

Taking a walk to learn more about downtown

By Debra Jensen-De Hart Features Editor | Posted: Monday, May 12, 2014 4:00 pm

Sometimes we really don't know what is in our own backyards.

Or what's happening in our downtown businesses.

With that in mind, Rosemary Dutter, who works for Century 21 Realty in downtown Beloit, did some brainstorming and came up with a plan.

In April, she began inviting people to take a walk with her to a different destination each week downtown and learn more about what they have to offer and what they do.

She calls it Walking Beloit and says it is open to anyone who wants to join the group on Fridays. They meet at 11:30 a.m. at the Vision Beloit building, 500 Public Ave. and go from there.

On this day, the group stayed at the Vision Beloit building and learned more about what it contains.

That includes Visit Beloit, the city's convention and visitors center, the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Beloit, Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation office and Downtown Beloit Association office, said Shauna El-Amin, the DBA Executive Director.

El-Amin told the group about various uses for Vision Beloit, such as Artwalk and community meetings that can be held there.

When asked what the occupancy rate was for downtown Beloit, she said 10 years ago it was about 75 to 80 percent, but presently it is closer to 95 percent. She said at the new Phoenix building on East Grand Avenue, which has both residential and office space, has apartment units filling rapidly.

After the tour and the talk, members of the Walking Beloit group said they are learning new things about the downtown each week.

They've also visited sites such as First National Bank and Trust, Northwoods Premium candy store and Life Circle, a wealth management and financial consulting business.

"As realtors we need to be familiar with what is here," said Sharon Kopp.

"It's good to learn about what's going on," Sandi Schuler said.