

## Development in overdrive in Somers

February 10, 2020

Story by Kenosha News

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Feb. 10, 2020



**SOMERS** — The turn of the decade marked a point of great change in Somers, and 2020 will be another year of growth, village president George Stoner said.

“It was a great year here,” Stoner said of 2019. “We got a lot accomplished, and 2020 will be a continuation of that.”

Apartment complexes, new senior housing, commercial development and infrastructure projects that filled the village docket are coming to fruition, and the upcoming construction season will be busy.

“You know, nobody likes changes, but it had to come,” Stoner said.

**Commercial development** Oakfire Pizzeria, a 10,000-square-foot restaurant slated to open in June at Somers Market Center north of Washington Road and west of Green Bay Road, is one positive example of the development boon in Somers, Stoner said.

It is the restaurant’s second location. The first opened in Lake Geneva in 2015.

The restaurant will feature an open-concept kitchen with two wood-fired pizza ovens, 30 varieties of Neapolitan-style pizzas, indoor and outdoor seating, a 100-seat bar area and private event spaces. The restaurant and bar menu also includes pastas, appetizers and 20 tap beers.

The list of new businesses that have already opened in area is long, Stoner said. It includes Firestone, Starbucks, Shopko Opticals and a nail salon.

**Residential development** The commercial development would not have occurred without new housing, such as Mills Market Lane north of Walmart and Sam’s Club, Stoner said. Another 50 units were recently completed there, bringing the total to 330.

“That was the key component that spurred that whole area,” Stoner said. “Without that apartment complex going in, none of that other stuff would have happened.”

Construction of the Hawthorn Apartments buildings is ongoing at Highway E and Green Bay Road. This will add 214 more units, which are expected to be ready for occupancy in May.

Also, Bear Development has broken ground at the former Parkview Tavern site, located on Sheridan Road west of Carthage College, which will feature 80 senior housing units and 16 side-by-side units.

“We are very excited about that one because it will be a nice senior citizen housing project that overlooks Carthage College,” Stoner said.

**Public services** Stoner said additional public services needed to support the residential development is offset by increases in the tax base.



“We just bought two fire trucks and two ambulances,” Stoner said. “We wouldn’t have been able to do any of that if we hadn’t had this development.”

Stoner added that a third shift of dedicated coverage by the Kenosha County sheriff’s department will be added in October. The full financial impact of this in 2021 will be \$500,000.

“According to the Sheriff’s Department, Somers is the busiest community in Kenosha County, and that’s because everything is happening around here,” Stoner said.

**Highway projects** In the meantime, Stoner said he is working with the sheriff’s department to ensure a presence in the areas experiencing construction-related traffic impacts. Highways KR and 142 will be under construction this year, and traffic is expected to increase on Highway E.

“Highway E will be the main road,” Stoner said. “I have a lot of concerns about that.”

The Highway KR project has been an exercise in compromise, Stoner said. During the planning process last year, the state Department of Transportation agreed to realign Highway EA with 90th Street in Racine County at the intersection of KR.

“The realignment will happen on the Mount Pleasant side,” Stoner said.

He said the DOT also responded to concerns by residents and agreed to use a soft median on Highway KR so those who live along the new highway can exit their driveways to the east and west.

**Infrastructure projects** The DOT is also working to alleviate flooding issues in the area as part of the Highway KR project.

“They have really stepped up to the plate,” Stoner said. “They are building a three-tier retention pond on the northeast corner of KR and the interstate to intercept the water coming out from Yorkville. It’s going to slow the flow down. Our road there, 113th Avenue, won’t be flooded anymore.”

The DOT has also agreed to pay for half the cost of relocating the sewers near the Union Pacific tracks and will use retention ponds to correct water issues at 56th Avenue as part of the project.

Stoner said he is also working with the state Department of Natural Resources on plans to lay new water mains on all of the side streets from 17th Street to Highway KR with funding from the Clean Water Act.

“That will be about a \$3 million project there,” Stoner said.

Rebuilding the three lift stations and lining the sewer in that area is about a \$5 million project, he said.

**Future development** This year will mark the construction of water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer infrastructure to serve the Pritzker military archive center.

“It will open up that whole area — from Highway 142 to Highway E and from the frontage road to 100th Avenue — for development,” Stoner said, adding Pritzker “is putting up \$14.5 million” to cover the cost and will recoup that as more development comes in.

Stoner said discussion is underway with Kwik Trip about the future of 40 acres the company owns at Highway 142.

“They have been chomping at the bit to put a service station there, a restaurant, and a repair center,” Stoner said.