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# Couture, streetcar could each survive on their own

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The Couture and downtown streetcar would be physically linked via a street-level transit stop but the two could conceivably live without each other if one does not gain approval.

Both projects in December separately will go to city and county governments for review. Couture developer [Rick Barrett](#) will seek Milwaukee County Board approval to buy the Downtown Transit Center at 909 E. Michigan St. for his 44-story apartment tower near Milwaukee's lakefront. Meanwhile, city officials will consider two taxing districts that would finance a spur of the downtown streetcar along East Michigan Street, with a station at the Couture's base.

County Board chairwoman [Marina Dimitrijevic](#) said she supports both projects, saying they are a partnership between city and county government. There are preliminary talks of having Milwaukee County, through its bus system, operate the city streetcar, she said.

"Now is the time to be open-minded and big and bold," Dimitrijevic said.

Both projects face opposition, but one's demise would not sink the other.

For starters, the Couture's transit concourse can handle buses as well as streetcars, said County Supervisor [Patricia Jursik](#). She declined to comment on the city's streetcar plan because it is not under the county's jurisdiction.

"I don't care how you move people, whether it is through a bus or a streetcar," she said. "I think it is enlightened to have transit serving the lakefront."

Likewise, a streetcar spur to the lakefront does not need the Couture development to survive. Milwaukee Mayor [Tom Barrett](#) is proposing to pay for that spur partially with \$31 million in city

tax incremental financing.

That TIF district lets the city borrow money for the streetcar, and pay it off using property taxes generated by the Couture and the neighboring 833 East office building, which is under construction.

Even without the Couture, the 18-story 833 East project alone could generate enough property tax money to pay for the streetcar, according to a city report.

Reporter Sean Ryan covers commercial and residential real estate for the Milwaukee Business Journal and through the [Real Estate Roundup blog](#) on the website. He also covers construction, highways and public transit.