

**Economic Development Strategy—Downtown Green Bay
Executive Summary Only**

**Presented to Downtown Green Bay Incorporated
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1 Executive Summary

Key Recommendations

We recommend that the Port Plaza Mall be redeveloped around the following activity centers:

Office Development - The anchor spaces are well-suited for corporate and business services office use. We recommend that office space be redeveloped, either in partnership with an office developer and/or an end user. For example, 100,000 square feet of retail space could accommodate 400-500 employees.

Government Sector - The Mall would be a good place to accommodate future government sector growth in Downtown Green Bay. Downtown government sector employment has been growing at 5% per year.

Riverfront - The riverfront should be developed as either a hotel and/or residential. The historic portion of the Younker's building can be reused for this purpose, and the remainder of the building, including the distribution center should be demolished. Washington Street should be re-opened to traffic. To complement a hotel, a casual dining restaurant, indoor pool and riverwalk could be developed.

Cultural Center- A cultural center could include the following components: a relocated and expanded Children's Museum, community theater, art gallery, music school and additional community/cultural activities. Ideally, the cultural center could be located adjacent to riverfront activities.

While the Mall is unlikely to continue as a regional retail destination, a portion of the Mall space can be redeveloped or replaced with street-level retail along Washington Street, including drug, fast food, convenience and bar/restaurants. Continued efforts should be made to preserve the existing retail base in the mall, by relocating these retailers to street-front locations.

Downtown Green Bay Strengths

- The Fox River is a significant downtown asset, providing opportunities for unique views and active and passive recreation.
- The KI Convention Center and Meyer Theater are major downtown attractions.
- Downtown Green Bay and On Broadway have significantly improved the street-level retail/restaurant/entertainment mix in the downtown.

- Downtown Green Bay remains the most significant concentration of government employment in Brown County and retains significant concentrations of legal, professional, finance and back office/services employment.
- The larger Brown County economy continues to experience expansion, with employment and population growth and rising income.

Downtown Green Bay Challenges

- The growth areas of Brown County have been moving away from Downtown.
- The Port Plaza Mall was designed as a regional retail center. Bay Park Square and Fox River Mall have emerged to serve this purpose.
- The majority of Green Bay's stakeholder industries are located outside the central business district and have very little connection to the downtown.

Office/Business Services

Market Findings

- The downtown office market in Green Bay has been stagnant, or in decline. Several significant employers, including AMS, have made significant investments outside the downtown.
- The redevelopment of Port Plaza Mall has the potential to reinvigorate the downtown office market. The decline of the mall has hurt the downtown office market, as office markets in Ashwaubenon, De Pere and other outlying areas are perceived to have better locations relative to retail.
- Downtown remains the center of government employment in the region, with over 3,000 government employees. The government sector has been growing at 5% per year.

Opportunities

- With the increasing growth of the population in Green Bay, growth of the government sector will likely continue. Therefore, there may be an opportunity to locate some of the new or existing government offices in part of the Port Plaza Mall.

- There is an opportunity to attract corporate/business service companies to locate downtown. The Mall could be an ideal place for such uses.
- One near-term opportunity could be to consolidate existing downtown employers with multiple facilities to one location.
- It may be possible to house government offices in a portion of the mall.

Hotel/Convention

Market Findings

- While Green Bay continues to be a strong hotel market, significant new supply in the form of limited service properties in Ashwaubenon has softened the market.
- The downtown hotels are heavily reliant on convention business. Downtown hotels need office development and year-round activities to attract tourists and individual corporate business.
- The KI Center needs an additional 200 rooms in the downtown area in order to remain competitive for large events.

Opportunities

- The opportunity exists to develop a 150-200 room property in close proximity to KI Center. In order to attract conventions with 1,200-1,500 attendees, at least 700 hotel rooms within walking distance are needed. Downtown currently has 590 rooms.
- This property should be located along the Fox River, in the vicinity of the existing Younker's and Fox River Parking Ramp. This property should be tied in with the skywalk system connecting to KI Center.
- This hotel project may require public subsidy in order to be feasible.
- This property most likely should be positioned as a mid-market, business-oriented limited service hotel, potentially co-located with a casual dining franchise.
- The hotel's amenity package could include an appropriately-scaled water park, to help attract family and weekend leisure business.

Retail, Entertainment and Dining

Market Findings

- Brown County has added 3,000 people per year over the past decade and is projected to continue to grow by 2,500 people per year over the next five years. As such, there will continue to be retail growth in the market.
- Port Plaza Mall, however, has lost its position as a regional retail destination to other retail areas, including Ashwaubenon and Appleton. Bay Park Square will continue to emerge as the regional mall serving Green Bay. Fox River Mall serves as the super-regional mall for Green Bay and the Fox Cities.
- In addition, the power center retail format, with big box retailers like Target, Shopko and Kohl's and category killers like Office Max, Home Depot and Best Buy, is funneling retail sales away from regional malls.
- Downtown Green Bay and On Broadway have emerged as the locations of locally-owned restaurants and small retailers.

Opportunities - Retail and Restaurants

- Long-term retail opportunities for Port Plaza Mall as a regional retail destination are limited. The potential exists to develop retail and restaurants with street-level access, on a scale sufficiently supported by conventioners and downtown office workers. The bars and restaurants should continue the flavor of locally-owned, unique establishments and fast food.
- Indoor market - As an interim use, the potential exists to use mall space as an indoor shopping, incorporating arts, crafts, jewelry and potentially a farmers market.
- There could be an opportunity to develop a branded casual-dining restaurant facing the river, in coordination with the hotel.

Opportunities - Entertainment

- The opportunity could exist to create a family-oriented entertainment center (FEC) in one of the anchor spaces at Port Plaza Mall. This would most likely need to be a publicly sponsored facility, and could support the programming of the school district and park district. Components of the FEC could include: expanded Children's Museum and children's play area and an indoor ice rink/multi-purpose facility. The multi-purpose facility could be configured to house recreational

sports and related public assembly events. This program would need to compliment plans for Leicht's Park.

- Hotel Amenities - As amenities to the hotel program, we recommend a waterfront casual dining restaurant/bar and appropriately-scaled swimming pool/water park.
- Health Club - The opportunity may exist to expand the YMCA in the mall and/or to create a public/private partnership to build a sports-oriented activity center.

Cultural, Educational, Not-for-Profit

Market Findings

- There are a diverse range of cultural and entertainment venues available in the Green Bay market.
- New facilities being added or proposed in the market include the Meyer Theater, Resch Arena and Packers Stadium expansion.

Opportunities

- Riverwalk - the riverfront could be redeveloped as a landscaped promenade.
- Children's Museum - the Children's Museum of Green Bay is seeking to expand its program to 30,000-40,000 square feet and, if co-located with other institutions such as community theater groups, could occupy over 50,000 square feet.
- Education/Workforce Training - a learning center could be created to consolidate and expand current offerings in the downtown area by Northeast Wisconsin Technical College and the Green Bay Job Center. In addition, the learning center could incorporate a day care center and special public school programs.

Residential

Market Findings

- The Alexander Company's Washington Square apartment development is the first major downtown housing development in Green Bay.
- The City has been very successful in improving the condition of housing in city neighborhoods near the downtown.
- The school district has renovated and expanded all of Green Bay's inner city schools.

Opportunities

- We recommend continued development of residential uses on both sides of the river, extending south from downtown. If the Younkers site is not used for a hotel, a possible opportunity exists for residential development on the site, potentially reusing a portion of the historic structure.
- Downtown housing should focus on the following product types:
 - **Low-rise Flats**, of the type developed by Alexander, to target singles, young couples, and single-parent families. These units should be affordable, potentially with a tax credit component.
 - In addition, the market should be tested for riverfront **town homes** and semi-detached units, to target the empty-nester market. Flats are not the right product to attract this market in Green Bay.