



2026 Snapshot of Strong Upward Momentum in Downtown Milwaukee

www.milwaukeedowntown.com

Prepared by:
MATT DORNER

Economic Development Director
Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21

Milwaukee is Experiencing Unprecedented Investment

Downtown Milwaukee is the economic hub of Southeastern Wisconsin. Since 2015, over \$5.4 billion has been invested in completed private and public projects. Meanwhile, more than \$3.6 billion is currently under construction or proposed to start soon, spurring significant momentum that reinforces Downtown as the vibrant economic center of Wisconsin.

This development adds to the more than \$2 billion invested between 2005 and 2015. The Downtown Area Investment map showcases where unprecedented growth is occurring.

Download the Greater Downtown Area Investment Map at www.MilwaukeeDowntown.com



\$5.4 Billion +
COMPLETED PROJECTS SINCE 2015



\$3.6 Billion +
UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR PROPOSED



Photo Courtesy of Nate Vomhof

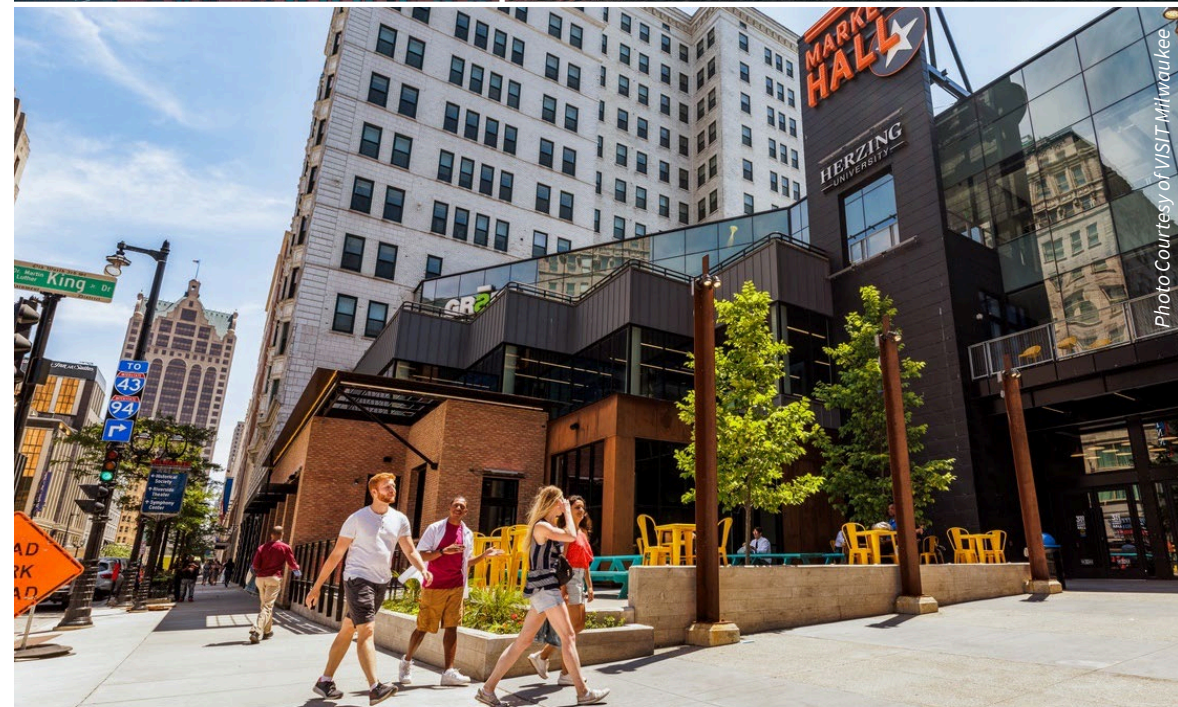


Photo Courtesy of VISIT Milwaukee

By the Numbers

THE GREATER DOWNTOWN AREA IS IN ONE OF ITS GREATEST GROWTH PERIODS, ADDING RECORD INVESTMENT:

- **21.2%** population growth since 2010, up to 42,275+ residents
- **22.1%** of the City's property tax base generated by 3% of City's landmass
- **88,700+** estimated total jobs downtown
 - 7,800+ employees located or announced plans to grow downtown since 2020
- **31%** of all jobs within the City of Milwaukee are located Downtown
- **6.3+ Million** Out of Market annual visitors
- **2,950+** new hotel rooms with the Hilton Tempo and AC Marriott to start in 2026
- **4,000+** new housing units with since 2020 with nearly 1,000 anticipated to start this year for a mix of incomes



Nearly 1 in 3 City of Milwaukee Jobs are Downtown

Downtown concentrates both a high share of jobs and is the core of several key industries: Finance & Insurance, Real Estate, Public Administration, Professional Services, and Knowledge-based Jobs.

Employment (Primary Jobs)



31%
CITYWIDE
JOBS



28%
CITY'S PRIVATE
JOBS



85%
CITY'S FINANCE
& INSURANCE
JOBS



51%
CITY'S REAL
ESTATE JOBS



90%
CITY'S PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
JOBS



38%
CITY'S
KNOWLEDGE
INDUSTRY JOBS

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)



Employment 2020

	Downtown	City	Region
Primary Jobs	80,332	255,187	928,393
All Jobs	84,896	276,971	999,896
Share of Land Area	n/a	2.9%	0.1%
District Share Of All Jobs	n/a	31%	8%
District Share Of Primary Jobs	n/a	31%	9%
Employees Per Acre (Primary)	45.6	4.1	0.6
Primary Employment Growth 2002–2020	6%	-8%	3%

Source: LEHD On the Map (2020)

2023 International Downtown Association Value of Downtowns and Center Cities Study

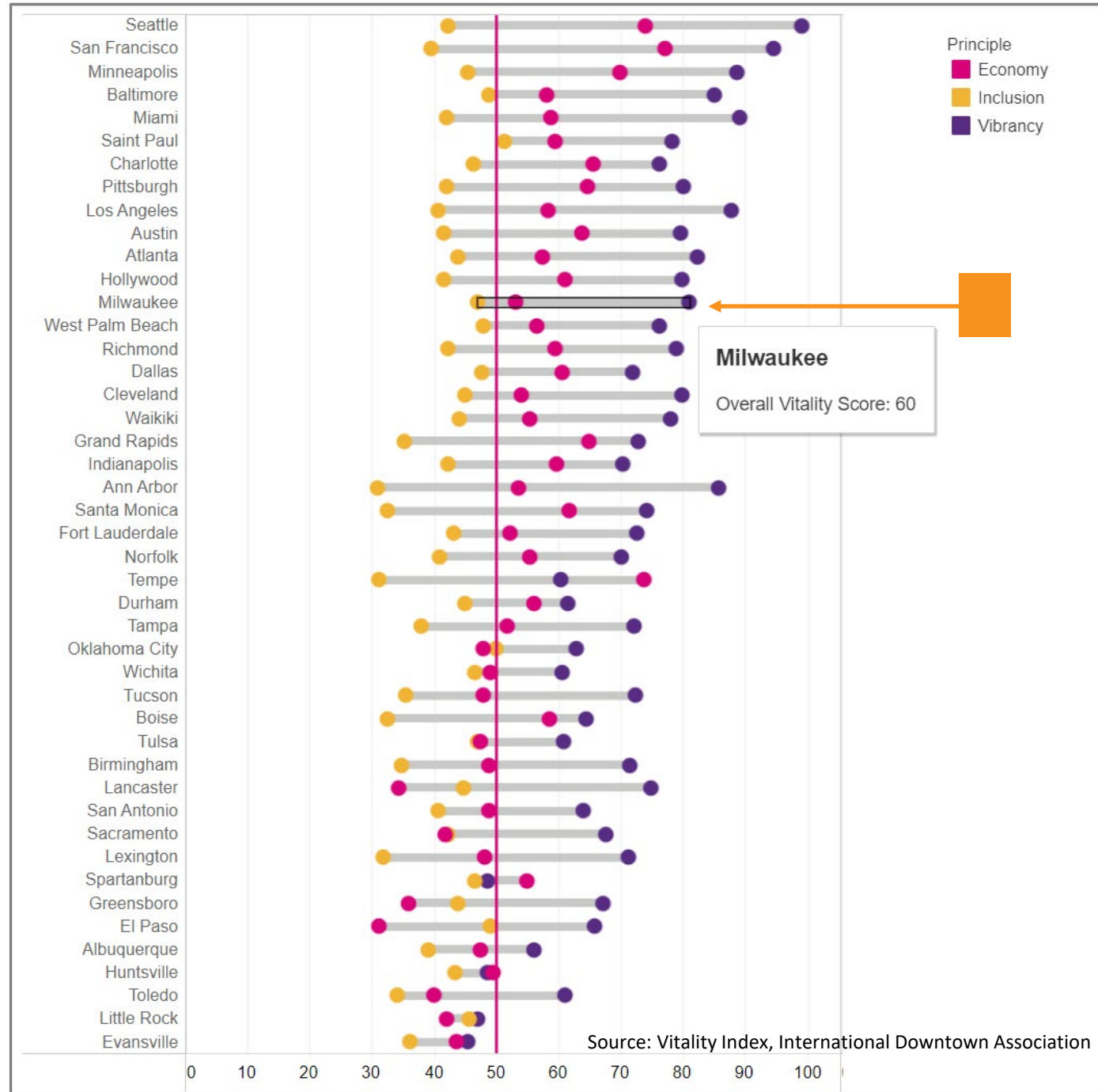
Downtown Milwaukee's Recovery & Resiliency is driven by its Vitality

Downtown Milwaukee ranks high with an overall score of 60, ten points above the national benchmark of 50.

Outpacing: Indianapolis, Cleveland, Dallas, Tampa, Richmond and many others



Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Oct. 9, 2025



Downtown Activity Tracking with Placer.ai January 2019 to January 2026



Measuring Downtown Activity

Comparing January 2019 to January 2026, the number of the *Employee, Resident and Visitors* in downtown Milwaukee was equal, signaling a full activity recovery in average daily population

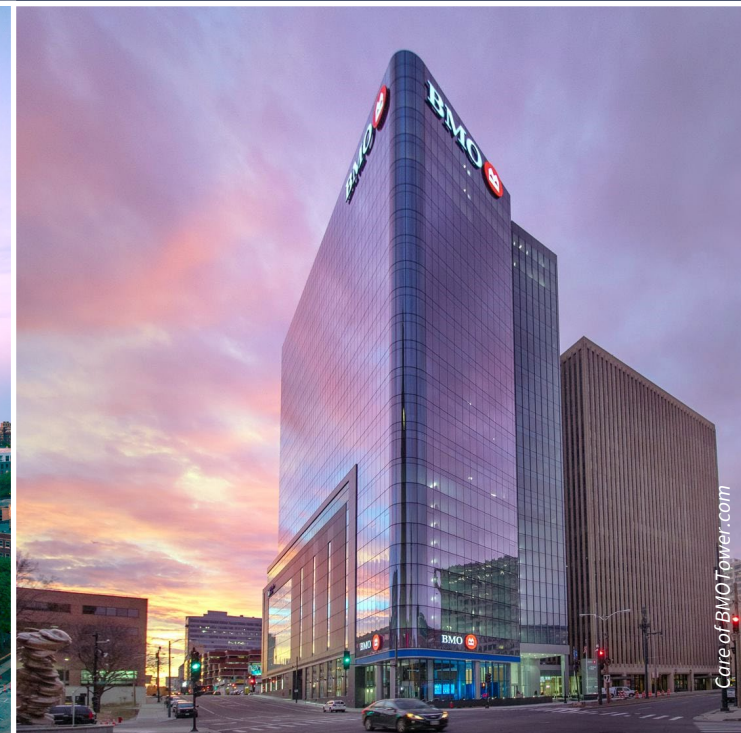
MKE
2026



AND... significant investment continues to outpace peer cities, positioning Downtown Milwaukee as the premier location for doing business.



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Downtown Milwaukee is Experiencing Record Business Recruitment & Expansion Success

7,800+ new jobs have located or announced plans to grow employment in downtown Milwaukee since 2020 alone!

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Milwaukee employers say new downtown offices have bolstered their recruitment efforts

Northwestern Mutual plans \$500 million upgrade to its HQ, will bring 2,000 Franklin employees downtown

Company will transform North Office Building at Milwaukee campus

By Andrew Welland - Feb 2, 2023 7:15 am

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Investment firm will move 300 employees from Menomonee Falls to the Third Ward

By Hunter Turpin - Jun 17, 2024 5:28 pm

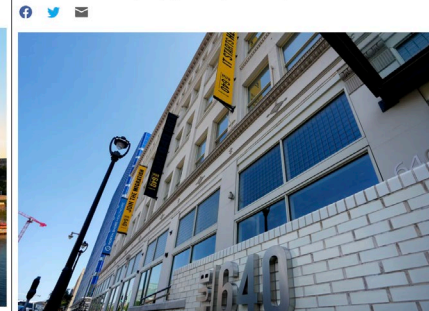
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Fiserv moving headquarters to downtown Milwaukee from Brookfield. 800 jobs are involved.

Tom Daykin
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 6:21 a.m. CT Oct. 27, 2022 | Updated 8:36 p.m. CT Oct. 27, 2022



Potawatomi Business Development Corp. opening downtown office

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The 833 East building stands between the U.S. Bank Center and construction site of the new Citicorp apartment high-rise on the downtown skyline.

LAND AND SPACE

Downtown lands another corporate headquarters. Enerpac moving from Menomonee Falls

Tom Daykin
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 8:55 a.m. CT Feb. 21, 2024



Global technology firm opening downtown Milwaukee office

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Veolia North America hosts grand opening of new downtown Milwaukee office

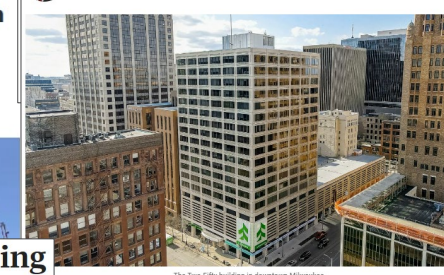
CEO teases future growth

By Ashley Smart
Sep 6, 2024 10:58 am

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HNTB again expands downtown Milwaukee office

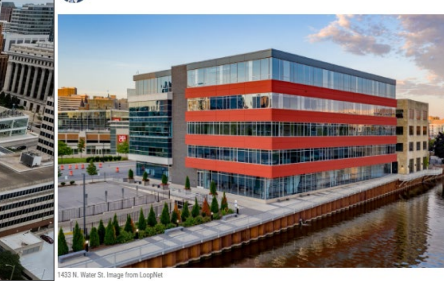
By Andrew Welland
May 11, 2023 11:04 am



The Two-Fifty building in downtown Milwaukee.

Staffing firm MARS Solutions Group moving HQ to downtown Milwaukee

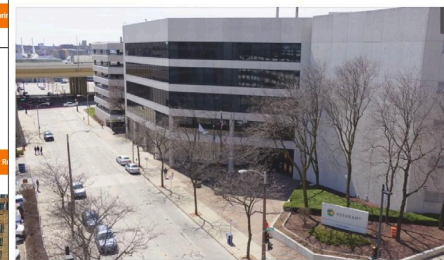
By Hunter Turpin
Oct 15, 2024 11:52 am



1433 N. Water St. Image from Longlit

Milwaukee Tool to expand corporate offices to downtown Milwaukee, add up to 2,000 jobs

Email | Facebook | LinkedIn | Twitter



A 2015 photo of Assurant Health's former downtown Milwaukee offices
LEE MATZ

SoftwareONE to move U.S. HQ from Waukesha County to Milwaukee's Third Ward

By Ashley Smart - Apr 15, 2022 12:17 pm


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Downtown Milwaukee's Momentum is Attracting More Companies and Thousands of Employees

"Fiserv, a Fortune 500 payments and financial technology firm, is among a recent string of major companies moving jobs to downtown Milwaukee. Others include Northwestern Mutual, Milwaukee Tool, SoftwareOne, Allspring Global Investments and Enerpac Tool Group."

"**Milwaukee has a ton of momentum**," Fiserv's Nelson said. "One of the things that attracted us to come downtown was wanting to be part of that."



MILWAUKEE BUSINESS JOURNAL

2024 REAL ESTATE AWARDS
Honoring the best real estate deals and projects completed in 2023 >

Milwaukee Business Journal, March 22, 2024

DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE CEO ROUNDTABLE • COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

DOWNTOWN MOMENTUM

More companies, including Fiserv and Milwaukee Tool, are being drawn to the city's central business district, bringing with them hundreds of employees.

Fiserv officially opened new downtown Milwaukee office in early March.

Milwaukee Employers say new Downtown Offices have bolstered their recruitment efforts

"Thanks in part to its new downtown space, Fiserv has seen a 56% surge in job applications from 2023 to 2024. Hau said the office has created a positive buzz and become a "powerful driver" for attracting top talent."

BizTimes MILWAUKEE BUSINESS NEWS Industries Ideas People Companies Stocks Magazines Events Submit Milwaukee Business Journal, March 22, 2024

Milwaukee employers say new downtown offices have bolstered their recruitment efforts

By Ashley Smart
Sep 8, 2024 11:24 pm

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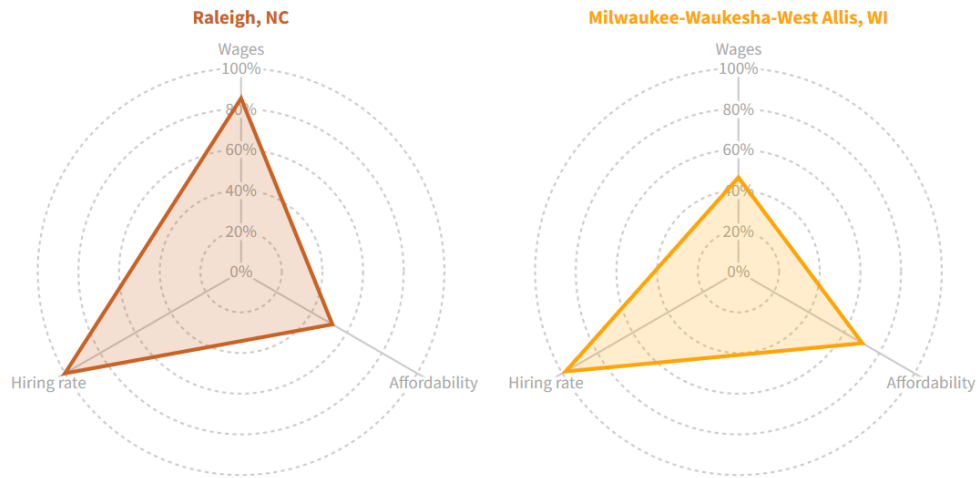
Workers gather in a common area at Fiserv's Milwaukee office. Credit: Fiserv

Milwaukee Ranks as a Top City for New College Grads to Find Jobs

Greater affordability, higher pay, and strong hiring

April 2024-'25

These radar charts compare a metro's percentile rankings on wages, affordability, and hiring. The further a point on the triangle is from the center, the better its ranking. Triangles more centered on 0% have more balanced performance across the three metrics.



Milwaukee ranks second-best city for new college grads to find jobs

The study, conducted by ADP cited wages, affordability and hiring practices in the city.



Updated: 10:27 PM CDT Jul 24, 2025

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Why Enerpac Tool's CEO Eyes Growing Employment at New Downtown Offices

"We continue to scale up here at the headquarters for sure. Milwaukee is a really good place for us. We have some critical mass here. We have over 1,500 associates in the Moving downtown is crucial to Enerpac Tool retaining and attracting talent, CEO Paul Sternlieb said. So far, employees and prospective recruits overwhelmingly embrace the new space that Enerpac occupied on March 31, he said.

"We know that this will create a magnet for additional talent as we grow our team here in the coming years," Sternlieb said

"This even gives us access to the talent base in the north shore of Chicago," he said. "I think we'll get phenomenal access to add more talent."

Why Enerpac Tool's CEO eyes growing employment at new downtown offices

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A mural of Enerpac hydraulics by Milwaukee artist Drew York graces a hallway of the company's new headquarters.

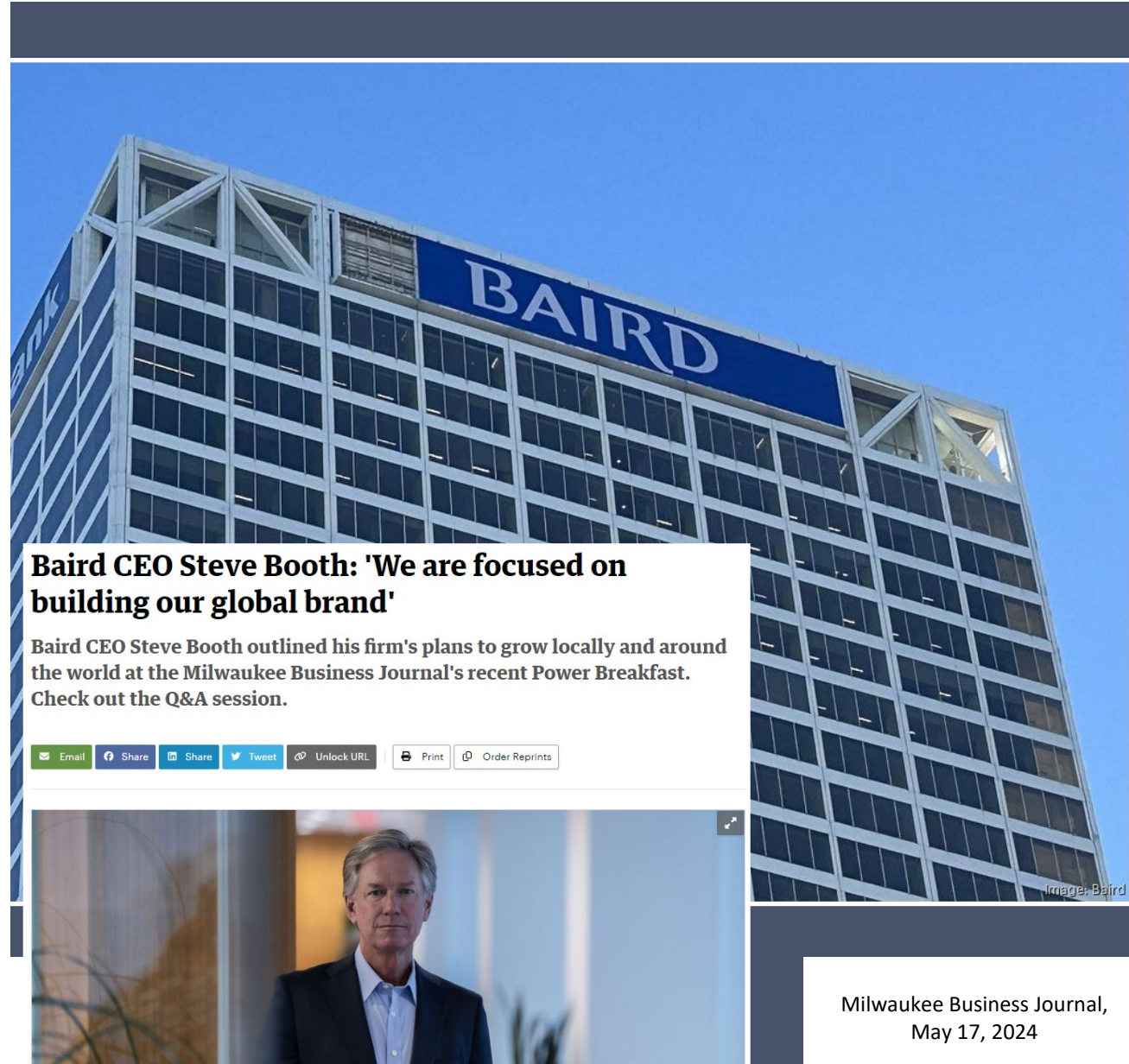
RICH KIRCHEN

BAIRD'S Position on Milwaukee's Quality of Life Advantages

Q: You're now in markets all over the country and all over the world. How does Milwaukee compare to those other markets?

A: *"When people come here, they say this just feels different than other places in the U.S. We have a smaller, second headquarters in Louisville. It's about the same size as Milwaukee, but it is fundamentally different. If you were to walk from the Louisville equivalent of The Pfister Hotel to the equivalent of where Baird is headquartered, you would have concerns about your personal safety. That's just the way it is."*

"That's in cities like Portland and Seattle, which are huge cities for us. In Portland, we've actually had to relocate our office from downtown out to the suburban area and essentially abandoned it. We do not have that issue in Milwaukee, and we take it for granted because we live and work here every day. But I have 200 locations, and real estate expenses are the second-biggest expense after people, so it's a huge issue for us."
Steve Booth, BAIRD CEO



OFFICE | RESIDENTIAL | SPECIALTY MIXED-USE | HOTELS | ENTERTAINMENT | RETAIL | CIVIC | TRANSPORTATION | PUBLIC SPACE

Sample of Transformational Projects Recently Complete, Underway & Proposed in all Development Sectors

Projected renderings are included for some projects and are subject to change.

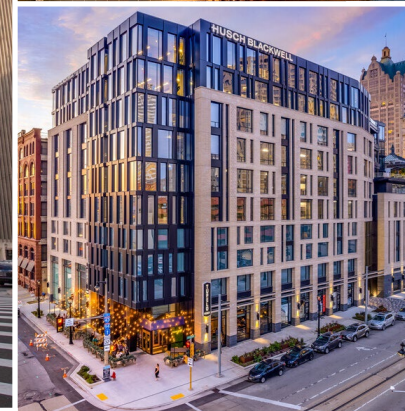
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Office

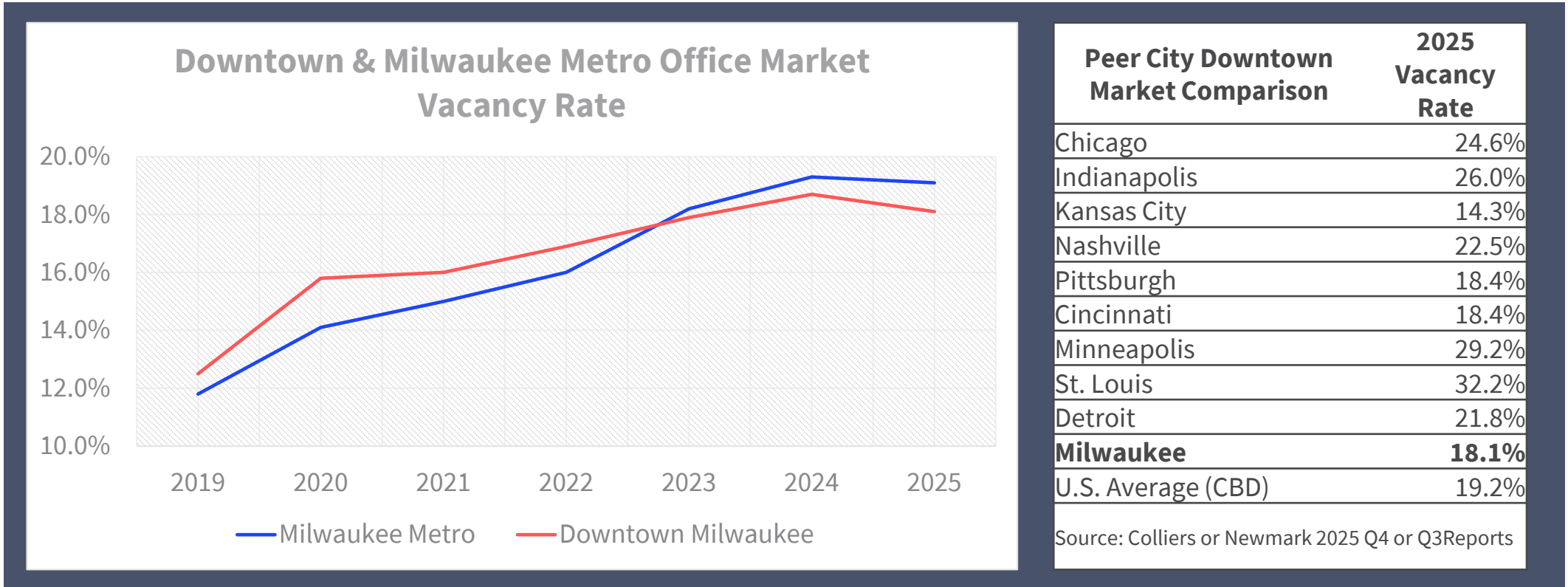
- BMO Tower
- Northwestern Mutual
- Associated Bank River Center
- The Huron Building
- Milwaukee Tool
- The Avenue
- Hub 640
- 833 East
- Enerpac Center



Care of Northwestern Mutual



Downtown Milwaukee Office Market Comparison



Peer City Downtown Market Comparison	2025 Vacancy Rate
Chicago	24.6%
Indianapolis	26.0%
Kansas City	14.3%
Nashville	22.5%
Pittsburgh	18.4%
Cincinnati	18.4%
Minneapolis	29.2%
St. Louis	32.2%
Detroit	21.8%
Milwaukee	18.1%
U.S. Average (CBD)	19.2%

Source: Colliers or Newmark 2025 Q4 or Q3 Reports

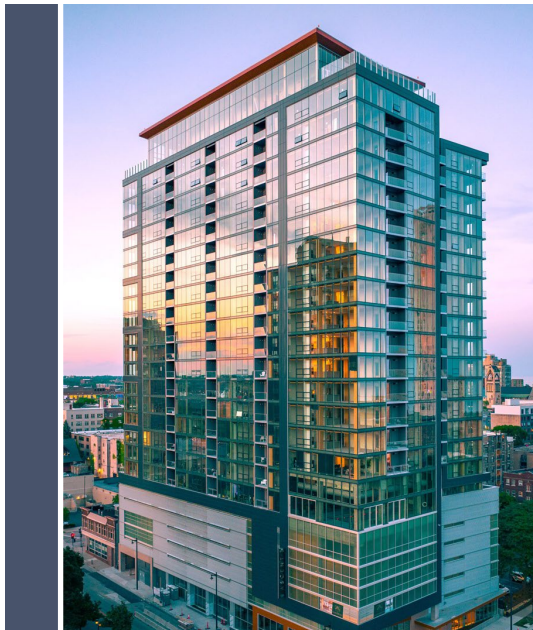
At the end of 2025, downtown Milwaukee vacancy rate at 18.1% was 1% lower than the entire metro area.

Downtown Milwaukee’s vacancy rate is one of the lowest among peer cities and over 1% lower than the United States central business district average.

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Residential

- 100 East conversion
- The Couture
- 333 Water
- Nova
- The Fifteens at Park East
- Ascent MKE
- 740 North
- River House Phase II
- Evoni
- Fieldhouse Flats
- Eighteen87 on The River
- Michigan Street Commons
- Elevation 1659



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Milwaukee has the 5th Strongest Apartment Rental Market in the United States

Milwaukee ranked the 5th most competitive apartment rental market in the United States out of the 139 rental markets at the end of 2025 according to [RentCafe.com](https://rentcafe.com) with a 94.4% occupancy and an overall competitive score 9% higher than the national average signaling the strong demand for more housing.

www.milwaukee downtown.com

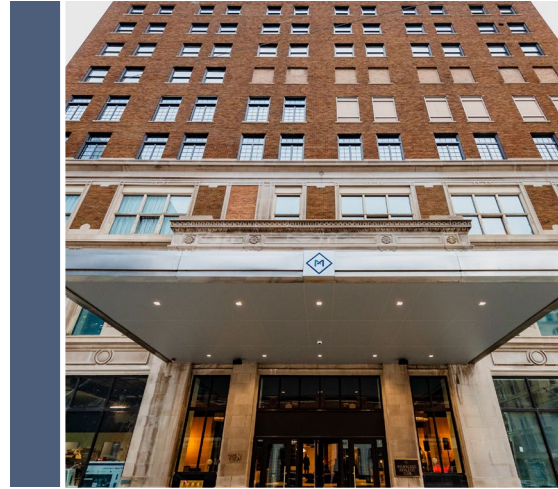
Top 20 Most Competitive Rental Markets in 2025

Rank	Market	Competitive score	Average vacant days	Occupied apartments	Prospective renters	Lease renewal rate	Share of new units
1	Miami, FL	92.9	33	96.4%	19	72.5%	4.22%
2	Chicago, IL	88.2	32	95.1%	13	61.1%	0.75%
3	Suburban Chicago, IL	88.1	36	95.5%	14	70.3%	1.11%
4	Manhattan, NY	84.5	36	95.9%	11	66.3%	0.84%
5	Milwaukee, WI	84.2	38	94.4%	11	71.2%	1.63%
6	Broward County, FL	83.4	39	95.0%	13	69.0%	3.08%
7	Suburban Philadelphia, PA	83.0	43	95.0%	11	77.3%	0.89%
8	Grand Rapids, MI	82.6	37	95.0%	9	70.3%	1.75%
9	Suburban Twin Cities, MN-WI	82.1	38	94.7%	11	67.8%	2.45%
10	Lansing - Ann Arbor, MI	82.0	35	94.6%	8	68.8%	2.94%
11	Omaha, NE	81.5	36	94.9%	11	66.6%	3.94%
11	Greater Boston, MA	81.5	38	94.8%	11	64.1%	1.93%
13	Silicon Valley, CA	81.4	36	95.5%	13	56.3%	2.45%
14	Kansas City, MO	81.1	39	93.7%	10	68.2%	1.27%
15	North Jersey, NJ	80.8	40	95.2%	10	71.4%	3.10%
16	Pittsburgh, PA	80.4	39	94.2%	8	68.4%	0.88%
17	Bridgeport - New Haven, CT	80.1	40	94.6%	12	65.4%	2.31%
18	Orlando, FL	79.8	37	94.1%	10	67.5%	4.65%
19	Cincinnati, OH	79.5	41	94.2%	11	65.3%	1.59%
20	Eastern Virginia, VA	79.3	39	93.7%	11	64.6%	2.26%

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Specialty Mixed-Use

- Milwaukee Athletic Club
- 3rd Street Market Hall & The Avenue
- Journal Square



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Hotels

- Tempo by Hilton
- AC Marriott Downtown Milwaukee
- Hilton Milwaukee Downtown
- The Marc Hotel
- The Trade Milwaukee
- Kinn Guesthouse
- Adams Hotel
- Hilton Tapestry
- Third Ward Marriott



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Entertainment

- The Iron District
- Vivarium
- Foxtown Landing & MKE Dog Park
- Landmark Credit Union Live



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Milwaukee's Pabst Theater lands spot on Billboard's list of Top Music Venues for 2026

Milwaukee's Pabst Theater has been named one of Billboard's Top Music Venues of 2026, part of a list that includes the Sphere in Las Vegas, Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez in Mexico City, the St. Augustine Amp in Florida and two dozen other venues.

www.milwaukee downtown.com

Milwaukee's Pabst Theater lands spot on Billboard's list of top music venues for 2026

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The Pabst Theater at 144 E. Wells St. was recognized in Billboard's Local Favorite category.
SCOTT PAULUS



By Linda Spice – Reporter, Milwaukee Business Journal
Feb 24, 2026

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Retail & Restaurant

Downtown’s growing restaurant scene continues to add world-class offerings, including the recent openings and announcements of:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| JoSa’ on the River | Sinta @ Agency |
| Sooshibay | Soban Korean |
| Cassis | Eatery |
| The Vig | The Spread |
| Upper Bar | Draft & Co |
| The Conroy | SapSap @ 3rd St |
| aya | Market Hall |
| ZX Sushi | Il Ponte |
| High Stakes | The Studio |
| Nakama | 801 Restaurant |
| Tom’s Watch Bar | |



Milwaukee Takes its Place on the Global Culinary Stage as MICHELIN Guide Comes to the Great Lakes

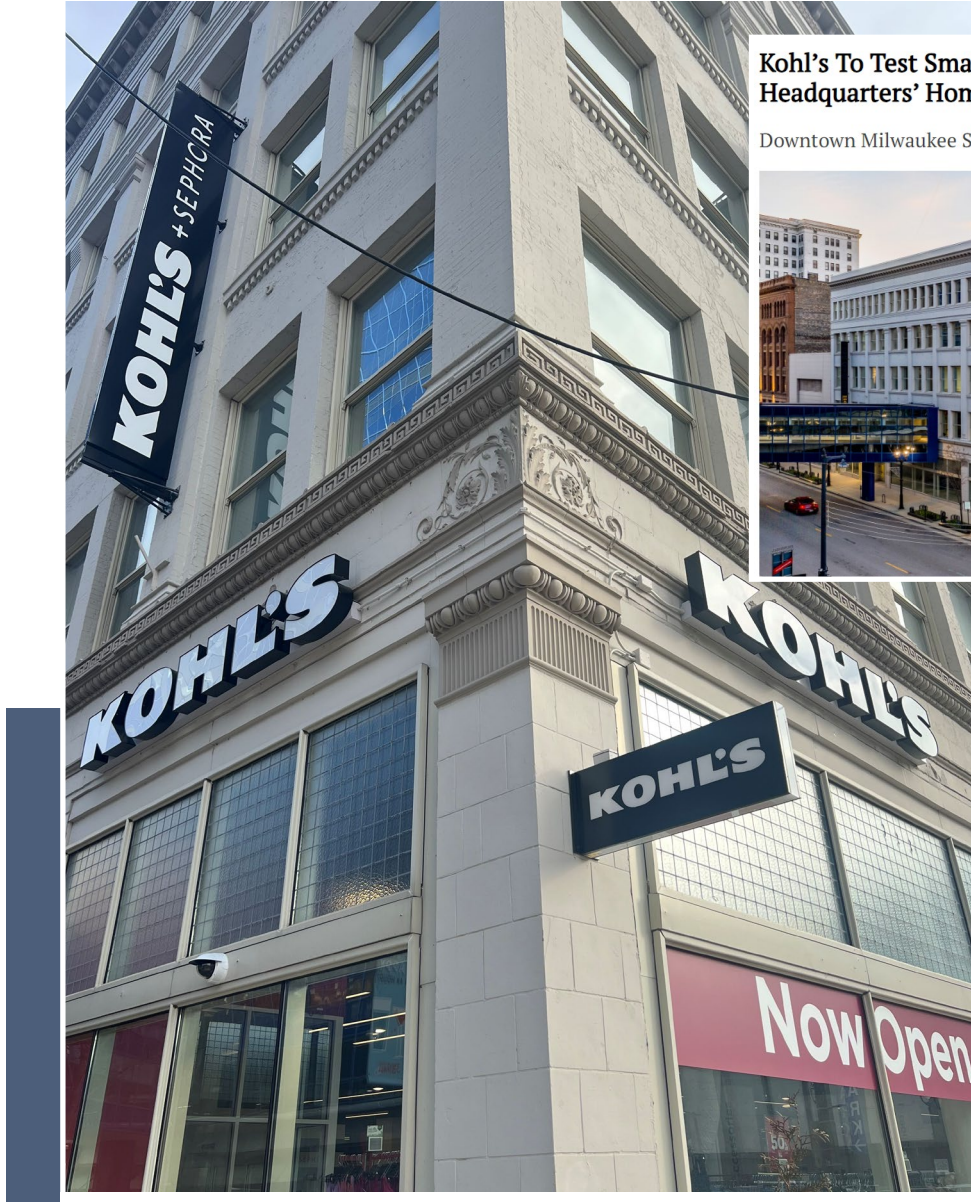
4/8/2026



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Kohl's Opens First Downtown Store

Downtown Milwaukee is one of the only markets among its peer cities to have a department store open in recent years!



Kohl's To Test Smaller, Urban Concept in Headquarters' Hometown

Downtown Milwaukee Store Will Complement Major Mall Redevelopment



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Civic

- BAIRD Center Expansion
- Bradley Symphony Center
- Milwaukee Repertory Theater
- Nature & Culture Museum of Wisconsin



MKE
2026

Transportation

- Bus Rapid Transit
- The Hop Streetcar
- Bike Network Expansion
- 6th Street Complete Street
- Michigan Street Pedestrianization
- Wells Street Reconstruction
- Van Buren Street Cycle Track
- Kilbourn Bike Lane Expansion
- FlexRide
- E-Scooters
- Bublr Bike Share Expansion



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Public Realm Projects

- Downtown Dog Park
- Red Arrow Park Redesign
- Brighten The Passage
- Frame the Square
- Vel R. Phillips Plaza
- Light The Hoan
- 6th Street Redesign
- Water Street Redesign

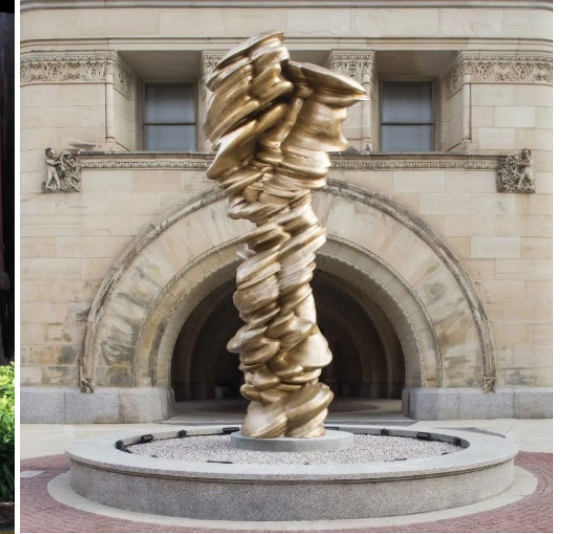




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Sculpture Milwaukee

Since the first exhibition in 2017, Sculpture Milwaukee has been transforming downtown Milwaukee's cultural landscape every year with world-renowned sculpture that serves as a catalyst for community engagement, economic development, and creative placemaking.



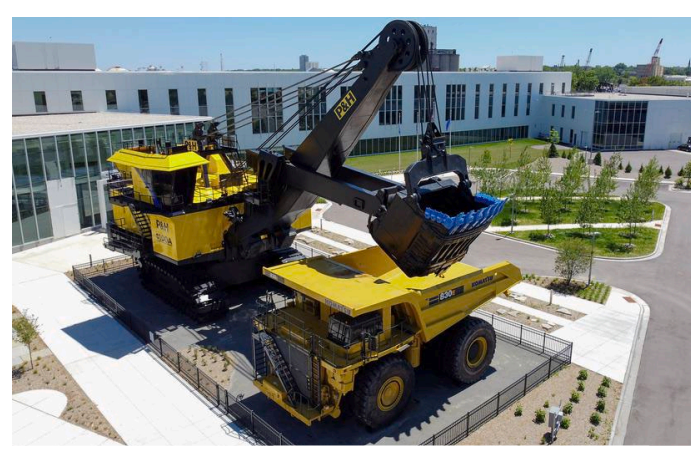
An aerial view of a city skyline, likely Pittsburgh, featuring a river in the foreground and a dense cluster of skyscrapers and buildings in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "Sample of Near-Downtown Transformational Projects" is centered in the middle of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Sample of Near-Downtown Transformational Projects

Projected renderings are included for some projects and are subject to change.

Catalytic Projects Near to Downtown

- Rite-Hite
- Michels/River1
- ThriveOn King
- Komatsu
- Marquette College of Business Administration



An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Pittsburgh, featuring a river and a bridge. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

**Continuing our Momentum!
What's In Store for Downtown?**

More Major Initiatives & Projects Moving Forward in 2026 & Beyond!

- Implementation of “Connec+ing MKE 2040” – Downtown Plan update recommendations and goals
- Build on business recruitment and retention wins
- Complete the redesign of Red Arrow Park
- Activate Downtown’s first dog park
- Open several catalytic projects
- Bolster the nighttime economy
- Enhance Downtown’s quality of life programs
- Expand public art throughout Downtown
- Create and activate additional third spaces
- Track trends nationally and implementing best practices locally
- Continue to position Downtown Milwaukee as the premier destination to live, invest, do business, work, and socialize in the Great Lakes region

MEASURING THE VALUE OF DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE

A strong downtown is critical for a successful city and region. A recent study by the International Downtown Association and Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, analyzed the contributions of Downtown Milwaukee as an economic driver. Through a variety of metrics, including five key principles – economy, inclusion, vibrancy, identity and resilience – the study demonstrated the central business district’s value as an epicenter for culture, innovation, community and commerce.

To view Milwaukee’s Value of Downtown study, visit www.milwaukeekeedowntown.com/do-business.

54% of Downtown residents are ages 18-34.

7,000+ new jobs added since 2010.

16th out of 63 U.S. and Canadian cities for post-pandemic recovery.

65,749 passengers rode The Hop in July 2022 marking the 4th highest month since it opened and the highest since the start of COVID-19, signaling a significant recovery.

2,000+ new residential units are currently under construction, with thousands more in the pipeline.

CONNECTING MKE DOWNTOWN PLAN 2040

\$4.6+ billion worth of completed projects in Downtown since 2010.

16th in the top cities for young professionals to live, according to a July 2023 ranking by Forbes.

Downtown Business Executives Applaud Downtown’s Value

Milwaukee business leaders agree that Downtown is a great place to do business and attract talent. From the synergies that exist among neighboring companies and organizations to the unparalleled amenities and emerging pool of talent fed by nearby universities, Downtown Milwaukee is where business gets done. Plus, with more than \$7.7 billion in completed and recently announced investments since 2010, it’s no wonder that Downtown’s growth is outpacing peer cities of its size.

Ashley Booth
Wisconsin Office Leader & Vice President, AV13

“HNTB, much like Downtown Milwaukee, is on an accelerated growth track. The opportunities in Downtown Milwaukee are endless and it continues to be a tremendous location for retaining and attracting talent.”

Renee Herzog
President, Herzog University

“We came back to our roots when we relocated our national central offices to the heart of Downtown Milwaukee. Being Downtown has strengthened Herzog University’s ties and involvement with business, healthcare and educational communities. I love working Downtown and our team members nationally love visiting us here.”

John Kissinger
President & CEO, GSK

“Our office is not just a physical space; it’s a reflection of our deep-rooted commitment to the community we call home. We consider it a privilege to be woven into the fabric of Milwaukee through our work, and we embrace the vibrant energy that permeates Downtown!”

Lyle Landowski
President & CEO, Collins Wisconsin

“Collins Wisconsin is in the business of finding companies the right home. When it came to our own space, we decided Downtown Milwaukee was the place to be. Downtown has the amenities, activity and access to talent that has propelled our growth for the last 10 years.”

Tim Mattke
CEO, MGIC

“MGIC has been committed to Downtown Milwaukee since our founding in 1957. The amenities that surround our home office are unmatched. Our Downtown is a vibrant work environment that aligns with our top-workplace culture and our commitment to a thriving local community.”

Jim Popp
President & CEO, Johnson Financial Group

“We make it a point to invest in and support the communities we serve. Our flagship location at the top of Cathedral Place is a perfect example of that commitment. Our associates love the energy, activities and the connections they’re able to make by being Downtown. It’s a great time to be in the city of Milwaukee.”

Mary Ellen Stanek
President of Baird Fausch and Co-Chief Investment Officer of Baird Advisors, Baird

“Baird has been invested in the vitality of Downtown Milwaukee for over a century. As one of Downtown’s largest employers, we believe in supporting the communities we serve. We’re proud to call Downtown our home and even prouder to elevate our city’s world-class amenities with a new convention center.”

To learn more about Downtown Milwaukee’s competitive advantages, visit www.milwaukeekeedowntown.com.

Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040 Catalytic Projects

- Public Museum & State Office Building Redevelopment at MacArthur Square
- Place Management Organization for Parks & Public Spaces
- Streetcar Extensions
- Water Street Transformation
- Performing Arts Center Parking Garage Redevelopment Site
- Clybourn Street & I-794 Corridor
- 6th Street Complete Street
- Lakefront Gateway Plaza & Connections
- Haymarket District

BUILDING UPON DOWNTOWN'S MOMENTUM

Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040, co-led by the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, sets a vision for the future of Downtown Milwaukee.

The last Downtown Area Plan was adopted in 2010 and included recommendations for streets, public spaces and new development that aimed to foster a distinct Downtown center, a strong sense of place, a connected Downtown, and attract a density of vibrant uses Downtown.

Since the Plan's adoption in 2010, many of its catalytic projects have been implemented and more than \$4.6 billion has been invested in public and private projects Downtown, with an additional \$3.1 billion proposed or under construction.

Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040 looks to continue the momentum of the 2010 Plan, build on the success of recently completed or announced projects, and lay out an aspirational vision for the future of Downtown – one that takes into consideration global post-COVID trends and Downtown Milwaukee's distinguishing physical characteristics to unlock its full growth potential with a focus on creating great places connected by walkable streets, enhanced transit options, greater connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods, and active and inclusive gathering spaces and plazas.



CONNECTING MKE DOWNTOWN PLAN 2040

connectingmke.com





CONNECTING MKE DOWNTOWN PLAN 2040



City of Milwaukee | MILWAUKEE | mke downtown

DEFINING A COLLECTIVE VISION

The vision set forth in Connecting MKE represents a collective vision for our city center, generated through significant community engagement. During nearly two years of outreach, the Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040 received input from more than 2,500 individuals – including participants from all 17 Milwaukee zip codes. This robust and inclusive engagement shaped the eight overarching goals for the Plan, as well as “big ideas” and catalytic projects.



Goals for 2040

- Housing & Neighborhoods**
GOAL 1: Increase the Downtown population through density and diversity of housing, and improve the quality of life in Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Business & Education**
GOAL 2: Create environments and programs that support an increase of diverse businesses and a talented workforce.
- Retail, Services, Food & Nightlife**
GOAL 3: Create vibrant retail and entertainment districts with streets and public spaces that feature active uses and pedestrian-friendly design.
- Arts, Culture, Entertainment & Sports**
GOAL 4: Create more opportunities for shared experiences, and highlight the diverse stories, people and places that make MKE unique.
- Sustainability & Resilience**
GOAL 5: Create an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable & resilient Downtown.
- Transportation & Mobility**
GOAL 6: Redesign our streets to support walkability, and expand options for the safe, comfortable and enjoyable movement of people.
- Streets & Public Spaces**
GOAL 7: Invest in the public realm by improving streets, parks and other public spaces to create a more vibrant, inclusive and resilient MKE.
- Land Use & Development**
GOAL 8: Create more opportunities for public and private investment in the built environment.

BIG IDEAS

Public input helped shape six “big ideas” for how public and private investment can drive physical changes to Downtown that meaningfully advance Connecting MKE goals.

- GROW DOWNTOWN**
Double the Downtown population through intensive housing development. Significantly increase Downtown's job and talent density. Leverage publicly owned development sites to promote housing density, affordability and more economic opportunities.
- INVEST IN PARKS & GATHERING SPACES**
Create new class gathering spaces, including improvements to Red Stone Park, Park Margatta Park and Central Square.
- REDESIGN STREETS AS PUBLIC SPACES**
Focus on walkable streets designed for people, including Water Street, Wisconsin Avenue, King Drive and Jefferson Street.
- IMPROVE STREETS TO SUPPORT ALL USERS**
Create an enhanced transit experience, including bus improvements to transit facilities on Wisconsin Avenue, Water Street and 6th Street. Build a new network for all that connects to greater Downtown neighborhoods. This includes improvements to Illinois Avenue, 6th Street, Van Buren/Jefferson Streets and connections to the BlueLine, Oak Leaf and Bank Drive Trails.
- EXPAND & ENHANCE TRANSIT**
Create robust transit options, including greater connections within Downtown, to the Land-out and to surrounding neighborhoods. Transform key Downtown streets and corridors to create new places and connections.
- RECONNECT PLACES DIVIDED BY HUMAN-MADE BARRIERS**
Create connections within Downtown, to the Land-out and to surrounding neighborhoods. Transform key Downtown streets and corridors to create new places and connections.

CATALYTIC PROJECTS

Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040 recommends a series of public and private development projects that have the potential to bring significant improvements to Downtown. Among these, several are identified as catalytic projects, which represent high-priority opportunities with some of the largest potential to have transformative impacts Downtown, including generating momentum to spark complementary investments in the surrounding areas.



Public Museum & State Office Building Redevelopment at MacArthur Square



Place Management Organization for Parks & Public Spaces



Extending the Divisadero to Wisconsin, Bronzeville, Walker's Point & East Side



6th Street Complete Street



Water Street Transformation



Performing Arts Center Parking Garage Redevelopment Site



Redesigning the I-794 & Clybourn Street Corridor



Haymarket District



Lakefront Gateway & Connectivity

Milwaukee Downtown's Updated 5-Year Strategic Plan

Building on the momentum started with the CONNEC+ING MKE - Downtown Plan 2040 to redefine and re-envision the future of Downtown Milwaukee, the updated Milwaukee Downtown 5-year Strategic Plan establishes a clear set of priorities, partnerships, programs, and projects to ensure that the next phase of downtown Milwaukee's growth is consistent with the needs, values, and overall vision for Downtown Milwaukee. Areas of Focus including:

- Continuing and augmenting our **Clean, Safe, and Welcoming** initiatives
- **Placemaking, marketing,** and signature **events**
- Enhancing quality of life and the attractiveness of **downtown living**
- Leveraging recent business recruitment wins to attract more **economic growth**
- Creating more **art, culture and entertainment**
- Building on our existing strong neighborhood and district **partnerships** for increased collaboration and collective action

FOR 25 YEARS,

Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District 21 (BID 21), has been a committed supporter of Downtown businesses and initiatives that **create and enhance unique experiences in Downtown Milwaukee**. Building on the excitement started with the CONNEC+ING MKE - Downtown Plan 2040 to redefine and re-envision the future of Downtown Milwaukee, this 5-year Strategic Plan establishes a clear set of priorities, partnerships, programs, and projects to ensure that the next phase of the BID 21's growth is consistent with the needs, values, and overall vision for Downtown Milwaukee.

Leveraging its strong reputation and the momentum from recent successes to reinforce its impact in and on Downtown, this Plan articulates a framework for building upon assets and advance strategies and ideas to create new destinations and experiences that will elevate Downtown Milwaukee on regional, national, and global stages.

For the complete list of strategies and the adopted BID 21 Milwaukee Downtown 5-Year Strategic Plan, please visit milwaukeedowntown.com

Acknowledgements

STAFF:

Elizabeth A. Weirick
CEO
Lesia Ryerson
CAP, DM, Administrative
Operations Manager
Matt Donner
Economic Development Director
Gabriel Yeager
Director of Public Space
Initiatives
Rebecca Sue Blutton
Marketing, Events
& Social Media Director

Greg Peterson
Director of Clean Sweep
Ambassador Program
Roosevelt Jenkins
Director of Public Service
Ambassador Program
Dennis Mulcahy
Public Service Ambassador
Program - Operations Supervisor
Brian Johnson
Public Service Ambassador -
Homeless Outreach

BID 21 - BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Timmy Bablich
Board Chair, Executive Committee
Member, Collars International
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Executive Committee Member,
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Annette Adams
Executive Committee Member,
Board Assistant Secretary, MDC
Kevin Behl
Executive Committee Member,
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Steve Bartlett
Board Member, The Marcus
Corporation
Mark Flaherty
Board Member,
Jackson Street Holdings LLC
Kim Guerrero
Board Member, Collars
International, 833 East Michigan
Tom Irgens
Board Member, Irgens

Susan Johnson
Board Member, Collars
International
Patricia Keating Kahn
Board Member, PK2group
David Knight
Board Member,
Associated Bank - River Center
George Meyer
Board Member, Kahler Slater,
CEO Emeritus
Phyllis M. Reap
Board Member, Pentagon Property
Management
Conor Ward
Board Member, WEC Energy Group
Scott Welsh
Board Member,
Inland Companies/Collars-
Wisconsin
Marky Brooks
Ex-Officio Member,
Wisconsin Center District
Mark Niehaus
Ex-Officio Member, Milwaukee
Symphony Orchestra
Peggy Williams Smith
Ex-Officio Member, VISIT
Milwaukee
Deborah Tomczyk
Legal Counsel,
Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren

Milwaukee Downtown 5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



CLEAN, SAFE, & WELCOMING
Continue to provide BID 21 services and expand programs that keep Downtown Milwaukee clean, safe, and welcoming for all.

Big Move
Milwaukee Downtown BID 21 will act as the steward for Downtown's public realm -- expanding beautification services, identifying and advocating for needed repairs and improvements; and activating the Riverwalk.

PLACEMAKING, MARKETING & EVENTS
Bring people together through new and exciting shared experiences by activating Downtown's public and privately owned/publicly accessible open spaces.

Big Move
Milwaukee Downtown BID 21 will take the lead in establishing a public space management initiative to develop, maintain, and activate inclusive public spaces in a financially and environmentally sustainable manner.

DOWNTOWN LIVING
Engage residential developers and residents in the revitalization and activation of Downtown through financial contributions and active participation.

Big Move
Milwaukee Downtown BID 21 will engage Downtown residential developers and residents to better fund, create and advocate for a complete Downtown neighborhood with vibrant, accessible, and affordable programs, events, and services.



ECONOMIC GROWTH
Strengthen Downtown's role as the best place in the Region for local businesses, large and small employers, start-ups, retail, daytime and nighttime entertainment, and tourism to grow and thrive.

Big Move
Milwaukee Downtown BID 21 will take the lead in establishing an Economic Development Coalition (peer organizations, government officials, and business executives) that will prioritize recruiting, retaining, and supporting employers of all sizes, and will help recruit, retain, and support a strong, diverse, and creative workforce.

ARTS, CULTURE, ENTERTAINMENT, & SPORTS
Grow Downtown Milwaukee's reputation as a premier location for arts, culture, entertainment, film, nightlife, and sports.

Big Move
Milwaukee Downtown BID 21 will continue and increase its role in elevating and promoting Downtown as a world class destination for the public and performing arts, music, film and tv, and sporting events

NEIGHBORHOOD AND DISTRICT PARTNERSHIPS
Leverage the exciting diversity of Downtown neighborhoods and the potential for collective action by strengthening existing partnerships and creating new relationships with neighborhoods, community organizations, and other districts.

Big Move
Milwaukee Downtown BID 21 will continue to and further take the lead in convening partners and coordinating efforts to strengthen Downtown, community, and district connections.



2026 Snapshot of Strong Upward Momentum in Downtown Milwaukee

www.milwaukeedowntown.com

Prepared by:
MATT DORNER

Economic Development Director
Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21