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Dive into the stories shaping local business.

By Mark Mensheha • August 17, 2020

The **Democratic National Convention** starts today. The pandemic-altered event will be a far cry from what Milwaukee civic and business leaders hoped for when the city was selected as host, but [the showcase still bears watching for reasons beyond the obvious political considerations](#).

Here's what else you need to know to start your new business week.

(If you're reading this because someone forwarded it to you, welcome! Sign up [here](#) for your own edition so you can stay one step ahead.)

Wellness resort targets Atlanta area

Byron E. Small / Atlanta Business Chronicle

Forest property west of Atlanta has been targeted for a wellness resort.

An investor hopes to transform more than 1,100 acres of forest west of Atlanta into [a \\$200 million C-Suite wellness resort](#). **Preserve Life Corp.** is the entity behind the project, which could include up to 6 million square feet of commercial, retail, residential and farm space, according to a conceptual master plan. The targeted area is less than a half-hour drive from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. With that proximity to the world's busiest airport, developers envision the proposed resort as a destination for people around the world seeking respite from their daily lives. A construction timeline for the project and whether it has financing is unclear. **Venkat "Vijay" Thotakura** of Preserve Life declined to answer questions. The company did, however, recently close on the purchase of the 1,100 acres.

In other commercial real estate news:

- **Amazon.com** has [leased 700,000 square feet of warehouse space](#) in Lakeland, Florida, for what the company said will be a new delivery station. The company also is [targeting New Albany, Ohio, northeast of Columbus for a \\$250 million investment](#) for a fulfillment center that could create 1,000 jobs.
- **FedEx Ground** plans [a \\$40 million project](#) in Birmingham, Alabama, that is expected to create 285 full- and part-time jobs at a 290,000-square-foot distribution center.

A region's growth hits a wall



Martin B. Cherry | Nashville Business Journal

Nashville's decade of growth has run into challenges because of the pandemic.

Nashville, Tennessee, entered 2020 on a run few other cities have experienced. The area's unemployment rate was a record 2.8%, down from 10% a decade ago. The larger Davidson County region had scored more than 70 economic development projects — including the likes of **Amazon** and **AllianceBernstein** — in the previous five years, resulting in 22,000 new jobs. Cranes filled the Music City skyline.

A decade of growth now has run into a wall. Since March 13, there have been 20,114 jobs lost in Middle Tennessee, according to Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act filings — and that reflects only a fraction of the actual job losses in area. Here's a look at [what happens when a booming economy runs into a pandemic](#).

Also: The **San Jose Downtown Association** on Friday [laid out a plan](#) to help the retail landscape and small businesses in general in the heart of that California city.

States of crisis



Gary Higgins / Boston Business Journal

Colleges face financial challenges as students return to campus for the fall semester.

Public colleges and universities, like all schools stung by Covid-19, are facing a perfect storm of financial headwinds related to enrollment declines and canceled athletics. It now appears [another major revenue source — taxpayer support — is on the chopping block](#) as states struggle to stay solvent amid the pandemic.

Moody's Investors Service has predicted that tuition as well as housing and dining revenue per student will drop between 5% and 13% for colleges and universities this year. Potential cuts in state and local aid will only add to the uncertainty ahead for public colleges and

universities, many of which already have cut jobs and trimmed programs to weather Covid-19's economic fallout. According to the **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**, some 200,000 state-education employees have been furloughed or laid off since the virus landed in the United States.

An analysis by *The Business Journals* found that state support at 270 public colleges and universities was equal to at least 30% of their total revenue prior to the pandemic, with funding often running well into the tens of millions of dollars, according to the most recent data available from the **U.S. Department of Education**. That means a decision by a state to cut funding could jeopardize additional programs, services and jobs on campuses.

Also: Companies try to be flexible for their employees as [parents juggle back-to-school considerations](#) that are varied and in flux.

Airlines brace for more turbulence



Anthony Bolante / Puget Sound Business Journal

Alaska Airlines is one of several airlines anticipating cutbacks.

Without additional support from Congress, it's [shaping up to be an ugly fall for airline companies](#). **AirInsight** analyst **Addison Schonland** has labeled what is about to happen The Great Shrink of 2020, noting that "the next half of the year is going to be painful."

Airline companies received \$25 billion in government assistance earlier this year, but that funding was designed to support the businesses and their employees through Sept. 30. As of Oct. 1, airlines can start to make staffing cuts, and resizing efforts already are afoot. **Cowen** airlines analyst **Helene Becker** recently told clients her firm doesn't think there's much appetite in Washington, D.C., for more money for airlines after Sept. 30. "Since this is an election year, it is possible there will be some support for this in Washington mere weeks before the election, but we are skeptical at best," Becker said.

Nursing homes battle pandemic challenges



Violeta Alvarez / Houston Business Journal

Dr. Linda Pang, Kelsey-Seybold Clinic

As managing physician of the palliative care and supportive medicine clinic for **Kelsey-Seybold Clinic** in Houston, **Dr. Linda Pang** tends to many of the clinic's more frail and chronically ill patients, a large portion of which stay in nursing and assisted-living facilities. Much like the friends and families of residents, Pang has been largely unable to visit her patients inside of these facilities during the pandemic, moving to telehealth options amid visitation restrictions in place to slow the spread of the virus in congregated living facilities. But with the impact of the pandemic dragging on, [physicians are worried about both the physical and emotional health of residents](#). Outside of hospitals, few industries have been hit harder by the pandemic than the nursing home sector.

"These are older, frailer patients. They're already at higher risk of having these issues," Pang told the *Houston Business Journal*. "On top of it, a lot of times these nursing homes are undergoing the same type of challenges that a lot of us in the health-care field are undergoing, like infection control, personal protective equipment, how do we isolate patients that have this disease, how do we prevent the risk of spread?"

Museum gets a new look



Kenny Yoo / Milwaukee Business Journal

Milwaukee Art Museum

Visitors returning to the **Milwaukee Art Museum** may be comforted as they enter and look up at the famous Santiago Calatrava-designed Quadracci Pavilion with its Burke Brise Soleil wings. They will recognize familiar paintings as they meander through a museum gallery or pause to analyze a Renaissance sculpture. But visitors may also notice the hand sanitizer stations and floor decals promoting proper hygiene and social distancing. They may spot a new piece of artwork, moved from one of the upper galleries, or peer down a narrow artwork nook blocked off by rope. A return to the art museum, which temporarily closed March 15 and reopened to the public July 16, offers both [a small sense of normalcy and escape as well as a brand new experience during the](#)

[pandemic.](#)

Even with reopening task forces, all the necessary sanitation practices in place and an ample supply of personal protective equipment, the greatest challenge facing cultural institutions during the pandemic is one that spins somewhat out of their control: Will people feel comfortable resuming public experiences like a return to museums? "We're really the first cultural organization in Milwaukee that reopened," museum director **Marcelle Polednik** told the *Milwaukee Business Journal*. "It wasn't about how to keep pace. It was about how do we set the pace and how do we set the procedures and protocols that would be helpful for other organizations to follow as much as us."

Also: The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra on Friday unveiled a 10-point Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan that includes the [creation of a chief diversity and inclusion officer position.](#)

Can shortage challenges beer makers



Gary Higgins / Boston Business Journal

Cans have become more popular than bottles for breweries.

Craft breweries have relied on sales of canned, take-out beer to get them through the coronavirus crisis as restaurants and taprooms remained fully or partially closed, but now they face a new threat: [a national can shortage](#). Cans in recent years have become more popular than bottles for breweries around the country because they insulate better against light, are lighter to ship and are less prone to break. That increased demand has turned into a supply problem because of the pandemic. When taprooms and restaurants shuttered overnight, demand for kegs fell. In 2019, the **National Beer Wholesalers Association** said 10% of beer volume was packaged in kegs. In 2020, most of that beer suddenly needed to be packaged in bottles or cans.

Sam Hendler, president of the **Massachusetts Brewers Guild**, told the *Boston Business Journal* the normal lead time for a truckload of cans used to be three to four weeks. Now it's 12 to 14 weeks. Building an inventory has become "mission critical" for breweries, he said, as the wholesale market may be crucial to surviving the winter months.

Got questions? We've got answers.



Getty Images (simonkr)

There are ways to make difficult conversations less challenging.

These are difficult times for employers. Here's a look at some developing trends and how corporate challenges can be addressed, as told to *The Business Journals* from across industry lines:

- If you're faced with having to demote an employee, here are [ways to navigate what can be a difficult conversation](#), according an executive who develops mentoring relationships.
- A corporate consultant outlines why [a merger could help a struggling nonprofit organization survive the pandemic](#).
- A property manager explains how she was able to [lease up a new apartment complex during the pandemic](#).

Also in the headlines



Arnold Wells / Austin Business Journal

World Class Holdings has a visible presence in Austin, Texas.

A federal bankruptcy court judge has ordered **World Class Holdings** to [open up its property management and accounting software](#) to the court-appointed caretaker of two limited partnerships at the heart of a long-running legal dispute. The court order means unprecedented access will be granted to internal records of the **Nate Paul**-led company at a time when the real estate firm is facing mounting legal and financial challenges.

Developer **Elliott Homes Inc.** on Friday broke ground on its **Rio Del Oro** project, [a 3,800-acre development](#) in the Sacramento market slated to provide more than 10,000 homes, 7.6 million square feet of commercial space, a new high school and one of the largest parks in the region, at 130 acres.

The state of California is considering a first-in-the nation proposal to [implement a wealth tax](#) that would set a 0.4% tax rate on all net worth

above \$30 million.

And finally ...



Dilip Vishwanat / St. Louis Business Journal

Carolyn Kindie Betz, St. Louis City SC

When the ownership group of St. Louis' **Major League Soccer** expansion team publicly emerged in October 2018, its leader, **Carolyn Kindie Betz**, used a term — international city — to describe why the region was ripe for soccer. She said MLS was perfect for St. Louis because “we want to be an international city, a destination for tourists and business and young millennial talent. Soccer is what those things are looking for.” Almost two years later, the sentiment has found its way into the team's moniker. The ownership group announced late last week that [the expansion club will be named St. Louis City SC](#).

“In full disclosure, I didn't really fully understand [then] how you name a professional soccer team,” Kindie Betz, the team's CEO, told the *St. Louis Business Journal*. “Over the last few years, I've understood names like ‘City’ and ‘United’ are recognized internationally. To say that I had my heart set on anything would be a lie.” But the ownership group's team name selection reflects the sentiments shared by Kindie Betz at the outset of their bid for a team. She and other members of the team's leadership group said the City SC brand is designed to celebrate St. Louis' diversity and unique neighborhoods and to pay homage to a city steeped in soccer history. It's also about the city's ambition. The franchise is set to begin play in 2023.

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120 W. Morehead Street
Charlotte, NC 28202, USA