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Anchoring community in downtown Manitowoc *WEDC Secretary's visit spotlights historically inspired revitalization and creative public gathering spaces in Manitowoc*

MANITOWOC, WI. JUNE 4, 2025 – With Lake Michigan as its backdrop and a rich maritime legacy at its core, Manitowoc is turning history into a catalyst for downtown growth. Through creative partnerships and a shared vision for inclusive community spaces, local leaders are embracing new spaces as a tool to reimagine parts of Manitowoc's main corridor.

That vision is coming to life with the development of the Captain Carus Maritime Garden, a proposed gathering space in the heart of the city. What was once a fenced-in parking lot is being transformed into a pedestrian-friendly park adorned with native plantings and historic nautical artifacts from the Wisconsin Maritime Museum.

"Manitowoc is a perfect example of showing how public spaces can reflect a community's history while also creating new opportunities for connection and city pride," said Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the state's lead economic development agency. "These efforts show what's possible when a community embraces its identity and invites public-private partnership to shape its future."

Hughes and other WEDC leaders are traveling across Wisconsin this year to recognize the work communities are doing to build an Economy for All, one where every resident has the opportunity to live, work, and thrive. During a visit to Manitowoc Wednesday, Hughes saw how the city and community partners are transforming overlooked downtown spaces into more welcoming and visually appealing destinations that invite residents and visitors to gather, explore, and embrace the city's historic roots.

The City of Manitowoc was awarded a \$40,000 Vibrant Spaces grant to assist with supporting the Wisconsin Maritime Museum's vision for the garden as a destination for education, reflection, and celebration.

"This is the center where the public can learn about all of these amazing resources and become involved in some of these public programming that we'll eventually be adding in," said Kevin Cullen, executive director of the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. "It's really exciting to see Manitowoc kind of blossom as if it were as an urban center, but for the public to enjoy it as public green space."

Located on the site of a former car dealership and repair shop, the garden honors the legacy of Captain Edward Carus, a Great Lakes captain who lived on the property in the early 20th century. The garden will feature a rotating selection of artifacts, including a submarine sail, radar antennae, and a ship's wheel to connect visitors to Wisconsin's maritime heritage while also providing a community gathering space.

LOOK FORWARD ➤

Manitowoc's commitment to investing in outdoor spaces extends beyond public parks. Nearby, Craft Creek Brewing Co., a local brewery in the city's River North district, is getting a boost of its own. The business was recently named the winner of WEDC's 2025 Main Street Place-Makeover contest and will receive up to \$5,000 in funds and design assistance to enhance its outdoor patio space.

Located along the Manitowoc River, Craft Creek Brewing hosts local events including Bike n' Brew and Dogs Day Out. With the new enhancements, the business hopes to make the brewery's outdoor area more inviting and better equipped to support its growing event schedule and visitor base.

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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](https://twitter.com/WEDCNews) to learn more.