



Development effort nears fundraising goal

By Hillary Gavan

hgavan@beloitdailynews.com

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Since Rock County 5.0 was announced in October, the development program has secured nearly \$1 million and unrolled new strategies to drum up business.

Rock County 5.0 is a five-year public and private economic development initiative designed to help revitalize the local economy. A joint effort between Beloit, Janesville and surrounding areas, it addresses business and expansion, business and investment attraction, small business and entrepreneurship, real estate positioning and workforce profiling.

Beloit Economic Development Director Andrew Janke said he's excited about the initiative. And with Rock County 5.0's capital goal of \$1 million mostly secured, the implementation of its strategies can proceed. Strategies include customer diversification assessments, a shovel-ready property certification program, targeted communications and outreach as well as workforce profiling.

The Rock County Development Alliance has teamed up with the Wisconsin Innovation Service Center (WISC) to deliver a fee-based assessment to help businesses identify which market niches provide growth opportunities.

Rock County Economic Development Director James Otterstein said the new offering is being piloted by a Beloit manufacturer. The time frame for the entire process is approximately 60-days, and each assessment will be financed through a partnership between the Rock County Development Alliance and the applicant.

"To date these assessments have been successful in Michigan for those companies tied to the automotive supply chain. It's a relatively new offering in the state of Wisconsin and we are going to take advantage of the opportunity to put it on the street," said Otterstein.

The shovel-ready property certification program provides properties with a standard recognized by the development and real estate communities. A third party company, yet to be selected, will be conducting the program.

Otterstein added that timelines for today's site searches are increasingly compressed, and only those locations providing immediate and accurate information survive the review process.

For cost considerations, the Rock County Development Alliance is recommending the services of a specific vendor to conduct the shovel-ready program for the following properties — a 200-acre site in Janesville's State Highway 11/Beloit Avenue Industrial Park and a 220-acre site in Beloit's Gateway Business Park. At least two additional sites within Rock County will be evaluated in 2011 and 2012.

The Rock County Development Alliance is also working to produce targeted communications to secure new business development opportunities, and workforce profiling to detail wage and benefits data and personnel information to support capital investment decisions. He said the workforce profiles offer businesses real-time data to make informed decisions.

For more information, visit the Web site www.rockcounty5.com.