

Footnotes...

FIRST QUARTER 2008

Forum to support Community Justice Council

The Forum has reached agreement with the recently formed Community Justice Council to become its research arm. The council is made up of 27 members from all levels of government and a variety of agencies, legal groups, and non-profits. Its purpose is to “ensure crime reduction, victim support, offender accountability, restorative community-based programs” by coordinating services and resources.

The council’s executive committee includes Chief Judge Kitty Brennan; Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke, Jr.; Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker; Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett; Milwaukee Police Chief Ed Flynn; Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm; Milwaukee County Sheriff’s Office Inspector Kevin Carr; Milwaukee County Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr.; State of Wisconsin First Assistant Public Defender Tom Reed; and Benedict Center Executive Director Kit Murphy McNally.

“Having taken part in or observed similar efforts in the past, we have seen many fail due to lack of sufficient staff support and follow through,” says Forum President Rob Henken, who sees the partnership as an opportunity to make a significant impact on one of the primary issues affecting the community. “This effort could be a shining example of inter-governmental cooperation in our region and we look forward to helping it succeed.”

Survey assesses status of region’s child care

More than 400 regional child care providers responded to a recent Forum mail survey assessing early childhood care and education in southeastern Wisconsin. Respondents included group child care centers, family child caregivers, and preschools. The following are preliminary results:

- Three-fourths of respondents (76%) are not accredited child care providers. Nine percent are working toward accreditation and 13% are accredited.
- One-fourth of respondents (26%) reported using achievement tests to measure children’s progress. Fifty-nine percent used no achievement tests.
- When asked about the greatest need in staff training, respondents said behavior management (e.g., discipline) (15%); education and care of young children with disabilities (10%); and measuring children’s progress (8%).

The survey is part of a three-year project on regional early childhood education policy. As the Forum issues reports, they will be posted at www.publicpolicyforum.org.

Property value growth slows but still healthy in southeastern Wisconsin

Illinois border counties continue to lead way

A Forum analysis of property values in southeastern Wisconsin counties reveals a growth rate of 6% last year, the slowest since 2004, and for some counties, the past decade. Counties bordering northern Illinois showed the strongest growth.

“While this is a significant decrease from the past several years, it’s still healthy,” says Forum President Rob Henken. “The key question is whether growth will stabilize at this level or continue to decline.”

The slowdown was not unexpected given the national downturn in values and the highly explosive growth of recent years. Of significance, however, was that the region grew more slowly than the state for the first year since 2002. Overall growth in Wisconsin was 6.2%. From 2005-2006, the region grew 10.7%; the state 9.6%.

The downturn could have impacts on public policy. Property tax caps could become more restrictive as growth in values and new construction declines. This may challenge governments and school districts at a time when budgets are squeezed by increased fuel costs and increased demand for social services.

Walworth and Kenosha counties – both of which border northern Illinois – had the highest property value growth rates in 2006-2007 among the region’s seven counties. Walworth saw its tax base grow 10.5%; Kenosha was next at 7.2%. In residential property value growth, the same scenario was true: Walworth topped the list with a 12.6% growth rate; Kenosha was second at 7.7%. During the last decade, Walworth and Kenosha counties had the greatest property value growth in the region.

“Other Forum reports, in particular the income migration study, and this new data suggest there are benefits from closer ties to northern Illinois,” says Henken.

Milwaukee and Waukesha counties had the slowest overall growth rates in the region, 5.5% and 5.1% respectively. Milwaukee County saw a steep decline in residential property value growth, falling from 11.5% (2005-2006) to 5.0% (2006-2007).

Footnotes (published quarterly)

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Report sponsored by:



Update shows opportunity to increase TIF usage

In an update to a report done three years ago, the Forum found that usage of tax increment financing has changed little in southeastern Wisconsin even though it's one of government's most powerful economic development tools.

Despite having 176 TIF districts scattered throughout the region's seven counties accounting for \$8.4 billion in property value, the tool still is used less than in the rest of the state. Yet there is sufficient capacity to do more. The update found that only 14 of the 56 municipalities currently using TIF in southeastern Wisconsin are "TIF'd out," i.e., the value of existing TIFs exceeds 12% of a municipality's equalized assessed value.

"There is no doubt that TIF use has increased since our last report in 2005, but it still lags areas outside the region," says Senior Researcher Ryan Horton, who wrote the original report and the update.

Under city of Milwaukee mayor Tom Barrett, TIF use has increased. Since 2004, expenditures have averaged \$66.2 million annually, up from \$46.6 million annually during the last two years of Mayor Norquist's administration.

"Of course the projects have to be there for municipalities to do more," Horton says, "but there are things that can be done to stimulate and facilitate usage." He suggests the following:

- Use TIF to compete globally, to strengthen the region's competitive position;
- Development of economic development plans so that developers know what projects would be considered for TIF;
- Readily available results of current and past TIF districts;
- Better due diligence of incoming TIF proposals to assure greater efficiency and success;
- Greater engagement and education of the public in the TIF approval process.

Forum submits proposal to assist audit of cultural and parks assets

The Cultural Alliance of Greater Milwaukee and the Greater Milwaukee Committee have asked for a Forum proposal to assist those organizations in their audit of the region's cultural and recreational amenities. The Forum's proposal includes help in three areas:

- An analysis of funding trends and needs for all Milwaukee County-owned cultural amenities;
- An historical and current analysis of the operating and capital funding of the Milwaukee County parks system;
- An assessment of historical and current public funding for quality-of-life programs in Waukesha, Ozaukee, Racine, Kenosha, Washington, and Walworth counties.

Hold or cleared for takeoff

What's next for Mitchell International Airport?

Milwaukee County's airport – one of the nation's fastest growing – is at a crossroads. Can it maintain its climb and remain a good neighbor with surrounding communities? When will parallel runways be needed? Are there now enough gates?

Join Barry Bateman, airport director; Ryan McCue, mayor of Cudahy; and Scott Dickson, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of Midwest Airlines, as they explore Mitchell International's role in keeping the region globally competitive.

To sign up for the May 8th Viewpoint luncheon, please go to: www.publicpolicyforum.org/events.php

Viewpoint
sponsored by:



Farewell

Jeff,
thanks for 13 great years.
Chuc may man



Jeff Browne addresses his last Forum annual meeting. After 13 years at the Forum (six as president), Browne decided to retire and focus on establishing economic and social ties between southeastern Wisconsin and Vietnam. **Inset picture:** Forum Chairman Bill Haberman (left) and new Forum President Rob Henken (right) present Browne with an engraved globe to commemorate his new career in working with Vietnam.

Going nowhere in Milwaukee

Forum President Rob Henken was a panelist on a recent 4th Street Forum, *Transportation Gridlock: Going Nowhere in the 21st Century?* Because of the Forum's interest in mass transit and its upcoming report on the county's transit financial problems, Henken was asked to participate. "There are no easy options for adequately funding the transit system because we've been applying quick fixes just to get us through the next year," Henken said during the discussion. "Unfortunately, we are almost to the point where there is no next year." Also on the panel were Kerry Thomas, of Transit Now; Pete Beitzel, of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce; and State Representative Jeff Stone.

Viewpoints take on tough issues



Panelist comments elicited audience questions.



Left to right on stage: Chuck Harvey, Tim Sullivan, John Shiely, Paul Purcell, Jeff Joerres, and Rick Armbrust

Perhaps no other Forum Viewpoint resulted in more media coverage than the CEO panel on the region's global competitiveness on January 10. It was also the Forum's largest Viewpoint ever, attracting almost 250 attendees. Five CEOs, including John Shiely, of Briggs & Stratton; Tim Sullivan, of Bucyrus Int'l; Jeff Joerres, of Manpower; Paul Purcell, of Robert W. Baird; and Rick Armbrust, of The Oilgear Co., spoke candidly about the region's shortcomings and advantages. The tenor of the discussion was that the region needs to quit talking about what needs to be done to enhance competitiveness and start acting. Chuck Harvey, Johnson Controls' vice president of diversity and public affairs, moderated the discussion.

Viewpoint sponsored by: **AON** Johnson Controls **National Survey & Engineering** **R.A.SMITH & ASSOCIATES, INC.**

Candidates for Milwaukee city attorney squared off at a Forum Viewpoint on March 6. Andrew Shaw, city of Milwaukee mayoral candidate, also spoke. The sparring between incumbent city attorney Grant Langley and his opponent, State Representative Pedro Colon, became quite vigorous over issues, such as the city attorney's proper role in stemming the tide of violent crime. Shaw spoke extensively about the need for light rail in Milwaukee to give people the opportunity to obtain and hold jobs. He also said that having an Asian as mayor (Shaw is Korean) would be a great selling point for the city and its efforts at diversity.



Debate sponsored by:

MICHAEL BEST & FRIEDRICH LLP

Scott Walker

On February 21, the Forum held a debate for Milwaukee county executive candidates. Incumbent Scott Walker and State Senator Lena Taylor presented distinct choices for voters. Bill Holahan, UWM economics professor (far right podium, top picture), moderated the debate, which was co-hosted by the Milwaukee Press Club.



Lena Taylor



Pedro Colon (left); Grant Langley (below)



Andrew Shaw

Forum expands board of trustees

Eleven new trustees elected at annual meeting

Jeffrey M. Barth

Tax Partner, Deloitte Tax LLP

Thomas A. Brophy

Director of Community Affairs, Medical College of Wis.

Jeffrey C. Browne

President, Vietnomics

Thomas E. Hlavacek

Executive Director, Alzheimer's Association of Wisconsin

Bruce A. Johnson

Vice President, Business Development, Aon Corporation

Daniel J. McCarthy

Director of Urban Development, Towne Investments

Karen Ordians

Executive Director, Children's Health Alliance of Wis.

Rachel Roller

Vice President, Government Relations, Aurora Health Care

Timothy W. Somers

Executive Vice President, U.S. Bank, N.A.

Howard A. Sosoff, CPA

Managing Partner, BDO Seidman, LLP

Julie Swiderski

Vice President – Government and Community Relations, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

Forum to roll out transit report

With sharply declining ridership and an escalating fiscal crisis caused by depletion of reserves and deferral of bus purchases, the Milwaukee County Transit System is at a crossroads. The system's problems will be the subject of a Forum report due out in early May. "We will be analyzing the factors that brought us to this point and outlining a number of possible options to help alleviate the system's financial predicament," says Forum President Rob Henken. "Our goal is to provide a menu of options that can be used to address this situation now." The report also will look at comparisons with other cities and at ridership trends during the past decade.

New members since start of 2008:

Brophy, Thomas A.
Commercial Association of Realtors Wisconsin
Cultural Alliance of Greater Milwaukee
Johnson Direct LLC
Literacy Services of Wis.
Pasch, Sandra
Pieper, Chip

Planning Council for Health and Human Services, Inc.
Reese, Christine A.
Stone, State Rep. Jeff
Walker, Sean M., CPA
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare