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### **Economic Development Director Announces Retirement After Successful Career with City of Beloit, Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation**

**September 9, 2020** - Beloit Economic Development Director Andrew Janke is retiring in January 2021 after a long career serving the Beloit community.

“We deeply appreciate his significant career and the positive impact. Andrew has made on Beloit over the last few decades,” Beloit City Manager Lori Curtis Luther. “Andrew’s work ethic and commitment to making Beloit a stronger community has been exemplary. He has made a lasting impact on Beloit’s economy, and his legacy will shine bright.”

Janke started with the City of Beloit as the first long-term Downtown Development Director on Sept. 1, 1987. His interest in local economic development was piqued when he completed an internship in Monroe, Wisconsin, during his time as an Iowa State University student. When he graduated and was looking for a career in downtown development, he began looking for a similar position. As a young college graduate, he moved to Beloit where he has lived ever since, raising his family in this community he now calls home.

Janke was promoted to Economic Development Director in 2001. During his tenure, the Greater Beloit area has added over 4,500 jobs and has seen over \$1.85 billion in private capital investment. He’s literally been involved in projects from A to Z - or from Amazon to Zen Sushi.

“My work here has always been about trying to support positive and lasting change with the full knowledge that the opening of the new bagel store on State Street that created five jobs was just as important as the opening of a one million square foot distribution center on the edge of town that created 500 jobs,” Janke said. “It has been this broad

diversity of work that has made my job so challenging and gratifying. They are all as important in the long run to the economic health of this community.”

Janke’s position for the City of Beloit is unique - he also serves as the executive director of the Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation. The position is funded by the City of Beloit and the GBEDC, and he is retiring from both positions. While Janke served the City of Beloit, he also advocated for economic development that would benefit the entire Greater Beloit region - not just in the City of Beloit or even just in Wisconsin. Under his tenure, the region has received many awards, including the 2011 Great American Main Street award, which recognized the community’s downtown revitalization efforts.

Janke has worked on over 200 projects of varied significance and has been through several recessions since he started in Beloit. Although Beloit’s current unemployment remains high post-COVID-19, he is energized knowing that the city has seen improvement in its unemployment rankings compared to other similar cities in Wisconsin.

“We have always been ranked number one or two. Even though our unemployment is high at this stage of the pandemic, we still have four or five communities that have the same ranking or higher,” Janke said. “What that tells me is that we have done a good job in diversifying our workforce. In the past, our economic health depended on one or two companies. That is no longer the case.”

The City of Beloit and the GBEDC partnered to launch the Gateway Business Park, which broke ground in 2001. This spurred significant economic development near the Interstate corridor with 11 major businesses locating there, bringing nearly 2,500 jobs in over 2.7 million square feet of space. The most recent project, an Amazon fulfillment center, accounts for 500 full-time positions. Janke was first contacted about the Amazon project in August 2019 for a shovel-ready site in the Gateway Business Park owned by the GBEDC. The land sale closed in December 2019 with the 1 million-square-foot facility constructed and operational in ten months.

“When Andrew let me know he had made the decision to retire my first reaction was to try and talk him out of it, but as I let his decision sink in, my thoughts turned to celebrating a job well done,” said Frank McKearn, President of the GBEDC Board of Directors. “He is the definition of a job well done. Never one to seek the limelight, Andrew has been a firm but gentle hand in guiding the Greater Beloit Area and ensuring that we are well positioned for the next opportunity. He has also made sure that the positive message of our community is communicated and celebrated.

“I have had the honor of working with Andrew over the last 20 years or so, since I moved back to my hometown to raise my family and grow my career (Beloit is great place for that by the way). During that time, Andrew has been a strong advocate for the Greater Beloit area and has established himself as a leader in the region and state when it comes to economic

development. His peers in the industry hold him in the highest regard. The Greater Beloit Area is certainly experiencing a renaissance of which Andrew has played a major role. I wish him the best moving forward and I will miss our regular calls which usually start out with 'how are we going to figure this one out.' Thank you, Andrew, for all that you have done, enjoy the next phase of your life in this wonderful community that you helped shape.”

The City of Beloit and GBEDC will launch a nationwide search for an economic development director with the intention of having the next economic development director start prior to Janke’s retirement to ensure a seamless transition. The commitment to economic development made by the community, GBEDC, and the City of Beloit, will be a great benefit for his successor, Janke said.

“Downtown will continue to be prime for opportunity. I think there are a number of things that are just getting ready to be announced that will move forward in the next few years. The Gateway Business Park has land available. The City of Beloit should be able to create tax incremental financing districts within the next two years, which will create additional opportunities. Whoever gets this job - they are going to be very busy. Our community is going to continue to grow.”

While Janke is taking it easy in his well-deserved retirement for now, he plans to keep Beloit his home. His wife, Maggie Janke, owns a small business in the community and the couple remains dedicated to the community.

“We wish Andrew a long, happy and relaxing retirement,” Curtis Luther said. “While he certainly will be missed at City Hall, and as part of the GBEDC, we know we will still see him out and about supporting local businesses. Andrew will always be part of the Beloit community.”

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