

B.C.'S CELEB BUILDING GETS MAJOR FACELIFT

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Ryan Silvola/Beloit Daily News Contractors are expecting to be done with the renovations to the college's Center for Entrepreneurship in Liberal Education in Beloit by the end of the year. A grand re-opening is set to take place in 2018.

BELOIT - Beloit College's entrepreneurial center in downtown Beloit is in the process of getting a facelift that's been more than 10 years in the making.

The Center for Entrepreneurship in Liberal Education at Beloit (CELEB) spans the Houston and Hulbert buildings on East Grand Avenue in downtown Beloit. CELEB director Brian Morello said there will be a complete rework of the buildings' facades. The Houston building on the west side will have a veneer that looks like brick, while the Hulberg building will have cleaned up limestone. All new energy efficient windows will add symmetry to each of the buildings.

Construction began at the end of August and is slated to be completed sometime before the new year. Morello said there will then be a series of soft openings next year before a grand opening later in 2018. The college declined to release the cost of the renovations and said the funds came from private donors.

Morello said the renovations are a part of the college's master plan that was conceived in 2003 when downtown Beloit was in its pre-renovated form. When the building was originally purchased Morello said the college only had funding for basic renovations, and the second phase of renovations was pushed back until 2017.

"The curb appeal will be eye appealing and help boost the already magnificent changes to downtown with the Phoenix building," Morello said.

Over the years, both buildings have retained their entrances. He said the new CELEB building will have only one entrance at street level that will have an open foyer instead of a staircase as well as an iron canopy that will run across both of the buildings. Though both of the buildings will keep their identities, there also will be a rod iron piece connecting the two buildings with the "CELEB" name.

In addition to mostly exterior changes, Morello said the third floor also is being remodeled to provide usable workspace. Originally, the third floor had two apartments that were unusable when the college bought the building. This remodel will add 30 percent more space to the overall center.

The third floor will feature a maker lab with equipment for rapid prototyping and 3D printing. Morello said this equipment used to be crammed into the second floor of the center. The building also will be more accessible, with an elevator being installed.

"It's a neat addition and fulfillment of the (college's) master plan...it also creates a real entrepreneurship hub with the city and Irontek," Morello said.

He said the center will add to the already vibrant downtown, and the college has been using local contractors such as Angus Young and CCI for the project.

"This remodeling is emblematic that Beloit is transforming into an entrepreneurship hub," Morello said. "It should be a great resource for the students and a nice improvement to the face of downtown Beloit."

CELEB offers students numerous entrepreneurial ventures, including: Gallery ABBA, an art gallery run entirely by students; a fully functioning audio recording studio; a cable access television station, BATV; a lab for post-production of video, film and sound editing projects and more.