

East Side BID Newsletter

2023 In Review



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Happy New Year!

December 2023 marked my second anniversary as Executive Director, and I have been taking time to reflect on all that we accomplished in 2023.

It was a very busy and exciting year, and the BID could not have accomplished all it did without the support and commitment of a whole team of individuals. In the spirit of the holidays, I want to thank some of the folks who helped make 2023 so great.

First, I want to thank each of my board members for their support and guidance. Second, thank you to Alderman Jonathan Brostoff for all of his efforts on behalf of the East Side BID. I also want to thank all our BID members, without whom there would be no BID! And last but not least, I want to give a shout out to our marketing consultant Allie Horner for all of her amazing work and Paige Hammond, who was a tremendous partner in programming events in Ivanhoe Plaza and Black Cat Alley.

As you browse through the timeline on the following pages, you will see that the BID welcomed several new businesses, implemented a variety of infrastructure improvements aimed at calming traffic, enhancing the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians, and creating safe gathering places.

We also enlisted the support and participation of local community residents and employers to help us clean up the neighborhood and we added two dozen hanging flower baskets to augment our ground planters.

Furthermore, we hosted a variety of new programs and events in the public plaza and Black Cat Alley. And of course, we celebrated our 21st Summer Soulstice Music Festival!

I am looking forward to 2024 with much anticipation. While we have a number of projects and programs in our plans, I am most excited about seeing the TID-financed North Avenue comprehensive streetscaping project get underway. We have been working closely with our City of Milwaukee and private company partners for much of 2023 on this project aimed at safety, traffic calming, intersection improvements, and overall street redesign. We hope to present our updated plans to the community in March. Please keep an eye out for an announcement.

Thank you for joining me in celebrating all we accomplished over the last year. I can't wait to see what the year ahead has in-store for our community!

Respectfully,

Executive Director
East Side Business Improvement District

Building a coalition to create Milwaukee's most vibrant neighborhood.

East Side Business Improvement District

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2023

Year in Review

Quarter 1

The Oriental Theatre was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This comes almost exactly one year after it was listed on the State Historic Registry. Having been a staple of the East Side for almost 100 years, the Oriental Theatre is an iconic destination for those looking to take in a movie, who appreciate intricate design, or simply want to visit a landmark that is truly 'Milwaukee.'



The East Side saw an influx of exciting new businesses.

We were thrilled to welcome hard cider taproom and eatery, Ponoma Cider Co., woman-owned, artist-run gallery, James May Gallery, and modern and friendly tavern, the Upper East Bar (which reopened under new ownership) to the BID as we kicked off 2023.



Quarter 2

We embraced Earth Day with a community cleanup.

Over 50 volunteers joined us for Crossroads Collective's East Side Community Clean Up and Block Party event, donating their time and energy to clean up litter and debris around our neighborhood in honor of Earth Day.



We made positive changes to improve safety and community spaces.

Ivanhoe Plaza was officially established in May, serving as a safe space to gather, enjoy events, and dine outdoors near the intersection of N. Farwell Avenue and E. North Avenue. In addition, we completed work on the Rapid Implementation Bike Lane Project, creating protected bike lanes on North Avenue between the east end of the bridge over the river and Prospect Avenue, as well as on Prospect Avenue between North and Maryland Avenues.



This year's Summer Soulstice Music Festival was a huge success.

We expanded our footprint to include Farwell Avenue between North Avenue and Kenilworth Place, allowing us to add a fourth stage and more musical performers than ever before and 25% more vendor booths than in the previous year. We're thrilled to share that event attendance was up 33% compared to 2022, with over 10,000 attendees. We can't wait to share what Summer Soulstice 2024 has in store!



In addition to filling the BID with great tunes, we also added new blooms.

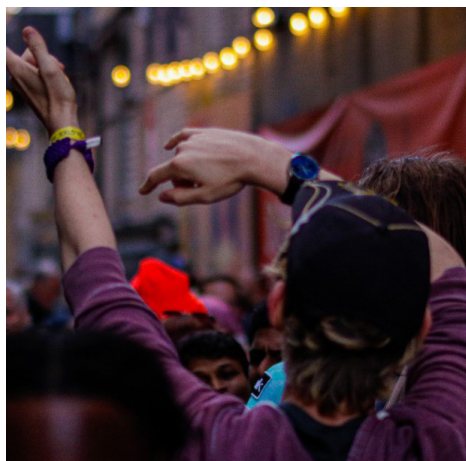
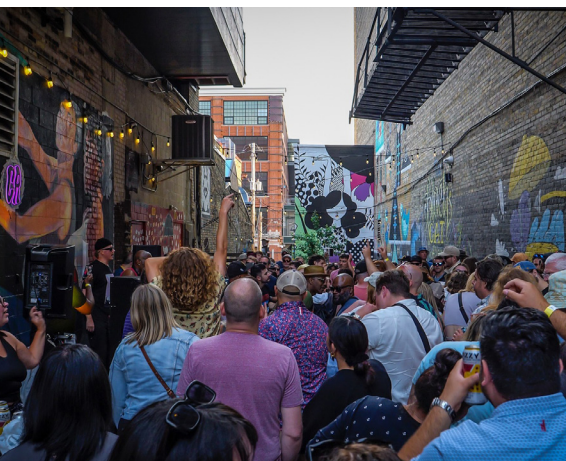
We enhanced the beauty of our neighborhood by refilling our existing standing planters and bicycle planters and installing 24 new hanging planters throughout the BID.



Quarter 3

We made it a summer (and year) to remember by introducing a variety of new community events on the East Side.

Fun in the BID didn't end with Summer Soulstice! In partnership with Crossroads Collective, we activated the new Ivanhoe Plaza and Black Cat Alley with a variety of new programming including two new concert series - Black Cat Rising Music Series and the Sound SYSTEM DJ Series - Latin Dance nights, trivia, yoga, children's events, and more.





We freshened up the BID with another community cleanup.

The BID was extra beautiful this autumn as we kicked off the season with another volunteer cleanup from the employees at New Land Enterprises. We are grateful for their help taking care of our neighborhood.

Black Cat Alley welcomed a new mural.

Another exciting development in the BID this quarter was the addition of a new mural to Black Cat Alley, “Head in the Clouds,” painted by local artist Ruben Alcantar. The BID issued a call for artists over the summer and a panel of seven jurists chose Ruben out of an applicant pool of over 100. Ruben is known in Milwaukee for creating murals around the city to inspire art and change, and also as a tattoo artist at Rabbit Tattoo Collective. Don’t miss this stunning new art the next time you’re in the neighborhood!



Halloween is always an East Side favorite and this year was no exception. We celebrated with activities at multiple East Side businesses including:

- 1) Yoga and trick-or-treating at **Kind Oasis**
- 2) Trick-or-treating, crafts, and a scavenger hunt at **Crossroads Collective**
- 3) A DJ dance party and costume contest in **Black Cat Alley**
- 4) Haunted mini golf at **Nine Below**
- 5) A lineup of spooky films at the **Oriental Theatre**



Infrastructure Improvements

The sidewalk area outside of Ian's Pizza was extended with some new cement pavement that greatly improved the curb appeal.



We rang in the holidays with festive fun for our community.

We hosted an East Side Holiday Celebration to welcome the holiday season with our community at Crossroads Collective and Ivanhoe Plaza. The festivities included a holiday shopping market, Christmas crafts, a Toys for Tots Charity Drive, photos with Santa, Mrs. Claus, and their reindeer, and the East Side's official holiday tree lighting.



The BID also hosted a Holiday Party in December at Vier North, a new bar and restaurant opening in January 2024 in the space of the former Vitucci's building at 1832 E. North Avenue. BID board members, BID property owners and business owners, and community members mingled in the beautifully remodeled space and sampled some of the delicious menu items and beverage choices that Vier North plans to offer.



The BID board elected a new President and Vice President.

The BID held board officer elections at its December Board Meeting. Joey Wisniewski was elected President, succeeding Dan Katt who had been interim President. Spencer Kronz was elected Vice President. Dan Katt is continuing in his role as Treasurer and Mike Vitucci is continuing in his role as Secretary. Please refer to our website for the full slate of BID board members.



The BID partnered with UWM students to better understand ways to connect cyclists and walkers on the Oak Leaf Trail to North Avenue businesses.

BID board president Joey Wisniewski and BID Executive Director David Smulyan recently attended the final presentation of a group of students from the UWM School of Architecture and Urban Development (SARUP). The students worked on a project for the BID as part of a class led by Krisanne Rehbein, Director of Community Design Solutions (CDS). CDS is a funded design center in SARUP that assists communities, agencies, civic groups, and campuses throughout Wisconsin. Students work with Krisanne, clients and faculty to develop concepts that promote positive change, stimulate funding opportunities, and serve as a catalyst for continued investment.

The student project focused on analyzing the three North Avenue adjacent access points or nodes to the Oak Leaf Trail with the goal of understanding ways to connect cyclists and walkers on the Oak Leaf Trail to the North Avenue business corridor.

The students offered a number of ideas and designs which can be used by the BID to engage other stakeholders, i.e., the Milwaukee County Parks Department, BID business owners, community members, etc. to understand and envision what is possible. One example they proposed is to utilize art (in the form of murals and bold, colorful signage) to make these access points more visible and inviting.



Follow along with us to be the first to
learn about new updates and events!

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