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City of South Milwaukee receives \$250,000 state grant to support revitalization of downtown building

WEDC investment to help fund renovation of Bucyrus Club

MADISON, WI. JAN. 19, 2021 – The City of South Milwaukee is receiving a \$250,000 state grant to help renovate a historic property in downtown South Milwaukee.

The Community Development Investment Grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will support renovations to the Bucyrus Club banquet and meeting center and museum, more than 100 years after the first Bucyrus Club opened in the building.

“A vibrant downtown is key to a community’s overall economic health, and this renovation is expected to bring more visitors to downtown, which will benefit other businesses and the entire community,” said Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of WEDC. “This project is another example of the many ways in which WEDC works with communities throughout Wisconsin to enhance their business districts and in doing so, add to their quality of life.”

“This is a transformational project for our downtown and city,” said South Milwaukee Mayor Erik Brooks. “I can’t thank the WEDC enough for their support. These funds will go a long way toward making this game-changing project a reality, and ensuring future generations know the heritage of Bucyrus in South Milwaukee through the Bucyrus Club.”

The city is partnering with South Milwaukee Industrial Museum LLC, Skyline Catering, and the Bucyrus Foundation on this project, which is estimated to be completed in June 2021. The city purchased the property in February 2020 after it sat vacant for more than five years with water damage.

Once renovated, Skyline Catering aims to bring a variety of events to the building, including small community group events, wedding receptions, large corporate events and public events. The building will also be home to the South Milwaukee Industrial Museum, which plans to feature rare artifacts, models, images, and other items from the collection formerly located on the Bucyrus campus. Bucyrus, a mining equipment manufacturer most famous for building the shovels that dug the Panama Canal, called South Milwaukee home for more than 100 years and employed thousands of people at its facility before Caterpillar acquired the company in 2011.

The owner of Skyline Catering is estimating 20-25 new hires for Skyline’s staff once the building is renovated. The volunteer-led South Milwaukee Industrial Museum plans to work closely with Skyline Catering to make the facility a unique regional destination.

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The downtown building was previously home to South Milwaukee's first manufacturer, Schutz Bros. Furniture Company. Bucyrus purchased the building in 1910 for use as its west machine shop and steam engine assembly shop. In 1920, Bucyrus reopened the building as the first Bucyrus Club for employees, including dining space, a bar, bowling alleys, gymnasium, stage, and handball court. With parts of the building dating back to 1892, this property is one of South Milwaukee's most historic.

WEDC's Community Development Investment Grant Program supports community development and redevelopment efforts, primarily in downtown areas. The matching grants are awarded based on the ability of applicants to demonstrate the economic impact of the proposed project, including public and private partnership development, financial need, and use of sustainable downtown development practices.

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About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit wedc.org or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

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