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## Visit Beloit Angel Museum plans move forward amid COVID-19

By AUSTIN MONTGOMERY Staff Writer  
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The plan to transform the former church and Angel Museum property on Pleasant Street will move forward, but construction goals are likely to be delayed due to COVID-19.

BELOIT — Visit Beloit’s plan to transform the former Angel Museum and St. Paul’s Catholic Church into offices and a community event space will move forward through the COVID-19 public health crisis, according to Executive Director Celestino Ruffini.

Ruffini said Wednesday in an interview with the Beloit Daily News that the tourism organization was still preparing to seek construction bids on the project, while the timeline for the larger, multiphase plan are expected to be pushed back.

“Our first focus is to occupy the building,” Ruffini said. “We continue to develop the best plan forward with the project while maintaining a strong fiscal position as an organization. We need to be ready to support the tourism industry in Beloit.”

Plans to add the first-floor public event space and expanded offices are expected to be delayed, but no decisions are final and are up to the Visit Beloit Board of Directors, Ruffini said.

The Visit Beloit team will have new offices at the space before any other construction is expected, Ruffini said.

“The second priority is to get the event venue open and a future priority would be the addition of the office complex,” Ruffini added. “We will bid the project out and determine what we can do moving forward.”

Visit Beloit is moving forward with the project despite the hit the tourism industry is taking due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit Beloit derives much of its revenue from a hotel/motel tax in the Beloit area, and because of travel restrictions, hotel revenues are down.

In 2018, Visit Beloit relocated to a temporary space at the Eclipse Center after the former location downtown on Public Avenue was transformed into Hotel Goodwin and Velvet Buffalo restaurant.

Last year, Visit Beloit beat out various proposals for future use of the former church-turned-museum. Since then, the group received approvals from the Beloit Landmarks Commission and Beloit City Council in effort to relocate downtown once again.

An ultimate goal would be to have the Downtown Beloit Association, Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce and Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation to one day be located with Visit Beloit under one roof, but no decisions have yet been made.

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