



TOP STORIES OF 2020: No. 10 Somers Development

December 22, 2020

Story by Kenosha News

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Dec. 22, 2020

In some cases plans have been in the works for several years. In other cases it was earth movers actually digging into the ground.

Wherever in the process, the development boom continued for Kenosha's suburban areas in 2020, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Projects in the City of Kenosha near I-94 and in Pleasant Prairie are worth noting and we'll talk about those in the days ahead. But it was development and development proposals in Somers that really stood out this year and ranked No. 10 in this year's countdown of the Top 10 local news stories of 2020.

Stories descending to the No. 1 story of the year will run through the Dec. 31 issue.

Somers continued its transformation from rural community that began in earnest several years ago with the development of the Somers Market commercial area and more recently with the warehouse developments near the intersection of highways S and H.

Residential development really came into the spotlight this year.

People were moving in to completed units while work continued at the Hawthorn Apartments site at Highway E and Green Bay Road. The 200+ unit development is valued at \$30 million.

Meanwhile, about a mile to the south, the Market Square Apartments, developed by S.R. Mills, chief executive officer of the Bear Real Estate Group, seem to be a stabilizer that have helped to bring on new development to the area. The apartments have a 90% occupancy rate. The 330-unit complex was first proposed in 2014. Mills suggested the timing was right because of the influx of new jobs predicted because of industrial development and expansion along Interstate 94.

Bear Development is also the company behind the senior housing project under construction at the former Parkview Tavern site, on Sheridan Road west of Carthage College. The development will feature 80 senior housing units and 16 side-by-side units and is projected to add between \$10 and \$15 million in value to the village.

Farther up on Sheridan, plans were floated in May for a 96-unit, four-story apartment complex on a 5.57-acre lakefront site at 743-45 Sheridan Road, between Seventh and Eighth streets, just south of Overlook Park.

The concept plan, a year in the making, was floated before the Somers Plan Commission by David Wallach, CEO of Blue Paint Development and Wally Walls, a construction material manufacturing, engineering and design company based in Kenosha.

A site plan for a 506-unit residential development called Somersville proposed behind Somers Elementary School at Highway E and 72nd Avenue (Highway EA) received approval from the Village Board in December.



Kenosha-based Land Quest, in partnership with West Allis-based Cardinal Capital is behind the proposed development features a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom townhomes and apartments, most with attached garages, and three-bedroom duplexes with basements and attached garages.

Pritzker archives

A virtual groundbreaking ceremony took place in October and grading work began around the same time for the Pritzker Archives and Memorial Park Center on a 288-acre campus on Highway E near 100th Avenue, east of the interstate.

The project is planned to be completed in phases over an estimated 10 years. The first phase of the project is to include the Pritzker Military Archives Center. Construction is planned to follow on the Midwest Firearms Education & Training Center and Cold War Veterans Memorial, while the building of commercial archival space is proposed to be completed on demand.

“The development of this project is critical for our economy,” said Missy Hughes, Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. secretary and CEO. “Various communities in Wisconsin depend on tourism to bring revenue. Having a special project like this in a unique village and town like Somers gives us the opportunity to draw new visitors that will help our community prosper.”

Commercial development

Several commercial projects and proposals in Somers also grabbed headlines in 2020. Opening its doors in late November was Oakfire Pizzeria Napoletana at 3552 Market Lane. It is the second location for Oakfire, with its just off the lakefront in Downtown Lake Geneva. The 10,500-square-foot Somers location that also includes a restaurant and full bar.

Plans were unveiled to village officials in mid December for a “Petroleum Travel Center” at Highway E, between I-94 and the east frontage road. The multi-tenant commercial development proposal, which has not yet received approval, was presented to village officials by developer Rick Walia and architect Bill Morris, the former Somers village and town administrator. Plans call for a travel center with diesel fueling bays for seven semi-trailer trucks and a convenience store; a hotel; a multi-tenant commercial building; six stand-alone retail buildings; and a drive-through lane at each building.

Meanwhile, Golden Oil Co., owner of the Kenosha Travel Plaza, 11800 Burlington Road (Highway S) in Somers, has started construction of a two-story Amoco gas station and convenience store facility in east Somers that will serve as its corporate headquarters.

The 7,500-square-foot facility at the northwest corner of Highway E (12th Street) and 22nd Avenue will also contain three fast food restaurants, including Subway, Hunt Brothers Pizza and Chester’s Chicken, according to Paul Bhardwaj, the chief executive officer and founder of Janesville-based Golden Oil.