Moving the Needle? Wisconsin Policy Forum report examines Kenosha County’s progress, establishes online data tool to gauge performance

Kenosha County has landed several major economic development wins during the past decade and has trended favorably on economic measures such as unemployment and poverty rates. In the wake of these developments, KABA commissioned the Wisconsin Policy Forum (WPF) to examine the County’s recent performance in terms of key economic and social indicators—to better understand the overall impact of these developments.

Positive results include impressive job growth, significant reductions in unemployment and youth poverty, sizable gains in property value, and a notable increase in the number of small business establishments.

However, the analysis noted several areas of concern that county policymakers and business and civic leaders may wish to consider. Slow population growth, lagging educational attainment, lower wages and productivity, and high rates of rent burden stood out as areas the County fared poorly when benchmarked with 11 peer or comparison counties.

In May, the WPF published both a summary report—Moving the Needle? How Kenosha County measures up on key economic and social indicators—and a more robust online interactive data tool that helps gauge Kenosha County’s performance, and its residents’ wellbeing in several categories, including population and demographics; education, health, and safety; employment and financial stability; housing; economic activity; and property values and taxes. The entire report can be found online at kaba.org/locate-expand/data-center.

KABA intends to use the report and its findings to influence future economic development initiatives and to work to ensure that economic development wins generate the intended benefits for the community.

“Thesefindingssuggestthatprogresshasbeenmadeonmanyfronts,buttworkremainstoensurethatthebenefitsofneweconomicdevelopmentandjobsaremaximizedandflowtoallKenoshaCountyresidents.”

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Archives of Perfectly Centered can be found on our web site: www.kaba.org

KABA is the lead business organization that drives economic development throughout Kenosha County and supports and provides services to its members and the community, helping to ensure growth, a robust economy, and a positive business climate for the Kenosha Area.
Thank you to Todd, our Immediate Past Chair Dr. Swallow, and the entire KABA staff for continuously performing at a high level. The entire Kenosha Community is proud of the work that has been put forth and what has been accomplished. I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of our member organizations and their active leaders within our community. I am confident that we can work with all of the appropriate stakeholders to ensure our economic success is only one of many accomplishments we are able to highlight at our Annual Meeting.

While we acknowledge the economic development successes Kenosha County has had, we must also focus on what more can be done. The Wisconsin Policy Forum’s recent report could work as a roadmap to maintaining our success in economic activity while maximizing the related benefits of our economic development success stories. At the same time, we have to be careful not to over-extend ourselves or lose focus on our primary responsibility - KABA can’t be all things to all people. Because of that constraint, we plan to focus on the key takeaways and determine where KABA can best help. The results of that analysis could drive KABA to lead the way, add resources to an existing initiative, or, most likely, partner with existing efforts to ensure we achieve the intended results. The report can be found at https://kaba.org/locate-expand/data-center/ and will touch on both economic and social indicators such as Population and Demographics; Education, Health, and Safety; Employment and Financial Stability; Housing; Economic Activity; Property Values and Taxes. I encourage you to read through this report and review the data tool (available at https://wispolicyforum.org/kenosha-county-indicators/), which will touch on the underlying indicators for Kenosha and comparison counties. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to Todd with any insight or ideas you gather from this material.

We are aware of other communities that have commissioned similar reports and utilized them to form public/private partnerships. Those partnerships have led to measurable progress in a variety of areas for other communities so I am very confident that our KABA team, along with our government and corporate partners, can do the same for Kenosha County.

Jens
Vice President of Finance, Froedtert South; and Chair of the KABA Board of Directors
KABA adds new team member & summer intern

You may hear a new voice answering the phone when you call the KABA office. Maria Chambers joined the KABA team in June as Administrative Assistant. Maria comes to us from Northshore University Health System where she was a senior radiology support associate. She has an Associate’s Degree of Applied Science, Business Administration from Robert Morris University. Maria lives in Kenosha with her husband and young son. Jeanne Geiger retired in May after seven years at KABA in the same position. We wish her all the best!

Nereyda “Nedi” Marquez will be entering her second year at Carthage College this fall, and is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Marketing with minors in Spanish and Graphic Design. She is from Kenosha, having attended local public schools including Indian Trail High School's Communications Academy. Nedi was a Mahone Fund Reaching for Rainbows Scholar in 2021, participated in Youth Apprenticeship and received many other awards and accolades in her time there. She is a marketing intern for the summer, assisting with the Life Balanced Kenosha County initiative.

Maria Chambers,
Administrative Assistant

Nereyda Marquez,
Summer Intern

See all of KABA’s upcoming events at https://kaba.org/news/events.

FOR THEIR INVESTMENT IN KABA

LAKESIDE STEEL & MFG. CO
lakesidesteel.net

LAKE COUNTY PIPE
lakecountypipe.com

ODW
odwlogistics.com

PARKER PLASTICS
parkerplastics.net

RUSSELL ZIEMANN

WOODVIEW GROUP
interstatepartners.com
Kroger officially opens its Pleasant Prairie Customer Fulfillment Center

Kroger, the nation’s largest grocery retailer, has opened its ninth customer fulfillment center in the Village of Pleasant Prairie. The new 336,840 SF automated grocery and home delivery facility will serve customers in Wisconsin, northern Illinois, and northwest Indiana. Kroger is working with UK-based technology company Ocado to make its CFCs highly automated. At the Pleasant Prairie facility, more than 1,000 bots whizz around giant 3D grids, orchestrated by proprietary air-traffic control systems in the unlicensed spectrum. The grid, known as The Hive, contains totes with products and ready-to-deliver customer orders. As customers’ orders near delivery times, the bots retrieve products from The Hive and are presented at pick stations for items to be sorted for delivery, a process governed by algorithms that ensure items are intelligently packed. Kenosha County and the Village worked with Kroger to apply for a Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) Grant from Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The TEA Grant financially assisted with the County Trunk Highway H transportation improvement costs associated with the development. The nearly-mile-long reconstruction of Highway H (88th Avenue), which officially opened in October, included the addition of turn lanes. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is supporting the project with up to $1.5 million in state tax credits to the Kroger Fulfillment Network and up to $500,000 in tax credits to Ocado Solutions.

“**We are thrilled to launch Kroger Delivery in Pleasant Prairie, continuing our long-standing engagement in the state of Wisconsin. This milestone moment incorporates end-to-end cold solutions providing Kenosha County residents with everything fresh, every time. Through the incredible relationships with several local departments, including Kenosha County and Village of Pleasant Prairie, this collaboration was key to success and will enable us to expand our delivery service to new areas in the region in need of our best-in-class service.**” – Gabriel Arreaga, Senior Vice President & Chief Supply Chain Officer
Rehrig Pacific breaks ground on its addition in Pleasant Prairie

Rehrig Pacific recently held a ground breaking ceremony for its 49,000 SF expansion and site improvements to their existing facility located in LakeView Corporate Park. Rehrig Pacific has occupied the Pleasant Prairie facility since the building was constructed in 1996. The addition will house 17 new plastics injection molding machines and add up to 36 new jobs.

Rehrig Pacific is a fourth-generation, privately-held, CA-based company established in 1913. Its businesses include plastics manufacturing, mechanical systems, and technology.

“The Rehrig Pacific Pleasant Prairie manufacturing expansion is a huge step forward for Rehrig and our ability to supply high quality packaging for the supply chain. This growth is a result of the hard work our team has accomplished. We are all proud to see our manufacturing capabilities increasing right here in Pleasant Prairie!”

— Nick Best, Plant Manager

Rehrig Pacific held a ground-breaking ceremony for its expansion on June 15.

ULINE buys more land in Kenosha

Uline Inc. recently purchased about 230 acres that was marketed for new industrial development near Interstate 94. The packaging materials company is among the fastest-growing businesses in the region, regularly either building or leasing large blocks of Kenosha County industrial space.

AMP Robotics Corp. to establish operations in an existing facility in LakeView Corp Park

Louisville, Colorado-based recycling company AMP Robotics Corp. plans to establish an operation in an existing facility in LakeView Corporate Park in Pleasant Prairie. The company plans to use the site for a secondary sortation facility to process recyclable materials from a primary material recovery facility, including paper, plastics, and metals. The facility is expected to be operational this fall and will have 25 employees.

Balcan Innovations increasing its job numbers at Pleasant Prairie facility

Balcan Innovations, a Quebec-based manufacturer of flexible packaging and technical films, will hire 20 additional people at its new facility in LakeView Corporate Park. The company leased the building, previously occupied by Mondi Akrosil, last year and brought on 60 people. The new facility is the company’s first operations in the U.S.

A $400,000 Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) grant provided by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is helping Balcan bring on the additional jobs. The grant will help construct a turnout from the Union Pacific Railroad mainline and about 1,760 feet of new spur track to allow Balcan to receive rail shipments of plastic resin, the primary raw material used in their manufacturing process.

“The TEA grant and our rail spur connectivity allows Balcan to supply its facility in the most economic and environmentally friendly manner. It is the next crucial step in our development of our U.S. flagship manufacturing location. We are thrilled to be in Pleasant Prairie, and grateful for the support of the state of Wisconsin.”

— Dano Lister, CEO

Above photo courtesy of Riley Construction.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Nevada developer planning $226 million industrial park at Pleasant Prairie power plant site

Reno-based Dermody Properties is working with the Village of Pleasant Prairie to turn the 198-acre site of the shuttered We Energies power plant into an industrial park that it expects to be worth $226 million.

The industrial park is expected to include three Class A industrial buildings, totaling more than 2.28 million square feet, and the dedication of approximately two acres to the village for a park designed to illustrate the history and economic impact of the We Energies site on Pleasant Prairie.

VILLAGE CONSIDERS ASSISTANCE FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Village of Pleasant Prairie planners recently proposed creating a tax increment finance district (TID) to facilitate the development at the former We Energies power plant site. The proposed redevelopment could spur about $17 million in village spending to pay for infrastructure.

Old Dominion Freight Line (ODFL) now operational at its new site in Kenosha

ODFL recently held an open house for its new 103-door facility at 6824 77th Avenue in Kenosha. The new service center opened in summer 2021. ODFL once serviced the area out of its Milwaukee service center but needed a facility closer to its growing number of distribution, manufacturing, packing, and pharmaceutical companies—as southeastern Wisconsin, and Kenosha and Racine counties in particular, saw major business growth in recent years. The center has available space for an additional 51 doors that will allow it to grow alongside the burgeoning business community.

Nosco expands its Pleasant Prairie HQs

Packaging manufacturer Nosco is expanding its Pleasant Prairie packaging innovation center and headquarters facility to add capacity and support future growth. The company relocated to Kenosha County about one year ago and is already adding nearly 100,000 SF to its 271,000 SF facility in LakeView Corporate Park. The expansion is expected to create approximately 25 new jobs.

Curbell moved its Chicago operations to a new, larger facility in Pleasant Prairie

Curbell Plastics, Inc., a nationwide supplier of plastic sheet, rod, tube, tapes and fabricated parts, has recently moved its Chicago operations to a new, larger facility in Pleasant Prairie.

The new location at 8201 109th St., Suite 300, provides twice the storage space with a larger warehouse that houses increased inventory and more customer-specific materials. The new space also allows for future growth and improved fabrication capabilities.
Selling the Milwaukee Region as a climate haven

Amid frequent national reports about forest fires, intense weather events and water shortages, the Milwaukee Region’s value proposition of being relatively free from the threat of natural disasters is becoming more relevant by the day.

As part of its core pitch to selling the seven-county Milwaukee Region to executives and site selectors interested in relocating or expanding their business here, representatives from the Milwaukee 7 Partnership for Economic Development often note that our region is relatively free from the threat of natural disasters and features reliable access to fresh, clean water.

That level of predictability would be an attractive proposition for any business leader under any circumstances. But amid frequent national reports about forest fires, intense weather events and water shortages, this aspect of the Milwaukee Region’s value proposition is becoming more relevant by the day.

Concern about the long-term effects of climate change has spread well beyond the realm of scientists and activists. Even the U.S. military is revising its strategy, recently releasing a plan to “train a generation of officers on how to prepare for a hotter, more chaotic world,” according to a story in the Washington Post.

In this context, the concept of future mass migration from regions under threat to regions that are better positioned to withstand the worst effects of climate change is gaining national traction – and highlighting the Milwaukee Region’s role as a potential “climate haven.”

A recent CNBC story defined climate havens as regions that are “situated in places that avoid the worst effects of natural disasters and have the infrastructure to support a larger population.” Jesse Keenan, an associate professor of real estate at Tulane University, listed Milwaukee and Madison as two of a relatively small number of cities – mostly in the Upper Midwest and Northeast – that are poised to benefit.

Beyond chaotic weather and wildfire events, access to water matters, too – and will matter even more in an uncertain future. In the most recent edition of MMAC’s Milwaukee Commerce magazine, we noted,

A recent analysis by MMAC member McKinsey & Company shows that by 2030, demand for water will outstrip supply by 40 percent, and that about half of the world’s population will live in water -scarce areas.

For much of the world, this is a looming existential challenge. For Great Lakes cities like Milwaukee, it’s an opportunity – if managed correctly.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Great Lakes contain 84 percent of North America’s surface fresh water and about 21 percent of the world’s supply of surface fresh water. By acting as good stewards of one of the world’s most precious resources, Milwaukee will be well positioned for an uncertain future.

The issue also featured an article from David Strifling, Director of the Water Law and Policy Initiative at Marquette University Law School, on the Great Lakes Compact as an example of government collaboration that really works in protecting the Great Lakes as a resource and asset. Amid uncertainty, Milwaukee will have opportunities in the future.

This article was written by the MMAC Chamber and originally appeared at mmac.org.

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Master conceptual plan for the future Village Green Center approved

In March, the Pleasant Prairie Village Board considered and approved the revised Master Conceptual Plan for the proposed Village Green Center (VGC) mixed-use development. The “main street” development -in the works for nearly 25 years - is on approximately 180 acres of land, generally located at Springbrook Road, 39th Avenue, and State Highway 165.
Get ready...Inspire is October 14!

Get your friends, colleagues, and work teams together and plan to join us for this premier leadership development experience! Inspire features high-caliber national and regional speakers & experts providing inspirational content to elevate your personal and professional leadership journey. Learn more at InspireKenosha.com.

The first three speakers for 2022 have dropped! Check them out below and plan to take advantage of early-bird registration which will begin in August.

**Jon Acuff**
New York Times bestselling author of seven books, including his most recent, Soundtracks, The Surprising Solution to Overthinking. Acuff’s work has helped organizations navigate change, increase productivity, and establish processes that help teams consistently finish the goals they set.

**Fawn Weaver**
CEO, Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey

Fawn Weaver is the CEO of Uncle Nearest, Inc., a company she founded in 2016. Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey is the fastest-growing American whiskey brand in U.S. history, the bestselling African American founded spirit brand of all time, and was the most award-winning American whiskey (including bourbon) of 2019, 2020 and 2021.

**Joe Kirgues**
Co-Founder, gener8tor

Joe Kirgues co-founded gener8tor—a turnkey platform for the creative economy that connects startup founders, musicians, artists, investors, universities and corporations. gener8tor runs over 30 programs across 25 cities ranging from Anchorage to San Juan and graduates of their accelerator programs have raised over $1 billion in follow-on financing and created thousands of full-time jobs.

**SEEN ON SOCIAL...**

@GOODFOODSGROUP

The Good Foods Marketing and Sales Teams spent yesterday (June 24) afternoon at Garden of Eatin’ Kenosha planting, weeding, mowing, and painting boards to be auctioned off to raise money to support the garden! Garden of Eatin’ Kenosha is a veteran-owned nonprofit that raises a harvest of fresh produce to donate to local soup kitchens, pantries, and other organizations feeding hungry people in Kenosha County since 2013 and Good Foods is proud to join their efforts.

Thank you to Garden of Eatin’ for having us and thank you to our team members who helped make a difference in our community! Do Good, Be Good.
Bruce was reviewing shipments and customer order reports as his company wrapped up another quarter. It’s going to be another weekend of overtime, he thought. Bruce is a plant manager in Tennessee for a large-scale manufacturing company with welders and skilled workers. They work twenty-four hours a day over three shifts and then added extra weekend hours during any given month as needed. He knew this weekend was one of those times. Goodbye, weekend. Bruce knew this especially bothered his team when they had plans to watch football or barbeque. In the south, college football Saturdays are sacred. But what could be done? They had to meet their quota.

Then he received a call that no one wants to receive. Tragedy had struck. One of the plant’s beloved employees, Junior, had just died in a motorcycle accident. Bruce rushed out to the scene, just to be there. He stopped thinking about their productivity. Some things are bigger than work.

Junior was the employee everyone wanted. He worked hard out in the shipping yard, often in 90- to 100-degree temperatures, always full on. He was not a time waster, not a wander-around kind of guy. He was friendly and helpful, likable and positive. As he walked out the door, moments before his motorcycle hit a pothole in the road, he said, “See you tomorrow, Boss! I’ll bring the donuts!” His last words, most likely, ever spoken.

Bruce knew that this news would devastate his team. He learned that the visitation and funeral would be on Saturday—which was the day for mandatory overtime. In that moment, he knew there was only one thing to do. He gave the entire plant off on Friday and Saturday. Those who knew Junior had to have time to pay their respects and to grieve.

“At the time, it was just the right thing to do,” Bruce remembered. “I thought I was going to be in trouble, but I didn’t think of the ramifications of it. I reached out to my boss, and he supported me.”

At the funeral, Bruce encountered Junior’s father. “You shut down the plant for my son,” he told Bruce, overcome with emotion.

**How Humor Strengthens Influence** | by Steve Scherer

Humor and laughter go beyond plain old fun. Laughing has been proven to be therapeutic, morale-boosting, and even good for the bottom line. Here are five ways humor can add to your company’s wellness and success.

**Humor reduces stress**

Stress has a profound effect on us, not only on morale but also on physical health. Stress can bring burnout, reduced motivation, and loss of self-esteem, negatively affecting productivity. However, there’s a cost-effective answer.

According to the Mayo Clinic, “laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles, and increases the endorphins released by your brain.” The result? Muscle relaxation, a decrease in blood pressure, and other physical symptoms of stress.

**Humor builds trust**

You should take your business seriously. But don’t take yourself seriously. Instead, use a little self-deprecating humor in your next meeting. For example, pick a parenting fail that happened last week. Or share how you tried that event and only two people showed. Being able to laugh at yourself goes a long way to making others feel comfortable with you. It’s a great way to break down weird walls of starchy professionalism and allows people to get to know you personally.

**Humor enhances leadership**

Leadership is influence. Humor can increase influence. Good humor should never put people down, perpetuate negative stereotypes, or veil criticism. Instead, it should fold people in, release endorphins and strengthen communication. Bad workplace humor creates an ‘in-group and an ‘out-group. It thrives on gossip, and gossip erodes trust in leadership.

You can have both net-income growth and humor in your workplace. In addition, you can have accountability and a mullet in your headshot. You don’t have to choose between fun and winning in business.

**Two points of application for humor in meetings & talks:**

> Make a sandwich: state your point, illustrate it with humor, and remake the point again
> Test your story on a spouse/trusted friend who will be brutally honest

I’m rooting for you.

Steve Scherer is Vice President of Sales at CCB Technology.
In other news...

**CENTRISYS / CNP WINS WMC WISCONSIN MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Centrisys/CNP, a leading manufacturer of decanter centrifuges and advanced biosolids treatment technologies HQ’d in Kenosha, has been named the Grand Award winner of the 33rd Annual Manufacturer of the Year Award in the small category (1-99 Wisconsin employees).

There were a total of seven winners for various categories out of the 26 nominees from around the state. Winners are recognized for quality careers, good business practices, financial growth, innovative processes, and reinvestment into local communities.

**TWO KENOSHA AREAS HIGH SCHOOLS SELECTED FOR A WELDING EDUCATION INITIATIVE AS DEMAND FOR WORKERS SKILLED IN TRADE ESCALATES**

Indian Trail High School and Academy in Kenosha and Central High School in Paddock Lake have been selected to take part in an education initiative that aims to increase the number of welders to help meet demands of more than 300,000 needed nationwide for at least the next four years.

The two local high schools will be among 16 new schools participating in the Airgas’ High School Welding Education Initiative. Each of the school programs was chosen to participate based on four key factors: “a high, unmet need at the school; a productive welding program with the potential to graduate job-ready welders; passionate teachers; and enthusiastic local Airgas champions,” according to the release.

**ULINE TO EXPAND FURTHER, CREATING 120 JOBS WITH KENOSHA WAREHOUSE LEASE**

Uline has leased another 756,728 SF of distribution space just across from the interstate from its recently completed the third and fourth warehouses on its Kenosha campus.

The building will add 120 jobs across three shifts. The company earlier this year reported to the Milwaukee Business Journal that it hired 700 people in southeast Wisconsin last year and 1,500 elsewhere in North America.

Uline’s largest recent Kenosha County project was the completion last year of two buildings with a combined 1.7 million square feet on its Kenosha property.

**HWY 50 CORRIDOR IN PADDOCK LAKE IS GROWING, POISED FOR MORE SOON**

On the Highway 50 corridor, from Bristol through Paddock Lake, there will soon be a Kwik Trip, Culver’s, Scooter’s Coffee, Dunkin’ Donuts and an assisted living center.

Additionally, a clothing retailer – which would be the first west of I-94 in Kenosha County – has reportedly been searching for space. It is anticipated the projects already underway or set to begin in 2022 will increase the value of Paddock Lake by $10 to $12 million.

The $12 million reconstruction of Highway 50 through downtown Paddock Lake is expected to make the area even more attractive to developers. The final design has been completed and construction is expected to begin in September 2022.

“We’re happy that business is attracted to Paddock Lake. It improves the quality of life for our residents. That is the whole goal here.” – Paddock Lake Administrator Tim Popanda

Read more about these stories and others at kaba.org/news/list.
Kenosha Emerging Leaders Academy (KELA) planned at former Brown Bank site

A program designed to create opportunities for youth, and a talent pipeline for local colleges and employers, is expected to open in Kenosha’s former Brown Bank building by next spring.

Known as the Kenosha Emerging Leaders Academy, the initiative is a partnership between the city and several local education institutions, companies and organizations. The city has begun renovating the building, located at 2222 63rd St. in Kenosha’s Uptown neighborhood.

Along with other initiatives like the nearby Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood planned at the former Chrysler plant site, KELA is part of the city’s plan to retain young residents through career development, higher education, training, and career opportunities in the trades, business, technology and entrepreneurship.

PROVIDE YOUR INPUT ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN & UPTOWN COMMUNITIES!

Downtown Kenosha, Inc., Uptown Kenosha, Inc., the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, and Main Street America are working together to gather perspectives about Kenosha. Local businesses and community members are encouraged to provide their input via one or both of the surveys below.

Kenosha Community Survey | link: bit.ly/Kenosha_Community_Survey_2022

Through this survey, we’re seeking your input and insights to inform the development of local market-based strategies to enhance the local business environment, advance economic opportunity and quality of life for residents, and position Uptown and Downtown as destinations for residents and visitors alike.


This survey is intended for owners of small businesses in Uptown and Downtown Kenosha. It includes up to 20 questions and will likely take 5-8 minutes to complete.

Do the Right Thing, cont.

< continued from page 9

You shut down the plant for my son.

With this profound and simple statement, Junior’s father illuminated the core of leadership: A regard for common humanity. Recognizing that people’s needs matter. Doing the right thing at the right time. Acting from the best possible values.

To learn more, visit www.livingasaleader.com/book. Aleta Norris is a leadership expert and Principal at Living as a Leader LLC.
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