

MKE BLUEPRINT



Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21's Economic Development Digest

SUMMER 2026

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 | 414.220.4700 | MilwaukeeDowntown.com

DOWNTOWN RAMPS UP ITS COMMITMENT TO VIBRANT PUBLIC SPACES

Over the last year, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 has helped advance, activate and promote several key spaces in the public realm.

Dog Park and Riverwalk Extension Complete

The new Downtown Milwaukee Dog Park opened to the public on August 20 of last year with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a Yappy Hour celebration. Coinciding with Downtown Employee Appreciation Week, the event was sponsored by Fromm® Family Foods in partnership with Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 and Historic Third Ward BID #2. We welcomed public officials, leaders in business, and the Milwaukee community to celebrate a milestone that has reshaped the Downtown Riverwalk landscape.



The park features more than 23,000 square feet of community space, including fenced-in exercise areas for small and large dogs, water stations, and a new

Riverwalk segment. Since its opening, it has received various accolades, including a 2025 Milwaukee Business Journal Real Estate Award (and was named a finalist again this year), a 2025 Westtown Association Community Impact Award, a 2025 Milwaukee Downtown Achievement Award, a Daily Reporter Top Projects of 2025 honoree, and a CARW Deal of the Year Award.

Later this spring, the project team will install a new sponsorship recognition wall, along with a new corten steel sculpture by Dale Rogers. Named "Happy Dog," the playful piece will greet guests at the corner of Clybourn Street and Plankinton Avenue. A new dachshund-inspired bench will also be installed inside the park. Interested in supporting the ongoing investment and maintenance of the dog park? Learn about donation and sponsorship opportunities at www.mkedogpark.com.

Red Arrow Park Redesign Update

Milwaukee Downtown, the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County continue to advance the design for future improvements to Downtown's Red Arrow Park. This collaborative initiative is a goal of the Connec+ing MKE: Downtown Plan 2040, which identified the central space as a priority project. Proposed enhancements in the plan call for improved park edges, with more seating, places for congregating and performing, more opportunities for year-round activation, and the potential for public art.

The group hosted a public engagement session on March 5 in Milwaukee's City Hall Rotunda. Members of the community were invited to attend this open house-style meeting to review and provide feedback on the preliminary design concepts, which were shaped by a public survey. The Kubala Washatko Architects (TKWA) and OLIN are collectively leading the redesign process, with public engagement support from P3 Development Group.

Three design alternatives were presented based on community input gathered so far. Feedback is still being collected on these concepts. The survey remains open at www.milwaukeedowntown.com. If you have not done so already, please take a moment to provide your thoughts and suggestions. Your feedback will help shape the next phase of design and will ensure that Red Arrow Park reflects the needs, values and creativity of the community it serves. Watch for your next public engagement session coming early this summer.



DOWNTOWN RAMPS UP ITS COMMITMENT TO VIBRANT PUBLIC SPACES (continued)

Gary P. Grunau Memorial Plaza

Construction is underway on the new plaza near the pedestrian bridge at Highland Avenue, just east of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. The Gary P. Grunau Memorial Plaza will honor Downtown cheerleader Gary Grunau, who passed away in 2019.

The new plaza is designed to enhance pedestrian connections between the Water Street entertainment district, Old World Third Street Entertainment District and Deer District via the Highland Avenue pedestrian bridge. Plans also call for a “social stair,” a nearby staircase that could be activated with programming.

Selzer-Ornst has been mobilizing equipment and materials for the project along Highland Avenue, so the pedestrian bridge is temporarily closed. In the meantime, pedestrians can access the Riverwalk from Highland Avenue. The plaza is expected to open later this summer.

Pere Marquette Park Redesign

Similar to the Red Arrow Park redesign project, Pere Marquette Park was also identified as a priority in the Connec+ing MKE: Downtown Plan 2040. Milwaukee Downtown is currently working with Milwaukee County, the City of Milwaukee and the Westown Association to outline the process for reimagining the popular park. Watch for an announcement soon about public engagement opportunities to help shape this vital space.



NEW ECONOMIC STATUS REPORT WILL TRACK KEY METRICS

A major priority for Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 is benchmarking the growth of Downtown Milwaukee with quantifiable data. Thus, over the past year, Milwaukee Downtown has gathered a variety of key metrics to demonstrate Downtown’s strong economic health. The findings will soon be published in a comprehensive economic status report. The report will highlight Downtown’s positive position relative to the broader metro area and comparable downtowns. It will examine housing trends, including the addition of nearly 11,000 new residential units since 2010. It will also analyze daily population patterns that underscore Downtown’s post-pandemic recovery, along with job concentrations by industry, commute times, and a comprehensive overview of completed, proposed and under-construction investments.

With the publication of this new report, which is packed with compelling metrics, and the launch of our new website, we will expand our “Get Down to Business” media campaign by including additional voices and making paid placements outside of the Milwaukee radio market. Listen for us on both the airwaves and streaming channels as we tout Downtown Milwaukee’s top competitive advantages. Plus, watch for the new report to be posted at www.milwaukeekeedowntown.com later this spring.

PROJECTS TO WATCH – DEVELOPMENTS MAKING A BIG IMPACT

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 has tracked over \$5 billion in completed, under-construction and proposed projects since 2020. Below are several projects currently in the works that are making a significant impact in our central business district.

1. Northwestern Mutual’s North Tower

A \$500 million project, the 18-story office tower renovation is slated to open in 2027. The company will welcome approximately 2,000 employees who will relocate from its Franklin offices.

2. Foxtown Landing

A soon-to-open addition in the “Dog District” along the Milwaukee Riverwalk, Foxtown Landing is a new distillery, pub, restaurant, cocktail lounge and ballroom event space that will offer boat slips for patrons who arrive by the river. Fromm Family Foods, the title sponsor of the Downtown Milwaukee Dog Park, is leading the development of the parcel, which is adjacent to the dog park. Construction began in January 2025; the project is slated to open in mid 2027.

3. AC Hotel Marriott

This \$50 million development is in the works at 430 W. State Street, near the Fiserv Forum, with prime access to Downtown entertainment venues, bars and restaurants. Planned as a seven-story building, the proposed hotel project would bring 156 guest rooms to the Westtown neighborhood on the portion of land where the Bradley Center formerly sat. Construction is slated to begin this summer.

4. 100 East

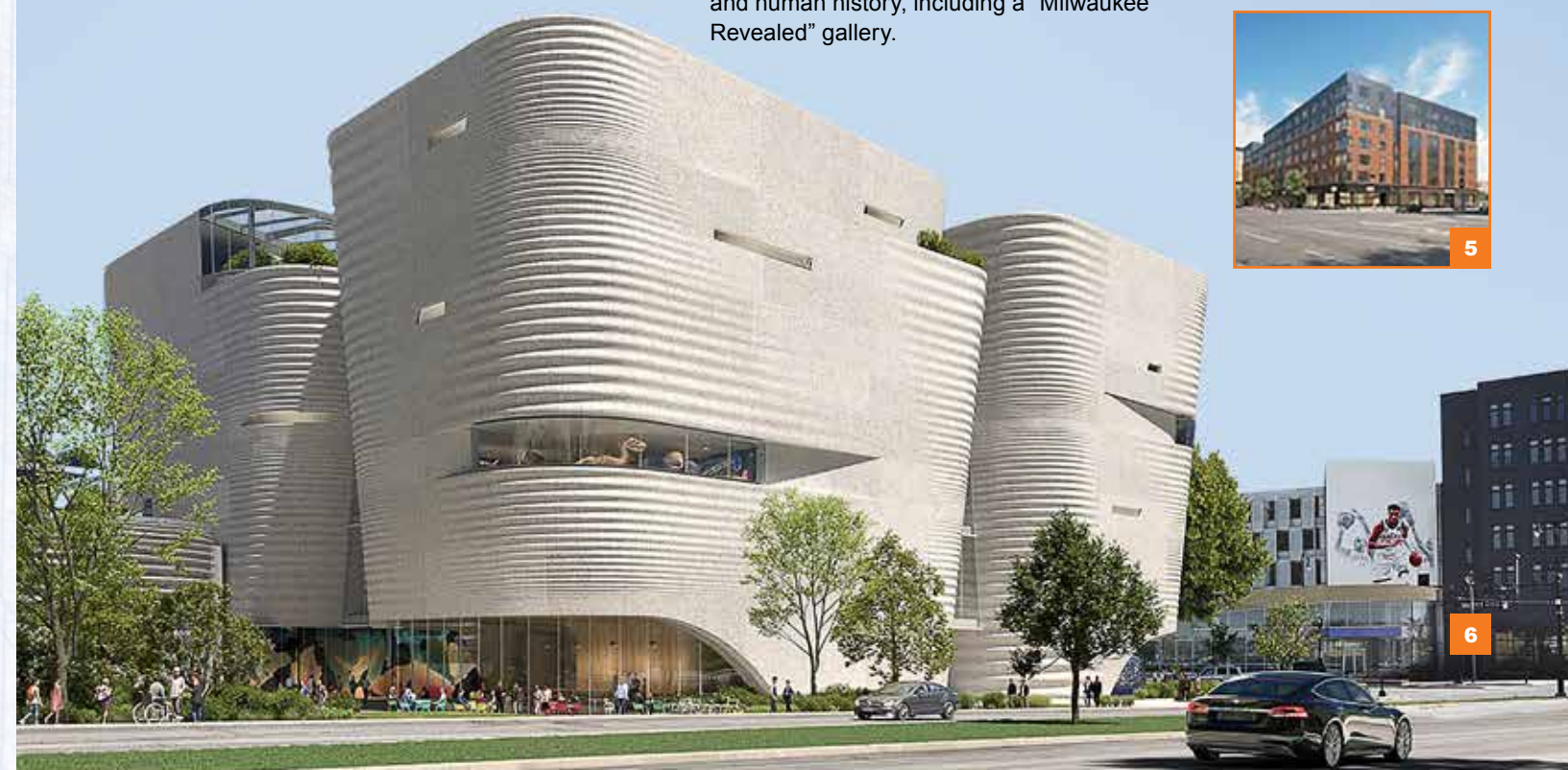
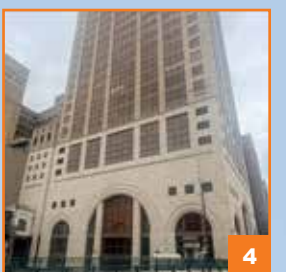
The 35-story office tower is undergoing a \$165 million-plus conversion to transform the building into nearly 400 apartments. Construction is expected to begin this year, with completion by late 2027 or early 2028.

5. Fieldhouse Flats

In the former Park East corridor, J. Jeffers & Co. has begun the construction of a roughly \$117 million project that will create 270 apartments and a Milwaukee Area Technical College athletic facility. The project, located on the vacant site north of Fiserv Forum, features a strong public-private partnership. Plus, it implements the goals of our Connec+ing MKE: Downtown Plan 2040 by growing our residential base with a focus on affordability.

6. Nature & Culture Museum of Wisconsin

Work is quickly advancing on the new museum, a \$240 million-plus facility that’s slated to open in 2027. It will be the new home for the Milwaukee Public Museum, which will cease operations in January of 2027 to prepare for the move. The new building will stand five stories tall and will include 200,000 square feet of exhibitions, making it the state’s largest natural history museum. It will feature exhibits on Wisconsin’s natural wonders and human history, including a “Milwaukee Revealed” gallery.





NIGHTTIME ECONOMY REMAINS A TOP PRIORITY

Downtown Milwaukee's nighttime economy is a critical industry segment representing more than 1,600 businesses and employing more than 25,600 individuals. Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 remains committed to maintaining a safe, vibrant nightlife in our central business district, in addition to a safe, vibrant day life. Besides working with the Milwaukee Police Department and elected officials, we're keeping tabs on nationwide trends and solutions.

As a result, we joined a Milwaukee delegation that recently attended the 2026 Social City Summit hosted by the Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) in Nashville. The group consisted of representatives from the Milwaukee Police Department, Visit Milwaukee, Milwaukee Downtown and the Westtown Association.

The Milwaukee contingency regularly attends this conference focused on social economy management. The annual event connects a broad network of leaders to advance innovation in multiple fields, including law enforcement, business district management, city planning and economic development, and nighttime venue operations.

Milwaukee Downtown hired RHI in 2022 to conduct an analysis of peer cities that have established nighttime governance systems. It included case studies from San Francisco, New York City, Pittsburgh and Washington D.C., and offers lessons to be learned as Milwaukee business leaders continue to advocate for the creation of our own office of nightlife and culture. More than 20 cities in the United States have created some form of a nighttime governance office and we remain committed to developing a similar model here to promote this vital segment of Milwaukee's economy.

