



Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21
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Downtown offers free rent for new retail emporium

Existing businesses have until Aug. 15 to apply for 2010-2011 holiday market

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (August 4, 2010) – Since implementing its Storefront Retail Strategy just 18 months ago, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 has scored one retail deal, and added \$100,000 in white-box grants and forgivable loans to its list of accomplishments. Now with the holiday shopping season approaching, the organization is aiming to infuse retail along Wisconsin Ave. with a new pop-up store concept.

Led by Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 Retail Recruiter Deanna Inniss, the Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival Retail Emporium offers existing businesses three months of free white-box space in a street-level location between October 15, 2010 – January 15, 2011. The goal is to encourage retailers to expand their business in downtown Milwaukee, following the success of a temporary trial.

“I’m very excited to make this option available to entrepreneurs who have an interest in opening shop downtown, but aren’t quite ready to take the plunge,” said Deanna Inniss, retail recruiter of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. “The Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival Retail Emporium gives retailers an opportunity to test the downtown market without the long-term commitment of a five-year lease. The interest thus far has been incredible.”

Targeted retailers for the Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival Retail Emporium must meet the criteria of the merchandise mix plan created by Downtown Works in 2008. Milwaukee Downtown hopes to secure 8-10 new businesses for the upcoming holiday shopping season. Retail locations will be concentrated in the Storefront Retail Strategy target area. All retailers must adhere to the same business hours as agreed upon. Applications for retailers are available at www.milwaukeedowntown.com. The deadline to apply is August 15.

“It takes special collaboration to make a concept like this work,” said Beth Nicols, executive director of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. “First, you need the buy-in from property owners and second, you need good retailers with unique inventory. Fortunately, everything is moving in our favor. The Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival Retail Emporium will be a destination for our holiday visitors.”

The Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival Retail Emporium is just one of many initiatives to aid in the resurgence of retail along Wisconsin Ave. This main downtown artery has also been identified as a catalytic project in the Downtown Master Plan. The plan calls for retail incentives for the area bounded by Wisconsin Ave., between Milwaukee and 4th streets, and Wells and Michigan streets. The Retail Incentive Plan combined with the central business district’s reputation for cleanliness, safety, communication and community, will leverage more slam-dunks for downtown.

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 is an organization established in 1998 to support the interests of the downtown Milwaukee business community. Created through private sector leadership, Milwaukee Downtown is a management district organization that oversees 120+ blocks representing approximately 400 property owners in the center of downtown Milwaukee. The organization funds specific initiatives aimed at creating a clean, safe and friendly downtown. For more information, visit www.milwaukeedowntown.com or call 414.220.4700.

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