

# MKE BLUEPRINT



Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21's Economic Development Digest

FALL 2021

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## THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN'S BROADWAY CORRIDOR SHINES BRIGHT

Almost a decade in the making, several proposed enhancements along Broadway are now a reality.

First introduced in the 2010 Downtown Area Plan and later addressed in RHI's Nighttime Study in 2011, Broadway has long been identified as a corridor ripe with opportunity—especially if better connected to the Historic Third Ward neighborhood. The challenge at Broadway's doorstep, though, has been reducing the perceived barriers of the elevated I-794 freeway structure.



Enter the "Brighten the Passage" initiative. A public space and infrastructure improvement project rolled into one. A project aimed at consciously rebuilding physical and sociological connections between downtown Milwaukee's central business district and the Historic Third Ward neighborhood – connections that have been severed for decades by I-794.

In a public-private partnership with the adjacent Historic Third Ward BID #2, Milwaukee Downtown and its fellow management districts rallied support from the business community and various federal, state, and local governmental entities around a common goal of improving the under-freeway areas to better reconnect neighborhoods. The multi-phase project included large-scale murals on the freeway support piers and dynamic, programmable color-changing LED lighting. In addition, the project also included strategic streetscape improvements such as corner bump-outs, new planting beds and wider sidewalks.

In fall 2020, the four I-794 freeway support piers that frame Broadway were transformed with art installations that have created one of the most unique outdoor urban art collections in the region. Tia Richardson, The Couto Brothers, Josephine Rice and Dave Watkins brought their individual styles to life in the corridor.

Then in December 2020, 75 programmable aesthetic lights were installed under I-794 at both Broadway and Water Street to create an enhanced sense of place. The dynamic lighting array,



which was designed by Ring & DuChateau, installed by Lemberg and programmed by Main Stage, features different seasonal settings and pre-programmed effects for ethnic festivals, holidays, and celebrations. The lighting effects are now enjoyed nightly.

"Brighten the Passage" is an implementation of the vision embodied in the City's Downtown Area Plan, which was further developed by the neighborhood BIDs to bolster downtown's daytime and nightlife economies," said Matt Dornier, economic development director of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. "Improving underutilized zones that discourage pedestrian activity is a goal that advanced this project. We want residents, workers and visitors alike to not only feel like they are in a unique and vibrant place, but we also want to create new and interesting attractions that draw more patrons to the area for our businesses."

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Beyond the “Brighten the Passage” project, other public spaces near the Broadway corridor are being reimagined. Pickleball courts recently opened just west of the Milwaukee Public Market, beneath I-794; community programming is occurring in the Riverwalk Commons space, across from the Market; renovations to Pompeii Square are wrapped up reinventing this key gateway; and fundraising for a dog park near Clybourn and Plankinton is underway.

Broadway has also seen a significant uptick in investment. Over \$200 million has been invested since 2018. In Fall 2020, the \$60 million, 11-story Huron Building officially opened with Husch Blackwell as its anchor tenant. In July 2021, the building’s first floor welcomed Tupelo Honey – a restaurant serving Southern-inspired food and hospitality.

Further north, BMO Tower also celebrated a grand opening in 2020. The \$137 million, 25-story building created new headquarters space for BMO Harris Bank and welcomed Michael Best & Friedrich as another anchor tenant. Plus, in March 2021, Fiddleheads Coffee opened its first downtown location in the building’s ground-floor space.

“Projects like BMO Tower, Central Standard Distillery, and the Huron Building, combined with The Hop streetcar system and the success of the Milwaukee Public Market, are setting the pace for Broadway’s bright future,” said Dorner. “Later this year, we will also celebrate the re-opening of the renovated Milwaukee Athletic Club and the new boutique Kinn Hotel. There’s no doubt in my mind that more great things are in store for this vital north-south corridor.”

For more information on “Brighten the Passage” and the Broadway corridor, visit [www.brightenthepassage.com](http://www.brightenthepassage.com).

## MAIN STREET BOUNCEBACK GRANT YIELDS RESULTS

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes visited Milwaukee in August to talk about a new grant program offering \$10,000 grants to new and existing business owners that move into vacant commercial properties around the state. The visit began at the new Central Standard Crafthouse and Kitchen, 320 E. Clybourn St., before proceeding to the recently-opened restaurant Tupelo Honey, 511 N. Broadway, and the Milwaukee Public Market.



In April, Governor Tony Evers announced \$50 million in funding for the Main Street Bounceback Grant Program to encourage businesses to move and expand into vacant storefronts in downtowns and commercial corridors around the state. The grants are part of Governor Evers’ commitment to invest \$600 million in support for small businesses.

More info on the Main Street Bounceback Grants program is available at [www.wedc.org](http://www.wedc.org).





# DOG PARK PROPOSAL WOULD BE FIRST OF ITS KIND DOWNTOWN

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, Historic Third Ward BID #2, Downtown Neighbors Association, and other aligning partners are working together to build downtown's first public dog park on a centrally located site under I-794, between the Milwaukee River and Plankinton Avenue, just south of Clybourn Street.

While still in the fundraising stage, the project was recently recognized as a vital safe space for dogs. PetSafe® brand, a global leader in pet product solutions, selected the project as one of 30 finalists for its popular Bark for Your Park™ grant contest. Now through August 31, 2021, anyone over the age of 18 that lives within the U.S. can vote once per day, every day for downtown Milwaukee's dog park at [www.barkforyourpark.com](http://www.barkforyourpark.com).

Following the contest voting period, PetSafe® will award prizes totaling \$150,000 to 10 deserving communities. The five communities with the highest votes will receive \$25,000 for the construction of a new park and five will

be awarded \$5,000 to enhance their local dog parks.

The downtown Milwaukee dog park would provide a much-needed amenity for our community and beautify one of the busiest gateways into downtown. The proposed site would be transformed into a dynamic, 12,000-square-foot dog run with a publicly accessible Riverwalk extension. Proposed features of the park include separate small and large dog areas, synthetic turf with irrigation to ensure cleanliness, decorative fencing, water stations, agility stations, public art, and opportunities for community programming and prominent donor recognition.

So get out the vote! Cast your support for downtown Milwaukee's dog park by visiting [www.barkforyourpark.com](http://www.barkforyourpark.com) now through August 31, 2021.

And toss us a bone to support the project monetarily. Donations are currently being accepted to make this game changer of a project a reality. Visit [www.mkedogpark.com](http://www.mkedogpark.com) to donate.



Renderings by GRAEF for illustrative purposes.





# “FRAME THE SQUARE” GETS UNDERWAY

Cathedral Square, Milwaukee’s original town square, will soon receive improvements around its perimeter in a new initiative led by Cathedral Square Friends and Milwaukee Downtown, called “Frame the Square.” The City of Milwaukee approved \$1.8 million for design, engineering and streetscaping improvements to advance the project. “Frame the Square” includes designing and implementing durable improvements to city-owned land around the county-owned park, from curb to sidewalk, entry points and intersections. The design was led by HNTB, with support from Kapur & Associates and Prism Technical Service. Integris serves as the project representative for Cathedral Square Friends and Milwaukee Downtown. JCP Construction is the general contractor making the streetscape improvements a reality.

## *Improvements will include:*

- New sidewalks surfaced with pavers, new curbs, and curb ramps will be installed.
- Unhealthy perimeter trees will be replaced and additional trees planted.
- Tree wells will surround trees, and pavers will extend between the sidewalk and curb, eliminating unsightly gravel and weeds.
- Benches, waste containers, and bike racks will be added.
- The corners on the south end will receive special landscape treatment, including low landscape walls, new plantings, and utility screening.

Like most streetscaping projects, the improvements are located largely in the city right-of-way. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements are fully integrated into the project. This phase of improvements is not intended to change the interior of the square as city funding limits the area of scope.

Access to the square will be available during the entire project duration; however, access points may be limited and will vary during the construction. Completion is anticipated by the end of the year.

Cathedral Square Friends most recently led the Color the Square initiative, installing a dozen hanging baskets throughout the park in the summer. For more information on the “Frame the Square” project, visit [www.cathedralsquarefriends.org](http://www.cathedralsquarefriends.org).



Rendering produced by HNTB.