



UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS  
SYSTEM



## Governor Pritzker Joins Leaders from Greater Peoria to Celebrate Peoria Innovation Hub Development Process

*World-class Innovation Center Coming to Downtown Peoria to House Start-ups, Corporations, Universities, Non-profits and More*

### For immediate release

Contact: Shelli Dankoff – Media Relations Program Manager, OSF HealthCare (309) 655-3897

(Nov. 4, 2019 | Peoria, IL) – Governor J.B. Pritzker today joined leaders from around Greater Peoria to celebrate the Peoria Innovation Hub, a world-class innovation facility coming to downtown Peoria. The Peoria Innovation Hub, funded through a \$10 million grant that is part of the larger [Illinois Innovation Network](#) (IIN), will be located at the Thomas Building, a 50,000 square foot facility that was recently vacated by Illinois Central College.

The Peoria Innovation Hub will be dedicated to finding solutions to improve the wellness of underserved populations and advance systems related to food, farming, and transportation – specifically autonomous mobility, and will contain spaces for startups, corporate partners, community organizations, universities and many other stakeholders. One of the stated focuses of the hub is crafting a diverse, inclusive and welcoming environment, and the organization is taking steps to ensure that the Peoria Innovation Hub will look and feel like Greater Peoria from moment one.

The process to build the Peoria Innovation Hub, and the community supporting it, will begin in earnest in 2020. This will include a community-supported branding effort to determine a name, brand, logo and identity for the Hub.

“Today, Peoria isn’t resting on your laurels but instead taking that legacy, those strengths, and building on them to propel you forward in today’s economy,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “As Peoria becomes a leader among the community of Illinois cities advancing digital and health care innovation, I want to offer my appreciation to the amazing team committed to making this district a reality. You are helping secure Illinois’ place at the forefront of the 21st-century economy.”

[OSF HealthCare](#), the University of Illinois System, [Illinois Central College](#), and the [Greater Peoria Economic Development Council](#) are all working together to develop the hub.

The Peoria Innovation Hub is governed by a five-member Board of Directors and will be part of the IIN, a statewide initiative led by the University of Illinois System to foster the breakthrough research, discovery, and entrepreneurship that drives progress, job creation and economic growth. The members of the Peoria Innovation Hub’s board of directors are: Robert Sehring, CEO, OSF HealthCare; Michelle Conger, Chief Strategy Officer and CEO, OSF HealthCare Saint Gabriel Digital Health; Dr. John Vozenilek, Vice President/Chief Medical Officer Innovation and Digital Health, OSF HealthCare; Christopher Setti, CEO, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council; and Dr. Sheila Quirk-Bailey, President, Illinois Central College.

The cornerstone of the network is the Discovery Partners Institute (DPI), a world-class research and education center that will bring hundreds of top researchers and thousands of students to Chicago to work with industry and government to tackle real-world challenges. In 2018, OSF HealthCare became the first corporate partner in DPI with the creation of the OSF Innovation Lab at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). DPI classes are already working with the OSF Innovation team to address key questions around serving the poor, rural, and elderly patient populations in Illinois.

Other hubs are being developed across the state, including research centers that have already been announced in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, Springfield, and DeKalb. Those centers will focus on discovery in critical and growing fields such as data science, cybersecurity, therapeutic drugs, food and water resources, and environmental change.

The Hub will essentially reimagine the region’s opportunities for entrepreneurs, students, innovators, creators, and residents. The hub will encompass nearly 53,000 square feet and function as a springboard for new companies and a place where members of the community can collaborate with innovators and bring creative solutions to challenges facing healthcare, manufacturing, and agriculture, among other industries.

“OSF HealthCare recognizes the importance of innovation in improving the health of the communities we serve. It is our hope that working with the Discovery Partners Institute and the Illinois Innovation Network will lead to improvement in the health of and health care options for all Illinoisans,” said Bob Sehring.

"In today's world, innovation is the key to progress, prosperity and an even better tomorrow," said Tim Killeen, president of the U of I System. "The Illinois Innovation Network reflects our commitment to bring the world's very best minds together and put them to work for people here in Peoria, across our state and beyond." All three universities in the University of Illinois System are engaged in Peoria – UIC through the College of Medicine, Urbana-Champaign through the College of Engineering's work with the Jump Simulation and Education Center, and the University of Illinois at Springfield with its master's and degree completion programs.

"Peoria provides a unique opportunity to combine academic and community resources to spur economic development," said Dr. Meenakshy Aiyer, interim regional dean of the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria. "In addition to the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria (UICOMP), we have important educational assets in Illinois Central College and Bradley University. Leveraging these resources with those of our health care systems, manufacturing sectors, and other components of our economy provides Peoria with wonderful opportunities."

"As the workforce innovation partner, ICC would engage in agricultural research with area farmers and students in addition to integrating workforce development programs in manufacturing and healthcare. Our efforts will leverage these advances by aligning these innovations with workforce credentials providing family sustaining opportunities to our community," added Dr. Sheila Quirk-Bailey.

"Innovation has always been the cornerstone of our region – in agriculture, manufacturing, and now health care," said Christopher Setti. "Innovation is also our future. The hub will be a great part of that future. It would inspire entrepreneurs with problems to solve, equip them with the tools they need to solve them, and support them in turning solutions into businesses." The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council has committed to moving its entire operation into the hub when it opens.

Co-working is expected to be a central feature of the proposed hub, in order to maximize productive collaboration across all disciplines within the building. There is expected to be a heavy focus on helping grow Greater Peoria's startup culture.

Some elements being considered for the Hub include:

- **Makerspace with machinery:** Facilities for manufacturing prototypes with equipment such as lathes, drill presses and laser cutters, plus equipment for 3D printing and modeling for artistic- and fashion-related disciplines.
- **Digital makerspace:** Virtual reality software and simulation devices that would build on the advances within OSF HealthCare and the city's simulation, gaming and virtual reality innovation groups.
- **Computing infrastructure:** Cloud computing, server architecture, and data integration would allow for creation of advanced applications to fuel creative pathways including artificial intelligence (AI) to expand information management and analytics.
- **A rooftop greenhouse** to experiment with urban farming and hydroponic techniques. A commercial kitchen for piloting a food pharmacy and restaurant concept testing, along with new and different food preparation methods. Classrooms for conventional courses for new entrepreneurs and students from higher education partners and the community.
- **Office space, classrooms, and conference rooms** for entrepreneurs, startups, and satellite offices for larger corporations that want to access resources of the DPI and IIN.

"The Peoria Innovation Hub will access a wide range of exceptional resources and local industry pioneers to help companies like ours flourish," said Steve Garrou, CEO, Enduvo, a company that develops a no-code, rapid AR/VR content authoring and delivery platform, and was born in Peoria at Jump Simulation. "The involvement of premier industry partners and leading innovators, such as Bradley University, OSF HealthCare and UICOMP, offers unparalleled opportunities for collaboration, economic advancement, and recognition of Illinois as an innovation center."

Located within Peoria's federally designated Opportunity Zone, the Peoria Innovation Hub will offer tax benefits allowing potential business startups to leverage incentives to attract early stage and venture capital. It is also located in the heart of the recently formed Peoria Innovation District, which is the result of an effort led by the Peoria Innovation Alliance. The Peoria Innovation District is a nine-square-block district designed to be a home for innovation and technology in Peoria.

"The Innovation Hub will serve as a focal point of activity aimed at jumpstarting entrepreneurial growth not just in Peoria, but across the entire region," said Jake Hamann, Executive Director of the Peoria Innovation Alliance. "We are thrilled to be partnering on this initiative as it ties very closely to our mission of sharing our region's innovation history, promoting our progress and vision for the future, and enabling and empowering the next round of innovators, entrepreneurs, and startups that call Greater Peoria home."

"It is essential that plans for economic growth include opportunities to strengthen vulnerable communities that have been divested in. The Peoria Innovation Hub will help diverse entrepreneurs improve health care delivery and reduce food insecurity in underserved neighborhoods," said state Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, D-Peoria.

"A Peoria Innovation Hub of the Illinois Innovation Network will have enormous economic potential for the Peoria region. It's fulfilling to see this mission – with its own facility in Peoria – come closer to reality after so much hard work. It is exciting to know our innovators and entrepreneurs could have access to some of the greatest minds in our country," said state Sen. Chuck Weaver, R-Peoria. "OSF, as one of our region's fundamental economic drivers, deserves high praise for stepping up to champion this initiative."

"Peoria has a long history of groundbreaking research and development. The Innovation Hub will build on our regional strengths of healthcare, manufacturing, and agriculture in order to deliver new jobs and startup companies that will strengthen the Illinois economy," added state Sen. Dave Koehler, D-Peoria.

# # #

**The Peoria Innovation Hub**, launched in 2019, is a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to supporting the development and operation of this facility.

**OSF HealthCare**, headquartered in Peoria, is owned and operated by The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, and consists of more than 21,000 employees in 116 locations, including 13 hospitals throughout Illinois and Michigan. Its physician network employs more than 1,000 primary care, specialist physicians and advanced practice providers. More at [www.osfhealthcare.org](http://www.osfhealthcare.org).

**OSF Innovation**, launched in 2016, is the overall umbrella initiative for the planning, structure, goals, and services OSF HealthCare uses to innovate for the improvement and transformation of health care.

**The University of Illinois System** is a world leader in research and discovery, and the largest educational institution in the state with nearly 86,000 students, about 25,000 faculty and staff, and universities in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield. The U of I System awards more than 22,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees annually. More at <https://www.uillinois.edu/>

**Illinois Central College** is dedicated to changing lives and is a community college leader in transfer success and workforce development with campuses in East Peoria, Peoria, and Pekin. The College serves over 19,000 credit and non-credit students annually, offering 160 programs of study and awarding more than 1,800 degrees and certificates annually. For more information on ICC's high-quality, affordable programs, visit [icc.edu](http://icc.edu).

**The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council** serves Logan, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford counties, a federally designated five-county Economic Development District. In collaboration with our local economic and workforce development partners, we drive economic growth in Greater Peoria through targeted business and talent development and attraction.

**The Peoria Innovation Alliance** is a 501c3 organization dedicated to fostering a collaborative movement to reposition the Greater Peoria region and change its narrative to one of inclusion, optimism, and progress through the support and celebration of innovation, entrepreneurship, and startup activity.