



## Job Center relocation supported in 2022 Kenosha County Budget

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A commitment to relocate the Human Services/Job Center campus to Sun Plaza on 52nd Street was strengthened this week with related costs included in the 2022 Kenosha County Budget.

“I’m pleased that the County Board committed to relocating our human services functions to the Wilson Heights neighborhood,” County Executive Jim Kreuser said Friday. “This will place these vital services in the heart of the community, central to the populations that we serve, while addressing the longstanding challenges of keeping up with a deteriorating and more costly facility on Sheridan Road.”

To accomplish the relocation, the county will forge a public-private partnership with Bear Development to renovate a building owned by Bear in Sun Plaza, at 3446 52nd St. The partnership will allow S.R. Mills of Bear Development to apply for cost-saving tax credits the county would not otherwise qualify for.

It’s a similar arrangement that made possible the relocation last year of Kenosha Human Development Services to Sun Plaza.

County Board Supervisor William Grady, chairman of the Facilities Committee, said relocating the Job Center rather than renovating the existing building at 8600 Sheridan Road was determined to a better option. A needs assessment conducted in May 2019 determined it would cost \$14 million to maintain the campus as is, and more to update it. Renovation at that site would not address its inconvenient location — on Kenosha’s far southeast side — for many residents of the county.

In an interview with BizTimes Milwaukee, S.R. Mills, chief executive officer of Bear Development, said the roughly 430,000-square-foot complex offers a lot of redevelopment opportunities. Plans are not concrete, but the firm has ideas of what uses could be included in the redevelopment project, Mills said.

The complex actually consists of a handful of connected buildings that were constructed between the early 1900s and 1999.



“Given the fact it was really seven buildings that have since been combined into one, there’s a lot of opportunity to have separate, unique spaces,” Mills said.

At least a portion of it will remain offices. Other potential uses include multi-family and hospitality, he said.

The fact Johnson Controls will remain in the building another couple years gives Bear Development time to study the market, Mills said.

Bear Development was attracted to the building due to its historic significance and its location within downtown, said Mills. The developer turned the old Button Block building a couple blocks away, at 500 N. Water St., into a Homewood Suites by Hilton hotel.

Mills said the Johnson Controls campus is well-located, close to Lake Michigan, the Historic Third Ward and I-794.

The Johnson Controls statement concluded, “We are encouraged with the outcome of this sale and excited to remain in the greater Milwaukee area.”