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Wisconsin Avenue group sees benefits from linking Grand Avenue with arena via streetcar

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[Alison Bauter](#)

Reporter- Milwaukee Business Journal

[Email](#) | [Twitter](#)

A group hoping to revitalize West Wisconsin Avenue has turned its sights on the streetcar, since it's now clear a new basketball arena and its attendant development isn't coming their way.

Although it [comes as little surprise](#), the **Milwaukee Bucks'** decision to place the new arena in the Park East is a blow to the group hoping to revitalize Wisconsin Avenue. It puts the convention center and **Shops of Grand Avenue** about a half-mile from a potential \$1 billion in retail, restaurants and residential development, along with the arena itself.

A long-vacant lot on the corner of Fourth Street and West Wisconsin Avenue briefly surfaced as a potential site for the arena, something those hoping to revitalize the street said would have been a "catalytic" if challenging undertaking.

See Also

- [For Grand Avenue, closer arena could be catalytic](#)

Instead, advocates like [Steve Chernof](#) are looking to the streetcar, supporting a line run from the intermodal station down Fourth Street to the arena, where plans include a streetcar stop.

"There are real opportunities," said Chernof, president of Wisconsin Avenue Milwaukee Development Corp., or WAM DC. "We just need to figure it out in the right way."

Running the streetcar line down Fourth Street, past the mall and the convention center, would be a chance to create a "vibrant artery," he said. Development along that corridor could spur work on the vacant Fourth and Wisconsin property, currently an asphalt parking lot.

In the meantime, the lot will play host to a number of pop-up events, food trucks and other temporary installations such as last year's night markets meant to enliven the area. Read more on those plans and the findings of a study by WAM DC [by clicking here](#). The area is a concern for both businesses and the city because it's the first impression many convention center and other visitors have of the city. Currently there is limited foot-traffic, and many of the storefronts at Grand Avenue and elsewhere are vacant.

Chernof was one of 15 Milwaukee developers, business owners and stakeholders who spoke Tuesday morning at the Milwaukee Business Journal's Downtown Roundtable. Read our May 1 weekly edition for more from that discussion on what it takes to revitalize the downtown retail environment.

Reporter Alison Bauter covers finance, technology, retail and education for the Milwaukee Business Journal.