

# City plan to focus on safety, growth

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer | Posted: Thursday, September 8, 2016 4:00 pm

BELOIT — City Manager Lori Curtis Luther and Economic Development Director Andrew Janke gave the public a sneak preview of Beloit's proposed strategic plan, with updates on the latest developments in the city at a Society for Learning Unlimited (SLU) event Wednesday at First Congregational Church.

Although the city's strategic plan is yet to be adopted, Luther said consensus among City Council members regarding the plan is strong. She said the city's first goal is to sustain safe and healthy neighborhoods.

"Our overall goal is to reduce crime, fear and disorder throughout the city of Beloit," Luther said. "Part of that is engaging residents, businesses and community organizations in different ways."

Thanks to the neighborhood revitalization plan, the city will be allowed to use its community development block grant funds in a more strategic way and will be focusing resources into the Merrill and Hackett neighborhood areas. The goals of the plan will be to reduce crime, provide job growth, encourage collaboration between community organizations, improve the city's neighborhoods and provide positive outlets for youth.

"The vision is to establish safe, healthy and stable neighborhoods and ensure all Beloit residents have meaningful opportunities for economic stability and growth," Luther said.

The city would use grant funds to improve housing by completing purchase-rehabilitation projects on the west side between Bluff and Eighth streets and Kenwood, Vernon, Highland and Euclid avenues.

In the first six months of 2016, Luther said violent crime has decreased 5 percent compared to a year ago. Beloit's clearance rate for all police investigations is up 10 percent, she said.

Luther said the police department will be kicking off the Officer Partnering Engaging Neighbors (OPEN) Hands program, which is designed to build trust with the community and work with neighbors to reduce crime.

Other components of Beloit's strategic plan include goals to sustain a high performing municipal organization, high quality of life, infrastructure and connectivity as well as a positive image.

Luther went on to share how demand for Beloit College is rising, noting first-year applications have increased by 71 percent in the past two years because of new enrollment approaches, before discussing the city's redevelopment activity.

Development, she said, continues at the Iron Works including an Ebates/Fat Wallet expansion. The Stateline Family YMCA's grand opening is scheduled for November 2016. The Iron Works south parking lot is also undergoing expansion.

Construction is underway at Hendricks Career Tek, to be located in the Iron Works along Center Spine Road. The facility will host numerous opportunities including: lunch-and-learns, business listening sessions, career panels for students, parents and community members, soft skills training courses, field trips to area businesses and other experiences. Additionally, the career center will work with 6-12 students to create an online publication focusing on careers, career exploration and local career-related topics of interest.

Irontek, a new site offering space for growing and start-up businesses, is home to the Greater Beloit Chamber of Commerce, Resonate Web Marketing, Brownfield Environmental Engineering and The Right Site Search Firm.

Construction continues on the Hendricks Commercial Properties speculative building, a 105,000-square-foot initial building being constructed on a 31.59 acre site at Stateline and Willowbrook roads.

"Very soon we hope the developer will be able to announce that a new tenant has signed a lease for this building," Luther said.

Altra Industrial Motion is renovating its South Beloit Gardner Street location resulting in 30 new jobs.

The Frito-Lay expansion project at 2810 Kennedy Road — a 30,000-square-foot potato chip line — is complete.

The Riverside Energy Center in the Town of Beloit, a \$750 million investment, is planned to be fully operational in 2020. A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Sept. 20.

The former Cubs Foods building at 20 Park Ave. is being converted into light industrial space.

ConAgra Foods signed a long term lease to occupy a 140,000-square-foot space at the former Alcoa building and is also planning a major expansion to its South Beloit cookie factory facility.

Pratt Industries has completed constructing a new corrugated container manufacturing facility resulting in 140 new jobs.

DuPont, 2600 Kennedy Drive, is undergoing a two-year expansion project in 2015-2016 to increase production capacity. The company is investing \$23 million and is creating six new jobs. Future expansion is expected into 2017, but details are yet to be determined.

SLU is a nonprofit organization at Beloit College, associated with Elderhostel Inc. SLU participants are "senior students," lifelong learners who have never lost interest in learning. SLU

offers programs to explore cultural and intellectual interests. For more information people can visit [www.sluinc.org](http://www.sluinc.org).