

MKE BLUEPRINT



Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21's Economic Development Digest

SUMMER 2025

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East Town Sees a Surge in Nighttime Economy Offerings

In recent months, there's been a wave of positive momentum in the East Town neighborhood. Several restaurants have recently reopened, and a few others will make their debut soon. This includes a revamped Elsa's on the Park, 801 Restaurant, and Electric Lime Taqueria. These openings are on the heels of other relative newcomers to the long-established entertainment district, including Safina's, Experts Only, and Barrel Burrito Co.

In addition to the buzz on fresh offerings, the Agency cocktail lounge

is making headlines as a James Beard Award finalist. Located within East Town's Dubbel Dutch Hotel, the hybrid bar will be the only Wisconsin nominee at this year's awards, furthering the appeal of the neighborhood as a hot spot for nightlife.

What's more, the accessibility of the neighborhood has improved. East Wells Street construction from North Broadway to North Van Buren Street is now complete. The scope of work included replacing deteriorated pavement and asphalt with a new street, sidewalk expansions, driveway

approaches, curbs, and gutters. Pedestrian curb ramps were built as well, to meet ADA standards and to enhance pedestrian and protected bike accommodations.



EASTTOWN

Drainage structures, street lighting, and traffic signals were also upgraded. These improvements demonstrate the concerted efforts by the City, East Town Association, and Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 to invest in and enhance our entertainment districts, which represent a vital part of Downtown Milwaukee's economy.

With the help of the Responsible Hospitality Institute, Milwaukee Downtown conducted a nighttime economy study to evaluate the sector's impact. The 2023 study showed that it has the fourth highest concentration of businesses and jobs in the City of Milwaukee, encompassing 1,668 businesses and 25,664 employees. In addition, the nighttime economy brings in over \$1.37 billion in annual consumer spending, and it's predicted to grow 19% by 2027. Given its recent momentum, the East Town neighborhood is already fulfilling these projections.





Red Arrow Park Redesign Moves Forward

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, the City of Milwaukee, and Milwaukee County have taken another step forward in exploring future improvements to Downtown's Red Arrow Park. Following an extensive review process, a collaborative team representing Milwaukee-based The Kubala Washatko Architects (TKWA) and Philadelphia-based OLIN was selected to lead the redesign process for this key Downtown public space.

A request for qualifications was issued in the fall of 2024. We sought teams that specialize in urban public space design and community engagement, to fulfill goals of the recently adopted Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040. Red Arrow Park was identified as a catalytic initiative in the comprehensive plan.

TKWA and OLIN assembled a team that emerged as the best fit for the project, based on their demonstrated design excellence and experience, a keen understanding of the site and its context, and a proven record of community engagement. Community engagement, specifically, will be led by P3 Development Group. This team plans extensive dialogue with key stakeholders and the public throughout the entire process.

Ring & DuChateau, B32° Engineering Group, KSingh, McEnroe Consulting

Engineers, and Concord Group round out the comprehensive consultant team that will apply their expertise throughout the redesign process. Funding for the design services will come from TID #48, the district encompassing the former Park East Freeway corridor.

"This is an incredible opportunity for our project team to work with design and community engagement experts to develop concepts that will further enhance Red Arrow Park as one of the most important places in Downtown's public realm," said Matt Dörner, Economic Development Director for Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. "We look forward to working with TKWA, OLIN, and their entire team."

The Red Arrow Park redesign process is expected to kick off this summer.

To sign up for email correspondence, engagement opportunities, and regular project updates, visit milwaukeedowntown.com/do-business/red-arrow-park-redesign-rfq.



COMING SOON The MKE Dog Park

The MKE Dog Park is quickly taking shape. The project team started the new year with strong momentum, continuing to make progress on the construction of Downtown's first off-leash dog park. Since the groundbreaking in the fall of 2024, the project is now roughly 90% complete. The majority of the pathways, riverwalk, fencing, lighting, K-9 grass, and landscaping have been installed. As weather permits, the next phase includes the installation of furnishings and other site elements, setting us up for a mid-2025 opening.

Next door, construction has begun with deep foundation work for Foxtown Landing. This 30,000-square-foot project will include the second Foxtown Brewing location, along with a restaurant, a distillery, event spaces, and expansive outdoor seating areas along the Milwaukee River. The MKE Dog Park and Foxtown Landing will be seamlessly linked by a pedestrian plaza that will play host to future activations and dog-friendly programming.

Follow mkedogpark.com for a grand opening announcement and additional opportunities to support the ongoing fundraising efforts.



BY THE NUMBERS Documenting Downtown's Growth

Milwaukee Downtown is tracking the central business district's growth in the following key metric areas:

- \$1.4+ billion in projects currently under construction in the greater Downtown area
- 7,800+ jobs have been committed to Downtown Milwaukee since 2020
- 31% of citywide jobs are located in Downtown Milwaukee



- 108,000 people in the greater Downtown area daily, on average, over the last 12 months
- 1.9 miles of new protected bike lanes have been installed in the Downtown area since 2023, with 3.1 additional miles planned and funded
- 10th strongest rental market in the country at the beginning of 2025, signaling a strong demand for continued residential investment



Our Streets are Still Positively Active

For the sixth year in a row, Milwaukee Downtown is partnering with the City of Milwaukee to present the popular Active Streets for Business program. It was created during the COVID crisis to help businesses expand their outdoor presence. This year, Milwaukee Downtown is helping five restaurants and bars achieve this goal by supplementing the cost of protective landscape barriers at their curbsides.



Credit: The Kubala Washatko Architects

KEI, Milwaukee Downtown's landscape partner, installed the barriers on May 1, and will maintain the plantings in them throughout the year. Businesses participating this year include Who's On Third, Oak Barrel Public House, Old German Beer Hall, Milwaukee Brat House, Lucky Clover, and Taylor's. Stop by some time and enjoy the wonderful spring weather while partaking in their refreshing offerings.

We hope to see you in our entertainment districts enjoying the expanded outdoor dining all summer long!

Enerpac Settles Into New Digs

At the end of March, some 130 Enerpac Tool Group employees moved from the firm's former headquarters in Menomonee Falls to its new Downtown offices at 648 N. Plankinton Avenue. Formerly known as the ASQ Center, the building has now been renamed the Enerpac Center after the firm signed an 11-year lease to occupy 56,000 sq. ft. in the building.

Enerpac joins a series of other major Milwaukee-area companies that have opted for the vibrant downtown environment as the optimal location to do business. That includes Regal Rexnord Corporation, Fiserv Inc., and Milwaukee Tool. Many of their executives cite the need to attract top talent as the main reason for choosing to relocate their headquarters Downtown.



Matt Dorner, Economic Development Director for Milwaukee Downtown, has been working closely with Enerpac and other new-to-Downtown employers as they move into their new homes.

WELCOME TO ALL!

Proposed Highland Plaza Would Honor Downtown Visionary

A new Riverwalk plaza has been proposed near the pedestrian bridge at Highland Avenue, just east of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. The Gary P. Grunau Memorial Plaza would honor Downtown cheerleader Gary Grunau, who passed away in 2019.

A founding board member of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, Grunau was an early advocate for Milwaukee's Riverwalk system, and championed the redevelopment of Schlitz Park. He also played a key role in the creation of RiverSplash! and the Milwaukee River Challenge.

The Downtown Riverwalk Business Improvement District has hired architecture firm RINKA to design the proposed plaza. Its purpose is to enhance pedestrian connections between the Water Street entertainment district, the Deer District and the Old World Third Street Entertainment District on MLK Jr. Drive, via the Highland Avenue pedestrian bridge. Plans also call for a "social stair," a nearby staircase gathering place that could be activated with programming.

To advance the plaza's creation, the Riverwalk BID has secured a private donation that would potentially be paired with funding from a nearby tax incremental financing district. Pending approval, construction of the Gary P. Grunau Memorial Plaza could begin in spring and finish by the end of this year.

