

## Champaign branch set to open in October

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CHAMPAIGN – First Bank hopes its new branch in downtown Champaign will be open for business Oct. 1.

The bank began interior demolition on the former Great Impasta building at 114 W. Church St., C, in mid-February. It hopes to begin soon with a \$1.3 million renovation project, said Adam Yeazel, the bank's Champaign County market president.

Paris, Ill.-based First Bank & Trust already has First Bank offices in Savoy and Rantoul. The downtown Champaign office will be its third in Champaign County.

"There's been so much going on in downtown Champaign, and this was a good opportunity to have an anchor building in the county .. in a centralized location," Yeazel said

So far the copper facade has been taken off the front of the building, revealing the original brick as well as second-story glass-tile windows. The glass tile will be replaced with new windows, and clerestory windows will be added on the west wall, adding natural light to the teller area.

"We wanted to take the south facade back to its original appearance and respect history," Yeazel said. "The west will have more of a modern look to it."

Yeazel described plans for the interior, which will feature taupes and browns.

"When you walk into the lobby, we'll have six private offices and a conference room, and teller operations on the west side where the kitchen area was," Yeazel said. "There will also be one drive-up lane with a full-service ATM."

The parking lot west of the building will be resurfaced for 10 customer and employee spots, he said, and the second floor of the building will be left vacant for now.

Yeazel said the downtown office will employ about 13 people, including four or five new employees. The bank plans to relocate its commercial lenders there, as well as three loan officers, two loan administrators, a deposit manager and some tellers.

First Bank currently employs 15 in Savoy and seven in Rantoul.

Ratio Architects has done the architectural work for the renovation, and the Petry-Kuhne Co. is general contractor.

Bill Devine, the project director for Ratio, said the design restores the original character of the building's front, with a side that's more contemporary.

"It will fit with downtown and still provide the modern conveniences of an up-to-date, 21st-century bank," Devine said.

The bank won't occupy the space immediately to the east where the Trevett-Mattis Banking Co. facade stands. That facade is part of the M2 mixed-use development at Church and Neil streets.

Mike Royse, president of One Main Development, said the Trevett-Mattis space hasn't been leased yet.

"We want a really cool tenant in there. We've talked with a couple different food operators and different kinds of retail, but haven't found the right thing yet," Royse said.

However, BankChampaign has agreed to lease space elsewhere in the M2 project and is expected to open there in

late spring, Royse said.

First Bank's parent company, First BancTrust Corp., has had an eventful year. On Jan. 22, the company announced that its president and chief executive officer, Terry J. Howard, would leave his position Feb. 13 and be succeeded by Jack R. Franklin, the executive vice president and chief operating officer.

On Feb. 20, the bank announced it had received approval to participate in the U.S. Treasury's Capital Purchase Program. It subsequently issued \$7.35 million in senior preferred stock to the Treasury.

On March 4, the company reported a \$179,000 loss for the fourth quarter of 2008, scaling back net income for the full year to \$481,000. It said it increased its fourth-quarter provision for loan losses to \$1.32 million, up from the \$170,000 that was originally projected.

**Caption:** Vanda Bidwell photos/The News-GazetteLEFT: Work has already begun on transforming the former Great Impasta building on Church Street in Champaign into First Bank's newest branch.Vanda Bidwell photos/The News-GazetteRIGHT: Adam B. Yeazel, Champaign County market president for First Bank, stands inside the building under renovation.

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