



Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21
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Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 announces changes in leadership

CEO Beth Weirick to step down in June; Economic Development Director Matt Dorner tapped as successor with other staff changes in store

MILWAUKEE (January 9, 2025) – Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District (BID) #21 Chair Tammy Babisch announces a leadership transition plan approved by the organization’s Executive Committee at its meeting today, January 9, 2025.

Beth Weirick, who has led Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 since 1998 as the organization’s only executive director and chief executive officer since its founding, will step down as CEO on June 27, 2025. Matt Dorner, currently Milwaukee Downtown’s Economic Development Director, has been tapped as successor. His appointment to CEO was approved by the Executive Committee today. Weirick will work with Dorner over the next six months to ensure a seamless transition.

“On behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Beth Weirick for her passion, commitment and visionary leadership these past 27 years,” said Tammy Babisch, board chair of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. “Beth cultivated partnerships, initiated high-impact development projects and advocated for policies that have enriched the area’s economic landscape, resulting in substantial tax base growth and real estate development. She believed in a high quality of life for all, forging a public-private collaboration that netted a Community Intervention Team that remains a model for urban centers across the nation. She instituted events that have made Downtown Milwaukee a regional destination and her desire to create dynamic public spaces undoubtedly expedited our post-pandemic recovery. She managed all this and more while remaining committed to strategic planning. Her recent work in overseeing the completion of the Connec+ing MKE: Downtown Plan 2040, as well as our organization’s own five-year strategic plan, defined a clear road map for the future of our organization to ensure its continued growth and success. While we will miss her immensely, we wish Beth the absolute best in her next chapter.”

Weirick’s Legacy in Cultivating a Vibrant Downtown

Weirick, formerly known as Nicols, began her post at Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 on January 18, 1998, with only an operating plan. She was identified as the frontrunner for the newly created organization given her experience, enthusiasm and knack for connecting with people. Prior to her appointment as Executive Director of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, Weirick served as Executive Director of the Westown Association from 1992 – 1998, and held several positions for the City of Milwaukee under the Department of City Development and Common Council from 1991 – 1992 and 1982 – 1989.

Soon after her hiring, Weirick implemented the organization's mission of clean, safe and welcoming. She deployed the Public Service Ambassador and Clean Sweep Ambassador teams, a Landscape Crew and a Graffiti Removal team. In addition, she started the organization's four core events – Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival, Downtown Dining Week, Downtown Employee Appreciation Week and Taste & Toast – to promote the central business district's distinguishing amenities.

She pioneered branding and marketing efforts that positioned Downtown Milwaukee as an attractive destination for tourism, business and residency. She cultivated relationships with business owners, city officials and community organizations, fostering a collaborative approach to economic and community development. She was also instrumental in creating the Community Intervention Team, a group comprised of behavioral health, public safety and community-based organizations that identifies best practices and develops standard operating procedures to address the community's unhoused population with innovative, long-term solutions.

In addition, she prioritized retail and business recruitment, as well as public space activations – many which have brought the district regional and national recognition.

“My journey with Milwaukee Downtown has been filled with passion, purpose and countless moments that I will cherish forever,” said Beth Weirick, CEO of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. “I will be forever grateful for the trust and confidence placed in me by my board, stakeholders, community partners and team. Together, we have attracted significant investment, revitalized streets, created public spaces and cultivated a Downtown that embodies the spirit and energy of all who live, work and play here.”

Over the course of her career, Weirick has served on a variety of boards, including Sculpture Milwaukee, the International Downtown Association, Kiwanis Club of Milwaukee, Visit Milwaukee, Wisconsin Downtown Action Council and Renaissance Theaterworks. She has also earned an array of accolades, including “Milwaukeean of the Year” by the *Shepherd Express*, the Paragon Communicator Award from the Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, and has been recognized as a “Power Broker,” “40 Under 40” and a “Milwaukee Woman of Influence” by the *Milwaukee Business Journal*.

Dorner Tapped to Lead Organization

In 2014, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 hired Matt Dorner to lead economic development efforts. Dorner began his career in economic development in 2006 at the Village of Menomonee Falls, rising from a planning intern to Assistant Community Development Director/Economic Development Specialist.

“Over the last decade, I have witnessed firsthand Matt's passion for Downtown Milwaukee,” said Weirick. “Matt's expertise and relationships within the community made him the clear choice as the next leader of this organization. I look forward to working with Matt on a smooth transition over these next six months.”

During his time with Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, Dorner has been fully engaged in quality-of-life issues and economic growth. Benchmarking the resurgence of Downtown Milwaukee with quantifiable data has been a top priority of the organization to aid in recruitment and retention efforts.

Over the past year, Dorner oversaw the completion of the “Value of Downtown” study by the International Downtown Association, added [Placer.ai](#) to the organization's toolkit, and maintained the organization's investment map which monitors investment in five critical sectors – residential, commercial, hotels, education/civic and infrastructure. Since 2015, the central business district has seen over \$9 billion in completed, under construction and proposed projects. Meanwhile, more than 7,800 new jobs have been relocated or committed to Downtown since 2020 – a testament to the burgeoning environment fostered under the leadership and advocacy efforts of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21.

Dorner's tenacity for seeing public-private projects across the finish line was also noted. Over the past several years, Dorner can be credited for assisting with the implementation of Brighten the Passage, Active Streets for Business, improvements at Pompeii Square, Frame the Square at Cathedral Square Park, and the Downtown Milwaukee Dog Park – Downtown's first public dog park, which broke ground in September 2024.

"It's an honor to be selected as Milwaukee Downtown's next CEO," said Matt Dorner, economic development director for Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. "I look forward to continuing to serve our stakeholders and bring added value to the strides that have already been made. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and for Beth's ongoing mentorship as we work collectively to set the organization on a solid course for its continued success and growth."

Other Staff Changes in Store

Other leadership changes are in store for the organization. This month, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 welcomed Rachel Farina as Director of Communications. The role is a new position for the organization created to communicate Milwaukee Downtown's growing number of events and initiatives that have rippling effects on surrounding neighborhoods and the region, while also steering the goals of the five-year strategic plan.

Farina has served as a marketing, communications and public relations liaison for Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 since 2003. She supported the organization under two Milwaukee-area advertising agencies – Ellingsen Brady Advertising and WaterStreet Creative. Farina began her post with Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 on January 6, 2025.

"Rachel has been an extension of our team for over two decades," said Weirick. "Her depth of knowledge of our organization and her ability to communicate our events and initiatives to a multitude of audiences, make her an invaluable asset to our team. We are thrilled to welcome her internally as she will play a pivotal role in our transition plan."

In addition, Milwaukee Downtown has promoted Isabel Ullrich to the role of Marketing, Events and Social Media Director. Ullrich was hired in June 2024 as Marketing, Events and Social Media Manager. Her primary responsibilities include coordination and implementation of special events, fundraising and sponsorship fulfillment, and management of the organization's social media channels.

"In her six months with the organization, Isabel has risen to the occasion, proving to be an essential team member," said Weirick. "Her project management skills, talent for content creation and ability to foster sponsor relationships earned her this well-deserved promotion."

Established List of Priorities for the Next Five Years and Beyond

Since its creation, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 has long been engaged in market research and strategic planning. Most recently, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 worked with the Department of City Development in updating the Downtown Area Plan. The two-year plan process, deemed *Conne+ing MKE: Downtown Plan 2040*, was adopted by the Common Council in July of 2023. Six "big ideas" were born from the plan, including growing Downtown's population, investing in parks and gathering spaces, expanding and enhancing transit, reconnecting places, improving streets to support all users and redesigning streets as public places.

In addition, at the close of 2023, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 concluded its own five-year strategic plan to ensure that the next phase of Milwaukee Downtown's growth is consistent with the needs, values and overall vision for Downtown Milwaukee. With assistance from MIG, comprehensive feedback was received from board members, stakeholders, employees and visitors. Among the top priorities identified were: continuation and expansion of clean, safe and welcoming services; establishing an Economic Development Coalition that will assist in recruiting, retaining and supporting employers of all size; establishing a public space management initiative; growing Downtown's reputation for arts, culture,

entertainment, film, nightlife and sports; engaging residential developers and residents to create and advocate for a complete Downtown neighborhood; and taking the lead in convening and strengthening district and neighborhood connections.

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 has already begun implementation of several of these initiatives, including spearheading the upcoming public engagement process for the redesign of Red Arrow Park for future improvements, and prioritizing the management and activation of public spaces, which is currently led by Erica Green, the organization's Director of Public Space Initiatives. Permanent and temporary art, family-friendly programming such as Downtown Ice CAPE-ade, Big Truck Day and Jack-O-Lantern Jubilee, midday concerts such as PNC presents Tunes@Noon and Heart(beats) of the City powered by MGIC, and initiatives of the Community Intervention Team are among the initiatives under the place management purview. Since the addition of this role, Milwaukee Downtown has brought nearly 30 permanent murals to public spaces within the district, with countless temporary installations drawing wide appeal.

“We’re so grateful for our very engaged board of directors and stakeholders, as well as our relationship with the City,” said Tammy Babisch, board chair of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. “Their feedback has put us on this solid course. These defined goals and priorities combined with our team’s talent will ensure that our efforts continue to have a transformational impact on our central business district.”

For more information on Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, visit www.milwaukeedowntown.com.

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About Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21

Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21, is an organization established in 1998 to support the interests of the downtown Milwaukee business community. Created through private sector leadership, Milwaukee Downtown is a management district organization that oversees 150 square blocks representing approximately 500 property owners in the center of downtown Milwaukee. The organization funds specific initiatives aimed at creating a clean, safe and friendly downtown. More info available at www.milwaukeedowntown.com.