



MKE'ING IT BACK

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



2020 – A YEAR OF CHALLENGES, REPOSITIONING AND RESILIENCE

MISSION

We lead and inspire believers in Milwaukee to engage in efforts that build Downtown as the thriving, sustainable, innovative and vibrant heart of the community.

VISION

Milwaukee Downtown is an economic catalyst. Downtown is a premier destination of choice. Milwaukee becomes a renowned world-class city adding value to the region and the state.

PRIORITIES

- Be a recognized Downtown economic development leader with increased support from a growing stakeholder base.
- Leverage collaborative partnerships to champion and better connect catalytic, next-generation projects, including The Hop and Wisconsin Avenue initiatives.
- Harness the energy and vibrancy of diverse Downtown residents, young professionals and other Downtown believers to position them for leadership roles in the Downtown community.
- Create an exceptional quality of life environment with a focus on enhanced safety, security, connectivity and public space management through innovative events, landscaping, lighting and public art installation.

MESSAGE FROM CEO + BOARD CHAIR

There's no doubt that the past 12 months have been unlike any period in recent history.

The unprecedented challenges facing individuals and businesses here (and around the globe) required a response that embodied the resilient spirit of our city and demonstrated that Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 remains a driving force behind the continued success of our community.

Ensuring positive perceptions of Downtown Milwaukee became more critical during a pandemic. Reinforcing messages of cleanliness, safety and friendliness were paramount in supporting a thriving environment.

Our rapid COVID-19 response included a variety of initiatives to reinforce those messages, including peer-city collaborations and discussions on best practices with cities around the globe, a reallocation of resources to support an "Active Streets" program and shifting of resources from in-person events to support local bars, restaurants and retailers through virtual programs and social media campaigns.

The development of COVID-19 webpages and implementation of safety and sanitation protocols, including ambassador deployment and installation of hand sanitizer stations and code of conduct signage were highly visible components of our efforts.

We quickly altered the messaging of our Downtown branding campaign to encourage people to "MKE It Back" Downtown and we are conducting ongoing consumer, business and employer research to help us develop innovative approaches to keep our Downtown constituency engaged.

The disintegration of the Democratic National Convention was both disheartening and financially devastating for many of our stakeholders, but we put our best face forward. Due to the lockdown and inability to bring together large groups of people, we needed to get creative and thus, virtual, with much of our event programming — including virtual Tunes@Noon and Downtown Employee Appreciation Week, adding Comeback Cuisine, and creating an interactive public art map.

Our public art initiatives and activations this past year were remarkable, including a new "I Love Downtown" event, digital screens, and multiple lighting and mural projects across the BID — all designed to enhance the warmth, look and excitement of just being Downtown and having some type of community connectivity.

Our economic enhancement initiatives were critical, including the successful support of the "Active Streets" and "Brighten the Passage" projects, and providing direction to businesses navigating through a tangled web of COVID-19 information from multiple sources.

Thank you to our stakeholders, partners and cheerleaders for your unwavering support through these challenging times. Your resilience and enthusiasm for Downtown inspires us to keep moving forward!

Working together, we'll all MKE IT BACK safely in 2021.



Beth Weirick

CEO
Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21



Joseph G. Ullrich

CHAIR
U.S. Bank

CORE PROGRAMS

PUBLIC SERVICE AMBASSADORS

Milwaukee Downtown's team of Public Service Ambassadors (PSAs) contributes to the authentic hospitality our city is so well known for. The PSAs provide daily guest assistance and work closely with property owners and managers throughout the Downtown community.

Managed by Block by Block for the second year, we deployed 18 ambassadors in rotation, with staggered start times — to dovetail with visitor density.

Remaining nimble and assuming some new roles, the PSAs collected 14,460+ gallons of litter between March and August, and were a critical component in the activation of our COVID-19 response, providing daily disinfection of high-touch surfaces at Cathedral Square Park, Zeidler Union Square and Pere Marquette Park (cleaned over 1,100 times since summer). They also assisted with the set up of “Active Streets” and managed distribution, placement and daily upkeep of COVID-19 posters and hand sanitizing stations throughout Downtown.

Our PSAs also continued to serve as an extra set of eyes and ears for Milwaukee's police and fire departments and were in regular communication with the Downtown Security Network.

Last, but not least, we hired a dedicated full-time Homeless Outreach PSA to support our Downtown Homeless Outreach Coordinator.



CLEAN SWEEP AMBASSADORS

Sidewalks continued to shine thanks to our Clean Sweep Ambassadors (CSAs). Cleanliness continues to be the hallmark of our district — no litter, no cigarette butts and certainly no gooey gum.

Managed by Modern Maintenance, the CSAs removed more than 301,050 gallons of trash while also providing daily disinfection of high-touch surfaces and maintaining sanitation stations throughout the BID. In addition, the CSAs wrapped picnic tables in vinyl and cleaned them regularly to provide sanitary seating for guests in Cathedral Square Park, Zeidler Union Square and Pere Marquette Park.

The CSAs also played a critical role in implementing the Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival by installing and maintaining 500,000+ lights throughout Downtown.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL TEAM

Like it was never even there... Milwaukee Downtown's Graffiti Removal Team responds rapidly to notifications of graffiti — within 24 hours to be exact. In 2020, the team wiped away more than 624 graffiti tags and stickers, which brought our cumulative total to 23,016 tags since 2000. While some eradication efforts require more extensive methods, 99% of all tags are removed by Public Service Ambassadors.



LANDSCAPE CREW

Making pedestrian pathways burst with seasonal flowers and foliage, the Landscape Crew lovingly maintained 377 beds and planters, and 75+ hanging baskets in targeted corridors on Wisconsin Avenue, the RiverWalk, Old World Third Street and the Court of Honor. Featuring spring, summer, fall and holiday arrangements, plus a special red, white and blue motif for the DNC, the Landscape Crew also assisted with plantings for the “Active Streets” program and transformed Postman Square with a new stone seat wall, old-world brick pavers, dog-friendly turf, electricity and aesthetic lighting.

KEY TO CHANGE

Our partnership with Milwaukee County Housing Division addressing homelessness and public nuisance behaviors with Housing First has placed 2,300+ homeless Milwaukeeans into permanent supportive housing since 2015, including 469 placements between September 2019 and August 2020, with a 96% retention rate.

Milwaukee Downtown's Key to Change public information campaign has successfully raised awareness of social service programs and supported Housing First, utilizing seven retrofitted parking meters designed to resemble keys and an online donation platform (keytochangemke.com). Over the last year, more than \$80,000 was raised for year-one funding of our Downtown Homeless Outreach Coordinator, including \$12,100+ in donations made through the Key to Change online platform.

The Downtown Homeless Outreach Coordinator serves as a liaison for Housing First placements and oversees wraparound services, which range from rehabilitation and counseling to job training and placement. Other responsibilities include identifying and building rapport with homeless individuals living on the streets, intervening in crisis situations and more. Fundraising continues to bring resources and support to this position.



SPECIAL EVENTS



TASTE & TOAST

Pre-COVID, Taste & Toast, a first-quarter happy hour event designed to lure Milwaukeeans out of winter hibernation, continued to mix up weekday nights. This year, a total of 27 bars and restaurants



participated — each customizing their own menu and pricing. Customer feedback told us that 46% of all diners neither lived nor worked Downtown and a whopping 85% rated food, beverages, service and environment as “excellent” or “good.” Estimated attendance over the five-day promotion was 6,712 diners.



COMEBACK CUISINE

In an effort to support restaurants and our Downtown workforce, we developed the “Comeback Cuisine” promotion in partnership with Colliers. We engaged 18 restaurants to offer box lunch options



for companies phasing staff back into the office over the summer months. By September 2020, 627 lunches had been purchased/pledged year-to-date and at the request of participating restaurants, the promotion was extended to continue to engage returning workers.



DOWNTOWN EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION WEEK

In light of the pandemic, Downtown Employee Appreciation Week featured virtual and distanced activities in mid-September to celebrate the Downtown workforce,



working both onsite and remotely. We offered a myriad of virtual programming, including virtual morning meditations, virtual “I Work Downtown” trivia, virtual painting lessons, virtual workout sessions and more! Virtual events earned over 10,000 video views.



PNC PRESENTS VIRTUAL TUNES@NOON

This popular event returned virtually via Facebook Live in July, supporting the hard-hit local music industry. We streamed 10 concerts between July 2 and Sept. 17.



With increased sponsorship support from PNC, we fulfilled all 2020 musician contracts, while encouraging donations to musicians’ virtual tip jars. The series garnered 10,000+ video views and reached 45,000+ virtually.

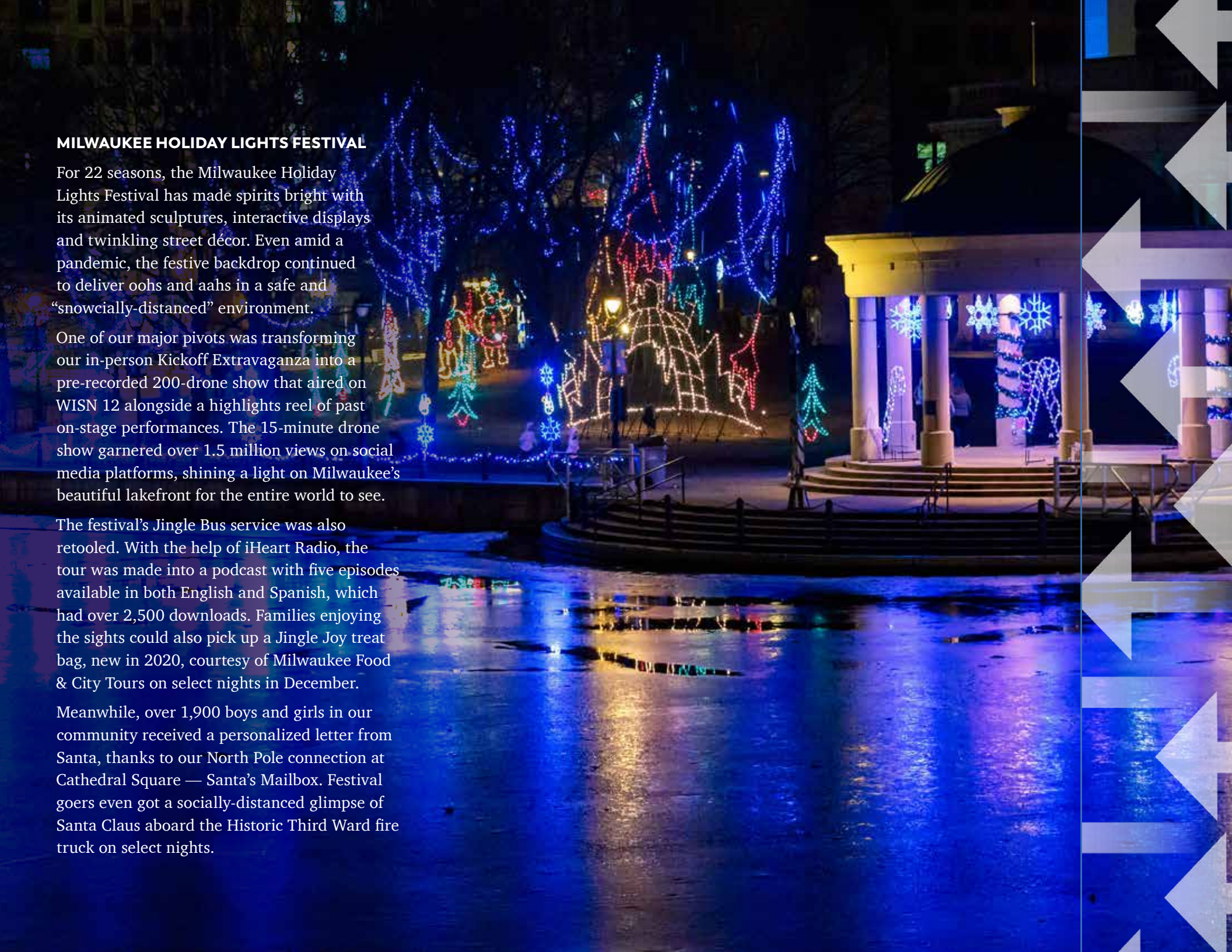
MILWAUKEE HOLIDAY LIGHTS FESTIVAL

For 22 seasons, the Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival has made spirits bright with its animated sculptures, interactive displays and twinkling street décor. Even amid a pandemic, the festive backdrop continued to deliver oohs and aahs in a safe and “snowcially-distanced” environment.

One of our major pivots was transforming our in-person Kickoff Extravaganza into a pre-recorded 200-drone show that aired on WISN 12 alongside a highlights reel of past on-stage performances. The 15-minute drone show garnered over 1.5 million views on social media platforms, shining a light on Milwaukee’s beautiful lakefront for the entire world to see.

The festival’s Jingle Bus service was also retooled. With the help of iHeart Radio, the tour was made into a podcast with five episodes available in both English and Spanish, which had over 2,500 downloads. Families enjoying the sights could also pick up a Jingle Joy treat bag, new in 2020, courtesy of Milwaukee Food & City Tours on select nights in December.

Meanwhile, over 1,900 boys and girls in our community received a personalized letter from Santa, thanks to our North Pole connection at Cathedral Square — Santa’s Mailbox. Festival goers even got a socially-distanced glimpse of Santa Claus aboard the Historic Third Ward fire truck on select nights.



MARKETING

SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2020, followers across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram grew by nearly 5%, pushing us beyond 118,000 fans. Most notably, Instagram followers rose by 27%. Our “MKE My Day” weekly photo contest garnered 380+ entries and a Gift Card Stimulus giveaway in partnership with the Downtown Neighbors Association in March generated 360 entries and 90,000+ impressions.

Our “MKE A Difference” campaign in April/May highlighted health and wellness, retail options and frontline heroes and gave away nearly \$6,000 in gift cards and generated 400+ entries across all social platforms as part of our Random Acts of Kindness campaign. Influencer partnerships continued with Milwaukee Mom and Estamos Unidos.



COVID-19 SURVEYS

To gauge consumer perceptions of safety and changing habits amid the pandemic, we released monthly polls via Instagram and email between May and August. We received 4,249 total responses reporting on top-priority safety measures, comfort with restaurants and bars, level of concern about the pandemic, retail habits, seasonal adaptations and more. We shared that data with Downtown businesses and used it to support Milwaukee Downtown’s safety implementations, such as public sanitation stations, outdoor seating and signage.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Whether it was planning COVID-19 action steps, chatting about virtual Downtown events or raising awareness of Milwaukee Downtown’s core programs, public relations continues to play a key role in shaping perceptions of Downtown Milwaukee.

In the last year, news about Milwaukee Downtown’s projects and programs garnered 20.7 million impressions and \$1.5 million in earned media value.



WEBSITE

Milwaukee Downtown's website has been an invaluable asset to visitors, as well as the business community, never more so than over the past year. A dedicated section to COVID-19 efforts has garnered significant traffic, while an ever-changing list of blogs geared toward places to visit and things to do coupled with a daily calendar of events powered by Milwaukee365.com has provided guests with a range of itinerary suggestions. Our "Get Around" section and interactive mapping pages allow businesses to shop available spaces and assess opportunity zones.

In the last year, the site welcomed over 130,500 users, 62% being female with 26.6% between the ages 25-34 and 17.7% between the ages 35-44. The blog page garnered 33,000+ views. We also implemented an accessibility widget to provide information for differently abled visitors.

PUBLIC ART MAP

When activities and programs transitioned digitally, so did Milwaukee's largest collection of free, accessible outdoor public art. A total of 145+ murals, monuments and sculptures are featured on a new, interactive map that users can filter by category: murals, monuments, sculptures, Sculpture Milwaukee and RiverSculpture!, as well as by neighborhood: East Town, Westtown, Walker's Point, Historic Third Ward and Lower East Side. There have been 6,200+ pageviews since March and 10,000+ photo views of Milwaukee Downtown murals on Google Maps.

MKE IT BACK CAMPAIGN

In light of the pandemic, Milwaukee Downtown decided to launch a new "MKE It Back" multimedia campaign targeting Southeast Wisconsin starting in late-July and running through mid-October. The campaign featured :15 and :30 radio and TV spots, and print, digital and outdoor ads across the Milwaukee market. In conjunction with those ads, Milwaukee Downtown collaborated with Imagine MKE and 88Nine on the "Milwaukee Strong" song/music video. Since July 27, the TV spots have had 48,000+ views on YouTube, reached 52,800+ people on Facebook and prompted over 1,000 engagements.

NEIGHBORHOOD COLLABORATION

With support from the City of Milwaukee and CARES Act funding, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 spearheaded a "MKE It Local" campaign just before the holidays. The campaign called attention to restaurants, bars and shops in 12 near-downtown neighborhoods. A website was developed with over 600 business listings categorized by neighborhood and operational status. Meanwhile, ad dollars boosted messages across print, broadcast, digital and out-of-home channels. In addition, \$10,000 in gift cards were purchased from local businesses and distributed to elevate awareness of Milwaukee's local gems.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MARKET ANALYSIS

Keeping stakeholders and prospects informed on incentives, market research and growth opportunities is a primary objective of Milwaukee Downtown.

Last year, we engaged with developers and industry leaders to unofficially update Downtown's employee and resident populations:

- Estimate is 90,700+ employees, a 12.1% increase since 2010
- 30.6% of all jobs within the City of Milwaukee (296,721) are located within Downtown
- Downtown residents now number 32,000+, a 26.5% increase since 2010
- Greater Downtown area makes up 3.5% of the City's landmass, yet produces 22.1% of the City's total property tax base
- Over \$6.5 billion has been invested in completed or is expected in under-construction and proposed private and public development projects during a decade of unprecedented growth



BUSINESS RECRUITMENT WINS

We actively monitor development trends to implement new incentive programs. One new tool is the Opportunity Zone program, which provides federal tax incentives to encourage investors to put their capital to work in Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs). With several Opportunity Zone sites shovel-ready, we developed a marketing kit highlighting the possibilities.

City grants, Kiva Zip loans, PACE financing and our Business Development Loan Pool (BDLP) have also continued to be economic generators. Since inception, \$190,000 of BDLP funds have helped leverage more than \$7.4 million in private investment, which includes projects like Canary Coffee Bar where we provided site selection assistance, a BDLP loan and connection to City programs to assist in financing the space build-out. Other wins included Tupelo Honey, where we assisted in a downtown sales pitch to ensure a site selection within BID #21; aiding HUB501 in their search for a local investor; and assisting Central Standard Distillery with a BDLP loan to support \$4.4 million in redevelopment and foster a connection with the City to assist with white-box grants.

COVID-19 ECONOMIC RESOURCES WEBPAGE

In response to an avalanche of information spread across multiple platforms from various agencies, we developed an online COVID-19 economic resources page to serve as the go-to-resource for local, state and federal economic support programs. This page provided information on PPP, Milwaukee Restart Grants, We're All In Grants and more. The pages received over 8,300 views since March.

COVID-19 EMPLOYEE RE-ENTRY SURVEY

At the request of stakeholders, we developed and disseminated a survey in June and October of 2020 and again in April of 2021 to assess employers' plans for resuming operations and bringing employees back Downtown.

In the latest survey, we targeted a sample of Downtown's office building managers and employers. Respondents represented an estimated 17,000 employees or nearly 19% of Downtown's estimated 90,700+ workforce.

As of May 1, 2021, an estimated 26.9% of Downtown's employee base has returned to the office with those numbers projected to increase as the year progresses. Milwaukee Downtown will continue to monitor re-entry trends into 2021.

ACTIVE STREETS

In response to public sentiment about indoor gatherings as well as mandated capacity limits, we advocated for expanded outdoor seating options for Downtown businesses. We partnered with TKWA UrbanLab to develop a model focused on Old World Third Street and, to date, more than a dozen expanded parklets have been implemented. As a result of our continued advocacy for this business recovery solution, the pilot program has been extended through 2021.

BRIGHTEN THE PASSAGE

Connecting the central business district to the Historic Third Ward, the Broadway and Water Street corridors under the I-794 freeway were transformed with new large-scale artwork, over 75 aesthetic light fixtures and improved streetscaping. All part of the Brighten the Passage initiative, the multifaceted project was aimed at improving the connectivity between two neighborhoods severed from one another by a freeway structure.

The lighting component, designed by Ring & DuChateau, installed by Lemberg and programmed by Main Stage, can now be viewed nightly.

ADVOCACY

Taking a leadership position on catalytic projects is one of our top priorities.

Milwaukee Downtown advocates for small businesses, Bus Rapid Transit, bike lanes, the revitalization of Pompeii Square and the Broadway connection, expansion of The Hop streetcar line, and bringing new businesses and investors to the central business district.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our economic development staff participated in several panel discussions continuing to highlight Downtown's value proposition and competitive advantages relative to peer markets. We're an active member of the NAIOP Public Policy Committee. We assisted WEDC in coordinating the "We're All In" event and serve as a regular resource for media outlets on Downtown developments and best practice research in pre- and post-COVID environments.

PROJECTS ADVANCING

There are a variety of projects advancing that will add significant quality of life improvements across the BID and beyond. We are advancing Downtown's first dog recreation area with tentative implementation scheduled for Summer/Fall 2021. Design is underway on the \$1.85 million "Frame the Square" beautification effort for Cathedral Square Park. It includes new sidewalks, trees and landscaping, benches, trash receptacles and other pedestrian-friendly elements and is targeted to start in Spring 2021. Finally, Historic Third Ward Association, BID #2 and Milwaukee Downtown are working together to improve the larger Pompeii Square area with landscaping, stone seat walls and new lighting among the enhancements.



PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

WAYFINDING

Milwaukee Downtown worked with VISIT Milwaukee, Corbin Design, Poblocki Sign Company and the City of Milwaukee to update Downtown's existing wayfinding system. The design integrates the authenticity of Milwaukee, including a header inspired by the iconic Milwaukee Public Market marquee; exposed rivets and steel frame structure, a nod to our city's manufacturing industries; and a red ribbon which reflects Pabst Blue Ribbon or the Wisconsin State Fair. The project encompassed providing retrofit solutions for 20 existing vehicular signs and eight information kiosks on Wisconsin Avenue; and installing 40 pedestrian trailblazing signs (20 in East Town and 20 in Westown) with walk times.

"HEART & SOL" MURAL

We worked with Community Advocates to secure a City of Milwaukee Community Improvement Project grant for a 5,000-square-foot mural on the same block as "Westown in Bloom." Created by artist Mauricio Ramirez, this mural depicts two young girls, portraying optimism for our city's future and serving as a symbol of Downtown's diversity and inclusion.

"KINDRED" MURAL

This 92-foot-long by 15-foot-tall mural was implemented in partnership with The Avenue on the 2nd Street skywalk. The Downtown Placemaking Task Force commissioned Wisconsin artist Jaime Brown, with assistance from Karim Jabbari, to create the mural. Completed in July 2020, it features 11 colors in a design inspired by a Native American quilt, telling a story of Milwaukee's past, present and future, including settlement, role in the Industrial Age and elements of the People's Flag of Milwaukee.

"THE HERO IN YOU" MURAL AND MILWAUKEE STRONG

We worked with the Department of Public Works to commission a 620-foot-long mural on the MacArthur Square parking structure. The Downtown Placemaking Task Force commissioned Milwaukee-based artist Ken Brown to create a mural that salutes Downtown's frontline heroes and essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the mural, we profiled 10 essential workers on Milwaukee Downtown's blog, the artist created a dozen coloring book-style pages available for download on our website and we partnered with Imagine MKE and 88Nine Radio Milwaukee to bring 35 local musicians together to create an anthem for our city's recovery — resulting in the "Milwaukee Strong" song and music video.

The Mayor's Office declared Friday, July 24, 2020 as "Milwaukee Strong" Day for the virtual release of the song, music video and mural.



BRIGHTEN THE PASSAGE

Downtown Milwaukee contracted four artists: Tia Richardson (Cosmic Butterfly Design), The Couto Brothers, Josephine Rice and Dave Watkins (Real Abstract) to create lively Broadway freeway pier murals. We launched the murals with a “Meet the Muralist” blog series, drone video for social media channels and arranged five live performances from local musicians over the lunch hour.



POSTMAN SQUARE

After a successful “lighter, quicker, cheaper” pilot program to activate the Postman Square traffic triangle in 2019, Milwaukee Downtown collaborated with the City of Milwaukee to complete the transformation in 2020. Along with neighborhood partners Boyle Fredrickson, Germania Apartments and The Chalet at the River, we led fundraising efforts for construction, maintenance and programming. Improvements included a stone seat wall, old-world brick pavers, electricity, dog-friendly turf and aesthetic lighting.



ROAD OF DEMOCRACY

A total of 58 street pole banners were installed on Water Street, between Mason and Cherry streets; and Kilbourn Avenue between the RiverWalk and Broadway, to celebrate the virtues of democracy, as well as the public spaces and city streets that have hosted demonstrations of our First Amendment Right over the course of our nation’s history. The banners featured work from two former Artists of the Year: Della Wells and Poet Laureate Dasha Kelly Hamilton.

In partnership with Imagine MKE, Milwaukee Arts Board, America’s Black Holocaust Museum and Marcus Performing Arts Center, the production of a short film is underway by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Brad Pruitt.

Artwork by Della Wells



LANDMARK LIGHTING

Milwaukee Downtown created and administered the landmark lighting database, featuring 30 properties with special lighting capabilities. These were activated to highlight the community’s resiliency during COVID-19 starting in March. Other campaigns included Share Lemonade with the Zizzo Group and FOX 6 in April, Pride month in June, #MKEitShine for canceled cultural festivals, the DNC in August, Red Alert RESTART and World Suicide Prevention Day in September, and the Holiday Lights Festival in December.

Old World Third Street also shone brightly with new café lighting between harp lamps on the 1000 and 1100 blocks. The initiative enhanced the 2018-2019 roofline lighting project and further solidified the corridor as a nighttime entertainment district.

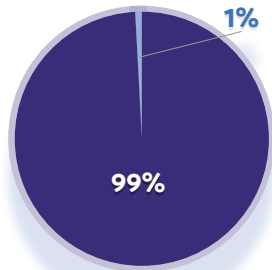
MOVING FORWARD

By emphasizing the cleanliness, safety and friendliness of our city, Milwaukee Downtown has made the central business district a desirable place to live, work, play and conduct business. Despite challenges presented by exterior forces, the quality of life in Downtown Milwaukee makes the district a sought-after destination for everyone — from Gen Z to Boomers. Milwaukee Downtown will build upon its success while concentrating on the following priorities for 2021:

- Continued focus on quality-of-life initiatives
- Development of a refresh of the Downtown Master Plan
- Capitalizing on real estate opportunities with The Hop
- Diversity and inclusivity initiatives
- Implementing post-COVID-19 initiatives to continue establishing feelings of safety
- Strengthening the connections of catalytic corridors to near-downtown neighborhoods

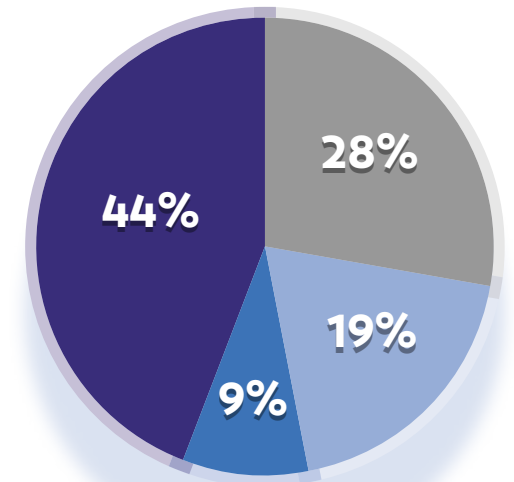
BUDGET

Representing approximately 150 square blocks and nearly 500 property owners, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 collected \$4.17 million in assessments to fund its core programs and initiatives.



■ 2020 Assessments: \$4,170,000
 ■ Additional Income: \$29,270
Total Income: \$4,199,270

■ Clean Sweep Ambassador Program (Sidewalk Cleaning, Landscaping, Graffiti Removal): \$1,155,555 (28%)	■ Administrative: \$397,202 (9%)
■ Public Service Ambassador Program: \$793,366 (19%)	■ Economic Development/Marketing/Business Retention/Recruitment: \$1,853,147 (44%)



Please note Milwaukee Downtown, Inc. annual contributions, sales and event fees are not reflected in this budget.

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