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## BRIDGE STREET: Joliet complex advances

### BRIDGE STREET TOWN CENTRE

May 7, 2008 By [BOB OKON bokon@scn1.com](#)

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JOLIET -- The city council on Tuesday took the vote that a developer said will "kick-start" the 314-acre shopping, hotel and office complex called Bridge Street Town Centre.

The council approved a development agreement that finances a new interchange for the project and annexations to bring the land into the city of Joliet.

Located on the southwest edge of town at the crossing of Interstates 55 and 80, Bridge Street Town Centre likely would move the core of the city's retail life to what is now the undeveloped outskirts of town.

One homeowner from the area spoke against the project Tuesday, saying he and neighbors would prefer the land stay undeveloped.

Most public comment on the project, however, came from a handful of speakers who urged that minority workers and contractors participate in the huge development.

California-based O&S Holdings plans to develop 1.5 million square feet of stores and restaurants and 600,000 square feet of office space. The market value of the project has been estimated as high as \$1 billion.

"We're here because we're concerned," said George Kimbrough, pastor of Holy Temple Redeemed and True Tabernacle Christian Fellowship churches in Joliet. "I look at the developer. I see no minority representation."

The large group of O&S representatives did not appear to include any blacks or Hispanics, although two seemed to be Asian.

Managing partner Gary Safady, who came to Joliet for the Tuesday vote, pointed out later that he is Lebanese.

"It's a landmark day, and it's a day that really kick-starts the project," Safady told the council.

Work on the project could begin later this year, Safady said. The first stores are expected to open in 2011.

He said O&S Holdings' developments offer the possibility of a "lifestyle change" by bringing high-end stores and unique restaurants into areas. He referred to another Bridge Street Town Centre the company opened last year in Huntsville, Ala.

A common comment heard at that Huntsville center, Safady said, is, "I feel like I'm not in

Huntsville."

Like that complex, the Joliet project is designed to include a lake and other features that would make it a gathering place as well as a shopping center.

City officials have said for months that Bridge Street Town Centre would change Joliet and create a new element to the city's growing image as a destination place in the region.

Bridge Street Town Centre is expected to attract customers from as far away as Bloomington and the Quad Cities.

### **Council response**

"This is a historic moment for everyone here," said Councilwoman Susie Barber. One of two black council members, Barber directed her words to the large number of minorities at the meeting who applauded the call for diverse hiring for the project.

The other black council member, Warren Dorris, was not at the meeting.

The vote on the project was seven in favor, and one councilman, Anthony Uremovic, abstained. Uremovic, a professor at Joliet Junior College, said he abstained to avoid any conflict because of a connector road that would be built partially on the college campus to connect Bridge Street Town Centre to Houbolt Road.

Most council members directed comments to the concerns expressed by the public, a change of pace from the celebratory atmosphere at a Monday workshop meeting in which O&S representatives talked about the virtues of the project with council members.

Mayor Arthur Schultz said he would talk with leaders in the building trades unions about spreading jobs around when the project is built.

"We've built a lot of things in the last 15 years -- the baseball park and speedway," Schultz said. "They've been very successful, and everybody got a piece of the action."

There were some murmurs of disagreement in the crowd.

Many council members directed comments to Fred Butalla, a resident of Rock Run Drive who said the development would ruin a way of life for his neighborhood.

"The noise, the traffic, the street lights -- this is what we tried to get away from," Butalla said. "Now, it's going to be right in our front yard."

Council members, however, said the project was good for Joliet and contended the land at a crossroad of two of the nation's major interstates was destined to be developed.

"This is a desirable site, a premier site -- wanted by many," Councilman Timothy Brophy said. "For the common good and the greater good of the Joliet area, I think this is a great thing."

#### [Council Approves Rezoning Of 125th Street](#)

From NYPolitics.com New Yorks Political Resource

#### [Arcola city council members can't be bothered to show up for meeting](#)

From South Texas Chisme

The views expressed in these blog posts are those of the author and not of the Sun-Times

News Group.

willcountian wrote:

This is great news for the entire Joliet area and well beyond. I have to laugh when nearby residents complain about development changing their quiet way of life - COME ON - you live near the intersection of I-55 and I-80 - did you really think that this was going to be farmland forever?? That is hysterical to me (really, really hysterical actually - rolling on the floor laughing hysterical)... but it really goes for anybody - if you live near vacant land - and I don't care what your surroundings look like now... it could change. You can complain but it's basically up to the owner of that land to do whatever they want with it - granted that it follows the zoning code. If you don't want to be disturbed by new development you either 1) buy in an area that is already dense with buildings/residences in an older established area that is not likely to change 2) own all the vacant lands surrounding your house so nobody else can do anything with them, or 3) move somewhere else!! It's quite simple. But anyways that's just my pet peeve about people that complain about development.. great job City Council for working with and approving this project!! What an awesome success for our region.

5/9/2008 2:35 PM CDT on suburbanchicagonews.com

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lea stahr wrote:

We need to consider the importance of hundreds of jobs and millions in taxes, both real estate and sales. This will be one of the largest, if not the largest, tax sources for Joliet. And we could certainly use some of the better stores locally instead of driving on \$4/gallon gas to Oakbrook. As always, I oppose any form of hiring discrimination for any group. Exclude none, favor none.

5/9/2008 1:26 PM CDT on suburbanchicagonews.com

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westside rick wrote:

Why do we have to hire one group or race over another? Why not just hire the one who is best for the job?

5/9/2008 8:03 AM CDT on suburbanchicagonews.com

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spw wrote:

Bravo to the contractors who attended the meeting and the clergy that spoke to the council concerning work for minorities in the Joliet area. Black contractors are still waiting to be called back to work. The construction season is well under way, yet their trucks are still parked. Take notice next time you are out and observe who is driving the dump trucks that haul material from the quarries to the job sites. Government money set aside for minority companies continue to not reach the workers in the Joliet and surrounding areas. Perhaps what is needed is an investigation of the allocation of government funds for the past 5 years to see exactly where the money went and to whom. It was a fair and timely question asked at the meeting, one the developers and council members needed to answer. Was there an answer? Mayor Arthur Schultz said "he would talk with leaders in the building trades unions about spreading jobs around when the project is built". What happened to the inclusion of minorities when the plans were being made for the project? The Mayor stated that "we've built a lot of things in the last 15 years and everybody got a piece of the action". Can he tell you how much of the money reached black contractors and black owner operators? Real numbers would prove very interesting. The Bridge Street Town Centre project could begin as early as this year, ending in 2011...nearly 3 years of work right here in Joliet! Mayor and council members make a commitment for real change and see that minority black business are given a fair a equal chance to participate in this and all projects going forward for this area. With 1.5 million square feet of stores and restaurants and 600,000 square feet of office space, a market value of the project estimated as high as \$1 billion. Mayor

Schultz, what "piece of the action" would be fair and equal for the minority black contractors/owner operators in your area? This is the question that you, the council, and California-based O&S Holdings need to address with Minority leaders and supporters. Let this be the beginning of minorities uniting to bring about needed change in the Joliet area. Continue to attend the council meetings...stand together until change comes. Black Clergy and leaders gather your people together and stand with them as they stand up for equality. You have been quiet far too long. Life is not as good as some portray on the council. If a minority contractor has not made their first dollar this year how can it be? Is there one council member or even the Mayor who can make the same statement concerning their finances for this year? I am a minority owner operator and my truck is still parked while non minority owner operators trucks are running everyday. Union dues paid in full...required insurance paid in full.. all requiremennts to operate in the state of Illinois in order. Let's get the tax paying, long time residents of Joliet and the surrounding areas back to work. Mayor and council members, your minority residents want a real piece of the action. No more lip service and empty promises. You can make it happen...do the right thing. Inclusion not exclusion.

5/8/2008 5:42 PM CDT on suburbanchicagonews.com

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donzztake wrote:

"handful of speakers who urged that minority workers and contractors participate in the huge development."Let's put all those illegal aliens to work right?"Bridge Street Town Centre is expected to attract customers from as far away as Bloomington and the Quad Cities."Just like "Mall of America", you go once but rarely twice~!

5/7/2008 4:44 PM CDT on suburbanchicagonews.com

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