatur ranked seventh, with 219.

Additional training has helped officers recognize signs of drug impairment, Police Chief Kirk Brueggeman said. But arrests aren’t the department’s only goal.

“It’s to prevent crashes, save lives, and make sure everyone gets home safely,” he said. “With so many options available today, including designated drivers and rideshare services, there is simply no excuse for getting behind the wheel while impaired.”

Brueggeman said officers are getting better at identifying drivers who shouldn’t be behind the wheel.

“Much of this can be attributed to additional training opportunities and our officers becoming more skilled at recognizing the signs of impairment,” he said.

Several officers are certified drug recognition experts. They have completed specialized training to identify drivers who may be impaired by drugs rather than alcohol.

“This training has become increasingly important as we encounter different types of impairment on our roadways,” Brueggeman said. “We are committed to enforcing impaired driving laws.”

The Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists recognized the O’Fallon Police Department with an award presented during the City Council meeting Oct. 5. A group of the department’s top DUI enforcement officers accepted it: Scott Votrain, Ty Matzenbacher, Brad Lewis, Joe Wagner, Aaron Krummrich, Chad Finnan and Gavin Gonzalez.

“As any law enforcement

SEE O’FALLON, 2A

Metro-East Voter Guide: What you’ll see on the local ballot

Belleville News-Democrat & St. Louis Public Radio

The 2026 midterm general election is less than a month away with the eyes of a divided nation focused on races that will decide the balance of power in the U.S. Congress.

In the metro-east, two Illinois party leaders are vying to

fill the void left by Dick Durbin, the senior congressional Democrat and an East St. Louis native. Voters also will decide on seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Illinois General Assembly.

Issues like voter ID and data centers also appear on the ballot in the form of advisory referenda.

Early voting is already un-

derway. Polls open in your local precinct on Nov. 3.

Here’s a guide to what you’ll find on your ballot with an overview of the candidates and issues you’ll decide:

U.S. SENATE

Sen. Dick Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat in the Senate, is retiring at the end of his term — leaving a rare open

seat in Illinois. Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton won a competitive Democratic primary, and former GOP Chair Don Tracy won the Republican nomination.

JULIANA STRATTON

Juliana Stratton has been Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker’s lieutenant governor since 2019. Before that, the Chicago Dem-

ocrat served two years in the Illinois House of Representatives. Stratton previously practiced law, specializing in mediation.

Stratton has pitched herself as a progressive — arguing for a \$25 federal minimum wage, Medicare for all and pledging to not accept corporate PAC

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