

Inspiration

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THE OTHER day when the red, white and blue topped off the magnificent new Phoenix Building in downtown Beloit, many citizens could be seen gazing upward at Beloit's newest symbol of renewal.

As the American Flag fluttered gracefully high above the central commercial district, it seemed an appropriate reminder of just how far this community has come in the past couple of decades. While so many cities — those in the industrial north in particular — have witnessed decline, Beloit has found a way to rebuild.

And as big-box retailers along interstate corridors on the outskirts spelled the doom of many downtown commercial districts, Beloit has reinvented and reanimated the central city. Each step in that direction brings new promise for a stronger future.

OF COURSE, this is a success story with many authors. Strong leadership, both from the private and public sectors, combined to create effective partnerships. The ongoing efforts of hundreds of local citizens, entrepreneurs and investors makes it happen.

Still, no one has done more than Diane Hendricks and her late husband, Kenneth Hendricks. They have shared their astonishing success in business with their adopted community, investing again and again in improvement projects that may or may not have been justifiable in a strict cost-to-benefit analysis. The commitment to a better Beloit is unmatched.

THE PHOENIX building is the latest example, a truly inspiring and magnificent structure in the heart of the central commercial district. It will stand for generations, a symbol of a visionary time in which this community was reborn.

But it's hardly the last contribution envisioned by the Hendricks organization. Even now planning is under way for a major renovation of the Ironworks complex, with the promise of new jobs and continuing beautification.

So take a moment. Look up at that flag, high atop the Phoenix. Be inspired.