



**URBAN SPACESHIP PODCAST, EPISODE #4, May 11, 2021**

**Topic: Housing, Transit and Work in Milwaukee**

Program hosts:

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Michael Bradley - Amateur Demographer, Passionate about Urbanism

Urban Spaceship presented by Greenfire is a civic program that explores the intersection of planning, architecture, housing, development, transportation, placemaking, government, economic development, historic preservation, construction, and design.

Each episode will dive deep into inspiring ideas to make Milwaukee more human-centered, sustainably-developed, and rethink and reframe the very foundation and function urbanism has on our region.

**Podcast 4 Summary:**

Do we need more transit out of the region? More housing near job centers? Or do we need employers that have a demand for talent to move where populations are? Montavius Jones, Michael Bradley, and Jeremy Fojut discuss housing in Milwaukee, map out the region's job centers and recommend housing and transit opportunities for Milwaukee.

**What's caught the panelists' eye in urbanism this week:**

The I-94 saga continues, though the state does plan to refresh the project's environmental impact statement. The Lt. Gov. came out against the project.

The Biden Infrastructure Bill included items that some critics say does not constitute infrastructure. \$85 billion for transit, \$80 billion for inner-city rail over eight years. That's double the size of the current transit allocation. \$115 billion "fix-it first roads," and \$174 billion for electrical vehicles: charging stations, plan for electric federal fleet including USPS and bus fleets. Oshkosh Corporation could benefit from contract and possibly bring work and thousands of jobs to Century City in Milwaukee. Need to consider that we don't have a sustainable electrical grid, and electric cars still bring issues for transportation.

For now, high-income earners are the electric car buyers and benefiting from this, but not the general population. Trillions of dollars in subsidized spending that always finds room for car subsidies and the infrastructure it uses - the roads they use and signage created.

Study on happiness and positive experience for working from home. Claims the higher the commute time, the more loneliness and depression increases. We don't look at the mental health side.

Companies are saying they can't find workers, but they're operating outside of where people live. If they don't have the remote work option, companies have to move where people are located. There's a tradeoff for them buying cheap land in the middle of nowhere, and then not having workers.

Milwaukee hasn't done a good job of selling the benefits of living next to where you work. There's an element of racism in the idea that it's 5 o'clock and you need to go back home to Milwaukee. It would be a compelling story to show how much companies are losing being on the outskirts instead of at Century City. The cost of losing employees is not in their metric to invest. It may be cheap land, but infrastructure comes from the city around it.

The infrastructure municipalities sign up for to attract companies doesn't bear out with taxes. They say it's a great boon for jobs, but the cost of the infrastructure doesn't account for the long-term obligations.

### **Deep Dive Topic: Geography of Jobs & People**

A series of US Census Bureau maps detailing where the workforce lives and where the jobs are concentrated shows the major job centers downtown, along the I-94 and I-41 corridors, Wauwatosa and West Allis. Also just west in Brookfield and Waukesha.

There are 120,000 works downtown, and the maps show they live in Milwaukee County, Ozaukee County, north and south along the lakefront. Very few live on the near north or south sides of Milwaukee – the people who live outside the convenient reach of the transit system. They work in retail and industrial centers in Glendale, Canal Street, Wauwatosa, Oak Creek and Brookfield. Those who work near the Zoo Interchange do not live downtown.

There's an inversion to where people live and work. Live in the inner city – work on outskirts. Blacks have said they feel like they're on a reservation, and the opportunities are not where they are living. Transportation is an issue. They added lines to Oak Creek and Brookfield, but it takes a long time to get there.

There's an entrenched idea of the type of development that is allowed. Mayfair Mall/retail reflects 1950s, not the reality of today. Where do those workers in retail go as there are less and less retail centers? We isolate work from where we live. Seeing some doing great things – West Allis, Walker's Point – where they get top rents next to manufacturing. But even the great development in the Valley didn't include housing, so you can't live next to where you work.

Racial maps show that the N/NW side is majority African American with no significant job centers. Those living on the east side have tighter transportation pattern because of the retail and hospital centers. South side residents have major retail centers on the periphery. The individuals who work there are statistically more low-income.

The division between where people work and where they live brought to light how important the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor will be for reform. The focus has been on getting people out to job centers, but the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor gets it right – they attract employers to the area. That serves as a catalyst and has to be our highest priority. It stands out as an area of opportunity.

Also at issue are the zoning types. Residential houses with a small corridor of businesses in Bay View. For most of the city the zoning in place are zoned for what's already built – if area is mostly single families and duplexes, that's what it's zoned for. Commercial corridors without setback requirements allows for an urban form. City restrictions on units designed too low for projects to get through without getting a variance. Most mixed-use proposals have to go through this process.

Walker's Point stands out for having so many uses – neighborhoods planned for industrial classifications and convert them to other uses. Seeing different venues – The Cooperage on the Harbor, an old industrial warehouse converted to bar, businesses. It's exciting to see it open to allowing it to become business/retail. Overall, the city is not at ease with having that flexibility everywhere else.

There's a need for planning the growth downtown. Northwestern Mutual made a major investment downtown, moving employees from their Franklin campus to the new tower. The news about Milwaukee Tool is positive, with 1200 jobs it can bring.

Other signs of growth include the Michels Corporation in construction. They had been in rural area – Horicon Marsh – a worker dead spot. Building an ambitious site in the city, with a mixed-use complex, and they purchased land for a second phase.

Can see from the maps where the city needs to plan for development.

### **High Note – Highlighting Positive Stories & Projects**

It was great to see the news release about the VA Soldier's Home renovation. This was built after the Civil War and is a spectacular building. It has been converted into 60-80 residences for veterans, with more than 50% leased out. The old theater has been restored, and there are plans to improve other buildings on the grounds. It's one of the treasures of our region.