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FEATURED

Economic development in Beloit sustained brunt of pandemic impact

By AUSTIN MONTGOMERY Staff Writer
Dec 27, 2020



Construction on the Amazon distribution center began in October 2019 at an 80-acre site near Gateway Boulevard. The building was opened in August.

Anthony Wahl/Adams Publishing Group

BELOIT — Cities struggled with economic slowdowns as the COVID-19 pandemic stalled construction across the county.

But a strong base of ongoing projects planned before this year led to sustained development, from industrial to residential growth in Beloit.

In 2019, Beloit planning staff issued 1,171 building permits worth a total construction value of \$138.3 million. As of November of 2020, the city issued 1,118 building permits worth a total construction value of \$84.8 million.

New in 2020 were the addition of 545 jobs citywide, coupled with the creation of \$223.8 million in overall economic impact, city data shows.



Unemployment figures in Beloit were at record lows in October of 2019 as the city saw an unemployment rate of 3.7%. The figure sky-rocketed to 17.2% in April as the pandemic took hold. In July, the figure dipped below double digits and in November, the latest month that unemployment figures were available, Beloit's jobless rate was 5.4%, according to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

A major point of growth for Beloit in 2020 was in the Gateway Business Park. Since 2000, development in the Gateway Business Park has led to over 2,793 jobs created as part of 11 major projects totaling over 2.7 million square-foot of industrial space.



Below are a summary of some of the major Beloit projects completed or underway in 2020:

Amazon: In October of 2019, construction started on a one-million square-foot Amazon distribution facility at 1255 Gateway Boulevard on an 80-acre site. The center opened on Aug. 16 after just a 10-month construction period. Over 800 full-time employees were hired at Amazon in Beloit as of September, with the facility expected to eventually have a staff of over 2,000.

Lyons Magnus North: In April of 2019, Lyons Magnus announced the purchase of TRU Aseptics and the company was rebranded. Since then, construction at 2924 Wyetta Drive has led to a doubling in facility size to 67,000 square-feet as part of a \$70 million investment to add to production, warehouse and distribution capacity, with the company planning to bolster its workforce to 200 employees.

NorthStar Medical Radioisotopes: The fast-growing company saw a major milestone in February of 2018 when it received Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval to produce radioisotopes in the company's patented RadioGenix system. In 2020, the company entered its third phase of development at the 1800 Gateway Boulevard campus with the construction of a 34,700 square-foot facility as part of an overall \$40 million investment. The project will accommodate two particle accelerators that will aid in the production of radioisotopes, and the company expects to have an employee base of 220 in 2021.

Powerhouse: The Beloit College Powerhouse transformed the old Blackhawk power generation station into a 150,000 square-foot student union and resource center as construction wrapped up in February of 2020 on the \$38 million project.

ABC Supply Stadium: 2020 was a major year for the Beloit Snappers as the team announced plans for a new, \$34 million stadium following the ownership transfer to Pensacola businessman Quint Studer. The team also announced it would be affiliated



with the Miami Marlins for the 2021 season and beyond. Construction on the 5,000-seat stadium is expected to be complete in June of 2021.

ABC Supply office building: The company completed construction on its new, four-story office building as part of a \$30.5 million investment that will eventually accommodate up to 600 employees in the 132,000 square-foot expansion.

Eagles Ridge: Growth in the subdivision continues as New Leaf Homes continues to be granted permits and build homes in the area. Two additional plats for 51 single-family lots were recently approved by the city as infrastructure work is currently underway.

Hawk's Ridge: Two additional buildings will add 150 apartment units culminating in \$22.8 million in assessed property value as residential growth in the Gateway area continues.

Austin Montgomery

