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## Janke retires after three decades of 'team effort' that transformed Beloit

By AUSTIN MONTGOMERY Staff Writer

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Janke

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BELOIT — It's only fitting that Beloit Economic Development Director Andrew Janke retires on a day that bears his name, but he wants the community to know the decades spent rebuilding and growing Beloit weren't his successes alone.

Janke started with the city as the Downtown Beloit Association Director in September of 1987 before being promoted to Economic Development Director in 2001.

During his tenure, the Greater Beloit area has added over 4,500 jobs and has seen over \$1.85 billion in private capital investment.

"There's been so many highlights and that's the remarkable thing," Janke said. "It's not about one project. It's really been about the journey and it's been extraordinary. I did not do this alone. It was a team effort. I would be remiss if I didn't express gratitude to all the businesses in the community, from small businesses downtown to the mega-corporations in the Gateway Business Park. It's been an honor and a pleasure to work with everyone."

Beloit City Council President Regina Dunkin said he was a crucial part to Beloit's growth over the years.

“Andrew Janke has positively impacted the City of Beloit by playing a crucial role in its development and growth,” Dunkin said. “I salute him for his many contributions and wish him the best.”

Beloit City Manager Lori Curtis Luther said Janke leaves behind a “shining legacy” with the City of Beloit.

“He has gone above and beyond to make Beloit a better place and to ensure Beloit’s economic future is strong,” Luther said. “We appreciate all that Andrew has done for our community; he will certainly be missed.”

Over his three decades in Beloit, Janke worked to make economic development what he called a “team sport.”

”There’s no one individual who could do what we have done together,” Janke stressed. “From the volunteers that I worked with at the DBA or GBEDC to the entire staff at City Hall, none of this would have been possible without the collective effort to make Beloit a better place to live and work.”

Economic development in Beloit was not the sure-fire bet it is today as it was following the closure of Beloit Corporation in 2000 or during the Great Recession of 2008 as the county reeled following the shuttering of the GM plant in Janesville. A new challenge arose last year in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic as economic development turned from expanded growth to triage and support of businesses struggling to cope with fallout from unprecedented disruption.

When the city first created the Gateway Business Park, controversy abounded.

Fast forward to today and the Gateway area has led to over 2,793 jobs created as part of 11 major projects totaling over 2.7 million square-feet of industrial space.

When Janke first came to Beloit, he recalled downtown's dreary and dull atmosphere as properties sat vacant. Today, property space in downtown is at a premium as businesses jockey for prime real estate.

“The common theme here is the intrepid spirit of this community and how it keeps pulling itself up by its bootstraps. This really is an amazing journey that's far from over for the city,” Janke said.

As he steps away, Janke said new challenges facing the city's continued growth will be negotiating additional land space adjacent to the Gateway area for further industrial growth, coupled with major downtown projects coming online including ABC Supply Stadium and Wright and Wagner Lofts residential units.

“The future of Beloit is going to be incredible,” Janke said.

On Dec. 21, 2020, the Beloit City Council declared Jan. 15, 2021 as Andrew Janke Day.

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Austin Montgomery