

# The Confluence: Be a supporter

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MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO, when a fledgling group calling itself Beloit 2000 formed, the grand ideas espoused by the organization left a lot of people scratching their heads.

Wait a minute, folks may have thought. This outfit expects to start a project leveraging private and public funds and expertise to beautify and transform this city center?

Seriously. This city center?

What happened next proved that determined people can make a difference. These days, people come from far and wide to look over the astonishing transformation of Beloit's central corridors and its downtown commercial district. A few skeptics and chronic complainers remain, but the word that best describes how most Beloiters feel about the improvements is "proud."

THIS COMMUNITY is not like others. Right there in the middle of the community's heart is an arbitrary thing called the state line. Mind you, when a bird flies over the community it does not see that line. It's a political construct that divides the urban area, often to its detriment.

The net result, to date, is that improvements anchored along the Rock River corridor came to a screeching halt at the border. The good folks of South Beloit in Illinois had to go north to enjoy the amenities.

That may change.

That should change.

THE LATEST PLAN is called "Nature At The Confluence." It's a joint proposal backed by the City of South Beloit and Beloit 2020, the successor name of the original Beloit 2000 organization.

The site is where Turtle Creek meets the Rock River. At present, that area is an overgrown mess. It is virtually inaccessible. No one uses it. It's fair to say the community turned its back on the confluence of the two waterways many years ago and, until now, never looked back.

This is, arguably, the most historic site in our region. The confluence of the creek and the river attracted human habitation long before Beloit existed. It was the site of important Native American villages because fresh water was plentiful and attracted abundant game, and the river provided a highway through the wilderness.

For the same reasons, settlers from the East were attracted to settle in this area. It is not an exaggeration to say that without the confluence, there likely would be no Beloit or South Beloit.

THE PLAN BEING considered is just that — a plan. But it has enormous possibilities for opening up an important resource in the community, along with adding the kind of amenities that bring people to animate the site. It won't happen overnight. It won't be cheap.

But this kind of plan no longer sounds far-fetched, because those behind it have a track record. They know how to make things happen and they've proved it.

We strongly support the "Nature At The Confluence" proposal.

We suggest our readers do the same.