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## Quiet talent for working together

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Development director played key role in renewing Beloit.

As John F. Kennedy said, “Victory has a thousand fathers ...”

Andrew Janke, who has worked diligently to improve Beloit for more than 30 years, understands the concept. He displayed a consummate ability to work within the system and build the team, both public and private, to produce plenty of victories in economic development.

Janke, who retired last week from his post as Beloit’s director of economic development, first arrived in the city to lead a fledgling program working to renew the downtown commercial district. For those old enough, think back 33 years.



Downtown Beloit was a mess. Efforts aimed at reviving the central commercial area were taking shape, and a business improvement district plan was forming. It would be a big job. Consumer traffic in the downtown area was low. There were way too many vacancies among storefronts. Many existing businesses in the district were struggling. Memories were long for what the downtown area used to be as a regional shopping hub, but ideas for what might come next were few.

For more than a decade, Janke worked hard to lead an effort to change all that. While he was a key figure, a catalyst, the effort required a large number of believers and deep investment to set the central commercial district on today's path of success. Janke showed he had skill at building a team and keeping it focused.

In 2001, Janke was promoted to lead the city's overall economic development efforts. In that post, Janke has had a hand in most of the impressive growth that has occurred the past 20 years, placing Beloit firmly on a path toward continuing progress.

Some history buffs may remember the rest of JFK's statement: "... but defeat is an orphan." Anyone in a public position wins some and loses some, and often in both instances must endure sniping from the cheap seats. Janke knows what it's like to occupy a hot seat, but to his credit he could keep criticism in perspective while forging forward. For that, Beloit is grateful.

Janke has been well suited to the work. He's quiet, unassuming, never a hot dog looking for praise and adulation. He's bookish, meticulously detailed and calmly efficient. That's a good combination when your job is to link the public policy role with private sector investment to smooth the way for growth.

Statistically speaking, the numbers say on Janke's watch Greater Beloit added more than 4,500 jobs and close to \$2 billion in private investment. Two key areas of transformation have been the central commercial district and the Gateway Business Park, which alone is nearing 3,000 jobs created.

As Janke steps aside, the community is well situated to continue its growth trajectory in no small part due to his commitment and talent with building partnerships. We wish him a long and happy retirement and thank him for his service.