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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **WISCONSIN CENTER DISTRICT BREAKS GROUND ON \$420 MILLION CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION**

*The groundbreaking event commemorates the next phase of the Wisconsin Center expansion project*



*(From left to right - Lafayette Crump, Peter Feigin, Joel Brennan, Marty Brooks, Jim Kanter, David Crowley, Bob Bauman, Dr. Eve M. Hall, Peggy Williams-Smith)*

**MILWAUKEE** - (Oct. 28, 2021) - The [Wisconsin Center District](#) (WCD) leadership and board members, elected officials and community leaders broke ground for the Wisconsin Center expansion Thursday morning. The \$420 million project will take up one square city block on Kilbourn Avenue, between Vel R. Phillips Avenue and Sixth Street, and include 650,000 square feet of space, bringing the total Wisconsin Center footprint to over 1.3 million square feet.

The Wisconsin Center expansion project will include 300,000 contiguous square feet of exhibit hall space, a rooftop ballroom and outdoor terraces, indoor parking, 24 additional flexible meeting rooms for a total of 52, and a retrofit of the current convention center. The facility is anticipated to open in the first quarter of 2024. [Here](#) is a photo from the groundbreaking and [renderings](#) of the project.

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“Today’s groundbreaking is the formal celebration of our highly-anticipated \$420 million expansion that has been years in the making,” said Marty Brooks, president and CEO of the WCD. “Doubling the size of the convention center allows us to execute multiple, simultaneous events bringing more visitors to Milwaukee to attend conferences and patronize local businesses. Meeting planners can expect flexible meeting space, robust IT infrastructure, and top-of-the-line health and safety features, along with our signature Bold, Proud, Experience Obsessed service delivery approach.”

After opening, the WCD anticipates an additional 100,000 out-of-state visitors annually, and the expansion is projected to generate \$12.6 billion in total spending over 30 years.

The event began with remarks from **Marty Brooks**, who spoke to the project's impact on economic prosperity in Milwaukee and creating a source of pride for residents. Additional speakers included WCD Board Chair **Jim Kanter**; VISIT Milwaukee President and CEO **Peggy Williams-Smith**; VISIT Milwaukee Board Chair **Dr. Eve M. Hall**; Milwaukee Bucks President **Peter Feigin**; WCD Board Member and Milwaukee Fourth District Alderman **Bob Bauman**; City of Milwaukee Commissioner of City Development **Lafayette Crump**; Milwaukee County Executive **David Crowley**; and Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Administration **Joel Brennan**.

Each speaker shared messages with common themes about the project’s economic impact and how the new, state-of-the-art facility will attract more people to visit and explore Milwaukee. The expansion project includes a 31 percent disadvantaged business enterprise commitment with at least 25 percent minority-owned businesses, five percent women-owned businesses, and one percent disabled veteran-owned businesses. Plus, a residents preferred program of 40 percent, meaning at least \$40 million of the \$100 million in anticipated construction wages will be earned by residents of the City of Milwaukee. Upon opening, the expanded Wisconsin Center is projected to support 2,300 full time equivalent jobs throughout the state of Wisconsin.

“This is a monumental day, and we’re here in large part because of the vision, tenacity and ingenuity of the WCD Board of Directors. In a time of unprecedented uncertainty, the WCD Board demonstrated faith and confidence in the leaders behind this project and voted yes to enhance Milwaukee’s future as a meetings and conventions destination,” said Jim Kanter, WCD Board Chair. “The shovel-ready project will be a source of pride for the city for years to come.”

The Wisconsin Center expansion is a cutting-edge project setting new industry standards. Its dynamic design elements are unique in the convention industry, its environmental requirements meet stringent standards and its contractors’ qualifications are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion practices that will benefit the local economy.

“This event marks the beginning of the Wisconsin Center’s thrilling next chapter and it will elevate Milwaukee in the ranks against our peer cities,” said Peggy Williams-Smith, president and CEO of VISIT Milwaukee. “An expanded convention center means more business, more visitors and more national exposure for Milwaukee and translates into billions of dollars in additional tourism spending in our community.”

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Expansion partners include the project owner's representative, [CAA ICON](#), design partners Milwaukee-based [Eppstein Uhen Architects](#) (EUA) and Atlanta-based [tvsdesign](#), construction management partners [Gilbane Building Company](#) and [C.D. Smith Construction](#), who have formed a joint venture as Gilbane | Smith Wisconsin Center Expansion (Gilbane | Smith), disadvantaged business enterprise partners [Cross Management Services, Inc.](#) and [Prism Technical Management and Marketing Services, LLC.](#) and naming-rights partner [Legends](#).

To stay up to date on progress and learn more about the Wisconsin Center expansion, visit [buildingmore.com](http://buildingmore.com).

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**Wisconsin Center**

The [Wisconsin Center](#), located in the heart of downtown Milwaukee, is the hub of convention business in Wisconsin and is ideal for trade and consumer shows, conventions, banquets, business meetings, and celebrations. Currently, the Wisconsin Center offers 188,695 square feet of contiguous exposition space and 37,500 square feet of ballroom space, accommodating up to 1,000 vendors and 10,000 guests. More intimate spaces are also available for groups as small as ten.

In 2021, the Wisconsin Center began a \$420 million expansion, which will bring the exposition hall to 300,000 contiguous square feet; add 24 new meeting rooms, include no fewer than 400 indoor parking spaces, add six loading docks, an additional kitchen, and feature a spectacular fourth floor rooftop ballroom with outdoor terraces and space for a minimum of 2,000 for a seated dinner. This will allow the Wisconsin Center District (WCD) to host multiple events simultaneously and offer flexible space arrangements to meet various clients' needs. The expansion is expected to be completed and open for business in Q1 2024. For more information and to book an event, visit [wisconsincenter.com](http://wisconsincenter.com).

**Wisconsin Center District**

Experience-obsessed and committed to creating unforgettable moments, the [Wisconsin Center District](#) (WCD) is a quasi-governmental body that operates the [Wisconsin Center](#), which began its \$420 million expansion in 2021 to double its size; [UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena](#); and [Miller High Life Theatre](#) in downtown Milwaukee. The WCD venues are within walking distance of leading hotels, retail establishments, attractions, dining, nightclubs and transportation. Created under [Wisconsin State Statute](#) in 1994, the WCD offers captivating- and buzzworthy-experiences, making Milwaukee a not-to-be-missed destination.