


[Print Page](#)

Library plans moving forward

By Julie Becker
Daily News staff writer

After a brief pollution-induced hitch, the Beloit Public Library's progress on its new facility is beginning to advance according to plan.

Plans for a development agreement between the City of Beloit and Beloit Properties, Inc. were delayed for about a month, after toxic chemicals were found in the path of the new facility's proposed access road at Beloit Mall.

Following a thorough environmental assessment of the area, the access road off Riverside Drive was moved further north, and the Beloit City Council approved the updated development agreement at its April 2 meeting.



Staff photo by Julie Becker

Shown here, the JC Penney site at the former Beloit Mall is now vacant - but it won't remain that way for long. Following the Beloit City Council's recent approval of a development agreement between the city and Beloit Properties, Inc., the 4.4-acre site will be converted into the library's new facility.

The agreement stipulates a payment of \$200,000 in cash and the current library facility by the city, in exchange for the vacant 4.4-acre JC Penney site at the former Beloit Mall - now the Eclipse Center.

According to the agreement, the current facility will be converted into an "academic facility," to be donated to Beloit College. The college hasn't made an official decision on what will occupy the facility, but it has some ideas.

"We have floor plans for the current public library utilizing the space for our dance and music programs, and for satellite gallery space for both the Logan Museum of Anthropology and the Wright Museum of Art," Beloit College Director of Public Affairs Ron Nief said. "It is a facility that will engage the community and provide public access to performance and exhibition space."

Now the city and the library are in the process of finalizing contracts with Milwaukee-based architects Engberg Anderson Design Partnership, Inc., reviewing details related to bonding, requirements for services and the money the city is willing to spend.

"The contracts will be moving forward for signatures as soon as possible. Everything's on the front burner now," City of Beloit Project Engineer Andy Hill said.

The city has set aside approximately \$7.3 million for the facility in its 2007 Capital Improvements Plan, but the

library will need to raise at least an additional \$1 million to fully furnish and equip its new location.

So far, the Beloit Public Library Board of Trustees has interviewed three fundraising firms - including the Abby Group of Milwaukee, American City Bureau of South Barrington, Ill., and CCS of Chicago - and will make a final decision on the firm at its next meeting, April 11.

Although hiring one of the three firms will cost the library a minimum of \$115,000, Beloit Public Library Director Dan Zack said the investment will be worth it.

"The difficulty has been they all have a lot to offer. Each has a different approach, a different commitment on time - they're affordable, but we have to decide how much we want the firms to do compared to the price," Zack said. "The fee is secondary to an extent. It may be the lowest, it may be the highest, but we just have to look for the best fit."

Because the library doesn't have a lot of staff that can commit to raising funds, they do need the outside help, he added. Following the board's decision on the firm, Zack said the city and library should begin serious work on design plans in the near future.

"It appears in the next few weeks all of these things may come together, and we should be able to get a good start on the project," he said.

For more details on the new library facility, visit <http://als.lib.wi.us/BPL>.