

Despite chamber move, Vision Center survives

By WHITNEY HELM Staff writer | Posted: Thursday, February 4, 2016 4:00 pm

BELOIT — The “Vision Center” is not at risk, at least not immediately, with the move-out by the Chamber of Commerce.

The tenants at the center — Visit Beloit, the Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation (GBEDC) and the Downtown Beloit Association (DBA) — all say the partnership remains intact and it’s business as usual.

The Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce moved into Irontek this week. Irontek, 601 Third St., offers businesses as well as individuals office space to rent to help promote entrepreneurship in Beloit.

Previously, the three agencies and Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce shared a space at the Vision Center Building, 500 Public Ave., to support the Vision Beloit concept. The original idea behind the center was to centralize services to create a one-stop shop for individuals and companies interested in locating or growing in Beloit.

"The Vision Beloit partnership is still intact," said Andrew Janke, executive director of Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation.

Celestino Ruffini, executive director of Visit Beloit, said his organization is the master leaseholder for the Vision Center and that along with GBEDC and DBA will now use the next 18 months to evaluate if they want to stay in that location. The Chamber was able to move into the new Irontek building, but still pays for its portion of the Vision Center lease until the term expires.

"They are able to be here and operate here, but their lease at the center remains intact," said Ruffini. "At this point what the Vision Center is about doesn't change because of physical location, we're still working together just as we were before we were under the same roof."



Vision

Vision partners meet in the Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce's new home, Irontek on Wednesday. (From left): Andrew Janke, economic development director, Celestino Ruffini, executive director of Visit Beloit, Shauna El-Amin, executive director of Downtown Beloit Association and Tim Dutter, executive director of Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce.

Another change is that Erin Clausen, who was the marketing director for all the Vision Partners, has moved into Irontek to work for Hendricks Properties.

Ruffini said throughout the years Clausen's former position had been primarily focused on Visit Beloit.

"Over the years that position has evolved, beginning in 2016, that position was exclusive to Visit Beloit," Ruffini said.

That position will be helping out with some promotions, like Farmers Market, for the DBA and other promotion for the GBEDC. He said the job description is currently being reviewed.

"When Shauna (El-Amin, executive director of DBA) hands out the sign-up sheet for the Farmers Market, it doesn't matter where we unlock our office door in the morning, we're all going to sign up," Janke said. "These partnerships will continue."

El-Amin said Irontek was an amazing opportunity for Beloit. She, Janke and Ruffini said they would also utilize the space for conference rooms and tours.

"This is good for downtown, we're excited," El-Amin said.