

City to apply for grant for pedestrian bridge

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A new bridge deemed to enhance the quality of life in Beloit may be on its way.

The Beloit City Council approved a request to complete a grant application for the Ironworks pedestrian bridge in a 6-1 vote at Monday's meeting. The approval allows the city, on behalf of Hendricks Commercial Properties, to apply for a Wisconsin Department Natural Resources grant. Hendricks Commercial Properties would be responsible for any matching funds for the bridge project.

The bridge, which is estimated to cost more than \$1 million, would span across the Rock River to a bicycle and pedestrian trail head and path around the Ironworks redevelopment to connect to the existing river trail system within Beloit's City Center, according to city documents. The bridge is planned to be located north of the Grand Avenue Bridge in downtown Beloit. The grant is estimated to cover about half the cost of the bridge.

Councilor Sheila De Forest, who cast the lone 'no' vote, stressed a need for an agreement between the city and Hendricks on which entity would be responsible for maintenance on the bridge.

She added that the bike path would divert residents from downtown.

"We want people to get downtown on the bike paths," De Forest said.

Greg Boysen, public work director for the city, said the application for the grant would open up discussions for an agreement between the city and Hendricks company on how the bridge would be maintained.

Currently, he added, "the maintenance is proposed to be a city maintained project."

Vice President Charles Haynes said at peak times he's seen residents having to walk in the street to get around each other.



Bridge proposal

The proposed Ironworks bike and pedestrian bridge would connect the existing river trail system to Beloit's City Center. The bridge is estimated to cost \$1 million to build.

“I think a pedestrian bridge would be an enhancement to the city if the details can be worked out,” Haynes said.

The bridge would be the latest in renovations at the Ironworks campus, which began in 2013. The Ironworks Campus is a 750,000-square-foot mixed-use property that houses more than a dozen companies. The property is owned, managed and developed by Hendricks Commercial Properties LLC (HCP). For nearly 150 years, the Ironworks site was home to the Beloit Corp., which began as a foundry but evolved into a manufacturer of papermaking machines. It closed in 1999.

If the grant is received and approved by the city council, construction would begin in 2016.