

# St. Joseph Community Building Project

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## **Executive Summary**

The St. Joseph Community Building is a project designed to serve the Village of St. Joseph, St. Joseph Township, and Champaign County, Illinois. St. Joseph has never had a community building to be the focus of civic and social activities. Starting in 2024, the St. Joseph Recreation Foundation (SJRF), a 501c3 organization, was created by nine citizens who serve as the Board of Directors. SJRF has worked tirelessly over the ensuing 18 months to raise sufficient funds to locate, design and build a community building in St. Joseph. With financial and logistical support from both the Village and Township of St. Joseph, resources, and support to get the facility constructed has been successfully progressing. However, there is still more to do.



This proposed facility addresses documented gaps in civic and emergency infrastructure by offering a centralized, accessible venue for civic governance, emergency preparedness and response, workforce development, health and social services, youth programming, and regional cultural and celebratory events. It will provide year-round public access, deliver regional benefits, and yield measurable returns on investment. Designed for shared use by municipal, township, county, nonprofit, and regional entities, the facility will be available 365 days annually. A 2020 community survey and recent feasibility study confirm the need for an event space as well as the citizen support for such a facility. The community building will be located on land owned by the Village of St. Joseph in the Community Park at 2007 E. Grand Street.

## **Background and Need**

St. Joseph, Illinois, has never had a dedicated community building, yet there is strong citizen support and a clear demand for one. Please see the attached results of a community survey on the issue. Community events—including graduation ceremonies, weddings, receptions, educational events, large meetings, funerals, and gatherings for social organizations (e.g., American Legion, Boy/Girl Scouts)—currently lack suitable local venues. People and organizations must travel to the Champaign-Urbana metro area where spaces are more expensive and increased demand make scheduling difficult.

## **Economic Impact**

This facility will positively influence the local economy. Event attendees will support nearby businesses, such as restaurants, shops, and services, boosting revenue and fostering job growth in St. Joseph area.

## **Emergency Preparedness and Public Safety**

The Champaign County Emergency Management Agency has identified a shortage of emergency reception and shelter options in eastern Champaign County. This building will fill that gap by accommodating up to 350 people during emergencies, equipped with an emergency generator for reliability during outages. Located in the 40+ acre public Woodard Family Park Sports Complex, the facility would serve as shelter during heat/cold emergencies, power failure, evacuation point, or any other emergency need.

## **Building Features**

The facility will be a modern, single-level building in a rural area with a floor plan reflecting a clean, welcoming facility integrated with the park setting. Donated funds will be used solely for capital development, including site preparation for utilities (sewer, water, stormwater drainage, gas) and construction. The 7,000 square-foot, single-level, fully ADA-accessible facility will include:

- A large meeting/activity area
- A kitchen (fully equipped, public health certified as a commissary for local businesses to produce food products)
- Storage spaces
- A bar
- An office
- Bride & Groom Dressing rooms
- Surrounding lighted parking for up to two hundred vehicles
- Modern IT and audio/visual capabilities

Currently, the plans include the installation of renewable energy solar panels on the roof to supplement power and promote sustainability.

## **Civic and Government Use**

The facility will host municipal, township, and county meetings; public hearings; zoning and infrastructure forums; regional planning sessions; and nonpartisan civic engagement events. Groups such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, American



Legion, St. Joseph Women's Community Club, and the St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce would use this space as well. This community building will address critical gaps in event hosting, emergency response, and public safety while promoting economic growth and resilience in St. Joseph.

## **Other Uses for the Community Building**

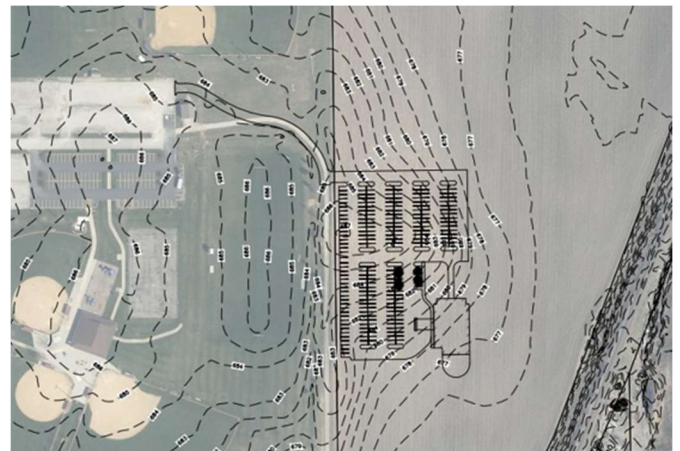
Other potential uses for the facility would include:

- Workforce Development & Economic Resilience
  - Job fairs, workforce training, small business workshops, agricultural education, and producer forums to support rural employment and sustainability.
- Cultural, Community & Regional Events:
  - Community celebrations, regional arts and cultural programming, veteran recognition events, and multi-community gatherings to enhance regional identity and cohesion.

- The St. Joseph region has a burgeoning music scene with many local artists who would be offered opportunities for music festivals and performance areas – both inside and outside the facility.
- Health, Wellness & Social Services Access:
  - Health screenings, wellness clinics, blood drives, vaccination events, senior services, and mental health outreach to improve rural access to essential services.
- Youth, Education & Nonprofit Utilization:
  - Youth leadership development, educational workshops, nonprofit training, mentorship programs, and community education initiatives to build long-term rural resilience and equity.
- Accessibility, Equity & Public Benefit:
  - ADA-compliant and universally accessible, with transparent scheduling and reduced/no-cost access prioritized for public agencies and nonprofits.

### **Budget Breakdown**

Depending on final cost, 55-61% of the required funding (\$1,930,000) has already been acquired. The goal is to raise between \$3,200,000 and \$3,500,000. Local government has provided 25% of the funding. Donated private money raised by SJRF represents the other 75%. Please note that there are no land acquisition costs as the facility will be located on property owned by the Village of St. Joseph. Funding sources include:



- \$1,250,000 from a single private donor (The Ralph Foundation)
- \$400,000 from the Village of St. Joseph (Approved December 9, 2025)
- \$100,000 from St. Joseph Township (Approved January 13, 2026)
- \$138,000 from various private donors (Accumulated since the Fall of 2024)
- \$50,000 from fundraising activities/events (accumulated since Fall of 2024)

This leaves between \$1,262,000 and \$1,570,000 shortfall. SJRF continues to pursue additional private fundraising, engaging local businesses, corporations, banks, and prominent citizens and organizations. In partnership with the Village of St. Joseph, SJRF is also exploring other public and private grants/loans. A contracted civil engineer, architect, and builder are finalizing the cost estimates. An architectural feasibility study has already been completed. A high utilization, multi-purpose design is expected to result in responsible self-sustaining revenue generation.

A long-term management plan is being developed for the management and operation of the facility. The plan at this time is for the building to be owned by the Village of St. Joseph and operated by SJRF pursuant to a management contract. Rental money and continuing fundraising will be directed toward

maintenance and capital replacement. The Village and SJRF will share resources to operate to manage the facility.

### **Stakeholders and Support**

SJRF is currently gathering letters of support from various social and business groups. Government and citizen stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Village of St. Joseph, Illinois
- Township of St. Joseph, Illinois
- Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, Illinois
- St. Joseph Ogden High School District #CHSD 305
  - St. Joseph/Ogden Future Farmers of America Chapter #IL0353
- St. Joseph School Elementary School District #CCSD169
- St. Joseph-Stanton Fire Protection District
- Champaign County, Illinois Emergency Management Agency
- Nearly 14,000 residents in and around the St. Joseph area
- Freese Funeral Home
- Local and regional civic organizations to include:
  - St. Joseph Women's Community Club
  - St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce
  - American Legion Post #634

### **SJRF and Facility Details**

The mission of the St. Joseph Recreation Foundation is to:

“To enrich the lives of Saint Joseph residents by creating inclusive, accessible, and vibrant recreational space and events that foster community connection, promote wellness, and support local development.”

The SJRF website can be found at [www.stjoerf.org](http://www.stjoerf.org). The Facebook page is “St. Joseph Recreation Foundation.”

Facility address is 2007 E. Grand St., St Joseph, IL 61873

Email Contact: [stjoerf@gmail.com](mailto:stjoerf@gmail.com)

**St. Joe Community Building Survey**  
**Opened January 27, 2020 ---- Closed February 10, 2020**

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Please note that the original community building committee was formed in late 2019. The committee did preliminary work assessing the need for the facility and its possible location and building design. One of the committee’s work products was this community survey. There were 328 responses to the survey.

The original committee paused its work during the COVID pandemic. It was revived in 2024 by the reformation of the St. Joseph Recreation Foundation.

**Do you generally support creating a community building in St. Joseph?**

Yes	306	94%
No	21	6%

**If a community building were to be built, what type of events do you think could reasonably take place there?**

Event Type	Response Number
Community Meetings/Events	298
Fundraising Events	286
Weddings/Receptions	280
Community Organizations (service clubs, youth groups, etc.)	275
Child Activities (Summer Days, Youth/Athletic Camps)	261
Banquets	258
Classes (yoga, fitness, etc.)	254
Vendor Shows	208
Other	38

**“Others” Listed in Comments:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School/family reunions</li> <li>• Private Events</li> <li>• Card Game Nights</li> <li>• Birthday Parties</li> <li>• Teen Hangout</li> <li>• Activities for seniors</li> <li>• Polling Places</li> <li>• Santa</li> <li>• Bingo</li> <li>• After School Programs</li> <li>• Police Substation for Deputy</li> <li>• Fall Festival Indoors Activities</li> <li>• Community Education (public health, finance)</li> <li>• Music shows and live events (theater productions)</li> <li>• Arts and Crafts clubs and shows</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prom/Homecoming</li> <li>• Emergency shelter or /heat/cooling shelter</li> <li>• Large funeral visitations</li> <li>• Movies</li> <li>• Theater productions</li> <li>• Camps</li> <li>• Tutoring</li> <li>• Tumbling</li> <li>• Village holiday festivals</li> <li>• Pageants</li> <li>• Indoor trick or treating</li> <li>• Concerts and dances</li> <li>• Antique shows for our antique businesses</li> <li>• Garden show</li> <li>• Bible study</li> <li>• Community Sales</li> </ul> |
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**Are you a member of an organization or business that might benefit from having a community building?**

Yes	81
No	235

**If yes, please identify the group or business and how it could use the community building?**

- Forest preserve outreach programs
- Community forums for rail trail
- C/U Poetry
- Home Extension Monthly Meeting
- Crestlake Homeowner's Association meetings
- St. Joseph UMC
- Realtor business
- SJO Cheerleading
- Tammy Walsh Scholarship Fund use for fundraisers
- American Legion
- Salt Fork River Runners
- Boy/Girl Scouting events
- SJFC Soccer Board for board and team meetings
- SJO Youth Wrestling for annual banquet
- IOTA Sigma Chapter, PSI IOTA XI
- St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce
- Village Gardeners
- Noonday Collections – Vendor Events
- Art Shows
- Women's Club
- SJO Alumni Events
- Illini 4H Clubs
- Personal Trainer – fitness classes
- Business Owner – need to conduct training
- SJO Extra Curricular Events
- Littlefield Realtors
- Business customer appreciation events
- Island Travel for large events
- PTC meetings and events
- SJO Fan Club Cash Bash and Post Prom
- Champaign and Urbana Spinner and Weavers Guild events/meetings
- SJO5K monthly meetings
- Girl Scout meetings events
- Farmer's market
- Flea market
- School Fine Arts Boosters
- DYI Business looking for a location to hold workshops
- Book Club