

ANGEL MUSEUM SITE GOING TO VISIT BELOIT

June 13, 2019 at 9:37 am | By AUSTIN MONTGOMERY Staff writer



BDN file photo Saint Paul's on the Riverfront, formerly St. Paul's Catholic Church and the Angel Museum, could soon be the new home for Visit Beloit.

BELOIT - The City of Beloit is poised to accept a proposal from Visit Beloit to convert the former Angel Museum property on Pleasant Street into an event space and permanent offices to further tourism outreach in the area, pending needed approvals.

In March, the city received six proposals for redevelopment of the property at 656 Pleasant St. According to City Manager Lori Curtis Luther, the selection committee - made up of Luther and city department heads - selected the Visit Beloit plan due to its proposal meeting all nine required guidelines laid out by the city, with an emphasis on public access of the property in the future. In the city's request for proposals, the property - formerly St. Paul's Catholic Church and the Angel Museum - needed to be revitalized but preserved.

With the city prepared to move forward with the Visit Beloit plan, the move keeps the site off city property tax rolls due to Visit Beloit's tax exempt status. The other proposals for private use - at least some of which would have returned to site to tax rolls - included residential units by Hendricks Commercial Properties; create a new

home base for W.B. Kennedy Lodge No. 3; a youth arts entertainment space by The Castle; an eatery/brewpub called Holy Smokes; and future office space by Forward Construction Group.

Visit Beloit Executive Director Celestino Ruffini said the organization is in the process of finalizing project financing and preliminary designs before seeking city approval. The property will require a re-zoning request before the Beloit Plan Commission, and since it's locally designated as a historic property, a design go-ahead from the Beloit Landmarks Commission before heading to the Beloit City Council for final approval or denial.

Ruffini said it's an honor to be part of "a new chapter in Beloit's city center redevelopment."

"This is an exciting opportunity that we are taking by the reins for our organization," Ruffini said. "Visit Beloit has been an official tourism entity for the city for more than 32 years now and in many ways, we are ready and able to make our own mark on the city and to give back to be a part of the redevelopment process here in Beloit. The opportunity to acquire this beautiful building is an exciting opportunity to make it a true Hallmark destination that we can bring businesses and residents into."

According to the proposal, the existing church structure will be renovated and converted into an event venue seating around 150 to 180 people with 3,120 square-feet of space.

A two-story addition to the south of the church would include office space, conference rooms and pre-function space for the existing church with around 8,000 square feet on the first floor of the new addition.

The timeline for Visit Beloit's \$3.5 million proposal could work out two ways: The organization nets all required financing at once, in which case the group would begin immediate construction of the addition, or Visit Beloit relocates to the space and the addition happens a year or so after relocation in a two-part financing plan, Ruffini said. If financing is secured all at once, the property could re-open in the fall of 2020, or if done in phases, could see office space use in early 2020 before the future addition.

Ruffini said it's still too early to tell whether or not the other Vision partners, Downtown Beloit Association, Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation (GBEDC) and Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce (GBCC) could join Visit Beloit at the riverfront property.

Chamber Executive Director Aimee Thurner said it's too early to make a statement on any potential move, while Ruffini said Visit Beloit would "always leave the door open to our partner organizations."

DBA Executive Director Shauna El-Amin also said it was too early to tell for making a decision.

Any moves would require board approval from all organizations involved.

Last summer, Visit Beloit, the GBEDC and DBA relocated from the 500 Public Ave. property after design changes in the Hendricks Commercial Properties (HCP) Goodwin Hotel project. The DBA and GBCC are located downtown in the Strong Building, 400 W. Grand Ave., and Irontek, 635 Third St., respectively.