

JOB LOSS & ECONOMIC MELTDOWN

In 2009 Milwaukee County lost over 30,000 jobs – the unemployment rate jumped from 5.5% to 9.2% in just one year.

[Bureau of Labor Statistics, bls.gov]

Dismantled County Economic Development Programs

When Walker was elected he had two divisions under his supervision that managed economic development programs in the county:

- Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Economic & Community Development division (a merger of Economic Development and Housing & Community Development),
- Executive Office was the Office of Community Business Development Partners (initially called Disadvantaged Business Development).

In his 2006 budget Walker moved the Office of Community Business Development Partners out of his office to the County Board after several years of reducing funding (in 2002 the program was funded at \$680,454 and by 2005 Walker recommended funding of just \$494,688).

[Milwaukee County Executive Recommended Budgets, 2002-2010]

After four years of recommending flat funding, Walker reduced funding for the DAS Economic & Community Development department by \$3 million (2007 budget), and then followed that up in his 2008 budget by stripping the program down to just real estate management and federal block grant distribution. He fully eliminated it as part of his 2008 budget – in the midst of the financial collapse.

[Milwaukee County Executive Recommended Budgets, 2002-2010]

Walker reduced what had been \$18-19 million each year in county spending on economic development (2002-2006), to just over \$1 million in his proposed 2010 budget.

In his 2010 budget, Walker proposed a new economic development program that essentially creates a local “Recovery Act” style stimulus through accelerated borrowing and amped up construction:

Despite some skepticism, Milwaukee County supervisors will likely find County Executive Scott Walker's big-splash move into economic development hard to resist.

*One of the marquee provisions of Walker's 2010 county budget is creation of a new county office of business development, **to be armed with a mother lode of bonding authority the county executive says will help rain aid on a recession-ravaged community.***

Walker's critics see the move as a ploy to bolster his Republican campaign for governor in 2010, but they also like the program's potential. The \$147 million in accelerated borrowing he wants to do in late 2009 and in 2010, on top of airport and other previously approved projects, adds up to almost \$400 million. That will generate about 1,000 jobs for roads, bridges, parks and other construction, Walker says

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 9/28/2009]

