



2025 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT



OVERVIEW

The City of South Milwaukee advances economic development by implementing zoning and planning updates, encouraging redevelopment, supporting small businesses, revitalizing Downtown, expanding housing diversity and density, leveraging Tax Incremental Financing, and responsibly managing Bucyrus Foundation funds.

ZONING

Approved Zoning Chapter Recreation

The last comprehensive zoning code change occurred over 30 years ago. Adopted in May 2025, the new code addresses housing needs, allowing varying land uses and context-sensitive density increases. Single-family-only residential zoning districts have been eliminated and lot sizes reduced, encouraging infill development and accessory dwelling units.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS

- Conditional use permits
- Planned Development Districts/Zoning Amendments
- Site plan, Landscape plan, Lighting plan reviews
- Zoning review, information, and letters
- Bucyrus business grants administration
- Sign permits
- New business resources, site selection, and business occupancy
- Business recruitment, retention and expansion
- Placemaking projects and initiatives
- Tax Incremental Financing & Development Agreements
- Certified Survey Maps & Subdivisions support
- Support Board of Appeals, Plan Commission, and Common Council

PLAN COMMISSION STATISTICS

Activity	2022	2023	2024	2025
• Number of Meetings	13	12	13	10
• Conditional Use Permit/Amend	2	10	7	1
• Special Exception Signs	0	4	2	0
• Rezone/PDD	0	1	2	2
• Certified Survey Maps	3	2	0	1
• Subdivision Plats	0	0	1	0
• Bucyrus Grants	0	2	6	4

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Approved South Milwaukee Comprehensive Plan 2050 Update

The city's previous Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2016. Changes in demographics, land uses, community needs, the zoning code rewrite, and State financial incentives, required a plan update, completed May 2025.

Zoning Chapter Rewrite & Comprehensive Plan Update

- 16 month project timelines
- 9 meetings each

BUCYRUS CAMPUS REDEVELOPMENT, LOCATED IN TID #5



Approved revisions to Bucyrus Campus Scott Crawford Redevelopment, Downtown

The \$52 ml redevelopment project received approvals in 2024 for repurposing three vacant office buildings and building a new building for primarily apartment homes on approximately 4 acres. In 2025, the city approved changing a building use from housing to a private elementary school, reducing the number of units to 132 apartment homes, and relocating the new building to the east lot. The school received temporary occupancy in October.

Project Details

Budget: \$52 ml
Base Value: \$1.1 ml
Value after Completion: \$10.37 ml
Incentive Requested : \$1.5 ml

CANAL TRANSIT LOFTS, LOCATED IN TID #5

Approved extension and revisions to AK Development proposal, Downtown at Marquette & 10th Avenue

The \$18.4 ml redevelopment project received preliminary approvals in 2023 for a mixed-use development at city-owned property 2318 10th Ave. Further approvals were received for increased housing density to 64 apartment homes, and changes in parking and project schedules. With increases in project costs, the developer is finalizing additional non-local funding.

Project Details

Budget: \$18.4 ml
Base Value: \$250,000
Value after Completion: \$6 ml
Incentive Requested: \$1.5 ml



SOUTH SHORE LANDING



Further Approvals for South Shore Landing, 100 15th Avenue

The vacant medical building on 1.8 acres was rezoned in 2023 for 20 market rate apartment homes with site improvements. The \$3.2 ml project was reactivated in 2025 after a change in ownership. Renovations began October 2025.

Project Details

Budget: \$3.2 ml

Base Value: \$297,100

Value after Completion: \$4 ml

Incentive Requested: \$100,000

315 MARION SITE

Progress on proposed development at 315 Marion Ave, former 30-acre Everbrite site.

A developer presented a concept to develop the site at 5th & Marion Avenue, for a phased development, providing one- and two-family homes and varying densities of multifamily homes. The city expects a site plan in early 2026.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Beekeeping / Urban Backyard Chickens

In 2025, the Plan Commission held several meetings on beekeeping and urban backyard chickens. After hearing from the community, beekeeping, and chicken experts, the Plan Commission recommended removing the prohibition on beekeeping from the municipal code and to initiate a test pilot program for urban backyard chickens. Ultimately, neither were pursued by the Common Council.

Raze 1208 - 1210 Milwaukee Avenue



Mid-year the property owners initiated removal of two vacant buildings at 1208 & 1210 Milwaukee Avenue, the former Dude Auto & Machine shop. Removal of the second building was delayed for further structural review due to a shared wall with the adjacent building. The report was provided January 2026.

Grant Park Plaza - S. Chicago Avenue

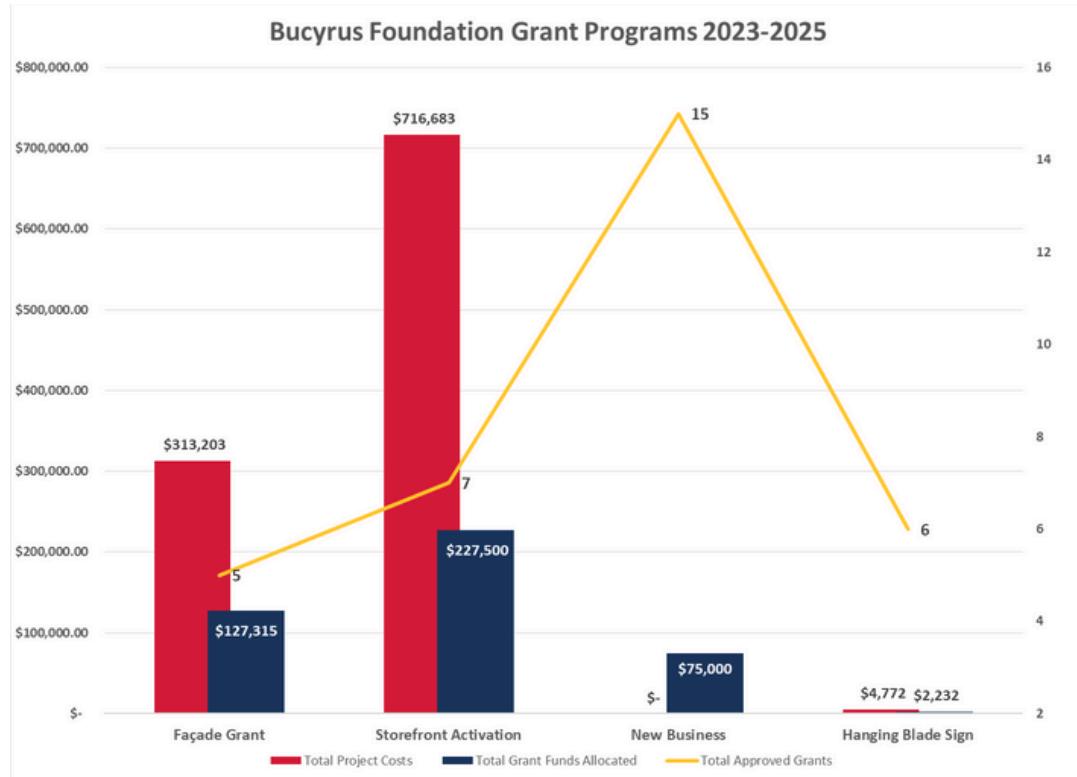
The City has been actively working with Pick 'n Save property owner after the store closure in the summer of 2025, seeking another grocer to occupy the space in the Grant Park Plaza. The city contracted with a firm to do a grocery market analysis report completed in November that led to further interest by a local grocer. Discussions remain active at yearend.

Staff also worked closely with the adjacent commercial property owner for filling the Planet Fitness and Associated Bank spaces.

BUCYRUS FOUNDATION GRANT PROGRAMS

The Bucyrus Foundation Grant Programs supports businesses through a variety of ways.

The building improvement grants are for permanent improvements to commercial buildings. They help small businesses offset the high costs of rehabilitation, allowing them to focus resources on operations and growth. Over time, coordinated storefront improvements contribute to a vibrant downtown identity, increase private investment, and reinforce traditional Main Street downtowns as a competitive, welcoming destination for businesses, residents, and visitors alike.



BUCYRUS FOUNDATION GRANTS

Grant Type

- Façade Improvement
- Storefront Activation
- *subtotal*
- Hanging Blade Sign
- New Business

Total Project Costs

- \$122,725
- \$222,643
- \$345,365
- \$4,772
- \$ -
- **\$350,140**

Total Grant Funds Approved

- \$57,000
- \$72,500
- \$129,500
- \$2,232
- \$30,000
- **\$161,732**

Total Approved Grants

- 2
- 2
- 4
- 6
- 6
- 16

PERMIT DETAILS

Commercial Building Permits

- Number of Permits Issued 23
- Total Permit Fees \$27,360
- Total Project Values \$4.2 ml

**Excludes electrical, HVAC, plumbing*

920 Monroe, Bella Rose event space

Before



After

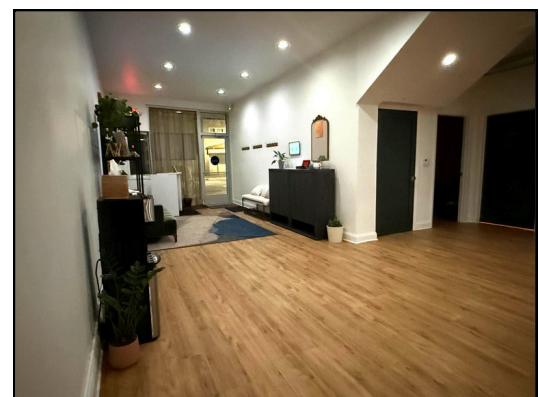


1013 Milwaukee, Beyond Yoga

Before



After



PLACEMAKING INITIATIVES

The City's Comprehensive Plan recommended improvements to the Tri City National Bank Plaza in the Downtown District at 10th & Milwaukee, revitalizing the space for public use. Early in the year the city and bank advanced efforts, supporting a concept that relocates the banks ground sign, identifies an area for potential art, and enhances passive use in the space. City staff completed a traffic sight analysis showing improved sign visibility with relocating the freestanding bank sign.

In October, the South Milwaukee High School National Art Society completed a crosswalk mural on 11th Ave on the side of Milwaukee Avenue. A complimentary crosswalk mural will be completed after the Bucyrus Campus redevelopment is done.



BUSINESS SUPPORT & RESOURCES

S.M. ALL BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

Formally adopted in 2024, the Business Retention & Expansion Program recognizes the City's businesses, connects them with resources, generates data to influence policy making, and works to ensure that South Milwaukee businesses stay and grow with the city.

2025 Business Milestone Anniversaries

5 Years

Burger Town
Dupree's Vintage
Elle Marie Beauty Salon
Glamour Soiree Hair Salon
Kico's Towing

10 Years

CSL Plasma
GRT Auto Repair
Littlest Flowers Center for Achievement
MT Towing & Recovery
Nails Express
Ryan's Tap Room

15 Years

Pasiano's Italian Restaurant
20 Years
A & J Environmental Pallets
25 Years
PyraMax Bank
30 Years
Mari's Flowers, Wine & Gifts
Moran's Pub

40 Years

Mike's Automotive
45 Years
KinderCare
Venne's Creations Salon
75 Years
South Milwaukee Yacht Club

S.M.ALL Business Awards

Venne's Creations Salon, Dupree's Vintage and MT Towing & Recovery each received a \$500 Bucyrus Business Retention Grant, distributed via a random drawing from the 2025 business anniversaries list.

The city received over 200 public votes naming Mari's Flowers, Wine, & Gifts the Business of the Year and GGs Grooming Salon as the New Business of the Year.

3rd Annual Shop Small Grant

The City provided a \$2,000 Bucyrus grant for the Shop Small Saturday promotional event, held on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. This is the second year supporting this event.

Monthly Business & Community Development Newsletter Data

	2024	2025	Industry Standards
• Total Emails Sent (Annual Total)	5,892	8,003	
• Year-End Subscribers	551	626	
• % Avg Open Rate	74%	68%	31%
• % Avg Click-thru Rate	11%	8%	7.2%

Business Interaction Data

	2024	2025	
• Individual Business Contacts	819	957	
• Total Outreach	3,783	4,514	
• New Inquiries to Open Business	67	50	Phone & In-person meetings

New Business Data

	2024	2025	
• New Business Openings	17	13	3
• Business Expansions	3	2	Ribbon Cuttings
• Business Ownership Changes	6	3	

New Business Openings

Bar 920	Heritage Plumbing	TB Auto Wholesale
Community Medical Services	NeuroWave Therapy Group	Total Wireless
Drop Zone	Ruthmansdorfer Law Group	Vine and Dandy
King Capitol Transport	Self Love Sanctuary	Virtue Coffee and Valor Wine
Kushykush		

5
Downtown

COMMERCIAL VACANCIES

Addressing downtown vacancies requires a coordinated approach that blends economic development tools, flexible zoning, targeted incentives, and placemaking strategies to restore activity and confidence in the downtown core.

There are many challenges with filling vacant spaces in older buildings. The biggest challenge is the cost of renovating a space to bring it into compliance with current building and accessibility codes. The Bucyrus Foundation Grant programs are crucial to attracting businesses.

COMMERCIAL STOREFRONT VACANCIES YEAREND 2025			
AREA			
	DOWNTOWN	S. CHICAGO	N. CHICAGO
For Lease Storefronts	7	3	1
For Lease Strip Mall Spaces	5	4	1
Not For Lease Storefronts	7	0	1
Pending Storefront Businesses	7	0	0

**Data excludes industrial and non-storefront commercial spaces*

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corp provides the cost of storefront vacancies in traditional downtowns. The latest data show an 1,800 square foot space with two above apartments costs a community \$133,000 per year in lost economic activity

Loss in workers, resident and local business spending; loss in property and sales taxes; etc

Vacant Building Registration

Commercial storefront landlords are required to register their space annually if they choose not to lease. Registration includes incremental fee increases capped after year four. Six spaces required registration at the beginning of 2025. Inspections are required to confirm zoning compliance, safety, and accessibility.

RenewTowns Pitch Contest filling Vacancies

South Milwaukee is working with University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Enactus students and faculty on a pitch competition called Space Race, where two winners will receive a year's worth of storefront rent made possible by the Bucyrus Foundation Funds.



Over 20 entrepreneurs participated in the various workshops and nine submitted pitches. Winners will be announced by the end of the first quarter in 2026.

ATTRACTING VISITORS

Bucyrus Commons Outdoor Event Space

The Bucyrus Commons park opened in 2023 in the heart of South Milwaukee's downtown. The South Milwaukee Downtown Market finished its 17th year enlivening the downtown and new events like Cheaterama car show, Flip Side Art fundraiser, and Samtember Fest added to the excitement.

Number of Rental Events

38 private and public events

+

17 yoga classes

Cheaterama Car Show



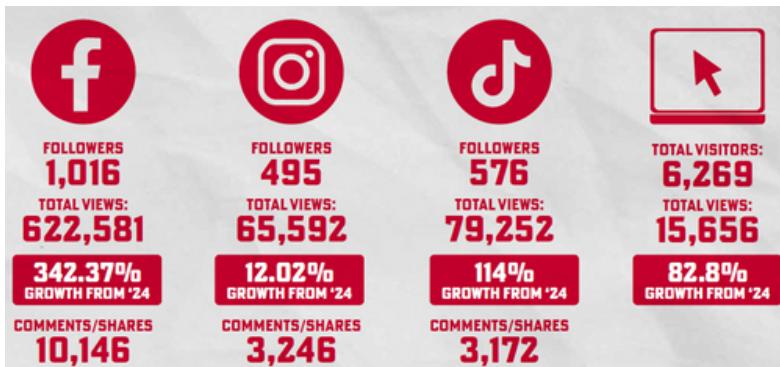
South Milwaukee Sam

Launched July 2024, the South Milwaukee Sam branding is a communications campaign that was designed to present a clear, fun, and consistent identity for the City of South Milwaukee that reflects its history, community values, and natural assets.

The campaign has supported how the City communicates with residents, businesses, and visitors by reinforcing a shared sense of place, pride, and belonging.

Sam's numbers far exceed expectations and industry standards. People love Sam!

Samtember Fest at Bucyrus Commons

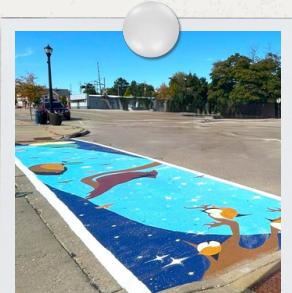


Sam

Attended 25 events

Visited over 20 Businesses in
South Milwaukee

A well-received awareness campaign that brought positive attention to South Milwaukee and elevated its profile regionally and nationally



2025 South Milwaukee

