

NorthStar launches in Beloit

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Just short of a year after breaking ground, phase one of the NorthStar Radioisotope Beloit facility has been completed.

On Tuesday media and other representatives got a look at the first development on the 32-acre site in the Gateway Business Park. The building features corporate offices, a call center and assembly line at 1800 Gateway Blvd.

The company is seeking U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval to produce medical radioisotope molybdenum-99 (Mo-99). If approved, it will be the first company in the United States to produce the radioisotope — a critical part of diagnosing cancer and heart disease in patients.

It is one of two Wisconsin companies competing to solve the medical industry's shortage of radioactive isotopes. The other company is SHINE Medical Technologies slated to open a Janesville facility in 2017.

NorthStar works with the Missouri University Research Reactor, which produces Mo-99 on site. The medical isotopes then are delivered to NorthStar, and then shipped to hospitals. The Beloit site will have the capability to not only ship new Mo-99 vials, but clean the shielded containers for reuse. Future plans call for on-site production of Mo-99.

Ed Fennell, vice president of business development, said there will be no airborne radiation or impact on the residents since the product has very low levels of radiation.

“The molybdenum has a 66-hour half life, the product that it makes has a six-hour half-life. In a few days, it's gone,” Fennell said.

He added there will be a public open house in September to address any additional questions.

Thirteen years in the making, NorthStar President and CEO George Messina has found a home for his dream.

Messina said he was impressed with the amount of “homework” that City Manager Larry Arft and Andrew Janke, executive director of the Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation, did before meeting with him.

“I was very impressed with the homework they'd done... and their willingness to work with us,” Messina said.

As per NorthStar's agreement with the city, it has Direct Developer Incentive Payments. This refunds some of the property taxes the company would face for nine years. It was initially slated for 10 years, but was reduced due to delays in construction. The city will pay NorthStar 35 percent of real and personal property taxes paid by the company for the next nine years.

If the company doesn't create a minimum of 165 jobs with the project in the next several years then the DDI will be lowered. A schedule with a minimum amount of jobs was laid out in the agreement. Fennell said the company expects 20 new full-time hires this year.

The second phase of the project consists of building a 20,000-square-foot addition, which if approved by the FDA will be completed in 2016. The third phase adds a 100,000-square-foot linear particle accelerator used to produce Mo-99 on-site. Construction on that facility would be completed by the end of 2018.

At a press conference Tuesday, Messina thanked Arft, the City of Beloit and key investor Diane Hendricks for their support with the project.

"It's a great idea and I'm excited over the fact that we've got the building up. It's going to be a great addition to Beloit," said Hendricks, whose company Corporate Contractors Inc. constructed the building.

The company is currently moving workers from Madison to the new location and expects to be completed in June.