

## Projects to improve downtown, create jobs in the Stateline Area

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Monday, September 17, 2012 4:00 pm

There are several exciting projects being pursued in Beloit thanks to Diane Hendricks.

“Her commitment to Beloit and Rock County is huge. She wants to do whatever she can to grow it and make it bigger and better,” said Rob Gerbitz, president and COO of Hendricks Commercial Properties (HCP).

From helping to bring businesses to Beloit’s city center and Gateway Business Park to investing in its current facilities and partnering with local educational institutions, Diane Hendricks and Hendricks Commercial Properties continues to find new ways to help the community.

Hendricks Commercial Properties is busy planning the transformation of the site of the Wagner’s building in downtown Beloit. In December of 2011 HCP purchased the two-story building in the 400 block of East Grand Avenue to fill it with apartments and businesses. The building has been re-named “The Phoenix” by Isaac Bamgbosea, a Beloit College intern, to symbolize it rising from the rubble.

“It’s pretty exciting when you think about more businesses and more people coming to live, work and play in the city center,” Gerbitz said.

Gerbitz said the Wagner’s building and two adjacent structures are set to be torn down in October. In August the company was testing the soil around the building and civil engineers had been out to inspect the location.

The company hasn’t finalized the purchase of the surrounding buildings, located at 416 and 418 E. Grand Ave., but expects to close on the property soon.

The company expects the project to take about a year, which includes construction and leasing out the first floor for commercial business.

Gerbitz declined to say how much the construction would cost, but *Beloit Daily News* archives said previous estimates put the total development cost at about \$7.39 million.

The top three floors will be residential housing apartments. Gerbitz said Beloit College officials have discussed students living in the apartments, but nothing has been finalized.

He said they haven't discussed having a mix of students and residents in the apartments, but would prefer to focus on either one or the other.

The college previously told the *Daily News* that its board of trustees was expected to take up the issue in the spring. The next board meeting will be in October, but they are not expected to hear anything on the Wagner's site at that time.

The Wagner's building previously held Wagner's Office Supply, which closed its doors in 2001. The building stood vacant for more than a decade until Hendricks bought it in December 2011.

Diane Hendricks and Hendricks Commercial Properties have also been involved in bringing a cutting edge business to Beloit — NorthStar Medical Radioisotopes. The company serves the needs of the nuclear medicine market.

NorthStar is a privately-held company, and one of the key investors is Diane Hendricks, through Hendricks Holding Company. She made an investment last November. The land in the Gateway Business Park where NorthStar is set to build is owned by Hendricks Commercial Properties along with John Patch.

In June of 2011, NorthStar announced plans to locate a \$194 million, 82,000-square foot production facility in Beloit. It plans to build the facility and occupy a 33-acre site adjacent to Gateway Boulevard. The development was projected to create about 150 jobs by 2016. Construction is slated for 2013.

NorthStar is also working on ways to decrease production costs while increasing its output of Molybdenum-99, which is used to extract isotopes to use in medical diagnostic imaging.

Gerbitz said one small project Hendricks Commercial Properties and Corporate Contractors Inc. are involved in is the re-roofing on American Construction Metals (ACM) on Park Avenue. The company produces a wide array of metal building materials including metal roofing, trim coil, edge metal, gutter systems, and a variety of other metal accessories.

The project was started about two months ago, but Gerbitz said that ACM's business is going so strong that it has been a bit challenging to get completed while making sure not to interfere with ACM's production.

Gerbitz said Diane Hendricks continues to work with Blackhawk Technical College officials to build an advanced manufacturing center in Beloit. The center is needed in order to meet the high demand of local businesses and their need for highly skilled and certified workforce. A third welding program section was added for this upcoming school year.

Blackhawk Technical College officials are looking at various locations to build an advanced manufacturing center after meeting with representatives of the Hendricks Commercial and Hendricks Holdings on Friday.

About \$10 million to \$12 million needed to be raised to finance the renovations. Eckert said the college couldn't afford to add the costs of the renovations to the lease, which is what the owner of a property normally does for the tenant and its specific needs.

Instead the college is attempting to raise funds from local businesses that can then have direct input into what BTC will be training their students and future employees for.

"We continue to work on the advanced manufacturing center with BTC. It's a strong initiative Diane really believes in to provide the highest level of technical education to Rock County, Green County and their respective businesses," Gerbitz said. "We are willing to help and work with them in any way we can."

Hendricks Commercial Properties, founded by Diane Hendricks and her late husband, Ken Hendricks, has a history of redeveloping buildings in Beloit. In in the downtown Beloit area, Hendricks Commercial Properties has redeveloped the former Beloit Public Library, which is now the Hendricks Center for the Arts. The company also redeveloped the former Beloit Corporation properties, which now is the Ironworks complex.