



City Scoop

The City of Collinsville's Semi-Annual Newsletter

Fall 2018

A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

It's been a year of accomplishments so far for Collinsville. A number of changes have taken place since the last City Scoop and we're excited to share them with you.

The City is moving quickly to improve our troubled parks. The Parks & Recreation Department began the year with just one staff member, Director Kimberly Caughran. Since then, she has put together an outstanding team to improve the quality of our facilities and create exciting recreation programs for our community. We're already seeing better maintenance and amenities in the parks, and bigger and better improvements are currently being developed.

The Gateway Center acquisition offers an incredible opportunity for economic development in Collins-

ville. The consolidation reduces operating costs and provides strategically planned capital improvements, allowing Gateway Center to become a top competitor in the industry and drive economic growth throughout the City. To more effectively market Gateway Center and the City as a whole, we have joined the Great Rivers & Routes Convention and Visitors Bureau. The City will work closely with Great Rivers & Routes to develop a marketing plan that highlights the unique history and charm that Collinsville has to offer. This combination of cost reduction, strategic planning, and effective marketing will have an enormous positive impact on Collinsville's economy.

The City has also made the quality of buildings, especially residential housing, a top priority. The recently

passed Occupancy Permit Program is designed to ensure that homes and businesses are safe and well-maintained, improving the quality of housing stock in Collinsville. The benefit to residents is not only increased property values over time, but also peace of mind from knowing that their homes are safe.

City staff have been working diligently to implement these changes, and we are just beginning to see the results. There is still more to accomplish, and we are up to the challenge. We will continue working to make Collinsville the best place to live, work, shop, and play.



Mayor John Miller

Parks & Recreation Developments



The new Optimist Playground at Woodland Park

In its first year of operations, the City's Parks and Recreation Department has been very busy! Director Caughran successfully applied for several grants that will help fund park improvements. Most notably, grants were awarded to help fund replacement of the shelters, amphitheater, and Optimist playground at Woodland Park. The playground replacement is now complete, and the shelter and amphitheater replacements are planned for 2019.

In order to better serve the community, the Parks and Recreation Department has created a survey for residents to provide input on Collinsville's parks and recreation facilities. The survey is available on the City's website at www.collinsvilleil.org/parks-and-recreation, and hard copies are available at City Hall and the Activity Center. It takes less than (cont. on p. 2)

CARD Dissolution

You may have seen the signs all over town that say “Dissolve CARD for better parks”. And while it’s true the parks will be better, the enhancement of our parks has already begun due to the City assuming operational control and investing in much needed improvements. The City has also acquired parks it did not previously own, such as Schnuck’s Park, Splash City, and Willoughby Heritage Farm. The efforts made by the City Council and Parks & Recreation Department have already substantially reduced the operating property tax for CARD because they no longer have operations.

All of these parks are being improved and the programming enhanced and increased to serve the residents of Collinsville and to positively impact the lives of all our families. The City is not doing this through property taxes, but with the Hotel Accommodation Tax and the Food & Beverage tax. It is very important to the City Council to keep property taxes low, and these revenue sources keep our property taxes low while funding parks and recreational activities through tourism and visitors to our city. This is a tried and true approach to funding these activities utilized by other forward thinking business minded municipalities. It is simply good business.

One of the primary objectives of the Collinsville City Council is to serve the taxpayers and reduce their prop-

erty tax burden. Absent their will and determination to assume the management and costs of the parks, the effort to dissolve CARD could not happen. The key consideration in creating a successful plan was to serve the best interests of the residents and taxpayers of Collinsville, who make up approximately 62% of the CARD district. This is why we are in the position to effectively dissolve CARD. Although residents will still pay some property taxes to CARD’s debt, which will take approximately 17 years to pay off, the dissolution will significantly reduce residents’ property taxes paid to CARD. It is important to know that property taxes paid to the City of Collinsville will not be increased due to the City creating a Parks and Recreation Department.

Please vote “Yes” to dissolving CARD on November 6th, with full knowledge that the vote for dissolution is in the best interests of the taxpayers of Collinsville. Be sure to look for new and enhanced services from the Collinsville Parks & Recreation Department, including an improved water park for the 2019 swim season, greater programming opportunities, more athletic opportunities, and new City athletic leagues. These new and enhanced opportunities are focused on connecting with Collinsville residents and offering a better value for these services because, in the end, it’s all about serving the community!

Parks & Recreation Developments (cont’d from p. 1)

5 minutes to complete. The survey results will help the Department determine recreation programming, amenities, and improvements that are most needed, and also help inform the City’s Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails Master Plan.

The Parks & Recreation Department is now located at the Activity Center at 10 Gateway Dr., and we’re excited to bring great rec programs and events to Collinsville. Here’s what we have coming up, with plenty more on the way!

Recreation Programs

- » Adult Volleyball: Mondays 6:30-8:30pm (@ DIS)
- » Totally Tots Playtime: M/Th 9:30-11am, T/W 2-4pm
- » Mighty Mites Karate: Mondays 6-6:30pm
- » Karate 1: M/W 6:30-7:30pm
- » Karate 2: M/W 7:30-8:30pm
- » Chess Club: Nov. 7, 14, 28, & Dec. 5 from 6-7pm

Willoughby Farm Events & Programs

- » Christmas at the Farm: Dec. 2 from 1-4pm
 - » Urban Ecology Club: Last Sunday of month 1-3pm
 - » Willoughby Explorers and Venturers (details online)
 - » Volunteer Days: Wednesdays 9am-12pm
 - » Conservation Stewards: 11/10, 12/8, 1/26 from 9am-12pm
- Visit www.willoughbyfarm.org or call 618-977-0941 for details.

For more information on these programs and events, and to stay up-to-date on what’s coming, visit www.collinsvilleil.org, call us at 618-346-7529, or follow us on Facebook @CollinsvilleParksandRec.

Christmas at the Collins House

Bring the whole family to Uptown Collinsville on December 1 to ring in the holiday season with the City’s annual Christmas at the Collins House event and light-up Christmas parade. The parade starts at 5:30pm and runs down Main Street and Clay Street, starting and ending at the Collins House. After the parade, we will host a tree lighting ceremony and have an array of activities and entertainment for your family to enjoy at the Collins House while you wait to visit with Santa Claus. Please visit the City’s website at www.collinsvilleil.org for the parade entry form or contact Kim Wasser at 618-346-5204. Help us make the second annual event bigger and better than last year!

A Business Plan for a City Explained

Over the past three years, Collinsville residents have noticed a lot of improvements around town. Whether it is a new Parks and Recreation Department, work to improve the streets, new developments, or improving the Gateway Convention Center, all of these efforts are done to run the City more like a private business and serve our residents as customers.

The goal of running a City like a business is not a novel concept. It is a real approach that provides incredible returns to the taxpayers. The simple philosophy is that the residents are the primary shareholders and also the customers; therefore, all efforts should be focused on buying the cost of services down for the residents and increasing those services. This philosophy is playing out on a daily basis around town. Some examples include the following:

- » Parks and Recreation services are provided by program revenues as well as through the Hotel Accommodations Tax and Food and Beverage Tax, not through property taxes. This allows these services to be funded primarily by visitors to the City via recreational tourism.
- » Gateway Convention Center operations and capital improvements are being funded through operational revenues for building use as well as through the Hotel Accommodations Tax and Food and Beverage Tax, not through property taxes.
- » The City is using more grant revenues to buy down the cost of increasing and expanding infrastructure.

While the Utility Tax was increased from 1½% to 4% in 2016, the utilization of these funds was restricted to addressing the serious infrastructure problems facing the City. These funds have driven approximately \$3.5 million in street and sidewalk improvements, and the average cost per household is approximately \$56. Most notably, the City was only the 2nd municipality in Illinois to offer a utility tax rebate to senior citizen, disabled, and low income residents. This is one of the most successful and responsible ways to improve the infrastructure of the City while minimizing the impacts on our residents.

Every action by the City Council is mindful, focused on problem-solving and being forward thinking, and makes financial impacts to the residents the primary consideration. The Business Plan model requires every service the City provides to fully be evaluated for the costs and benefits to the residents. It also requires considering other issues, including reliance on outside vendors, private sector markup, quality meeting expectations, and finding ways to increase the quality of the service and reduce the costs. Every component needs to be considered for the plan to be successful.

Running a business requires investment in the business for success and for that investment to provide returns to the business. In Collinsville's case, that return on the investment is a reduced provision cost and an increase in service quality. The operations of the City are always focused on ensuring that minimal costs are born by the residents and that property taxes are not increased. The City currently has the 3rd lowest municipal property tax levy for the Metro-East behind Fairview Heights (no property tax levy) and Troy, and the City Council intends to maintain this low level of taxation. All of the changes that have occurred over the past couple of years (some very evident and some not so much) require a lot of front end planning and detailed evaluation to be successful in serving the residents. This is a different approach to City management, but it is one that is required to fully realize the limitless opportunities of the community and to ensure our place as "the" leader in the Metro-East.

Capital Improvement Plan

The CIP is the City's roadmap for planned investments in infrastructure, facilities, equipment, and vehicles. The 2017 CIP budgeted \$4,946,894 worth of projects. The actual project costs were \$3,927,631, which is 20.6% under budget.

Completed Projects

- » The City's largest infrastructure project, the new Water Treatment Plant, is nearly complete. The project has progressed extremely well, staying on schedule and on budget throughout the construction process. It is scheduled to begin running this year, with final project closeout expected in February 2019.
- » The Main Street resurfacing project, Vandalia Ave sewer main extension, Church Street water main replacement, Clay Street repaving, and Betline Road at Keebler Avenue Intersection were significant projects that have been completed.
- » Bleachers and ADA picnic Tables purchased for Parks & Rec.
- » About \$90,000 worth of equipment has been purchased for Woodland Park Improvement

Upcoming Projects

- » The 2018 Local Roads Resurfacing Project is slated to begin in October. Approximately 2.8 miles of 17 local roads are scheduled to be resurfaced throughout the City. Roads are selected for resurfacing based on the condition of the pavement surface.
- » Welcome sign replacement (two completed, two more to be finished by end of year)



Finance Updates

The City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the 2017 fiscal year was released at the end of June and is available on the City's website. Highlights from the CAFR include:

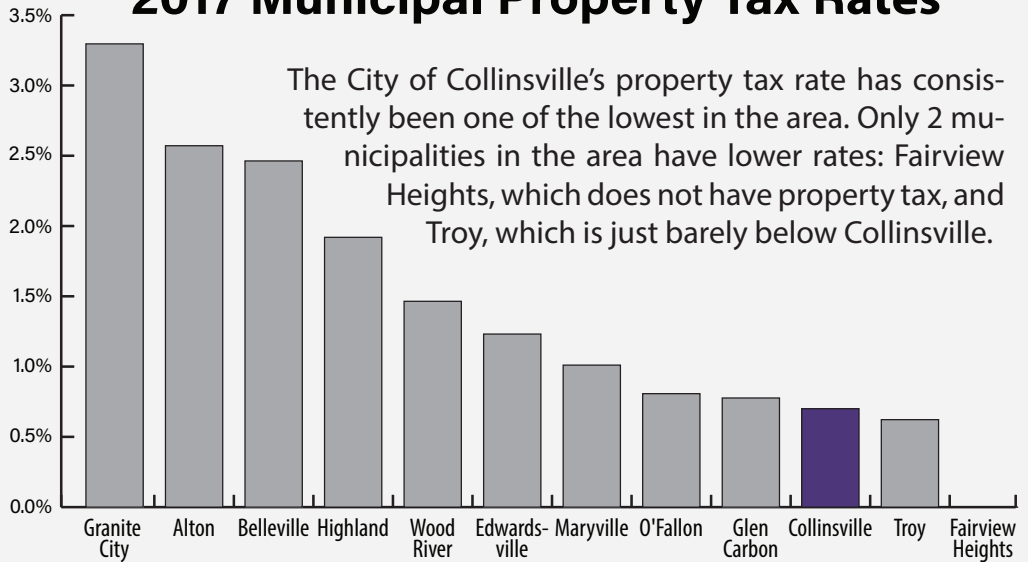
- » The City's net position on Dec. 31, 2017 was \$23,689,893, an increase of \$2,276,696 from 2016.
- » The unassigned fund balance for the General Fund was \$8,387,604 (42.2% of General Fund expenditures for the year). The City Council is investing a portion of the unassigned General Fund balance into critically-needed Capital Improvement projects.
- » The City's total bonded debt decreased by \$1,750,000.

The majority of the City's net position comes from its investment in capital assets, particularly infrastructure. The City has continued to invest in the community in 2018, acquiring several new assets, including Gateway Center, Willoughby Heritage Farm, and Splash City Water Park. These acquisitions are expected to have a significant positive impact on the City as a whole, as well as the following positive financial impacts:

- » Gateway Center is valued at \$26 million with \$4 million in associated debt, for a net positive impact of \$22 million.
- » Willoughby Heritage Farm is valued at \$1.25 million with no debt transferred to the City.
- » Splash City Water Park is valued at \$19.25 million and no associated debt transferred to the City.

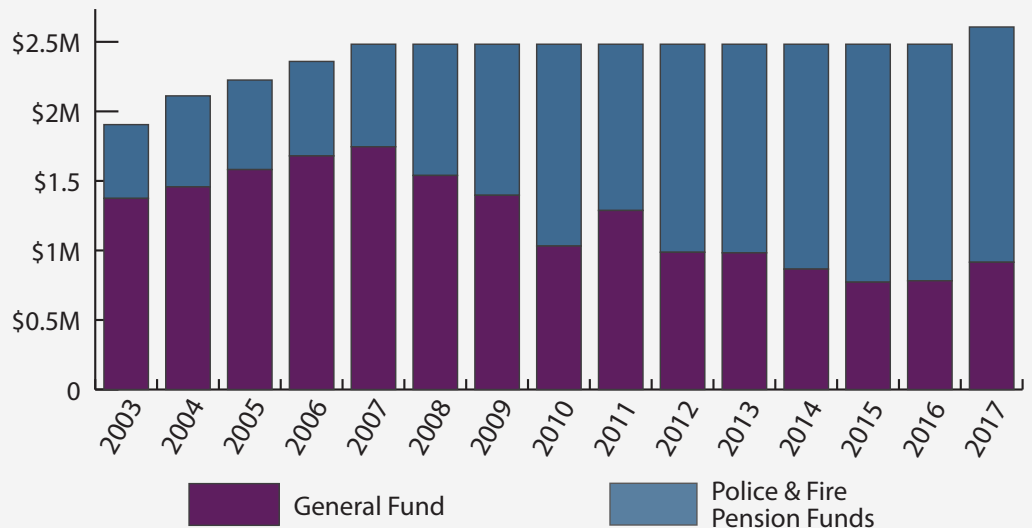
The total impact of these acquisitions for the City is an increase of \$42.5 million in assets.

2017 Municipal Property Tax Rates

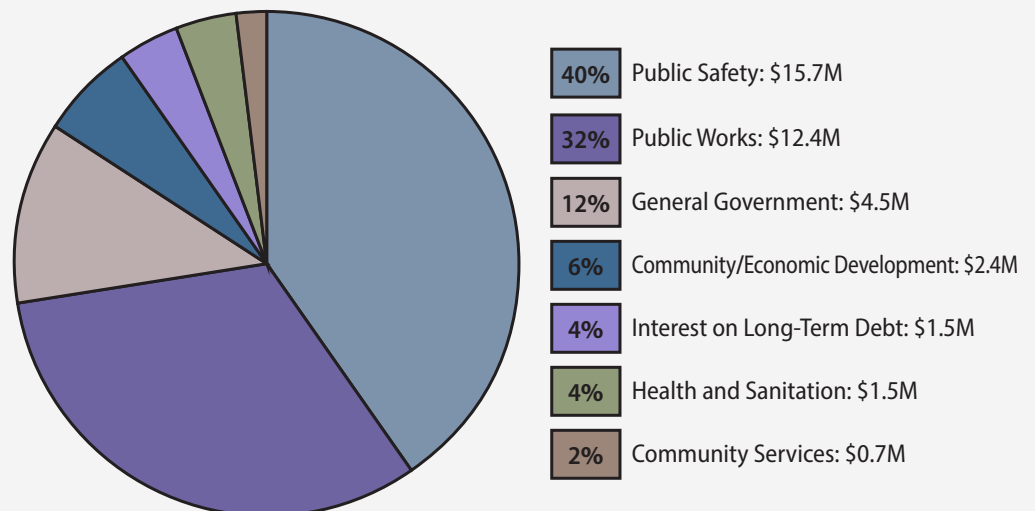


Property Tax Allocation

Over the past 15 years, the proportion of property taxes going towards City operations has significantly decreased. This is due to Police and Fire pension fund obligations. Currently, 65% of the property tax collected goes to these pension funds.



Expenses by Type of Service 2017 (in millions)

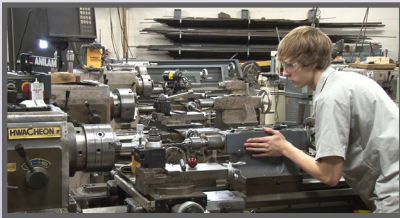




Collinsville Area Vocational Center

Collinsville Area Vocational Center (CAVC) is preparing students for the future. Unlike any vocational school in the area, CAVC provides students with the education, hands-on training, and professional certifications needed to succeed in a wide variety of college programs and careers. Programs offered include:

- » Auto Body Repair
- » Automotive Repair
- » Building Trades
- » Clinical Health Occupations
- » Criminal Justice
- » Early Childhood Education
- » Electronics
- » Engineering
- » Culinary & Nutrition
- » Precision Machining
- » Web and Graphic Design
- » Welding



Approximately 300 students are currently enrolled in one of the 12 programs offered, and students from 5 other area school districts participate. Students can earn college credit at SWIC through 8 of the programs and Engineering students are eligible for credit at additional colleges and universities. Visit the CAVC website to view program videos and learn more: www.kahoks.org/schools/collinsville-area-vocational/

Mission

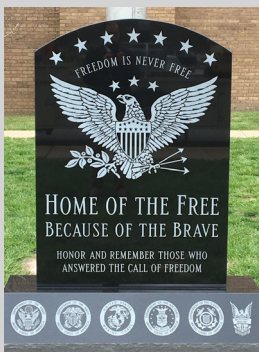
The Collinsville Area Vocational Center, in collaboration with outlying districts, is committed to preparing students academically and technologically to attend college, trade school, enter the military, or enter the work force. In partnership with business, industry, and higher education, we strive to provide a foundation of skill mastery as well as the collaboration and critical thinking skills necessary to be successful in the work world. We focus providing an educated and capable work force, with real-world problem solving skills, ready to take on the challenges of the ever-changing world in which we live.

CAVC Believes:

- » Education is the key to a successful future.
- » All students can learn at their own pace and in their own time.
- » Students learn best when given the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities.
- » Effective education includes technical skill and training that prepares students for career opportunities consistent with their capabilities, aptitudes, and desires.
- » Collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, and cooperation are essential skills necessary for life-long success.
- » Education is enhanced through access to technological resources, flexible learning environments, and quality facilities.



Collinsville Unit 10 School District News



The Collinsville School District has been working hard to provide its students with excellent education and extracurricular opportunities. Just some of their accomplishments so far this year include:

Collinsville High School dedicated its new Veterans Memorial monument (pictured left).

The memorial project began after the school's 2016 designation as an Illinois Democracy School as a way to engage the school community and to serve as a reminder of the freedoms enjoyed by Americans. On Sept. 11, CHS students and faculty, local dignitaries, veterans, and members of the community gathered to celebrate the completion of the monument.

Twin Echo Elementary has been named a National PTA School of Excellence for 2018-2020, one of only five

schools in Illinois to ever achieve this recognition. The program supports and celebrates partnerships between PTA's and schools that work to improve the educational experience and school environment for every child.

CHS Senior Jimmy Moore has been named a National Merit Scholarship Program semifinalist. Students must earn the highest scores on the PSAT/NMSQT in their state become a semifinalist, and less than 1% of high school seniors qualify. Moore is a top member of the CHS Math Team, president of the National Honor Society and Mu Alpha Theta, and vice president of the STEM Club.

Bradley Hyre was named Assistant Superintendent of the Year by the Illinois Principals Association Southwestern Region. The award category "Superintendent" of the Year was modified this year to honor Hyre based on his impressive nomination by CUSD #10 elementary school principals. Hyre was honored on September 5 at the IPA Fall Social and Awards Presentation.

City Council Meetings

City Council Meetings are held at 7:00pm on the second and fourth Monday of each month (except holidays) at City Hall. The public is welcome to attend and every meeting provides an opportunity for public comments. Upcoming meetings are as follows:

- » November 13 (Tuesday)
- » November 26
- » December 10
- » No meeting December 24
- » January 14
- » January 28
- » February 11
- » February 25

Meeting agendas and changes to the regular meeting schedule are posted at City Hall and on the City's website. Changes to the schedule are also on Public Access TV (Charter 993/AT&T 99).

Planning Commission

The City's Planning Commission reviews new developments and makes recommendations to the City Council for final approval of plans. Planning Commission meetings are open to the public and are held at 7:00pm on the second Thursday of each month at City Hall. Upcoming meetings are as follows:

- » November 8
- » December 13
- » January 10
- » February 14

Meeting agendas and changes to the regular schedule are posted at City Hall and on the City's website.



FREE YARD WASTE DISPOSAL

NO PLASTIC BAGS!
Yard waste must be in paper yard waste bags.



FOR COLLINSVILLE RESIDENTS ONLY

WHERE: City Street Garage
850 S. Morrison Ave

WHEN: Saturday December 1, 2018
8am-3pm

Please bring proof of residency (driver's license or utility bill)

Development News

With the infrastructure improvements included in the City's Capital Improvement Plan and the well-deserved recognition of Collinsville's prime location and quality amenities as a result of the Amazon H2 selection process, Collinsville is attracting more and more attention from developers. In just the last quarter (May - July), the City has issued 451 building permits representing over 5.6 million dollars in improvements and new construction. Some highlights of the commercial development news over the past few months include:



Who Dat's Southern Food recently opened at 118 E. Main St.

Construction of The Old Herald Brewing Company at 115 E. Clay is progressing well. The microbrewery, micro-distillery, and full-service restaurant is aiming to open in November.



The new 44,000 sq. ft. Ameren headquarters in Eastport Plaza is nearly complete. The building will house 240 employees, making a large investment in the local economy.

Villas of Holly Brook assisted living facility is under construction on Rte 157.



Attention Smartphone Users: Would you like up-to-date City news and event information? Have a problem that you'd like to report? Download the Collinsville Illinois 311 app today!

Festival of Trees

Holiday Magic Abounds Thanks to a Generous Community

Joyously celebrate the holidays by attending the 25th Anniversary of the Festival of Trees held at Gateway Center in Collinsville on Wednesday, December 5 at 6:00pm. The 40,000 square foot event space transforms into a holiday winter wonderland with beautifully decorated live trees, gorgeous wreaths, and unique home décor. These extraordinary masterpieces are sold by silent auction with the grand prize tree sold by raffle. Guests will enjoy cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, desserts, and live entertainment by the Diamond Empire Band. This is a ticket required, adults only, semi-formal event with valet parking available. Tickets can be obtained online at the link below.

The 2018 recipient of the Festival of Trees proceeds is the Collinsville Junior Service Club, a philanthropic organization dedicated to providing an opportunity for women to make a difference in this community by enriching the lives of others. One of their most fulfilling projects provides food baskets, clothes, and toys to approximately 50 needy children and families in the Collinsville Unit #10 School District at Christmas. The Club also provides college scholarships to young women in need and supports various clubs and organizations at the local schools and in our community. Funds raised at the 2018 Festival of Trees will be used to help revitalize Glidden Park.

This spectacular event is an excellent opportunity to showcase your business, school, or organization. Please consider being a sponsor of the 2018 Festival of Trees to help make a difference in the community while celebrating the spirit of the holiday season.

For tickets and information:

Renee White: 618-830-8534 or reneemariwhite@gmail.com

Barb Kusmierczak: 618-910-1646 or Sandy Smith: 618-406-5305

Ticket Website: <https://gateway-center.ticketleap.com/festivaloftrees/>

Utility Tax Rebates

This year's Utility Tax Rebate period ended on May 31, 2018 with 385 claims accepted and \$19,999.38 in rebates issued, for an average rebate of \$51.95. Utility Tax Rebates are available annually from April 1 - May 31 for senior, disabled, and low income City residents. Saving all pages of your gas and electric bills now will help you prepare for next year's rebate. Bills from April 2018 to March 2019 will need to be submitted. Next year, the City will provide complete details on applying for the rebate, including application assistance.

Eligibility Criteria

Must be a City of Collinsville resident and meet ONE of the following:

- » 65 or older OR
- » Class 2 Disability OR
- » Income at or below Section 8 Low Income Guidelines

Required Documentation

- » Utility bills: Apr. 2018-Mar. 2019
- » Current Driver's License or State ID
- » For Disabled Applicants ONLY: Class 2 Disability ID
- » For Low Income Applicants ONLY: 2018 U.S. income tax return or income affidavit

Gateway Center Events

There is a lot going on at Gateway Center! Mark your calendars and get ready to enjoy these terrific events:

Dec. 5	Festival of Trees
Dec. 13	Jingle & Mingle and Dueling Pianos
Dec. 15-16	St. Louis Gun & Knife Show
Jan. 4-6	Let's Go Fishing Show
Jan. 12-13	Mississippi Valley Bike & Outdoor Expo
Jan. 19-20	American Consumer Spring Home Show
Jan. 24	Gateway Wedding Show

For details on events and how to register, visit gatewaycenter.com.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

The City of Collinsville is looking for enthusiastic applicants to fill vital roles on the newly established Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission. Commissioners will serve in an advisory capacity on recreation related issues and activities as well as provide community guidance to the Parks and Recreation Department on various aspects of operations from programming and capital improvements to facilities and future needs for the community. Meetings will be held monthly. Please contact the Parks and Recreation Department at parks@collinsvilleil.org or (618) 346-7529 for an application.

SAVE THE DATE!
City of Collinsville/Chamber of Commerce Awards Night
Thursday, November 6, 2018 • 6:00-9:00pm



The City of Collinsville
125 S. Center St.
Collinsville, IL 62234



City Scoop

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Fall 2018

If you have any questions or concerns about any information in this newsletter, or about any other City business, please call us or visit our website!

City Hall: 346-5200
Public Works: 346-5214
Parks & Recreation: 346-7529

Police Department: 344-2131
Fire Department: 346-5022
Gateway Center: 345-8998