

Downtown makeover planned

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The downtown properties that once housed Wagner's Office Supply will be demolished to make way for a new, mixed-use business and residential development should plans for a public-private partnership between the City of Beloit and Hendricks Commercial Properties go forward, City Manager Larry Arft said Monday night.

Revitalizing the prominent downtown property in the 400 block of East Grand Avenue will provide a "big benefit for downtown," he said.

Downtown Beloit's business climate will be further boosted by the additional foot traffic created when the multi-story residential building with ground floor retail space is completed, which could be as early as summer 2013, Arft said.

Hendricks officials shared similar hopes for the project in interviews Monday.

"I hope that revitalizing the property will do a lot for downtown," said Rob Gerbitz, president and COO of Hendricks Development Group. "There's been a lot going on. We hope to add to that."

A development agreement between the city and Hendricks Commercial Properties has not been finalized. Details of the proposed agreement, which has been hashed out between the two parties over the past several weeks, will be presented alongside building floor plans and other information during a public workshop, scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Monday at City Hall, 100 State St.

Throughout the planning process, the city has been represented by Arft, City Attorney Tom Casper and the city's chief economic development official, Andrew Janke, Arft said.

He called the proposed deal the "usual type" of public-private partnership the City of Beloit engages in. Plans call for the city to pay for acquisition, demolition and environmental cleanup costs, he said, with the developer bankrolling new construction.

The development agreement will need final approval from the city council, and if all goes according to schedule, a ground-breaking ceremony could be set for mid-summer, Arft said.

Hendricks purchased the large, nearly 29,000-square-foot building in December for \$200,000, city assessor property search records show. That sale included three addresses — 422, 430 and 432 West Grand Avenue.

The oldest portion of the building was built in 1910 and newest portion was built in 1956, according

to Beloit Daily News archives. The building has been vacant for years and fell into disrepair.

Though tearing it down will be somewhat tricky, Arft said, reusing the standing structure is not an option.

However, he vowed that the newly-erected building will feature “beautiful, heritage architecture that will fit right into the street landscape.”

