

# THE MILWAUKEE METHOD OF CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

GREATER MILWAUKEE COMMITTEE



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## Introduction

The Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC) formed the Creative Placemaking Committee in fall 2014 to foster local support for creative placemaking and contribute to an emerging national dialogue in the field. Creative placemaking is driven by The National Endowment for the Arts in collaboration with national and local foundations looking for effective ways to create economic prosperity and cultural vibrancy within communities. In alignment with these efforts, the GMC and its partners are developing *The Milwaukee Method of Creative Placemaking*, convening a cultural leadership network, and facilitating creative placemaking projects in neighborhoods across the city. This new initiative stems from a long history of the GMC's investment in Milwaukee as a vibrant place to live, learn, work, and play.

## Defining The Milwaukee Method of Creative Placemaking

*The Milwaukee Method of Creative Placemaking (The Milwaukee Method)* embraces the following national framework for creative placemaking:

- Unifies the arts and culture with economic and community development
- Accelerates neighborhood development by creating civic gathering places
- Increases density, safety, business creation, tax base, and property values
- Strengthens public and private alignments
- Supports artists, makers, and other cultural workers to co-lead neighborhood engagement processes

*The Milwaukee Method* additionally includes these core values:

- Amplifies an authentic local voice with respect to the history and current culture of neighborhoods, the city, and the region
- Extends the long-term commitment to neighborhoods
- Creates a platform for community discussion among neighbors that may feel separate due to a host of cultural or economic conditions
- Cultivates an intergenerational network of cultural leaders versed in creative placemaking who foster public dialogue around complex cultural subjects
- Advocates for a range of redevelopment opportunities at various scales
- Learns from historic investment in public spaces and architecture
- Repurposes buildings, materials, and human resources
- Links people to public space and to natural resources like freshwater lakes and rivers via a city-wide trail network
- Attracts and retains talent through an interesting and vibrant city
- Ignites creative entrepreneurs and artists to grow businesses and develop markets
- Leverages the accessible scale of the city
- Grows existing tendencies for cross-sector alignment
- Focuses on evolving definitions of work and income-generation in response to an industrial past



*The Milwaukee Method* focuses on culturally-sensitive neighborhood development based on the interests of independent and institutional stakeholders. The method acknowledges that cultural workers such as artists, makers, and creative entrepreneurs are critical to influencing neighborhood development. These cultural workers are responsive to the regional landscape, climate, and people to help value our history and explore new perspectives. *The Milwaukee Method* emphasizes civic engagement to address concerns of displacement and disparity, as well as the health of the community. The method suggests sustaining neighborhoods through talent attraction and retention, business formation, job creation, and increased tax base and property values. Creative placemaking projects based in *The Milwaukee Method* cultivate intergenerational leadership and access to resources in order to grow local culture.

## Investing in Public Space

Many creative placemaking projects nationally have an active public space at the core as a way of exploring a civic commons. *Creational Trails: The Avenue and The artery*, a current creative placemaking initiative of the GMC in collaboration with local partners, focuses on generating a new experience of public space in Milwaukee. Creational Trails extends from Milwaukee's long history of investing in public space including community centers, parks, festivals, markets, and other cultural initiatives. All these initiatives make our city feel alive as an enjoyable place to live and work.

Frederick Olmsted's original design for Lake Park exemplifies Milwaukee's longstanding commitment to public space. In recent decades, this park on Lake Michigan has extended into a dedicated investment in a trail system. The Hank Aaron State Trail, Oak Leaf Trail, Beerline Recreational Trail, and the RiverWalk are heavily used for recreation and commuting. All along these trails, as well as in parks, one can find examples of art, community engagement, and vibrancy. The Beerline Recreational Trail opened in 2010 now hosts the new Selig Joseph Folz Theater, a swing park under the Marsupial Bridge, the Riverwest 24 Bike Race and a resident-built skating rink. New restaurants and residential housing have developed along the trails. The three revitalized rivers of the city are links in this trail system. The Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewage District and the 16th Street Community Health Center, among others, are undertaking the Kinnickinnic River Corridor project, which aims to naturalize the river to connect neighborhoods and improve public health. This green infrastructure of trails, parks, and tree-lined streets bring a heightened sense of access throughout the city.

Menomonee Valley with Three Bridges Park, just south of downtown, is a recent success of a new public space investment in alignment with commercial redevelopment. This project's partners include the City of Milwaukee, Urban Ecology Center and Menomonee Valley Partners, among others. The redevelopment of the Menomonee Valley created a new sense of interconnectivity between the south and north sides of the city. These are two areas that have historically struggled with feelings of cultural separation. The Menomonee Valley's strong identity is revived with growing vibrancy. Simultaneously, the Valley functions as a bridge among adjacent neighborhoods.



## Repurposing an Industrial Powerhouse

Milwaukee's public space investment has regularly occurred in tandem with commercial, residential, and institutional development. Current redevelopment frequently repurposes industrial buildings, neighborhoods, and land through public-private collaboration; examples include the live-work campuses that have grown in corridors that once housed the automotive industry, manufacturing plants, and breweries like Schlitz Park, The Brewery, and North End. Buildings made of local Cream City brick are being rehabilitated alongside new construction and pocket parks.

The opportunity of repurposing Milwaukee is underscored by national efforts like the Legacy City Design Initiative (LCDI) of New York City and the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP) of the United States Department of Commerce. The LCDI has identified Milwaukee as a Legacy City. These industrial hubs have faced economic, social, and physical challenges since the mid-twentieth century. Legacy Cities are well-positioned for regeneration with the proper resources from both inside and outside local government. Under the IMCP initiative, Milwaukee is one of 12 U.S. cities the federal government aims to retool for advanced manufacturing by prioritizing their access to \$1.3 billion in federal funds.

These national designations, in combination with the local redevelopment trends, growing public-private alignments, and the city's scale, highlight the promising competitive advantage of Milwaukee.

## Valuing Neighborhoods

Milwaukee historically and currently values neighborhoods as a combination of commercial, residential, and public spaces. This commitment to balanced neighborhood development often involves artists, makers, and other creative workers. Examples include neighborhoods such as Riverwest, Walker's Point, Bay View, Sherman Park, and the Third Ward.

This valuing of neighborhoods is reaffirmed through investment from the City and local foundations. The mayor's ReFresh Milwaukee initiative seeks to make the city a center for sustainability innovation and thought leadership. One program within ReFresh Milwaukee is Home Gr/own, which encourages people to engage with healthy food production and distribution. Home Gr/own produces new green community spaces from vacant lots and foreclosed homes. In collaboration with the City, local foundations focus on neighborhood development through efforts such as the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Healthy Neighborhood Initiative and the Zilber Foundation's Neighborhood Initiative.



## The Greater Milwaukee Committee's Leadership with Creative Placemaking

The GMC is nationally recognized as a Midwestern leader in creative placemaking. Two leading national foundations for creative placemaking, ArtPlace America and The Kresge Foundation, are focused on Milwaukee through the GMC's current projects. These foundations have provided the GMC with three grants totaling \$1.6 million. This national investment was complemented by local and federal funding currently estimated at \$2 million. Via Artplace America, the GMC contributed an essay to the upcoming Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco's *Community Development Journal* issue focusing on creative placemaking. Additionally, the GMC is exploring the connection between independent workers and creative placemaking initiatives, partly through funding from the Knight Foundation.

Ellen Gilligan, president and CEO of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, and Barry Mandel, president of Mandel Group Inc., co-chair the GMC's Creative Placemaking Committee. Consultant Sara Daleiden of MKE<->LAX will facilitate this committee in collaboration with GMC leadership. The committee will reflect different sectors within the GMC membership as well as external community partners connected to creative placemaking.

For 2015-2016, the Creative Placemaking Committee's commitment includes facilitating a curated network of cultural leaders and three creative placemaking projects. The committee will also further define and distribute *The Milwaukee Method of Creative Placemaking*. The GMC will commit financial resources to support the infrastructure and consultant fees, manage the national grant funding, and raise local funds. The GMC will initiate strategic actioning sessions with local stakeholders to stimulate linkages across sectors and generate a collaborative vision for a project area. The GMC will collaborate on production of programs and initiatives related to the committee's commitment.

### Cultural Leadership Network

The Cultural Leadership Network is the backbone of efforts emerging from *The Milwaukee Method of Creative Placemaking*. This intergenerational network of local talent will represent a range of Milwaukee's cultural groups. An initial core group of leaders will be selected for their facilitation skills, focus on equity and commitment to developing Milwaukee as a city with many active cultures. The network encourages interconnectivity across the city with "trails" as a unifying concept for a new sense of access. The cultural leaders will practice the development of trust, resource-sharing, and dialogue around complex cultural subjects with each other. Network participants will address the experience that neighbors can feel culturally separate, frequently based on perceived differences in race, gender, class, and other cultural characteristics. This relationship-building practice of the network will then be spread across sectors and neighborhoods as cultural leaders advise on the development of creative placemaking projects and related initiatives.

The Cultural Leadership Network will create a feedback loop with neighborhood leadership to discover opportunities and alleviate distrust as creative placemaking initiatives are undertaken. The network's involvement will bring transparency to economic, community, and real estate development efforts as institutional and independent relationships are forged. A networked and aligned group of leaders will bring more efficiency and innovation to initiatives. This level of collaboration will set a new standard for inclusive development of the city.

The Milwaukee Method of Creative Placemaking



### *Network Production Areas*

- Develop metrics for neighborhood development to document impact on safe conditions, business creation, and neighbor engagement
- Support local independent workers in the arts and other entrepreneurial areas to connect with the economic and community development sectors
- Facilitate creative placemaking production and advocacy with local agencies
- Identify potential creative placemaking projects regionally for future investment
- Activate a mentorship program to encourage connections among emerging and established leaders, as well as peer-to-peer learning
- Organize discovery trips to other American cities which revitalize industrial corridors and correlate different cultural groups within neighborhoods
- Produce educational programs such as the April 2014 Creative Placemaking Forum with local and national case studies
- Generate an active online platform for sharing references, asset maps, and program materials

## **Creative Placemaking Projects: The Avenue, the artery, and Walker's Point**

The GMC is practicing *The Milwaukee Method* by focusing on three long-term projects in 2015-16, as well as exploring other potential creative placemaking projects for future investment. The three projects include Creational Trails, both the Avenue and the **artery**, and Walker's Point. These projects are located in the North Side, Downtown, and the South Side to represent a cross-section of the City of Milwaukee. These areas are receptive to redevelopment and contain areas of disinvestment. The GMC seeks to work in neighborhoods where a strong community development corporation (CDC) is present or in formation. CDCs and other anchor institutions are important neighborhood partners for long-term investment in collaboration with other public and private agencies.

The first grant from ArtPlace America supported the initiation of the Innovation in Milwaukee (MiKE) initiative within the GMC, located in The Shops of Grand Avenue in an effort to revive the mall as a place for creative businesses like NEWaukee. The second grant from ArtPlace America supported the first phase of Creational Trails: the Avenue and the **artery** realized in 2013-2014 with NEWaukee, between and MKE<->LAX. The third grant from the Kresge Foundation will support the second phase of Creational Trails: the **artery** in Riverworks and the development of the Cultural Leadership Network in 2015-2016.

As an extension of the many recreational trails in the region, Creational Trails seeks to bridge neighborhoods that can feel culturally separated. Creational Trails identified the importance of tapping into existing local networks of artists, makers, and other creative entrepreneurs. These networks were pooled to generate safe, active, and inviting places where a range of intergenerational cultural groups could intersect. This is a significant accomplishment for public space in Milwaukee where many cultural groups feel apprehensive to cluster with each other. The GMC's project partners, including the City, development corporations, local businesses, foundations, and community organizations, were key drivers in the process. Through the implementation of arts-based programs and installations, Creational Trails suggests new public spaces as a way to redevelop underutilized areas and create a new rhythm for each neighborhood.



Led by NEWaukee, Creational Trails: the Avenue is located on West Wisconsin Avenue and is supported by the GMC, the Wisconsin Avenue Milwaukee Development Corporation (WAM-DC), and the City of Milwaukee. The Avenue explores walkability and interaction with a broad range of cultures on downtown's main street through animating a vacant lot and streetscape. Activities include the new Night Markets and art installations. This work is an important building block in the revitalization of West Wisconsin Avenue and The Shops of Grand Avenue in connection with Creative Alliance Milwaukee's 4MKE initiative. Additionally, NEWaukee is an example of a local creative placemaking agency that has received GMC investment for several years for their focus on millennials and talent development. NEWaukee is currently working on The Avenue and the **artery** as well as a new project on Cesar Chavez Drive.

Creational Trails: the **artery** at the Beerline Recreational Trail Extension is located in the Riverworks area. Riverworks is comprised of Harambee and Riverwest, two neighborhoods which have a history of dedicated community-driven initiatives. Harambee is predominantly African-American and Riverwest is one of the most culturally diverse neighborhoods in the city, partly due to proximity to the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. The initiative is supported by the GMC, the Riverworks Development Corporation (RDC), the Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiative, and the City of Milwaukee. Founded by beintween, the **artery** repurposes a former railroad corridor into a linear park focused on the arts. The **artery** programming supports experimentation and training in performance and design-build projects through ICAN2 Labs. Future work with this initiative includes continued activation of the trail and expanding Riverworks as a live-work hub for artists, makers, community organizers, and other cultural leaders. The project will seek opportunities to create and grow creative entrepreneurial ventures in Riverworks.

The newest project relates to the GMC's headquarters at the Global Water Center in Walker's Point. Walker's Point is rich with long-standing Latino, LGBTQ, and other arts and cultural groups. The project intends to respect the GMC's neighbors and the entrepreneurial business community's growing food, design, and technology clusters. The GMC is partnering with the Walker's Point Association, Mandel Group Inc., and the City of Milwaukee. The partnership seeks to develop creative placemaking collaborations with the Global Water Center, the Corredor Creativo, the Innovation District Initiative, The Inner Harbor District Initiative, Reed Street Yards, and other public and private efforts. This project will also engage with The Commons, a collaboration between leading local universities and businesses founded by MiKE and Startup Milwaukee.

## Distributing The Milwaukee Method of Creative Placemaking

With all of these efforts, the GMC with the Cultural Leadership Network and other partners will define and distribute *The Milwaukee Method of Creative Placemaking* for contribution to the field of creative placemaking occurring regionally and nationally. *The Milwaukee Method* supports interweaving cultural and economic diversity as a method of sustainable city development for long-term success of investments. This commitment to a trail system, repurposed industrial space, and neighborhoods fosters ongoing and new alignments.



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