

NINETEEN NINETY-EIGHT — TWO-THOUSAND SEVENTEEN

# Celebrating Twenty Years



2017 ANNUAL REPORT



## *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 emerges as a premier destination of choice. Milwaukee becomes a renowned world-class region.





## Message from CEO & Board Chair

This year marked the 20th year of operation for Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. It was back in 1998 when several property owners had the foresight to work toward building a more competitive downtown.

We are forever indebted to these visionaries, as well as the many board members, partners, and friends of the organization who invested countless hours to position downtown Milwaukee as the national player that it is today.

Since 2005, \$3.6 billion in public and private projects has been completed, while another \$3.6

billion is under construction or in the pipeline. Cranes are in the air, and businesses and residents are moving in droves to get in on the action. It's no wonder why *Condé Nast Traveler* named Milwaukee as one of six U.S. cities to watch in 2017.

Our commitment to providing a clean, safe, and friendly environment has made the central business district one of the hottest neighborhoods in the region, state and country. Couple that with more than 6 million social media impressions, and the creation and blossoming of iconic events like Downtown

Dining Week, Downtown Employee Appreciation Week and the Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival, and it's easy to see our vast appeal.

We have a great product to sell and we look forward to writing the playbook for the next 20 years. As we take a brief moment to relish in the successes of the past two decades, one thing is for certain: Our commitment to you, our stakeholders, remains unwavering. Thank you for your ongoing support and confidence in our team, and in the mission of our organization.

*Beth Weirick*  
CEO,  
Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21

*Joseph J. Ulrich*  
Board Chair,  
Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21  
Vice President, U.S. Bank

# Operations

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 has established its clean, safe, and friendly trademark with the help of four teams. Over our 20-year career, these crews have pulled in some amazing numbers.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE AMBASSADORS**

As downtown Milwaukee's walking concierges, the Public Service Ambassadors (PSAs), contracted through G4S, welcome the district's 12+ million annual visitors. From assisting with directions to providing restaurant recommendations, the PSAs have a pulse on everything downtown.

Since 2000, the PSAs distributed over 9.7 million info packets to guests and tallied over 4 million visitor interactions. They can be found strolling the streets, biking through town, and staffing our Visitor & Newcomer Information Center, Traveling Information Kiosk and Bicycle Information Kiosk.

Annually, the PSAs conduct more than 9,200 patrols of businesses, parking structures and high-traffic pedestrian areas. And with a direct line to Milwaukee's police and fire departments, the team assists in making downtown one of the safest neighborhoods in the city and country.



## **CLEAN SWEEP AMBASSADORS**

Our squeaky-clean image would not be possible without the help of our Clean Sweep Ambassadors (CSAs), contracted through Modern Maintenance. Panning and brooming all 150 square blocks of the district, not to mention scrubbing, power washing and gum-busting the sidewalks, the CSAs hauled away over 115,900 gallons of trash in 2017. Over the last 20 years, their work has contributed to the removal of over 3 million gallons of garbage.

The CSAs are also the muscle behind many of our events. From installing 28 miles of wire, 500,000 lights and 150 live Christmas trees for the six-week Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival to assisting with office challenge games for Downtown Employee Appreciation Week, this team truly impacts downtown on a daily basis.



# BID #21

## By The Numbers

### GRAFFITI REMOVAL TEAM

Since 2000, the Graffiti Removal Team has wiped away 19,783 tags – most within 24 hours of discovery. This quick-removal tactic has led to a continual decline in annual tags. In addition, 99% of all graffiti is removed by the Public Service Ambassadors, saving Milwaukee Downtown both time and money. The remaining tags are removed by Ace of Spray.



### LANDSCAPE CREW

Flowers and foliage are the business of our Landscape Crew, contracted through KEI. Over 250 planters and 100 hanging baskets along Wisconsin Avenue, the Milwaukee RiverWalk, and Old World Third Street receive the green thumb treatment. Arrangements are rotated throughout the seasons to ensure visual interest.



**\$3.6 billion**

in completed projects since 2005

**\$1.6 billion** under construction

**\$2 billion** on the drawing table

**67,000+**

higher education students

**2,000+** housing units

currently under construction

**83,490** jobs held downtown

**7.1%** retail space vacancy rate,  
down from 8.5% in 2012

**16.6%** office space vacancy rate,  
down from 21.9% in 2012

**31%** of downtown workers living  
within one mile of downtown

**26,000+** residents and growing

**\$3.45 billion** in annual tourism sales  
for Milwaukee County

**\$240 million** generated  
by nighttime economy

**18%** of city's property value found in  
downtown's **2.7** square miles

**112** jobs per acre

# Building Community

In the last 20 years, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 has produced several events to spotlight the advantages of living, working and playing downtown.



## MILWAUKEE HOLIDAY LIGHTS FESTIVAL

In its 18th year, this six-week festival continued to establish downtown Milwaukee as a first-rate regional destination, dazzling guests with light displays and a variety of family-friendly events.

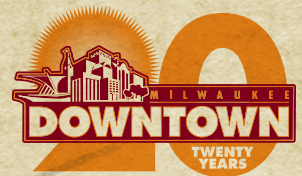
The grand unveiling of Cathedral Square Park, Pere Marquette Park, Zeidler Union Square, Wisconsin Avenue, and Old World Third Street was marked by the festival's Kick-Off Extravaganza. The official switch-flipping ceremony, which included

live music, holiday acts and fireworks, attracted over 5,000 attendees and 52,511 viewers in our first-ever WISN 12 live broadcast.

Other festival highlights included \$1 Meijer Jingle Bus rides, which serviced 7,049 passengers; Cocoa with the Clauses, which attracted 500+ guests; and Santa's Mailbox, which collected 1,676 wish lists – all personally responded to by the elves from Interfaith Older Adult Programs.

## TASTE & TOAST

In its third year, this small plates and cocktails promotion served as a teaser to Downtown Dining Week and gave the 24 participating restaurants a first-quarter boost. Over 6,000 diners participated in the event – 44% of which were first-timers to a restaurant, and 42% learned of the event through social media.



### **DOWNTOWN DINING WEEK**

Spurring spin-offs in nearby neighborhoods, Downtown Dining Week has become a premier dining event attracting over 600,000 diners to our restaurants since 2006. The 12th edition featured 43 invite-only eateries and three-course menus priced at \$12.50 for lunch and \$25/\$35 for dinner. The promotion continues to draw over half (55%) of all diners to a new restaurant, and 49% who neither live nor work downtown.

### **DOWNTOWN EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION WEEK**

Downtown Employee Appreciation Week celebrates one of downtown's greatest assets – its workforce. We honor downtown's 83,490 employees with a week of great events and giveaways, including volleyball and trivia tournaments, a happy hour, western hoedown and over 19,250 free lunch items.

### **DOWNTOWN DIGGS**

Created in partnership with the Greater Milwaukee Association of REALTORS®, the 5th annual Downtown Diggs condo showcase capitalized on the visitor traffic from Downtown Dining Week and the Milwaukee Trolley Loop launch. Prospective residents were able to see over 20 units throughout downtown.



# Marketing

## BRANDING

To celebrate downtown's energy, vibrancy and variety of things to do, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 launched its "How Do You Downtown?" campaign with a new twist. Running June 1 through August 31, the campaign featured an exciting montage of activities, events and landmarks set to a new beat. The song "This Is Our Year," by Milwaukee artist Lex Allen, was our 2017 anthem.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Interactions with our biggest cheerleaders continued to grow across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Utilizing new media options like Facebook Live and Instagram Stories, we increased total engagements by 18% and 1,059%, respectively. All told, we generated over 6.6 million impressions among our 32,645 Facebook followers, 53,110 Twitter followers, 9,802 Instagram followers and 680 Pinterest followers.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Milwaukee Downtown relies on a year-round public relations strategy to increase visibility of downtown and awareness of its many projects and programs. From September 2016 through August 2017, the organization secured over \$758,330 in media coverage. Topics included the Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival, Taste & Toast, Milwaukee Trolley Loop, Downtown Dining Week, Downtown Employee Appreciation Week, the utility box mural project, West Wisconsin Avenue audio tour, staff announcements and economic development news.

## WEBSITE

The Milwaukee Downtown website remains a beacon of information for everything that is downtown. From the BID's core programs, events, and attractions to contact and mapping info for our downtown stakeholders, the site continued to be the call-to-action for the branding campaign and PR initiatives.

We received almost 400,000 site visits and over 1.38 million pageviews last year, with new visitors accounting for 72% of the traffic.





# Economic Development

## **BUSINESS TOOLKIT**

With developers and investors in mind, Milwaukee Downtown created its first Downtown Investment Map in 2014 to depict investment activity across multiple sectors. Since then, the map has been updated twice annually and has become one of the most requested selling vehicles. Other items in our toolkit include the MKE Streetcar Guide, commercial property search database, monthly Real Results e-newsletters, biannual MKE Blueprint magazines, and a new business retention and recruitment brochure.

## **INCENTIVE PROGRAMS**

We know how important supporting small business is to the overall success of downtown. Since its inception, our Business Development Loan Pool (BDLP) funds of \$100,000 have leveraged more than \$840,000 in private investment. We also continue to act as an information conduit to promote the innovative use of City grant tools, KIVA Zip loans and PACE financing, as well as encourage participation in the City's Better Buildings Challenge to promote energy efficiency and operational savings.



## **NIGHTTIME ECONOMY**

Downtown's nighttime economy continues to thrive. In order to continue this upward trend, we contracted with the Responsible Hospitality Institute to re-engage nighttime economy stakeholders and build upon successes. Our two-day workshop with 60+ participants helped us create 2017/2018 priorities to bolster a hundred million dollar industry that employs thousands.

## **ADVOCACY**

We love downtown and are committed to shouting it from the rooftops! Positivity, hard work, collaboration, and high energy are our calling cards. We support The Milwaukee Streetcar. We advocate for the Historic Preservation Tax Credit. We support the MKE United Greater Downtown Action Agenda and contribute to the WEDC Connect Communities network. Most importantly, we bring people together, hosting meetings on Bus Rapid Transit, the Lakefront Gateway Plaza project and so many more catalytic initiatives.

## **CEO CALL PROGRAM UPDATE**

In talking with leaders at nearly 70 companies, our CEO Call Program has made one thing crystal clear: companies love downtown. From proximity to clients and a stronger ability to retain talent to downtown's vibrant neighborhoods and amenities, CEOs spent hours with us talking about how we stack up. Their feedback, which was first gathered in 2006, will be utilized to develop new tactics to help companies continue to grow downtown.

## **ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS**

With frequent strategy sessions, we often uncover ideas to enhance the downtown experience. The Pilot Lighting Design Project for West Wisconsin Avenue is a combination of art and visual appeal that will grace our main street. Milwaukee Downtown also remains committed to assisting in the lighting improvements under the I-794 overpass, and we're continually trying new events, like downtown's inaugural PARK(ing) Day, which will include temporary pop-up parklets in on-street spaces.

# Partner Initiatives



Unprecedented investment, combined with a series of public art projects, re-established Wisconsin Avenue's standing as downtown Milwaukee's truly grand avenue. Among the projects giving Wisconsin Avenue its street cred were Sculpture Milwaukee, the utility box mural project, a West Wisconsin Avenue audio walking tour, and the Key to Change campaign to end chronic homelessness. For these reasons, 2017 was declared "The Year of Wisconsin Avenue."

## UTILITY BOX MURAL PROJECT

With direction from the Downtown Placemaking Task Force, Milwaukee Downtown rolled out a design competition for a mural installation on 10 Wisconsin Avenue public utility boxes. The intent was to create artwork to highlight Wisconsin Avenue's rich history of commerce, diversity of architecture and people, and its bright future. Mauricio Ramirez was selected as Wisconsin Avenue's Artist in Residence and transformed the boxes, which stretched from 9th to Cass streets.

## SCULPTURE MILWAUKEE

Visitors to downtown were wowed this summer by Sculpture Milwaukee, a one-of-a-kind outdoor sculpture exhibit. Featuring 22 sculptures by world-renowned artists and stretching from 6th Street to O'Donnell Park, Milwaukee Downtown helped administer the program, from collecting donations to assisting with installation logistics and maintenance. We collaborated on the ribbon-cutting ceremony and VIP reception, and led local media outreach efforts, which accounted for over

\$600,000 in coverage. We also drafted the Herzfeld Foundation grant application, which awarded the program \$50,000! We're looking forward to stepping up each year as Sculpture Milwaukee aims to be an annual event with new artists and works.

## KEY TO CHANGE

Years of planning and coordination with both public and private partners finally paid off as Milwaukee Downtown was able to bring Key to Change, a community-giving program to end chronic homelessness, to downtown Milwaukee. Joining major cities like Washington D.C., Denver and Detroit, we repurposed parking meters as donation vehicles.

With seven meters located along Wisconsin Avenue, donations will be collected by the PSAs and used to further the mission of Milwaukee County Housing Division's Housing First project. Since its inception, Housing First has placed more than 225 chronically homeless individuals into permanent housing with a 98% retention rate. To date, over \$16,000 has been raised in private contributions.

## OTOCAST APP

What better way to shine a light on West Wisconsin Avenue's rich history than a walking tour of the avenue itself? Unveiled in June 2017, our West Wisconsin Mobile Audio Tour was created via Otocast, a free app available on iTunes and Google Play. The tour highlights 13 points of interest along West Wisconsin Avenue, increasing engagement and encouraging exploration of this exciting and growing downtown corridor.

## MILWAUKEE TROLLEY LOOP

Revitalizing this Milwaukee staple in partnership with VISIT Milwaukee, Milwaukee Downtown took the lead to help market the popular summer service, revising the route to include more of Wisconsin Avenue and adding Sunday hours for leisure travelers and conventioners. With limited hours of operation, we were still able to service almost 5,000 riders, with 64% of them being leisure travelers and 71% being first-time riders.



**THE MILWAUKEE STREETCAR**

While there have been plenty of important downtown projects over the last two decades, The Milwaukee Streetcar is certainly one of the most exciting. As a day-one advocate, we realize the economic impact, and are doing our part to help communicate and showcase all of the benefits downtown will reap. From Streetcar Socials to creating and updating the MKE Streetcar Investment Guide, we are “all in” and are excited to see the first phase of this amazing project completed in 2018.

**BETTER BUILDINGS CHALLENGE**

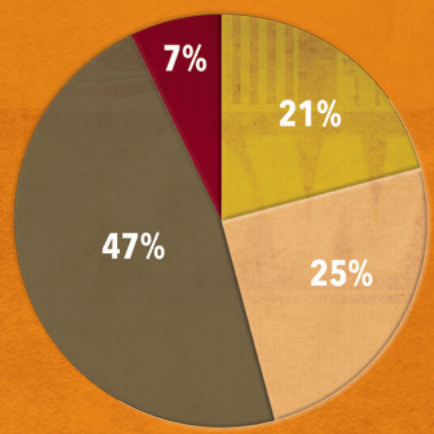
In partnering with the City of Milwaukee’s Environmental Collaboration Office, we are committed to promoting the Better Buildings Challenge, an energy efficiency campaign targeted to commercial property owners. From saving on energy costs to focusing on “green” strategies and tenant satisfaction, we are reaching out with a toolkit of solutions that has helped secure 59 participants to date.

*Budget*

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 is funded by commercial property assessments, grants and private contributions. The programs and projects implemented are intended to further enhance downtown Milwaukee’s clean, safe and friendly image.

**TOTAL BUDGET: \$3,625,791**

- Public Service Ambassador Program: \$772,417
- Economic Development, Marketing and Business Retention & Recruitment: \$1,696,944
- Clean Sweep Ambassador Program: \$891,185
- Sidewalk Cleaning, Landscaping and Graffiti Removal
- Administrative: \$265,245



# 2017 Board of Directors

## 2018 & BEYOND – WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?

We are committed to continually evolving and improving our approach to provide visitors, residents, and businesses with unique and memorable experiences. In the very near future, look for a new identity and website to reflect our growing skyline, as well as an increased focus on quality of life issues, business recruitment and retention, and the evolution of The Milwaukee Streetcar, Milwaukee Bucks arena district, and other catalytic projects.

It's a great time to be downtown and it's only getting better. Let's enjoy the ride!



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