

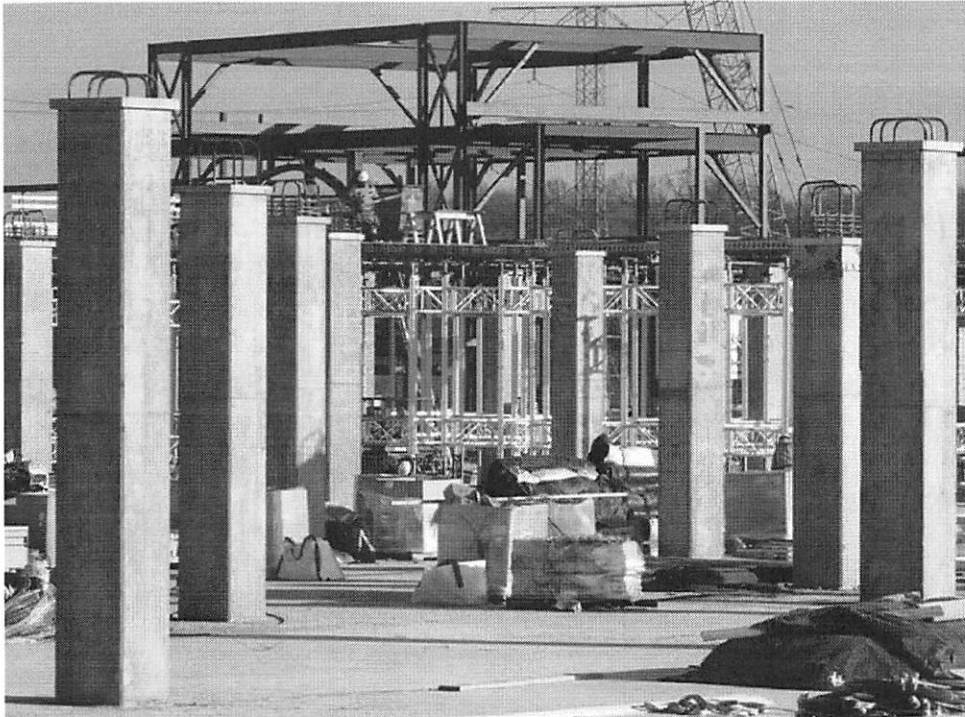

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## Interactive: Brookfield developments drive job creation

Region expected to add 5,000 or more in coming years



*Structural construction continues at The Corners on Bluemound Road and the Highway 18 interchange. The development is expected to eventually result in more than 1,000 jobs. Photo By C.T. Kruger*



By Geoff Bruce  
March 15, 2016

As the economic recovery from the Great Recession continues, many communities have seen a spurt of new projects and construction taking place.

The city and town of Brookfield are not strangers to that experience.

With major mixed-use projects such as The Corners and The Corridor under construction along Bluemound Road and I-94, economic development is in a sprint in the Brookfield area.

And along with development comes jobs.

### Job boom

Over 5,000 in fact. That is the number by which employment could grow as a result of half a dozen different projects around the area.

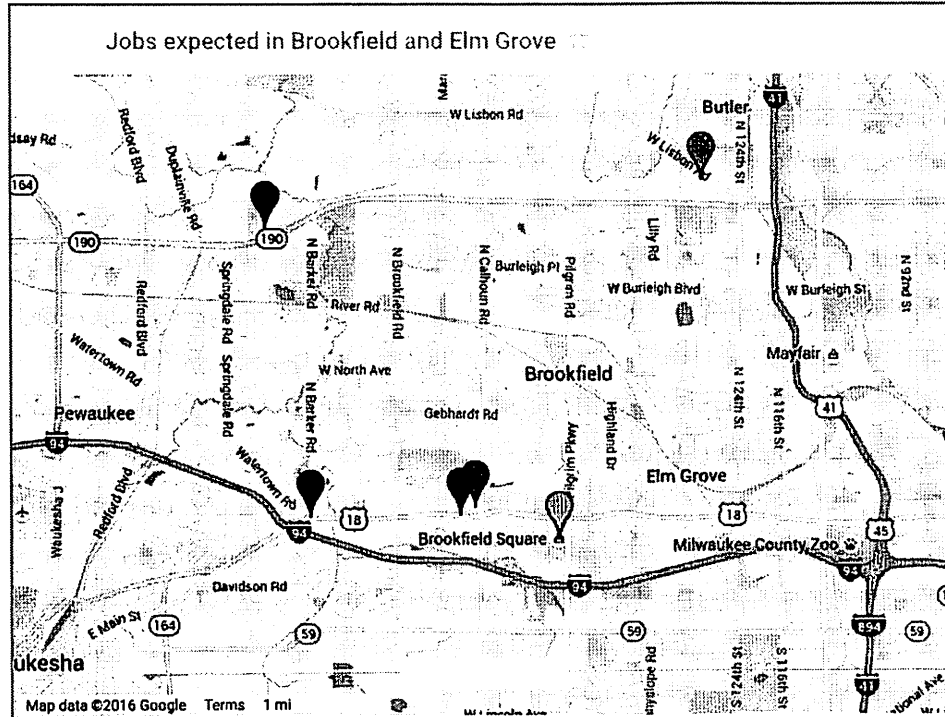
The jobs that developers and companies are projecting to create will offer a wide range in both role and location.

The Corridor, Calhoun Crossings and Brookfield Square's ongoing expansions will bring thousands of retail jobs to the eastern side of the Bluemound Road corridor, while The Corners is projected to create over 1,100 jobs on the western side.

In the northwest corner of the city of Brookfield, on Gumina Road, the Gumina Commerce Center continues to move along, and developer Todd Rizzo said that the site will create 200 to 300 industrial jobs.

Far east, along the Capitol Drive corridor, the proposed expansion of Milwaukee Tool is projected to create 300 to 500 corporate level office jobs over a period of years at the company's headquarters on Lisbon Road. The Corridor developer Irgens also expects that many of its 3,000 projected jobs to be corporate-level office jobs in the project's office park along I-94.

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**Economic impacts**

The Greater Brookfield Chamber of Commerce hosted a program Tuesday, May 8, at which representatives from Brookfield Square, The Corridor and The Corners summarized their respective developments in a series of presentations.

Woven between those recaps were remarks from Department of Workforce Development senior economist and director Jeffrey Sachse.

Sachse discussed projected ripple effects of the developments on Bluemound Road.

Every 100 positions created will yield an additional 30 to 40 in related firms. In addition, every dollar spent will generate \$.36 in related spending or tax revenue. Sachse said.

"The region's competitive retail space dictates that old money follows new spaces," Sachse said. "(Retail developments) bring income into communities that didn't exist there before."

Sachse also made the point that development coming in bursts is a logical pattern.

"Development tends to spur development as a market is considered more attractive," Sachse said.

That type of catalytic effect also has been discussed at length by Brookfield officials and its consultant Gruen Gruen + Associates with references to the Milwaukee Tool expansion.

"The basic concept is that the regional economy is linked. A change such as investment and construction of expanded operation will generate a ripple or multiplier effect," Gruen principal Debra Jeans said in December.

**Not all good news**

While officials generally agree that the burst of job creation in the area is a positive, there are those who worry that all of growth might be too much at one time.

"I don't recall ever seeing this much at any one time in such a condensed period of time in Brookfield," Greater Brookfield Chamber of Commerce President Carol White said. "I think it's kind of that pent up demand of wanting to get going and wanting to do something, but so many businesses have been sitting on the fence waiting to see where things are going to fall."

White worries that businesses along Bluemound Road have already been having trouble with staffing and that the thousands of new positions in nearby areas could exacerbate that problem.

"The retail and the restaurant and the hospitality businesses are already having some trouble finding employees. If you go to a restaurant, retail establishment almost anywhere along that corridor, you're going to see 'Now Hiring' signs," White said. "We already see that it is tight and I do think that once all this development comes online, it's going to be more than tight."

Sachse also touched on the subject of the retail workforce Tuesday.

"Attraction and retention (of employees) is going to be a concern," Sachse said. "Turnover in retail and hospitality and

leisure is higher than other industries."

According to Sachse, the aforementioned sectors average 11 percent turnover compared to 9.3 percent overall.

However, Sachse noted that turnover in those sectors is beginning to stabilize as both wages and the age of the retail workforce increase.

Brookfield Economic Development Administrator Tim Casey says that he has heard the concerns that White has heard from local businesses.

"Some retailers and restaurants are concerned about accessing enough labor force," Casey said.

Despite the potential for the workforce to be stretched thin, White is confident that both new and existing businesses will be able to thrive.

Following Tuesday's presentations, White hoped to form a network among businesses that wish to continue to discuss the topic.

"I am confident that we will, in partnership with the business community, be able to come up with solutions," White said. "But we definitely need their input."

Casey said that in order to fill all of the jobs in the area, workers from farther away may be necessary.

"There's good options for labor force for retail, restaurants and hospitality, but we might have to cast the net a little bit wider to access the whole pool of labor," Casey said.

### Public transit expansion

Some local officials believe that one element of obtaining the necessary workforce for the Bluemound Road corridor could be making the area more accessible from other nearby communities.

Brookfield's Casey says that the city has a vested interest in ongoing talks about rapid transit between downtown Milwaukee and the western suburbs.

"There's a group that has been convened to talk about the potential for bus rapid transit, and I think the focus right now is primarily on the Wisconsin and Bluemound corridor from downtown Milwaukee to the regional medical center" in Wauwatosa, Casey said. "We want to see if there is anything moving forward in terms of that and is there an opportunity to coordinate with that coming out to Brookfield?"

Casey says that Bluemound Road businesses are fortunate to be served by both the Milwaukee County Transit System and the Waukesha Metro.

"The only place that Milwaukee County Transit System and Waukesha Metro meet is at the back of Brookfield Square," Casey said.

Casey noted a conversation he had with the owner of the new Mooyah Burgers, Fries & Shakes at Brookfield Square.

"A good percentage of his new workforce are coming via bus and some are spending more than two hours each way," Casey said. "What we have to explore is are there opportunities to enhance the system?"

In the town of Brookfield, Development Services Administrator Gary Lake says that the town has not yet seen a need to increase public transit but admits that that may change.

"I think it might be an issue when the retail components (at The Corners) are fully operational," Lake said.

Irgens Executive Vice President Dave Arnold said that the company believes employees at The Corridor will be drawn from both Milwaukee and Waukesha, and he is confident that existing infrastructure is adequate to stock the labor force.

At the same time, Arnold said that Irgens would be open to seeing public transportation options expanded.

"While we haven't been involved in any relevant conversations on this matter, we are always open to ideas that more effectively integrate a development like The Corridor with the surrounding community," Arnold said.

### Other factors

Rizzo admits that while he feels confident in the Gumina Commerce Center at its present location, he doesn't think extending public transit to the area would be a bad thing.

"We feel pretty good about where we're at with things, but if there was public transportation that came out to the area that would be helpful," Rizzo said. "I don't necessarily anticipate public transportation coming out to Gumina Road, but if it were to at least come down Capitol, that would be helpful."

A majority of Milwaukee Tool's employees drive to the company's headquarters and officials do not expect that to change; however, with the campus resting off of Lisbon Road, a two-lane street, a traffic study is being conducted.

"We're still taking a look at it, but preliminary indications are that the additional traffic expected to be generated is not going to require anything extraordinary," Casey said. "I think it's human nature to focus on the new jobs and trips, but we're at about 8,000 cars a day on Lisbon Road now."

Milwaukee Tool officials have told the city that they encourage their employees to use Lisbon and other arterial roads to get to work rather than going through nearby residential neighborhoods.

Traffic remains a concern, as well, beyond the availability of public transit along Bluemound Road, particularly near Brookfield Square, where city of Brookfield City Engineer Jeff Chase says multiple options for improving the area are being looked at.

"We've been looking at a series of studies at the mall and on Moorland Road and a series of improvements at the mall and clearly we're not done there yet," Chase said. "There's another proposal (for expansion) coming forward where we would be looking at adding a whole lot more and I expect that would be the vehicle through which we would do a more exhaustive study of traffic impacts."

In the past, there have been talks among residents, city officials and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation about building a new interchange off of I-94 at Calhoun Road. While the interchange would provide easier access to a number of projects, such as The Corridor and the redeveloped Plaza 173, now called Calhoun Crossings, Arnold says that Irgens is impartial to that addition.

"We're not anticipating any changes to I-94," Arnold said. "The Corridor was designed to assimilate with the interstate's current traffic pattern through Brookfield."