

## **Kiel's Economic Development Work Unfolding**

Kiel continues to grow at a successful rate compared to many neighboring communities. As the Kiel City Administrator Jamie Aulik shared those insights connected to economic growth and development at the December meeting of the City of Kiel's Economic Development Committee.

He told the committee that net new construction showed that Kiel had the second highest growth rate of communities in Calumet or Manitowoc County. Efforts are ongoing to help Kiel continue in that capacity as a growth leader.

### **Lulloff/Kwik Trip Lot Update**

The city administrator briefed the committee on the progress of potential development at the combined location of the former Kiel Kwik Trip and Lulloff Hardware.

At this time, the city is seeking grant funding to assist with a site assessment on the two properties. The assessment would evaluate the conditions of the soils on the site to determine if any potential contamination exists. Both are still privately owned.

Aulik said that Kwik Trip has expressed an interest in donating its parcel to the city, if no testing issues are discovered. Former Lulloff Hardware owner Joel Lulloff has also been contacted about a potential opportunity to make his lot available to the city. The two lots have been targeted as a potential site for a new anchor for a downtown development project. No official plans are in the works at this time, however.

### **Studies proposed**

Aulik suggested that the city may want to look at coordinating a study with local businesses that would help outline the needs in Kiel for both housing and retail development. Determining the needs will help potential contractors identify the kinds of projects that would make sense for the downtown site near the Sheboygan River.

### **Building renovations**

Research results on downtown aesthetics and design standards were shared with the group. Aulik said that Kiel can continue to look toward neighboring communities like Elkhart Lake, Sheboygan Falls, and Plymouth as examples.

Plymouth has worked with an annual budget of \$7,500 for its redevelopment authority, but received a separate private contribution of \$250,000 toward refurbishing efforts. Plymouth currently has no adopted guidelines for facade improvements.

Sheboygan Falls has esthetics rules that require business to match the design standards of the district. Aulik also shared guidelines adopted in Wisconsin Dells as another example. One other option for Kiel's downtown would be to look at the potential for a historic district, whereby building owners could receive tax credits for improvements. This would also include more stringent guidelines on improvements.

### **Working with Progress Lakeshore**

Peter Willis, executive director of Progress Lakeshore, was present at the meeting. Together with Aulik, they shared some of the results of their meetings with Kiel businesses. Across the board, manufacturers are concerned with workforce recruitment and retention. In addition to normal numbers challenges, local

manufacturers are seeing continued shortages in the employee pool due to retirements and loss to commuting to other communities. Both Willis and Aulik commented on businesses seeing the need for connecting with the Kiel Area Schools as an ongoing economic driver.

### **Budgetary review**

Aulik also shared highlights from the 2019 City of Kiel budget. Among those items included—

- an annual match of \$8,600 for the Kiel River Walk Business Improvement District;
- the elevation of Melissa Brandt to a full-time community services manager, in conjunction with the Kiel Area Association of Commerce;
- road improvement plans for First and Fourth Streets;
- a planned move toward major community sidewalk improvements in 2020;
- an agreement with the Kiel Area Schools to upgrade six tennis courts in Belitz Park;
- a new trail connecting Belitz Park to residential areas; and
- new playground equipment for the Kiel City Park.

In addition, the Economic Development team also welcomed two new members to its ranks, including Dr. Brad Ebert, representing the Kiel Area School District, and Jill Preissner, who works in local real estate.