

# Guests 'Pop up' in Beloit for attractions

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Saturday, June 7, 2014 10:00 am

Beloit was impressing guests from around the state Friday as it played host to the Wisconsin Downtown Action Council's (WDAC) Community Visit called "Pop up into Beloit."

The one-day event showcased Beloit's success stories to visitors from Green Bay, Wis., to Quincy, Ill. "Pop up into Beloit" highlighted interesting stories, creative people and innovative programs in Beloit. Guests had the opportunity to learn how Beloit transformed itself into a hub for creativity, cultural tourism, education and 21st century economic growth, according to DBA Executive Director Shauna El-Amin.

The morning hours of the event were spent at the Ironworks Hotel where guests learned about development possibilities at the confluence of the Rock River at the Wisconsin/Illinois border and a discussion on strategic planning versus strategic doing. The day also included walking tours, a Fridays in the Park lunch to enjoy the downtown and stories on businesses that started out as vendors with booths in the Farmers Market and eventually became businesses with storefronts in Beloit.

WDAC member Anne Katz of Madison, who is also the executive director of Arts Wisconsin, said she talks a lot about how Beloit has transformed its downtown during her travels around the state. She said one of her favorite things about Beloit is its creativity and focus on the arts in addition to its ability to move forward.

In her opinion, Beloit's success can be attributed to successful public and private partnerships, between its key investors and the City of Beloit. She said the city had done a good job of working together, despite the usual politics and personalities which can sometimes sidetrack projects in other communities.

"Overall, people keep moving forward because they want to and it's impressive to me," she said.

WDAC member Neil White of Green Bay said he was impressed how Beloit was able to set up networks to make its initiatives a reality.

"It's a challenge to get the right people in a room to make things happen," White said.

White said everyone has a vision for downtown but the key to success is finding the human capital to make and execute a strategic plan. He said Beloit's beautiful downtown was an example of how downtown development can really happen if there is the right plan.

Jim Packard with the Beloit DBA said it was exciting to show people what can happen when you have support and goals that have spurred growth in downtown Beloit.

After Friday's festivities, the guests were encouraged to take in a Snappers baseball game, stay overnight in Beloit and attend the Beloit Farmers Market the next morning in order to get the full Beloit experience.