



MILWAUKEE DOWNTOWN

Business Improvement District 21 | 301 W Wisconsin Ave. Suite 106 | Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203

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July 28, 2021

Historic Preservation Commission
Zeidler Municipal Building
841 N. Broadway, Room B-1
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Honorable Chair and Commissioners,

I am writing on behalf of Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21 (BID #21) in support of the Irgens application to the Historic Preservation Commission for historic designation of the former Marshall & Isley Bank headquarter building located at 770 N. Water Street in downtown Milwaukee. The M&I building is located in the heart of the District. It represents an important time for Downtown and the City of Milwaukee and therefore its legacy should be preserved and repositioned.

The Grassold, Johnson, Wagner & Isley designed building was at the time of completion in 1968 and continues to be a unique landmark in downtown Milwaukee that has won multiple architectural awards. The M&I building is a significant Modern Movement - International Style example of a post-war bank building in the country and one of the most significant in Milwaukee. With original core components such as the main tower's exterior and interior first and sixth floor, it should be preserved and ultimately repurposed to ensure the City of Milwaukee does not lose this irreplaceable representation of this important architectural style.

Through the preservation of M&I building, the City of Milwaukee will be able to join dozens of peer cities throughout the country that have been able to see buildings from this period repurposed into successful, transformational projects utilizing historic tax credits through a historic designation.

In addition, the repurposing of the building into multi-family residential with the added bonus that 20% of the units would be affordable to a population who meet certain income limits, will add much needed diverse density in the core of downtown where it is needed most. The developer has done their due diligence and the thoughtful repurposing of the M&I building will also remove nearly 300,000 SF of vacant office space in a time that will see an office market space supply and demand adjustment due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Irgens has a demonstrated track record through the successful completion of many of downtown's most significant projects, including the BMO Tower, 833 East, 875 E. Wisconsin and the ASQ Center. They have the proven ability to deliver another high-quality project in the repurposing of the M&I building that will be another great addition to the City of Milwaukee.

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Milwaukee Downtown is in alignment and fully supports the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service findings that the Marshall & Ilsley Bank headquarter building, without the original parking structure, appears to be eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It would be unfortunate if the demolition of the parking structure would prevent this preservation project from moving forward, especially with other examples from across the country where similar buildings in similar circumstances have achieved historic designation.

In closing, we ask for the Commission to support the Irgens application for historic designation of the Marshall & Ilsley Bank building and allow the developer to move forward with preserving this important legacy for the City of Milwaukee and its people.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Weirick

CEO

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21

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