

MILWAUKEE NOTES

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GENERAL NOTES

Frequently heard comment:

- **Milwaukee “has its swagger on.” It’s time Portland got its swagger on, too.** Milwaukee, after many years of de-industrialization, population loss and civic problems (violent crime, inequality gap among residents, poorly performing public schools, many lead water pipes), etc. seems to be coming back.

Milwaukee’s downtown has benefited from investment in clean-up and renovation. Since the Downtown Area Plan was adopted in 2010, \$4.5 billion has been invested in public and private projects. More than \$3.1 billion additional investment is underway or planned.

Current projects include development of the Deer District (ongoing); lights on the Daniel Hoan Memorial Bridge (ongoing); and plans related to the overall urban plan, “Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040.”

The downtown ends at the shore of Lake Michigan, and efforts have been made to make the most of the long stretch of lakefront. The signature Quadracci Pavilion of the Milwaukee Art Museum, designed by Santiago Calatrava, was completed in 2001. The outdoor concert venue housing Summerfest, the music festival was first held in 1968, has grown into a multi-stage concert location for not only the long-running music celebration but also for celebrations by other ethnic and cultural groups.

Large companies (e.g. Milwaukee Tool, etc.) are moving operations, including headquarters (e.g. Fiserv), into the city.

The Historic Third Ward, where most trip participants stayed in the Kimpton Journeyman Hotel, was historically a warehouse district. Today it is a “mixed-use district,” home to hundreds of businesses, specialty shops, restaurants, art galleries, and condominiums.

“Overall, our economy is strong with an unemployment rate in Milwaukee County running around three percent. That’s better than the national rate. However, we cannot ignore the clear disparities in economic health that exist within our city.” said Mayor Cavalier Johnson during his June 2023 State of the City address.

In July 2023, the city of Milwaukee and the surrounding Milwaukee County each approved local sales tax increases—helping both the city and county avoid drastic cuts to essential services and possible bankruptcy. Approval for the local sales taxes emerged from a successful effort to win bipartisan approval from the Republican-controlled legislature and Democratic governor.

Strong leadership has helped make some projects succeed, according to Omar Shaikh, co-owner of a food court that is revitalizing a once-neglected area of downtown.

The improvements in downtown cleanup and investment, as well as in tourism and entertainment facilities has boosted tourism to Milwaukee. Convention business also is picking up. The Republican National Convention is scheduled to convene in Milwaukee in 2024.

Quick comparison:

Milwaukee, WI

Population: 577,222 (Census 2020); 31st most populous city in the US

Metropolitan area (Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, Waukesha counties): 1,575,179 (Census 2019 est.), 39th most populous metro area in US

City and county governance: In addition to the election of a Mayor and Common Council on the city level, Milwaukee residents elect a Milwaukee County Executive and the [Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors](#).

Major employers (metro area): <https://www.mmac.org/major-employers-in-metro-milwaukee.html>

Major league teams: Bucks (NBA, 2021 NBA champions); Brewers (MLB); Admirals (hockey) Wave (soccer); the Green Bay Packers play about 117 miles north

Portland, OR

Population: 652,503 (Census 2020); 26th most populous city in the US

Metropolitan area (Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA MSA): 2.5 million, 25th most populous metro area in US

City and county governance: Portland's current city council (4 council members + mayor, who assigns him/herself and each of the council members city departments to administer) will only last one more year (2024).

In January 2025, Portland will have a new city council with 12 members (four geographic districts, with three city council members elected to represent each district) and a mayor (independently elected, citywide, who will vote on the council only to break a tie), who will oversee day-to-day operations run by a city administrator.

(Voting for city council members and the mayor will first occur in November 2024, and will be conducted using ranked-choice voting.)

Portland lies in Multnomah County, which has county council consisting of council members elected from four districts, and a county chair elected countywide.

In addition, Multnomah County and two neighboring counties (Clackamas, Washington) are part of an elected regional government, Metro, which has a president, elected region-wide), and six representatives elected by district.

Major employers (metro area): <https://www.greaterportlandinc.com/research-center/major-employers/>

Major league sports teams: Trailblazers (NBA, 1977 champions); Timbers (2015 MLS Cup); Thorns (2022 NWSL champions); Hillsboro Hops (minor league baseball, in Hillsboro)

***BUILDING CIVIC SPIRIT:
IN BOTH CITIES, CIVIC PROJECTS USE ELECTRICAL LIGHTING TO
HIGHLIGHT BRIDGES, ART***

Lighting the Hoan: The Daniel Hoan Memorial Bridge, Milwaukee's largest and most visible bridge, lies across the mouth of the Milwaukee River estuary where the Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic Rivers empties into Lake Michigan. Light the Hoan (“a collective of local business and civic leaders who have joined forces to illuminate the Daniel Hoan Memorial Bridge.”) has since October 2020 been outlined the western side of the bridge with colored lights: many lightbulbs affixed to the bridge frame, which blink on and off and change colors, according to Light the Hoan programming.

Light the Hoan, a non-profit, is entirely funded by philanthropic dollars and earned revenue. The organization and the bridge were named after Milwaukee's 32nd mayor, Daniel Webster Hoan. Serving as mayor from 1916-1940, Hoan, a Socialist, was a reformer who spent his 24 years in office trying to clean up and improve the city, earning a lasting reputation for honest and efficient government.

- The initial grant for Light the Hoan was raised from the Daniel Hoan Foundation. The chair of the foundation's board, Daniel Steininger, is the son of Mayor Daniel Hoan and also the father of Andrew Hoan, president and CEO of the Portland Business Alliance and the Portland Metro Chamber, and chief organizer of the Best Practices trip to Milwaukee.), signed the donation papers while he was in the hospital with Covid.

The bridge lights have become both a visible symbol of Milwaukee.

Lights can be programmed to any music – and even have been programmed by local school students.

Portland also has two civic projects that use electric light to build civic excitement and pride. The two projects were introduced by Alisha Sullivan, executive director of the Portland Winter Light festival/Winter Light Brigade:

- The Willamette Light Brigade lights Portland's bridges crossing the Willamette River.
- Portland Winter Light Festival attracts roughly 200,000 people to light-themed sculptures and activities in downtown—using art to stimulate the local economy and boost civic spirit.
 - “The Willamette Light Brigade is a Portland, OR based nonprofit committed to connecting community and enriching the public realm by harnessing the power of artful lighting to transform the cityscape. We light bridges, produce a dynamic winter light festival, and advocate for the importance of night-time identity and place-making.”

Other cities that have used electric lights as a way to build civic spirit are San Francisco and Redmond Washington, and

Post card from the future?

MILWAUKEE'S CITY GOVERNMENT IS A TASTE OF WHAT CITY GOVERNMENT LIKE UNDER PORTLAND'S NEW CITY CHARTER

Milwaukee's city government is similar to (but not exactly like) what Portland's city government will look like after January 2024, when the new city charter is scheduled to be fully in place.

- Milwaukee. has a “strong major” system of government,
 - The mayor is elected citywide and serves as the city’s chief executive;
 - Milwaukee’s lawmaking body is the Common Council, with 15 members (called aldermen and alderwomen), each of whom represents a district.

Portland will have:

- 4 districts, each of which will be represented by 3 councilors, for a total of 12 city council members;
- a “weak mayor” system of government: the mayor – an independently elected official, elected citywide -- will only vote on measures being considered by the council in order to break a tie.
- The mayor, who will oversee a city manager, will be responsible for day-to-day city management.

The Milwaukee County District Attorney, John T. Chisholm, is nationally known for his office’s outreach to neighborhoods through a Community Prosecution program.

Multnomah County previously had a similar neighborhood-oriented program, which has been partially revived by current District Attorney Mike Schmidt.

Other programs of the Milwaukee County District Attorney’s office include “... a Child Protection Advocacy Unit to better serve child victims,...a Public Integrity Unit to focus on public corruption matters and a Witness Protection Unit to thwart attempts to intimidate victims and witnesses of crime.” Violent crime is a problem in the county, and is addressed via “specialized units focus[ing] on violent firearm and sexual assault offenders.” The office also includes a drug treatment court. The office also “...participated in Milwaukee County’s selection as a seed site for the National Institute of Corrections’ Evidence Based Decision Making framework.” (quotes from the Milwaukee county District Attorney website.)

Comments from current Milwaukee Common Council members:

- Forming consensus among such a large group of aldermen/women is not easy, but it helps for individual aldermen to be not only familiar with their own districts but also familiar with other districts as well.
- Milwaukee is notorious for the gap between haves and have-nots, and more work is needed to ensure that have-not neighborhoods get their fair share of services;
- The city bureaucracy is at times slow to take action, and so individual aldermen/women have been known to go around the mayor to approach portions of city government to demand services;

Cluster based economic development strategy.

MILWAUKEE HAS PUT ITSELF ON THE MAP INTERNATIONALLY AS A CENTER OF EXPERTISE IN WATER (TREATMENT AND MEASUREMENT) – A LEGACY OF ITS EXPERTISE IN BEER-BREWING

- Milwaukee discovered that it has an industrial expertise in water treatment and measurement. The expertise stems from the city’s history as a center of beer production. The result is a public-private partnership called The Water Council, in which local universities and local businesses address “critical” challenges in freshwater technology and “stewardship.”

Sport-economy and the impact of major league franchises

**DOES THE SPORT FRANCHISE-BASED REDEVELOPMENT OF MILWAUKEE’S
“DEER DISTRICT”
HOLD LESSONS FOR REDEVELOPMENT OF PORTLAND’S ROSE-LLOYD
DISTRICT?**

In 2021, when the Milwaukee Bucks defeated the Atlanta Hawks to win the NBA championship for the first time since 1974, some 25,000 people crowded into the Deer District around the Fiserv Forum, the Bucks’ state-of-the-art stadium, which had opened only 3 years earlier, in 2018.

Interest soared in the Deer District, a \$500 million-dollar plus real estate development project that encompasses 30 acres of mixed-use development.

The pandemic dampened hopes for office development in the district, but music venues, housing and other uses have remained. Given the difficulty of winning an NBA championship, today’s challenge for the Deer District developers – and for downtown Milwaukee– is how to get tens of thousands of people to come back to the Deer District and “activate the space” on a regular basis.

PARTICIPANT TAKE-AWAYS

Reflections on the trip from Steve Percy:

Reflection on Best Practices Trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin October 4-6, 2023

Stephen Percy, Portland State University

My Lens: The Best Practices trip to Milwaukee was a homecoming for me. I lived in Milwaukee from 1988 to 2011, serving in a variety of faculty and academic leadership roles at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I very much loved living in Milwaukee for 23 years and was really looking forward to seeing developments in the city that have occurred since I left for an academic leadership position in Baltimore.

I recognize that there are likely many varied perceptions of the visit and of what's happening in Milwaukee. Those with a current lens may see things differently than I do, since my observations reflect my past residence in Milwaukee.

Demographic, Evolution And Civic Leadership: Since I left in 2011, the demography has evolved. Today, Blacks/African Americans have become the largest demographic group in the city. It was clear from our visit that elected local officials and their leadership, which includes large demographic representation by the Black and LatinX communities, reflect the city's diversity. City leadership demonstrates strong commitment to advancing the city and its residents.

I was impressed by the fact that Milwaukee city leaders (coming from the heavily Democratic, largest city in the state) were able to work with a very partisan Republican state legislature to receive state approval for the city to levy its own additional 2% sales tax. This new revenue source will enable the city to stabilize its fiscal position and make investments in key services—including police and fire—that previously experienced personnel and budget reductions. Such services are key to addressing public safety challenges that face the community.

Corporate Commitment To Milwaukee: Throughout our visit, we saw extensive evidence of corporate investment in the community. The Northwest Mutual Insurance (NMI) building, which we visited, is exceptional evidence of commitment to the city. (The Northwestern Mutual Tower and Commons—550 feet tall, with 32 stories, making it the second-tallest building in Milwaukee—opened in 2017. It replaced a 16-story building, Northwestern Mutual's East Building, which in turn had opened in 1979. Both the now-demolished 1979 high-rise and the new, 2017 skyscraper were designed to complement the original, many-pillared NMI headquarters, which has been a city landmark since its 1914 completion.) The fact that Milwaukee Tool is moving back downtown, which we heard about during a couple of presentations, shows another strong commitment to the city. Another was the earlier location of the ManpowerGroup Global Headquarters downtown, and the national office of Manpower Inc. just north of downtown.

We also saw evidence of extensive corporate backing of many companies to the different sound stages and infrastructure of the Summerfest facilities alongside Lake Michigan. In speaking to some of my Portland colleagues who noticed the corporate signatures on the Summerfest stages,

many wondered if this corporate backing would be similarly appreciated in Portland. At the current time, many corporations in Portland appear focused on retaining employees and embracing remote work and/or closing offices in downtown Portland. A question for us: can corporate Portland become more involved in community revitalization, renewal, and innovation? The task force to address Portland's downtown problems, organized by the governor (Gov. Tina Kotek's Portland Central City Task Force), and the work of the Portland Metro Chamber (PBA) and other corporate groups, are directly focused on aligning with evolving efforts to revitalize (and hopefully, reimagine) Portland.

Related to the visible corporate impact in Milwaukee are the many contributions of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce, very ably led for decades by Tim Sheehy, whom we met during our visit. The Chamber was instrumental in developing M7 (the Milwaukee 7 Partnership for Economic Development) the seven-county (Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha economic promotion agency for the region, which replaced the previous multi-community competition to attract new businesses and industries.

Creating M7 was quite a feat. There was huge debate about the name. On the one hand, Milwaukee was by far the largest and most recognized community. On the other hand, other counties, cities, and communities were proud of their own names and identities. An early name, Milwaukee -7, was modified to M-7 and was accepted by the whole set of stakeholders.

The education provided by Milwaukee Public Schools is distressingly poor (less than 20% of primary, middle, and high school students are "proficient" in English and math, according to US News & World Report), which for years has prompted debate about how to better educate the city's children.

The Chamber of Commerce's contribution to the debate was active support for a controversial proposal to create a state-supported voucher system, whereby parents can request and receive vouchers (funded as part of the state's budget support for K-12 education) which they can use to enroll their child or children in a private or parochial school of their choice. The voucher strategy was a way to avoid direct state support of religious institutions (which would have violated the separation of church and state provisions of the U.S. Constitution). This approach grows from a business-type orientation to education services, focused on competition and consumer choice, as well as strong concerns about the quality of education available from Milwaukee Public Schools. As you would expect, this voucher program, unique in the United States, was opposed by teacher unions and leaders in the public school system. One concern was that private schools might choose not to accept students with learning or other disabilities (who are more expensive to educate), while the public schools must accept and serve all students. (I am not aware of the full empirical results of educational achievement in the parallel systems; results can be difficult to assess since the student bodies are not necessarily comparable.)

Reimagining The Downtown Mall: In the early 1980s, Milwaukee promoted an innovative commercial enterprise when it supported the creation of a downtown urban mall. Rather than tearing down a set of buildings and then building a suburban looking mall, the city instead

supported redeveloping the lower floors of multiple buildings, aligned on Wisconsin Avenue, into a two-story mall connected between buildings by elevated, covered walkways. The mall had two major anchor department stores (Marshall Fields and the Boston Store) and many high-end retail outlets. It was successful, thanks to the patronage of downtown workers, despite the higher cost of parking there than at suburban malls. (The urban mall had integrated parking garages and therefore had plenty of parking, but it charged a parking fee, whereas suburban mall parking was free.) Ultimately, however the new city mall was buffeted by changes in retail providers, and declining attendance and sales, leading to its closure. So, what to do next? Clearly, this was a challenge: lots of space, but as yet, no clear demand. Our Best Practices group visited an innovative way to re-activate the former mall space by installing a food court with a dining area surrounded by unique, local vendors—not food chains. This new design for the underused old space appears to be receiving a positive response. It will be interesting to see other new uses of the previous mall space, especially if the number of people working downtown remains fails to recover to pre-Covid 19 pandemic levels.

Innovative Approach To A New Sports Arena: Whenever communities look for public sector support to create or replace a major sports arena, proponents call out the expected economic benefits to be generated in nearby businesses, hotels, eateries, etc. From what we learned in Milwaukee, the community understood the opportunity to create a new arena as a broader opportunity to support the vitality and vibrancy of the community. Not only does the Fiserv arena (formally named the Fiserv Forum) offer a state-of-the-art sports arena for the Milwaukee Bucks, but the district also includes space for public events (e.g., community fairs); space for major music and artistic performances; and affiliated restaurants and hotels. Also, adjacent to the property is a new parking garage as well as a building, the Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Sports Science Center, housing both a Bucks training facility and a sports medicine facility that also offers local health services.

Multicultural Celebration Location: As an older midwestern city, home to many incoming immigrant groups, Milwaukee appreciates its broad ethnic heritage. The city has found an important strategy for cultural celebration and a venue that can support that celebration: the Summerfest grounds. The grounds offer free-standing sound stages; food/restaurant utilization on a rotating basis; an overhead tram; and many other amenities, making this an accessible and exciting venue for summer and early fall events. Each weekend sees celebrations of the German, Irish, Polish, Native American, African American, and other heritage and ethnic groups that have had—and continue to have—great relevance in the community.

More to See If Visit Again: Time is always limited on our Best Practices visits. If we had more time, it would have been interesting to visit initiatives and community building efforts within Milwaukee's urban neighborhoods. There are some very significant organizations that support specific communities. One example is the [Sixteenth Street Community Health Center](#), which has grown over time to provide a wide array of social, medical, community development and educational services in the heart of Milwaukee's Hispanic Community. Institutions such as [Hope House](#), [Hunger Task Force](#), [Urban Ecology Center](#), [Danceworks](#), and so many others are engaged in innovative programs and service provision to support community neighborhoods and residents. There are also some important community assets dispersed among the urban

neighborhoods that celebrate history and seek to improve the future of Milwaukee residents. They include [America's Black Holocaust Museum](#), the first such heritage site in the nation. Recognition is also due to the large group of philanthropic organizations that have demonstrated long-term commitment to community revitalization. They include the [Greater Milwaukee Foundation](#), [Bader Philanthropies](#) (formerly the Helen Bader Foundation), the [Bradley Foundation](#), and a large number of others. Being an older city, Milwaukee was home to many large corporations which generated great family wealth, and eventually foundations to shepherd that wealth for the public good. Much to see on a future visit!

Community Pride on the Rise: I was very pleased to see a growing sense of pride in the city. Milwaukee has had a long-term national perception as a blue-collar, beer drinking community. It has not had a strong appeal for travel visits or national conventions as compared to other communities. Notwithstanding, convention attendees and other visitors generally come away with very positive impressions.

Milwaukee offers many very positive things to visitors, including the Summerfest grounds; the Third Ward area (where we stayed; an area whose history and development is similar to that of the Pearl District in Portland); the Public Market (formally, the Milwaukee Public Market); the Milwaukee Public Museum (with its Brise de Soleil); the Fiserv Forum and the Milwaukee Bucks; Lake Park, which extends north and south along the whole eastern edge of the city, encompassing public land, beaches and venues; Brewer Stadium and the Brewers; the Harley-Davidson Museum; the Potawatomi Casino Hotel; ethnic neighborhoods; a quality airport; and more. Many assets that include protecting heritage assets (e.g. parks, lake access) and new infrastructure (e.g. [American Family Field](#), home to the Milwaukee Brewers, one of the few such facilities with a retractable roof) contribute sustained—although not always rapid—creation of opportunities that enhance the community, boost tourism and raise national visibility and stature.

These and other civic and nonprofit work are now stimulating pride and sustained community revitalization. Bravo!

Thanks Randy, Andrew, and the GPI staff for creating a robust learning experience.

Reflections on the trip from Dan Yates:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Dan Yates** <dan@portlandspirit.com>

Date: Mon, Oct 23, 2023 at 9:39 PM

Subject: Re: Milwaukee Trip Debrief & Trip Feedback

To: Best Practices PDX <bestpracticespdx@gmail.com>

Firstly. I can attend as I will be in Cambodia. Second. The conversation on their government structure was too short. Way too short as the only questions allowed were by our two commissioners. No questions were asked about concerns with the system, will it actually be an improvement over our current system and how would they change their governing structure to be more effective. The local DA section of was also too short and seemed like an advertisement to save Schmidt's job. We needed to understand their racial issues so we can avoid some of those tensions as Portland becomes more diverse. The trip was a full day too short. R, Dan

Reflections on the trip from Amanda Lowthian:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Amanda Lowthian** <amanda@travelportland.com>

Date: Mon, Oct 23, 2023 at 3:35 PM

Subject: FW: Milwaukee Trip Debrief & Trip Feedback

To: bestpracticespdx@gmail.com <bestpracticespdx@gmail.com>

Hello Best Practices organizers,

Thank you again for such a well-organized, thought-provoking and inspiring best practices trip to Milwaukee. I look forward to joining the debrief on 10/30 and further discussing and sharing take-aways with the other delegates. Here are my responses to your feedback questions below, though I'm sure I will think of other comments to add once the group discussion gets going next week.

1. I can't think of anything I would change in the way the trip was planned and organized or the content and experiences that were provided.
2. I share much of the sentiment that was discussed during the trip that Portland is often its own worst enemy when it comes to growth and development. Yes, growth has to be managed strategically and intentionally but not to the point where growth stalls, the population declines and Portland loses its appeal. It is up to civic and government leaders to embrace thoughtful growth and drive change in public opinion about what the state's largest urban center needs to be viable and compare favorably against our peers.
3. Oddball ideas: I imagine there have been report outs to government and civic groups about learnings from these trips in the past. Now seems like an opportune time to gather and synthesize the high level take-aways and recommendations into a report or presentation for sharing with leaders and media for the purpose of generating interest and momentum around some of the lessons learned in Milwaukee.

Thank you again!

Amanda Lowthian

AMANDA LOWTHIA (she/her)

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"You can pretty much thank Portland for your city's food scene." – Cosmopolitan, 2022

Reflections on the trip from Eddie La Berge:

From: **Eddie La Berge** <Eddie-LaBerge@hoffmancorp.com>

Date: Mon, Oct 23, 2023 at 2:48 PM

Subject: RE: Milwaukee Trip Debrief & Trip Feedback

To: Best Practices PDX <bestpracticespdx@gmail.com>

Hey Friends, Feedback:

How was the trip overall? Is there anything you would have changed?

Trip overall was excellent! Not sure if my expectations were too low going in or what, but I really walked away impressed with Milwaukee from an overall livability standpoint (safety, cleanliness, business climate, cost of living, entertainment, etc).

What did you learn -- Anything new? Anything applicable to Portland?

Went for a 4-5 mile, zig-zag run all through the downtown upon my arrival and did not see one single tent or open drug use scenario for the entire duration... which of course would be next to impossible in the heart of Portland. Then I learned that it's routinely in the 20's during the winter which they largely credit with clearing out the street camping / drugs. Also, while standing atop Northwestern Mutual's tower and admiring the investment they'd made (and continue to make) in downtown Milwaukee, it reminded me of how important it is to have strong business support in your city's core... we could use more of that... more large HQ's downtown with the monetary and political capital to promote safety and vibrancy in our core.

Oddball ideas! (Apart from recombobulation...)

Nothing crazy comes to mind... but it was fascinating to see the conversion of mall retail space to apartments. Initially I was dubious, but as I contemplated freezing cold Milwaukee winters, I came to the conclusion that walking out your front door into a nice, warm, open high ceiling mall complete with a food court, a CVS and a pickleball park might beat the outside alternative during those months. Creative solutions like this will be needed as our downtown core in Portland adjusts to the new norms for office space usage.

Thanks again to all of you who help make these trips happen!

EDDIE LA BERGE

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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Reflections on the trip from Alisha Sullivan:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Alisha Sullivan** <director@pdxwlf.com>
Date: Mon, Oct 23, 2023 at 2:49 PM
Subject: Re: Milwaukee Trip Debrief & Trip Feedback
To: Best Practices PDX <bestpracticespdx@gmail.com>

Good morning Randy and Deborah,

I plan to attend on the 30th, thank you.

Here is my feedback:

1. What a wonderful trip! As an event person, I commend you on how well executed and considered everything was. I would happily attend again and I loved the mixture of professional backgrounds within the group. My constructive feedback would be to have no programming during lunch if possible, though I believe it was because we were running a little late that we ended up eating while there were speakers.

2. There were many takeaways! Here are the thoughts I've been revisiting:

- There are a lot of dedicated, intelligent people in Portland working in all sectors who have great ideas and want to take action to revitalize our city. However, in many ways (with the best intentions) we in Portland have set ourselves up to work against our own best interests with recent choices.

- I believe the 30-year takeaway is that spaces and places should never serve only one function. To create the vibrant, lasting city that we want to see in the future, we need to include some form of housing, industry, and activation in various combinations in everything we do.

- Very biased with this one, but we should make a huge gesture that enhances civic pride via art and placemaking. Milwaukee looks at Chicago to see how well this works (the Bean and Millennium Park), but there isn't precedent on the West Coast at the same scale and we should lead that charge.

- Very little that is creative or revolutionary will be able to take place unless the stage is set, meaning that it needs to be clean downtown and it needs to be safe.

- I read in an article summarizing the new tax reform in Milwaukee that small businesses would be able to apply back for a percentage of the sales tax that they brought in and I think that might be attractive here for retailers downtown.

- There was something very collaborative in the economic development they are doing for their whole region that we should learn from... Currently, our suburb cities directly compete with Portland and that dynamic needs to shift. I was surprised at how many people I spoke to on the trip who live outside of Portland and Multnomah County.

3. So many ideas.

- We should invest in the Portland that exists 30 years from now and take immediate steps to start bringing that city of the future to life. The population may be declining at this moment but eventually, we will become a safe harbor for humans with a temperate climate and water

resources. We should see that as a positive and position ourselves to benefit. Once we do so, innovation will follow as well as brand reputation.

- The waterfront needs to be entirely reimagined on both sides of the river. I think 1-5 should go underground on the East side and open up the area for density and development.

- I hope that some real efforts at tax reform come from this trip.

Thank you!

Alisha

Alisha Sullivan

(she/her)

Executive Director

Willamette Light Brigade I Portland Winter Light Festival

541.554.7526

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pdxwlf.com

lightthebridges.org

Reflections on the trip from Jason Triplett:

Overall, this was a phenomenol, informative trip and I'm very glad I attended. -- Jason Triplett

Downtown Milwaukee/Portland:

The trip highlighted a contrast in development trends with our respective downtowns. Milwaukee's downtown has [recovered 86%](#) of its pre-COVID activity, ranking #15 out of 66 cities in the US and Canada while Portland ranks #61 (San Francisco ranks at #48 while Seattle comes in at #63) or [slightly higher](#), depending on how to define downtown and measure activity. Portland's slower recovery could be attributed to several things. I explored five different elements, together with solutions that occurred to me during the Milwaukee trip:

One, Portland's office workers have transitioned more fully to remote work than other cities and downtown businesses have not had the same success as their counterparts in peer cities in bringing their employees back to the office. In Milwaukee, we learned of corporate businesses returning to the central business district and appealing to the draw that an urban environment has for its young professional workforce/talent; certainly Portland would be wise to emulate some of Milwaukee's outreach efforts and its management of relationships with the business community. At the same time, post-COVID office space does not appear to be coming back into demand any time soon across the country.

--Portland's [outreach efforts](#) should be targeted towards those types of professions/creative industries where ideas/innovation are more likely generated from in-person interactions (administrative functions like insurance and law appear less reliant on 'extrovert' types of environments). I would like to see downtown office interests reach out to Portland State University and other local higher education facilities (or business incubators) that are creating tomorrow's creative industry leaders and see about offering discounts on vacant office space or pairing young start-ups with existing tenants that might be interested in sub-leasing. To that end, I would like for someone at Prosper Portland, GPI, or other regional economic development agencies to serve as the 'alchemist' for potential businesses/industries. It will probably mean casting a wider net and attracting businesses from outside of the Portland region similar to the businesses/industries we wish to develop. Office space is a [tenants' market](#) and Portland Office landlords must act accordingly and play the 'long game' so that such young companies may eventually become viable market-rate tenants and office landlords can maximize return on investment (or minimize their liabilities). In real estate, nothing is more expensive than vacancy.

Two, Portland's downtown real estate is more office-centric with less ratio of residential usage; it's only in the West End, the Pearl District, Goose Hollow where there are residential concentrations. Many cities aspire for residents to move downtown, but Milwaukee appears to have been particularly intentional/deliberate in making downtown Milwaukee more attractive to residents and housing developers alike. Use of excess office space requires a forward approach.

--The [Biden White House](#) recently put out a discussion paper on how to convert office space into affordable housing. Portland would be wise to get on the ground floor of any such federal government initiatives, as converting office space into residential uses is often considered cost-

prohibitive within the developer community without a subsidy. Portland's [Inclusionary Zoning](#) often receives blame for the dearth of new housing developments (downtown and city-wide); it is true that IZ applies to housing developments consisting of 20 or more units and that permitting applications for large housing developments have dried up at the City's BDS. I remember voting against IZ back in 2016 for that reason, given the experience of rent control in New York City during the 1970s and how that had the effect of halting housing development/supply and driving up rents as a result of the scarcity of supply. But IZ is the law of the land until Portland voters say otherwise, so the best we can do is find a way to [make it work](#).

Three, [Visible homelessness](#) is much higher in downtown Portland (and citywide) than in downtown Milwaukee. Indeed, I did not see a single unsheltered person during the entire walking tour of downtown Milwaukee. The City of Milwaukee, along with many other cities, have a system of shelters for houseless populations, given the severity of the city's winters. How the City of Milwaukee (and other U.S. cities) succeeds in compelling houseless populations into shelters would be an interesting case study. Hopefully, Portland and Oregon leaders are studying the methods in places like [Houston](#), which employs a 'housing first' model and has moved 25,000 homeless people into permanent homes in the past 10 years. Portland is currently grappling with this approach and the premium on getting houseless populations paired with housing and supportive services.

--In the long run, Portland should continue to aspire towards 'housing first,' as decades of research bears out that housing such populations is considerably cheaper on a per capita basis than allowing these same people to drift in and out of the public health and criminal justice system. But voters in liberal bastions like [Portland](#) and [San Francisco](#) are turning towards creating more shelters as a transit stop until the permanent housing units can be developed. In my opinion, the development of sub-population specific emergency shelters (a shelter for women and families, shelters for persons with behavioral issues) that ensure safety will encourage more houseless persons to leave the streets. Getting people to relocate from the streets to shelters is an enormous challenge (and often controversial) and cities must determine what level of persistence to employ to get houseless people off the streets. Fairly or unfairly, visible homelessness affects perceptions of safety and order amongst workers/residents/business owners in downtown Portland (or in any other city).

Four, even though crime has gone down in Portland citywide, downtown business owners routinely cite property crime as among their top concerns. Restaurants and other businesses, without a downtown office worker customer base, are facing headwinds as it is without having to constantly worry about property damage/theft. Anecdotally, I've talked with businesses that have been broken into and bemoan the lack of police response/presence. The answers they generally hear from police is that they do not have the resources to adequately respond. Surely this is true to some extent, but I've always been leery of this narrative. It is not uncommon for police departments across the country to 'slow down' their response to crimes, especially during a contract year, with the political calculation that civilian leadership (such as the Mayor) will get the brunt of public blame and have less leverage in contract negotiations. There could have been some lingering resentment amongst Portland Police, stemming from the 2020 Summer Protests, about a 'lack of gratitude' amongst Portlanders. Either way, such slowdowns are inherently hard to prove. This certainly occurred to [Mayor Wheeler](#), who criticized PPB's unresponsiveness

before pledging once more to rebuild our [police force](#). In Milwaukee, civic/business leaders understand the importance of a strong police presence to deter property crime, theft and violent crime; safety (or at least, the perception of it) consistently ranks at or near the top of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

--In my experience of visiting downtown, it feels more vacant and lonely than unsafe. But there is safety (real and perceived) in numbers. Increasing the number of visitors (through more entertainment events, seasonal occasions, et al) is something Portland has been trying to encourage. During the Milwaukee Trip, I chatted with a few folks from Travel Portland and we discussed the utilization of vacant/empty street-level retail space to make available to local artists, crafts people (especially along normal walking routes to and from the entertainment district. And reach out to local artists/craftspeople, who can pay for the electricity usage or other utilities in lieu of rent; anything that keeps storefront lights on and space occupied with people. That way, when visitors are walking to and from their cars towards events with the downtown entertainment district, people will see more activity and will feel that much safer about coming back downtown. Hopefully, Portland Police will be more present downtown as well. If people do not feel physically safe, little else matters.

Five, the prolonged protests in downtown Portland (during the summer of 2020) led to a [national narrative](#) about our city being overrun by 'antifa anarchists' and leftist protesters. The architects of this narrative understood the power of frequent and confident repetition, which ramped up right around the time of the City of Portland being used as a [trial balloon](#) for the deployment of unmarked federal agents during the summer protests. Given the inevitable backlash (both local and national) during the 2020 Presidential Election season, the political leadership of the US Department of Homeland Security probably felt that exaggerating the scope of political violence in Portland was necessary to retroactively justify (in the court of public opinion) the use of these federal agents. Hence, the Trump White House singled out Portland as [lawless and endemic](#) of Democratic governance during the 2020 Election cycle, continuing to [this day](#). As someone who works downtown one day a week, and in talking with downtown businesses, it was clear that the 2020 police protests were confined to a 9-block area of downtown (right around the Federal Courthouse and the Justice Center) and that the protests had little to no physical impact on businesses beyond that 9-block area. However, narratives nearly always trump facts. Portland Civic/Business leaders did not adequately push back against these narratives, which trickled down into national business media and other [national trade sectors](#). Indeed, the Urban Land Institute's annual Real Estate Outlook had the City of Portland drop from #20 nationally (for the 2020 Outlook) all the way to #66 just 12 months later, frequently citing the 2020 protests. Local developers have described Portland as 'toxic' among national lenders/equity sources, making it harder to obtain financing for new developments. The owner of the Oakland A's had originally scheduled a trip to Portland in the spring of 2021 as a possible relocation option before abruptly cancelling the visit and focusing on Las Vegas; one wonders if the national narrative of Portland in 'downward spiral' factored into this, given that Portland's regional economy remains much larger than that of Las Vegas.

--The last few years have proven that something does not necessarily have to be true in order for it to feel true. Local perceptions of Portland's decline can be traced, in part, to widespread visible homelessness (and [inadequate mental health services](#)), an increase in property crime, and

escalating drug use. These things are realities on the ground. But as discussed with several people on the Milwaukee trip, two things can be true at the same time; Portland does have real issues, but national perceptions are also exaggerated and politically-motivated. Citywide, Portland has been a relatively [safe city](#) compared to other U.S. cities; it is certainly safer here now than it was in the 1980s. But as Portland's national perceptions hardened, it was perhaps inevitable (in the absence of an adequate push-back) that Portlanders would [begin to wonder](#) if there was 'something to it' and [internalize these national perceptions](#) (which reinforces the narrative of Portland being a [failed city](#), and so on). How do we reverse these perceptions? It would be pointless to pretend that Portland's reputation (fairly or unfairly) hasn't been tarnished. Hopefully we can find a way to lean into these perceptions in a way that creates intrigue/allure to outside visitors. I'm reminded of two visitors slogans from the Oregon Visitors Association during the 1980s. The first one was along the lines of 'Oregon: You're More Than Welcome.' The second one, coming a year or two later, said 'Oregon: Things Look Different Here.' Which one would we suppose is the more effective slogan? For my taste, it's the second one by a mile. I would love for Portland to find a way to make use of the false political narratives in its image-making redo among national/international businesses, tourism, and (perhaps most importantly) the people that already call Portland home.

Other Thoughts and Takeaways:

--The discussion about the Milwaukee region's water technology cluster was interesting. The MMAC repeated that *industrial clusters are not created so much as found*; i.e., emerging from assets hiding in plain sight. The Milwaukee Water Council, formed in 2008, corralled existing beer businesses, water businesses, and local academia. The Water Council has been private sector-driven, creating a laboratory for testing/innovation/pilot projects for all things related to water technology and usage. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's School of Fresh Water Sciences studies freshwater ecosystems, while the UWM's School of Engineering contributes its research of technological development, creating symmetry with the Water Council that leads to commercialization and enhancement of the Milwaukee regional technology cluster. The Portland region has several industrial clusters (footwear/athletic apparel, food, high tech hardware, advanced manufacturing, etc.), but there are surely several other opportunities for developing latent industrial clusters if our imagination and ingenuity can get us there. Involving local higher education institutions on the research end is something that economic development professionals and business leaders would find beneficial; regional industries get cost-effective research while providing higher education students with valuable real-world experience.

--There was discussion about the Minneapolis region's economic development strategy of investing in K-12 public schools, to help develop a pipeline of talent for regional industries, to make up for the relative lack of migration of talent to the Twin Cities. I'm sure there are people much smarter than me that within Portland Public Schools that are looking for ways to couple a strong, traditional education with skills-based training that is nimble enough to respond to evolving industrial needs. A solid public school system is obviously imperative for any metro region, but it's especially important for families that are contemplating a move to Portland and setting down roots while providing students with value-added education that leads to greater upward mobility. In short, we have an immediate need to think long-term.

Reflections on the trip from Erik Lawrence:

The Milwaukee trip really highlighted some important things for me. These things seem critically important for the City of Portland to also understand and as best we can, apply those lessons to match our needs and guide our decisions.

1. More police does not mean less crime. If it did, Milwaukee would be the safest City in America. I'm not against police, I like our police. But it seemed painfully obvious Milwaukee threw a lot more money and manpower into their police force which has not netted better outcomes for them. It seems as we face similar decisions regarding the correct size of our PPB, it is important to also consider other avenues of investment. Reducing crime is a multi-pronged approach and we would do well to always remember it.
2. Public/private partnerships are critical. Milwaukee is working their way out of morass because they are doing critical investment in their community through well-crafted public/private partnerships. We tend to shy away from business and minimize the role business plays in the success of our community. Remembering we need to foster a close and meaningful relationship with our business community and embrace that community as partners in creating a better Portland is very important. One can not necessarily thrive without the other.
3. We need to be bold and creative. Milwaukee is searching for ways to invest in their community and be proud of their community. Too long we Portlanders have thought better of ourselves than we maybe deserved. We rested on legacy as our feather in the cap and stopped striving for improvement and community building through thoughtful investment in quality-of-life projects and community enhancement projects that don't necessarily return huge dividends. We need common ground and a community sense of pride in ownership of our town.
4. Taxation sucks but needs to be thoughtfully changed. Our community leaders would do well to consider changing our tax code, not simply adding to it as they always do. You can propose a sales tax, but the leaders better also offer something back or it will be a non-starter. Portland also needs to carefully consider how public dollars are spent. We are out-taxing and out-spending Milwaukee but a wide margin, but we are netting poorer results. Why? Taking a look in the mirror is always difficult, but our public leaders need to take a long hard look and propose dramatic changes to the benefit of all.

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Reflections on the trip from Margaux Mennesson:

Milwaukee Best Practices trip reflections

1. How was the trip overall? Is there anything you would have changed?
 - Best work trip I have ever attended
 - Delegates were awesome. As a newbie and a relative nobody in Portland, it felt welcoming and inclusive
 - Access to places like the Deer District/Bucks locker room, Summerfest, and the Northwestern Mutual rooftop were phenomenal and I appreciate the work that went into getting all of that arranged
 - Hotel was great
 - Andrew and his dad were fantastic hometown hosts
 - For next time, would be interesting to learn more about access to healthcare and health services

 2. What did you learn -- Anything new? Anything applicable to Portland?
 - The morning session on day 2 was really inspiring. The framework was about how to attract businesses who then bring people/workers to the region, but the overall approach was so universal: People want to live in places that invest in schools, public safety, libraries, parks, etc. Leaders need to figure out how to do that and bring the public along with them without the political rhetoric around which party cares about what public services (or at least navigating the political rhetoric in a way that focuses on the outcomes). Randy noted that Minneapolis (I think) intentionally decided to invest a lot of money in education as a priority, I think Portland should do this.
 - Intentionally developing the Deer District as a place people go even if they're not going to a game - whether they're watching the game at one of the outdoor beer gardens or going to a restaurant or shopping in the area, it's vibrant and fun. How can we do that with the Moda Center district? Slabtown is a perfect success story/example.

 3. Oddball ideas! (Apart from recombobulation...)
 - LOVED the lighting of the Hoan bridge and how they involve youth/students interested in coding. Could we do that with Fremont bridge? I know we already do the Morrison but IMO it's underwhelming and the debate around the controversial colors makes it seem like it's not even worth doing!
 - Get rid of ALL the parking garages around Moda Center
 - Bar scene and security - the security vibe was really positive and safe and helpful, as opposed to scary and unwelcoming, can Portland security be overall more friendly and helpful? There to keep everyone safe/having a good time, as opposed to enforcing rules.

 4. What I appreciate about Portland
 - Neighborhoods are still vibrant, quirky, and the best of Portland
 - Weather
 - Portland nice is just as good as Milwaukee nice
-

NEWS MEDIA

Around 100 leaders from Oregon traveled to Milwaukee to meet with local leaders on key issues

By: [Daniela Cado Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

Posted: Oct 5, 2023 3:40 PM CDT

<https://www.cbs58.com/news/around-100-leaders-from-oregon-traveled-to-milwaukee-to-meet-with-local-leaders-on-key-issues>

MILWAUKEE (CBS 58) -- A group of leaders from Portland, Oregon, made a trip to one of our hometowns Thursday, Oct. 5, to learn some do's and don'ts from the city of Milwaukee.

"Want to make sure that we build a city that is attractive for folks who have opportunities and will go anywhere potentially," said Mayor Cavalier Johnson at City Hall.

Around 100 leaders from Oregon gathered at City Hall to learn about what Milwaukee is doing successfully, and what the city needs to improve upon.

"We just heard from the mayor that you are one of the least unsheltered communities, we would be in the top rung of unsheltered communities and working to end chronic homelessness in the next eight years," said Lynn Peterson, Oregon metro council president.

Public safety, mental health, and crime are some of the issues both cities are attempting to tackle.

"A lot of the crimes that folks are talking about, the ones that really send people over the edge here, including myself, are issues around guns," said Mayor Johnson.

Johnson says gun violence is an issue the city deals with on a daily basis, and Wisconsin as a whole, needs to do better.

"We don't control gun law at the local level and so that's why we have to continue to work with our partners at the state to make sure there are more consequences for people who pull triggers and hurt people," Johnson added.

This hits a little too close to home for Wisconsin native Peterson. "My family is a victim of gun violence in Wisconsin," Peterson told CBS 58 while in tears.

Bart and Krista Halderson were murdered in 2021, by their 23-year-old son who dismembered them and discarded the remains in Dane County.

"The hard part was that an individual from out of state gifted a gun to the murderer, who, in this case, was my cousin's son," Peterson said.

She hopes that as an elected official, she can help close some loopholes."Some of these problems that we are seeing now are so systematic that you have to pull the system apart to put it back together again," Peterson concluded.

Milwaukee offers advice, solutions to leaders of Portland, Oregon

WISN 12 News

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGYfYXS2gk>

(transcript: <https://www.wisn.com/article/milwaukee-offers-advice-solutions-to-leaders-of-portland-or/45454448>)

Discover how Milwaukee is guiding Portland, Oregon, in tackling pressing issues. This video explores the collaborative brainstorming on crime reduction, homelessness solutions, and more. Witness the power of shared knowledge and innovative strategies in creating safer, more livable cities.

Some written reports relevant to this video are accessible now (find them in the References section below). Here are the takeaways from them:

- A delegation from Portland, Oregon, is visiting Milwaukee to learn from the city's leaders about crime, homelessness, and government issues.
- Portland is transitioning to a district-style local government similar to Milwaukee's Common Council and wants to learn best practices from Milwaukee.
- Both cities are facing challenges with crime, with Milwaukee having higher homicide rates but lower car theft rates compared to Portland.
- Milwaukee has a robust community prosecution unit that Portland previously had but discontinued, and Portland is interested in learning from Milwaukee's community-based solutions.
- Portland is also interested in Milwaukee's success in addressing homelessness, as Milwaukee has the lowest per-capita count of homeless people in the nation.

References:

- [1] *Milwaukee offers advice, solutions to leaders of Portland, OR.* [Link](#)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mayor Cavalier Johnson's State of the City Address

June 26th, 2023

<https://city.milwaukee.gov/mayor/2023-State-of-the-City/State-of-the-City-Address>

Thank you all for the kind welcome this afternoon. This is truly a special location. The Henry Maier Festival Park is a place of celebration, entertainment, and memories. This is a public space where people from across Milwaukee and beyond come together. For decades, we have enjoyed a vision first imagined at City Hall, and followed through by creative people who built this place – and events here – into what we know today.

This is an unusual time for a State of the City presentation, but that's fitting for an unusual year. The uncertainty surrounding our financial predicament made a presentation about our situation impossible. Now, after months of effort, our work to put Milwaukee government on a sustainable fiscal course is almost done.

My strategy has been to build consensus among groups of people who are often at odds. While that sounds like common sense, it has become a political rarity in a world where harsh, strident, and inflexible positions prevent progress. Communicating, partnering, and seeking the common good is the best path forward as we address the major challenges in front of us.

I focus on what we have in common. We are One Milwaukee, a city composed of a remarkable array of people with varied backgrounds, cultures, and races. We are One Milwaukee where residents may speak different languages, have different educational experiences, and different levels of wealth or poverty. Yet those differences do not divide us on the most important civic concerns. We are One Milwaukee in our shared desires for public safety, equitable economic opportunity, and city services that serve the needs of every person in every neighborhood.

Overall, our economy is strong with an unemployment rate in Milwaukee County running around three percent. That's better than the national rate. However, we cannot ignore the clear disparities in economic health that exist within our city.

In the center of the city we are seeing a boom that is plainly evident. First, in construction where work is underway on multiple significant structures. Three separate projects have started that will add high-rise residential buildings, each more than thirty stories. Other big residential projects are expected to start soon.

The second way we can see the economic boom is in the companies choosing Milwaukee for growth and expansion. Milwaukee Tool is joining Komatsu, Rite-Hite, and Michels with projects that have brought large numbers of good jobs to Milwaukee. Northwestern Mutual is starting a major addition to its campus that will add employees to downtown.

And Fiserv, a Fortune 500 company, is moving its headquarters to Milwaukee, right at the corner of Wisconsin and Vel R. Phillips Avenues. The hundreds of Fiserv employees working from the new offices could have been moved to any of the company's locations across the country. Instead, Fiserv selected Milwaukee.

Milwaukee is in the midst of a resurgence in the hospitality sector of our economy, too. Make no mistake, our city is the preeminent location in Wisconsin for tourism and convention activity. Modern

Great Lakes cruise liners have selected Milwaukee as the city to begin and end itineraries bringing thousands of passengers to our port.

Our new addition to the Baird Center will double the convention capacity bringing up to 100-thousand additional out-of-state convention goers here each year. Next summer, the Republican National Convention will allow Milwaukee to show the nation, and the world, we are an ideal location for major events. And, with Visit Milwaukee, I am working to attract more big events to our city.

And our future requires more than just building and growing. We also have an obligation to address the challenges Milwaukee faces.

For example, the Black infant mortality rate is three times higher than that of White infants. Milwaukee Health Department programs such as the BOMB Doula program provide maternal and child health services, improving outcomes.

Only 70% of Hispanic residents have health insurance, compared to a 95% coverage rate for Whites. Our Community Healthcare Access Program addresses this racial disparity by enrolling Milwaukee residents into BadgerCare Plus and Foodshare services.

Childhood blood lead levels are twice as high among Black children compared to those of White children. Last year the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program received 109 elevated blood lead level referrals and issued hundreds of permits for abatement services to homes in Milwaukee.

We see disparities in the economy. So, the City of Milwaukee requires development projects that receive significant municipal support to employ city residents who are unemployed or underemployed. We require those projects to use small disadvantaged businesses.

While Milwaukee does not currently provide racial preferences in hiring or contracting, the Wisconsin legislature recently imposed explicit restrictions against racial preferences. I opposed that. It was unnecessary. And, it bluntly ignores the reality in Milwaukee.

I will state it clearly: Government has a moral obligation to assist its residents who are discriminated against. We have a moral obligation to help those who have been left out. It is basic human decency to intervene when harm disproportionately affects one or more racial groups.

Milwaukee will not defy the law. However, we will find ways to follow through on our principles.

A separate challenge Milwaukee is wrestling with involves young people who are disconnected from societal norms and acting in destructive ways. It is evident on our roadways and in crime statistics. I believe in consequences for breaking the law, but a punitive approach, alone, is not sufficient.

I am adding something else to the mix, attention to the root causes of the problem. Based on my personal experience, I know that positively engaging young people in their pre-teen and early teen years can make a major difference in the direction their lives take.

Milwaukee is rich with resources that can help. Young people can find direction at organizations like those associated with the United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee, Safe and Sound, at the Boys and Girls Clubs, and at Milwaukee Rec programs. New opportunities exist through the Milwaukee Police Athletic League and other programs. A new city website, Hello Summer, is a connection point for events, programs, and employment. That's at [Milwaukee.gov/hellosummer](https://www.milwaukee.gov/hellosummer).

I also want to call attention to one of my favorite programs, Camp Rise. Camp Rise emerged from a group called Voices of the Elders. It is a concept I immediately embraced. As it has grown, Employ Milwaukee, along with Milwaukee Public Schools and many generous donors have made it a truly valuable program. And, I offer a special thank-you to Governor Tony Evers who immediately recognized the value of Camp Rise, and directed significant resources to make it a reality.

Camp Rise invites kids between the ages of ten and thirteen to open their worlds, to see what's possible, and to equip them with basic tools they need to find positive direction in their lives. A distinguishing aspect of Camp Rise is that participating young people receive a stipend, a nominal amount of money for participating. It is a taste of how the working world operates, and, more importantly, how they fit into that world.

I want to introduce De'Anthony Roaf, he's a Camp Rise alumnus. You may have read his story in yesterday's Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. I remember when he introduced me at a Camp Rise media event, and he did that well. It's fair to say De'Anthony's eyes were opened to new possibilities through Camp Rise. And, yes, De'Anthony, someday you could be Mayor.

Yes, we are One Milwaukee, and we all have a part to play in guiding our young people to success.

A very large portion of my attention in recent months has focused on the fiscal challenges the City of Milwaukee faces. Without a major change in the structure of our finances, we will experience draconian cuts to our police, our fire department, and our libraries.

When I became Mayor, I pledged to resolve the decades-old broken financial relationship between Milwaukee and state government.

Nearly forty years ago, Mayor Henry Maier expressed his outrage that the expected growth in shared revenue, the money Wisconsin provides to local governments, was being constrained. Years later, the amount sent to Milwaukee was frozen, and for the last twenty years the money "shared" through shared revenue never increased.

That was unsustainable, particularly for a city with no viable alternative for raising tax revenue. You see, Milwaukee is an outlier, a city in a unique situation among major urban communities in having just one tax revenue source. That's the property tax. And the property tax is not a tax source that keeps pace with inflation.

In recent city budgets we have dodged the inevitable and extreme cuts by deploying federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to fill the gap. However, that was hardly a long-term strategy.

Complicating the situation, our city pension system is requiring a much greater contribution in order to fulfill our obligation to city retirees.

So, I took our case to leaders in the State Capitol. I said I would have a cot in the capitol, and I spent an enormous amount of time there. That led to one of the most remarkable aspects of this journey: city and state legislative leaders were able to talk. The political barriers to substantive communication, in place for a long time, began to fall away. Milwaukee's predicament was, at last, getting the full attention of state leaders.

The discussions explored, in great detail, the complexities of the situation.

Of course, no elected official wants to champion a new tax, but our reality presented no alternative. Even so, there were questions. What was the right tax rate? What mechanism should be used to initiate the tax?

Then, building support among the Republican caucuses in the Assembly and Senate introduced a range of demands and changes. Add police officers. Add firefighters. I could embrace that. But then there were the punitive provisions. Restrict funding for the streetcar. Add impediments to new programs and spending. Limit diversity and inclusion work. Take power from the Fire and Police Commission.

Milwaukee's fiscal cliff opened the door to Republican demands that would never have passed muster for me or at the city's Common Council. No matter how loudly I said no, the steamroller of political reality moved forward.

Let's be clear. Milwaukee accomplished its top objective. We now have a solution that will overcome decades of fiscal problems and our city now has a path forward.

To achieve this, Milwaukee had a number of solid partners. County Executive David Crowley and Milwaukee County Board Chair Marcelia Nicholson have been right alongside us. The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, the Greater Milwaukee Committee, and the League of Wisconsin Municipalities have all played important roles. From inside City Hall, the Intergovernmental Relations and Budget offices have done extraordinary work.

And, thank you, Common Council President Jose Perez for the time and effort and numerous trips you made to Madison. Your private meetings and public testimony amplified the city's position on a range of issues.

Ultimately, legislative leaders rallied around Assembly Bill 245. Speaker Robin Vos and Representative Tony Kurtz in the Assembly and Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu and Senator Mary Felzkowski in the Senate were among those who led the way. Democratic legislators were champions, too including Senator LaTonya Johnson and Representatives Kalan Haywood, Sylvia Ortiz-Velez, Christine Sinicki and Deb Andraca. Thank you, all.

I also can't overstate the important role Governor Tony Evers played in this process. I know there were times, Governor, that your patience – and your values – have been tested. Milwaukee is grateful for your support. Governor Evers, thank you.

So, where do we stand now? I support a two percent city sales tax. The decision to move forward on that is now in the hands of the Milwaukee Common Council where at least ten Council members must approve.

For our long-term budget prospects, there are reasons to be hopeful, but there is not yet certainty. We only have estimates of the actual revenue we might receive from the sales tax, and the new costs associated with pension changes add to the uncertainty. What is clear is that Milwaukee's fiscal situation will be far, far better with a sales tax than without.

It is important to note that the most objectionable non-fiscal matters included in the state legislation are in place irrespective of whether local approval of the sales tax occurs. The limitations on streetcar expansion, the rulemaking authority of the Fire and Police Commission, the mandated police in public schools, and the elimination of race as a factor in hiring or contracting, all of this is now the law whether or not we move forward on the sales tax.

Frankly, what's at stake in the upcoming Council vote, is whether Milwaukee will have the resources to provide the basic city services our residents need.

Without this new revenue, we will have no options other than laying off hundreds of police and firefighters, devastating our ability to respond promptly to emergencies. Libraries all across the city will be shuttered. We will spiral into a deeper and deeper fiscal crisis.

We're working with alders to answer questions and encourage support. I've pointed out, for the first time, visitors and commuters will start paying for the local services they receive. I've pointed out that the sales tax is not collected on basics like groceries and prescription drugs. And, I have shared a brighter vision for the future in which emergency responses are faster and libraries will be open, offering more innovative programs for our younger residents. That's how we build One Milwaukee we can all be proud of.

I am hopeful we can resolve our structural fiscal problems so that our attention can be refocused on other challenges ahead of us.

I have no higher priority than improving public safety in Milwaukee. Fear, crime and violence disrupt our quality of life. They undermine our economy. And, too often, they destroy lives.

Let's start with a look at reckless driving. We have all experienced the shock of a reckless driver ignoring a traffic signal or irresponsibly passing on the right or tearing along local streets as if they were driving in some invisible NASCAR final lap. Too many innocent drivers have been smashed into. And, yes, too many lives have been lost.

There are four different ways we are taking on reckless driving. First, we have formally tasked city staff to lead the response. That includes implementing best practices from organizations such as NACTO and Vision Zero. A great deal of that work has been led by Kate Riordan, from Department of Public Works. And, in recent weeks, we have added a new team leader, Jessica Wineberg in our Department of Administration. We are listening to residents and developing new plans.

The second way we are working to reduce reckless driving is through education. Partners such as the Greater Milwaukee Urban League are working to get hundreds of people trained and licensed to drive. At Milwaukee Rec, driver training is broadly available at reasonable fees.

Some of our biggest investments are in our third approach, and that involves physical changes in our roadways that make reckless driving much less likely. I'm sure you've seen our work. We are constricting lanes and adding crosswalk bump-outs. New concrete is being poured on a regular schedule. That's improving safety for drivers and car passengers. And, it is also directly advancing another concept that is so important to me; streets are for everyone – and should be designed with pedestrians in mind, with scooters and bicycles in mind, and with local businesses in mind.

The fourth step is enforcement. The Milwaukee Police Traffic Safety Unit is laser focused on holding reckless drivers accountable for their actions. Officers are out there pulling over violators, writing tickets, and, hundreds of times, they have used their legal authority to tow the cars of repeat reckless drivers and unregistered vehicles used by reckless drivers.

The Traffic Safety Unit targets locations all around the city. In fact, I'll let you in on a secret, our police are so forthcoming about their enforcement that they announce in advance where the High Visibility Enforcement Efforts will take place. Go on the website, you can see that right now, they are out on Silver Spring Drive west of 43rd Street, on the watch for reckless drivers.

I am grateful for the support from the State of Wisconsin in our reckless driving efforts. Governor Evers' State Patrol, which ordinarily does not operate in the city, has assisted us on multiple occasions.

We track the numbers on reckless driving – the crashes, the tickets, the injuries and fatalities. I want more progress, but I have confidence we are moving in the right direction.

One number that's particularly noteworthy – and related to a major subset of reckless drivers – is the big reduction in the number of stolen cars. Motor vehicle thefts are down almost one-third this year, when compared to this time last year. And, compared to two years ago at this time, the number of stolen cars is down almost forty-percent. That's good news.

Those numbers are a part of a trend that bodes well for Milwaukee. Part One crime, a definition established for FBI major crime reporting, is down about fourteen percent so far this year. And that continues the good news we saw for the full year in 2022, when crime was down significantly compared to the previous year.

Yes, there are still too many instances of property crime and violence. But, a number frequently cited in crime discussions is the number of homicides. So far this year, homicides are down about thirty percent in the City of Milwaukee.

There is no magic solution to urban crime and violence. The causes are complex; the solutions are, too.

Our police are central to the safety of our city. They respond in emergencies, enforce the laws, arrest the criminals, and they deter and prevent crime. As I have said frequently, though, the police cannot do it alone. Safety is a cause we can all take part in. In my vision of One Milwaukee, everyone has a responsibility for reducing crime.

So, what does that mean? We all are obligated to report suspicious activity. We all have a role in holding people accountable. We can join with our neighbors in block clubs. We can offer mentorship and guidance to young people. All of this will help make our city safer.

Partnerships are key, and that is a significant part of the work underway at the Office of Violence Prevention. Under the leadership of Ashanti Hamilton, that office is mobilizing dozens of Promise Keepers who are making connections with community resources in the work to make the city safer.

The frequency in which guns are used to attack others in Milwaukee is appalling. There are simply too many guns in the hands of people who should not have them. Do we need tighter background checks on all gun sales? Yes. Can we add appropriate restrictions on magazine capacity and conversions that make handguns into automatic weapons? Yes. Can we crack down further on straw purchases and felons who shouldn't have guns? Yes.

Reasonable changes in gun laws are not local matters. So, today, again, I call on state and federal elected officials to start making the changes in gun laws that people in Milwaukee need. Senator Tammy Baldwin and Representative Gwen Moore, you have been thoughtful champions of public safety, and I am appreciative of your work.

I also ask gun owners to take their responsibilities more seriously. Let me offer this example, in the City of Milwaukee, last year, 737 guns were stolen from cars. Think about that. That is hundreds of guns now in the hands of people who, absolutely, should not have firearms. If you can't take your

gun into a bar, a restaurant, a theater, or a sporting event, don't bring it in the first place. Do not leave a gun in your car.

We have challenges other than crime, and we are making progress on those fronts, too.

I have some good news to share today from the Milwaukee Water Works. Together, we have established a new goal of replacing all remaining lead service lines in Milwaukee within the next twenty years. That will reduce by two-thirds our previously estimated time for removing lead laterals. There is no question, any lead exposure is dangerous to young children, and every parent wants their child drinking clean, safe water. We are taking all reasonable steps to get lead out of drinking water and, in doing so, we are advancing a more equitable and healthier city.

President Joe Biden's EPA is allocating billions of dollars for local governments to replace lead pipes, and Milwaukee is well positioned to tap into these resources. Working with our state partners, local contractors, advocates, and homeowners, we can replace all of Milwaukee's lead service lines much faster than was initially laid out.

There are a lot of great people working for the city of Milwaukee. They do their jobs with dedication and talent. And, on a regular basis, they step up and accomplish something extraordinary.

Let me give you an example. Two and a half months ago, Tawanna Jordan, a Milwaukee Parking Enforcement Officer, was in the right place at the right time. She spotted a person on a bridge who was obviously contemplating suicide. Now, Tawanna could have simply called for help, but she chose to do much more. She stopped, talked to the person, and she said, "You are loved." She was able to walk the person back to the sidewalk and stood by until the police crisis intervention team got there. Please stand, Tawanna. Thank you. I am so proud to have you as a colleague.

Our One Milwaukee is, already, a great city. And we can do even more to build on that. At my direction, we are moving forward with an ambitious plan to add up to fifty miles of protected bicycle lanes on our city streets. I want these fifty miles under construction or in active development by 2026. Yes, this is an aggressive and attainable goal.

There are numerous benefits to our bike lane plan. We are connecting the city with a new transportation alternative which adds safety for bike riders. We are promoting a way of getting around that improves both physical and mental health. And, the addition of protected bike lanes with a defined boundary from the car lane will promote traffic calming and additional safety for all roadway users.

You will see the start of this work underway this year with the protected bike lanes on Highland Avenue from 20th Street west to Washington Park and on Lapham Boulevard from Cesar Chaves Drive to Sixth Street.

Last month's groundbreaking for the new Martin Luther King Branch Library, which opens in the Fall of next year, represents my commitment to Milwaukee's neighborhood-based network of library branches. Our city's libraries stand as powerful symbols of education; they foster connections with city residents that lead to literacy, jobs that pay sustainable wages, reduce violence, and foster a safe environment for children and young adults.

Our library also achieved remarkable fame. Its highly creative social media campaign has successfully reconnected local residents with the library and has refreshed the national image of both libraries and of Milwaukee. With well over 90,000 followers, the library's TikTok and Instagram

campaigns have been so successful Visit Milwaukee recently presented the Milwaukee Public Library with the 2023 Dear MKE Award. Congratulations.

I think a lot about our city's future. Our economy, our quality of life, and our identity will continue to evolve. My role, and the role of so many other leaders here, is to guide Milwaukee's evolution in ways that benefit the people who live here. That's part of what One Milwaukee means, building consensus, having goals, and moving us forward.

I've talked about wanting Milwaukee to be a city of one-million residents. One Mil for One Milwaukee. That's not just a numerical milestone. It's a vision, and a goal that allows us to think big. Reaching one-million people will add new energy and new opportunity. It would redefine Milwaukee in the eyes of people from coast to coast, elevating all the best things about our city.

Yes, it's ambitious. Let's be ambitious. Because Milwaukee's destiny is in our hands.

Today, the State of the City is promising. Key factors are aligning in very positive ways. Doubters and pessimists, we proved you wrong.

I believe in Milwaukee. I believe in One Milwaukee. We live in a community of new opportunities, new optimism, and renewed promise for all of us. Let's make the most of it. Let's make our future something our children – and our children's children – will celebrate.

Let's create the best version of ourselves, the best version of our neighborhoods, and the best version of the city we all love.

Thank you, Milwaukee. You're the best!