

# Growth seen in Beloit's future

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There will be a couple changes to the City of Beloit's leadership next year, however, City Manager Larry Arft said he still has a few items he'd like to complete before retiring in June.

Council President Mark Spreitzer also will be leaving the council after his term ends in April as he prepares to enter the state Assembly representing the 45th District.

"I've got plans to keep everything moving forward," said Arft. "There are some long-term projects in the five-year capital plan that we want to move up the list."

Arft said he wants to work with city engineers to get Milwaukee Road prepared for the Interstate 39/90 and Interstate 43 interchange construction project set to start in 2017.

Arft said there won't be too much happening publicly in Beloit in terms of the I-39/90 project next year. However, major construction is expected to start in 2015.

The planning and design phase for the interchange reconstruction is nearly complete with the final approvals likely happening next year.

"There are also a couple projects in city center area we have planned," Arft said. "Some of them are resurfacing streets others are street reconstruction. Most of that work has been deferred because of a lack of resources."

There will be a lot of business construction ongoing throughout next year, Arft said. Chicago Fittings, currently based in Belvidere, Ill., plans to build a 30,000-square-foot facility in the Gateway Business District starting in the spring.

Additionally, Pratt Industries will construct a 350,000-square-foot building along Gateway Boulevard that will serve as a Midwest location for its business. Arft added NorthStar Radioisotope plans to start the second phase of its construction next year.

The second phase includes a 20,000-square-foot building and a 40,000-square-foot building in addition to the 50,000-square-foot building already under construction on the property.

"The first floor of the Phoenix building (in downtown Beloit) is nearly all occupied," Arft said.

"We're still expecting a formal proposal on the Atlanta Bread building next year as well. So there will be quite a bit of new business and remodeling of businesses in the new year."

Arft said he also plans to write some memos for his successor, and wants to help prepare for a smooth transition for the new city manager.

When he was hired in 2003 he said he had about a week overlap with the outgoing manager, which he felt is enough time to get acclimated to the job, and meet with department heads and other business leaders in the community.

Spreitzer said the biggest challenge facing the council in the coming months will be finding Arft's replacement.

"I think that will be a process that the whole council does as a group and everyone will want to have a voice in," he said. "That's certainly the biggest thing coming to the city in the next year."

Spreitzer also said developing the job description for the city manager will be a priority at the beginning of the year.

"We are going to need to hire a manager that not only has the skills to lead the city on a day-to-day basis, but also has the same vision we have for the city," he said.

Spreitzer said he hopes other major business projects come to the city in the next year following the announcements of Chicago Fittings and Pratt Industries.

"I think success breeds success, and my hope is that we will see other projects coming forward," he said. "We certainly have more land in the business park, and the opportunity to make other projects happen."

Spreitzer, who is officially sworn in on Jan. 5, added one of his focuses while serving in the Assembly will be to advocate for increased revenue to local governments, and loosening restrictions on municipalities' ability to raise their own revenue.

Council Vice President Charles Haynes also said hiring Arft's replacement is the priority for the beginning of the year.

"One thing I think Larry has been very good at is keeping things moving forward in the city," Haynes said. "Everyone has been together. Finding his replacement is probably one of the biggest decisions anyone will make on the council. The challenge is to make sure we have the right talent in place to keep things moving forward."

Haynes said the city is getting more contacts from businesses over the last year than in previous years that he's served on the council.

"I'm grateful that the old Kerry Facility on Grand Avenue was sold to Hendricks. That was a big building problem, and the last horror story in the downtown," Haynes said. "With NorthStar finally coming online, and with Pratt and Chicago Fitting coming in we're starting to show some good life."

Haynes said bringing in more business will increase the tax base, and decrease the city's dependency on state aid.