

Our View | Downtown

Milwaukee's downtown looking healthier

Nov. 29, 2014

Northwestern Mutual's new headquarters building is rising from the ground at the base of Mason St., and soon perhaps so, too, will the Couture project nearby. That would be an impressive \$622 million of development in a small area of downtown Milwaukee that will fundamentally change that part of our city for the better.

And that's only part of the story. The face of downtown is changing. Counting all development in the past nine years, about \$2.6 billion in public and private investment has been completed, according to figures compiled by Milwaukee Downtown, a business improvement district. Another \$980 million is under construction, and millions of dollars more is proposed, including a new multipurpose arena. But even if the arena isn't built, confidence in Milwaukee's downtown — at least as evidenced by development — is growing.

New projects include: 833 East, a new 17-story office building just west of the proposed Couture on Michigan St.; renovations to the Milwaukee Art Museum and War Memorial; the Posner building on W. Wisconsin Ave.; reconstruction of the Hoan Bridge and many other projects that are either in the ground or on the drawing board.

More public investment is needed, including improved transit and a modern streetcar line to move people around — and we'd like to see even more people living near the city center. But all the investment that is being funneled into downtown is promising. A healthy downtown with a healthy tax base helps the entire city.

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