

The Milwaukee-Madison Corridor:

BUILDING FOR TOMORROW

*With its solid business foundation,
an economic region looks ahead.*

In the Milwaukee-Madison Corridor, civic and business leaders are engaged in plans and partnerships needed to build an economy that will prosper well into the 21st century. Their job will be made much easier by the fact that the foundation necessary for building such an economy is already in place.

There is no lack of enthusiasm for what lies ahead. In October, when the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce unveiled its Blueprint for Economic Development, a new strategy for economic growth, it was hoped that as many as 800 people would attend. Instead, says Timothy R. Sheehy, president

of the MMAC, 1,500 people packed the Midwest Express Center. "Now," says Sheehy, "we're hard at work organizing the business leadership around the Blueprint's agenda, and executing that agenda."

The spectrum of companies that flourished in the corridor area reflects the region's economic diversification. Northwestern Mutual, Harley Davidson, Oscar Mayer, Briggs & Stratton, Miller Brewing, and Johnson Controls are but a few of the many names that elicit almost instant recognition throughout the country, if not the world.

But it isn't only the successes of the past that hold promise for the region's economic aspirations. Despite the nation's economic downturn, new business start ups in the state totaled almost 22,000

in 2001, a six-percent increase over 2000. And, according to state officials, new business start ups were up 15.6 percent for the first six months of 2002.

Confidence in the economic future has bred commitment, and there are few better examples of that than Wisconsin Energy Corporation. Based

in Milwaukee, the \$8.4 billion holding company is in the early stages of a 10-year, \$7 billion strategy to meet Wisconsin's growing energy needs. The willingness to earmark so much time and money is based firmly on conviction. "We looked at the prospects and we think they are excellent," says Chairman, President and CEO Richard A. Abdo. By the company's reckoning, an increase in jobs,

households and population in Wisconsin will bring about a rapidly growing demand for electricity. Satisfying that demand, which is increasing at about three percent annually, will require planning and investment.

Wisconsin Energy is located in its historic Public Service Building, completed in 1906. Its utility subsidiaries serve one million electric customers and almost as many gas customers in Wisconsin.



Left: Madison is Wisconsin's state capital and the home of the University of Wisconsin's flagship campus. Center: The Milwaukee Art Museum features a striking addition, designed by Santiago Calatrava. Right: Opened in 1998, the Midwest Express Center is Milwaukee's new convention facility.

sin and Upper Michigan. Last April, subsidiary Wisconsin Electric-Wisconsin Gas became We Energies. The name change, says Abdo, was part of Wisconsin Energy's determination to consolidate its image and its resources within the state. "We needed to get back in the game here at home," he says.

The company has done so in a very big way. In the short term, it has set about improving operating systems for the benefit of customers. Longer term, the strategic plan — known as Power the Future — would result in the largest construction project in the state's history. Among other things, it calls for \$3 billion to build 2,800 megawatts of new generation, \$1.3 billion to add capacity and reduce emissions at existing facilities, and \$2.7 billion to upgrade the distribution system.



Abdo leaves no doubt about the need for Milwaukee and Madison to position themselves for the future, or his company's part in what's to come. "We view our role as absolutely critical," he says.

Yet another perspective on the future can be found at University Research Park, which is a conduit for the transfer of technology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to the private sector. UW-Madison, the oldest and largest of The University of Wisconsin System's excellent four-year campuses, is second nationally in attracting research money. It includes among its faculty and alumni 17 Nobel Prize winners. The Madison campus, with an enrollment of 42,000, has a long history of research breakthroughs. One of the most recent examples was the stem cell research of James Thompson, Ph.D.

University Research Park has its 255-acre, 34-building campus in a residential area of Madison. A recent count indicated that more than 100 businesses employing some 3,000 people are located in the park, and approximately half of these enterprises

had a connection to the university. The campus is also home to the MG&E Innovation Center, a scientific incubator, which provides a flow of technology from UW-Madison to the marketplace. Founded in 1989, it has helped launch more than 50 companies.

The University Research Park is at the heart of an emerging technology corridor anchored by Milwaukee and Madison. In Dane County, which is home to Madison, high-tech jobs now account for eight percent of employment, but are expected to grow at a rate of about 10 percent annually. The area reportedly has more than 440 technology firms, with 25,000 employees and a payroll of more than \$2 billion.

All of this bodes well for the city of Madison, the capital of Wisconsin. Consistently ranked as one of America's "best" cities, Madison this past summer played host to the 2002 U.S. Conference of Mayors 70th Annual Meeting. The event was held at The Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, which was built in 1997 along the water's edge of Lake Monona and is based on plans of architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Among several scheduled construction projects is a world-class downtown arts facility, Overture Center, made possible by a \$100-million gift from Madison businessman and philanthropist Jerry Frautschi. The Center is the work of architect Cesar Pelli.



Far left: Milwaukee's classic Public Service Building is the headquarters for We Energies and its parent company, Wisconsin Energy Corporation.

Left: Downtown Milwaukee is enjoying a construction boom.

But Madison isn't the only metropolitan area benefiting from new construction. Milwaukee, Wisconsin's largest city with 597,000 people, has a downtown that's humming. "We're bucking a national trend," says Julie Penman, commissioner of city development, referring to the preponderance of construction projects put on hold in many cities due to the economic slowdown. The Shops at Grand Avenue recently undertook a \$17 million renovation. Cathedral Place, a \$50 million development, will add 150,000 square feet of Class A office space and 36 condominium units, and a new investment of \$50 million in 875 East Wisconsin will add another



The Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison, built in 1997, is based on architectural designs first presented by Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1930s.

213,000 square feet of office space. As for living space, Kilbourn Tower Condominiums will add 59 luxury condos with prices ranging from \$500,000 to \$2 million.

Downtown housing has, in fact, been a priority in Milwaukee. More than 3,400 units have been built, with plans calling for 500 new units a year for the next 20 years. The push for such housing has much to do with making the city an attractive place for young people. "We're working as a region to attract and retain the best and brightest of Milwaukee," says Penman, who points out that the city is home to 64,000 college students.

Keeping young people close to home is also on the mind of the MMAC's Timothy Sheehy. The organization's 2,500 member companies employ 300,000 people, many in the manufacturing area, and they're going to need the best and the brightest. Like so many others, Sheehy is determined to see that the jobs and the people needed to fill them are there in the years ahead. "We're selling shares in the future of Milwaukee," he says.

The same could be said of Madison, and in both instances the people who live and work there are investing in the future. ©

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