

Embrace today; seize the future

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THIS IS THE TIME when media look back at the year that is ending and try to find the deep and sometimes hidden meaning in it all.

Not today.

Good or bad, what's done is done. No one can change the past. There's nothing to be gained by obsessing about it.

People get to decide how they will act today. And they can influence tomorrow by deciding how they will approach it. Be present, and be in the moment, then be optimistic about tomorrow. Look at it this way: People could learn a lot about the pursuit of happiness by watching their dogs.

BESIDES, HERE IN the Stateline Area there are a lot of things to be optimistic about. Let's consider a few of the positives that already are known.

- The Fran Fruzen Intermediate School will be finished and occupied during the year, marking completion of Beloiters' grand investment in the education of youngsters for generations to come. The dividends from that investment will help determine Beloit's future.
- The first phase of the NorthStar radioisotopes facility will be completed and occupied east of Interstate 39/90 in 2015. That's great news in itself, but keep in mind it's just a down payment on the NorthStar promise. More phases are scheduled, leading to manufacturing a crucial substance for the medical industry. The plant also will burnish Beloit's image as a place for high-tech companies to grow.
- Chicago Fittings has announced its plan to move operations from Illinois to locate in Beloit's Gateway Business Park.
- Pratt Industries also has announced its intent to develop a major manufacturing facility, near the NorthStar site. Pratt expects to create about 140 good jobs, making it one of the largest developments Beloit has landed in many years.
- The inspiring reconstruction of the Ironworks complex continues, wiping away bad memories of the Beloit Corporation demise a decade and a half ago. What many once feared would be a rusting eyesore in the heart of town is now a bustling center of commerce with a future that will only get brighter.

WE COULD GO ON with that list, but let's turn to another — promising developments on the cusp of popping champagne corks.

- Here in the city, Beloit College grows nearer with its tremendous Powerhouse Project. The former plant — directly across from the campus — is one of the last remaining sites for redevelopment along the Rock River. Beloit College’s creative plan to convert the building into a variety of uses both for students and the community will make the Powerhouse into a landmark, and strengthen ties to the campus.
- Plans are coming together for the Ironworks on Willowbrook commercial complex, a long-awaited shopping center just across the border in Illinois. This project could be among the most significant retail developments in decades.
- Plans for The Confluence — where Turtle Creek meets the Rock River — are moving forward, extending across the state line the vision that has transformed Beloit’s city center. The concept is to bring an environmental education center to this key historic site, along with a variety of other public amenities. The resulting rehabilitation of a blighted area likely would inspire myriad nearby improvements, as the river corridor work in Beloit has over the years.
- Also in Illinois, the Rockton Road corridor seems poised to explode with development. Adjacent to the interstate, the new All World manufacturing facility is quickly going up. Nearby, two new medical centers have opened along with an Aldi supermarket and other stores. Growth sparks more growth, so look for additional commercial interest in 2015.
- Could this be the year action takes place on the long-awaited Beloit casino complex? Perhaps. If Gov. Scott Walker green-lights the Kenosha plan, it will be a signal that Wisconsin is “open for business” to tribal gaming interests and could help move the Beloit plan along. There’s reason for optimism, since the Ho-Chunk Nation compact with the State of Wisconsin already includes one more gaming site.

THE POINT? While there are always naysayers, and always people who can’t get their eyes off the rear-view mirror to look forward, it is undeniable that our part of the world has reason to anticipate good things.

Attitude is part of that. A big part.

Negativism becomes a pattern in which people go out of their way to find and point out dark clouds, obscuring for them any glimmer of hope. It’s self-defeating, for individuals and communities.

Don’t be one of those people. Embrace the day. Believe in the future.

A new year. A new beginning.

Maybe, a new you?