



December 18, 2020

Dear GMC Members:

We will long remember 2020 both for the enormity of the challenges as well as for how we, collectively and individually, addressed those challenges. While you can expect a recap of this unforgettable year in our 2020 annual report, it is worth reflecting on how we continued to work this year to make Milwaukee the best place to live, learn, work, play, and stay.

Beginning in March, we gathered virtually for our member meetings, joining the rest of our community and the world in navigating a new reality amid a global pandemic. Members participated in one-on-one YouTube interviews about specific industry sectors' challenges and how their organizations are meeting the challenge. We typically schedule eight member meetings annually. This year, we hosted 15 meetings with Zoom technology, engaging with local, regional, and national voices in conversations around COVID, racial equity, and business and community strategies.

We continued to make extraordinary progress in our focus areas of Innovation and Talent, Economic Prosperity, and Vibrancy of Place.

- MKE United, a collaboration with the City of Milwaukee, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, the Urban League, and LISC, working with Black and brown neighborhoods surrounding Downtown. The two-year-old anti-displacement fund helps prevent gentrification due to rapidly rising property values and taxes in historically disinvested neighborhoods. We are developing equitable housing initiatives with resident-driven strategies. The initiative continues to be a strong partner of Brew City Match, pairing empty retail locations in commercial corridors with small businesses, awarding 59 in the first year.
- Scale Up Milwaukee is creating a new culture in the region through events and accelerators designed to infuse growth and spread inclusive economic prosperity. The SPARC accelerator works with entrepreneurs of color and women-owned businesses between \$100k-\$1M to grow at a rapid yet sustainable rate. These businesses are a crucial factor in commercial corridor redevelopment. Entrepreneurs of color own 67% of the participating companies. Scale Up Milwaukee's Growth Accelerator focuses on entrepreneur cohorts between 1-15M in revenue and includes Rising Tide, a sub-cohort of Black and brown business owners that focuses on closing the generational racial wealth gap. Scale Up Milwaukee has also been working with local and national organizations that are addressing the digital divide. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, it was apparent many business owners of color did not have the equipment or resources needed to operate virtually or apply for PPP loans. Scale Up formed a partnership with Square, a nationally recognized digital business services provider, to grant access to the services needed to operate in a pandemic world
- Black, brown, and first-generation college students and young professionals do not have access to the same professional networks as their peers. The Commons and Forward 48 help level the playing field, creating an equitable space to connect with Milwaukee-area companies and build a career network. The Commons serves a diverse population of talent that reflects those living in our region through a new

approach to talent ecosystems from K-12 to emerging and C Suite leaders. Over 60 community-based talent development partners and a strong connection with staff and faculty at more than 20 higher education institutions help create a high inclusivity level. The Forward 48 leadership initiative, launched in 2020, focuses on connecting diverse, rising leaders in our community with established leaders. The program creates a robust and diverse civic leadership succession strategy. The Commons Virtual Internship Program served 120 students in summer 2020 as a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic impacting corporate internship opportunities.

- We play crucial roles in the design, creation, and support of public spaces that increase civic engagement and connect people across racial, economic, and social divides. Beerline Trail Urban Park Development brings together the Riverwest and Harambee neighborhoods to grow prosperity, provide equitable green space, and meet resident needs while celebrating art and culture. Nationally recognized Black urban landscape designer, Walter Hood, created the Lifeways Plan. Developed alongside the Plan, we developed the Beerline Trail Equitable Implementation Plan which earned a 2020 Planning Excellence award from the American Planning Association – Wisconsin Chapter. A capital campaign launch, scheduled for 2020, was delayed due to COVID with a revised plan to launch in early 2021.
- The GMC board convened a Racial, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to examine how we can, as an organization, continue to be a part of the commitment to equity in our community.

The global pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to our community and many of your organizations. However, throughout this year, your commitment has remained strong. You have answered the call, literally and figuratively, as our community joins together to address our challenges – from small business survival to talent retention, the digital divide to racial equity.

We look forward to ongoing progress and additional milestones with your crucial and continued participation in the GMC, helping to impact Milwaukee's most vital community and regional initiatives positively. The 2021 Membership Dues Invoice is included as an attachment. Your financial contributions, in addition to the gift of your valuable time and talents, are crucial to our continued work.

Thank you for your involvement and your support as a member.

Sincerely,



David Lubar
Chair



Julia H. Taylor
President