BUSINESS

Tom Saler: Aging of America will further dampen stock market. **3D**

◀ **Farming:** Irene leaves hard times for East Coast growers. **3D**

Von Maur took liking to location

2013 opening seen in Town of Brookfield

By TOM DAYKIN
tdaykin@journalsentinel.com

For about 10 years, Jim von Maur has been trying to find a way to bring his family-owned, upscale department store into the Milwaukee area.

But it wasn't until the summer of 2009 that he and other executives at Davenport, Iowa-based Von Maur Inc. finally found a way to make that happen.

The retailer had been approached by executives at Marcus Corp., who were pitching a company-owned site on Madison's east side as a redevelopment play. The Marcus team also brought another location for Von Maur to consider: a Town of Brookfield site between W. Blue Mound Road and I-94, east of N. Barker Road.

It was the Brookfield site, home to a former Marcus theater, a former Menards store and a small strip shopping center, that captured the imagination of von Maur and other company executives.

"We were elated," said von Maur, the company's president. "It was the sweet spot we were looking for."

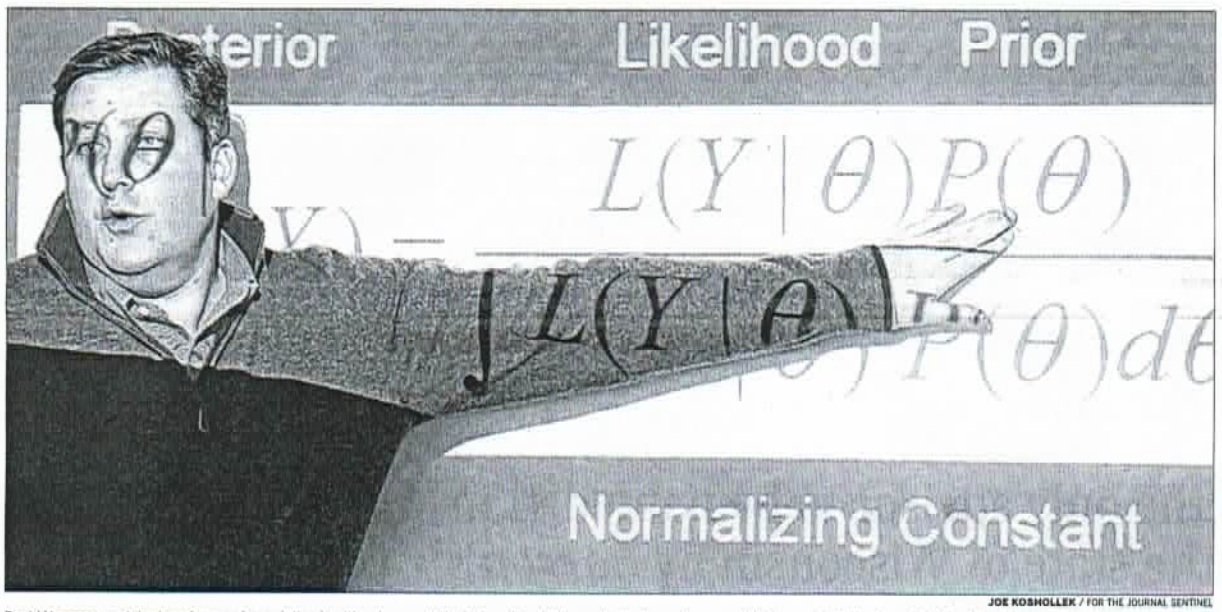
Two years later, a Von Maur department store is to anchor a $100 million retail and office project, known as The Corners, which Milwaukee-based Marcus is developing. Marcus continues to refine the project's design, negotiate leases with other store and restaurant operators, and negotiate public financing assistance with the Town of Brookfield. The plan is to begin site work perhaps this fall, with construction to begin next spring for a

Please see **VON MAUR, 6D**

JEFF SAINLAR / JSAINLAR@JOURNALSENTINEL.COM

The efforts to develop a Town of Brookfield site for Von Maur Inc. are led by Von Maur CFO Bob Larsen (from left) and CEO Jim von Maur; and Katie Falvey, director of real estate for Marcus Corp., and Marcus Corp. CEO Greg Marcus.

UW-Madison researcher's mathematical models look for most effective drugs, treatments



JOE KOSHOLLEK / FOR THE JOURNAL SENTINEL

David Vanness, assistant professor of population health sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, shows a slide from a statistical model in his office. Vanness develops mathematical models to assess the effectiveness of different health care treatments.

Secret to health may lie in numbers

By GUY BOULTON
gboulton@journalsentinel.com

Madison — What is the maximum dose of a drug that will limit side effects to an acceptable level? How many patients would benefit from a treatment and how many would be harmed? Would the potential benefit of screening everyone for a disease outweigh the potential harm to people who receive unneeded care because of inaccurate results?

These are common questions in modern medicine. Yet answering them often would require clinical trials that span decades.

That's not practical or even feasible. Instead, researchers are turning to computer models, meshing math and biology to develop diagnostic tests and treatments.

David Vanness at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health is one of those researchers.

Vanness, an economist, spends a good part of his days writing intricate equations de-

isn't known — about how well a diagnostic test or treatment works.

"My goal is to help take the research that's already being done about new medical technologies and help decision-makers determine whether they are valuable to patients and to society," he said.

The amount of information generated by the advances in medicine often is too overwhelming and too complex to analyze and understand without computer models.

It's an esoteric field — the domain of people with a gift for math — but the work of Vanness and other researchers could one day help ensure that patients receive the most effective care.

"If we could just find efficient ways to capture and analyze that data, we could have a much healthier population."

David Vanness,
researcher, UW-Madison

From page 1

VON MAUR

Parties say project is on schedule

fall 2013 opening of The Corners.

Both von Maur and Greg Marcus, Marcus Corp. chief executive officer, say the project is on schedule, even though Town of Brookfield officials had hoped to have a financing proposal negotiated by early summer. In a joint interview on Friday, von Maur and Marcus said recent bad economic news, including a national unemployment rate that remains above 9%, concerns over European debt defaults and arguments over raising the U.S. debt ceiling, haven't affected the development's prospects.

"We think long term," von Maur said. "You can't look at a business cycle to make a decision on something like this."

Financing first

Marcus, whose company has the private financing lined up to develop The Corners, said work will begin once the public financing and lease commitments are in place. He declined to disclose the names of other prospective stores and restaurants, but said they'll be high-quality operators with long-term staying power.

"We're not a fly-by-night developer," Marcus said. "We're not looking to develop it and then flip it."

The 140,000-square-foot Von Maur will make up roughly one-third of The Corners, which will have about 460,000 square feet of retail and office space on 19 acres.

The conceptual plans call for Von Maur to be near I-94. Other stores and restaurants would be closer to Blue Mound Road.

Offices above the shops and restaurants would account for the remaining space. The open-air development would include a town square, similar to a feature at Bayshore Town Center in Glendale.

A 1,900-space parking deck would be built under the office and retail buildings, with an entrance to Von Maur at the parking deck level along with another Von Maur entrance at the main level of The Corners. The development's ability to keep the parking deck under a 20-foot ceiling — out of inclement weather — is a big selling point for retailers, said Marcus and Katie Falvey, Marcus Corp.'s director of real estate.

"I've noticed we have winter here," Marcus said.

Site benefits

The other selling points include visibility from I-94; quick accessibility to both I-94 and Blue Mound Road, and a location in a growing, affluent area, von Maur said. There's also the advantage of being a new development with a unique design, he said.

"This is not going to be a typical lifestyle center," von Maur said.

The department store chain has long wanted a store in the Milwaukee area, but found its access denied to area malls when rival department store chains invoked their rights under covenants with mall owners to bar Von Maur.

Since plans for The Corners were announced in March, Brookfield Square operator CBL & Associates Properties Inc. has renewed efforts to woo Von Maur. But von Maur and Bob Larsen, Von Maur chief financial officer, said they are committed to The Corners, and haven't had discussions with CBL in months.

Presentation to town

The next major step forward will occur when a detailed public financing proposal is presented to the Town of Brookfield board for its review.

In March, Gov. Scott Walker signed legislation that allows the town to create a tax incremental financing district to help pay for site work and public improvements tied to The Corners. Towns are otherwise not allowed to use such districts with retail projects.

If approved by the board, the town will pay for the road work and other expenses. The property taxes from The Corners would pay off that debt over several years. Once the debt is repaid, the property taxes flow to the town, its school district and other local governments.

Negotiations are still occurring between Marcus and town officials, and a detailed proposal might land in the next month or so, Town Administrator Rick Czopp said.

Marcus said those talks are complicated, but are proceeding amicably.

"We are working at full speed," he said.

Health data holds clues to efficacy

Medical College professor to work on developing software

By GUY BOULTON
gboulton@journalsentinel.com

The information that exists in Medicare billing records, patient registries and electronic health records could help answer one of the most common questions in modern medicine: How well does one treatment work compared with another?

The information could contain the answers to such questions as how often breast cancer reoccurs in women given two different drugs.

"There is a wealth of information there," said Purushottam "Prakash" Laud, a professor of biostatistics at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

The challenge is figuring out how to make the best use of that observational data while protecting patients' privacy. That will require new research methods and new tools.

Laud and a group of colleagues at the Medical College of Wisconsin and the University of Texas have a three-year grant for nearly $1.2 million to develop software to help make better use of the information from Medicare billing records and other large databases.

MARK HOFFMAN / MHOFFMAN@JOURNALSENTINEL.COM

Purushottam "Prakash" Laud, a professor of biostatistics at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Wauwatosa, and a group of colleagues have a three-year grant for nearly $1.2 million to develop software to help evaluate treatments from various medical data.

The information can be used in computer models to get a better sense of how well different treatments work, particularly in real-world settings where patients often differ significantly from those in clinical trials.

The grant was part of the $1.1 billion allocated under the Recovery Act for comparative effectiveness research.

Computer models have become an important tool in medical research, and they could become an essential tool in comparative-effectiveness research.

"Models are a smart way to make use of data," Laud said.

But information from Medicare billing records and other databases has limitations, and researchers must have a way of gauging the limitations and the accompanying uncertainty.

Laud and his colleagues are developing software based on what is called Bayesian nonparametrics, a type of statistical analysis that enables researchers to build models that have fewer assumptions and that are more flexible.

His work starts with his sitting at a desk, with no more than a pen or pencil and a blank piece of paper, thinking about equations.

The group, Laud said, is making headway.

The immediate goal is t publish an academic pape on the method and then mak the software available to re searchers through the Med cal College of Wisconsin an the National Institutes Health.

The long-term goal is fo the software to help researcl ers build better models usin data from Medicare billin records and other database and eventually for those mo els to help determine wha treatments, particularly ne technologies, work best fo patients.

"That is where I woul hope that our success storie come from," Laud said.

From page 1

NUMBERS

Models integrate data

The goal is to give doctors better information on which tests, drugs and procedures work best for specific patients. Too often, that information simply doesn't exist, particularly for new treatments.

"We are always playing catch-up," Vanness said. "The joke in technology assessment is it's always too early to assess a technology until it's too late."

Vanness' expertise is building Bayesian models — a type of statistical analysis used to determine probability and measure uncertainty.

Advances in medicine often start with imperfect evidence and build on that. Bayesian models are a way of gauging how much confidence you can have in research findings, such as whether patients or a specific group of patients would benefit from a treatment.

"That's really what my job is about — trying to find out what the data can tell us that's of value and trying to highlight where it fails and why it fails," he said.

Making sense of data

Computer models enable researchers to integrate and analyze data from different sources, such as clinical trials, medical records and insurance claims.

"You've got to find something to string it all together," Vanness said, "and you use mathematical models and computers to do that."

That, in turn, could help doctors and scientists answer questions about the effective-

JOE KOSHOLLEK / FOR THE JOURNAL SENTINEL

David Vanness conducts a seminar on modeling for UW students. Vanness' work has the potential to identify which health care treatments work better than others.

patients would benefit by detecting the disease early and how many would be harmed by additional tests or unnecessary treatments when the initial results are inaccurate.

"Modeling is a way to help you weigh those trade-offs and understand how important they are," said Douglas Owens, a senior investigator at VA Palo Alto Health Care System and a professor of medicine at Stanford University.

An example is the controversial recommendation that screening most women in their 40s for breast cancer would result in more harm — because of the risk of complications from biopsies when mammograms incorrectly indicate a possible tumor — than the overall benefit of detecting cancer in some women.

The recommendation

statistical tools for analyzing and interpreting data and assessing uncertainty.

"The kind of things we do routinely now would have been very difficult to do 20 years ago," said Owens, the VA Palo Alto investigator.

Models also hold the potential for helping doctors and scientists determine the effectiveness of different treatments more quickly.

For example, more information will become available from electronic health records in the coming decade, such as how patients respond to a specific treatment, and models can help analyze that data.

They also could become an indispensable tool as more is learned about the link between someone's genetic makeup and disease and how he or she may respond to a specific treatment.

sential if the United State and other countries are t slow the rise in health car spending.

Doctors, economists an policy analysts have lon called for more research o comparative effectiveness - research that looks at wha works best for specific pa tients.

The health care reform la allocated a total of $560 mi lion through 2013 and mor than $500 million a year b ginning in 2014 on compari tive-effectiveness research.

In addition, the Recover Act of 2009 allocated $1.1 bi lion for the research.

The initiative will face it share of challenges. The re search can be immensel complex and rarely yield straightforward answers And ways must be found t find answers more quickly.

That will require new way