

Catalyst Innovation Center business and research venture launched

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Catalyst Innovation Center, Bradley, Illinois, exterior (architect's rendering, 2014)

Marking the launch of the Catalyst Innovation Center for Kankakee County, Illinois, area business, education and community leaders gathered at the historic David Bradley Building in Bradley on Tuesday, December 9, 2014. Founded to provide comprehensive services and programs to support both business growth and entrepreneurial opportunities in Kankakee County, this business and research venture is a cooperative effort of Olivet Nazarene University, Riverside Healthcare and the Economic Alliance of Kankakee County.

"Catalyst Innovation Center is the first of its kind in Kankakee County and neighboring counties," said Dr. John C. Bowling, University president. "South of Chicago and north of Champaign, Catalyst is the only creative, entrepreneurial space for business and research that is available."

Other collaboration leaders for this venture are:

- Phillip Kambic, president and CEO, Riverside Healthcare
- Michael Van Mill, president and CEO, Economic Alliance of Kankakee County
- Pat Martin, president and CEO, HomeStar Bank, and chair, Economic Alliance Board
- Dr. Doug Perry, vice president of finance, Olivet Nazarene University
- Dr. Jeff Williamson, director of corporate and community engagement, Olivet
- Dr. Shane Ritter, chair, Olivet's Department of Engineering
- Jesse Erickson, director of Catalyst and project manager, Olivet's Department of Engineering

"The organizations and ideas that are bringing the Catalyst Innovation Center to life represent a commitment to creativity, innovation and growth for our community," Kambic said. "Riverside is excited to be part of this collaboration."

The vision for Catalyst is to assist in creating local economic growth and diversity, business success, new employment opportunities and overall community enrichment. One of the outcomes of this focus will be

growth of a culture that supports entrepreneurship in Kankakee County. Discussions about this initiative began in summer 2013. Construction will begin in early 2015. Full facility programming is scheduled to begin in fall 2015.

The first phase of the launch utilizes 22,000 square feet located on the first floor of the five-story building with walk-in access from the east side. Open floor space will be utilized as collaboration stations for Olivet's engineering students and faculty. The overall plan is to provide a creative educational and work environment while preserving the building's history and integrity throughout the entire space.

Future plans include:

- More student and faculty workspace to be utilized by Olivet's Department of Business
- MakerSpace programming, providing workspace and tools for creating and building projects
- Training, meeting and event space
- Co-working facilities for business start-ups and small businesses
- Partnerships with more local businesses to provide internships, full-time and part-time jobs for students and recent college graduates
- Project support, workforce training and technical assistance for local businesses utilizing the expertise of Olivet students, faculty and staff as well as area professionals
- Mentoring services to help businesses succeed
- Dedicated space to house up to 35 small or start-up businesses
- Riverside innovation design space and multi-discipline engagement projects, including student collaboration

"The Economic Alliance has ambitious goals for small business and entrepreneurial development through 2019, as outlined in our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy," said Van Mill. "Catalyst will absolutely be a hub in not only our business attraction plan, but also for post-secondary graduate and Millennial retention in our community. We salute ONU and Riverside for this monumental investment in Kankakee County's workforce and economic vitality."