

Alderman Backes Update

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Thanksgiving is nearly upon us already! I'm thankful that life is *slightly* less busy for me than normal. The South Milwaukee High School fall play, *Little Women*, has wrapped, and the kids who participated did INCREDIBLE work. I'm so proud of that group—and also a bit exhausted!

While that job has taken up a lot of my focus over the last week or two, there are also some really big things (and other not as big but exciting things) happening in the city of South Milwaukee as well!

Let's take a look!

Former Bucyrus campus development

By now, you're likely well aware of the new development that will be occurring at the former Bucyrus campus starting this spring. After about three and a half years of various iterations of project proposals, developer Scott Crawford Inc. will be moving forward with a \$50 million mixed-use development.

The city has already shared various articles on its social platforms, including one in the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), but here are a few of the highlights:

- There will be 171 total rental units, 81 of which will be dedicated as affordable housing, with the rest at market rate
- Three former Bucyrus structures will be repurposed into housing: the Heritage, Corporate, and Technical buildings.
- There will also be a brand new three-story building with townhomes on the west side of the property, near the train tracks
- Additional amenities include an art alleyway, a playground, bike racks, and commercial space
- The developer received \$2.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds and \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding from Milwaukee County

This project is an incredible opportunity for our city. It could completely remake the downtown area that has already seen some significant steps forward in recent years. There will now be a large influx of residents directly in the downtown area, which will ensure that area becomes even more full of life.

It also activates a space that has spent essentially the last decade dormant. There was little chance these office buildings would ever be used for that purpose again, so this development is a responsible use of existing space while being able to preserve some historic structures.

There will be a lot more information to come, but to me, this is incredibly exciting. The developer reported at our council meeting a couple weeks ago that this project would likely break ground in March 2025 with a target completion date of September 2026.

Shop Small Saturday: World Tour returns!

Some of you may remember the Shop Small World Tour that was organized by some of the business owners in our downtown district last year on Small Business Saturday (which is the day after Black Friday). The event is happening again this year, and it promises to be even bigger and better.

It will still have many of the same features of last year, with businesses all representing different countries through themed decorations, treats, music, etc. This year, to ensure even more businesses get traffic and to enhance the experience for guests, the plan is to have a shuttle bus that will take patrons on a loop of the participating businesses throughout the day.

The owners of Bakehouse 23, Parkway Floral, and Omen came to the council with a \$1,000 Bucyrus Grant request to cover some of the hard costs of the event. Their breakdown showed about a \$2,000 hard cost, and with the success of the event last year and the good this event does for the city, I recommended doubling the grant request to cover almost all of those costs.

To me, it's an amount that barely puts even the tiniest dent into the funds we have available through the Bucyrus Grant, and it's exactly the kind of thing the grant money was meant to support.

A majority of the council agreed, and in a 7-1 vote (with the sole dissent coming from Alderperson Pieper), the council agreed to the \$2,000 grant.

I'm looking forward to bringing my kids out on that day to a number of the businesses and to seeing what everyone does with the theme!

Budget meetings next week!

The annual budget is set for approval next week. After our finance committee met and worked through many of the key details in October, we're set for a public hearing and then final approval.

Monday at 6 PM there will be a public hearing at which any member of the public can come and speak about the budget. Then, on Tuesday at 6 PM there will be a special meeting of the Common Council, at which the 2025 annual operating budget will be approved (and there will be other issues on that meeting as well).

Rarely do we have members of the public attend or speak at these meetings, but I know there are many people that have opinions about how the city manages and spends taxpayer money. If you are one of these people, I encourage you to attend next week and take part in this critical process.

Lots of exciting things happening lately; there are some folks working really hard to make this city the best it can be. I'm excited to be a tiny part of it.

I hope you all have a happy and restful Thanksgiving!

If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, email Alderman Backes at tbackes@smwi.org.