

The Sign Language Store has lots of help for people with hearing problems.

COMING SATURDAY

## DIGEST

## State improves in economic report

Good grades have put the state of Wisconsin on the honor roll, at least according to an annual economic development report released by a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization.

The Corporation for Enterprise Development gave the state an "A" for economic performance, a "B" for business vitality and a "B" for economic growth potential in its 19th Development Report Card for the States.

The grades are good enough to make Wisconsin one of seven states on the report's "Honor Roll." The only straight "A" states were Massachusetts and Minnesota.

According to the annual report, Wisconsin improved from last year in development capacity, but it is still behind in technology employment and fostering new business.

## Drawstrings lead to clothing recall

Popular college outfitter Steve & Barry's University Sportswear is recalling more than 15,000 children's jackets, sweatshirts and fleece garments sold in Wisconsin last year.

The voluntary recall comes after a Wisconsin Consumer Protection investigation determined that the garments were sold with drawstrings, which are illegal to sell in Wisconsin in upper outerwear, sizes 0-16, due to choking hazard. No injuries have been reported.

Customers who bought the recallable boys and girls drawstring items, which were sold in Madison at West and East Towne malls, in Greendale at Southgate Mall and in Racine at Regency Mall, are encouraged to return the items to any store but the Madison State Street store for a refund.

The items cost between \$6 and \$10 and were sold between January 2004 and November 2005.

For information on the recall, call Steve & Barry's at 877-866-7776, or visit [www.steveandbarrys.com](http://www.steveandbarrys.com).

## Midwest Air posts loss

Midwest Air Group reported a net loss of \$13.8 million for the fourth quarter, compared with \$19.4 million a year ago. But the loss for the year was \$64.9 million compared with \$43.1 million.

Operating revenue for the quarter was up to \$142.8 million from \$103.6 million during the fourth quarter of last year, and for all of 2005 it was up to \$523.0 million from \$415.2 million.

## Coreweekly stops publishing

Coreweekly, the free distribution weekly newspaper for young Madison adults, has ceased publication after 17 months. The staff was informed Thursday that this week's edition would be the last one published.

"We are very proud of the entertaining, innovative newspaper produced by publisher Catherine Nelson and her talented staff, but we were unable to achieve enough advertiser support to sustain the publication," said James Hopson, publisher of the Wisconsin State Journal and chairman of Capital Newspapers.

Coreweekly was first published in August 2004. Eleven staff members will be offered severance packages or jobs at other publications of Capital Newspapers.

— State Journal staff, wires

## City maintains affordable rents

## Study finds no need for inclusionary zoning

By MARV BALOUSEK  
mbalousek@madison.com  
608-252-6135

Plenty of affordable rental housing is available in Madison, negating the need for the city law requiring developers to include affordable units in their projects, according to the Apartment Association of South Central Wisconsin.

A three-year association study found hundreds of available rental units below the law's price levels and Nancy Jensen, the association's executive director, said the results demonstrate there is no need for Madison's inclusionary zoning ordinance as it affects rental housing.

"After we began compiling the data and saw where the rents were, we realized there's a large amount of vacant and very affordable housing," she said.

The past several years have been the worst ever for Madison's rental market due to low interest rates, which have allowed many former renters to buy homes. That has resulted in an increase in vacant apartments.

Brenda Konkel, a Madison alderwoman and director of the Madison Tenant Resource Center, said the inclusionary zoning

law is needed because it looks beyond the current market downturn.

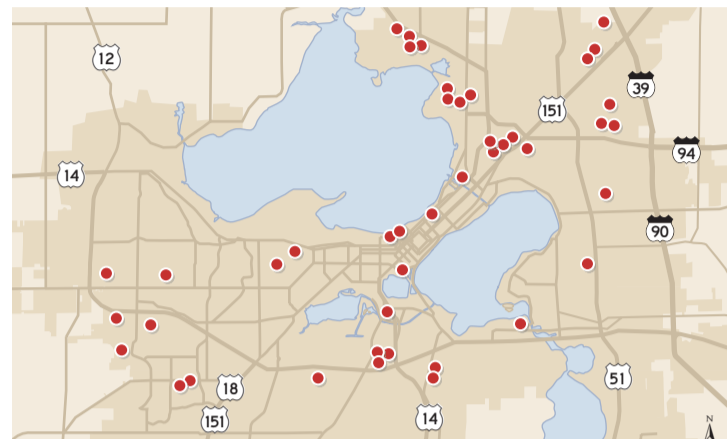
The 66-page study looked at how many rental units were available in Madison in September through November for the past three years that were below affordable levels specified by the inclusionary zoning law. Apartments and families of different sizes as well as various income levels were included in the analysis.

The study found, for example, more than 40 two- or three-bedroom apartments available last fall that were

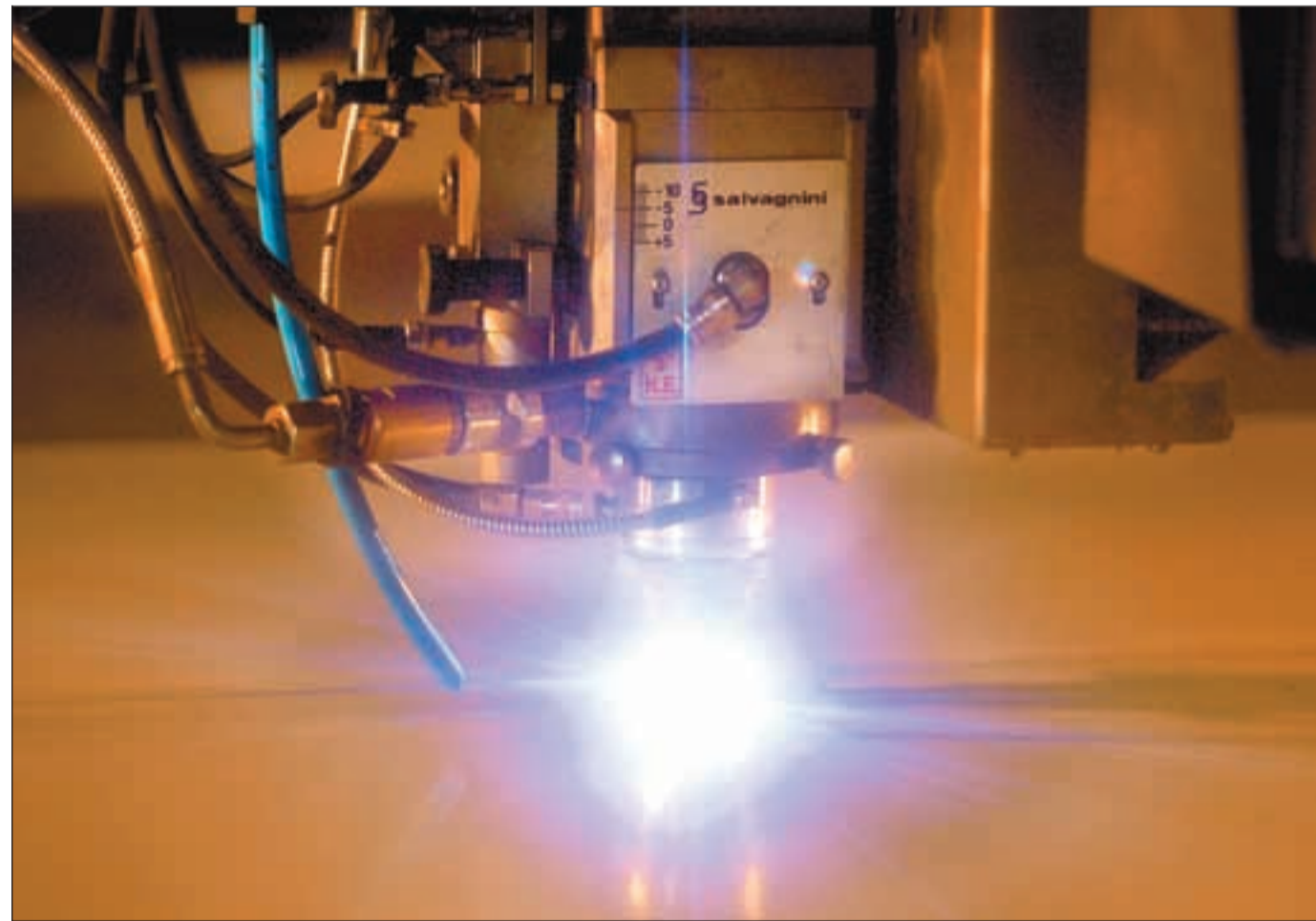
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## Madison's affordable rental housing

A recent study found that more than 40 apartments were available last fall throughout the city that were less expensive than the city's mandated affordable housing rent of \$762 for four persons in two- to three-bedroom apartments. Where the apartments were:



SOURCE: Apartment Association of South Central Wisconsin State Journal



JOHN MANIACI — State Journal photos

Dane Manufacturing has been using an Italian-made laser since September to quickly cut metal parts, greatly decreasing its production time for a range of items. The company has invested more than \$1 million in the machine.

## Laser among changes at Dane Manufacturing



A robotic arm uses suction cups to load dehumidifier panels onto crates after the pieces were cut from a large sheet.

By NATHAN LEAF  
nleaf@madison.com  
608-252-6126

DANE — Troy Berg uses "Ferrari" and "F-16" to describe how his new toy performs.

It zips back and forth in a white-hot blur — so fast it exerts the gravitational forces that fighter pilots feel in a steep turn.

But this is no pleasure ride. It's an Italian-made precision laser cutter that cranks out fabricated sheet metal at Berg's Dane Manufacturing in northern Dane County, slashing days off his production time while also reducing



Berg

his production cost. Berg has invested more than \$1 million in the machine to make his operation more efficient and keep the business competitive.

The laser, made by the Italian firm Salvagnini, brings the company more automation, said Berg. It has a robotic arm to feed the laser 24 hours a day as it accelerates

Please see **LASER**, Page B7

## Soybeans, corn make electricity

By JUDY NEWMAN  
jdnewman@madison.com  
608-252-6156

Soybeans may be lighting your home.

Virent Energy Systems — a Madison company developing a system that turns waste sugars into fuel for electricity — began sending power this month to the grid that serves our homes and businesses.

"It's the first time anybody's been able to put together a small system like this," said Eric Apfelbach, Virent's chief executive officer.

The device turns soybean and corn byproducts into a mixture of hydrogen and components of natural gas that burns very cleanly with few emissions. "We call it Supernatural gas," Apfelbach said.

Virent's demonstration model produces 10 kilowatts of power, enough to light about five homes, he said. The model is owned by Madison Gas and Electric Co.

"We think the Virent process holds the potential for reshaping how people think about renewable energy. We are excited to be a part of this effort with Virent," said Gary Wolter, MGE chairman, president and chief executive, in a written statement.

The unit is at Virent's offices at 3571 Anderson St. Not only does it create power, it also provides heat as a waste product of the electricity generation.

"We use it to heat our building, because natural gas is so expensive," Apfelbach said.

Potential customers have said they want to use Virent's product as a refueling station for hydrogen-powered vehicles and for industrial processes such as window glass manufacturing, Apfelbach said. Demonstration models are expected to be available this summer.

Founded in 2002, Virent has 20 employees and expects to add 10 by the end of the year, Apfelbach said.

## GM loses \$8.6 billion in worst year since 1992

By DEE-ANN DURBIN  
AP auto writer

DETROIT — General Motors Corp. posted its largest annual loss in more than a decade, laying bare the problems the automaker is facing: rising labor costs, fierce competition from Asia and falling sales at home. It was another blow for the U.S. auto industry, already reeling from massive job cuts announced this week by Ford Motor Co.

GM, which could lose its position as the world's largest automaker this year to Toyota Motor Corp., said it lost \$4.8 billion in the fourth quarter and \$8.6 billion for all of 2005.

That was the worst showing since 1992, when it lost \$23.5 billion.

Sales gains in Asia, Europe and elsewhere were more than offset by huge losses in North America, where GM lost \$5.6 billion for the year.

Company executives insist the results will improve in 2006, but GM shares slumped as concerned investors wondered if the company can win customers and extract sufficiently large concessions from its unions to stop the financial nosedive.

The company lost \$15.13 per share for the year, far more than Wall Street's forecast of a loss of \$4.19 per share, accord-

ing to analysts surveyed by Thomson Financial. Worldwide revenue of \$192.6 billion for the full year was down slightly from 2004.

GM shares, already down 36 percent since July, fell 80 cents, or 3.4 percent, to close at \$23.05 Thursday on the New York Stock Exchange. Moody's Investors Service said it was reviewing GM's credit rating, already in "junk" territory, and could downgrade it further.

"Two significant fundamental weaknesses in our North American operations were fully exposed — our huge legacy cost burden and our inability to adjust structural costs in line with

falling revenue," said GM chairman and CEO Rick Wagoner. He described 2005 as "one of the most difficult years in GM's history."

Wagoner and other executives said they will move forward with GM's turnaround plan, which calls for eliminating 30,000 jobs and closing 12 facilities by 2008. The company won't close its Janesville assembly plant.

GM anticipates stronger sales this year because of its new lineup of sport utility vehicles and trucks, and it's abandoning costly, confusing incentives in favor of lower prices on most vehicles.

But some analysts doubt GM's new lineup of trucks and SUVs will do well, particularly if gas prices rise. Shelly Lombard, a senior analyst at the corporate bond research firm Gimme Credit, pointed out that SUV sales fell 42 percent in the fourth quarter.

GM also forecast that it will save \$4 billion in structural costs this year, primarily because of a health-care deal with the United Auto Workers. "We do expect improved financial results in 2006 and 2007," GM chief financial officer Frederick "Fritz" Henderson said. "There's really no other choice."

THE MARKET IN REVIEW

STOCK EXCHANGE HIGHLIGHTS

Table with columns for NYSE, AMEX, and NASDAQ. NYSE: 8,044.00 +74.51. AMEX: 1,826.51 +66. NASDAQ: 2,283.00 +22.35.

Table of Gainers and Losers for NYSE, AMEX, and NASDAQ. Columns include Name, Last, Chg, %Chg.

Table of Most Active stocks for NYSE, AMEX, and NASDAQ. Columns include Name, Vol (00), Last, Chg.

Table of DIARY stocks. Columns include Name, Last, Chg, %Chg.

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WSJ Legal Notices

STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT, DANE COUNTY NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS AND TIME LIMIT FOR FILING CLAIMS (Informal Administration) Case No. 06 PR 53

STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT, DANE COUNTY NOTICE TO CREDITORS (Informal Administration) Case No. 06-PR-45

STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT, DANE COUNTY AMENDED SUMMONS Case No. 05-CV-5620

STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT, DANE COUNTY NOTICE OF HEARING Name Case No. 05-CV-4108

STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT, DANE COUNTY NOTICE OF HEARING Name Case No. 05-CV-3152

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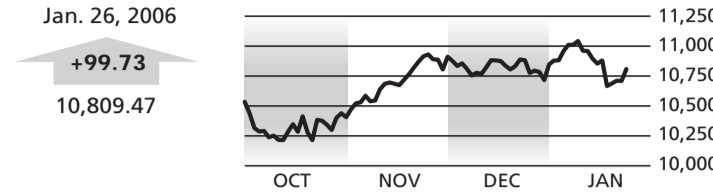
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DAILY DOW JONES



Pct. change from previous: +0.93. High: 10,827.96. Low: 10,710.94. Record high: 11,722.98. Jan. 14, 2006. Associated Press

STOCKS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Table of local stocks with columns: Name, Ex, Div, Yld, PE, Last, Chg, %Chg, YTD.

Stock Footnotes: g = Dividends and earnings in Canadian dollars. h = Does not meet continued-listing standards. If = Late filing with SEC. n = New in past 52 weeks. pf = Preferred. rs = Stock has undergone a reverse stock split within the last 50 years.

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STOCK MARKET INDEXES

Table of stock market indexes: 52-Week High/Low, Last, Net Chg, %Chg, YTD %Chg, 12-mo %Chg.

MUTUAL FUNDS

Table of mutual funds with columns: Name, Obj, \$Mil, NAV, 4-wk, 12-mo, 5-year, Pct Load, Min Inv.

BL - Balanced, GM - General Muni, HC - High Yield Taxable, IB - Intermediate Bond, IL - International Stock, LV - Large-Cap Val, MV - Mid-Cap Val, SC - Small-Cap Core, SP - S&P 500, SS - Single Stock, XC - Multi-Cap Core, XG - Multi-Cap Growth, XV - Multi-Cap Val, Total Return: Chng in NAV with dividends reinvested. Rank: How fund performed vs. others with same objective. A is in top 20%, E in bottom 20%. Min Inv: Minimum \$ needed to invest in fund. NA = Not avail. NE = Data in question. NS = Fund not in existence. Source: Lipper, Inc.

Bird flu top worry for business leaders

By ALEXANDER G. HIGGINS Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland — The global threat that most preoccupies the world's business leaders is the deadly H5N1 bird flu virus, according to a study released at the World Economic Forum.

Other global risks, such as terrorist attacks and the possibility of an even bigger oil price shock, were deemed just as dangerous, but less likely to happen in the coming year, said the "Global Risks 2006" report.

The H5N1 bird flu strain has ravaged poultry stocks in Asia since 2003 and recently spread to Europe through migratory birds. World health authorities fear the disease could mutate into a form that spreads easily from person-to-person, sparking a flu pandemic that could kill millions of people.

So far, though, human cases of the disease have been mostly limited to people who have come into direct contact with infected birds. According to the World Health Organization, 83 people have died of the disease since 2003.

The report warned of other possible severe shocks, such as an oil price spike to \$100 a barrel or an earthquake hitting Tokyo, but said those risks had a low likelihood of occurring.

Rents

Continued from Page B8

"It's fundamentally flawed," she said of the law. "It essentially attaches a lien on the property for the term it has to remain with a percent of units rent-controlled."

But Konkel, who helped craft the inclusionary zoning ordinance, said the law ensures that new developments on the city's periphery will have affordable housing.

"We're building whole communities right now that don't have affordable housing options for people," she said. "As we build new neighborhoods, we need to make sure we're providing a variety of choices."

She said the inclusionary zoning law has persuaded some developers to drop rental units from proposed mixed-use developments and make them all condominiums.

Jensen said a needs study wasn't performed before the inclusionary zoning law was enacted.

Laser

Continued from Page B8

The Salvagnini laser has allowed Dane to compete for contracts previously out of reach, such as making parts for dehumidifiers destined for the rehabilitation projects in New Orleans on short deadline.

The laser reduced production time from up to a week with a stamping machine to just hours.

"Every time you need to punch some custom shape, you need to order a tool," he said. "(With the laser) you just program it and the next minute you're cutting."

Josh Bann, a second-shift foreman who works with the laser, said the machine has made a big difference in his work load. "This is a lot faster," he said.

He said annual revenue has grown from about \$1.5 million in 2002 to more than \$4 million last year. He expects that to rise again to \$5.5 million in 2006.

FARM MARKETS

Associated Press. A summary of agricultural markets as reported by the state Department of Agriculture. Trade and Consumer Protection's Federal-State Farm Market News.