

SCHOOL CAMPUS MAKEOVER PROPOSED

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Submitted architectural rendering Above is the Beloit Memorial High School master plan, the next phase of Beloit 2020's plan to redevelop Fourth Street. The master plan stretches from Maple Avenue to the north, Sixth Street to the west, Liberty Avenue to the South and the Rock River to the east. It's hoped to improve the image for the city and Beloit.

BELOIT - A proposed concept for the development of land surrounding Beloit Memorial High School is being touted as a way to recruit new students, families and staff to the school district and give a powerful first impression to visitors.

The collaborative effort between the city, school district and Beloit 2020 will help parents and visitors learn more about what the school district and the city have to offer, supporters say. The intent is to make the spot a go-to attraction bringing in Beloiters, traveling sports teams, business people and others while supporting the city's youth.

"We want to control our destiny and take advantage of opportunities," said Frank McKearn, president of Batterman, a Beloit engineering and surveying firm often associated with area public projects. "We want the broader community to attend concerts, plays, games and events."

Representatives from Beloit 2020, Angus-Young, Ayres Associates and Batterman presented the Beloit Memorial High School (BMHS) master plan to the School District of Beloit Board of Education Tuesday evening. The board unanimously voted to allow district staff to continue to work on the plan as it moves forward with a final decision by the board to be made in a July board meeting.

The high school campus master plan committee is scheduled to give a similar presentation to the Beloit City Council May 15.

The estimated cost of the master plan, as proposed for all entities, would be \$23 million. The estimated timeline is 2017-2030.

The BMHS master plan is the next phase of Beloit 2020's project to redevelop Fourth Street. The concept developed out of a day-long design charrette on April 21, 2016. At the brainstorming session, community members determined the areas surrounding the high school needed to give off a better first impression as well as have more visual impact and improved traffic flow.

Beloit 2020 then invited School District of Beloit and City of Beloit staff to join its committee to create the master plan. After the first of the year, the committee started meeting every two weeks to finalize the concept.

Angus-Young's President Elect Joe Stadelman said the proposed campus improvements will help with recruitment and retention for the school district during a time when districts are competing for students due to school choice. It also may help attract and retain staff and portray a better image for the district and the community.

"We want to make sure the exterior of the high school as well as the entire campus reflect the positive things going on inside the building and within the district," Stadelman said.

The master plan stretches from Maple Avenue to the north, Sixth Street to the west, Liberty Avenue to the south and the Rock River to the east.

Phase 1 includes a proposed new welcome and resource center on the north side of the campus, at the corner of Fourth Street and Maple Avenue. Not only would the administrative functions currently operating out of Kolak Education Center relocate to the new center, but the new center also would serve as a hub for the district to promote student and staff recruitment, provide staff training and parent outreach. For example, parents could go to learn more about using the school's electronic grading system or find out about bilingual services.

It would cost \$6.3 million to build the new center.

The parcel of land was donated to Beloit 2020 by the Beloit Foundation. Currently, soil is being placed on the lot in order to get it in environmental compliance with DNR regulations because of past contamination. The site was formerly occupied by a car dealership.

Phase 1 also includes the closing of Fourth Street from Middle to North streets. The proposal also includes a bus and fire truck turnaround at the BMHS pool parking lot, to stop people from driving on the bike path on the east side of the high school.

To better define the high school building entrance, a new canopy would be added at the main entry point. A parking lot would also be added on Fourth Street west of new tennis courts on the south side of the campus.

Phase 2 would include turning Fourth Street into a pedestrian mall from Middle Street to Lenigan Creek. It would feature a new WIAA sanctioned soccer stadium which will allow the district to host post-season tournaments in Beloit. Due to WIAA standards, the tournaments can't be held on a football field. Plans would also include a WIAA sanctioned softball field so the girls softball program would stay on campus and players wouldn't have to use the fields at a city park or the YMCA's sports center. New parking would also be added as well as new streets to accommodate the closing of Fourth Street.

The last part of Phase 2 would be redevelopment of Lenigan Creek to include a park.

Phase 3 would include a WIAA sanctioned tournament baseball field, a pedestrian walkway from Sixth Street to the soccer stadium, improvements to the riverwalk in front of the high school, and the installation of synthetic turf on the football field to allow practice and more activities to occur.

Phase 3 would also include the extension of Fifth Street from Maple Avenue to the soccer stadium.

Phase Four is reorganization of the main parking in front the high school to create an outdoor boulevard entrance from Sixth Street and improve the drop-off and pick-off traffic patterns for students. It also includes reorganization of Fifth Street from Liberty Avenue to Middle Street. It would result in a net gain of 50 stalls which are more dispersed.

It would include the sale of school district owned land for private development, possibly residential, south of tennis courts on the corner of Liberty and Fourth streets.

Stadelman said the work done at the high school could make land more appealing for development, specifically along Maple and Liberty avenues.