



Knothe &amp; Bruce Architects

Developers are proposing 203 workforce housing units in a mixed-use building in Brookfield.

# Business leaders, residents support workforce housing proposal in Brookfield

## Developers want to address affordable housing shortage

By Hunter Turpin  
hturpin@conley.net.com  
262-513-2681

**BROOKFIELD** — Amid what some stakeholders call a significant shortage of workforce and affordable housing units in Brookfield, developers are proposing 203 workforce apartment units in a mixed-use building in the Bishop's Woods Office Park. In a public hearing Tuesday evening, local-business leaders and residents voiced their support for the project, but some neighbors are concerned the proposal doesn't fit the community.

Developers and those who spoke during the public hearing said that Brookfield is becoming increasingly unaffordable for many people who work in the community such as child care workers or nursing assistants and, as market-asking rents approach \$2,000 per month, this development, which also includes eight live-work units, is necessary for the area's economic future.

"As we work to strengthen the economy in the county, it's important that we we work together to tackle our employers largest, most critical barrier to growth, and that is finding enough qualified workers," said Suzanne Kelley, CEO of

the Waukesha County Business Alliance. "And I'm sure you (the Common Council) have heard that before."

The definition of workforce housing varies, but this development defines it as housing that is affordable to individuals and families making between 40 and 80% of the area median income. Affordable housing, as defined by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), does not exceed 40% of an individual or family's income, though this development is not receiving funding from HUD and these units are not the same as Section 8 Housing, developers said.

In Brookfield, this income would be between \$42,952 and \$85,904, making rents of these units an estimated \$1,073 to \$2,147 per month for the one, two and three-bedroom units, city documents show.

### Public response

Of the 11 people who participated in the public hearing, eight supported the project and three said they were against it.

Beyond the economic benefits of workforce housing, residents also said this type of development would help younger, older and disabled res-

idents find housing in Brookfield rather than needing to move away.

"I have three children with disabilities... we've worked for 30 years as they've grown to teach them independent living skills, but you gotta start with a place to live, and they're on a very fixed income," Brookfield resident Wendy Heyer said. "For my son to be able to find a place to live his best life, he needs low-income housing."

Amy Zimmerman, another resident, said after graduating college she rented in Brookfield for six months, but struggled to find any community as most people her age could not afford to live there. She thinks the community spaces included in this development, like outdoor gathering spaces and a fitness center, will attract young professionals.

"Despite being apartments, that are not property owners, I'm sure there are a lot of good eggs who would be renting them," Zimmerman said.

One resident who spoke against the development said she was concerned about crime and drug use that could accompany it.

"When the city of Brookfield stated it was going to zone part of Bishop's Woods as residential, it was

probably foolish of me to think it would be for a first-class condominium development, in accord with the other prestige condominium developments in Brookfield...," Susan Schmidt said as she read from a letter that a neighbor wrote to the city, she said.

Other concerns that neighbors had were density, traffic and the architecture of the building, which one resident said looked like it was made out of Legos.

The developers, Lincoln Avenue Capital, are requesting that 250 and 350 Bishops Way be rezoned to a Planned Development District (PDD), which is in association with their proposed redevelopment plans for the southeast corner of Bishops Way and Bishops Lane.

Currently, the land is occupied by two office buildings and a parking lot. City officials said these buildings are class C office space, meaning they are functionally obsolete.

"If you sneeze, the power goes out in that office park," Tina Chang, CEO of SysLogic, said when speaking in support of the development.

The Common Council took no action on the rezoning request on Tuesday. The request will return to the Plan Commission for approval.