



TRANSFORM - CHANGING A BUILDING, CHANGING A COMMUNITY

The Children's Museum of Rock County is in a unique position to positively impact the lives of children, the local economy, and preserve a historical landmark.

The museum will be located in the former First National Bank at 100 W. Milwaukee Street. This architectural cornerstone of downtown Janesville was built in 1907 and served as a premier financial institution for the community for 110 years.¹ The preservation of the original bank building's facade serves as an important representation of the community, its values, and its history. Construction of the Children's Museum will consist of restoring and repurposing the bank building to serve as an "anchor," while demolishing the 1970s drive-up addition in order to construct more usable space. We believe the adaptive reuse of the bank is a sustainable option since it provides adequate space for the project, the anchor building is well-built and sound, and, in general, reuse is less wasteful than a completely new construction.² Additionally, its location near the heart of Janesville, a central spot in Rock County, is optimal for serving the community.

The adaptive reuse of 100 W. Milwaukee Street will not only give it new life, it also will play a major role in the revitalization of downtown Janesville. The Rock Renaissance Area Redevelopment and Implementation Strategy (**ARISE**) assesses the redevelopment opportunities in downtown Janesville and along the Rock River. The **ARISE** Plan provides guidance on these development strategies, priorities, needs, and opportunities.³ Construction of a children's museum at 100 W. Milwaukee Street falls neatly into this plan supporting three out of four of the plan's goals: make the downtown the heart of the community and a fun, vibrant and healthy place to live, work and visit for a wide spectrum of the community; preserve the historical character and authenticity of the downtown; and facilitate new investment and redevelopment with a market driven and action oriented strategy. Moreover, this project supports objectives identified in the **City of Janesville's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan** by drawing people to downtown and encouraging diversity in the development of downtown businesses and activities while also establishing a niche experience.⁴ The development of this location was specifically identified in a 2021 downtown market opportunity study as the "highest development priority" among various catalyst sites and as an ideal space for a children's museum with the museum itself serving as "a key, near-term driver for the continued revitalization of downtown."⁵

Finally, the goal is to build a project that is representative of Rock County and will exist in perpetuity. For such reasons, we are planning for longevity, and are designing the museum to be adaptable and enduring. The children's museum will include rotating content to keep the museum experience fresh for visitors in addition to its flex spaces. The museum experience will be symbolic of Rock County and everything that makes it a unique and wonderful place to live, work, and PLAY!

Annually, the museum is expected to generate \$4.26 million in local spillover spending with \$3.48 million from local patrons and \$420,000 from visitors. Currently, Rock County does not have the same number of recreation and enrichment opportunities as similar communities. A children's museum is more than just an amenity and the Children's Museum of Rock County is positioned to fulfill an evident community need, serve as a catalyst in downtown revitalization, and preserve a significant piece of architecture and history.



¹ 100-106 W. Milwaukee Street Property Record, Wisconsin Historical Society.

² Sustainability and Historic Preservation, Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 2011.

³ <https://www.growjanesville.com/economic-development/downtown/rock-renaissance-arise>.

⁴ <https://www.janesvillewi.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/9896/637438933992630000>

⁵ Highest and Best Use Study of Downtown Janesville, Weitzman Associates, LLC, June 2021.