

Phoenix rising in downtown

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The Phoenix Building is about 55 percent complete, with the bones in place for its unique architectural features which will grace Beloit's downtown when it's completed in October.

In a tour on Friday, Corporate Contractors, Inc. (CCI) Senior Project Manager Terry Russell and Field Superintendent T.J. Gonfiantini showed off all the progress at the site and the vision for its future. The outside of the structure is enclosed with the wood framing on the four levels completed inside. The electrical, plumbing and sprinkler system components also have been roughed in.

Starting the week of Aug. 19, the roof will be put on and the signature tower, which will stand 109 feet from pavement to tip, will be installed. Russell said the unique features on the exterior, such as the four colors of brick, limestone, wood paneling and siding as well as cornices, will be visible in the coming weeks. Then, flooring, walls, the installation of kitchens, and bathrooms and other interior renovations will move forward.

Located in the heart of Beloit's downtown in the 400 block East Grand Avenue, construction began last fall when the old Wagner's building was razed along with five other structures.

The new building is expected to include 27 residential apartments on the top three floors and four spaces for commercial business on the ground floor. Fourteen private garages will be built on the south side of the building, with a rooftop deck for residential tenants to enjoy.

There also will be a patio area with a pergola on the west side which would provide a potential tenant with outdoor seating and give the general public the opportunity to get to the parking lot in back from East Grand Avenue.

What's most unique about the massive structure is how it gives the illusion of being five separate buildings, with different facades, windows and roof shapes.

"Maintaining the downtown feel is important, with the look of multiple buildings," Russell said. "The challenge was to blend it with existing and 100-year-old buildings."

One of the building features will be dormers, or window enclosures which protrude from the building's exterior for a unique look both inside the attached apartment and from outside the structure. The signature feature, however, will be the lighted tower overlooking downtown. The tower beneath the massive flagpole will be covered in windows and topped with cedar shingles. During the evening the inside tower will be lit as well as two spotlights which will shine on the flag.

Russell said there have been significant construction challenges in the project, including the

discovery of unsuitable soils under the previous buildings' foundations. CCI had to excavate 100 percent of the soils from the parking lot to Grand Avenue and then undercut, or dig below the foundation, in order to install lean mix concrete to properly support the new construction.

In addition to the silty soil stemming back over the millennia, there were many surprises along the way such as old buried construction debris from when the old Wagner's building was erected.

Officials have declined to say how much the building will cost, but Beloit Daily News archives said previous estimates put the total development cost at about \$7.39 million.

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.