

# Redone First National Plaza debuts at Fridays in the Park

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Saturday, July 25, 2015 10:00 am

Visitors to the First National Bank and Trust (FNBT) Plaza at Fridays in the Park were pleased this week with the newly transformed space.

“We come here for Farmers Market, and it’s been interesting to see how it’s progressed from week to week,” said Deana Fahn Johnson. “Now that it’s finished, it looks fantastic. It looks polished, and is tied together well.”

After construction work was finished this week on the Plaza on Grand Avenue it was ready to debut for Fridays in the Park, said Theresa Wendhausen, FNBT branding and communications officer.

Thanks to FNBT, visitors will now enjoy a freshly landscaped space with additional seating. A new canvas canopy will provide shade during the warm summer months and a curved pergola is available where bands or other entertainers can perform.

Wendhausen said the goal was for the space to be more user-friendly. She said an official ribbon-cutting event will be planned at a later date to commemorate the re-opening of the park.

FNBT worked with Klobucar Construction Company, Inc. and Angus Young and Associates architects on the project which began this spring. The plaza was installed when FNBT built the branch building across the street, more than 30 years ago.

“It was time to freshen it up,” Wendhausen said.

Those dining and listening to music at the Fridays in the Park event were thrilled with the results.

“I love it. It’s more festive,” said Vicki Ball.

“I love what they’ve done,” said Sarah Piper.

“It’s a great addition, and I love the color choice,” said Domenico’s restaurant owner Peter Gabriel.



## Enjoying the plaza

(From left): Vicki Ball and Sarah Piper catch lunch together at the newly remodeled First National Bank and Trust Plaza at Fridays in the Park. The women said they enjoy the additional seating and the festive atmosphere at the freshly renovated site.

Heidi Schroeder, who was lunching with Deana Fahn Johnson and Carmen Dekok, said she liked the added seating and wished she could have canopies similar to those at the Plaza for her own yard. Schroeder said she'd already been out Thursday night to scope it out after dinner at Lucy's #7 Burger Bar.

"There's more seating, and it's really nice," Schroeder said.

Carmen Dekok said she loves the area under the pergola where the band or other entertainment can perform.

"It's so attractively constructed," Dekok said. "We have an area for showcasing community talent."

Downtown Beloit Association Executive Director Shauna El-Amin said she appreciated how FNBT put so much thought into the design. Bands or other entertainment can perform under the pergola with attendees gathered around on the benches, bringing people together. Tables strategically placed throughout the outdoor space will also increase seating, and the large canopies will encourage people to stay longer at events because of the added shade.

El-Amin said vendors from the Farmers Market will be moving to the space on Saturdays. She also noted the new plaza has a removable metal plate in the middle which will allow for installation of a Christmas tree in the winter.

She said FNBT is the largest sponsor of Fridays in the Park as well as numerous other community events.

"I thank them so much," El-Amin said.

First National Bank and Trust Company is a family-owned, community bank headquartered in Beloit. Chartered in 1882, First National Bank and Trust Company now serves more than 27,000 households in nine communities and 12 locations in Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois with assets of approximately \$820 million.

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