



## Packers' game plan protects the offensive line

SPORTS, 4B

# THE REPORTER

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## Cheese factory slated for redevelopment



The former Winnebago Cheese Factory at 233 W. Division St. has been nominated for inclusion in the National and State Register of Historic places. The factory dates back to 1914 and has been purchased by Commonwealth Corporation for redevelopment into multifamily units. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MACROSTIE HISTORIC ADVISORS

### Take a look inside this historic building in Fond du Lac before it's converted into housing

Sharon Roznik Fond du Lac Reporter | USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

What was once a bustling cheese factory in the city is slated for redevelopment into multifamily housing and has been nominated for placement on the National and State Register of Historic Places. • The abandoned Winnebago Cheese Factory at 233 W. Division St. once employed generations of city residents from 1914 to 1957 and is considered a rare, surviving example of Fond du Lac's cheese industry.

The city was home to several cheese-related businesses in operation between the 1890s and 1940s following industrialization of commercial cheesemaking. Today, very few buildings associated with this history remain.

In April 2020, the city's redevelopment authority purchased the building and property from Woolhether Holdings LLC as part of ongoing, proactive efforts to revitalize the Brooke Street Corridor, said Community Development Director Dyann Benson.

A request for proposals for redevelopment of the property followed, and Commonwealth Corporation was selected for its plans to transform both the former cheese factory as well as the former Northern Casket Factory at 16 N. Brooke St. into multifamily units.

Work on the project is expected to begin the first quarter of 2022. Historic tax credits will help finance the adaptive re-use of the building.

The Brooke Street Corridor includes vacant and underused properties between Lewis Street

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Third floor of the 1925 addition at the stair landing and entrance to cold storage room at Winnebago Cheese Factory.

## More students mask up as COVID surges

Sharon Roznik Fond du Lac Reporter  
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

FOND DU LAC - More schools in the Fond du Lac School District are requiring masks and the city's local hospital is at capacity as COVID-19 cases re-surge this winter season.

The case rate in Fond du Lac is considered "critically high," with 516 newly confirmed cases of the virus over the past two weeks, according to the Fond du Lac County Health Department.

Local health officials said Monday afternoon that St. Agnes Hospital is seeing 65 new cases of COVID-19 each day and that resources are stretched thin in both emergency and non-emergency care.

Although case counts are similar to last winter, patients are coming in much sicker and much younger, requiring longer care times, St. Agnes President Katherine Vergos said.

"A couple of weeks ago, we were reaching out to Chicago and Minneapolis looking for beds because there are no resources anywhere and the field hospital in Milwaukee no longer exists," Vergos said. "It may require us to shift staff or use hospital beds for

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## Will Wisconsin have a white Christmas?

Melissa Siegler Stevens Point Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Are you dreaming of a white Christmas?

Well, it might not be in the cards for parts of Wisconsin this year.

With record warm weather forecast this week, small accumulations of snow are likely to melt. Today's high could get up to 62 in parts of the state, and the rest of the week will experience highs between 36 and 44. So if you don't have much snow on the ground now, your chances are diminished.

Mike Cellitti, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Green Bay, said that there is some potential for small accumulations across the state, but there are not any big storm systems expected between now and Christmas. However, that could still change, Cellitti said.

Right now, your likelihood of having snow on Christmas largely depends on which part of the state you live in.

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### Assessing omicron

Early study from S. Africa suggests variant is milder but more vaccine-resistant. **8A**

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# Fears growing US may see 1M COVID deaths

John Bacon  
USA TODAY

Less than three months ago, the U.S. reached 700,000 COVID-19 deaths, and public health experts mused over whether the toll would reach a once-unthinkable 1 million.

Now the nation is within days of reaching 800,000 coronavirus deaths as 1,200 Americans die from the coronavirus every day, the delta variant drives an infections spike and the ominous omicron variant races around the world.

"There is no question that we will reach 1 million deaths sooner rather than later," Robert Glatter, an emergency medicine physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, told USA TODAY in an interview. "At the current tra-

jectory we may reach it much sooner than expected, with cases, hospitalizations and deaths significantly increasing in the past two months."

Such a death toll may be inevitable, but "we can still do a lot within our means to prevent that from happening," said Ogbonnaya Omenka, an assistant professor at the Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

Glatter and Omenka emphasized a recurring theme: Vaccination is the key to curbing the trajectory. But other mitigations will be required.

Experts cringe at what winter could bring. The flu is already spreading through some communities. The coronavirus causes about 100,000 new COVID-19 cases a day in the U.S. The delta surge hasn't peaked, and here comes

omicron.

Masking indoors and at large outdoor events, vaccinations and booster shots and testing if sick or exposed may be the only hope for avoiding the looming triple threat of the flu, the variants – and the holidays.

"The potential for a catastrophic surge of deaths looms large this winter," Glatter said. "The outlook ... looks bleak at best."

Tighter U.S. travel restrictions kicked in this month. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio unveiled a vaccine mandate requiring 184,000 businesses to have all of their workers vaccinated starting Dec. 27.

"Even before omicron, we were worried about the cold-weather months and the holiday gatherings," de Blasio said.

"Before we heard the word 'omicron,' we saw the troubling trendlines."

## A more dangerous omicron?

Omicron, the latest "variant of concern" as described by the World Health Organization, is drawing a lot of attention. There are signs that vaccinated people have some protection. Pfizer announced that lab tests indicate a third dose of its vaccine provides neutralizing antibodies against omicron similar to the level observed after two doses against the original coronavirus and other variants.

Glatter said Americans need to receive all three doses to prevent transmission, breakthrough infections, severe disease and hospitalizations.

## COVID

Continued from Page 1A

COVID, rather than a planned procedure, and right now we are evaluating surgical schedules every day."

The greatest increase in virus infections are in children, health officials reported, with a significant growth of COVID-19 cases in children ages 4-13.

Their report coincides with what's happening in the city's public schools, where as of Thursday, 647 students and 89 staff members tested positive for the virus sometime during the school year, according to the Fond du Lac School District's COVID-19 dashboard. Of those, 45 students and 11 staff members currently have the virus.

Four elementary schools — Riverside, Lakeshore, Pier and Rosenow — require masks for two weeks, said Nicole Noonan, the district's communications coordinator. One classroom at Evans Elementary is also requiring masks because a person was infectious while at school.

Roberts Elementary School just finished a 14-day mask requirement, and the district is "highly recommending" everyone to continue wearing masks at the school.

The district's guidelines require an

entire elementary school to wear masks for two weeks if at least one classroom at three grade levels is wearing masks, Noonan said.

At Monday's school board meeting, Superintendent Jeff Fleig said the number of cases poses a challenge, more so since Thanksgiving break, and with a substitute teacher shortage, elementary teachers are acting as substitutes in addition to their regular jobs.

## Majority of patients unvaccinated

The majority of COVID-19 patients at St. Agnes are unvaccinated individuals, said Dr. Nathan Larsen, the hospital's emergency medical director. Since mid-August, 35 of the 216 unvaccinated COVID-19 patients the hospital treated have died. This compares to four of the 83 vaccinated patients seen in that same time frame.

During Monday's update, Larsen pointed out chances are nine times higher an unvaccinated person contracting COVID-19 could end up in the hospital, and that danger increases for people older than 50. Hospital stays are on average also four times longer for unvaccinated patients.

An uptick in virus cases was most prevalent 10 to 14 days following both Halloween and Thanksgiving, Vergos

said, when people typically gather in large groups.

"It has been extremely stressful on our health care system, and much more so this year than last year because of workforce challenges," Vergos said. "It's a little disheartening, and I am not feeling the concern (from the community) I felt early on in the pandemic."

In April 2020, a parade of people lined up outside the hospital to support health care employees who were working around the clock to care for COVID-19 patients. Conversely, in August, protesters stood outside the hospital to oppose a vaccine requirement for employees.

Vergos called what she perceives as a lack of concern for health care employees by those who are unvaccinated "disheartening" and said it is "frankly, selfish to not get vaccinated."

"It is at the expense of individuals who are working their tails off for this community. ... your social life has a direct impact on how we care for this community," Vergos said.

Health care workers are tired and exhausted from disbelief in the system, Larsen said, with people still questioning why they should get vaccinated if they could still potentially contract COVID-19.

"Right now in Wisconsin there are no hospital beds anywhere, if you have a

heart attack or a car accident," Larsen said. "Yes, we have some breakthrough cases (in vaccinated people), but for the most part they experience only mild symptoms."

Fond du Lac County Health Officer Kim Mueller said COVID-19 testing locations remain busy, and people should consider getting tested before attending large gatherings and take proper precautions to celebrate safely.

The recommendation remains that people gather only with individuals from the same household, Mueller said.

COVID-19 testing is available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds.

Health officials continue to implore everyone to get vaccinated, including a booster shot if they received a Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine at least two months ago or a second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least six months ago.

Vergos said it's a shame the issue has become politicized as people continue to die from the virus.

"This really should be about the common good," she said.

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