



DMI Director's Report – May 2026

From Jason Ilstrup, DMI President

Creating Connections and Community:

- DMI and the City of Madison hosted the second public meeting for Envision Downtown Madison in late April. The open house brought together community members, stakeholders, and project leaders to review and provide feedback on the draft vision, values, and “Big Moves” that will guide the future of Downtown Madison.
- In April, DMI hosted our What's Up Downtown Breakfast featuring Madison Metropolitan School District Superintendent Dr. Joe Gothard:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GS8AJyvuRo>.
- MKE Downtown and DMI hosted the first MSN+MKE Downtown Exchange event of the year in April. The Exchange featured presentations and a discussion on the potential new passage rail corridor between Madison and Milwaukee. Amtrak's Arun Rao and the High-Speed Rail Alliance's Rick Harnish joined us: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XL7e2cSKRMk&t=223s>.
- The April DMI Advocacy Update featured a conversation with Matt Geske, Vice President of Public Affairs at the Downtown Austin Alliance:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rcls0hNYSg4>.
- DMI hosted our New Member Coffee at Strang.
- The latest version of the DMI Downtown Happenings Podcast featured Jason connecting with the Madison Symphony Orchestra's Elaine Mischler and Derrick Smith on the MSO's 100 Anniversary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0FEnQjofz0&t=2s>.
- Jason served as a Delegate to the International Downtown Association's (IDA) World Towns Leadership Summit in Dublin and Belfast. The Summit brought together 50 leaders from around the world to exchange ideas on city-building, economic development, and public space leadership. The Summit focused on how downtown organizations can respond to political polarization, financial and environmental sustainability challenges, and evolving community expectations.

DMI Media Mentions:

- April 28 – The Wisconsin State Journal - [Madison's Next Downtown Area Plan Open House Set for Thursday](#)
- April 30 – International Downtown Association Newsletter - [News from the Top: When Downtowns Speak Together, Policymakers Listen](#)
- April 30 – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel - [Milwaukee-Madison Amtrak Line to Cost Over \\$200m, if Wisconsin Helps Out](#)
- May 7 – Cap Times - [Center for Black Excellence and Culture Has a Grand Opening](#)
- May 7 – Isthmus – Opinion: Who Might Run for Madison Mayor?

- May 8 – InBusiness Magazine - [Visions of Housing, Hospitality and Vitality for Downtown Madison](#)

Presentations:

- Jason co-facilitated the training for IDA’s Capitol Fly-In in Washington DC.
- Jason served as the keynote speaker at the spring Shive-Hattery employee event in Madison. Jason presented on the state of Downtown Madison.

Economic Development:

- The Economic Development Committee met in April and heard a presentation from Madison’s Central Business Improvement District (CID) Executive Director Matt Tramel on the vitality of Downtown storefronts.

Membership Development:

- DMI welcomed several new members, including:

Kapur & Associates, Inc.	https://www.kapurinc.com/
Maria Segura	https://www.linkedin.com/in/mariasegura775
Merrill Lynch	https://fa.ml.com/andrew-b-charles
Oakbrook Corporation	www.oakbrookcorp.com
Serendipity Labs	https://serendipitylabs.com/us/wi/madison/

Transportation

- The DMI Transportation Committee met in early May to discuss several ongoing topics including placemaking and passenger rail.

Quality of Life

- The Quality of Life Committee did not meet in March.
- Jason and Matt Tramel attended the Madison Police Department’s Town Hall in Downtown Madison.

Beyond Compliance

- The Beyond Compliance Subcommittee met in April to hear updates on their work and discuss their next projects.
- The Accessible and Affordable Housing Task Force postponed their May meeting for later this month.

Government Relations

- Jason attended the International Downtown Association’s (IDA) Washington DC Capitol Fly-In as Chair of the Association’s US Government Relations Committee. He met with the offices of Sen. Baldwin, Sen. Johnson, Rep. Pocan and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Deputy

Assistant Secretary McKenney and Deputy Assistant Secretary Gaither. The event and meetings focused on advancing federal policies that support vibrant, safe, and economically resilient downtowns and urban districts. Key discussion topics included public safety and crime prevention, homelessness and mental health response strategies, economic recovery and downtown revitalization, housing attainability, transportation and mobility investments, and strengthening public-private partnerships.

- The DMI Government Relations Committee met with City of Madison 4th District Alder Mike Verveer.

For questions or more information, contact Jason Ilstrup, DMI President, at 608-512-1330 or jilstrup@downtownmadison.org.