

Downtown bank will get new look

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First National Bank and Trust Company has started a major building facade renovation at its corporate headquarters, Financial Centre One, located at 345 E. Grand Ave. in downtown Beloit.

On Monday crews from Klobucar Construction started fencing the north side of the building facing the parking lot to begin construction, according to Vice President and Marketing Director Laura Pomerene.

First National worked with the Potter Lawson Inc. architectural firm to freshen the look of the 39-year-old building, which first opened its doors on March 26, 1973. Pomerene said the lead editorial in the Daily News on the day of opening summed up the meaning of the structure:

“By its venture, First National demonstrates the kind of purposeful forward focus that sets institutions and communities apart from the pack.”

It’s this purposeful forward focus that has always energized Steve Eldred, a lifelong Beloit and fourth generation of his family to run the bank.

“After 39 years, it was time to freshen the look of the building but at the same time ensure that it remained a beautiful structure in the downtown area,” Eldred said.

The project incorporates a new stone panel system, created by the same manufacturer of the elevator tower at Beloit Clinic, which is meant to highlight the pedestrian entries. The building’s windows will also be replaced and glazed reducing the glare in some of the internal offices and creating a more energy efficient building.

Klobucar Construction Project Manager Jerry Klobucar said the project will be broken down into three phases. Each phase will require some redirection of the parking lot and pedestrian traffic. First National asks that everyone be patient with the noise and dust. Sidewalks may also be obstructed around the entrances during phases of the project, however, the bank will be open during its normal hours of operation. The renovation will be completed in the fall.

Pomerene said there will be at least one entrance to the bank open, with proper signage pointing it out. The work on entrances will be done in mid-September, and most parking shouldn’t be impacted.

This is the third downtown Beloit renovation project the bank has undertaken in less than 10 years. In 2004, the Grand Avenue facility interior was remodeled and in 2008 its corporate

services building across the street from headquarters underwent both an interior remodel and exterior facade renovation. There were also several remodeling and renovation projects over the past eight years at all its locations.

“Projects like this continually underscore our commitment to beautify the communities we serve and help develop them as vibrant and prosperous business centers,” Eldred said.

Pomerene said the downtown Beloit facility underwent an extensive interior renovation in 2004. First National sites feature coffee bars, Internet cafes and children’s areas. Customers often come in just to check the Internet or have a cup of coffee.

First National Bank and Trust Company is a diversified financial services corporation headquartered in Beloit. Chartered in 1882, First National Bank and Trust Company now serves more than 28,000 households in nine communities and 13 locations in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

First National has more than 250 employees in the Stateline Area. Pomerene noted First National just celebrated its 130th anniversary in July.

“The bank’s been growing over the past few years. As a community bank we have a great opportunity to reinvest back in the communities where we are — people that live here value that and tell us it can make a difference when they choose to bank with us,” Pomerene said.